Through an Artist’s Eye: Observations on Aspects of Copying in Two Groups of Work by John White c. 1585–90

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Introduction

For more than a decade I have been a practising and teaching botanical artist, following a career mainly in editing and writing international illustrated nonfiction books. Using historical botanical illustration extensively in my teaching, I have made a particular study of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues. Through his work I became interested in John White, and the links between White, Le Moyne, and the collection of related works known as the Sloane volume (see below).

Although I am not an academically qualified art historian, several years ago I began exploring aspects of White’s work, particularly concerning evidence of copying and the sequence of drawings. In 2007 I visited the exhibition A New World and conference at the British Museum and found juxtapositions between the exhibition, catalogue and conference papers that were relevant to my personal study. I was encouraged by the last paragraph on page 225 of the catalogue, where Kim Sloan acknowledges the uncertainties regarding the status of the drawings currently attributed to John White and of the related Sloane volume works. I also noted that her interdisciplinary list of expert contributors did not include an artist, and ventured to fill this gap.

I therefore offer my personal perspective to the lively debate over the work of White and his contemporaries. In so doing I emphasise that these are essentially preliminary observations, particularly concerning the issue of copying, as seen in just two groups of White’s work. Part 1 considers some of White’s natural history drawings that correspond to drawings in the Sloane volume; and Part 2 considers the ‘Pictish drawings’.

I further emphasise that while I have outlined some of my own ideas arising from this research, I hold that all of the related groups of work must be considered both separately and together before any substantial hypothesis can be advanced. These groups of work include: costume studies, Inuit studies, Indian life in Virginia, Indian portraits, Florida Indians, natural history studies, Brazilian Indians, birds, fishes, and plants; both in the John White album and in the Sloane volume (see below). I hope to continue my exploration in this field and would welcome feedback from interested readers.

I acknowledge an immense debt of gratitude to Kim Sloan (together with her colleagues in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum) for her generous and open-minded encouragement and support. Her catalogue A New World (2007) is an essential reference, as are the works by her predecessor at the British Museum, Paul Hulton.3

Botanical and other scientific illustration

A practising botanical artist studying historical work soon becomes aware not of how much difference the centuries make, but how little. One is essentially trying to do the same task as an artist centuries ago, with slightly different tools. Once this becomes apparent, one can look at historical paintings with greater insight and discretion, rather than the overwhelming awe that often glazes the sight of the newcomer to this intensely focused genre.

The main requirement of a scientific illustration is that it should be ‘fit for purpose’: i.e., ‘Authenticity [of species], Accuracy, and Artistry’. Artistic effects, ornamentation, and personal style are subsidiary and indeed may be actively discouraged by the scientist, although of course, this term was not used in the 16th century as it is today. In discussing the iconography of prehistory, Stephanie Moser’ points out ‘Scientific illustrations are ... based on observation or objective methods of study’ but in some cases they may ‘make theories for which evidence is limited seem credible’. White’s Pictish drawings are among her examples. In assuming that White’s drawings were accurate documentaries of what was seen at the time, we must also identify with the artist and be aware of the various influences that may have had a bearing on the works we see today.

For example, it is apparent that White’s colleague Thomas Harriot had an approach to his New World studies that most would now describe as ‘scientific’ and that this influenced White. However the ‘lay’ patron of scientific illustration (such as Raleigh, perhaps), while impressed by its meticulous precision, may also be seduced by embellishments such as the metallic pigments seen on some of White’s work; such effects are discouraged by modern convention. Meanwhile publishers have always sought the visual impact that will encourage sales, in artwork presented in a technically appropriate format, often to impossible deadlines: in this respect one suspects that Theodor de Bry was entirely typical of his profession, and through my former career I am familiar with such constraints. Finally, of course, available materials and the end-purpose of a drawing may dictate different techniques. These are some of the influences I have considered when assessing these works.

The drawings of John White

For those readers who are not familiar with these two groups of work, I will try to summarize very briefly the background that is described fully by Sloan and contributors in the catalogue A New World. The 75 watercolour drawings attributed to John White were sold in an album to the first Earl of Charlemont in 1788.

It was clear from the outset that many of the drawings, although nowhere signed by White, were closely related to the engravings made by Theodor de Bry (who credited them to White) for the first volume of his international book series about the New World, America, published in 1590. The drawings must have been made during or after Raleigh’s
expedition to Virginia in 1585, and the text of the book consists mainly of Thomas Harriot's report from that voyage. It is the contents of this 'John White Album' that are referred to here as the 'John White versions' and abbreviated by me in the present paper to JWV. In 1865 the album was taken for sale to Sotheby's in London, where it was damaged by a warehouse fire, and even more by the water used to extinguish it. As a result many of the saturated drawings were 'offset' on to the interleaving sheets, which were subsequently separately bound. Both albums were sold to the British Museum in 1866.

It was also clear that there was a relationship between White's work and that of a Huguenot artist in Elizabethan London, Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, whose drawings of Indian life in Florida in 1564 were published by de Bry in *America, Volume II*, three years after Le Moyne's death in 1588. Paul Hulton also attributed the original watercolour *Daughter of the Picts* to Le Moyne; coincidently, it is the only Pictish subject not included in the John White album.

The Sloane volume

In about 1715 the founder of the British Museum, Sir Hans Sloane, purchased an album of drawings – apparently sold by White's descendants, and annotated as 'Mr Raughley's (Raleigh's) book' – that also clearly related to many of those by White, as mentioned above. It is this second album of drawings that are referred to here and in the relevant catalogues, as the 'Sloane volume', and its contents the 'Sloane versions', abbreviated here to SV. There is a tantalizing mixture here of drawings that are either (a) extremely similar to the John White versions; or (b) related but substantially different or (c) apparently not related at all, other than by inclusion in the same album. While some groups are decidedly inferior, others are of very comparable standard to works in the John White album.

Although Sir Hans Sloane initially thought that these were the originals, they were subsequently dismissed, often disparagingly, as copies after John White. This was the view of Hulton although he did contradict himself on occasions. A.L. Rowse refers to the Sloane drawings as 'by an unknown hand corresponding to but not copied from the original by John White' (see my conclusions, below). Some recent writers including Sloan have acknowledged that the distinction between the works attributed to White and the works in the Sloane volume is far from clear-cut. It is the questions arising from these different groups of related works that have long fascinated me and have led to the present study.

This is an inadequately brief summary of the background to these drawings and readers unfamiliar with the works mentioned above should consult the books by Hulton, Hulton and Quinn, and Sloan (cited in notes 3, 4 and 5 below). Sloan is not only comprehensive and up-to-date, but also includes reproductions of all illustrations, in colour.

Part 1: Observations on those natural history subjects by John White with corresponding works in the Sloane volume

In this part I address the question: Where are there two similar versions of a drawing, is the SV copied or derived from the JWV, or vice versa? In so doing, I emphasize that here I am specifically only considering those natural history subjects by White that have corresponding drawings in the Sloane volume: see para. 4 of the Introduction, above.

I set out below, observations on four of the corresponding pairs of drawings that seem significant to me, to demonstrate my approach. Space does not permit discussion of the rest, but they have been taken into account in my conclusions.

a) Pineapple

The SV pineapple is, while not a superb or inspired work, a very competent botanical illustration. Although a little heavy of touch it is well observed – apparently from life – and cleanly executed. There is some light green colouration and limited shading on the leaves, but the fruit is strongly formed and coloured, and depicts the lifelike irregularities of scale shape and placement on its axis. There is an assured attempt at the texture and shading of the individual scales. None of these elements is evident on the JWV. The JWV on the other hand, is clearly unfinished. I suggest the following sequence of events:

1. The artist – we are assuming White – has set out quite confidently to do a freehand copy of the SV. He has made a good oval outline on a reduced scale from the SV, (SV 282mm deep, JWV 235mm) but has placed the cut stalk on the central axis of the fruit rather than set slightly to the side as on the SV. He has also placed his fruit vertically on the paper rather than at a slight angle to the right. (Of course, neither of these amendments is ‘wrong’ in the sense of changing the botanical nature of the fruit, but they betray a somewhat automatic approach.)

2. He has noted that the scales of the pineapple follow a diamond pattern that can be used as a grid on which to base the drawing. He has drawn in a grid, but without close observation and perhaps even drawing of the individual scale outlines, he has over-confidently and prematurely started to paint in the details.

3. He has sketched in the leaves, probably largely freehand, but has not added any green. He has made a light yellowish-brown wash over the fruit. He has mixed a shade of reddish brown water/body colour, and tipped in some of the leaves following the SV, before going through the scales on the fruit painting in a series of rough but very similar cross shapes.

At this stage he has abandoned his drawing. Why? I suggest that he has now realized several points.

![Figure 1 Pineapple, John White version (left, JWV) (BM 1906.0509.1.41) and Pine Sloane version (right, SV) (BM P&D SL 5270.24r)](image-url)
a) His grid, drawn freehand with black lead (not traced – we have a change of scale from the SV drawing), but possibly ruled since the lines are very evenly spaced, is to a smaller proportion than the SV. This has given him at least a dozen extra pineapple scales to draw in. This means a lot more work, as each scale has to be observed and depicted with its own colour, perspective, light, shadow, and texture. Because of his grid he has to do about 62 of these, and has models on the SV for only 49 of them.

b) He has noticed that despite following a basic diamond grid pattern, the outline of individual scales is often quite irregular, as exemplified in the lower right area of the SV fruit. Because he has started painting, he cannot now amend his grid. Perhaps (with a foreboding familiar to botanical art students) he knows he will ‘get lost’.

c) Having started to draw in dark shadow outlines around some of the upper central scales, he has perhaps looked again at the SV and noticed that the scales do not adjoin each other directly, but are positioned in slightly raised form on the fruit surface, separated from each other in visual terms by narrow parallel light-coloured ‘valleys’ on each side. Because of his small grid there is no space to amend his drawing accordingly.

d) Because his grid is not curved at the edges of the fruit to indicate its spiral construction, he is already beginning to have trouble representing the perspective of the scales: the fruit appears very two-dimensional, and his cross-shaped brown painted markings are overly uniform and lack clarity.

I strongly suspect that on realizing these basic problems with his drawing so far, and finding that pineapples are a rather slow and tedious subject to paint, he has at this point abandoned his work, but saved it as a pretty, delicate, unfinished sketch of a novel and exotic fruit.

**Conclusion**

I would therefore argue that the SV pineapple cannot be after the JWV. It is possible that the JWV was an initial sketch for the SV which would then also be by White. According to this scenario, White would have made his initial, very formulaic sketch, with the errors described above, and then abandoned it and made the SV, a much more realistic and well-observed drawing from life.

This possibility might necessitate reconsidering all the Sloane volume drawings as being (a) by White and (b) sequentially secondary to the JWVs. At present, and given that these are preliminary observations, I believe that this is unlikely. I cannot see how any single artist could make two immediately sequential drawings that display such difference in skill. I think it is entirely possible, however, and indeed probable that the JWV is after the SV, and that the SV is therefore by a different artist.

**b) Land crab**

I note that the two drawings are the same size, so it seems very possible that one was traced from the other. If so, the fact that the JWV is on much finer paper than the SV would make it more likely that this was the traced outline.\(^{18}\)

The SV is, again, a crisp, confident, and workmanlike natural history drawing. The JWV is in his style: softer, sketchier and more stylistic. The SV is strongly coloured in pinkish-brown shades, while the JWV is only lightly coloured with pink and grey washes (oxidation of body colour may have contributed to the grey).

None of these observations would prove that the JWV is after the SV. However, I propose that the evidence lies in the indentation marking at the base of the crab’s shell. On the JWV this is virtually invisible in printed reproduction, and hard to see on the original. However the SV shows a distinctive rectangular detail of concave double scalloped lines, shaded away to indicate indentation on the shell surface.

On studying closely the original JWV it is clear that this marking has been attempted in faint black lead more than once. There are overlying lines and indentations, of disproportionate size, which appear to have been rubbed or washed out. They are not evenly and clearly depicted as in the SV. I therefore suggest that White tried to copy this marking freehand, could not get it right, and left it unfinished and almost entirely erased and disguised by the colour wash of the shell.

**Conclusion**

If the JWV were the initial drawing, this shell detail would not have been a strong enough reference for the SV to have been constructed from. Again, I can only conclude that in this case the JWV must have been copied from the SV rather than the other way round.

**c) Flying fish**

These two drawings are evidently extremely similar, and it is easy to be distracted by the water damage to the JWV and the degeneration of the silver pigment used to accentuate the fish scales and fins. Even so, I find the SV slightly more meticulous in execution – a fine scientific illustration, whose author resisted the excessive embellishment of silver fins. This suggests to me that it was the initial drawing of the two.

As they are the same size one can assume that the outline of one was traced or otherwise closely copied, from the other. I note, however, that the upper fin tip of the JWV is shorter and more rounded than the same part of the SV. I suggest that this

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**Figure 2** Land crab, John White version (upper, JWV) (BM 1906.0509.1.56) and Sloane version (lower, SV) (BM P&D Sl, 5270.16d)
SV puffer fish is therefore the initial drawing of the two.

Conclusions to Part 1
Space does not permit me to consider here, each of the other pairs of drawings in this group (natural history drawings with corresponding subjects in the Sloane volume). The similarities and differences between some pairs of drawings are extremely subtle, making it difficult to say which one of each pair was made first. In the examples given above, however, I would argue that the Sloane versions were made before the White versions, rather than after as has been widely assumed.

There are several other pairs of corresponding drawings in this group, where this seems to me the probable sequence.

There are other pairs that are indeterminate – either being virtually identical, or of equal skill – where either drawing might have been made after its equivalent in the other album.

I can see no definite evidence, however, of a SV having been copied or adapted from the equivalent JWV. I therefore conclude that John White copied the ‘Sloane version’ of all the drawings in this group.

What other possibilities remain?
Several writers have raised the possibility that there were other, intermediary, drawings related to those outlined above, that have not survived; and that the versions in the John White album and the Sloane volume are actually originals of, or copied from, versions we have never seen. This clearly cannot be proved or disproved. Also it would not change the sequence of copying in those corresponding pairs of drawings discussed above. 21

It seems unlikely to me that some drawings were copied in one sequence (SV–JWV) and some the other way (JWV–SV). Apart from the stylistic differences, the versions in either album are on noticeably different paper supports. The JWVs are on a finer paper, which could have been used to trace an initial outline from the heavier, handmade SV paper. Nor does it seem likely that both versions were made by the same artist, although at this stage I would not rule it out completely. Firstly, the style of these White drawings is consistent with other works attributed to him; it is quite distinct from many of the Sloane works in this category, although very close in other cases, e.g. the flying fish.

Conclusion
Again, while the JWV could have been copied from the SV according to this scenario, the opposite seems impossible. The slight truncation is due to the JWV paper having been cut a little too short for the tracing, so White had to round off this top fin to get it on the sheet. Given such precise copying in this case, I think that if the SV had been traced from the JWV the top fin would have been equally rounded.

It could be that the paper was subsequently cut very close to the picture, as has happened elsewhere, but that would not explain the slight variation in fin shape. The blues on both these versions are so similar to the eye that it would be interesting to know if they are chemically identical: suggesting that a) it was the same artist, b) the artists were working alongside each other or c) using the same pigment mixture at different dates.

Conclusion
Again, although these two drawings are extremely similar, I would argue on the basis of the above observations that the JWV is after the SV.

d) Puffer fish

The JWV at 159mm long is shorter than the 188mm SV, and is reversed.

The execution of the JWV is distinctly sketchy, with uncharacteristically rough brush markings across the back of the fish. The outline perspective of the head and the placement of the fins are slightly wrong, so they appear to come directly out of the corner of the fish’s eyes (one being hidden of course). There is also sketchy shading under the lower jaw of the fish in the JWV, rather than the evenly graduated shading of the SV. These are minor and essentially insignificant differences.

The markings on the back of the JWV, however, are distinctly different from the SV where they are neatly delineated. I suspect that White was looking too quickly from the SV to his copy and drew in the main oval shape towards the right side of the fish body of the fish, as it appears in the SV; realized it was wrongly placed on the mirror image, and then tried to replicate the other markings in reverse; finding this impossible, he finished his drawing to a rather indecisive and scruffy standard. As with the pineapple (see above) White realized that he had made mistakes which would not allow him to produce a good copy.

Conclusion
Again, while the JWV could have been copied from the SV according to this scenario, the opposite seems impossible. The
Secondly, I believe that if one artist was making both versions, errors such as those described above would not have occurred: an artist competent enough to make the SV pineapple (first in sequence) would be able to make an equally competent copy if required.

This leads, of course, to some very interesting possibilities regarding the authorship of the Sloane versions, and the reasons and circumstances for this sequence of work. One might also ask why some of the copies are so much better than others. I have considered several scenarios and no doubt others will arise from further study of other groups of these works.

One suggestion is that White was learning his craft by the traditional method of copying. His somewhat sketchy approach indicates that he was new to scientific illustration and the rigours of precise observation and depiction. He may also have been new to miniaturism. He was evidently a quick learner and an excellent copyist. It seems possible that he was working very closely with, and learning from, a professional artist specializing in this type of work.

We know that Thomas Harriot was a meticulous scientist; was on this voyage with White; would already have known White through his service to Raleigh and is known to have worked with painters—limners—at other stages of his life. The artist of the Sloane versions might have been a skilled professional 'scientific' artist, perhaps trained by and working for Harriot. Of course there is no evidence to support this, other than a limner being mentioned in Harriot's will.22 Was there another artist on the 1585 voyage? Or was White working with another, immediately after the voyage, either to make copies for his patrons or to prepare work for de Bry's publication?

One must also consider the significant possibility acknowledged by Kim Sloan23: that the Sloane versions might actually have been drawn by John White, and that the collection attributed to White since the 18th century is by someone else. If this were so, however, it would raise problems with other groups of the works, for example the Indian engravings by de Bry (America, Volume I), which he clearly acknowledges as White's; the relevant originals of which are stylistically similar to the JW works discussed here and which were found in the same album of work. However, there are related 'Indian' works in the Sloane volume, apparently by a different hand. It is a tantalizing puzzle.

Part 2: An analysis of copying in the watercolours of Picts and Britons

Introduction

Many readers will be aware that at the end of America, Volume I (1590) the publisher Theodor de Bry included a section containing five engravings of human subjects, three of which were described as ancient Picts and two as ancient Britons. His introduction and captions explain that in the distant past, ‘we’ Europeans were once as savage as ‘they’—the American Indians that form the main part of the book, based on White's drawings. In the Charlemont album of White's watercolours (see introduction to Part 1, above) there were five drawings, three related to the engravings of Pictish subjects and two Britons. A further 'Pictish' subject related to the engraving of the Daughter of the Picts was subsequently discovered, a stunning miniature painting on vellum that was attributed by Hulton24 to Jacques Le Moyne on the grounds of its botanical artistry. This attribution was more recently questioned by Christian Feest.25

Since different writers have referred to these figures by different titles, I am naming them as closely as possible to the titles of de Bry’s engravings.26 I have tried to reduce confusing verbiage where possible by abbreviating these titles within the diagram captions. Unless specified as ‘engraving’ the titles refer to the original artworks.

The material on the following pages was put together by myself alone out of my own interest, working with a computer and scanned images. It was because of copying one of these onto thin paper that I noticed that Warrior Pict with Severed Head and Pict with Spear were not only similar but mirror-image identical. Based on accurately sized copies, I made transparencies and was quickly able to find many more instances in the Pictish paintings where copying was possible or even likely. I do not think that this amount of correspondence is accidental.

In looking at the Pictish series, I raise the question: who might have made these drawings, in what sequence, and what is the evidence of copying?

a) Style and skill

In the case of the Pictish drawings, the quality of imagination is a major factor in what are otherwise intended to be accurate and ‘scientific documentary’ illustrations. The significance of artistic imagination in creating icons of prehistory has been explored by Moser,27 Smiles28 and others. The Pictish paintings are significant examples, which have helped to create a whole genre of visual imagery, lasting several centuries. The imagination, flair and artistic skill exhibited in Warrior Pict with Severed Head seem to me to have very little in common with other drawings attributed to White, such as the costume studies or the domestic studies of Indians in Virginia.

b) Errors

A fundamental aspect of my observations of the work attributed to John White, particularly evident in this group of his works, concerns what I believe to be his use of metallic white body colour to obscure minor errors in his work (see following diagrams). Time has revealed these cover-ups by oxidizing the paint to appear black or grey.

Coincidentally in the present circumstances, this technique in artwork is often called ‘whiting-out’. It is sometimes seen as a lazy and unprofessional technique. In particular, artists preparing text and illustrations in publishing houses for printing made use of this technique, since the error was never going to be seen in the printed version. (This has of course been superseded by computerized printing in the past couple of decades. Even its more recent comparable application in products such as Tipp-Ex® is now falling into disuse.)

In the case of the Pictish drawings, I have considered whether the oxidized markings on the drawings are indeed cover-up errors due to hasty and careless copying.

c) Possible copying methods in the 16th century

Although I am no expert on drawing and copying methods of that time, it is well known that copying, both by tracing and freehand, was extremely widespread. The Pictish originals by
White are on a fine paper support, which would permit tracing of outlines especially if held up to a good light. I have also tested the reflection method (holding a glass sheet at right angles to the original and ‘tracing’ the mirror image) and found it to be surprisingly accurate and easy. Of course it also leaves no mark or damage to the original drawing. Also, once one has both a drawing outline and a reversed (mirror image) copy of it, one has a versatile template for putting together elements in different combinations.

**Diagrams**

Since it is easier to express my ideas visually at this stage, there follows a selection of my diagrams and captions using scanned copies of published versions of the Pictish drawings. My own conclusions to date, based on this research, follow this Diagram section.

**The six Pictish original watercolours**

- A Young Daughter of the Picts attributed to Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, c. 1585, watercolor and gouache, touched with gold, on parchment (The Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1981.25.2646)
- Warrior Pict with Severed Head, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.24)
- Pict with Spear, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.26)
- Pictish Woman, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.27)
- British Woman, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.25)
- British Man, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.28)
Diagram 1: Creation of template from Warrior Pict with Severed Head

1a) Warrior Pict with Severed Head, John White (BM 1906.0509.1.24)

1c) Tracing reversed

1d) Tracing superimposed on Pict with Spear, John White, (BM 1906.0509.1.26). The tracing aligns perfectly either on the upper body (as shown here) or lower body, suggesting that the artist paused and moved the template slightly before continuing his tracing, using the navel/belt as a reference point.

Diagram 2: Left arm of Pict with Spear compared with right forearm of Warrior Pict with Severed Head

2a) Right hand of Warrior grasping the Severed Head

2b) Tracing of right hand of Warrior, reversed, superimposed on left hand of Pict with Spear; only the thumb and two fingers can be traced, because in the original, the hand is holding the Severed Head and is obscured by hair.

2c) Detail of forearm of Pict with Spear, showing rather ill-defined representation of hand and shield handle. The shadow on the edge of the shield does not correspond with normal lighting or with the shadow underneath the forearm; the fingers and the shield handles have not been completed; and the end of the sword handle has been painted in so lightly that the artist has had to add a coarse dark line to differentiate it from the edge of the shield.
Diagram 3: Pictish Woman torso and arms compared with tracings of Warrior Pict with Severed Head

3a) Pictish Woman, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.27) with tracing of Warrior, Fig 1b, superimposed. Note correlation of head, left arm, shoulder, and left side of torso. There is a strong correspondence in the head, left shoulder, upper left arm, and left line of torso, between the Pictish Woman and a tracing of Warrior (outlined). In fact, the only part of Pictish Woman that could not have been traced from templates of Warrior and Pict with Spear is her right foot (see Diagram 5).

3b) Right arm of Pictish Woman with tracing of left arm of Warrior (verso) superimposed and addition of thicker dark paint (highlighted with red circles). The wide masculine arm of Warrior has been ‘slimmed down’ at elbow level by the addition of thicker dark painted hair (see red circle). The hand, of course, has had to be replaced by a right hand, which is in fact an almost exact tracing of her left hand, i.e., the left hand of Pict with Spear (see Diagram 4). Similarly the broad torso line of Warrior has been reduced to create a more feminine waistline, by the addition of thicker dark paint within the hair (see red circle).

Diagram 4: Arm of Pictish Woman compared with tracings of other Pictish drawings

4a) Note that on the original of Pictish Woman there is a ‘whited-out’ error at the elbow, which has oxidized to leave a black mark.

4b) Note corresponding tracings from Warrior Pict with Severed Head (black outline) and its mirror image, Pict with Spear (red outline). It can be seen that the Warrior tracing corresponds exactly to the torso line, neck and upper arm of Pictish Woman, while the Pict with Spear tracing corresponds to the forearm and wrist. The careless addition of the latter forearm section could have left an overlapping pencil line, which the artist obscured with a flick of body colour (white). This would not have been noticeable at the time.

4c) Detail of A Young Daughter of the Picts attributed to Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (The Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, 81981.25.2646) (see complete image above, p. 90, and author’s conclusions below)

4d) The tracing of the left forearm of Pictish Woman (green outline) and of Daughter of the Picts (blue outline) coincide exactly except for the different hand positions. However I suggest that given the problems of copying from the Daughter original (see my conclusions, below) the copying was probably as indicated in 4b.
Diagram 5: Legs of Pictish Woman compared with those of Warrior Pict with Severed Head

There are close correspondences between the legs of Pictish Woman and Warrior. Where they correspond there are coincidentally several 'whited-out' marks, now oxidized to appear black.

5a) Left leg of Pictish Woman with tracing of left leg of Warrior superimposed. Note red circles to highlight: the 'whited-out' error on left thigh corresponding to superimposed position of Warrior leg; the 'whited-out' mark at the back of the left calf of Pictish Woman, where the calf line of Warrior may have been slimmed down to suit a female subject; and the messy painting of her left foot toes, where the artist has tried to reduce the excessively large masculine foot by painting over the drawn outline of the toes with body colour (now oxidized) and adding a smaller set of toes on top.

5b) Right leg of Pictish Woman with tracing of right leg of Warrior superimposed. If the right leg of Pictish Woman had followed the traced Warrior leg exactly, her right foot would have been somewhat unnaturally turned out, so an alternative had to be found. Is the right foot of Pictish Woman original, or have we seen it somewhere before?

5c) Compare the lower leg of The wyfe of an Herowan of Secotan, John White (BM 1906,0509.1.18). This original is also the same size as Pictish Woman. This is much more in White's usual style, with its jaunty big toe. Indeed if White had already added this right leg copied from the female Indian subject, he may have subsequently adjusted the toes on the left foot (see 5a) to match the right foot and look less masculine.

Diagram 6: Indian Werowance or Chief compared with tracing of Warrior Pict with Severed Head

6a) An Indian Werowance or Chief (BM 1906,0509.1.12) superimposed with a tracing of Warrior Pict with Severed Head. As can be seen, both originals are the same size. It is apparent that the image has been rather hastily traced; the tracing aligns with the figure either on the upper body (above left) or the legs, suggesting that the template tracing was moved possibly several times against the paper. Again, the navel has been used more or less as a reference point. Much less care, however, was taken with this tracing than Pict with Spear, which suggests that this was a later and sloppier derivation from the Warrior template.

6b) If the left arm tracing of Warrior is rotated it fits the right arm of the Chief fairly closely. This, however, would also have been easy to draw in freehand. Given that the Chief is clearly derived from Warrior Pict with Severed Head, it seems likely that the tattoo/body paint designs of the Chief are also derived from Warrior and the subsequent Pictish paintings.
Conclusions to Part 2

I must emphasize again that my studies and the ideas arising from them, are entirely personal and that these are essentially preliminary findings concerning only the groups of work discussed here. They may be subject to development and change in the light of further exploration of these and other groups of work. I have based my conclusions on diagrammatic research, of which several examples are offered above. The evidence may be interpreted in different ways by others, and I welcome alternative points of view in the interests of answering the questions around the works of John White and his contemporaries.

Errors and copying: an inescapable link

I believe that the oxidized body-colour markings on the Pictish originals attributed to John White indicate places where the artist 'whited-out' or covered up an error of drawing, probably unwanted lines of black lead or pencil (graphite). In a few places he may have used a black pigment for the same purpose, e.g. in hair (see Diagram 3 above). It would therefore seem that White made some drawing errors and did not use an eraser (I do not know at what time erasers came into use).

In general, I have observed that drawings attributed to White frequently show the use of this kind of 'whiting-out' of errors. The oxidized markings often occur where inaccurate tracing or other forms of copying, might have caused unwanted lines. These two elements – copying and 'whiting-out' of errors – would therefore appear to be connected.

I acknowledge that there are exceptions to this rule that warrant further study. By contrast, however, I have yet to see any picture attributed to Jacques Le Moyne in which an error has been covered with body colour. He has used body colour on subjects, such as pale flowers, where it has oxidized, but never to cover any errors. Likewise I note there are no 'whited-out' marks on the corresponding Sloane volume drawings.

Sequence

The above studies and diagrams suggest to me that White made a traced outline copy of Warrior Pict with Severed Head, and used it as the template for the rest of the Pictish drawings (except Daughter of the Picts – see 1, below); and at least one of the Indian subjects (see 7, below).

Because copies tend to degenerate and become more careless with repetition, and since little fresh imagination seems to have been brought into play since Warrior, I believe that this drawing was the first of the series of Pictish subjects made by White.

We have noted, however, that one original did not appear in this album, i.e., the Daughter of the Picts attributed to Jacques Le Moyne (see Introduction to Part 2, above). I believe that the Daughter preceded Warrior and the rest of the group. In the circumstances I am extending the discussion to include this painting.

Number 1: Daughter of the Picts

Although this paper is concerned with a series of drawings by White, inevitably one must begin the sequence by considering a drawing that has never seriously been attributed to him. Based on the above research I suggest that Daughter of the Picts was the first of the sequence, and was painted by Jacques Le Moyne, as asserted by Hulton. While acknowledging expert reservations about this painting, I have studied this original as well as other works by Le Moyne, and would agree with Hulton that it is indeed by Le Moyne.

Of course questions remain about this painting, such as that it includes a background – unlike the other Pictish subjects – that is very similar to the relevant engraving in America, Volume I. One possibility is that that the background might have been added to the original after the engraving – for various reasons – perhaps by Le Moyne, or de Bry, or more likely (to my mind) by White, after Le Moyne's death. Alternatively, although White rarely included backgrounds to his figures, we have no evidence that Le Moyne did not.

No drawing relating to the relevant engraving in America, Volume I was included in White's album of drawings. Perhaps significantly in the light of the above research, the original Daughter of the Picts is of similar size to the other Pictish originals, but larger than the relevant engraving. As it is on a relatively opaque vellum support it might not have been suitable for tracing, although it could have been copied by techniques such as the reflection method mentioned above. I do not think it was used as a template, although there are correspondences with the other Pictish drawings, e.g. the left arm of Pictish Woman (see Diagram 4 above). The different restrictions of painting on vellum versus paper should also be considered.

If we accept that the original Daughter of the Picts is by Le Moyne, we must assume that it was made first in the Pictish sequence, as Le Moyne died in 1588. After Le Moyne's death, and with the rest of the Pictish originals for America, Volume I supplied by White, de Bry would have had no need to confuse his readers by crediting one original to Le Moyne but all the rest to White. I suggest that he compensated for this omission by the singular praise he included in his caption: ‘... this present picture a thinge trewilly worthie of admiration’ – surely de Bry was referring to this amazing original painting by Le Moyne, rather than to his own engraving, which is of comparable quality to the others. In his introduction to the book, headed ‘To the gentle Reader’, de Bry enthusiastically anticipates publishing Le Moyne's drawings in the next volume in the America series: suggesting again the superior quality of Le Moyne's work. We may also recall that de Bry and Le Moyne were united by their devout Huguenot beliefs.

What if the Daughter of the Picts is not the original by Le Moyne, but is an extremely skilled later version (but not a direct copy) after the relevant engraving? One must then postulate a further (unknown) painting of equivalent standard by Le Moyne or someone else (but presumably not White since the original would then have been with his other Pictish originals), made at the right time and place to be used for the engraving in America, Volume I. One must also postulate, if not White or Le Moyne, a third, (unknown) artist of the Daughter who despite doing such fine work, left no record of his identity. The simplest solution certainly seems attractive.

One might also ask if Daughter of the Picts is by Le Moyne, why did he not do the others? I would suggest that Le Moyne was known to be expensive (he knew he was good, and was used to high-level patronage); this painting would have taken a long time to complete – perhaps too long for de Bry, who was hungry for originals to engrave for his great book, and perhaps...
too expensive for the backers of the enterprise. We also know that Le Moyne died in 1588 during the preparation period for America, Volume I; he may have been ill before then, and physically unable to do more.

Finally, Daughter of the Picts and Warrior Pict with Severed Head make a superb pair: entirely different but complementary; iconographic of gender; imaginative, detailed, and stunningly original in approach. Perhaps that is what they were intended to be – a couple, male and female Pictish archetypes, by a single artist.

Number 2: Warrior Pict with Severed Head
I consider that Warrior was the second Pictish drawing completed in the sequence, and the source of all the following subjects. This accomplished painting is of a confident Mannerist style, with detail and imagination that complement Daughter of the Picts but has nothing in common with other paintings by White. It is clear that the body ornamentation design owes basic elements to the drawing of ancient Britons by another Huguenot artist, Lucas de Heere, but de Heere was dead by this time so cannot be the Warrior artist. The sheer wit of the cross-eyed owl motif on the Warrior’s chest is unmatched in White’s work, but has some affinity with the owl in Le Moyne’s book La Clef des Champs.

It seems clear that since the original Warrior was included in White’s album, on similar fine laid paper and offset by water damage like the others, it was indeed painted by White. I can only suggest, however, that it was either copied from a lost original probably by Le Moyne, (but see reservations above) or that Le Moyne made a drawing that was very carefully copied and/or coloured by White. There are no ‘whited-out’ errors in this original and all the brushwork is perfect. White evidently took extreme pains over this drawing.

Numbers 3–6: The other ‘Pictish’ subjects
White, however, clearly had less imagination and patience than Le Moyne. In continuing further images of Picts – presumably at the request of de Bry – I believe he adapted and copied first Pict with Spear and then Pictish Woman. As I have shown above, Pict with Spear is an almost exact copy of Warrior, which is perhaps why de Bry only borrowed the spear element of it to incorporate into the Warrior engraving for America, Volume I. Pictish Woman is becoming quite careless in its execution, with several ‘whited-out’ errors, and the body decorations are becoming dilute with repeated adaptation.

It is also obvious that the female subjects, Pictish Woman and British Woman, are very masculine in their appearance due to having been derived from the masculine template Warrior Pict with Severed Head.

Using the above-mentioned templates, I suggest that White subsequently drew British Man and British Woman, although to save space I have not included them in the examples provided here. There are obvious correspondences with the Warrior tracing, and several examples of ‘whiting out’ of errors. Lacking images of body paint and given only rudimentary clothing (the line of the bodice of British Woman corresponds to the traced pectoral line of Warrior, for example), they do not show any particular imagination or originality. Indeed I suggest this is why de Bry changed these drawings so much for the equivalent engravings in America, Volume I.

Number 7: An Indian Werowance or Chief
Finally, it seems likely that the image of the Indian Werowance or Chief was derived, probably last in this sequence, from the Warrior template. The markings on his lower legs are evidently adapted from those on the thighs of Warrior, and the vague circles on his chest and shoulders may owe some inspiration to the second figure in the drawing by de Heere mentioned above. There is little doubt in my mind that the Indian Chief was drawn and painted later than the Pictish paintings, and after the 1585 voyage to Virginia; it was not painted from life. It may have been made in England to augment de Bry’s publication, or even derived from the corresponding figure in the Sloane volume. I have not, however, had an opportunity to research this group of works at this stage.

Notes
1 A note on terms: these are somewhat subjective but broadly speaking, a botanical artist follows similar constraints of precise observation and technical accuracy to those required by a botanical illustrator, but with a decorative rather than a specific scientific purpose. A flower painter’s work may be much more subjective and interpretative, even impressionistic, and is not bound by scientific accuracy.

In common with the terminology of the time, and many books since then, I refer to ‘Indians’ rather than ‘Native Americans’.

2 It is believed that the America series of books by Theodor de Bry, starting with the volume illustrated by John White and discussed here, was the earliest instance of international publishing of large illustrated non-fiction books.

3 Le Moyne was artist and mapmaker to the 1564 French expedition to Florida led by Laudonnière, which was routed by the Spanish. He became a superb botanical artist in France and later in London where he died in 1588. See P. Hulton, The Work of Jacques le Moyne de Morgues, London, 1977.


8 Hulton, supra n. 4.

9 T. Harriot, A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia, by Theodor de Bry, Frankfurt, 1590; see also 1972 facsimile Dover ed., N.Y., with an introduction by P. Hulton.

10 In the present paper I have not referred to the offset album, although I naturally took its contents into account when researching the works discussed here. It provides, however, a useful guide to which are the works currently attributed to John White.

11 Hulton, 1977, supra n. 3.

12 Miniature on vellum, in the Paul Mellon collection at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.

13 Hulton, 1964 and 1984, supra n. 5.

14 A.L. Rowe, The First Colonists: Hackhuyt’s Voyages to North America, London, 1986. Despite acknowledging a different authorship of White/Sloane volume drawings, Rowe does not speculate as to the identity of a possible second artist, or to the possible sequence of drawings, or to evidence of copying.

15 Sloan, supra n. 4, 224ff.

16 Hulton, 1964, supra n. 5: JWV no. 11a, SV 11b; Hulton, 1984, supra n. 5: JWV plate 11, SV fig. 64; Sloan, supra n. 4: JWV cat. no. 41, SV fig. 116.

17 Hulton, 1964, supra n. 5: JWV no. 5a, SV 5b; Hulton, 1984, supra n. 5: JWV no. 5, SV fig. 55; Sloan, supra n. 4: JWV cat. no. 58, SV fig. 133.

18 I am aware there are other possibilities regarding copying that
cannot be entered into here.

19 Hulton, 1964, supra n. 5; JWV no. 27a, SV 27b; Hulton, 1984, supra n. 5; JWV no. 27, SV fig. 61; Sloan, supra n. 4: JWV cat. no. 48, SV fig. 124.

20 Hulton, 1964, supra n. 5; JWV no. 100a, SV 100b; Hulton, 1984, supra n. 5: JWV no. 54, SV fig. 53a; Sloan, supra n. 4: JWV cat. no. 53, SV fig. 127.

21 This possibility becomes much more significant when considering the drawings by White that have no corresponding equivalent in the Sloane volume. This is a category that I have not yet had the opportunity to study, either on its own or in relation to the White/Sloane corpus as a whole.

22 Sloan, supra n. 4, 37.

23 Sloan, supra n. 4, 225.

24 Hulton, 1977, supra n. 3.


26 All the figures are reproduced in colour in Sloan, supra n. 4.

27 Moser, supra n. 7.


29 Hulton, 1977, supra n. 3.

30 Hulton, 1984, supra n. 5, 18. Hulton suggests ‘de Bry may well have taken away drawings of Picts by both artists in 1588 and without realising his error, attributed Le Moyne’s figures to White’. I suggest that such confusion would have been even less likely at the time than it is today. I believe that de Bry and Le Moyne understood each other very well and that the ‘delay’ in publishing Le Moyne’s work second when it chronologically came first, was not due to any resistance by Le Moyne, as has been suggested elsewhere, (other than, perhaps, a desire for appropriate payment) but to the lucrative attention of Raleigh, Hakluyt and the backers of the colonization movement for Virginia, promoting the account of Harriot and White.

31 ‘The same with divers other things of chiefest importance are lively drawn in colours at your no small charges by the skilful painter James Morgues’ from Hakluyt’s letter to Raleigh, 1 May 1587; (my emphasis).

32 This difference of style and skill between Warrior Pict with Severed Head and other work attributed to White is so marked that it drew me to study the correspondence between the work of White and Le Moyne in the first place, more than six years ago. I still cannot believe that a man who could, for example, paint (or even copy?) an image of an Indian girl with two right feet, (see Sloan, supra n. 4, cat. no. 18, 130–1) could envisage and produce a painting of the dynamism, flair, detail and wit of Warrior Pict with Severed Head.

33 De Heere, ‘Les premiers anglais’, watercolour drawing from costume book Theatre de tous les peuples et Nations de la terre, MS 2466, Ghent, 1577; see Hulton, 1964, supra n. 5 and Moser, supra n. 7.

34 One of the only three extant copies of this book is held in The British Museum Prints & Drawings Department.

35 I am bearing in mind that at the time de Bry was preparing America, Volume I, containing only 23 illustrations by White including a map, he had already seen at least 48 detailed and vivid colour paintings by Le Moyne associated with the Laudonnière voyage of 1564, together with a long written account and captions, which de Bry was anticipating publishing. Sadly Le Moyne’s death in 1588 preceded the publication.