

may dry up. Burne-Jones cannot have been unmindful of this drive and it is easy to understand the thrill and enthusiasm he put into drawing cartoons at home in the evenings (FIG. 4), moving deftly from one project to the next during those periods of his collaboration with Morris and Co. when they were inundated with projects. His windows chronicle the virtuoso skills he developed over time, dealing with the most complex fenestration and traceries and rarely repeating himself (beyond the obvious commercial duplications), bringing fertile uninhibited vivacity to this ancient form of art. It is worth noting that Burne-Jones and the medium of photography are almost exactly the same age, and as I think of photography as being synonymous with modernity, it is natural therefore that I see Burne-Jones as the first modern artist.

Martin Harrison

'Pure gold, clear as glass': Burne-Jones in transition and the Lyndhurst New Jerusalem

As a student at the Royal Academy, about 1867, Christopher Whall heard of Burne-Jones as 'a strange unknown artist, who wouldn't exhibit his pictures, but who had done some queer new kind of stained-glass windows at Lyndhurst'.¹ Whall became a great admirer of Burne-Jones, whose two windows at St Michael and All Angels, Lyndhurst (1862-63) had long been considered among Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s (the Firm) finest early designs. However, despite their general appreciation, and reasonably extensive bibliography, several aspects of their design and execution warrant further attention. The thirty-five year collaboration between Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris was founded on their mutual respect for one another's gifts, and Morris interpreted Burne-Jones's designs with acute sympathy. Yet from the inception of the Firm in April 1861 its design precepts were not entirely in accord with Burne-Jones's evolving creative imagination: Lyndhurst's East window signalled this divergence.

Conceived while the Firm's inaugural glazing scheme at Selsey was still in progress, Burne-Jones's design for the East window at Lyndhurst was the first to eschew the 'banded' layout that Morris and Philip Webb deeply admired in the early 14th-century windows in the nave of Merton College Chapel, Oxford. This idiom, which comprised richly-coloured figure panels set on pale quarry grounds, dominated the Firm's output, in infinite variations, throughout the 1860s. But at Lyndhurst Burne-Jones announced his inclination, given the freedom from external constraints and in an architectural context that provided the latitude, to depart more radically from medieval precedent than his colleagues Morris and Webb would have contemplated.

Morris and Burne-Jones had been contemporaries at Oxford, where they avidly consumed John Ruskin's seminal multi-volume epics on art and architecture, *The Stones of Venice* and *Modern Painters*. Shortly after moving to London in 1855 Burne-Jones met Ruskin; they became firm friends, the eminent critic in effect vying with Rossetti to be Burne-Jones's chief artistic mentor. But in the late-1850s Ruskin was rethinking his views on art, and coming to terms with the light, colour and humanism of Veronese prompted his vaunted 'unconversion' from his evangelical upbringing. In one of his mandarin aesthetic shifts he declared that he no longer wanted 'stiffness and quaintness and intensity' but 'classical grace and tranquility'; worried about his rôle in disseminating 'this fatal medievalism', in 1858 he complained to G. F. Watts of being 'sickened of all Gothic by Rossetti's clique'.² In 1859 Burne-Jones made his first, epochal tour of Italy. Ruskin, who sponsored the young artist, was anxious to divert him from the baleful influence of medieval 'quaintness' and armed him with advice on where to go and which painters to study. Burne-Jones's enraptured physical encounters with the works of the Renaissance masters transformed the course of his art.

Burne-Jones's second visit to Italy was the tour through the north of the country he took with Ruskin in 1862. Several months before departing in May 1862 he had completed a preliminary sketch for the Lyndhurst window (FIG. 1). But the design underwent extensive modifications and there are compelling reasons to believe that the figural groups were reconceived in response to influences he had absorbed under Ruskin's guidance. The willowy angels that rather sparsely occupy their landscape

settings in the first design were replaced by hieratic and often frontal representations, with more naturalistic physiognomies, in a much tighter overall composition. The revisions attest to both Burne-Jones's aptitude for the tectonic incorporation of Biblical subjects in a large and complicated field and his incipient withdrawal from medievalism.

Burne-Jones's principal pictorial reference for the original *vidimus* was Fra Angelico's *Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven* (c.1423-24; National Gallery, London); the predella panel to the high altarpiece at St Domenico, Fiesole, it had been acquired for the nation, along with four other sections of the altarpiece, in 1860 (FIG. 2). The *Court of Heaven* concept, which elides the New Testament (Hebrews 13) and Old Testament narratives of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21), was the overarching theme of the iconography of Lyndhurst church. Burne-Jones, on the other hand, liked to think of his design as a kind of Paradise, although it may be significant that the *vidimus* had the title 'Courts of Heaven' appended to its mount at a later date.³ Presumably Burne-Jones was aware of the incorporation in Fra Angelico's painting of St Michael (Revelation 12), since his presence has a specific relevance to the dedication of Lyndhurst church.

In the Lyndhurst window as executed in 1863, the fundamental transformation in the figural groups – their Luini-like grandeur and grace – persuasively argues for the alterations having been effected after Burne-Jones's return from Italy at the end of July 1862 (FIG. 3).⁴ In Milan, Ruskin and his protégé had worked side-by-side in the church of San Maurizio, copying Bernardino Luini's frescoes. Ruskin's copy of Luini's *St Catherine*, nearly two metres high, remained on display in the Drawing School he established in Oxford until 1968, and Burne-Jones's finished copies of *St Apollonia* and *St Agatha* are now in the Royal Cornwall Museum. Ruskin believed that Luini represented 'the best central type of the highly trained Italian manner',⁵ and he co-opted his paintings to his strategy of diverting Burne-Jones towards the Italian High Renaissance. Burne-Jones, who later said of Luini 'nothing is like him anywhere for perfect beauty',⁶ was duly captivated, and his more solid anatomies and rounded facial types, while sweetened and assimilated into his individual style, promptly reflected the adjustment. The lessons of Luini were equally apparent in Burne-Jones's easel paintings, for example *Fair Rosamund* (1863) and *Cinderella* (1863), but Ruskin's ideal of beauty as diffused through the example of the 16th-century Milanese master was probably first manifested in stained glass, at Lyndhurst: with Burne-Jones, painting and stained glass (and, at this time, tiles and embroidery) invariably proceeded symbiotically (FIG. 4). In his Oxford Drawing School Ruskin symbolised his triumph as artistic catalyst by positioning of his own copy of Luini's *St Catherine* next to two drawings by Burne-Jones, *Love Bringing Back Alcestis from the Grave*, and *The Two Wives of Jason*, in order to demonstrate 'dignity and purity of conception, and the best examples I can give of the forms of highest art which I think should be held, for standard, and scope, by English students'.⁷

Although the more pronounced formalism that distinguishes the New Jerusalem would become axiomatic in Burne-Jones's subsequent stained glass designs, the advice of Morris and Webb in the lateral and vertical balancing of the individual panels in the amended arrangement cannot be ruled out. The originality of the Firm's stained glass was recognized by a few of the more perceptive contemporary critics, for example the architect James Fowler, who observed, 'both in spirit and execution it is essentially modern'.⁸ The architect of the striking polychromatic fantasy at Lyndhurst was William White, and his eccentric tracery posed the problem of a complex field that Burne-Jones negotiated with great ingenuity. Two tiers of angels and apostles on foliate grounds dominate the three breadth, main lancets, while etiolated, formalised seraphim, standing on wheels in the manner of the 15th-century musician angels in the Beauchamp Chapel, Warwick, occupy the four, problematically

narrow, intermediate openings (interestingly, Burne-Jones had not adopted the wheel device in the earlier design). Six of the eight trefoiled tracery lights depict musician angels, the others *Sol* and *Luna*.⁹ The musical theme extends to the sinister and dexter main lights, in which the angels carry portable organs, citerns and harps. To the detriment of the window's pictorial unity, a symbol of the Trinity, designed, like all the subsidiary openings, by Webb, was substituted for the *Christ in Majesty* Burne-Jones had proposed for the centre of the tracery lights. All the subjects are clearly legible from a distance, evincing, in comparison with the crowding of some of his earlier figural groupings, Burne-Jones's more assured handling of the disposition of figures in space. The implied movement of the figures in the lateral lights serves to direct the gaze upwards, and is in sharp contrast with the more static drawing of Morris and Webb.

Although William White would have been acquainted with Burne-Jones through their membership of the Medieval Society and the Hogarth Club, he seems to have played no part in the glazing of the East window. It was Frederick Leighton (also a member of the *erstwhile* Hogarth Club), while engaged on his impressive spirit fresco of the *Wise and Foolish Virgins* below the East window at Lyndhurst in 1861-62, who recommended the incumbent, the Rev. John Compton, Rural Dean and Rector of Minstead, to commission Burne-Jones.¹⁰ Charles Sumner, the elderly, evangelical Bishop of Winchester, had opposed Leighton's fresco, partly on liturgical grounds, but Compton united the parish and carried the day: the introduction of avant-garde art into churches was not a foregone conclusion, as Burne-Jones would find at Lyndhurst. The chronology of Burne-Jones's two designs can be established from contemporary sources. Evidently Burne-Jones had sent the *vidimus* to Leighton before 15 January 1862, when he wrote to Compton about it, and a design for 'Leighton's window' appears in his account book with Morris immediately preceding his fee for attendance at meetings up to 31 March 1862.¹¹ He started to charge for the full-size cartoons for the tracery lights of window on 10 August 1862, and supplied the main figure groups in December 1862.

John Compton had initially suggested the iconographic convention of a crucifixion for the East window, but Burne-Jones countered that it would be difficult to reconcile this subject with the interruption of six intermediate mullions and proposed instead the more flexible New Jerusalem theme. The central compartments of the main lights, he told Compton, 'I should make Paradise itself with a thick crowd of the Blessed, nimbus behind nimbus, both men and women (some such figures as you find in Angelico's pictures)',¹² diverting to a residual but significant Fra Angelico element that was retained in the final version (SEE FIGS. 2, 4). Burne-Jones seldom discussed the thinking behind his designs with clients,¹³ but here he was referring to the isocephalic and jugate arrangements that would become a cardinal element in his repertory; these, it should be noted, had been prefigured in several of his designs executed by James Powell & Sons between 1857 and 1860.

Philip Webb's portrayal of the gates of the heavenly city in the cusps of the main lights are as effective as Burne-Jones's figures, if not exactly congruent with their gracefulness; they anticipate the even bolder 'Reformed Gothic' canopies he designed for Bloxham church, in 1869. Since Burne-Jones no longer supplied coloured cartoons, Morris's inestimable contribution stemmed from the simplified geometry of his lead-lines and sensitivity as a colourist. His juxtaposition of the predominating white glasses with passages of apple and olive greens, muted flashed rubies, a beautiful pale blue and a variety of silver stains was essentially – unlike his earlier schemes – an exercise in propagandist Aesthetics. The subdued palette, which may strike present-day viewers as subtly restrained, probably registered as provocatively unusual in 1863, and a marked departure from the medieval primaries

Did Morris discuss the matter with Burne-Jones? Given that Ruskin's main object in 1862 was to inculcate Burne-Jones with the art of the great Venetian painters, the parallels between the New Jerusalem and the colours and mood of the paintings of Giorgione or Titian may not be coincidental. Speculation aside, the colouring of the completed window, like the transmuted figures, bears only a vestigial resemblance to those indicated on Burne-Jones's *vidimus*.

In the south transept window at Lyndhurst, Burne-Jones's *Power of Prayer* designs date from the second half of 1863 (SEE p. 38). Simpler in format than the East window, it contains scenes in rectangles in each of the four, tall lancets and reverts to pale quarries in order to fill the spaces above and below; in the initial sketch (British Museum, 1941, 1213.696) the four subject panels were considerably shorter and a larger proportion of the lights occupied by quarries. The architect J. T. Micklethwaite had reservations about the Firm's 'banded' windows, especially the placing of a single figure, without any preparation, in the middle of a light otherwise entirely made up of uniform quarry glazing. The two never seem properly to belong to one another'.¹⁴ The donor of the south transept window, Richard Pulteney, was

FIG. 2: Fra Angelico, (Detail of) *Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven* (c.1423-24; National Gallery, London). The many photographs Burne-Jones collected of Italian paintings were in monochrome, but in this instance he was acquainted with the original.



FIG. 3: East window, St Michael & All Angels, Lyndhurst, Hampshire (1862-63), designed by Edward Burne-Jones and made by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Photograph © Paul Trend.

FIG. 4: Detail of left and central lights of the East window, St Michael & All Angels, Lyndhurst, Hampshire (1862-63), designed by Edward Burne-Jones and made by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Photograph © Martin Harrison.

even more sceptical; Rector of Ashley, Northamptonshire, he was a scion of a prominent Lyndhurst family and the stained glass was a memorial to his mother, Elizabeth Evelyn Pulteney. Pulteney was not impressed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s stained glass at the 1862 International Exhibition and would have preferred to commission John Hardman & Co. or Clayton & Bell; in the context of White's richly polychromatic interior, either firm would have been a logical, and arguably more sympathetic, choice. Compton prevailed on this point, but he and Pulteney continued to direct the iconography. Burne-Jones wrote to Compton on 16 May 1863 seeking his advice concerning the treatment of the *Vision of St Peter*; he proposed the archetype of Christ sitting on the right hand of God, but feared 'the feeling of the present-time is against it';¹⁵ in the event he depicted the trial scene, with St Stephen's three official accusers, at the Temple in Jerusalem. The Rev. John Lawrell failed to persuade Compton that the seraphim should be omitted from the East window, but in January 1863 he visited the Firm's workshop in Red Lion Square and his report on the cartoon of *Christ in Majesty*: 'Our Lord in Glory... is wanting in dignity and the face is really ugly', probably engendered its unfortunate rejection.¹⁶ Such intercessions seriously challenge the tendency to regard Morris and Burne-Jones as uniquely autonomous in their dealings with clients, and our understanding of their relationships with patrons may need to be adjusted should further evidence of this kind come to light.

The four main scenes in the south transept window (two of the censuring angels in the tracery were designed by Rossetti) developed a formula that Burne-Jones had essayed at Bradfield College in 1857, in which the subjects in each light were stacked in horizontal panels, with minimal spatial recession. Unsurprisingly, none of the *Prayer* designs, nor the arrangement of the East window, was reused elsewhere, for they would have been difficult to recycle. For two years Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co made new designs for each admission they undertook, but complex, 'site-specific' conceptions were hard to adapt to alternative window spaces; thus, as demand for their stained glass outstripped the capacity of the designers to supply, new cartoons, Morris was obliged to introduce some stereotyping of cartoons. While a common enough practice in stained glass, it did not meet with universal approval: within ten years of its inception the decorator John Aldam Heaton, an early supporter of the Firm, was advising patrons to '... have new designs. It is really provoking to see the same figures over and over again in Messrs. Morris's windows throughout the country'.¹⁷

Burne-Jones devised variations on the 'stratified narrative' of eras throughout his life, either dispensing with horizontal divisions from narrative episodes or arranging a biblical scene in ascending or descending tiers; notable examples include the *Baptism of Christ* and *Cleaving of Naaman* at Cheddleton (1865) and the *Legend of St Maurice* at Eakshamstead (1887). In two of his late designs for the medium, the *Tree of Jesse* and *Jacob's Dream* at Rottingdean (1896), the subjects were probably selected on account of the vertical motion inherent in their iconography.

The frameworks of the Firm's stained glass between 1863 and 1875 were mostly planned by Webb and Morris, but partial exceptions could be cited in which Burne-Jones dictated the main elements of a window's design. By default the two rectangular 'bande dessinée' subject panels in the impressive *Song of Solomon* at Darley Dale (1862) left no space for Morris's or Webb's contributions, and the same applies to the East window at Amington (1864) and the West window at Middleton Cheney (1870). However, it is unlikely to have been coincidental that Burne-Jones's

next 'global' designs for major East windows – the Allerston *Rivers of Paradise* (1875) and Easthamstead *Last Judgment* (1876) – had to await the reconstitution of the Firm (as Morris & Company) in 1875, after which he became its sole figure designer. At the apex of the Easthamstead side lights the Blessed sit in rows, again in Fra Angelico fashion, while the Allerston design is redolent of both Fra Angelico's *Court of Heaven* and Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb*.¹⁸ But it was after 1881, and Burne-Jones's commission to design mosaics for the American Protestant Church in Rome, that a neo-Byzantine iconographicism became paramount in both his paintings and his designs for the applied arts. His enduring admiration for the Byzantine mosaics at Ravenna informed many of his last great stained glass designs, including those for Birmingham Cathedral (1885-1897) and Hawarden (1898). Yet in several crucial respects all these later masterpieces had been foreshadowed by the pivotal design in his turn towards monumentalism – the Lyndhurst *New Jerusalem*.

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NOTES

- ¹ Christopher Whall, *Stained Glass Work* (London: John Hogg, 1905), 250.
- ² John Christian, 'A Serious Talk: Ruskin's Place in Burne-Jones's Artistic Development', in Leslie Parrish (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelite Papers* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1984), 130.
- ³ The drawing, in graphite, pen and ink and watercolour, was presented in 1911 by Charles Fairfax Murray to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; it appears to have been mounted and captioned 'Courts of Heaven' by the museum, though this may have perpetuated its identification as such by Murray.
- ⁴ The first full-size cartoons that Burne-Jones drew were of angels in the tracery trefoils, 10 August 1862.
- ⁵ *Works of John Ruskin. Library Edition*: 39 Volumes (London: George Allen, 1903-12), E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (eds.), Vol. 19, 130.
- ⁶ Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelites: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 149.
- ⁷ 'Ruskin's Rudimentary series', 5th ed. (1873), Ashmolean, Oxford; see website 'The Elements of Drawing, John Ruskin's Teaching Collection at Oxford', <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/collection/89909168>.
- ⁸ James Fowler, 'On a New Painted Glass Window in St. James's Church, Brighthelm, The Saturday, Vol. II (May 1872): 150-53. It is instructive to compare Burne-Jones's response to these complex spaces with that devised by C. E. Kempe in 1903 for the virtually identical tracery of the West window. Kempe borrowed a similar solution for the narrow lights (with three seraphs instead of two), but divided the main lights, more conventionally, into single main subjects (Archangels and prelate).
- ⁹ Burne-Jones appears to have adapted the device of angels playing bells in the tracery lights for the seven circles he designed for the West window at St Michael and All Angels, Brighton (1862). In this magnificent window the Archangels in the main lights were designed by Ford Madox Brown and William Morris; exceptionally, these figures similarly occupy the entire window openings, dispensing with quarry ornament. The proportions of the single, standing figures fit the window openings at Brighton exactly, while at Lyndhurst the much taller lights rendered this solution inappropriate.

¹⁰ John Christian, 'The Literature of Art', *Burlington Magazine* (March 1976): 59-61. John Christian was the first modern scholar of Burne-Jones. Had his valuable observations on the patronage of the Lyndhurst scheme not been somewhat buried in his review of Volume 1 of A. C. Sewter's catalogue raisonné of Morris glass, they would doubtless have elicited a wider response.

¹¹ See Douglas Schoenher's important survey in this issue (pp. 28-211). The letter from Burne-Jones to Compton is deposited in Hampshire Record Office, 25MR4/PW48.

¹² Burne-Jones to John Compton (undated), Hampshire Record Office, 25MR4/PW48.

¹³ More correspondence may survive, of course, but regrettably few documents of this kind have come to light thus far.

¹⁴ J. T. Micklethwaite, *Modern Parish Churches: their Plan, Design and Furniture* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874), 292.

¹⁵ Burne-Jones to John Compton, 16 May 1863, Hampshire Record Office, 25MR4/PW48. Did Burne-Jones intend to write the *Vision of St Stephen* in the window itself the revised passage is placed above the *Martyrdom of St Stephen*.

¹⁶ John Lawrell to John Compton, Hampshire Record Office, 25MR4/PW41. Lawrell, incumbent of St Matthew's, City Road, London (with stained glass by Arthur O'Connor), also disliked the *Virgin Mary* in the centre of the *Three Marys* in the upper centre light. In 1851 Lawrell was staying with friends in Guildford, in their rather house guest was the Gothic Revival architect Henry Woodsey; if a congruity in their tastes (and lineage) can be inferred from this, Lawrell's antipathy towards Burne-Jones's art is comprehensible.

¹⁷ John Aldam Heaton, 'On Colour for Decoration', *The Saturday*, Vol. I (February 1871): 29-34.

¹⁸ Ruskin contradicted himself regarding Fra Angelico (as on so many topics), but at the height of his anti-medievalism he looked only for his supposed weaknesses. Nevertheless he was tireless in urging the National Gallery to acquire Fra Angelico's paintings, which the gallery first did in 1857. Burne-Jones was (and remained) less critical of Fra Angelico than Ruskin became. Indeed, one would not wish to over-determine the argument that Burne-Jones eschewed medievalism after 1862: while increasingly marginal to his artistic development, his admiration for Gothic architecture and illuminated manuscripts, for example, scarcely diminished. Moreover, the Lyndhurst *Power of Prayer* design could be considered a reversion to medievalism.



Research and Methodology