

Poets and Poetry in the Enderby Cycle

by [Sylvère Monod](#)

In 1980 I had published a study of Mr Enderby, one of Anthony Burgess's favourite characters. As Mr Enderby was both impressive and mean, I had called my article, in French, "Enderby, le minable magnifique". This appeared in the fifth issue of *TREMA*, a short-lived and obscure scholarly journal published by the English Department of my own University, Paris-III Sorbonne Nouvelle [Note 1](#) . Our N° 5, though not so heady and successful as Chanel's, had its own glamour, since it was entirely devoted to one unquestionably brilliant and entertaining writer. It was an Anthony Burgess special issue. I based my study on what I took to be the complete Enderby cycle of three shortish novels,

Inside Mr Enderby

,
Enderby Outside

, and

The Clockwork Testament, or, Enderby's End

. I still regard myself as having been at the time justified in thinking the cycle was complete, since the word

End

appeared in the title of its third part, in which poor Mr Enderby was actually seen to die. I therefore expressed my conviction that there would be, that indeed there

could

be no more Enderby stories. Dead men, even fictitious ones, notoriously tell no tales. Nor do they lend themselves to being told new tales about. I could not have been more wrong. A fourth Enderby novel,

Enderby's Dark Lady

, annihilated the hero's death at the end of the third, the author blandly explaining that his *Clockwork Testament*

had been only one branch of a "forked ending", the unreal term of the alternative, of which he now gave us the other and truer one. Enderby's survival in the

Dark Lady

volume was so vigorous that Burgess left himself plenty of room for adding a fifth, then a sixth part, and so on, in fact, any number of sequels, had he lived long enough to write them. We can trust his fertile inventiveness: had he lived, he would never have fallen short of adventures for Enderby. But talented writers are not like fictional figures; they cannot, alas, be resurrected at will. Burgess has died, and taken Enderby with him to a final grave this time.

Enderby's profession, while he lived, and even at the time of his temporary or illusory death, was poetry. He was a professional poet and could do nothing that did not fit in with his vocation: write poetry, read, be interviewed, at a pinch do a little teaching and/or collaborate in the production of a play, or a film, or a television programme, or a musical, as long as the work was to be based on a poetical achievement of some kind. Enderby's own poems, or fragments and dribblets of them, were lavishly interspersed in the pages of the books that related episodes of his life. In addition to the future resurrection of Enderby, there was another thing I was ignorant of while writing my essay for *TREMA*. I may have been told by the able editor of our special issue, the late Jacques Cabau, that Burgess had sent him a sheaf of unpublished poems of his and allowed him to print them in the Burgess issue. But I was not shown the poems themselves; I saw them for the first time when they had been printed together with our articles. Even then, I failed to recognize them. Otherwise, I would not have said in my article that I did not know whether Burgess intended the readers of his Enderby fiction to treat the fragments of verse in those volumes as Enderby poems or as Burgess poems, whether he wished us to admire them as fine productions or to deride them as feeble attempts at producing poetry. Had I looked at the thirteen "Poèmes inédits", I would have recognized them as pieces quoted, or quoted from, in one or other of the Enderby novels, as poems written by Enderby. The same lines being now offered to the public as Burgess poems, my hesitancy would have come to an end. I would have been certain that the author of poems to which Burgess now proudly laid claim as his own were intended to be treated with respect. Ergo, Enderby was (in Burgess's view) a genuine poet. Unless, of course, Burgess was aware that *TREMA* was not exactly one of the best-selling periodicals; we commanded a very limited readership; our journal was rather obviously confidential, not to say parochial. It was not to the public at large that Burgess had proclaimed his authorship of many Enderby poems

[Note 2](#)

One must add that lately the plot has considerably thickened. I am referring to the publication, on November 25, 2002, of a volume called *Revolutionary Sonnets and Other Poems* by Anthony Burgess, edited by Kevin Jackson for the "Poetry Pléiade" series at the Carcanet Press. This is a very valuable book, which one is delighted to have at one's disposal. It contains all the short poems known to have been written by Burgess, and substantial specimens of and extracts from his bulkier productions in verse, including his work as a translator of poetry and as an author of lyrics for musical performances. The editor provides an excellent introduction and lavish bibliographical information. What makes the book contribute in thickening the plot is the fact that Kevin Jackson has traced earlier publications as Burgess (or as Wilson) poems of several pieces supposed to have been written by F. X. Enderby. Kevin Jackson had not come across our poor

TREMA

special issue; no-one will be tempted to blame him; but his ignorance of the so-called "unpublished poems" it contained makes him miss one link in what becomes a longish chain: poems which had seen the light of print as the work of Burgess, then been ascribed to Enderby, were in 1980, for their third appearance, recovering their virginity as "poèmes inédits" before coming to their final niche in Jackson's edition of the *Revolutionary Sonnets*.

Like most bibliographical histories, these accidents are of limited interest to most people. But it remains true that poems which have been published, however discreetly, no less than three or four times, imply a good deal of deliberation and perseverance on the author's part: he wanted them to be known: Enderby, as part of this machinery, must therefore be examined seriously as a poet.

Kevin Jackson's volume does not in fact collect much more Burgess poetry than had become known earlier, though he gives us a lot of Burgess verse, often of dazzling brilliancy. There was

never any doubt about Anthony Burgess's ability to write in verse. He was a poet at least in the etymological sense that connects poetry with the greek verb *poiein*, with *making*; he was always remarkably skilful at handling language in stimulating ways and in any form, including metre and rhyme. He had his own idiosyncrasies in that field as elsewhere, and his attitude to rhyme is original even when it is not eccentric

Note 3

. Another element must be taken into account, though it is extremely difficult to assess and circumscribe, and that is the genuinely poetical quality of many of the best passages written by Burgess in prose, and as prose.

One fact remains to be examined: in his Enderby cycle Anthony Burgess tried to introduce to his readers a man who consistently claimed that he was a poet, and could be nothing else, a born poet, a poet by nature and by profession, a man who would live and die as a poet (who, in fact, if only for a time and as it were by mistake, did actually die as such). To that fictitious character Burgess lent what he seems to have regarded as the best part of his own poetical output. And the Enderby cycle also provided Burgess with opportunities for airing his views about the nature of poetry and the processes of poetry-making. One way of airing his views was to have them discussed inside the fictional world he was putting across to the reader. And no-one could be more qualified to conduct such an undercurrent of discussion with Enderby than a fellow-poet. Burgess gives us double measure in the cycle: two poets for the price of one. Enderby and Rawcliffe. Rawcliffe and Enderby, whose relationship is complex.

It has not been much studied. And yet the two men are clearly opposed to each other, they sometimes talk about poetry together, they pass from implicit rivalry to (one-sided) enmity, which at one point becomes bloodthirsty (still on one side only), before subsiding into something like mutual tolerance, and even affection and gratitude. This phenomenon deserves close attention. Kevin Jackson, who has written so well about Burgess's poetry and its link with Enderby, dismisses Rawcliffe, I believe, a little too glibly, in a single sentence, when he says that Burgess, in his work as a whole, created "a whole regiment of ghastly poetasters from Enderby's arch-enemy Rawcliffe, author of a single dud lyric 'in all the anthologies'" (p. x). I

nevertheless believe that the creation of Rawcliffe beside Enderby may help us enrich our view of Burgess as a poet and as a thinker and writer about poetry in general

[Note 4](#)

These early novels, while they show their age in some of the now outdated phrases (*I've had it, you've had it*

) and details of daily life (

the [gas-]meter needed a shilling

), are full of the humour and the fun that characterize Burgess's manner throughout his career.

Also of his political preferences. In

Inside

, for instance, he introduces a man named Walpole, who appears as a successful caricature of a Marxist, a worker involved in the promotion of his Union, but he is stark mad, and the confusion in his mind is astonishing; yet he involuntarily coins a superb phrase when he repeatedly reproaches Enderby with being a "boor Joyce". Another uneducated speaker provides Burgess with an opportunity of palming off upon him a pun on the word "psychiatrist", transmogrified into "trick cyclist". There is brilliant writing also (again in

Inside

) in the description of Mrs. Opisso, the daily woman (whose dailiness is another archaic feature of the book). And there are some of Burgess's stylistic idiosyncrasies, such as his liking for adverbs like

queenlily

,

statelily

,

pearlily

, not much used in current English but often found in Robert Browning's writings.

The visible subject of the *Inside* volume is the apparent curing of an aberration by a combination of psychological, physiological and social remedies; it thus seems germane to the theme of *A Clockwork Orange*. The surface subject of *Outside* is Enderby's attempt to flee from England in order to escape punishment for a murder he has not committed and at the same time to inflict punishment by murder on Rawcliffe and thus make

himself finally eligible for the hitherto undeserved sentence he is threatened with.

Yet, in common with the *Testament* volume and perhaps to a certain extent with the *Dark Lady* story, the first two parts of the Enderby tetralogy are in depth concerned with the mysteries and agonies of poetical creation in a largely hostile world, and the place of poetry and of the poet in modern society. On being interviewed by Jacques Cabau for

TRÉMA

, Burgess had laid special stress on the seriousness of his attitude to literature, dismissing his reputation as a writer of comic or even farcical scenes: "I did not think of myself as a satirist or a comic writer. I had always seen myself as a creator of gloom and sobriety" (

Trema 5

, p. 94).

The first encounter between Enderby and Rawcliffe occurs in London, after a dinner-party at which Enderby was to have been given the Goodby gold medal and a valuable cheque, which he ineptly and unexpectedly found himself refusing. Rawcliffe drags Enderby away from the table, tells him who he is ("I'm Rawcliffe [...] You know me. I'm in all the anthologies." (

Inside

henceforth

/

- 54-55

[Note 5](#)

) Rawcliffe obviously knows who Enderby is, and attaches at least some value to his work, though the reverse is not true. It is then, already, that Rawcliffe questions Enderby about his present work, and that to him Enderby "with babbling nerves [...] blurted out a detailed synopsis of

The Pet Beast

", his ambitious work in (slow) progress at the time.

Rawcliffe finds mention again when Enderby leafs through a shelfful of poetical anthologies in order to check whether Rawcliffe was indeed present in them; he is always represented by the same short poem, of twelve lines, regarded by Enderby as made up of "artless lyrics" (I-67-68). Enderby also discovers that none of his own work is reprinted in any of the ten anthologies he has consulted. After which findings Enderby becomes intermittently obsessed by the thought of Rawcliffe and his undeniable though ambiguous and limited virtue of anthologizability.

The second encounter between the two men takes place in Rome, where Enderby has just flown with his bride Vesta. She has, with great and ill-advised authority, taken him in hand, restored him to decency, married him and carried him to Rome on their honeymoon; their union will remain unconsummated, partly because Rawcliffe, who had been waiting for them, and who has courteously had flowers delivered to Vesta, spends a good deal of time with Enderby and makes him share more than one of his own drinking sprees. At his most relatively sober moments, and sometimes even when half drunk, Rawcliffe becomes known to the reader as a rational creature, a man of culture (he quotes Dante fluently), clever, imaginative, capable of speaking much better Italian than Enderby, good at playing with words (I, 129-130). Rawcliffe shows a modicum of admiration for Enderby's work, but seems mainly keen on borrowing his ideas. Enderby still asserts that he doesn't like Rawcliffe (132), who guesses that the other poet is jealous of his (Rawcliffe's) presence in "all the anthologies".

Rawcliffe, who reveals himself as capable of playing a part, thus seems altogether better equipped than Enderby to make a success of his life. It takes cleverness of a kind to exploit Enderby in small things, like making him pay for a large number of drinks, though not for a long taxi-ride. And his greater feats, like turning Enderby's sketchy project for *The Pet Beast* into a film scenario, selling it to Italian professionals and getting money out of the venture, must have taken wizardry; at least in my eyes, because I do not regard Enderby's invention as in the least cinematically promising; on the contrary, it could only lead to a deadlily boring production. Rawcliffe, when Enderby spends time with him in Rome instead of going back to his bride in their hotel bedroom, has not yet made his money, or not avowedly; he is as poor as a mouse, and there is a hole in the sole of his shoe. Perhaps there are many holes in what is left of his soul.

Rawcliffe still sounds rather brilliant when he emerges from his (perhaps partly spurious) drunken stupor. Yet Enderby's attitude to him is slowly evolving; he has to remind himself occasionally that he dislikes Rawcliffe. Up to that point, however, all the positive efforts at establishing a relationship are made by Rawcliffe, not Enderby. Rawcliffe indulges in a piece of autobiography; he is now aged 52, and he says he lost the power of writing poetry when he was 27; in the course of that conversation, once again, though still drinking hard, Rawcliffe preserves the ability to talk lucidly about poetry, America, and age. Rawcliffe's name provides Burgess with an opportunity for wordplay (see "a rockcliff, a rawface", /-138), whereas Enderby stimulates Rawcliffe in a similar way ("Who would an ender be [...] Would you a spender be [...] Would you a fender be", / -130-131).

When Enderby eventually returns to the conjugal bedroom, Vesta shows that she does not think much of Rawcliffe, whom she regards as a drunkard and a born liar; she may be right, but she is not a trustworthy or impartial judge; like Rawcliffe she is out to exploit and manipulate Enderby. Their rivalry in that direction accounts for her animus but it seems strange, considering how little there is in Enderby that possesses the least marketable value. Vesta Bainbridge, however, will succeed even better than Rawcliffe, being far more ruthless and infinitely less generous than that lapsed poet. Meanwhile, she warns Enderby against the perils of consorting with Rawcliffe, a man, she says, who is "always messing round on the fringe of things" and she guesses that he is in Rome for some specific purpose, "He's probably here in films, I should think, just messing around" (/ -139).

When Enderby quarrels with Vesta, he thinks of Rawcliffe for the first time in other than contemptuous terms, recognizes the man's clear-sightedness, for he had seen through the woman's game (/ -169). Vesta counters her husband's charges by asserting that Rawcliffe is "jealous as hell" of Enderby (170). Vesta cannot be left out of a study of the relationship between the two men; she plays a part in it and of the three people involved she appears as the most thoroughly malignant figure.

Shortly after that crisis between the newlyweds, Rawcliffe, still dirty and shabby, reappears in the bar of the Enderbys' Roman hotel, to invite them to the première of a film he has worked on; a film that has been produced cheaply and is in great part borrowed from other films. The film is called *L'animal binato*, a phrase coined by Dante. In the course of the conversation, Rawcliffe once more talks amusingly and cleverly; he is clearly a better speaker than Enderby, and one wonders, fleetingly, whether the opposition between the two men is not between genius, which isolates, and talent, which can bring in money. At that stage, the narrative provides more and more insistent hints that Rawcliffe is a homosexual. He says he will be leaving Rome on that very day; he remains vague about his destination, mentioning merely that he is "going South". Rawcliffe warns Enderby against the woman he calls "Auntie Vesta", just as she had put her husband on his guard against him; he gives good advice to Enderby: "Get wise to yourself, as they say. Wake up. A poet must be alone!" (I-173). Before departure, Rawcliffe appears sober and almost depressed. A crucial dialogue between the two men shows that one is extinct as a poet, while the other is incapable of being anything else, being in fact too *minable* to accomplish anything practical. Rawcliffe reverts to his autobiography and that is probably when the reader realizes that he really has been a poet, and perhaps that it is better to be a "has-been" than a "has-not-been", just as it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Or isn't the reader intended rather to wonder how much genuineness there is in the *vis poetica* of two aging shams? That poetry plays a great part in Rawcliffe's life is shown by the fact that when drunk and asleep he can still quote poetry (I-176).

Gradually, what transpires is also that between Rawcliffe and Enderby there is both enmity and kinship. Isn't there something in common between the pair they form and the two Wilsons of Poe's famous story, which must have appealed particularly to Burgess, whose real name was Wilson and who had found the literary scene too crowded with Wilsons already to appear in print only as one more writer of that name.

After Rawcliffe's departure, the Enderbys attend the première of the film to which Rawcliffe

(Italianized as Raucliffo) contributed at least suggestions; and that film, not surprisingly, turns out to be based on Enderby's plans for *The Pet Beast*. By what is said about it in Burgess's book, it can only have been monumentally heavy-going; yet the novelist asks us to believe that it was good enough to have an English version made and for that version to become a hit.

Shortly after that session at the cinema, Enderby unexpectedly reveals himself in his turn as capable of playing a part, deceiving Vesta and running away from her, with her fur coat. In a way, he is rawcliffizing himself by so doing, or at least he is following Rawcliffe's sound advice. This initiates a period of poverty and despair for Enderby, who remains haunted by "the prophecy of the traitor Rawcliffe" (I-190). He later suspects Rawcliffe, his "pet beast" in one sense, of having written an unfavourable review of his (Enderby's) latest volume of verse. Driven to suicide (which he manages ineptly enough to survive, as who wouldn't suicide by aspirin?) he gives one last thought to Rawcliffe, whom he connects with Dante's *Inferno*, for he remembers that his friend/enemy was familiar with the Italian poet.

After his failed suicide, Enderby undergoes psychological treatment, and tamely submits to becoming a pallid barman named Hogg, who has nothing to do with poetry, or with Rawcliffe, any more. The relationship will be resumed, with a vengeance, in *Enderby Outside*, the second story in the chronicle.

The blurb of that sequel to *Inside Mr Enderby* makes great play of the notion that Anthony Burgess, the author of *Enderby Outside* is the legatee of Joseph Kell, an alias supposed to have written the first volume. This is an interesting sidelight on the story, since by the end of the *Outside* novel Enderby will have become Rawcliffe's residuary legatee. In the early pages of *Outside*

, some information about the previous episodes is provided for the ignorant or forgetful reader; thus, even a newcomer to Enderby's adventures will know that Enderby harbours a grievance against Rawcliffe. Enderby is still barman Hogg, but he is slowly working himself back into an Enderbian consciousness, so that at one point he dubs himself "Hoggerby" (

Outside

, or

O-

26). It may be difficult for some readers to share Hoggerby's excitement on finding that his Muse is being reborn, considering the results, which, in most cases, are again undeniable Burgess poems, supposedly "unpublished" as such until they half-appeared in

Tréma

. One of the odd characteristics of Enderby's poetical career is that his poems are constantly stolen from him, and quite often revered by himself, though they do not sell and receive at best the faint praise of lukewarm reviews. Though there is a good deal of poeticality in some prose passages of

Enderby Outside

(such as those making lavish and suggestive use of the moon and its light), the genuineness of the poems

qua

poems may remain in doubt.

When Enderby finds himself compelled to flee from London in order to avoid being arrested for a murder of which he is innocent, but which has been perpetrated under circumstances that make him an obvious suspect, he decides to go to North Africa, and, if possible, to Tangier, where he happens to know that Rawcliffe now owns a bar, which he seems to have called AL-ROCKLIF; more wordplay with a character's name. Once he has arrived in Morocco, Enderby says to a man whose help he can buy: "I want to get to Tangier to see off an old enemy" (O-119). The old enemy's identity is slowly disclosed, when Enderby hears the last line of a poem < of a kind < recited by his new acquaintance: "And the rawgreen growler under Bellamy's Cliff", Enderby reacts: "Rawcliffe [...] it won't be long now." The other man, nicknamed Easy Walker, is taken aback and reacts in his turn: "You say Rawcliffe, brad? Rawcliffe the jarvey you bid to chop?" , and that leads to Enderby being told that Rawcliffe, though unquestionably the owner of a bar "Called the Acantilado something-or-the-next-thing", is not in Tangier at the moment, because he is ill and undergoing treatment in Gibraltar. But he will be back eventually. Meanwhile, Enderby has defined him as "Plagiarist, traitor [...], enemy" (

O-

123), And though warned that "This jarvey Rawcliffe [...] is some big kind of a jarvey. Big in films and that" (

O-

124), Enderby's determination remains settled.

The long wait for Rawcliffe's return turns him into a mythical figure; he is not only a traitor and an enemy, but The Enemy, *par excellence*. That uncertain period also gives Enderby a chance to devote himself to writing poetry, conceiving poems, and reflecting about poetry. He becomes aware, for instance, of "the danger [...] of trying to make poetry out of the ephemeral" (

O-

140), and he develops his own poetical principles, which set him apart from "the *soi-disant avant-garde*

". He has been accused of belonging rather to the rearguard, but he is determined to remain faithful to his literary ideal. His anger is fuelled by finding out that some of his poetry has been lifted by Vesta from his manuscripts left in her house and printed as the work of another man, including, inadvertently, at least one poem that had already been published earlier by Enderby himself. Thus Enderby seems to share with Burgess a certain vagueness about the status of the unpublished.

When Rawcliffe reappears in Tangier, it will be as a target for Enderby the Avenger; killing him has become the single purpose of Enderby's life, and Enderby endeavours to convince himself that that is as it should be: "if one accepted that killing was a legitimate and sempiternal human activity, authorised by the Bible, was there any better motive than Enderby's own?" (O-154). Yet, Rawcliffe returns to Tangier just in time to hear Enderby, in disguise as a Moroccan beggar, extemporize a poem in pseudo-arabic; it is one of the funniest episodes in the whole tetralogy, and one in which Enderby displays talent and humour on a scale unusual for him, though not for Anthony Burgess. Obviously, Burgess and Enderby share both a sense of humour - more pronounced in the author, and a tendency to ill-humour (more vivid in the character). Rawcliffe is indeed very ill; he treats Enderby, whose murderous impulses he ignores, with real kindness. In any case, he is in no danger from Enderby's enmity, for Enderby has forgotten to provide himself with a weapon, as he might easily have done. The novelist more than hints that this deficiency is no accident, but the consequence of an inability to kill. And in fact, Rawcliffe, now to be seen as "a failed poet" (

O-

164) and a failing homosexual lover, behaves to Enderby as a friend; he is not merely friendly,

he is a friend. And he does define him as such to his young Spanish assistant: "

Es un amigo

" (

O-

165). He lays claim to "poetic clairvoyance" (

O-

166); he is still a heavy drinker, and does not mind the consequences, knowing that he is going to die soon, anyway. And once again, in conversation with Enderby, Rawcliffe appears clever, humorous, and even in his way masterly; he wins hands down the conflict with Enderby, all the more so as the conflict is one-sided, and while Enderby remains for a time hampered by his grievance, Rawcliffe exudes geniality, good humour,

joie de vivre

, almost, one might say,

joie de mourir

. He quotes and adapts lines from

Measure for Measure

(

O-

168 and 186). He now calls Enderby "a fellow-poet" (

O-

169; Enderby discovers that he has been influenced by Rawcliffe, has imitated Rawcliffe in some of his familiar attitudes. Meanwhile, Rawcliffe issues a terse and sharp diagnosis of Enderby: "Not cut out for marriage, not cut out for murder" (

O-

171). And he gradually discloses his intention of leaving his bar and his money to Enderby, who will have to alter the name of that establishment. Rawcliffe had called it

El Acantilado Verde

: "Green cliff, raw cliff. You've got somebody on your side. Who? There you stand, absurd but vigorous. And Auntie Vesta is vanquished and poor Rawcliffe is dying. Is there anything more you want?"

This great generosity is in line with Rawcliffe's philosophy; he now explains that he has been "a conscientious hedonist" (O-176) and he and Burgess make it abundantly clear that Enderby could never succeed in becoming that. Not surprisingly, Enderby finds it more and more difficult to remain angry, let alone murderous, towards Rawcliffe, much as he still tries "to harden his heart against him, traitor, traducer, diluter, sinner against literature" (

O-

177), these epithets being the last shreds of a pose that has become mechanical and unconvicted. Dying Rawcliffe provides an outline of his own career as poet and as man: "Better to be the one-poem man. But she [the Muse] left me then. Opened up heaven of creativity and

then closed it. [...I bought your books at least. Least I could do. I am not all badness." (

O-

180-181) Throughout the final episode the two men are kind to each other. Rawcliffe endeavours to exculpate Enderby from the suspicion of murder that imperils his freedom, and Enderby helps Rawcliffe put on his clothes and plies him with brandy, against the doctor's orders; he looks after, almost nurses, dying Rawcliffe; until his formal forgiveness is granted, post mortem, unenthusiastically, but definitely: "Poor Rawcliffe. Traitor Rawcliffe rather, but he had paid" (

O-

191).

As Rawcliffe's legatee and successor, Enderby now finds himself exposed to a certain confusion about his identity. Easy Walker refuses to give him back his passport, and suggests he might use Rawcliffe's instead: "Have this, though, your need being greater than. Dead jarveys help the living from their heart of darkness.", which Enderby counters with "I'm entitled to an official identity of some sort." And the narrator comments: "But was he? And, if so, why? [...] And, anyway, did bearing a name matter? Rawcliffe would be glad to be called anything or nothing if he could be alive again" (O-192). Later, Enderby finds himself addressed as Rawcliffe on at least two occasions (O-197 and 201). Later still, a fascinating girl who dazzles Enderby takes him to task rather severely: "Still curious, aren't you? Bit of a change for you, isn't it, this curiosity about people? You've never cared much for people, have you?" (O-216)

By the end of *Enderby Outside*, it has become clear that Enderby will go on living in a décor that has been created by his erstwhile enemy: "There was still something raffish, riffish, Rawcliffesque about the bed on the floor, in the middle of the floor. Enderby had not yet sufficiently breathed on things" (O-224) The "hero" of the tetralogy has one final question to solve: "He wondered if it might not be a pious duty to find out more about Rawcliffe's slender and thwarted

oeuvre

, edit, reprint at expense of [the money left by him in his] mattress. There might be odd things, juvenilia even, concealed about the place [...] But no, best keep away" (

O-

230). Enderby's final answer is thus negative, but the fact that he can think of anything

connected with Rawcliffe in terms of "pious" or "duty" shows that the wheel has indeed come full circle.

Or not quite full, as a cursory glance at the two post-Rawcliffe Enderby novels seem to hint. Enderby can still think of Rawcliffe as "the bastard" (*Testament*, 11-12), but the word sounds almost tender, and Enderby is still occasionally mistaken for Rawcliffe and will still be wearing Rawcliffe's dressing-gown in New York. Also "a kind of sculpted Edwardian overcoat bequeathed by his old enemy Rawcliffe. Rawcliffe was long-dead. He had died bloodily, fecally, messily, and now, to quote his own poem, practically his only own poem, his salts drained into alien soil. He had got death over with, then. He was in a sense, lucky." (

CT-

43) Enderby, who has thus inherited Rawcliffe's belongings (as well as, once again, the authorship of some of Burgess's "unpublished" poems), may envy Rawcliffe's dead man's status, for he is acutely suffering and may well think he is dying. When in pain, he wonders what he is being warned against and thinks of three possible guilts: "Smoking? Masturbation? Poetry?" The choice is interesting, and characteristic, but it seems incomplete. Enderby might also feel guilty of having misjudged his friendly enemy Rawcliffe. He doesn't.

The final volume tells us more about Burgess than it does about Enderby. And the almost brash subtitle "No End to Enderby" reminds us that, as we hinted above, it was Burgess's own death that put an end to Enderby, that made the latest volume the last, the final novel really terminal.

Enderby's Dark Lady

also provides the reader with an explicit "Prefatory Note", in which Burgess performs graceful acrobatics around the vexed question of the authorship of Enderby's poems, saying: "His poems are, inevitably, written by myself, but only by myself in disguise as Enderby" (

Dark Lady

, 8), which is not strictly speaking, true, since so many of them have also been offered to a section of the reading public as poems written by Burgess undisguised. The Note also reminds us that T. S. Eliot had liked at least three of the Enderby poems ; or had he liked them as Burgess poems? The Note does not tell us that and, in any case, with typical Boorjoyce

impishness, destroys the impact of the statement by adding that "posterity is beginning to find his [Eliot's] taste unsure". Jackson explains that the three poems liked by Eliot were praised as exceptions in a polite rejection note when Eliot refused to publish Burgess's poetry in *Criterion*

Inside the novel we hear that Enderby has decided to write no more poetry. As for Rawcliffe he is not mentioned once by name, but Tangier and the pub (renamed, punningly enough, *La Belle Mer*), for

Enderby is known to have been obsessed by the memory of the stepmother -or *belle-mère*

- who had brought him up) are referred to on several occasions. In that sense, we might say that, if

Testament

and

Dark Lady

are the forked ending of the Enderby saga, the second branch, roughly contemporary with the first, but unlike it dealing with what

had

happened, is the ungrateful and forgetful version of Enderby's post-Rawcliffe career. It is also more or less enlightened by an elaborate sub-subtitle: "Composed to placate kind readers of *The Clockwork Testament, or Enderby's End*

, who objected to my casually killing the hero." Burgess thus quietly asserts that Enderby does not end.

It cannot be claimed that Anthony Burgess wholly sides with Enderby. There remains a latently indulgent view of Rawcliffe at the back of his creator's mind and sensibility. Kevin Jackson, whose study of Burgess's poetry is the most thorough in existence, concludes (p. vii) that "Burgess himself was always somewhat diffident in putting himself forward as a poet". Diffidence was not Burgess's most frequent attitude, but he may have sympathized with Rawcliffe because of the danger that he himself ran of being, or becoming, more like Rawcliffe than like Enderby. Burgess was not precisely like Rawcliffe "in all the anthologies" on the strength, such as it was, of a single poem, but if his favourite poetical performances were not widely anthologized, they were printed and reprinted, by his own act, and under various

disguises and pretences, in several of his published works. Or (a grimmer thought) he may have, not feared, but hoped, that he had in common with Rawcliffe some enviable characteristics, like the ability to make money, to achieve success of a kind, not always by the most straightforward methods.

In a sense, it is true that in Anthony Burgess's career there was something of both Enderby and Rawcliffe. After all, we are not allowed to read much verse written by Rawcliffe in the Enderby cycle, but what we are given to read has been written by Burgess, just as much as Enderby's poems. Burgess the poet is a kind of Endercliffe or Rawby, dedicated to writing verse, not always succeeding, yet making a brilliant success of his career as a writer of prose, occasionally of poetical prose [Note 6](#) . Even if we remain in doubt about the poeticality of Enderby's verse, we are bound to recognize the poetical quality of the prose that describes him in several episodes of the cycle.



Notes:

1. Anthony Burgess liked that essay or at least enjoyed the sense of being taken seriously and discussed in the usual terms of scholarly literary criticism. An attitude that, in my turn, I enjoyed and appreciated. [Return to article](#) .

2. Considering the evidence it provided of my ignorance, naïveté and brashness, I have more than once derived comfort from the thought that my early article on Burgess was unlikely to have been read by many people, and even more unlikely to be remembered by any of the "happy few" who are unconditional *aficionados* (or *aficionadas*) of the Burgess *oeuvre*. [Return to article](#)

3. Observant readers familiar with Burgess's own poems will have noticed that there is at least one feature in common between him and Enderby: both are fond of rhyme and use it with adroitness and even virtuosity. Also they tend to rhyme *à la française*, considering that the similarity between consonantal endings is enough to create a rhyme. Thus, to them

ears

rhymes with

airs

,

fears

with

flowers

,

then with been

,

shrift

with

left

, etc. Rawcliffe's rhymes show the same peculiarity.

[Return to article](#)

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4. As Rawcliffe dies at the end of *Outside*, and does not undergo any resurrection, I shall concentrate on the first two Enderby stories, and leave aside the later volumes, dealing with Enderby's American adventures, first as a Faculty member and writer in residence in a New York university, then as a script-writer for a film-making company. In both capacities, Enderby loses many of the inhibitions and disabilities that had been part of his initial charm. He becomes more self-assertive than in the past, less forlorn and hopeless, and thus, I feel, rather less attractive and interesting. In other words, by being less

minable

he becomes less magnificent. Eventually, one wonders whether his magnificence did not lie in his very

minable

ness.

[Return to article](#)

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5. References are given to the only editions I have been able to procure: the Penguin Books *In side*

of 1966, the Heinemann

Outside

of 1968, the Hart-David/MacGibbon

Testament

of 1975, and the Abacus paperback

Dark Lady

of 1985.

[Return to article](#)

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6. Kevin Jackson writes (p. xiv): "Was he a great poet? In the final analysis, perhaps not; I leave the verdict to others." But what others will rush in where Jackson fears to tread? [Return to article](#)

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