

Aging in F(r)iendship: "Big Ger" Cafferty and John Rebus

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Abstract. Ian Rankin's series featuring Scottish detective inspector John Rebus chronicles his hero's tense bonding with gangster "Big Ger" Cafferty. Both men age in parallel for decades in what Rebus might call "f(r)iendship." Their bonding is based on a mutual need for validation as obsolescent patriarchal men but also on Rebus's bitter realization that, although he must accept legal retirement, the villain need not renounce power.

Author Ian Rankin ended his series of seventeen novels (1987–2007) about Scottish Detective Inspector John Rebus with a memorable, thrilling scene. The hero tries desperately to save from death his archenemy, Edinburgh crimelord Morris Gerald Cafferty, aka "Big Ger," as he flatlines in hospital, where he has been admitted after a brutal assault. The scene, hence the series, ends in tension, as Rebus's colleague, Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke, stops his frantic pounding of Big Ger's massive chest: "That's enough now. You can let go now" (*Exit* 380). Rebus, unable to truly "let go" of his foe, asks whether Big Ger will be "all right" (380). The villain does get his comeuppance, but the hero does not inflict this and even, paradoxically, fights for his life. Only Big Ger's survival and eventual capture can guarantee a sense of closure for Rebus's career as a crimefighter in this final retirement novel, yet Rankin denies his hero this ultimate satisfaction and provides his readers with an unexpected conclusion.

The historical hostility between Rebus and Cafferty compares to the one binding Sherlock Holmes and Professor James Moriarty, the London criminal mastermind. Holmes feels "forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill" (Conan Doyle n. pag.), a feeling that resonates in Rebus's passionate obsession about Cafferty but also in the gangster's sardonic curiosity about the cop. Yet their relationship differs crucially from that of the Holmes-Moriarty pair in that Rankin's hero and villain "enjoy" their odd association for almost twenty years. Many readers expected Rankin to lead Rebus and Big Ger to a spec-

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tacular final confrontation. The author, however, had another end in mind. Asked whether he had retired Rebus with a heavy heart, Rankin declared that he had “nothing to feel heavy-hearted about,” because Rebus is “still alive at the end of the book. I didn’t have it in my heart to kill him off, couldn’t do that Conan Doyle-Sherlock Holmes thing of sending him off the Reichenbach Falls—thought about it, but couldn’t do it” (Mayer n. pag.). The ending that Rankin chose highlights, nonetheless, not only the author’s sympathy for his own creation but also that more than enmity links Rebus and Cafferty: They are bonded in a complicated, symbiotic dynamic of “f(r)iendship” that has developed through the series as the two men age.

Big Ger often uses the incautious Rebus to rid himself of bothersome rivals, which subsequently taints Rebus, to his chagrin, with a reputation as Big Ger’s friend. In *Resurrection Men* (2002), when Clarke reports that she has visited his “friend Cafferty,” Rebus retorts, “People keep calling him my ‘friend.’” Tauntingly, Clarke asks, “And he’s not?” Rebus angrily replies, “Take away the r and you’re getting closer” (144). This tantalizing “f(r)iendship”—compounded of hatred for the “fiend” tempered by an irresistible “unacknowledged mutual dependency” (Petrie 154), a longing for the “friend” neither man has—is more solid and long-lasting than any other relationship in the two solitary men’s lives. Rebus may think that he is in hell and haunted by his “own personal devil” (*Hanging* 250), but he also acknowledges to Barlinnie governor Bill Nairn, who puzzles over this odd cop-and-criminal connection, that “[s]ometimes I feel closer to that bastard than I do....” He bit off the ending: *to my own family*. Frankly, most of the time it felt like no contest” (*Set* 348, original ellipsis and emphasis). The reader does not have such a direct insight into Big Ger’s feelings, although the time that Big Ger warns Rebus that there may be a contract out on him provides some insight. Cool but curious, Rebus asks:

“What’s it to you?”

“Maybe I like having you around.”

“Why?”

“Who else cares about me?” Cafferty chuckled again. (*Set* 449)

Anthony Easthope explains:

... [Banter of this kind] has a double function. Outwardly banter is aggressive, a form in which the masculine ego asserts itself. Inwardly, however, banter depends on a close, intimate and personal understanding of the person who is the butt of the attack. It thus works as a way of affirming the bond of love between men while appearing to deny it. (88)

Cafferty and Rebus’s relationship, although certainly marked by constant banter, is not quite a “bond of love” but more a bond of need. It is tempting to read their connection in literary terms as yet another instance of man’s duality, explored by Scottish Gothic literature in works such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) or James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Rankin claims that he had Hogg in mind when he characterized Cafferty as “a kind of devil who’s always standing behind Rebus with this seductive voice, saying, ‘It feels good to do bad things, why don’t you give it a go’” (qtd. in Plain 13). Yet Cafferty is not just a Gothic villain, a devil, “shamelessly malign, deceptively amiable, ... a sinister presence” (Hainsworth n. pag.). He is a more complete character. No doubt Cafferty sees in the headstrong Rebus a useful tool, and he possibly enjoys the manipulation of Rebus more than any other aspect of their peculiar bond. However, when Big Ger saves his enemy from dying in a fire in *Mortal Causes*, he does so out of a budding sense of their complementary natures that

overwhelms cold calculation. In *Exit Music* Cafferty even asks Rebus out for a drink; when Rebus rejects the offer, claiming he is not that desperate, Cafferty replies that neither is he but just had to try (176). In other circumstances, these two men might have been, if not close friends, at least steady, loyal drinking buddies. Certainly Cafferty entertains fantasies of the pair “in a couple of deckchairs, somewhere hot but with ice-cold drinks. Reminiscing about the sparring we used to do, back in the days when the good guys thought they knew the bad guys” (*Naming* 425).

Cafferty often is portrayed as both annoyed and amused by Rebus’s persistence in doing his duty and by his borderline criminal behavior regarding the law he serves. Along the years the two men have even helped each other, with Rebus frequently crossing ethical lines. By the end of their long association, Rebus is no longer acting on official orders but mounting his own “vendetta” (*Exit* 146) against his foe. Big Ger, for his part, seems to welcome this kind of perverse attention. He may boast to Clarke that “unlike DI Rebus here, I have plenty of friends I can drink and have a laugh with” (142), but when he is on the brink of death, only Rebus visits him in the hospital (311). Both men seem to need, as well as understand, each other, although neither will cross the line to step fully into the other’s territory. Although mildly corrupt, Rebus cannot be bought, as he does not care for wealth or status; Big Ger cannot totally abandon his criminal habits, not even when he tries to act as a legitimate businessman. What they seem to share is an understanding that the line separating the underworld from a corrupt overworld is blurred (*Exit* 188; *Naming* 253) and that issues of legality are not necessarily straightforward in the world they share.

This paradoxical bonding throughout the Rebus series gathers momentum as the two men age for, as Rankin explains:

I took a decision early on in the series that Rebus would live in real time — he would age, realistically, unlike most fictional detectives. He gets older, he gets slower, he gets creakier, he gets fatter as the series progresses. Having started the series in ’87, when he was 40, in 2007 he must be 60. In Scotland, if you’re a cop, if you’re a detective, you’ve got to retire at 60. So I was sort of forced into it. If they changed the law, then he would happily come back and be a cop again.¹ (qtd. in Mayer, n. pag.)

The aging cop and gangster both then face the prospect of time running out and of their own powers and influence waning in twenty-first-century Scotland after devolution. However, Cafferty, who is just one year older than Rebus (in *Exit Music*, he uses Big Ger’s birthday date, 18 October 1946, to break into the gangster’s safe), need not submit to mandatory retirement, because, of course, he is an outlaw. The pragmatic gangster, still Edinburgh’s crime master at the point of the final scene, is, nonetheless, smart enough to realize that his decline in the competitive underworld may not be far off. What galls Rebus about reaching retirement age is that he will be dispossessed of his (limited) power as a law enforcer before he can send Cafferty back to jail, a failure that will deprive his career of “the knockout punch” (*Exit* 71).

Age started receiving the long overdue attention it deserved as a factor conditioning identity as a result of 1970s feminism. Sontag lists the disadvantages that beset women as their bodies age, in contrast with the many advantages men still enjoy well into their old age. Today, when many medical and self-help books, as well as the widespread use of Viagra, have exposed mature men’s fixation with their bodies, male aging is more disempowering than it was assumed to be. In addition, the growing gender equality in labor and related retirement legislation are, as Featherstone and Hepworth argue, making men’s and women’s aging issues and experiences more similar (359). Age studies received a first major impulse from the realization that “old age, esteemed or denigrated, is socially produced”

(Hendricks and Leedham 6). In the last twenty years, this realization has spread not just to old age as it affects women but to all ages and both genders. Gullette points out that "[i]n short, the negatives linked to having an age have spread. *Every* age (after the pre-oedipal) has been problematized" (216, emphasis in original). As sociologist Jeff Hearn notes, "successful men defy simply being 'older men'; as such, they reproduce men's taken for granted asexual, agendered, a-aged power and authority" (107). In this sense, an irony of the Rebus series is that the cop ages faster than the gangster, for, as Rebus loses authority and power, the gangster keeps his intact in the underworld and even gains some in legitimate society. As his own retirement approaches, Rebus finally acknowledges that "[f]or a while now, he'd known the truth — that it wasn't so much the underworld you had to fear as the *overworld*. Maybe that explained why Cafferty had, to all purposes and appearances, gone legit. A few friends in the right places and deals got done, fates decided" (*Exit* 188, emphasis in original).

The study of male aging in literature is, of course, not new, although it has grown significantly with age studies. Attention has been paid primarily to canonical literature; thus, the Deats and Lagretta volume includes the section "The Aging Man in Literature," which deals, quite predictably, with Shakespeare's Lear and Prospero; George Bernard Shaw's play *Back to Methuselah*; Ernest Hemingway's heroes; and a key, real-life figure, Bertrand Russell. The representation of aging in popular fiction has by no means received the same attention, yet there are signs that detective fiction is one of the genres most committed to considering the impact of this process. Hepworth complains that the genre has been overlooked by "literary gerontology" and claims that this fiction is an important source of information about how society sees its elderly. His focus falls, accordingly, on "four noteworthy images of old self: physical and mental frailty; otherness; the mask of ageing; and positive ageing" (32). Miss Jane Marple is inevitably mentioned as an example of positive aging and the ways that the best powers of detection may hide behind the deceptive mask of old age. The same could be said of Hercule Poirot, although his age does not provoke as much comment. In the case of Rebus and Cafferty, their anxieties about getting older, with the implication of waning powers, are no doubt complicated by what Makinen describes as a new fictional landscape in crime and mystery fiction. Examining novels by Colin Dexter, R. D. Wingfield, and Reginald Hill, Makinen argues that

At the same time as feminist writers have taken up the genre and created a range of robust detective heroines, the texts of male contemporaries begin to betray an anxiety around their detectives' lack of potency. Where the female is purposeful, independent but committed to her community, the male detectives have failed relationships, and a lack of purpose. Male detectives have traditionally been loners, but they have been self-reliant loners. What distinguishes these contemporary examples is a particular aura of sadness and loss that surrounds the mature male detectives and which I locate in the cultural debates around the "crisis of masculinity" that arose as a consequence of the impact of feminism. (254)

Makinen concludes that the sadness of male detectives is built "around their implicit obsolescence" (257) in this new territory where patriarchy is under siege. This may help explain why Cafferty tries, but fails, to form an alliance with Rebus's subordinate and friend Clarke, who is eager for promotion in a police service still dominated by male status and privilege. In *The Naming of the Dead* (2005), Clarke's hippie mother is attacked during a demonstration, and Cafferty offers immediate but illegal retaliation to satisfy Clarke's frustration with slow legal justice. At first tempted, she realizes in time that she is making a serious mistake; she finally visits Big Ger to declare herself his enemy. Undismayed, he

teases her: "Imagine how we could run the city between us—information exchanged, tip-offs and trades.... Me going about my business and you swiftly climbing that promotion ladder. Isn't that what we both want, when it comes down to it?" (*Naming* 502, ellipsis in original). Clarke, however, chooses eventually to climb the ladder unaided, for, although she has Rebus's full support, he is too marginal in the police hierarchy to actually empower her. As Laura Severin claims, "With *Exit Music*, Rankin suggests that Clarke's feminism does indeed have disruptive potential" (87). Duncan Petrie argues that Rebus, a failed father who never truly connects with his daughter, Sammy—not even when a young joyrider cripples her—finds a surrogate daughter in Clarke. For Petrie, her "symbolic succession" of Rebus supplies "a viable answer to the erosion of the traditional hard man by the forces of feminism and advanced capitalism" (158). In his view, Rankin's foregrounding of Clarke offers new possibilities for a positive recovery of Scottish identity, although Petrie does not clarify how young people would participate in this nor how they would abandon the legacy of the patriarchal hard man. It is worth noting that, even though it had been rumored that Rankin would continue the series with Clarke as a protagonist, this has not happened to date.

The main reason for Rebus's obsolescence is not, however, Clarke's rise but, more simply, Rankin's decision to make his series as realistic as possible, including Rebus's compulsory retirement. Rebus is forced to become a hero with a deadline, a situation that he, like other capable workers compelled to retire, resists. "Following the imposition of mandatory retirement ages," Blaikie states, "old age became increasingly regarded by Western governments as a 'social problem'" (60). When old-age pensions were introduced in 1908 in Britain, this was seen as an immense social achievement. Because of the current economic crisis and much higher health standards, all of Europe is now debating whether the retirement age should be pushed back even as far as age seventy, because fully productive members of society are forced to retire regardless of their actual capacities. This form of social engineering affects crime fiction as well, particularly because of the growth of the police procedural. Priestman suggests that "the story of British detective fiction since the Second World War is largely the story of how middle-ranking career police officers—usually detective inspectors—came to be taken seriously" (173), decentering the private eye and the amateur detective figure. In real life, British detective inspectors retire earlier than the general population, either at age sixty or after thirty years of service. What to do with officers retiring often in their prime does indeed bother the police and the authorities.² Hamish Brown, a renowned detective inspector retired from the Metropolitan Police, explains that leaving the "organisation" is not easy, as it works as a family, and the role of "a police officer carries status and it is difficult to walk away from that." He advises retiring officers to take some months off before embarking on a second career, always a possibility as "there is plenty of work out there." "The important thing," he concludes, "is to decide when you want to leave and what you want to do after the service" ("Police Review" n. pag.).³

In contrast, Rebus, the fictional detective inspector, never plans for his retirement, which is simply forced on him. His reckless attitude may be due to the hard-boiled legacy shaping his difficult personality, which also problematizes the procedural itself:

This view of the procedural as a "celebration" of teamwork, however, overlooks those characters who are clearly not "team players." Rankin's John Rebus is a loner who frequently withholds information regarding cases from his fellow officers, follows individual "hunches" which are rarely shared with, or explained to, the other members of the investigating team, lives, and often drinks, alone, and rarely plays by the same rules as the police officers around him. (Scaggs 95)

Or it may be due, as Diemert argues, to Rankin's emphasis on "the pervasive Calvinism of the Scottish milieu" (168) and its exacting work ethic, compounded with Rebus's gnostic imperative to find the truth. Whatever the case, Rankin puts his hero in an impossible position, for, despite his bodily aging and legally mandatory retirement, he has not lost the urge to be a detective. The hard man of predevolution, hard-boiled, Tartan noir is simply made redundant, which is why his cases

don't just get harder, but become more representative of the disaggregated Scottish *polis*—in both senses of that term.... With classical economics gone global and enigmatic, a sophisticated multi-level state employing complex social theory and a well-educated élite is required, but a minimal 'policeman' state is all that's paid for. Rebus is that policeman, and he is being overwhelmed. (Harvie 65)

Rebus's pounding on Big Ger's chest signifies, accordingly, the hero's rage at his realization that he must stop, forced by realistic circumstances beyond his control.

The realistic choice made by Rankin also forces a somewhat melodramatic resolution for Cafferty's career, leaving unanswered the question of how much longer he might have remained in power (that is, unless Rankin eventually decides to resurrect him in a future, postretirement Rebus novel). Given that age "has been a major source of power for men in this and many societies" (Hearn 100), it is to be surmised that powerful young criminals grow even more dangerous with age, as Big Ger's backstory suggests. In *The Black Book* (1993), in which Big Ger first appears as a major character, the reader learns that he was born in Craigmillar, "one of the tougher Edinburgh housing schemes" (351). In *Exit Music*, Big Ger discloses to Rebus that his father left a month before he was born, and an aunt and uncle helped his working mother raise him (272). Cafferty began his criminal career as the leader of a local teenage gang; when he was first arrested for a stabbing, "Police discovered that the teenage Cafferty had already been in trouble at school for 'accidentally' jamming a ballpoint pen into the corner of a fellow pupil's eye" (*Black Book* 351). Later, in his twenties, he moved to the Scottish West coast, where he was employed in the 1960s as "muscle for loan sharks" (*Set* 361). He served his apprenticeship, as Rebus calls it, in London, "post-Krays and Richardson. Made his name and learned his trade" (*Set* 361). Back home, Big Ger became a henchman for Edinburgh underworld kingpin Bryce Callan, eventually "branching out on his own" (*Set* 361) with his boss's blessings. When Callan retired in 1979, Big Ger took over Edinburgh. His supremacy is not even altered by his several prison terms; as Bill Nairn, his jailer, reminds Rebus: "You know how it is with career villains: serve their time, just part and parcel of the job, like a temporary relocation" (*Set* 347).

A sociologist might highlight the tough, rough lifestyle of Big Ger's childhood as a conditioning factor of his adult lifestyle. Yet not all fatherless boys living in similar neighborhoods become criminals. Rankin takes a more psychological approach in explaining the construction of his arch criminal with exploitative tendencies:

A few years ago when I made a series about evil for Channel 4 I interviewed a psychiatrist who said that the psychological make-up of a psychopath is almost identical to that of a successful entrepreneur.... That is really interesting, that your Murdochs of the world have a pattern of behaviour that is actually quite similar to psychopaths. That has stuck with me and drip-fed its way into a lot of my books. (qtd. in Kean, n. pag.)

Big Ger, this Murdoch of the underworld, embodies the urge to accumulate power. This urge has psychopathic undertones, although Big Ger's utter lack of empathy for his victims is by no means a sign of mental illness; his lucid hyper-rationality is actually his most valuable business asset. Cafferty's methods, however, include physical violence per-

petrated by his henchmen and occasionally by himself; it is this aspect that characterizes him as a criminal and separates him from so-called "legitimate" business enterprises. The key to Big Ger's personality is that, as he tells Rebus, "Thing you have to realise is, I'm happy with my lot.... Unlike some I could name" (*Fleshmarket* 225, ellipsis in original). His happiness lies in accumulating power rather than just money, and because he holds the top position in the classic patriarchal structure of the criminal underworld. Rebus poses no real threat to him, as, essentially, Big Ger considers him a puritanical loser. Big Ger's jokey use of "Strawman" as Rebus's nickname, borrowed from a prosecutor who confused Rebus with another witness, is eloquent.

Big Ger takes threats to his authority seriously, whether they involve aspiring villains like Tommy Telford or potential heroes like Tench in *The Naming of the Dead*. In *The Hanging Garden*, Tommy decides to push Cafferty (then in jail) out of Edinburgh's gangland, finding his native Glasgow's criminal world too overcrowded. Aware of the danger that the upstart Tommy poses, a concerned yet adamant Big Ger tells Rebus, "I've never backed down from a fight" (*Hanging* 176). In his strict code of behavior, matters are simple: When attacked, as he rationalizes to Rebus, "I'm going to have to retaliate, whether I want it or not. A little ritual we have to go through, like shaking hands" (*Hanging* 258). If an enemy strikes and he does not strike back, Cafferty worries that he will "look like something you'd step around on the pavement" (*Hanging* 284). By the time he leaves prison under the false pretence of a terminal cancer in *Set in Darkness* (2000), Big Ger already understands that, in the new Scotland of devolution, he needs, like Dr. Jekyll, to keep up a respectable appearance if he wishes to act as he pleases. After adding drug and illegal immigrant smuggling operations to his gaming and prostitution businesses, Big Ger turns his sights on profiting from real estate speculation in Old Town, unleashed by the building of the new Scottish Parliament. Toward that end, he kills Callan's nephew, Barry, his main rival and a "respectable" businessman who plans to corrupt the new Scottish Members of Parliament so as to control urban planning in Scotland. By pretending that he is a respectable businessman retired from crime, Big Ger succeeds in his plans to combine his underworld with his overworld "legitimate" operations. He even becomes a "full-scale celebrity" thanks to a sensationalist biography commissioned by him, which meets "roaring success not just in Scotland but further afield. USA, Canada, Australia" (*Naming* 67).⁴

A new enemy eventually mars this triumph — honest councilor Gareth Tench of Craigmillar and Niddrie, Cafferty's childhood territories. Tench irks Cafferty particularly because

"... he sees nothing wrong with shouldering me aside, because he's got righteousness on his side. By controlling the illicit, he makes it a force for good." Cafferty gave a sigh. "Sometimes I think that's how half the globe operates. It's not the underworld you should be watching — it's the overworld. Men like Tench and his ilk." (*Naming* 253, emphasis in original)

Tench is another male character lusting after power and control. He taunts Big Ger, declaring that he will not even bother to fight him as "[y]our little empire's turning to dust. Time you woke up to the fact" (*Naming* 255). He undermines Cafferty's power by arranging for the council to reject his legal business applications to open bars and cab offices and persuades the young men in his impoverished district to reject Big Ger's work offers. Tench's "heroic" mettle impresses Rebus, who, nonetheless, pities his foe: "It struck Rebus that what Cafferty feared was a loss of power. Tyrants and politicians alike feared the self-same thing, whether they belonged to the underworld or the overworld" (*Hanging* 257). When a rape victim murders Tench after he failed to protect her, clever Big Ger never dispels the

suspicion that he is responsible for Tench's death, as this sends a powerful message to prospective rivals.

Big Ger's narcissism prevents him from bonding with his associates. He fails, for example, to empathize with his loyal lieutenant, the Weasel. He is an indifferent father to his secret son, Billy, who is brutally murdered in *Mortal Causes* (1994) as an accidental victim of the squabbling between two criminals. Billy's mother has never revealed his father's identity to him, because, according to Big Ger, she "wasn't exactly proud of me" (*Black Book* 515). Cafferty and his wife, Morag, are childless; he limits his parental duties to sending Billy's mother money until the boy comes of age, after which he sends Billy occasional amounts anonymously. When his son is murdered, Cafferty breaks out of jail not out of sense of personal outrage or grief but because "I can't have people fucking with my family, it's bad for *my* reputation. Nobody gets away with something like that ... it'd be bad for business" (*Mortal* 515, ellipsis and emphasis in original). The Weasel betrays Big Ger to the police to protect his own son, who has started drug-dealing in Big Ger's territory. Despite his own loss as a father, Big Ger callously kills his closest personal ally.

Lanchester describes Cafferty as "a complicated figure whose worldview has much more in common with Rebus's than the policeman would be willing to admit" (n. pag.). Possibly in protection of his own reputation as a hard cop, Rebus constantly struggles to keep alive his dislike of "his 'brother' antagonist" (Smith, n. pag.). There is, nevertheless, something exaggerated in his adamant claim that he wants "a full scale crucifixion" of his enemy (*Black Book* 239). At one point, Rebus feels tempted to kill Big Ger. The gangster senses this and taunts him: "Thinking evil thoughts? ... I'm a taxpayer, remember — top bracket at that — which makes me *your* employer" (*Hanging* 249, emphasis in original). Exasperated, Rebus nurses his obsession even to the point of stalking the gangster, as his dismayed colleagues in the Scottish Crime and Drugs Enforcement Agency discover. They had considered charging Cafferty with tax evasion. Rebus, however, sees this final chase as a personal matter:

Yes, he wanted Cafferty taken out of the game. But suddenly, it was important that it be *him* making the bone-crunching tackle. So it couldn't be *just* about Cafferty; it was about the means and method, too. Years he'd been fighting the bastard, and now technology and some bespectacled penpusher might end up finishing the job. No mess, no fuss, no blood. (*Exit* 222, emphasis in original)

In this final novel, Rebus and Cafferty continue to spar, bantering boastfully to the last:

"...For a time there, I used to think that was me — the last free bull."

"You're full of bull all right," Rebus retorted.

"Thing is," Cafferty said with a smile that was almost rueful, "nowadays I think maybe it's you, Rebus. You're bucking and kicking and snorting, because you can't deal with the idea of me being legit." (*Exit* 272)

Cafferty seems here to declare here, paradoxically, his admiration of Rebus's inexorability. Rebus is mellowed enough by this backhanded compliment that he momentarily considers giving his enemy the lift that could have saved his life. Later, when he sneaks into hospital claiming to be Big Ger's brother and a nurse replies that they do resemble each other, Rebus, in his own paradoxical moment, feels smug rather than hurt.

The symbiotic relationship between these two grumpy old men is an enduring characteristic of Rankin's Rebus series. As the two men hate and hound each other through the

novels, they lend each other meaning and significance. The ambiguities and tensions of the long relationship seem to mirror the ambiguities and tensions implicit in the larger abstractions of good and evil, justice and revenge, that also are explored in the novels. Perhaps leaving Rebus alive and Cafferty at death's door is Rankin's final signal that their "f(r)iendship" has grown too complex for simple closure.

Keywords: aging in literature; friendship in literature; mystery villains; Rankin, Ian

NOTES

1. In Rebus's first appearance in *Knots and Crosses* (1987), he is forty-one and has served as a police officer for fifteen years. Rankin has not yet explored Rebus's early years in the force. Apparently, a Scottish MP and Rebus fan did ask the Scottish Ministry of Justice to delay the age of retirement for police officers just so Rankin could continue the series (Gibbs 100).

2. See "Retiring Information at Police Life" and "Preparing for Police Retirement." The latter states, "All forces provide some form of pre-retirement course whether conducted 'in house' or outsourced to commercial organisations. These courses are generally available 1-2 years prior to the date of retirement and sometimes have spaces for partners." Rebus is not offered this option.

3. See also Brown's Web site, <http://www.hamishbrownmbe.com>

4. Rankin might be using Cafferty's book to criticize the celebrity gained by notorious Glasgow gangsters Jimmy Boyle and Paul Ferris, thanks to the publication of diverse fiction and true-crime volumes. Ferris's case was so blatant that Cathy Jamieson, minister for justice in the Scottish Executive, proposed in 2007 that convicted criminals be barred from making a profit by publishing their memoirs. See "Criminal Memoirs."

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