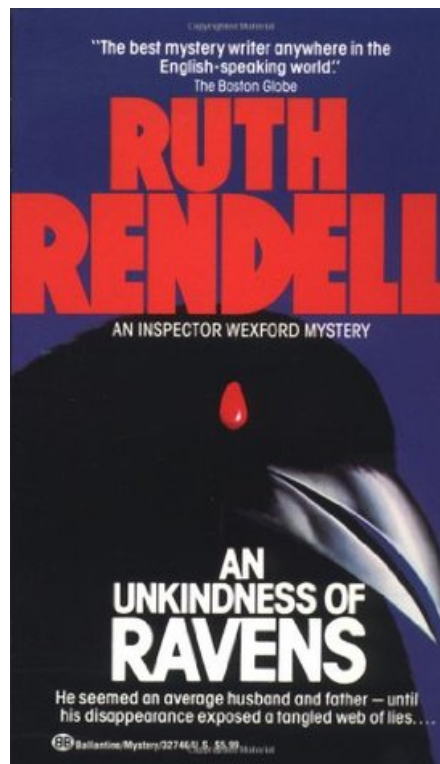




An Unkindness of Ravens

Ruth Rendell

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An Unkindness of Ravens Ruth Rendell

When Chief Inspector Reg Wexford does a favour for his wife - to look into the disappearance of one of their neighbours' husbands—everything he finds seems to confirm his first inkling: that this is simply another case of a bored middle-aged man having run off with a younger woman. However, when Rodney Williams is found dead, and another local man is stabbed in his car, Wexford finds himself thrown into an investigation involving a militant feminist organisation known as "Arria", who have taken the raven as their symbol.

An Unkindness of Ravens Details

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From Reader Review An Unkindness of Ravens for online ebook

Laila (BigReadingLife) says

I've read thirteen of these Inspector Wexford mysteries now. THIRTEEN! They're not the greatest thing ever but for some reason I can't quit reading them! In spite of the whole murder aspect, these are "comfort reads" for me. I know and really like the two lead detectives, Wexford and Mike Burden. I like the setting in semi-rural England. So I guess visiting these characters is like visiting old friends.

This particular entry is odd. It involves this militant feminist organization called ARRIA. Also Burden's wife is pregnant and she's having (odd) emotional difficulty with the pregnancy. I guessed the "whodunnit" part long before Wexford did, unfortunately. Oh well. It was still a pleasant visit to the fictional town of Kingsmarkham.

Lyn Elliott says

You can't help liking Inspector Reg Wexford. He might be a bit rough and grumpy, but he's kind, loves his family, reads plays and can spend a lot of time on wrong tracks. Here the tracks get pretty muddy and the motive resolve not very convincing, most of the characters overdrawn, but it was ideal for another day shut inside with bronchitis.

Deborah Gray says

Ruth can be guaranteed to write a well-crafted story, an easy read. I enjoy Inspector Wexford and his dogged pursuit of the truth, a man with his own brand of intuition who would rather follow up leads himself than send a subordinate. In this case, there were sufficient plot twists to hold interest, although I did start to guess the murderer about 2/3 of the way in. And it kept me entertained on recent long walks as I listened to the book on an MP3.

However, this story particular choice of subject captivated me less than most. It had a dated quality that couldn't quite be overcome by story for me. It wasn't the fact that it was written 30 years ago. I love Agatha Christie and other fiction much older than that. It was the feminist group, who were almost cartoonishly militant, the constant descriptions of era-specific white tights and flower printed dresses and the apparently oblivious wives of the bigamist. Burden, Wexford's partner, is dealing with his own family problems, a parallel anti-feminist issue that overwhelmed him with depression, but wasn't sufficiently plausible to be engaging to me. Despite all that, it deserved 3 stars, a solid "I liked it."

Francis says

This was my least liked of the Rendell books I have read to date and Ruth Rendell has been one of my favorite mystery authors. So... what was the problem exactly? I would break it down to three separate complaints.

1) The cold, unemotional mother figure and her subsequently damaged or dysfunctional offspring. While this

leads to an interesting puzzle - is it the mother or the damaged child - who committed the crime? It can begin to feel a little repetitious after awhile.

2) The young radical adult thing. This gets done in many ways on many different subjects, antiwar, environment, feminism ...etc. But it far too often cartoonish as in portraying young people as unintelligent, mislead sponges, with no minds of their own, ready to lap up and act on any anti-societal message being fed to them by their wicked and misinformed leader(s).

3) Explaining the solution by doing a complete psychoanalysis of the protagonist as explained by the local detective who was trained where?

Well should this review deter you from reading a fairly good book? Absolutely not, but then I needed to grip, so if nothing else, I feel better now.

Oh and thank you for your patience.

Liz says

The absurd, insulting ending to this book completely mitigates the decent novel that came before. I would not recommend this book to anyone.

Roman Clodia says

Ok, this is the third 'vintage' Rendell I've listened to on audiobook and I think I'm done: they're clearly wildly popular in my local library but I can't get over how dated and old-fashioned they are. This book was originally published in 1985 but what we have is a story of young feminists who are also knife-wielding man-haters ('cos, 'feminist' is a synonym for 'psychopath', obv!).

Alongside all the misogyny and dodgy gender politics, is a horribly patronising approach to the readership: very early on Rendell slips in a reference to *The Cenci*, a play in which Wexford's daughter is acting - which gives away the entire plot of the book - but clearly Rendell doesn't think that her readers might be up on their Shelley. Instead we have to wait for Wexford's laborious unpacking of the plot after watching the play, reading the programme and ruminating for quite some time.

Why Rendell's books are regarded as crime 'classics' is a mystery to me: they feel far more old-fashioned with objectionable social attitudes than books that are far older.

Rose Griffith says

This book may be why I stopped reading Rendell many years ago.

By 49% (Kindle), I was in agony wondering why the story was going on and on when it was obvious who, if not why, committed the murder. By 79% I was skimming. At 85% I gave up.

There was nothing I liked about this book, especially after reading Peter Robinson's Inspector Banks' novels where I feel plunged into the settings and as if I'm forming friendships with the characters.

I couldn't get a bead on Wexford--his age, appearance, anything. I had no idea why Burden's story was included except to further convolute an already convoluted story.

I realize Rendell has won many awards for her writing, so we'll go with the: it's not her it's me and move on.

Heather says

I think this is one of Rendell's most interesting books with regard to images of women, assumptions about feminine character, and feminism. She keeps setting up and knocking down feminine stereotypes, playing with our assumptions about the nature of women -- ugly/pretty, old/young, sophisticated/naive, strong/weak. Characters and readers are duped/led astray by the strong emotions produced by the very idea of abusive/exploitative men and vulnerable girls.

I enjoy the rather comic depiction of the teen/college feminist group... their zeal, their exaggerated language, their degrees of sincerity, their sexual hypocrisies... comic because they're mostly described through Wexford's skeptical yet humane and generous perspective. Also thought it was interesting that feminism, the "prime suspect" for almost the whole book, turned out to be kind of a red herring.

Biblio Files (takingadayoff) says

This one has put me off Ruth Rendell, and that's saying something. I'll just have to keep in mind that it was written in 1985 and attitudes have changed a lot since then, but her caricature of a militant feminist group is way over the top and apparently just for her own amusement, since it had little to do with the murder. And I'm not too crazy about the fact that Rendell seems to be a Freudian as well. How tiresome.

Leslie says

Aaaah...a much better Rendell experience than the last Wexford! A plot that's close to home--perhaps even too close--and full of the concise descriptions of characters that make you know them, this entry in the series is perfect in every way, right down to the too-real problems of Wexford's partner, whose wife is pregnant with their first child--and doesn't want it. The psychological twists and turns of that relationship are a fascinating story alone, but so much more is happening.

At the request of his wife, Wexford pays a visit to an acquaintance who lives a couple of streets away; her husband is missing. While this woman warrants no sympathy--and Rendell's description of her and her home is ruthlessly classic RR--we do begin to wonder what happened to the man and why his wife is so hostile towards their daughter. And then the story really begins.

Although I thought I had an idea of the "whodunnit"--which turned out to be correct--the "whydunnit" was an unexpected psychological horror, which caused me to slow down (as much as I wanted to speed up) so that I wouldn't miss anything; I even put the book aside late one night, with only 20 pages to go, to read the next day so that I wouldn't rush through to the end. Absolutely fascinating.

Ellen says

An Unkindness of Ravens by Ruth Rendell.

This story was published in 1985. I wanted to go back to the start of the Inspector Wexford series after I had enjoyed so many of them that were written more recently.

Inspector Wexford is informed of a neighbors disappearance. Actually it's his wife that has requested he speak with the wife of the missing man. The inspector doesn't think too much about this situation but does go to the home of the missing person and speak with the wife, Mrs. Williams. In questioning her he obtains some information including the company the man works for.

The next step is to question Rodney Williams employer. There still doesn't seem to be too much out of place in Rodney Williams life until he learns of his income. There the discrepancy begins.

The Inspector Wexford books offer exactly what I look for in a mystery. DEPTH in characters and detail. The slow, painstaking deduction of each clue with the outside lives of Wexford and Burden keeping it realistic. This was an author who (in my opinion) enjoyed writing every page and plotting every murder.

Bettie? says

Read by..... Michael Bryant
Total Runtime..... 8 Hours 9 Mins

Description: *Rodney Williams's disappearance seems typical to Chief Inspector Wexford -- a simple case of a man running off with a woman other than his wife. But when another woman reports that her husband is missing, the case turns unpleasantly complex.*

This is somewhat similar to getting back onto a horse after a fall as the last book in this otherwise solid series was a dut-doh.

A feminist-toned tome with added knives and tennis.

- 3* From Doon With Death (Inspector Wexford, #1)
- 3* A New Lease of Death (Inspector Wexford, #2)
- 3* Wolf to the Slaughter (Inspector Wexford, #3)
- 2* The Best Man to Die (Inspector Wexford, #4)
- 3* A Guilty Thing Suprised #5
- 3* No More Dying Then (Inspector Wexford, #6)
- 3* Murder Being Once Done (Inspector Wexford, #7)
- 3* Some Lie and Some Die (Inspector Wexford, #8)

3* Shake Hands Forever (Inspector Wexford, #9)
3* A Sleeping Life (Inspector Wexford, #10)
3* Put on by Cunning (Inspector Wexford #11)
1* Speaker of Mandarin (Inspector Wexford, #12)
3* An Unkindness of Ravens (Inspector Wexford, #13)

3* Not in the Flesh (Inspector Wexford, #21)
2* The Vault (Inspector Wexford, #23)

Chris says

In case you missed it, Rush Limbaugh called a woman a slut simply because she had a different perspective on an issue. Of course to Limbaugh, the term feminist is a nasty word. I feel like I should send him a "Happy Women's History Month" card or something.

There is an actual point to my rambling here. Rendell's book deals with the question of what is feminism or to be more precise, can things go too far. At least in part. How she deals with it is rather interestingly and enjoyable. Nice to find a book that isn't preachy.

See, this guy disappears, and his wife has a bit well old fashioned. And then Wexford's Watson (whose name is Burden), his wife has issues because she is giving birth to a girl and feels upset that it is not a boy (and then feels upset that she is upset).

And disappearing guy, boy, does he sound like a real winner.

Kunjila Mascillamani says

First Ruth Rendell read for personal reasons. Did not like the book nor the detective. Even though i picked it up because i had been told that it was about a staunch feminist group functioning underground, the book turned out to be of nothing of the sort. There was no feminism at all. On the contrary i found it very misogynistic and patriarchal in its story, approach and even language.

The man who in the beginning of the book is reported missing had a reputation. This we get to know from the conversation inspector Wexford has with his wife, Dora.

'I'll tell you something I was scared to tell you at the time. I thought you might do something violent.'

'Sure, he said. 'I've always been so wild and free with my fists. What are you on about?'

'He made a pass at Sylvia.'

She said it defiantly. Standing there in the long red dress holding the sherry glass, her eyes suddenly wide and wary, she looked astonishingly young.

'So?' His elder daughter was thirty, married twelve years, and the mother of two tall sons. 'She's an attractive woman. I daresay men do make passes at her and no doubt she can take care of herself.'

Dora gave him a sidelong look. 'I said I was scared to tell you. She was fifteen at the time.'

Firstly, i noticed the way the author describes women by making elaborate comments about their clothes and

most of the time, age, appearance and bodies. Women who have become agents of patriarchy have a major role in establishing norms and they inevitably turn out to be patriarchal. Ruth Rendall, throughout the book speaks the language of patriarchy. Look at the way the inspector or is it the author? who makes a mental note of how young Dora looked. And the man's explanation to the sexual harassment that his daughter faced? It is that she is an attractive woman! I don't know how many times feminists will have to yell on rooftops that sexual harassment is *not* about looks or beauty. It is about power and violence and gender. This was only the beginning of things which were wrong with the book.

Another portion where a man was attacked by a woman in his car after he had given a lift to her, there is a reason given for them not having contacted the police.

It was his wife who had dissuaded him on the grounds that if the police were called the conclusion they would reach would be that Wheatley had first made some sort of assault on the girl.

That sounds like bullshit to me. So what is the author trying to say? Whenever a woman makes a complaint it will be assumed by default that the woman was attacked first and everything that was done was done in self defense? Then it would have been so so so easy for people like us who have had to fight sexual harassment tooth and nail all the time yelling on top of our voices that we are not lying because that was what we were mostly accused of. Are the police stupid or is the author?

Pitting women against women has been patriarchy's weapon for the longest time. We can see many instances of it in the book. The mysterious case of Jenny's pregnancy [which was not mysterious to me at all, from the look of things i knew what was 'wrong' with the baby] tells us that she, not Burden, the father was upset that she was going to have a girl. Burden is a little relieved when he gets to know that his wife has started taking a psychiatrist's help. He tells her

'Don't let him give you drugs.'

'It's a woman.'

She wanted to scream with laughter. The irony of it! She was a teacher and this other woman was a psychiatrist and Mike's daughter Pat was very nearly qualified as a dentist, yet here she was reacting like a no-account junior wife in a harem. Because the baby was a girl.

I am at a loss to decide what is meant by this that i quoted. no-account junior wife in a harem? Seriously? Throughout the book i never understood why this woman was upset with having a baby girl. Nor did her innocent husband [who seems to assume all psychiatrists are men in the earlier conversation]. So that is why the book says

In vain he had asked why this prejudice against girls, she who was a feminist, a supporter of the women's movement, who expressed a preference for her friends' small girls over their small sons, who got on better with her stepdaughter than her stepson, who professed to prefer teaching girls to boys.

She didn't know why, only that it was so. Her pregnancy, so long desired, at first so ecstatically accepted, had driven her mad. The worst of it was that he was coming to hate the unborn child himself and to wish it had never been conceived.

Did that make any sense? It was helpful because i got to know that like many women and others the author had no clue what feminism is about. She further elaborates with this rant that Burden does in a bar soon after.

'It's not that she's anti-girls usually,' Burden said. 'For God's sake, she's a feminist. I mean, it's not some stupid I-must-have-an-heir thing or every-woman's-got-to-have-a-son-to-prove-herself. In fact I think she secretly thinks women are better than men - I mean cleverer and more versatile, all that. She says she doesn't understand it herself. She says she had no feelings about the child's sex one way or the other, but when they told her, when she knew, she was - well, dismayed. That was at first. It's got worst. It's not just dismay now, it's hatred.'... '...She says that ever since the world began sons have been preferred over daughters and now it's become part of race memory, what she calls the collective unconscious.'

'What Jung called it.'

Her justification made no sense to me even though i like Jung's terminology and what it means. I hope that everyone else knows that stating that one's a feminist a lot of times does not make you a feminist. The author didn't seem to know it. You cannot be pissed just because you are going to have a girl baby and still call yourself a feminist. Collective unconscious or not.

From time to time we get glimpses of the sexist nature of our inspector. My guess is that, these revelations were planted so that in the end people go 'he was right all the while with his sexism' because (view spoiler)

'I was at work. Thursday's our late night. I didn't tell you, did I? I'm manageress of the fashion floor at Jackie's.'

He was surprised. Somehow he had taken it for granted she didn't work...

From the beginning the inspector has certain 'opinions' about this 'other' home of the dead man. [The dead man had two wives. One legal an another illegal, both with kids] From the way the woman dresses to the way she keeps her home, the inspector has to make a comment or a mental note which makes no sense whatsoever. For example,

Wexfor thought how easy it was to imagine Rodney Williams - or his idea of Rodney Williams - in his other home but next to impossible to imagine him here. Seated at that glass-topped dining table, for instance, with its bowl of pink and red roses or in one of those pink chintz armchairs. He had been a big coarse man and everything here ahd a daintiness like a pink shell or the inside of a rose.

I mean, seriously, the author is still stuck with pink=girl,dainty?

In another instance,

In this house Williams had had no desk, only a drawer in the gilt-handled white melamine chest of drawers. This had been Wendy's house, no doubt about it, the sanctim where Wendy held sway. Girlish, fragile, soft-voiced though she might be, she had made this place her own, feminine and exclusive - exclusive in a way of Rodney Williams. He had been there or sufferance, Wexford sensed, his presence depending on his good behaviour...So Wendy had made a home full of flowers and colours and silk cushions inw hich he was allotted small corners as if - unconsciously, he was sure it was unconsciously - she knew the day would come when it would be for herself and her daughter alone.

To this i ask, 'So?'

But don't think that his opinions are restricted to the 'younger' wife. The man has an opinion about even the laughter of the other wife, Joy. See here

'...She gave that bitter laugh of hers. If I'd had to live with that laugh it would have got horribly on my nerves.'

Was inspector Wexford living with that laugh? No. Then what the fuck was it to him! What is he trying to say, that it was perhaps justified by this woman's laugh that the dead husband married another woman and begat a child? Wow. This Wexford man gets on my nerves really. He is like the quintessential mallu male. Has to pass a comment on everything which does not concern him.

If you are a police officer and your job requires you to observe young women playing badminton, you might be questioned. Of course if you keep staring at girls that way you should be questioned. And may be that's why when there are women involved, women cops are always required? Now see what the conversation between these two cops observing young girls playing tennis/badminton [i forget] looks like.

'What would you think if you saw two middle-aged women watching young men playing squash?'

Burden looked sideways at him.

'Well, nothing, would I? I mean, I'd think they were their mothers or just women who liked watching sport.'

'Exactly. Doesn't that tell you something? Two things? One is that, whatever the women's movement says, there is a fundamental difference between men and women in their attitude to sex, and the other that this is an area in which women might claim - if it's occurred to them - to be superior to us.'

I'll tell you what else we can claim. That what you just said is horseshit. If middle aged men watching women are looked at suspiciously it is because middle aged men have, for a long time looked at girls like that and done things to them. And no, you cannot *look* at women like that without being questioned. That's what the women's movement that you so mock from time to time have made possible. You are just cranky because you lost your 'freedom' which was not freedom to begin with of looking at women whenever you please and for however long you pleased. Alright? By the way, there is no question of *if* something has occurred to us. All serious stuff occur to us.

Wendy later gives some 'motherly' advice to her daughter. ARRIA, the underground feminist group is constantly under scrutiny by these male detectives. What even teenagers can understand they can't apparently.

'Why girls?' he said. 'Haldon Finch is co-ed. Don't any boys belong?'...

'Well, it's all women, isn't it? It's for women. They're - what d'you call it? - feminists, militant feminists.'

'Then I hope you'll keep clear of it, Veronica,' Wendy said very quickly and sharply for her. 'I hope you'll have nothing to do with it. If there's anything I really hate it's women's lib. Liberation! I'm liberated and look where it's got me. I just hope you'll do better than I have when the time comes and find a man who'll really support you and look after you, a nice good man who'll - who'll *cherish* you.' Her lips trembled with emotion. She laid down her sewing. 'I wasn't enough of a woman for Rodney,' she said as if the girl wasn't there. 'I wasn't enough of a girl. I got too hard and independent and - and *mature*, I know i did.' A heroic effort was made to keep the tears in, the break out of the voice, and a victory was won. 'You just remember that, Veronica, when your turn comes.'

Now can someone please tell me what Wendy's husband turning out to be a con man or dead has anything to do with women's liberation? Does Wendy realize when she wallows in self pity that that is exactly what women's liberation has helped women *not* do? Make them realize one's self esteem has got nothing to do

with how old you are or how much of a 'woman' you are?

Author continues with her stupid descriptions of women as seen through the eyes of the male inspector.

...Wendy Williams came down the spiral staircase, walking slowly, giving him a voyeur's look if he had wanted it of shapely legs in very fine pale tights all the way up to a glimpsed border of cream lace. He wasn't looking, but out of the corner of his eye he saw her hold her skirt down as if he had been.

...Wendy had a pretty cotton dress on, the kind that needs a lot of ironing, a wide black patent belt to show she still had an adolescent waist and red wedge-heeled shoes that pinched where they touched.

I am still trying to figure out what a 'voyeur's look' is and what the necessity of this paragraph was in the book.

His own wife too is described the same way. The author has something for waists.

He lay down beside her and the last thing he remembered before sleeping was laying his hand on her still-slender waist.

Our detective, however is kind of happy in a patronizing way about how

women were at last taking steps to defend themselves against the muggings and rapes which in the past few years had so disproportionately increased.

The usage 'at last' makes it worse. As though it is our fault that we waited till the rapes reached this proportion. And self defense itself indicates inequality, for me.

There is an alarming statement in the rules of this militant feminist group and i am sure it has been put there to make people go 'what the fuck' and despise the whole group.

'...Rule 10: Women wishing to reproduce should select the potential father for his physique, health, height, etc., and ensure impregnation in a rape or near-rape construct.'

I couldn't make any sense of it. I am not sure if the author herself knew what she was writing when she was writing it. But i have a hunch because a little later these middle aged police people say:

'It's tempting,' he said to Burden, 'to think of a group of those ARRIA girls grabbing hold of poor old Williams like the Maenads with Orpheus and doing him in on the Lesbian shore.'

It's male fantasy and that's why it has been put there. And yet we are the ones who get accused of 'liking', 'inviting' 'enjoying' rape. Phew!

Later ARRIA members are accused of 'inviting' trouble. One of the girls even says that she once deliberately created a situation in which men would attempt something. But the way the young women is questioned gives a lot of insight into what the inspector himself think of such crimes. In this one the girl was assumed to be a sex worker by a man whom she later attacked.

'Not that there's anything wrong with being a prostitute. That's OK, that's fine if that's where

you're at. It's just the way men *assume*...

'Only some men.'

'A lot[...]

'Why did you ask him for a lift? To provoke exactly the sort of situation that arose?'

Yeah. That's what all women do. Provoke, attack and then feel good about it. Because to be harassed is so much fun, you know. The girl even has to justify herself later on due to the inspector's unabashed victim blaming.

'I didn't do that. I didn't do anything but go for a walk in the wood. I wasn't provocatively dressed.'...The only thing I did to provoke anyone was *be* there and be a woman.'

Now i'll come to the part i found the most disgusting. This dead man, Rodney Williams was known to have 'a thing' for young women. (view spoiler)

'...I said of course I was upset. No mother wants to her her daughter's like that, does she?

'Well, we know he was. But he'd never have done that without...'

'Encouragement?' he said flatly.

She nodded impatiently. 'Putting her arm round him, trying to get his attention, she wasn't *ten*. I said to her, you're not ten anymore. Sitting on his knee - what did you expect? Now the least you can do is keep quiet about it, I said, think of my feelings for a change.'

So it's her daughter Sara's fault that she was raped by her father. I thought the word she refuses to use is 'rape' but later i got to know it is 'fuck'. I am assuming 'like that' meant someone who slept with her father or elder people. Earlier in the book she had hinted something like that to the inspector when he had asked if he could go up to Sara's room to question her. And she had provoked her father by sitting on his knee and putting her arm round him. I think, by the same logic, even my cats can be said to have been provoked by me. Pathetic! Now when it comes to the other family, which also has a female child Veronica whom Sara alerts of her father's behaviour there is a sentence in the book which summarises what the author's take on rape is.

Rodney would serve Vronica the same way as he had served Sara. An unfortunate verb in the circumstances, but perhaps not inept...

Serve? Rape is the word you are looking for.

Sara, her daughter, throughout the novel is described in a rather peculiar way which struck me even before the novel told me that she is the killer. The girl aspires to be a doctor and that is something our inspector doesn't approve of.

A hard, neurortic little go-getter, he thought of her, without an atom of concern for her mother whom the police suspected of murdering her father.

In the same vein,

Nor would she care when her mother was arrested for the murder. But perhaps it was natural for victims of incest not to care much about anything. He felt a wrench of pity for her.

Now look at this portion where the inspector is questioning her about the rape.

'Why didn't you tell your brother? Or did you? I have a feeling you and your brother are close.'
'Yes, we are. In spite of everything.' She didn't say in spite of what but he thought he knew. 'I *couldn't* tell him.' Like a different girl speaking, her face turned away, 'I was ashamed.'
And she hates her mother, so it was a pleasure to tell *her*?

See how the inspector puts words into her mouth and goes on with the 'why didn't you tell your brother/best friend/uncle/aunt rant. But soon you" understand that *all* this treatment meted out to the young girl is justified because she is the murderer. A serial killer psychopath. That she has no feelings was already established earlier anyway. Ambitious girl as she is...This is the biggest crime that the book does. First say that there is a rape and then in the end say that the woman was lying. As if we don't have enough of such testimonies from patriarchy and victim blaming episodes. Phew. Thanks for this.

(hide spoiler)]

Complete write-up in blog

Lara says

Ruth Rendell's intrepid Chief Inspector Reg Wexford skillfully maneuvers his way through another murder in Kingsmarkam. This one, however, is a bigger tangle than most of his cases, involving not just murder but incest, unimaginable duplicity, bigamy and, ultimately, revenge of a type that leaves no room for easy answers or absolute justification.

Meanwhile, Wexford's partner, Mike Burden, is about to become a father, but his wife has become convinced she doesn't want the baby, especially if it's a girl. Set against the backdrop of the murder investigation, Burden's distress over his wife's attitude towards the unborn child contrasts sharply with the murder victim's penchant for young women and the wake of destruction he leaves behind him.

If you don't follow Wexford, you're missing a great series. Ms. Rendell died earlier this year and, while I hate that there will be no more adventures of our Chief Inspector, there are many more novels after "An Unkindness of Ravens" to enjoy - and I've moved on to the next, "The Veiled One"!
