

Reading and watching the Ruth Rendell Mysteries

For more than three decades, Ruth Rendell's police procedurals and psychological murder novels have provided rich material for both film and television adaptations. The aim of the study will be to examine the transformations undergone by crime and mystery stories once they have become films or television series, with a focus on narratology as well as reception. In other words, we shall aim at answering questions referring to the different ways of telling and reading/viewing the Rendell mysteries when novels or short stories become films and TV shows.

The two major trends of Rendell's abundant production will be studied, beginning with a few adaptations of her psychological novels for the cinema, such as Arvin Brown's *Diary of the Dead* (1976), based on *One Across, Two Down* (1971) and Ousama Rawi's *The Housekeeper* (1987), based on *A Judgement in Stone* (1977). Though not an English-speaking film, Claude Chabrol's adaptation of the latter in *La Cérémonie* (1997) will be included for comparison's sake. As one of the few film adaptations of her work Ruth Rendell was happy with, it will provide us with clues on how some specificities of her novels can be translated into another medium, especially as the novel hardly reads as a classic whodunit.

Regarding the second major part of the production, the "Wexford novels", featuring Rendell's recurrent detective, we shall focus on British television series ***The Ruth Rendell Mysteries*** (1987-2000) for inter-media comparisons between, first, the police procedural episodes centering on iconic Inspector Wexford and the episodes based on either short stories or full-length novels not featuring Wexford and second, film and TV adaptations. The last set of comparisons will also reflect on the links between seriality and recurrent detectives in different media, with insights into the role played by actors and actresses in the visual ones.

Key-words: Ruth Rendell / crime novels / recurrent detective / film adaptations / TV series

Biography

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