

Author:

Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

Adult Fiction

Book Appeal Terms: Definition of Appeal Terms**Genre:** Fantasy comics; Fantasy mysteries; Mystery comics; Urban fantasy**Character:** Likeable; Snarky**Storyline:** Intricately plotted**Pace:** Fast-paced**Tone:** Strong sense of place**Writing Style:** Banter-filled**Persistent link to this record (Permalink):**
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Database:

Novelist

1.

**The furthest station** (Jun 2017)**By:** Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

With this new novella, bestselling author Ben Aaronovitch has crafted yet another wickedly funny and surprisingly affecting chapter in his beloved Rivers of London series.

Series: Rivers of London**Popularity:** ★★☆☆☆ **Adult Fiction**

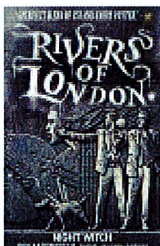
2.

**The hanging tree** (Jan 2017)**By:** Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

When blood and ghosts return to the Mayfair mansions of the super-rich, which have a haunted history as the last trip of the condemned, England's last wizard and the Metropolitan Police's reluctant investigator of all things supernatural is called in to get to the bottom of the sinister doings.

Series: Rivers of London, 6**Popularity:** ★★☆☆☆ **Adult Fiction**

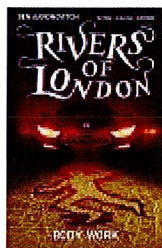
3.

**Rivers of London: night witch** (Dec 2016)**By:** Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

When the daughter of a Russian oligarch is kidnapped, Peter's boss Nightingale is kidnapped to ensure Peter's cooperation in the investigation.

Series: Rivers of London graphic novels, 2**Popularity:** ★★☆☆☆ **Adult Fiction**

4.



Rivers of London: body work (Mar 2016)

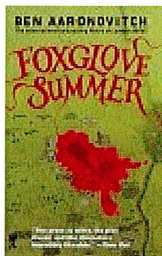
By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

Cop and wizard Peter Grant investigates when a series of haunted driverless cars go on killing sprees on the streets of London.

Series: Rivers of London graphic novels, 1

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆☆ Adult Fiction

5.



Foxglove summer (Jan 2015)

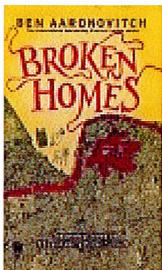
By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

Cop, Londoner and magical apprentice Peter Grant is the only one willing to admit that there may be a supernatural element involved in the disappearance of children in the small village of Herefordshire as he tries to find the truth.

Series: Rivers of London, 5

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆☆ Adult Fiction

6.



Broken homes: a Rivers of London novel (Feb 2014)

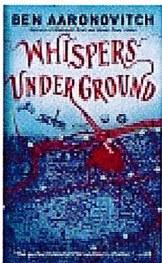
By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

Sworn to enforce the Queen's Peace, Constable Peter Grant, a magician and keeper of the flame, must discover if a mutilated body found in Crawley is the work of a common serial killer or an associate of the evil wizard known as the Faceless Man.

Series: Rivers of London, 4

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆☆ Adult Fiction

7.



Whispers under ground (Mar 2012)

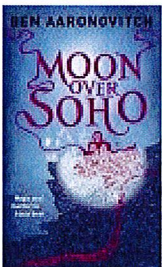
By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

To solve a perplexing murder case, Peter Grant, London constable and sorcerer's apprentice, must plumb the haunted depths of the oldest, largest, and deadliest subway system in the world.

Series: Rivers of London, 3

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆☆ Adult Fiction

8.



Moon over Soho (Mar 2011)

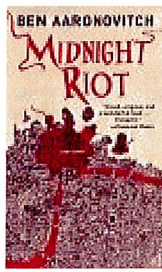
By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

After the death of a part-time jazz drummer, London constable and sorcerer's apprentice Peter Grant investigates a series of supernatural deaths in and around Soho that are linked to Peter's dad--a talented trumpet player named Richard "Lord" Grant.

Series: Rivers of London, 2

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆☆ Adult Fiction

9.



Midnight riot (Feb 2011)

By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

When his ability to speak with the lingering dead brings him to the attention of Detective Chief Inspector Thomas Nightingale, who investigates paranormal crimes, Probationary Constable Peter Grant is drawn into a world where an ancient evil is making a comeback on a rising tide of murder and dark magic.

Series: Rivers of London, 1

Popularity: ★★☆☆☆

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10. No Image
Available

Transit (Jan 1992)

By: Aaronovitch, Ben, 1964-

Series: Doctor Who: the new adventures

Popularity: ★☆☆☆☆

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Questions to Consider While Reading Science Fiction

SETTING (TIME AND PLACE)

- Do you think that the author accurately describes scientific principles in the novel? Why or why not?
- List some details from the novel that describe science and scientific principles.
- List some items from the story that can be found now. List some items that seem to be from the future.

CHARACTERS

- Explain the characters' involvement in the plot and story line.
- How are the characters important to the action of the novel?
- Are there any characters in the story who are different from those in other genres?

PLOT (STORY LINE)

- Does the plot focus on a particular area of science or scientific principle? Explain.
- Do the characters of the story participate in a documented or controversial area of science? Explain.
- Do you think the conflict of the story is real or fictional? Provide examples to illustrate your choice.

SUMMARY

- Why do you think the author chose to write about this particular incident?
- Why is this book considered to be science fiction?
- Do you think this novel is a good or bad science fiction text, based on the definition of science fiction?
- What scientific principle or technology does the novel reveal?
- How can this novel be compared to contemporary time?
- Any other thoughts?



© Sabrina Aaronovitch

If you fancy urban fantasy, then Ben Aaronovitch is a name you should know. His new novel *Midnight Riot* (published in the UK as *Rivers of London*) is a fresh take on a familiar trope, a magic-infused police procedural in a distinctly British vein. Magician's apprentice/Police Constable Peter Grant's penchant for deeply ironic humor and the occasional fireball, along with a full realized occult London make *Midnight Riot* a book that fans of Jim Butcher and Harry Connolly will love. Aaronovitch spoke with us about the nature of evil, that Dresden fellow, and how a character can sometimes come to life all on its own. When you're done with the interview, read the first fifty pages of the book here!

First of all, I should congratulate you for creating an incredibly memorable character: Peter Grant. I loved his background – the biracial son of a jazz musician and an African immigrant – and his sense of humor, which led to some pretty amusing lines in the novel. How did you come to create him?

This is one of those tricky questions. Peter Grant sort of crept up on me while I wasn't looking. Back when the title was *Magic Cops* (don't laugh it was a working title) and I was thinking of it as TV project Peter Grant was a woman of Jamaican parentage but certain parts of her character got cannibalised for another project so I thought I'd write a guy instead. Then I thought I'd make him mixed race and the next thing I knew I'd written the line:

My name is Peter Grant and I am a member of that mighty army for justice known to all right thinking people as the Metropolitan Police and as 'the filth' by everyone else.

From this I knew he was from North London (the accent), that the book was going to be in the first person and that Peter was only going to stop being ironic when he was dead.

Once you get past a certain point with a character it ceases to be an act of creation and becomes one of negotiation. This is what writers mean when they say their characters take on a life of their own — it's a very good sign. Right up until when they refuse to do something vital to the plot at which point you are just stuffed...

The mixed race aspect just felt right from the start so it became a process by which I worked out where his parents were from and what they did for a living. The thing with Peter's father's

career and addiction came about because I wanted a melancholy stripe to run through his life — a touch of blue if you like but I didn't want it to be debilitating or spill over into angst.

If you're writing about an occult detective, you're bound to run into readers comparing your books to *The Dresden Files*. However, having read and enjoyed *Midnight Riot*, I know that there's a world of difference between Peter Grant and Harry Dresden. Did you anticipate comparisons? How have you handled them and what would you say to readers skeptical regarding your series?

The \$64 thousand Dresden Question. When I was putting together *Magic Cops* as a TV pitch I'd never heard of Dresden. Then I was explaining the idea to a friend and he said – 'That sounds just like that new TV series that SciFi Channel (this was pre-dyslexia) are developing.'

This happens to me a lot; for example: 'I want to do an space opera only, like, about a tramp freighter – what do you think?' 'Well it's funny you should say that...'

So I watched *The Dresden Files* series and, dispirited, shelved the TV version of *Magic Cops*. Once I'd decided to resurrect the project as a novel I thought I'd better read actual Dresden books to make sure I wasn't going to do an expy version by accident. It's a surprisingly easy thing to do when you're writing within a genre, look at *Harry Potter* and *The Worst Witch*, it's almost never intentional but it doesn't look that way from the outside.

So I read *Storm Front* and then I read all the other books that were available over the course of the next week, swearing pretty much continuously as I did so. If they'd been terribly books my life would have been so much easier because the rule is that outright literary theft is perfectly acceptable providing your version is better than the version you stole it from. I didn't make that rule, by the way, Shakespeare made that rule so take it up with him if you dare.

Paying 'homage' is an entirely different thing.

Anyway: I felt I was pretty safe in all but one aspect. Whereas Harry Dresden was a lone hero in the noir mould Peter Grant was going to be a policeman, part of a wider system, with rules and bureaucracies and procedures. This was going to be a Police procedural in the British mode.

That was going to be the other big difference – this was London, not Chicago, fewer guns more sarcasm and the stories were going to be spun out of the city's long history.

I was fairly secure that the 'voice' of the story would be sufficiently different to avoid unfavourable comparison which just left the magic...

And that's where I was in trouble. Television producers are simple, honest folk who really don't like to face more than one complicated concept at a time. To avoid problems I'd kept the magic a nice generic gesture/magic word/will power system. It didn't really change much when I started thinking about the book. It was, to be honest, *Ars Magica* in the 21st century which is incredibly lazy and why Jim Butcher has done me such an enormous favour – the swine.

I don't think people realise just how sophisticated the system Jim Butcher has invented is. It is a cunning synthesis of a myriad western magical traditions (with some entirely new concepts thrown in) that solves a wide array of potential structural problems allowing Jim to throw up these extravagant soaring narratives while doing the literary equivalent of leaning against a wall and nibbling on a carrot. Ain't he a stinker?

So I was forced to rethink my magic and that was, possibly, the best thing that could have happened. I can't even begin to talk about how it works without huge spoilers but there are a few things I can clarify. Magic, as it is practised by Nightingale and Grant, is not something you're born with. It is, as someone suggested, like playing a violin, anyone can be trained to do it and while some may have a natural aptitude it takes years of practise just to get a decent tune and a more than a lifetime to truly master.

So I'd like to thank Jim Butcher for forcing me to work harder and also for writing all those really good books. *Dresden* wasn't the only horribly similar book. Once I was halfway through my first draft I discovered Shevdon, Carey, McLeod, Gaiman (how could I forget Gaiman). Kittredge, Shevden and of course China Meville (who I thought had abandoned us for the dizzying heights of literary fiction).

You seem to have a very solid grasp of the fundamentals of mythology and maybe even Jungian psychology, and I really enjoyed the various gods and spirits that inhabit London. Where did all of this come from? Have you always been interested in this sort of thing? Also, how does one go about personifying a god in a way that makes him or her godlike but still understandable to readers?

I've always been interested in history, particularly the micro-history of place and how these things tangle up with the present. It's what some people, rather pretentiously, call psychogeography and what I call 'stuff'. The thing about a novel is that it eats stuff at a prodigious rate so you have to keep finding more to keep the narrative on track.

The idea of Mama Thames came from a completely different project but I can't really discuss her origins without more spoilers. Let's just say that she grew in stature from amusing background to a major character in her own right (she got a lot more frightening at the same time).

Taking the prize for ascended minor character is Beverley Brook who started off as the girl the opened the door... but I digress.

I started looking at the tributaries of the Thames and where they ran and asked myself if they were people who would they be. There's a quite a big difference between the two courts of Father and Mother and not just the obvious gender and ethnicity issues – if you think about it you might figure it out before it becomes a factor in the books.

I didn't really think about the gods in terms of power, they are more like the personifications of localities — true *Genius Loci* than what we think of as gods. Again I can't really give much away about the cosmology of the books without massive spoilers.

The "monsters" in your book aren't completely evil, and even when they harm others it's usually just that they can't help themselves – it's in their nature. Was this a conscious consideration for you in writing the book? How do you generally like your monsters?

I'm not a moral relativist but I don't believe in evil as an abstract concept. People chose to do evil through action or inaction but they almost always believe they are doing good, or they have no choice or, most corrosively of all, because they tell themselves that everyone else does it (whatever it is). This philosophy is bound to permeate the way characters behave in my books.

I do introduce a very wicked person in *Moon Over Soho* but even they have motives that seem rational and just to them.

Grant's master, Thomas Nightingale, is grudgingly accepted as part of the police force, and anyone who has worked in a real world bureaucracy knows that there are always "black sheep" of one sort or another in the flock. How did you come to define his relationship with the police, and will we learn more about how this relationship developed in coming books?

We will be learning more about Nightingale and some of the history behind the Folly and its relationship with the Met in later books.

I wanted it to be a typically British constitutional mash up whereby rather than there be a rational organisational plan the system had developed out of layers of petrified custom and practice that had somehow been overlain by a modern police force.

What's next for you? And what do you have in store for Peter in *Moon Over Soho*?

In the next book will be Lord Grant and the Irregulars. The Pale Lady and a quick dip in the Thames. Post modernism, demon traps, a man without a face, the problem with Tigers and why certain kinds of music can get you killed.

COMMENT

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FILED UNDER:

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HARRY DRESDEN

MIDNIGHT RIOT

URBAN FANTASY

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