

## Ten tentative points about BBC John Watson

by mazaher

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*Being a first, incomplete draft about the less analysed facets of his character.*

*Because he is also human, and imperfect, but he's so amazing in his own understated way that his faults get easily overlooked.*

*My intent is not to bring John down, but to use the darker areas in his nature to give relief to the way he manages himself. Which is admirable most of the time.*



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1. *Ambivalence about therapy.* John doesn't want to feel better, not before ASiP, not after TRF. Or rather: he doesn't want to feel a bit better day by day, by patience and hard work. As a patient, he must be quite a handful. Ella has all my sympathy.

2. *All or nothing.* John will let go of his desperation (the only brilliant thing he's got left) only for something which will make him feel a whole lot better, all at once. Like Sherlock.

3. *Taking it out.* Problem: how does one go about feeling like a disaster area, without taking it out on someone else? Solution: keeping strictly alone. Before he happens on Stamford, we don't see him having any contact with anyone except Ella, and even then he's armoured like a tank.

4. *Not his housekeeper.* The very first evening at 221b, John is stunningly rude to Mrs. Hudson. At first sight, it may look like he's following Sherlock's lead. But look better: the feeling is completely different. Between Sherlock and Mrs. Hudson, it's play-acting. John behaves like the proverbial man-of-the-house, just come home after a day at his job and demanding a) not to be bothered, and b) to be fed plentifully and silently by a devoted female.

5. *Hypothetical background.* Perhaps John's and Harry's father used to take out his frustrations in this same, oh-so-common way on his family; perhaps also on others, anyone whom he felt was his inferior. He may have been ambitious once, and not have been as successful as he hoped; he may have felt John's choice to be an Army doctor, rather than a Harley Street one, like a personal disappointment; he may have seen Harry's marriage as an affront to his hopes for progeny. We know nothing about him or his relationship with his wife. We can however draw hypotheses from what we know about his son and daughter.

6. *Rules of engagement.* A point which doesn't seem to have been made in meta is whether John may be overreacting when he shoots Hope. John is more than bright enough to realise that Sherlock is in real and present danger; agreed so far. But was shooting to kill the only possible line of defence? Why didn't he aim at a non-lethal part of Hope's body?

One reason may be the line of sight. If he couldn't aim below the knees, Hope standing with arms next to his body didn't offer much choice.

Another reason may be that John did aim at a non-lethal point, but missed the exact target.

Yet another may be his psychological situation, whether you see it as PTSD, depression, or something else. Danger for a member of his team --> all stops pulled to save him. John aims at \*the shoulder\*, where he himself was wounded!

7. *THoB*. After a hard day, stressful and tiring, John gets to a comfortable seat in front of a fire. He expects either to be left alone to have a silent conversation with his whisky, or to be left alone while his comrades settle down as best they can, also silently. His reaction to Sherlock's distress is an understated version of "Don't bother me with your emoting, friend/colleague/wife/comrade: be a man, and deal with it yourself, like I'm doing right now".

8 and 9. *Manners, rugby and girlfriends*. John is terrible with girlfriends. He works on the assumption that there is a handful of stereotyped rules of behaviour (call it basic good manners) which will earn him smooth interactions \*and\* what he wants. It applies to courtship, but also to other, non-sexual situations: his lies to Ella, his attempts at conversation the first night at Angelo's, his attitude when he goes on errands for Sherlock in TBB... It's the same with Anthea, and it's the same with every one of the unfortunate ladies with which he hopes to –in his words—get off.

We never see him try, get into and keep an actual relationship; he behaves like he's playing rugby, and mistaking the current girlfriend's name is nothing worse than a fault.

10. *Only one friend*. Let me correct myself: we do see John working hard at a relationship: with Sherlock. The definition remains fluid in the tv canon: friend, colleague, partner, comrade, alpha wolf, patient, ward... But we definitely see him involved early and deep into something personal and unique, which he embraces wholeheartedly.

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