

Ten tentative points about BBC Sherlock Holmes

by mazaher

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Being a haphazard addition to the notes posted in occasion of the BBC Sherlock rewatch of ASiP – A Study in Pink at fennishjournal's, February 4, 2013
<http://fennishjournal.livejournal.com/48533.html>



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1. *Social rules.* As an effect of the changing times, BBC Sherlock seems to have lacked early exposure to the unyielding, but clear-cut frame of social rules which are so visibly imprinted on canon!Holmes. In a way, he seems to have nothing as definite to rebel against. He's unhappy with the world in general, but doesn't seem to have focused on a specific reason.

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2. *Ethics.* BBC Sherlock doesn't seem to have been encouraged to think in terms of ethics. I don't mean this in terms of a particular denominational ethics (e.g. Church of England); I mean that he doesn't seem to be used to ask himself whether his actions are morally right or wrong according to criteria of his own. He does that, on occasion, and does have an ethics of his own; it's just seldom used.

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3. *Being left alone.* BBC Sherlock seems to have in common with Mycroft a keen desire to be left alone. The difference seems to be more in the means they adopt to pursue the goal: Mycroft quietly follows a path of least visibility, while Sherlock is very vocal in keeping others at a distance.

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4. *Caring is not an advantage.* BBC Mycroft seems honestly frightened by the very idea that Sherlock may care for someone (John, Adler...). It is all right if John cares for Sherlock. Not the reverse: caring is a liability, a hole in the defence walls.

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5. *Revolution.* John is for BBC Sherlock something unforeseen, unplanned, or even planned against for years. It is a big deal for Sherlock to let him in. Sherlock tears his whole life and worldview apart to its structural components, then rebuilds it making room for John, and tests how it's working. He trusts John, leans on John, gives him credit as someone who can see him and understand him.

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6. *Superiority.* The reason why BBC Sherlock doesn't feel superior isn't because he belongs to a privileged class. He feels superior because he uses his brain to the full rather than leaving it buzz on idle. He may appear dismissing of other people, but he actually keeps the same attitude as Voltaire: "I can do it, and you should also be able to, but I know you won't because you're idiots = lazy". Proof be that he treats Wiggins (even more than Lestrade) as his equal,

because Wiggins does better with her brain than most privileged people do. When Sherlock mentions disinfecting his hands after contact with the homeless, he's not acting superior, but voicing a very normal bit of inner dialogue which anybody may think, but would not say aloud.

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7. *Fans*. BBC Sherlock doesn't want followers (apart from John). He doesn't want, expect, or know what to do with fans, or worse pupils. What he wants is not the impersonal admiration of a crowd, but acknowledgment by someone whose opinion he values. His blog is not meant to gather an audience to teach, but to work as a reference for individual study.

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8. *Paradox!Sherlock (by wordstrings on AO3)*. *Madness?* I don't think Paradox!Sherlock is technically mad. Paradox!Sherlock reasons on similar lines to my cats. It's perfectly sensible. Even adapted. But not exactly human. The real question is: does the absence of a wish to be part of mankind constitute madness? I think not.

If not, it's mostly a question of manners, and Paradox!Sherlock does have the basics. He's learning faster since John came along. He's becoming better, both on the side of fine-tuning his behaviour and be able to safely try things which he prudently steered completely clear of before, and on the side of avoiding the occasional major blunder. Otter, they say. The natural ethogram of an otter is peculiarly unfit for urban life (if only for the fundamental tenet that "water must be kept in motion"), but Paradox!Sherlock is learning how to live as a well-behaved dog or cat.

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9. *Paradox!Sherlock (by wordstrings on AO3)*. *Oh, it's christmas!*. Sherlock's attitude in Paradox exactly reproduces the theological theory of the *felix culpa* (= how fortunate that Adam and Eve sinned, so mankind could be saved by a gory human sacrifice) and John's attitude exactly reproduces the common sense answer theology never seemed to get around to, i.e. "you're off your rocker". The difference being that Sherlock doesn't dream of proposing himself as a paragon of righteousness: not for embracing the theory of *felix culpa*, not for the killing of his mouse for Mycroft (= the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham).

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10. *BBC Sherlock and Peter Greenaway*. Sherlock's attitude to murder ("how interesting, and, oh, yes, on second thoughts, pity that someone had to actually die for me to have such fun") is precisely the attitude of the audience watching the episode, or any murder mystery on film or printed page.

Sherlock merely brings that same selective focus from book or movie theatre out in the so-called real life.

Are we all freaks, in Donovan's pov, because we're enjoying the crime-solving process?

What's the difference between us as watchers and Sherlock as gleeful crime-solver, apart from the fact that he can solve the mystery and we can only watch?

But there are worse questions in store.

How real is consensual reality? How real is a character's suffering in a book or a movie? Can a book bleed? Can a character on screen feel actual distress? What can we deduce from Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* and Peter Greenaway's whole opus, but esp. *The Baby of Macon*?



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