

BAFTA Television Lecture: Jane Featherstone  
30th October 2017 at Princess Anne Theatre, BAFTA, 195 Piccadilly,  
London

**Krishnendu Majumdar:** Good evening, I'm Krish Majumdar the chair of the Academy's television committee. Welcome to the 2017 BAFTA Television Lecture. Each year we invite a leading figure to give their view on creative excellence in television, and their vision for the future. Last year, Liz Warner asked if the TV industry was failing young people. Previous lectures have included Armando Iannucci, and Lenny Henry who delivered a blistering talk, reframing and reigniting the urgent debate around diversity that sent shockwaves through the industry and beyond. I'm delighted that we've asked BAFTA winning producer Jane Featherstone to give this year's lecture. Before I welcome Jane to the stage, I just wanted to say a few words about BAFTA. If you didn't know, BAFTA is a charity, and BAFTA for me signifies two things. It signifies excellence and inspiration. Excellence demonstrated in the awards ceremonies we put on, and inspiration in all the other work that we do. BAFTA produces over 250 events each year, most of them are recorded. We're filming this lecture for future broadcast on BAFTA Guru, the academy's learning website. If you've not had a chance to check out BAFTA Guru please do. It's a real treasure trove of content. Last week, we launched BAFTA's Breakthrough Brits, one of our new talent initiatives, another shining example of BAFTA nurturing the next generation. Next week, we have the team behind *People Just Do Nothing* giving a masterclass here. That's what BAFTA does. We have access to world-class talent, and put on events and talks with the aim to inspire and be a force for good in the industry. And of course our awards ceremonies are the most visible events that we do. Entries are now open for the Virgin TV British Academy Television Awards, and the Television Craft Awards. For the full rules, guidelines, category information, including a new short form category, and deadlines, please visit our awards portal on [BAFTA.org](http://BAFTA.org). And spread the word about all the inspiring work that the Academy does. So back to this evening's lecture. Jane Featherstone is the former chief executive of Kudos and co-chairman of Shine UK. In 2015 she founded Sister Pictures, an independent production

company, specialising in bold and distinctive scripted stories. Her work includes the BAFTA-winning series *Broadchurch*, *Spooks*, *Humans*, *Life on Mars* and *Flowers*, as well as upcoming projects for major UK and international broadcasters. Jane is an alchemist. She's had years of experience and bringing together the best creative teams around a script, and that has given her the confidence to make bold decisions. Tonight, Jane's lecture, *The Urgency of the Long Game and Other Stories*, is a rallying call for creative excellence in the mainstream, to challenge the industry to wake up to the fact that dynamic change is coming. After the lecture, journalist Gareth McLean will chair an onstage interview with Jane and take questions from the floor. I'd like to thank a few people for making this event happen. Overnights.tv for assisting with research for the lecture, and also the brilliant BAFTA team lead by Tim Hunter and Kam Kandola Flynn. Without further ado, please welcome our speaker, Jane Featherstone.

[Applause]

**Jane Featherstone:** Hello, thank you Krish, that's very nice, thank you. So, is the temptation to start with 'Once upon a time...' too irresistible, when I have to almost-quite-literally a captive audience? I love stories that start like that. I love hearing them and I love telling them. At bed time - my children's not mine - I start stories like that and my 'audience' is like 'Mum! We want Harry Potter! Not one of your stories!'. Well, hopefully there won't be too much of that this evening.

Before a beginning-proper, a preface. A thank you. To BAFTA, for the invitation to give the 2017 TV Lecture. Since I was asked, I've had this moment in my mind and how totally 'honoured' I'd feel. At this very moment. Faced with an intelligent, inquisitive audience including some of the sharpest, smartest people I know. People who are notoriously difficult to impress. Everyone assembled to hear the story I have to tell. Oh yeah, I'm totally fucking 'honoured'...

[Laughter]

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And not at all 'nervous', great.

So, 40 minutes and counting. If you're counting. Which, clearly, I'm not.

So, I'll stick with 'honoured' because it is – partly, mostly, overwhelmingly – true, albeit an accolade seasoned, slightly, for now, with a sprinkling of 'stage anxiety'. Don't get me wrong, I like a big audience. Who, of the programme makers in this room, is going to pretend that they don't like a big audience? Not for the last time tonight, I'll say now that I am a big fan of the mainstream. It's just that I prefer my audience where I can't see the whites of their eyes and they can't see mine, them on the sofas at home, where they've been watching the TV that I've been involved with making – from *Spooks*, *Life on Mars*, *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard*, *Broadchurch*, *The Hour*, *Humans* – for over 25 years. Bloody hell.

From the privilege of having an audience engage with something you've made – whether that's to have them gasp as you deep-fry Lisa Faulkner's face or weep as you put Julie Hesmondhalgh through hell – to this privilege of being able to share some of the observations and insights I've made along the way. I've worked pretty hard to get here. And I've also been incredibly fortunate. It's mostly hard work, obviously, but there's been serendipity, too. Unpredicted, unpredictable moments on which your life just pivots. Like being taken to see *The Nutcracker* by my dad on my seventh birthday. Just me and him, at the ballet.

Or, over a decade later, landing the job as PA to Paul 'Gazza' Gascoigne, after *Italia 90*. In those 18 months – I know, I really did – in those 18 months – I'll tell you later more. I learnt plenty about the football transfer market, spent far too much time in Terry Venables' members-only club, called Scribes, in West Kensington, and I am still applying the lessons I learnt then every day at Sister, which I'll come back to later.

Or, first meeting Abi Morgan for the first time. At a bar in Wardour Street after a performance of her play *Sleeping Around*, of which she wrote one quarter. This is more impressive than it sounds, ask her later, she's here.

Or, coming across a newer writer – Mark Marlow, Joe Barton or Naomi Alderman – and thinking 'you've got That Something'. A proper voice and something to say.

Those moments can never be entirely attributed to your own toil nor completely explained as the providence of the universe. They are the confluence of experience and fortuity, opportunity and investment. Work and luck.

As to the ratio of work and luck? I can't tell you that, because I don't know. It's almost alchemy. A mystery that it's best not to analyse too much. Like Theresa May's Brexit policy.

Suffice to say though, that thanks to that combination of hard work and good luck, and as Julia Roberts almost says in *Notting Hill*, I'm just a girl – a woman – standing in front of her boy – an audience of her peers – asking him to love her – if they'd like to hear all about creative excellence.

Maybe I should just leave the chat-up lines to Julia and Richard, but anyway.

So, I thought about creative excellence and the mainstream, and what there was to be said about it. Obviously it's incredibly subjective, and it's also bandied about a lot, at this sort of thing, like its buzzword buddies 'creative risk-taking' and 'permission to fail'.

So, as Hardy probably should have said to Miller about her husband way back when in *Broadchurch*, let's start with a little interrogation, shall we?

At the risk of sounding pompous I truly believe that creative excellence is a laudable ambition that you don't really realise you're practicing until someone else points it out. That's certainly how I feel sometimes. For me, and I think for a lot of you, aspiring to creative

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excellence isn't so much a conscious calculation or a strategic positioning. I certainly don't get up and think 'today, I'm going to be creative excellently, or excellently creative'. It's just what you do.

And you do it because you want to and because to do otherwise doesn't sit right with you. You do it because you're inspired to, because you've been inspired to. You do it because the opportunity is there and why would you pass that up? You do it because someone once believed you could.

Now, any discussion of a concept as appealing and as subjective as 'creative excellence' could become very vague, very quickly so I'm going to tell that story via another, about which I know lots of specifics: my own, apologies for that. It's the story of someone who wanted to make television, but it starts with how television first made her, once upon a time...

Like most British people, like most people, I grew up with television. I wished I'd gone to *Grange Hill*. I was terrified by *Threads*. I was hooked on *Cracker*, and I got caught up in *State of Play*. These stories, these characters, these lives... Thrilling. Compelling. Heartbreaking.

I grew up in the 1970s and 80s in a pretty ordinary family with my brother and sister. My dad worked for BP and my mum was a nurse and a housewife. Dad was the first in his family to go to university and, in another era, I suspect my mum would have had a great career too. My dad loves movies, music, TV and he wrote comedy sketches for his college revue company. My mum has read almost every book in print and has a general knowledge to rival Richard Osman's. They were, I now realise, frustrated creatives. As a result, they provided us with a glorious cultural education. Every holiday – museums and monuments, prehistoric sites, National Trust properties, endlessly.

It was my father who really ignited the love of performance and storytelling that my siblings and I share. One evening, he took my sister Vicky and me to see

*Coriolanus* at the National Theatre starring Ian McKellen and directed by Peter Hall. It's hard to convey how formative an experience this was to us. Perhaps it's enough to say that my sister Vicky now has got a very good job in theatre, and my brother is a music producer.

Throughout this impressive drive to educate us artistically, television never played second fiddle or was viewed with snobbery. It was integral to our cultural landscape. It was a shared experience and my parents loved watching TV with us. From *Blake's 7* to *Only Fools and Horses*, from *Doctor Who* to *Morecambe and Wise*. *Angels* to...

God, I really loved *Angels*, does anyone else remember that show?

Um, yep. Television was my most enduring love, due in a large part to its accessibility. Its presence at home. Its currency at school, a font of watercooler moments long before I'd heard of watercoolers. The connection it created with family and friends. The availability of quality viewing.

I loved those quality mainstream shows. And I believe those shows and their successors are the most important cultural force for unity and shared conversations we have.

They were important then and they are even more important now, given the increasingly fractured, fragmented, atomised world in which we live. A world in which the country seems so polarised along ideological lines. Divided and dislocated. Political stalemates apparently intractable. Not so much open dialogue as shrill shouting. 52 per cent versus 48 per cent.

Now, more than ever, we need television dramatists to tell us stories that challenge us, unite us, remind us of the ties that bind, recall that fundamental truth that there is more that we have in common than not. Intimate and epic stories that help us understand our place in the world. Great state of the nation stories with a voice and a purpose. *Edge of Darkness* to *The Moorside*. *Prime Suspect*

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to *Happy Valley*. Stories told in recent years by Chris Chibnall, Paul Abbott, Lynda La Plante, Jimmy McGovern, Victoria Wood, Sally Wainwright, Russell T Davies and many others like them, and I will be here literally all night if I try and namecheck all of them. Writers who examine our feelings for us. They fight for us, they love us, they see us, and they hope for us. They take the chaos of human experience and give us back understanding. That's what drew me to TV as a child and it's what keeps me making it now. And truly I feel privileged on a daily basis to spend so much of my time with writers.

Yet now, more than ever, that vital possibility – shared stories told on mainstream television – is at risk. If storytelling breeds empathy – which I emphatically believe it does – I hope you can see why I say now we need it more than ever today.

What I hope to do in this lecture is outline that risk, reframe it as a challenge, and, like any good producer, give it some notes as to what we might do to actually meet that challenge. I for one am not afraid of it, and indeed, I'd say I'm excited by it, but I want to be ready. We can choose either to bury our heads in the sand and hope for the best. Or we can rise to the challenge and make a better future, starting now.

First off, we have to stop being snobs about the mainstream. Also, we have to find and fund new ways to meaningfully support, train and develop a new generation of inspiring, great writers. We have to fight the forces that demean and diminish the importance of the arts and culture in our children's educations. Because we need that pipeline from childhood to screenwriter to be unbroken and accessible. So we must apply political pressure and also take on personal responsibility. This is an opportunity for us all to invest in what comes next for our industry, our culture, and our society.

This is a long game. We need to play it far, far better. And we need to do so urgently.

It will not be news to any of you that it's boom time for scripted. So far, this seems to have been good news all-round for the UK. For audiences, for the industry, and most definitely for the producers.

But, we need to understand that, so far, this success has been heavily subsidised in one form or another. Whether it's the UK tax break that's driven up budgets, or virtual advertiser monopolies in free-to-air commercial TV. Or hefty deficits from distributors. Or the high-end returning drama series and soaps that have provided nursery slopes for writers, directors and producers, courtesy of Public Service Broadcasting. Because the BBC's role in discovering, nurturing, and showcasing new talent cannot and should not be underestimated. While pressure on the licence fee will continue and partisan press persecution of the corporation shows no sign of abating, I say again what has been said before: leave the BBC alone. It is, along with the NHS, one of the great British institutions that is testament to our national character.

Channel 4, ITV and Sky each invest in their own way which speak to their individual needs, be they public, commercial advertising, revenue from sports, or whatever. They have also made substantial contributions to new talent and diversity schemes and investment in drama, resulting in the emergence of talent like Jack Thorne and Michaela Cole, and big series like *Ackley Bridge*, *Fortitude* and *Strike Back*.

When I talk about the 'quality mainstream', it is to this ecology that I refer. An ecology that's brought forth shows like *Criminal Justice* and *Call The Midwife*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*, *Unforgotten* and *Line of Duty*. Shows that demonstrate creative excellence and respect for their audience.

To me, mainstream is about a connection with an audience, often a live-viewing experience such as *Doctor Foster*, *Liar*, or *Little Boy Blue*, which results in a shared dialogue at work the next day. I always believed with *Broadchurch* that the whodunit element was the tool the public used to discuss the show the

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next day, but the reason they came back wasn't really to find out who did it, although I grant you that was part of it, but because they loved experiencing the feelings it evoked when they watched it. Feelings created by an author at the top of his game – Chris Chibnall, and actors at the top of theirs – David Tennant and Olivia Colman, or should I say, Her Majesty.

[Laughter]

With such a rich and diverse ecology of creative brilliance, is it little wonder then that we have recently greeted new and intrepid visitors, keen to explore and draw on our resources. Which is where the irreversible and dynamic change comes in. We are now living in a world of hugely increased and increasing competition from the 500, yes 500, Subscription Video on Demand and Over the Top Services (SVOD AND OTT). Chief among these are Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google – or to give them their Bond villain name, FAANG.

[Laughter]

It's an acronym. Very apt for the night before Halloween as well I think.

So, these arrivals have brought with them a new form of subsidy - a stream of money from US broadcasters and from FAANG's own apparently bottomless pockets. Budgets have escalated, demand for onscreen named talent and behind the scenes A-Listers is sky high. Co-production has been a buzzword for the last five years. Entire conferences have been devoted to it – and let's be honest, we've all fallen asleep at few of them. Already some shows on the BBC are funded 80 percent by Netflix, and many more have around 20 to 30 percent funding from the likes of HBO or AMC. ITV has followed suit – with the recent Netflix-supported *Marcella* – while Channel 4's *Humans* was only made possible at all because AMC stepped in.

Happy marriages all – but for the occasional tiff over toilet seats left-up or where to spend Christmas. Or in reality,

who gets the biggest credit, and when it's scheduled...

Well, and I'm not the first person to say this, that honeymoon period? Consider it over.

Up until this point, this co-funding has meant relatively subtle changes to the kinds of dramas being commissioned, perhaps they're a little bigger and more globally facing. Henceforth, that subtlety will be replaced by less nuanced behaviour.

We know, because they've told us, that the SVOD's are going to start ramping up commissioning of only fully owned original programmes, meaning that they won't need to co-produce any more. Why keep investing in shows where they don't own the territory most likely to make that show a hit, it doesn't make sense for them. The co-production tap is going to be turned off, or at least reduced to a trickle.

It's already happening with *The Crown* and *The Innocents*, and I reckon we have a year or 18 months before the big FAANG players stop co-producing entirely, except maybe for very specific talent-driven content. With such deep pockets to reach into, why go through the hassle of sharing with traditional British broadcasters.

This talent shift is already happening elsewhere. We know that Shonda Rimes, the US powerhouse creator and producer whose huge hits *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal* and *How to Get Away with Murder* grace the free-to-air network ABC, has jumped ship, to Netflix. More will follow. And what will follow that will be a slow – or not-so-slow- starvation of the quality mainstream on free-to-air platforms and channels. While networks waste away, Netflix is fighting fit. Some great mainstream TV will emerge, of that I am certain. They will be the first truly global channel. A very canny move.

Canny for them. Good for producers. But what are the consequences for our creative ecology?

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Imagine a world in which Sally Wainwright worked exclusively for Apple. Or you could only watch Peter Bowker's output on Netflix. Or Mike Bartlett was Amazon-only. Because exclusivity will be the next stage of this battle for talent. Our system of writers working on three or four things at once isn't going to fly in the new world.

So here we have the threat we must address or, as I like to see it, the challenge we must rise to: how do we nurture our mainstream storytelling – its producers and platforms – while engaging collaboratively and creatively with the new reality? Not isolationist but involved?

Does it matter, you ask, if the writers are still writing somewhere it's fine isn't it? But the cold hard truth is that we don't yet have the depth of storytelling talent to lose Sally, Pete or Mike from free-to-air BBC, Channel 4 or ITV. We simply don't have enough to go around. So we must take a similarly cold look at ourselves and look at what we can do to be ready for what is coming.

At the recent moshpit that is the TV marketplace MIPCOM, you've all been there, everyone was talking about 'global shows'. Looking around the market, all you could see were thrillers, period dramas and branded worlds. Now I've been guilty of making one or two thrillers. I like to think maybe I made at least one good one, but, admittedly, I made a couple of the shit ones as well.

[Laughter]

*Hunted*, anyone? Sorry, that wasn't in the script. Sorry everyone! It's not that these genres can't be meaningful, but what struck me at MIPCOM was the absence of almost anything else. I believe that viewers want and need to see their own contemporary world represented. Relevant domestic stories, that look at Britain but also our place in the world, and it's our responsibility to deliver them. If we don't find stories – from all corners and cultures of the UK, in all its diverse glory – and tell them in the mainstream, the audience fragments and fractures further. They retreat to

niches. And if the last three years in public life, its referenda and elections, have taught us anything, it's that there's danger in living in echo chambers, and media bubbles foster division when we need common conversations and spaces.

And I'll tell you what, the UK commissioners agree with me, because I've spoken to them. So this process – and it is a process that should always be ongoing – starts with fostering talent.

Much of our new talent, writers, directors, producers and actors, have spent their time watching US box sets, being influenced in their programming tastes by *Master of None*, *Breaking Bad*, and *The (goddamn) Wire*. This diet of long form, articulate storytelling has played a brilliant role in raising the quality aspirations of this group, but, it has also resulted in a gradual readjustment of our industry's narrative focus, from the mainstream to the niche. The new platforms offer 'creative freedom', bigger budgets, and the associated glory of being part of something fresh and cool. I truly believe that more competition is a good thing. It means more choice for the audience, and quality will win. But if of our talent chooses to work outside of the mainstream, and our existing mainstream stars slowly migrate to other platforms, are we refilling the well quickly enough to replace that talent, so that mainstream stories are still told across all platforms.

Because if you think it's challenging getting the best talent now, imagine what it's going to be like when 15 more scripted series a year are being commissioned out of the UK.

So, we need to nurture it from all our corners and cultures.

That means more women. Oh yes. We might like to think we've got that covered with female leads in *Doctor Who* and *Doctor Foster*, with Sharon Horgan and Phoebe Waller-Bridge blazing trails, but really, we haven't.

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It's also a class issue and it's an issue of ethnic diversity. It's an out-of-London issue. How can we hope to talk to the British people about their lives if no one who creates the nation's most popular stories has lived their experiences? We have to engage with the popular mood, and investigate it, to tell relevant and compelling stories. Just as *Cracker* discussed Hillsborough in front of millions, just as *Spooks* discussed radicalisation, just as *Humans* looked at AI taking people's jobs. We need big shows that deal with inequality, representation, abuses of power, Britain's identity crisis, the NHS, our political system, the crisis of masculinity, the new battles over race and gender. And at the moment there aren't enough people wanting to tell big, complex stories about big issues slap-bang in the middle of the mainstream. We seem to be confining our taste in stories which examine the popular mood, to factual dramas. Thank God for the great Jeff Pope. But why aren't as many new writers telling more fictional stories that entertain us and make us think. Well for one thing, I suspect it may be harder to make popular quality work, than to deliver something your peers will like.

But I would also ask is it partly our fault as the gatekeepers of the ideas? Might it be our snobbery? Have our tastes shifted too, along with the writers? Because that is a dangerous way of thinking that has, in part, led to the point we're at today where we could be seen as disrespecting the audience by underestimating the audience. We do this at our peril.

After a highly instructive stint with Denise and Jimmy at *Hat Trick*, and a few months with Tony Garnett where I watched the birth of the great *Cardiac Arrest* and *This Life* – and was in awe every day of the man who had made the era-defining *Cathy Come Home* – I produced *Touching Evil*. It was the first original series from Paul Abbott, who was on his way from *Coronation Street* via *Cracker* to becoming one of the greatest TV dramatists of his age.

Working with Paul taught me many things. The first was how to use a fax

machine, because that's how I received the script, page by agonising page on Christmas Eve after everyone else had gone home. The second was the importance of the audience. Paul Abbott respects and listens to the audience at all times – he's one of the least snobby people I know, and I have ever come across in this industry. He knows that the mainstream audience are highly sophisticated and intelligent.

For its time, and putting a thoroughly flawed hero at its heart, *Touching Evil* was innovative, bold and primetime, and it got 13 million viewers on ITV. There were new writers – Paul made sure that Russell T Davies wrote one of the *Touching Evil* scripts – and new directors, including Julian Jarrold and Marc Munden, and a brilliant young actor, Nicola Walker. While the growth of cable and OTT services and their influence on our industry has perhaps perpetuated a myth that quality must sit on the fringes and populism is bad, I firmly believe you can innovate, be bold, be creative, be entertaining and be excellent right in the middle where the most number of people will find the work you've done. You just have to have the faith to do it. Faith in the audience and faith in the writer to connect with that audience.

Many of the writers of Paul's generation, and earlier ones – Kay Mellor, Jimmy McGovern, Russell T Davies, Ashley Pharoah, Matthew Graham and Tony Jordan, for example – had honed their ability to connect with the audience by coming through the writers' rooms of *Corrie*, *Brookside*, *Holby*, *Eastenders* and *Casualty*. Rooms which provided a safe and structured world to learn the craft and tell mainstream stories directly to the audience, and somehow nurtured distinctive voices throughout. Great TV beget great TV.

The soaps and continuing drama series are still producing some great writers but not in the quantity they were. Maybe because we're being too snobby about the talent there. Maybe because many new writers want to work on a US show for Hulu instead. Maybe it's a combination of both. Regardless, the power of the soaps is waning, and we

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need to look to additional sources to find the next generation of Paul Abbotts and Kay Mellors. As it stands, we may not be doing enough.

The current fashion for single writer authored series such as *Line of Duty*, *The Missing* and *The A Word* has led to a place where there are hardly any opportunities for writers to train on mainstream series any more. We do have a few new writer's-style rooms, particularly on the big Sky shows, and this will begin to fill the gap to a degree, but too slowly.

Many of these shows are serialised and do not easily allow writers to 'own' an episode in the way that they used to with *Life on Mars* or *Hustle*. I barely want to think of the average age of the dominant writers and producers working in the mainstream now, me included. But as we, the TV industry, has been slowly and inextricably moving away from the mainstream, we have found it harder and harder to attract the writers who love writing mainstream TV like we love watching it. Who will make us sit up and take the world seriously through entertaining us?

One thing has always been true since stories began, the best writers have something to say and they want to tell their stories to as many people as possible. Don't they? Even if they sometimes pretend they don't. I'm going to run a little sketch for you to watch now.

[Clip Plays]

Sounds good that show. Storytellers are out there, and we need to work out how to usher them through and offer them an exciting platform for telling new stories, so that they can be supported in going after the nine million. It's the stage from baby writer to star that's hard.

One of our sources of writing talent, is theatre, specifically subsidised theatre, which is one of the only sources of new playwrights in this country. Why is it so successful at finding new voices? In part, because it doesn't cost as much – so it's easier to take risks on new talent. But for

them as a percentage of their budget it's just as risky. For writers, the benefit of theatre is clear, proper development time with authorial voices finding a supported route through to an audience. Whether it be fringe theatre, rehearsed readings, or workshops, writers are desperate to see their work performed. They don't want to work in a vacuum. Writers like Lucy Kirkwood, Nick Payne and Charlene James. The team at Sister and I are now working on a couple of series for mainstream BBC1 and ITV 1. The first is *The Split* by my friend and collaborator, and playwright, Abi Morgan. It's about four women still dealing with the legacy of divorce 30 years on.

The second is *Clean Break* by Mark Marlow. This represents Mark's first ever transmitted script, let alone series. He and the young director Lewis Arnold brought me an idea about a cleaner who worked in Canary Wharf. The audience will decide if these ideas end up being popular, but all I know is that we've tried to make contemporary, moving, funny pieces that are inclusive, whilst examining complex issues of family splits, modern marriages, class, identity, inequality and opportunity. The ideas for both have been gently nurtured over time. Indeed, the first meeting with Mark went a little bit like this.

[Clip Plays]

That's not really how we work with new writers at Sister. I love working with new writers. In 2000 I'd recently joined Stephen Garrett at Kudos and we were working with a gifted young writer, David Wolstencroft on a show called *Spooks*. I was lucky that this all coincided with Lorraine Heggessy arriving as controller of BBC1. Lorraine felt that the mainstream audience was being better served in cinema than TV, how things have changed, and that the BBC had to rise to the challenge of offering a cinematic experience at home.

Lorraine tasked Jane Tranter and Gareth Neame with finding dramas with the scope of a movie but that could be viewed in your pyjamas, from the comfort of your own sofa. Luckily,

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*Spooks*, a spy show with ambition, met all those criteria.

What I felt we didn't have, right after we were commissioned, was an extra voice. A writer with a political viewpoint, not just experience in genre thriller. I wanted someone who could examine our place in the world. The brilliant agent Mel Kenyon at Casarotto suggested Howard Brenton, a hero of mine for his brilliant stage writing. I couldn't believe that this man of such revolutionary spirit might want to come and work on our show, but it turns out he did, and it was a turning point.

The combination of him and David, and our third writer, Simon Mirren, in our mini-writer's room was very potent and very magnetic to talent, including acting talent, especially Matthew Mcfadyen, David Oyelowo and Keeley Hawes. I think they're doing ok these days.

*Spooks* dealt with complex post-9-11 stories in a way that was thrilling, moving and deeply political. The writers and directors who came through the *Spooks* stable were a diverse bunch - Bharat Nalluri, Justin Chadwick, Ben Richards, Zinnie Harris, Neil Cross, David Farr, Dennis Kelly, Sam Vincent and Jon Brackley. They've also done pretty well between them, too.

So subsidised political theatre helped attract millions of viewers to BBC1.

These days we are all pilfering from theatre's heartland. Every producer, or more likely a member of their development team, spends their lives scouring theatres for the next Jez Butterworth. At a recent opening night of *Touch* by Vicky Jones, there were so many producers there it was like a MIPCOM flashback without the ludicrous drinks bill.

So, we've taken a lot. And now, I believe it's time to start giving back.

As I've mentioned, at *Kudos* we used *Spooks*, *Hustle* and *Life on Mars* amongst others to mentor new talent, and at *Sister* new writers are at the heart of what we're doing. Four of our new

commissions are being written by first-time series creators, including Joe Barton and Desiree Akhavan. And we're developing with several more writers at the start of their career, including Mika Watkins, Will Sharpe, Adam Kay and Laura Deeley. We also financially support a number of new writing theatres, and build relationships with them as we all look for ways of nurturing writers.

Most non-televisual creative organisations do community work, museums, galleries, theatres. I don't know if it's because TV doesn't quite see itself as a having true artistic merit yet, and it really should given the quality of much of the work, but TV companies don't do enough. We need to step up. The UK-based studios, indies and buyers need to dig into their pockets, free up their diaries and open doors.

I wonder sometimes if producers and UK-based studios have been let off the hook somewhat by paying our levy into Skillset. Don't get me wrong: Skillset do a remarkable and important job through their various apprentice and new talent schemes – and we should continue to pay our levies with gusto. But, I am worried that sometimes it's a bit like paying a direct debit to a charity. Guilt is assuaged and we don't have to really deal with the problem.

The BBC's Writers Room and Channel 4's Screenwriting programme do excellent grassroots work, but what happens when they pass their talent over to us? Ditto the Sky Shorts series and their leadership in diversity, the ITV continuing drama writer scheme and BAFTA's own Elevate programme for female directors. Then there's also the recent Skillset scheme established by Brian Elsley to train newer writers to be more robust and educated about how TV works. These are all properly brilliant.

But we need to engage more. Much, much more.

As singular authorship continues to dominate the commissions, we need to think very carefully about how we move the talent from these schemes, to

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commissioned work and how we develop them.

Let's put a junior writer on every series by a single author – to learn, help, proof, listen, maybe write a little, but above all to be mentored.

And on a salary.

No more having to write six treatments for free.

And those writers who shine so brightly as they emerge from the schemes, need guidance and protection. Because the best are often swamped with meetings and interest from production companies, mine included, and often begin too many relationships, burning out their ideas before they've fully developed.

My advice would be, find a great agent, who will help you find one or two expert practitioners, and let them shield and guide you.

I believe we need to allow time and money when we work with new writers. They cannot be expected to find perfect expression for their voice straight away every time and we have to make sure we don't crush them on the way. This is simply the cost of good Research and Development. Investing in the future.

We need to help them learn what it means to really write in TV, under pressure, big budgets, a demanding audience. Which is why, at Sister, I'm proud to announce we are establishing a writer-in-residence programme, which I know a couple of other Indies already have underway. Perhaps we can start a trend.

My team and I will endeavour to open every door to this writer and, at the end of the time, maybe they will even have a script or an idea they can be proud of. But above all they will be working in the real world, well the real TV world anyway.

We also sponsor a scholarship student at the NFTS and will continue to look for other ways to engage.

I fear I sound a bit like a do-gooder, but really what's so wrong with doing good? I strongly believe in giving back. I wouldn't be here today, where I am, without the opportunities the others presented me with. Without the investment others put in me. I wouldn't be the person I am today without them. And nor would you.

So, I urge the newer players in the market – the FAANGs – to make the connection between the great talent we have here in Britain, and the foundation on which their opportunities have been provided. Subsidised theatre. The talent schemes. Public service broadcasting and education.

I know that these buyers pay into the Skillset Levy through the productions they pay for, but what would it look like if Netflix sponsored scholarships at the NFTS for example?

Or if Apple chose to invest in new writing theatres such as The Everyman in Liverpool, Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre, or The Royal Court.

Or if YouTube funded a scheme to place five new writers in production companies for a year?

It is vital to nurture and progress new talent because there is not enough to go around. And if my airy-fairy reasons aren't enough, which they are, by the way, there's also an unassailable business case for taking the nurturing of talent seriously.

According to Sir Peter Bazalgette in his recent Review, the creative industries could reach a gross value to our country of 128 billion pounds by 2025. 128 billion.

Even if you just measure the success of TV storytelling in cold cash and not in the empathy it encourages or the understanding it can promote, it pays to invest in it. It makes moral and commercial sense. To give the next generation, and the generation after them, real opportunities. Opportunities that, when they presented themselves to us, we took, sometimes gratefully, and sometimes for granted.

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Because those generations are being already being deprived of opportunities to reach their full potential by the very system that is meant to enable them.

So far, I have talked about our industry's responsibility in finding and fostering new creative talent, nurturing new commentators skilled enough to ask big questions in entertaining, dramatic ways.

Now, I'm going to shamelessly use this platform that BAFTA has so kindly lent me for this evening to highlight a pressing issue that I feel extremely passionately about: the calculated, ideologically-motivated, shocking way that the government is shoddily treating creativity in the education system. It's a deprivation of opportunities for children to reach their full potential as human beings. It is unjust, and needs to be challenged.

So, here's a party political broadcast.

[Clip plays]

[Laughter]

[Applause]

And there we have it. Only this one is no joke, this is all true. Young teachers studying to work in primary schools have a training programme of 190 days across a year where they are required to learn all the disciplines needed to teach children from age 4 to 11. Of course, this includes Maths, English, IPC, PHSEE. As you've learned though, of the 190 days training, only one day is dedicated to the quartet of art, music, dance and drama.

One.

That is how much our government and it seems, our country, values creativity in education.

How dare they undervalue our culture so much.

On September 30th 2011 a highly successful initiative called the Creative Partnership, designed by the

organisation CCE or Creativity, Culture and Education, was closed down.

This programme was set up to develop the creative skills and outlook of children across England. It raised their aspirations and opened up doors for their futures. It supported thousands of long term partnerships between schools and creative professionals, including architects, musicians, artists, multimedia developers and scientists.

It touched the lives of one million children across 5,000 schools.

Quite apart from the engagement the children found by working with creative professionals, they were ten times more likely to tell parents about what they'd done that day than if they didn't engage with the scheme. Schools showed significant improvements in behaviour and attendance, all directly attributable to this scheme.

As I understand it, the government withdrew funding from the Arts Council for this scheme as a political act. Ideology, disguised as austerity, denying an entire generation of children the opportunity to benefit from a fully rounded education.

The Creative Industries Federation and the Cultural Learning Alliance are all still active in this area, in lobbying and connecting organisations and businesses to education. But our industry needs to start shouting too. If we want a healthy talent pool in ten years' time, we better do everything we can now to put the education of arts back at the top table.

Again, the long game needs to start now.

Until the 130 accountability measures by which schools are judged include even one arts one, we have no chance.

Creativity in schools makes happier pupils who work harder, are more likely to succeed and will eventually help drive growth in our sector and other sectors. It's not hard. In the future, and I know this from *Humans*, the only thing computers won't be able to do is be creative. This is

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the thing we should be nourishing above all others.

I now feel compelled to ask how we let this happen and how can we as an industry, take our place in the line-up of creative industries and start supporting the really grassroots level? Start lobbying our politicians, make a drama about it, adopt a school.

Because the result of not doing this will be that the human cultural pipeline will become ever narrower. The growing gap between the haves and the have-nots will become a chasm.

This is exacerbated by private schools continuing to offer a range of cultural experiences and education as opposed to state sector where these things have been cut in pursuit of austerity or the EBACC school ratings system, which only measures success in the so-called 'core' subjects.

But just one afternoon in the theatre could make all the difference to someone's interest in the arts.

Think of the child aged 6 who gets taken by their school to see a performance of *Alice in Wonderland*.

By age 8, this has fuelled their imagination to write a story about a child who has an imaginary life.

By age 9, they know all the words to all the *Horrible Histories* songs.

By age 18, they have left school and are working in the local supermarket and doing an evening class in creative writing.

By age 23, they've sent a script to the local theatre, which by the way has enough funding in my own imaginary world, to have a literary department which has time to read all the submissions.

At age 24, this writer is on a new talent programme and by age 28 has a new play on at the Bolton Octagon.

And as soon as one of the producers in this room hears there's a new voice on the scene that writer is hauled in, signed up and set running.

Within a few years a new series is born, a new commentator to tell us stories about our world and our lives.

It's lovely story isn't it? And I bet every single one of you sees something of yourself in that writer.

Something inspired you, something brought you to where you are today. Opportunity and investment. Work and luck. That alchemical combination.

So, we are the grown-ups now. We're not 'I'm waiting for my movie to happen, but I'm doing TV in the meantime'. We're not purveying 'guilty pleasures'. We are not a cottage industry.

We are a dynamic, resourceful, brilliant creative business. We have, and always have had, the best storytellers in the world. And I feel lucky on a daily basis to be doing this job which I love so much. We're entering a new age, where choice, fragmentation and global players will dominate. We will survive and thrive in this new age if we work in service to the most important people in this conversation, the audience.

They will choose where and when and how they watch our content.

But it falls to us, the drama industry that is powered by writers, to provide the means and the platform for talent to write big, state of the nation, funny, entertaining, relevant, moving, and innovative dramas in the mainstream, linear and SVOD, for big audiences at the highest level of quality.

And we must not assume or expect that this will happen automatically. As an industry we must engage with the tools needed to facilitate this in the best possible way and to provide the next generation with a storytelling world where their preoccupations and concerns are explored in a way that grabs them by the heart. The route from new to star has to be taken seriously and

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allowed time and money, patience and process. So, let's invest ourselves. Let's build in that time and money to commissioning and budgeting. It's not a luxury. It's essential.

Let's encourage our new writers to write in the mainstream, by allowing their innovation.

Let's ask the FAANGs to contribute to the cultural pot, to help refill the well. They can work out how, but please do it.

Let's pester Philip Hammond and Justine Greening to give schools back their budgets for arts.

This path may not be easy. Hell, it will not be easy. But I am an optimist. I have hope. Hope that you will do it because to do otherwise doesn't sit right with you. Because you're inspired to, because you have been inspired to. Because the opportunity to do it is there.

Because if you're like me, you understand that creative excellence doesn't live in a vacuum. It is not an individual achievement. It is the consequence of a thousand decisions made by many people. 500 of those decisions may well have been wrong at the point they were made but they were necessary to the process and were corrected or improved over time. This cooperative process produces creative excellence. Creativity isn't yours or mine. It's ours. It's shared. It's in the connections between us. Because we are connected. We're human beings. We exist in relation to each other. If stories and storytellers teach us anything, it's surely that.

Thank you.

[Applause]

Thank you, hi Gareth.

**Gareth McLean:** Jane Featherstone ladies and gentlemen. Phew. How are you feeling?

**JF:** Yeah, good. Yeah, great, a couple of jumbled words but you know, you got the drift.

**GM:** Yeah, vaguely. There was loads in there.

**JF:** I talk quite fast, sorry.

**GM:** No no, no. That's a good thing. The most pressing questions probably that I have are, Gazza?! Tell tell!

**JF:** Yeah

**GM:** Scribes? Tell me about that.

**JF:** Um, so my first job, I got a call, about a week before I left Leeds University, didn't have a clue what I was gonna do, wanted to work in TV, didn't know anyone, no idea how I was going to do it. The great thing about my mum and dad, was they didn't tell us we had to get a proper job. So I was just like 'well I'll just, something will, I don't know we'll work it out it'll be fine'. And, I got a phone call from one of my good friends, who had gone down a year early and was working in the Spurs press office. And she got to know Mel Stein and Gazza through that. And she said 'Gazza needs a new PA because his old one's gone AWOL. I don't want to do it but will you do it for three months over the summer maybe and then you can go and do, you know, whatever it is, but it's just a three-month summer job'. So I got the train down on the last Friday of the term at Leeds, met Gazza, got the job and started on the Monday. And during that time, it was kind of a crazy moment, he was very famous then as well, during that time his managers were and his lawyers were observant Jews and they wouldn't work after sundown on a Friday. And it seemed that all the negotiations for Lazio all took place on Friday night at Terry Venables' nightclub called Scribes – great today can you imagine – called Scribes in Kensington. So I was sent along to be their representative at the age of 22, to make notes and do quite knows what else, haven't got a fucking clue, but anyway I sat there and took notes. And I was in a room, nightclub, 15 men, cashmere navy coats. Me taking notes. It was funny. I learnt some things about El Tel then, I'll tell you those later as well. So that's how it all started anyway. And then I met

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somebody who worked in TV and went for a job as a runner. That's the connection.

**GM:** So that sounds like a total nightmare, but that must have taught you something, were you not totally out of your depth?

**JF:** Yeah, completely and totally out of my depth on an hourly, daily basis. But it was, you know, you sort of sink or swim. And I sort of had nothing to lose, and I don't know, we just got on with it. But it did teach me how to engage with complicated people, which is to be honest with them, I really learnt that young, is that if you can be honest with very complicated people who are usually the most interesting in my experience actually, they will respect you for that and they will trust you. So I've tried to be honest, gently honest, not completely, but mostly gently honest with the people I work with, the writers included.

**GM:** And that's got you to a point at which you can call on Andy Buchan, Julian Farino, those sorts of...

**JF:** Can I just say thank you to all the people who gave their time for those brilliant sketches. Julian Farino directed them for me as a favour, and our writers Sam John, Abi, Joe Barton, Adam Kay wrote them, and we had those amazing casts and all the team assisted. So thank you, and we put them under huge pressure to do them but I'm very grateful so thank you all.

**GM:** I get the feeling that you're the sort of person that people want to do good things for.

**JF:** They work for me, they had no choice. Julian could have said no.

[Laughter]

**GM:** Changed his phone number. Now, you mentioned a couple of times in your speech about process. How did that become important to you? Or what, because a lot of people you speak to are very goal oriented, They've got their

BAFTA speech written, I know I've got my BAFTA speech written.

**JF:** I didn't have mine, let me tell you.

**GM:** But that seems to me to be the wrong thing to focus on, the process is the point...

**JF:** I think that in creativity the process is the point. I don't think unless you're Mozart perhaps, you wake up one morning and think I'm going to make this perfect thing. I think it's a process of lots of misdirections and lots of collaboration, particularly in our business which is completely collaborative. And it starts, you shouldn't know where you're going half the time. I think you should just let the process go. And I think we try and pin it down to early in our business. I think we try and reach resolution too quickly, and of the writers, many are here, who work with me, know that I hate to do that, and actually try to create an environment where they can be free and keep going, and that means often lots of drafts. That also means dialogue not written notes. I don't think I've ever given written notes in my entire career on any script, because you can only do it as a conversation. Because really, my notes, it's meaningless you know, it's only in response to what a writer intended or thinks or feels. So I think we have to be patient with the process you can't rush it and we try and engineer it too often.

**GM:** Is that because people are unsure or insecure about their own, like is it because producers think 'oh my god, if I let it just go whatever way I'm going to lose control of it'

**JF:** Look, everyone wants certainty, we're all looking for certainty we're all trying to find out what might be a hit. So we deliver pitches then we deliver outlines and actually most of the time you chuck all that stuff out, and I think we're all reaching for, you know, this belief that something will know what it is and it's going to be a hit. But it just doesn't work like that, you just have to follow your creative judgement in my view. And create the circumstances for the best people to just follow their path, and when you work with great

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commissioners, and we're really lucky in this country, in drama we have some really, and comedy we have some really brilliant people who get that actually and don't require you to constantly deliver updates and things the whole time. So we don't know, and I frequently will sit in a room with a controller or commissioner and say well I don't know if it will be any good I really hope it is. I can't tell you it is because I don't know yet, we're going to try and make it good. That's the process I think.

**GM:** Yeah. And so that environment that you're talking about for getting the most out of creative people. Sister is one of those environments one would expect.

**JF:** I hope it is

**GM:** I hear good things.

[Laughter]

**JF:** Yeah, I hope it is, and I am having such fun there at the moment with my small team.

**GM:** Because it's quite different, it's really different to what you did just before. Obviously that's a conscious effort.

**JF:** It is. I mean, I loved Kudos, it was 15 years and I loved it so much and I had such opportunities there. And we made some really good work together. But now we're smaller and much more closely connected to everything going on, I really really love that, I'm really involved editorially on everything and I really really enjoy that. So we're having a lot of fun. And you know Sister, the Sister name was about trying to find something, there's a lot of, I was looking for a name, there's all these TV companies, Renegade, Optimum, big cock you know, I don't know.

[Laughter]

**GM:** There's a certain masculine bent.

**JF:** They're all masculine! All these companies are all 'look at me', so I was like 'oh god'. So I was trying to find something, at some point someone's going to call a company big cock aren't

they, it's a porn company. At one point it was nearly Giddy Aunt, which wouldn't have been quite as good.

**GM:** That sounds like a make of gin.

**JF:** It really does. But fortunately I listened to my team who all went 'hmm not sure about Giddy Aunt' and I was like 'I really like it, it could be that' and they went 'no' so Sister emerged and they were so right, thank god.

**GM:** Was there anyone else you listened to?

**JF:** I listened to my daughter, my four-year-old girl as she was then. We were trying to come up with a name and I thought she could help me, she could be kind of free and you know something that; creative and entirely natural. So she was going, she'd seen a dog on the beach and she was saying 'dog, something, dog', and then she was going through the alphabet and she was going 'dog buck dog luck dog fuck dog fuck, mummy dog fuck'. So I was like dog fuck sounds like a great name. So it was Dog Fuck, Giddy Aunt or Sister.

[Laughter]

**GM:** Good choice!

**JF:** I think it was the right decision, yeah, she really did.

**GM:** I was interested in this *Split* you mentioned that's Abi Morgan, you, that's obviously been a really fruitful partnership over the years. Nicola Walker's in it, quite a female production.

**JF:** It really is. We've got Jess Hobbs directing, Lucy Dyke producing, me and Abi, Clare Batty Script Executive, female line producer, female designer, female location manager. It's kind of amazing. And it's really glorious. It's been great fun. We've got 60 percent female cast, which I think is really rare. And so it's been amazing and the show is exciting with another week to go filming. Yeah! We'll see won't we.

**GM:** Yeah, we'll see, we don't know yet! Process.

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**JF:** Yes, process

**GM:** Yes, it's all in the process. On that subject of gender, now we may as well call this the Weinstein question.

**JF:** Oh god.

**GM:** Yeah. What, how can television, that is not a problem exclusive to cinema or theatre or everywhere, I mean TV has a problem, like everywhere, how do you think that can be addressed.

**JF:** Well, I'm sure TV has a problem, wherever there are men in positions of power and women in vulnerable or younger women in vulnerable positions. It's going to be found. TV certainly as well. And I suppose what we all have to do now is be vigilant, and seek it out, and where it is there we have to name it and expel it. And we have to be shameless about that now. And it's sort of staggering, it's taken so long actually for us to get to this point, There's something very corrective happening in all these businesses, you know media in particular because it's so high profile. But I suspect it's not the only business which it's happening in, and other sectors as well. But we have to, we have to root it out, and you know, putting more women in director roles, more women as writers, more women as lead actors, that will make a difference, that will help. So by representation and doing, will we also change the culture.

**GM:** Because BAFTA is working with ACAS at the moment to work on sort of anti-bullying, anti-harassment sort of policies, which to me actually, I mean it comes from a horrible situation, and you say it's corrective. But I'm quite optimistic about where we are. I mean it's horrible but the future...

**JF:** Yeah, it could be a reset, it could be a moment, where the next generation who we have a responsibility to witness us do something about it. They see us change, you know make changes, and enforce those regulations, the anti-bullying anti-harassment and we won't,

we should not tolerate people who behave that way. And if that next generation of young men and women see us behave that way we can have long-term change. So you're right, in a way it's a moment that needed to happen and we now have to own it and make a change.

**GM:** You sort of, you talk about, I suppose that; one of the long games that we're still playing that's a process that we're gonna have to go through. The long game that you talk about in terms of nurturing writers and fostering talent and that unbroken pipeline that you talk about from school to new writer to star, do you think here are consequences of us not having stated that, been aware of that sooner

**JF:** Yeah I think that six bloody years since they took arts education out of the primary school and out of the secondary sector. Not completely but massively will have a detrimental effect for that generation of children, and apparently the government are now softening towards the arguments a little bit. Because I did a lot of research for this and talked to a lot of people. And they're saying that gradually, apparently Phillip Hammond is more open to conversation than elsewhere in the government, he kind of gets the argument. It's so fucking obvious, I literally just like how simple can it be between investing in a cultural education and the success that Britain brings commercially to this, just it's so mind-numbingly obvious to me, and this is at the expense of maths and English, but it's as well as, and it's also not huge sums of money that we're talking about. So I think we will have lost a generation potential, you know this is six years where this wasn't there so we have to make sure that doesn't happen again.

**GM:** And in terms of the writers this kind of evacuation of talent from the mainstream to the niche. Do you think a drought of writers is inevitable in that mainstream space because we won't have addressed the kind of the cultural well that you talk about?

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**JF:** I think it was really interesting again when I was thinking a lot about this. Those writers, Sally Wainwright and Pete Bowker and Jimmy McGovern are all pretty much of one generation, and of course there are new writers coming up, you know there's Mike Bartlett and Nick Payne and you know here are other great writers coming up but they're not heartland mainstream big stories in quite the same way. And that's the bit I couldn't see and I haven't really noticed until I started researching this. It was like bloody hell where are those people. So I think we're going to have to work hard and it's not just the writers you know we have to nurture the talent, but we need to offer a platform, we need to make it interesting for them to want to work in the mainstream, and mainstream therefore has to be innovative and be prepared to innovate. And I suspect that that BBC will be, and ITV and Channel 4, will be struggling financially to compete with these big FAANG places, it's a great acronym isn't it. I don't know who came up with it.

**GM:** I feel like I should go 'dun dun dun'

**JF:** I don't know who came up with it, anyway it's really good. It wasn't me that came up with it, it was someone really clever. But I do think that those that, the linear channels here are going to financially really struggle to keep up.

**GM:** And can you see sort of a solution or...

**JF:** God knows what the solution is to that. But I do believe that as with cable in America 20 years ago, when all the networks were riding high and *West Wing*, you know and all the shows that cable all evolved and they couldn't afford to compete with the networks for talent so they were forced to look elsewhere, they were forced to look to new talent and they were forced to look and take risks and they become the new cool. You know with *The Shield* and the *Sopranos*, all those things, So I kind of hope that that will happen, and other people are very resourceful. In MITCOM distributors were clubbing together from around the world to try and deficit programmes so they could put them on

their channels you know put them on the channels in their countries, but you know paid for from a global grouping of distributors. I don't know at the moment the distributors are putting in a lot of money. It's really challenging I think Tony Hall's doing a whole review about it so I don't have all the answers at this minute.

**GM:** Not right here right now

**JF:** But I do think the talent pool will help that solution, will help find that solution. Because the more people there are to go around, the more people with voices, we're bound to still be making good stories in the mainstream. But it's challenging times definitely.

**GM:** Because I suppose that one argument is, well what's wrong with Netflix making the mainstream stuff. And if, you know.

**JF:** There isn't, there's nothing wrong with them making the mainstream stuff, but their subscriber base will never be, maybe it will be one day, but not for a long time, as big as the free-to-air services in this country, and if they do, as I said in the lecture, if the big talent, and of course I'm not actually suggesting that, maybe Sally Wainwright probably doesn't want to work for Netflix, but someone will, absolutely migrate over because that's what happens. It's a market. And that will leave those gaps in the mainstream. And I think you just look at things now, even entertainment shows you know, even *Strictly* and *Bake Off*, I'm dying for the final tomorrow, can't wait, you want to have those big stories. And what *Broadchurch* did and what *Liar* did recently and *Doctor Foster*. That massive unified shared experience is a really wonderful thing. And I think we can do both, I think you can have great mainstream shows on SVOD, but you also need them free-to-air.

**GM:** And it's not just watercolour moments we get out of it, from what you say in your speech. It is that unifying conversations in a fractured world. So there's a political impetus.

**JF:** I really think there is. I think there's a way, we're also, our younger people

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are, apart from the Corbynites, are depoliticised, They're not engaging with politics in the way that, I'm not saying our generation was perfect, but perhaps we engaged a bit more. We had Thatcher, so we were railing against something. And maybe now you could argue there's more to rail against at the moment. More stories to explore. Maybe that talent will have more things to shout about. So maybe they'll evolve through writing those stories.

**GM:** Because I mean that bit of your speech struck me as quite political. The stuff about education was political with a bigger 'p' perhaps. Is that an area that you were warned against going into or. Because I can just imagine 'Are you gonna say that'

**JF:** They wouldn't dare Gareth!

**GM:** 'You're gonna say that Jane, are you sure you want to say that Jane.'

**JF:** I don't think they'd dare to try and warn me against that. No, I think the great thing about being where I am now, the wonderful privilege. I don't work for anybody, it's my company and the team at Sister's company, and we don't have to answer to anyone some people might, no one can tell me off, I can say what I like. BAFTA might tell me off but I'm not that scared of them.

[Laughter]

**GM:** Underneath this carpet there's just a trap.

**JF:** So actually I really believe these things and finally it's like someone's offered me this platform to talk about them. So yeah, what's the worst that could happen.

**GM:** The sharks underneath the...

**JF:** So yeah, other people would say it if they could I'm sure, it's just that I happen to have been offered this opportunity so I've said it.

**GM:** So Jane's had her chance to speak, so I'd like to open it up to the floor as they say, so there are a couple of nice

people with microphones, so if you, put your hand up then we'll pick you.

**JF:** Now I can see you all.

**GM:** Yeah that's nice. You must be hot, you've all got jumpers on out there. Yeah so if you put your hand up and then when you get the mic if you can say what your name is and where you're from blind date style. Yes, so there's a chap right at the back in the corner. Hello.

**Q:** Hi, thank you very much for such an illuminating and inspiring talk, I enjoyed it very much, possibly one of the best ones so far I (had it) through these lectures since its inception. But what I would really like to ask you is a left wing question if I may. I'm just wondering if you've been preparing yourself for no talk, no deal at the brexit.

**JF:** Politics, I start with politics in the speech I deserve a question like that I suppose.

**GM:** Yeah go on, we'll get you on GDP next.

**JF:** No, is the answer. I think, I know that the Creative Learning Alliance and the Creative Industries Federation I know are talking a lot about what, and Pact, and talking a lot about what will happen in terms of the skills shortage that's going to merge with Brexit whether deal or no deal actually. You know there's bound to be a skills shortage, so you know that's something that will affect us definitely. Have we been actually thinking about it in terms of what we would do as independent producers, no we haven't perhaps we should, do you think we should.

**Q:** You are the boss

**JF:** Oh shit I knew that would, yeah ok. I mean there are no question that we deal with Europe and we sell our shows to Europe and we have much talent crossing borders all the time so if there really is no deal yeah we're probably up shit creek as well, like the rest of the country. So we have to hope that somebody works something out. It's not

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going to be Theresa May though is it. David Davis possibly.

**GM:** Ok someone else now!

**JF:** Don't start me on Brexit!

**GM:** Yeah, down here in the front row.

**JF:** But thank you for that question.

**Audience 2:** Jane, thank you very much for a very informative speech, I agree with you, with the whole education thing because as a stifled creative as a teenager I mean, loving films, it was difficult because it was an embarrassing situation because it would hold you back. I was just curious to know whether in terms of how the schedules are on TV at the moment do you feel that there are things that you would change because there's a plethora of shows during the day that you would change in terms to make, so you could get dramas on screen that would make way for, that these shows could make way for.

**JF:** I think that's a really excellent question. And I addressed that in an earlier draft of the speech and it had to come out because there wasn't room for everything. So I'm really glad you asked that question, I think that when you look, I went to a talk by David Bergg, who used to be head of scheduling at ITV many of you will know, and they used to call him the prince of Darkness I think because... he's very clever and when I was doing *Touching Evil* which was 25 years ago, a very long time ago.

**GM:** 19 oatcake as my mother would say

**JF:** 19 oatcake, excellent, and he showed one of those tables with, you know Wednesday was factual entertainment and soaps here and whatever else, what the schedule was. And I looked at one two years ago and it was exactly the same. 25 years later. And it was staggering to me that the schedules, apart from the odd little shift, are really the same as they were. And actually if you look at the world now surely schedules are becoming irrelevant, more and more, we know this, and you have to say, I mean I don't, you

know, you know, and I don't know, if I were Carolyn McCall and Alex Mahorn and Tony Hall I'd be looking at thinking well how can we potentially collaborate together. They've tried Britbox, a couple of those in the US, to fund an online platform that doesn't have schedules because surely at the moment the schedules are holding us back creatively in some way. The strict structures of soaps at this time and nine o'clock drama, the watershed thing is an issue, SVOD there's no watershed so you know, you get recommendation I think.

**GM:** Would you get rid of the watershed?

**JF:** No I think it would change gradually you know no one's going to get rid of the BBC and ITV schedules overnight. But they are becoming increasingly problematic there's no question. And I think you know if you look at the daytime programming and maybe the BBC which has huge funding challenging coming in drama and other areas, maybe some daytime programming has to go, I don't know. But the problem with the BBC, the difficulty it faces is that it has to be everything to everybody, and you know when they tried to close Radio 6 quite rightly there was a furore, and they couldn't close that. It's very difficult, what do they do. I think it's, but I do that that one other thing on schedules. I think the schedules are potentially holding back innovation in form for writers which is one of the reasons they also like writing for the FAANGs because the shows can be any length they can be any order number. They don't have to conform to a particular structure that they impose on them by a regular linear schedule. So I think that things are going to have to change. I know that the British commissioners are looking at that, we're taking at the moment about doing a 45 minute on the BBC because an hour's just too long sometimes and you don't want to stretch it. So it's a really good question.

**GM:** Bring back points of view. *Points of View*. Who wants to put that in the quarter to nine slot?

**GM:** Does *Points of View* still exist?

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**JF:** Does it? I don't know.

**GM:** It's gone hasn't it? Come back.  
Bring back *Points of View*.

**JF:** Does *Points of View* still exist anyone?

**GM:** Yeah, oh it's still on, on a Sunday with Jeremy Vine. No one watches that though. Do you think that if you keep your hands up if you want to ask a question, I'm just going to ask Jane something. Do you think the BBC will be the big, could be the biggest casualty of this change, this shift?

**JF:** No I think it will be ITV. Sorry.

**GM:** Do you?

**JF:** Yep. Because the BBC does have at the moment the license fee, it has an amazing brand, and there's a, I think commercial television is going to struggle more.

**GM:** So ITV and Channel 4?

**JF:** And Channel 4 probably. And Sky will have its own struggles you know. If the SVODs and the FAANGs start getting into sports. I'm sure they're already thinking about it, it won't be me suggesting it, think about that, thank about whether they're getting into sport!

**GM:** Netflix are on the phone now to the FA! Use your Gazza connection.

**JF:** But you know they, who knows what will happen it's a market.

**GM:** Anybody else? Come on don't be shy. Oh a hand right in the middle. Hello.

**Q:** Hello. I've spent a long time in the broadcast industry, and now I actually teach at Brunel. And I actually wave the flag for the creative industries. I go into schools and do fairs and they stare at me as if I'm from another planet. Trying to put 'A' back into STEM. There are movements actually called STEAM. But I just wonder how much, here we all are, media luvvies here from many years and all the rest of it. You know you put some figures up there, you know, 84 billion in

2014 actually into the industry. I know how much we all are aware of the drain that's going on in education. I don't think many people even knew that perhaps we contribute that much to the economy. You know gaming is one of the fastest growing etc. etc. so I say all this to the students etc. but I don't know and I wonder whether you know whether we actually are aware of what's happening out there. Because certainly on my courses there's a real threat that our clients as now they're called at university because they're all paying or (a parent who's paying for my son). But that feeling that there isn't enough awareness that we will be under threat because as you say, this generation has suffered as a result. Creative thinking and all those chances and opportunities that perhaps at school, I mean it was always difficult being in the creative arts.

**JF:** I completely agree and honestly that's why I put that large chunk in. Which is, you know I started thinking at the beginning when I started researching this. It came out of, I'm a trustee of the Freelands Foundation which is a foundation that tries to support arts in education as well as one of the things it does. And it was through my connection with that that I found, that I met Henry Ward who is the education advisor on the trust, and he started talking about these issues and I hadn't known anything about them. And honestly I don't know how many people know, lets have hands up, how many people knew this stuff before tonight. 10, 15? So it came out of researching for this lecture. I didn't really know I think I'd read something somewhere about it in the Guardian you know arts subjects being at risk but I didn't have any idea and when I spoke to the Creative Learning Alliance and to Henry the 130 accountability measures, that's true. I mean you will know, there are 130 measures by which schools are accountable which meet their targets, and not one of them is about the arts. I mean it's sort of, it really is staggering. And I haven't quite worked out, I I don't know what we can do enough about it. We have to lobby. We probably should make a drama about it because dramas can make change.

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**Q:** Also those of us who are perhaps parents in the room, who've got kids at school at different ages I see a lot of different age groups here, you could go into schools and you could talk about what you do. That could be a simple solution to start off.

**JF:** I completely agree; I did that actually about four or five months ago. I went to my son's school and I spoke about television. And it was a careers day and they were all going in and, they were a bit like TV Producer?

**GM:** From Dog Fuck Productions

[Laughter]

**JF:** From Dog Fuck Productions here's Jane Featherstone, Will's mum. And I spoke about it and after they said 'Oo it sounds ever so fun, your job. I'm like it's really great'. No one had apparently come in to talk about that before. So we just have to tell everyone we can, you know start lobbying, talk about it, spend money. I mean we're all fricking rich really in this business. I don't mean everyone in this room, by the way, I don't mean people new writers and new talent. But those of us who have been fortunate, the television industry is a wealthy business. And it is time to give back. Yes.

**GM:** Anyone else? Oh yep, chap down here with the very long lustrous hair.

[Laughter]

**Q:** I'll give you some if you want some.

**GM:** Yes, please! I've got more on my back than I've got on my head now.

**Q:** I don't have any there!

**GM:** Brilliant, thanks very much. It's all getting a bit *Silence of the Lambs* here. Carry on.

[Laughter]

**Q:** My question follows on a bit about education. I'm quite young in the room I guess, nearly 21, just stumbling out of uni in about six months to try and do story

editing, and script editing, and so I went to a careers meeting with my personal tutor because we had to, telling him what I wanted to do. So I said 'I've had two ambitions in my life, and one is radio presenting because I like broadcasting, and the other one is story editing, and scriptwriting', and he basically said to me well it might as well have translated to unless you sleep with someone in the industry you're not going to get in full stop. Full stop, honestly.

**GM:** Who in this room will sleep with this young man?

[Laughter]

**Q:** So that's what I'm asking

[Laughter]

**GM:** I'm having his hair, you can have his body

[Laughter]

**JF:** That's wrong on so many levels

[Laughter]

**Q:** You learn something new, so I basically said to him well, is that it? I mean, and that was that. So I went away and I thought well ok so what I've got under my belt is I've read lots of scripts, I do a bit of writing, I am on the radio show presenting, that's all that he said I could do. So I'm thinking oh well, who wants me.

**JF:** Well clearly that's bollocks, I mean the fact that all the writers writing in this room didn't all have a father or mother who worked in the industry I'm sure, some may have done, but as I said you have to find those grassroots programmes that will look at your scripts. If you're talented they will find you but you have to write something and put yourself out there and connect. And you have to send it to companies and you have to pester and you have to knock down doors and you have to keep banging away at it, because that's the only way you can do it. But we are looking, the doors are open. I don't think the industry isn't looking anymore. I think

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five years ago maybe it wasn't looking hard enough. I genuinely think people are looking now for talent from all over the country. It's just that we're not perhaps as good at ushering through as we should be so you know you can do it.

**Q:** Yeah I mean because I was thinking when you think about the people in a position of power in terms of in the industry, you think how much attention is given to people who try and sell themselves if you know that you could be capable, if you went in and had the door opened for you.

**JF:** It is, there is attention given. And you know, you may start as a runner, I started as a runner, many other people did. You might, that's how you might get into the industry and find your own route through it. But you can do it. You have to, and also when good people, the other producers and other people will agree, when they come into your world, we spot them and we hold on to them. And once you're in television it's pretty meritocratic I've found. Not always, but mostly, and in the business I run I try to make it that. So you have to keep plugging away.

**Q:** Thank you, that's great.

**GM:** Anybody else?

**JF:** That's enough now isn't it?

**GM:** There's a Malbec through there with your name on it. I have a question.

**JF:** Oh God ok.

**GM:** Writers, you said you liked writers, liked us, very important. Who's your favourite

[Laughter]

**JF:** Who's here? They're all my favourites Gareth!

**GM:** Are they.

**JF:** I couldn't possibly choose between them.

**GM:** Say they were all in like a burning building.

[Laughter]

Not this one, this one has very good labelled fire exits. If they were all in a burning building and you had to save one of them.

**JF:** To be honest with you if they were all in a burning building I'd run a fucking mile and leave them all there! Because actually, I couldn't save one, I couldn't save one, they're all too special and valuable to me. If I couldn't save them all I wouldn't save any.

**GM:** That's very meritocratic of you. Right, ok, if no one else has any other questions I'd like you to join me in thanking Jane Featherstone.

**JF:** Thank you.

[Applause]