

Katie Hopkins

MailOnline columnist & LBC presenter

Media Masters – June 9, 2016

Listen to the podcast online, visit www.mediafocus.org.uk

Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one to one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined by TV personality and columnist Katie Hopkins. Katie first made her name as an outspoken contestant on the reality TV show The Apprentice, famously snubbing lord Sugar by turning down a place in the final.

She has since gone on to hold the British public rapt through controversial appearances on I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!, Celebrity Big Brother, and presenting her own shows My Fat Story and If Katie Hopkins Ruled the World. A columnist at Mail Online and presenter at LBC, she is also a regular commentator on shows such as Question Time, The Wright Stuff and this Morning.

Katie, thank you for joining me.

It's my pleasure.

Wow! Well, where do we start? I actually fielded questions for this, I crowd sourced some on Twitter before we started.

Yes.

And most people were unkind. Is this something you're used to?

That's the joy I suppose, of being a strongly opinionated – I was going to say 'woman', but I'd say that's arguable and also not relevant – but...

Is some of it misogynistic, or is it just that they hate you because it's you?

Oh, no, no – it's not relevant that I'm supposed to be a woman. It's much more relevant that I just am a strongly opinionated person and have lots to say, but I think

I'm like many people who have opinions – I'm super happy for people to completely disagree, to be as rude as they like in return, and I don't mind if your view is completely different from mine; I'd quite like to hear it actually. And I think that's probably... people always think, "Oh you've made your mark by being controversial," or, "You've made your mark by being an obnoxious cow," but I think actually I may have made my mark by not minding at all the feedback that people give or the way they want to articulate it. When people say, "Look, I'm going to set your house on fire, lock the door and I hope you burn alive," I think all they're trying to do is articulate that they disagree with my point of view, they just don't necessarily have the word skills to be able to do that.

It's still not a nice thing for them to say though.

You've got choices. Everybody has choices; I always think you've got your remote control, you've got your on-off button for your radio, you've got a selection of newspapers you may or may not wish to buy, you've got Twitter that you can or may not wish to be part of, and you don't need to be part of Facebook if you don't want to be, there is always an off switch – indeed, there's a off switch to this podcast which I hope people don't use!

Well, maybe at the end.

At the end, once we've got the numbers! So it's optional, isn't it? It's to opt in or opt out, but of course that applies to myself as well; I think one should always point the finger at yourself, and I don't have to take any of this – I can go home and sit on my sofa. If you don't like the criticism you get then stay indoors, sit on your sofa and be a regular mum or dad. Don't put yourself out there. And equally, if I don't like the abuse I get on Twitter, I can come off Twitter – it just so happens that it's a functional tool for me, it works with my job and actually it does me a great service. My Twitter following, although they may pretend they don't follow, they're there and whilst they may not believe they're helping me, they're helping me all the way, even when they're criticising me.

I mean, I've been involved in a few Twitter spats over the years and I've had a lot of criticism, and even if it's quite nasty as long as it's done with some wit and I don't feel there's any malevolence behind it I don't really mind it. But there are a few people over the years where you think, "Well, I don't like you, that has crossed the line."

I don't pay much attention, , my Twitter feed – and people get to experience if I retweet them ever – it's very hectic. People are overwhelmed by the deluge that follows if they're retweeted, so they're surprised by what goes on on a busy Twitter feed. But I don't see a lot of what's said anyway, but the ones that I do, if I go back to them it's not really Twitter spats, I just kind of go for the slay. So I will just slay you.

So if you come on my Twitter feed and want to have a go, go for your life – but if I choose to take you out, I will take you out at the knees and I will embarrass you in front of 650,000 people, so you should be prepared for that.

And how many fights are you having at any one moment then?

It's not really... I don't ever think, "Right, I'm going to look at my feed and see what people are doing."

Limit my number of spots to 20 concurrent fights and then...

Essentially, if a train is delayed or some idiot decides to throw themselves in front of my train, or they want to do, and I always say if you're going to commit suicide, fab – but if you just do it somewhere else and not in front of my train, that be bad be fantastic. I'm just quite busy, although clearly you're not. And so if my train's delayed I will go to my Twitter, then I'll take you on. And then of course then I have a whale of a time for about 20 minutes and people are like, "Wot! She's on form!" And then they hide. Basically.

You alluded to it a moment earlier there that in a sense it is good for you, isn't it, even these people are taking you on, it's all generating attention to your views, and... in a sense what I want to talk about in the podcast is not your views, it's almost the meta-narrative, to sound like a media geek, as it were...

Who drinks green tea. Just so people know, that whilst you're trying to be all noble, you drink green tea and you fast.

Not only that, I used the word meta-narrative there, and I hate people who use phrases like that.

So do !! You've just got into my book of pillocks.

Yes, well I temporarily abstain from that, put me at the end...

Okay.

But how does it work, then? I mean, clearly you generate this furore on Twitter. That's a good thing, isn't it? Is all attention good attention?

That's sort of an old, lazy I think, explanation for how press and PR work. I think much more, I see something, I think about and I think my reaction, and I'm usually or quite often share it, and then when I share a reaction, I think... , if my views... and the left wing obviously like to position me as just this obnoxious, abrasive racist bigoted idiot, and I understand why they would choose to do that because I'm so far

removed from where they're at. I don't see them in that way, although I think knitting yoghurts must be a really fun pastime, or drinking green tea for that matter.

Green tea is delicious!

Enough. But I do think, importantly, that sitting where I sit in the spectrum of life, what I do offer, and I think of myself, if I shut my eyes and picture myself, it's always pushing back the wall, so I think that I'm holding back walls of the things that we're allowed to say, I'm pushing back so that there's still space and freedom to speak. And I think the reason I'm not just a nutter shouting racist remarks in the rain in my underwear, being pointed at, people going, "Oh my God, she's a nutter," is that actually I articulate views that a lot of people feel, but also feel they can no longer say. And that's why I have a show on LBC or why I'm one of the two columnists employed full time at the Daily Mail Online.

Is there any time that you've had a view where you've tweeted it and thought, "I've gone slightly too far."? I mean, even I've done that.

Even you! Even you, you wise old man?! Yes, of course there's times that I tweet something and then the scale of the reaction – we're talking once you start to trend on Twitter, or you get the call from the Met Police – that's when possibly you might question whether you'd pushed the limit of the things that people will find tolerable or acceptable. What I've noticed about British policing in particular is the police are keen to be seen to be reacting. Now, whether that be an incident in a shopping mall where we've accidentally shouted Allahu Akhbar in order to be as true to form as we can be for a terrorist incident, then we're apologising 20 minutes later, or whether that's actually my Twitter feed and people say, "Well, Hopkins has said this," or, "Hopkins has said Scottish people sending their sweaty Ebola victims down to the UK." They need to be on Twitter, being seen to react, and then saying, "Katie Hopkins is being investigated for her Twitter feed," so they can be seen to be doing something. And when my Sun column came out about the migrant columns that the head of the UN criticised – because of course there are no other bigger global issues than what Katie Hopkins writes in a column in the Sun newspaper – the head of the UN and then the Met Police major crime and homicide command... so I went in and was interviewed under caution for my copy. So, words I write. So, I mean, I suppose that's where I don't question have I gone over the line, I question has our policing and the head of the UN, do they have insufficient things to do.

I don't agree with a lot of what you write but as long as you don't advocate violence against people...

Mass genocide! Which is coming later in the week! Read that column!

You should surely be allowed to say it so that we can take you on and challenge you? But this going to the police...

The police thing is strange, being interviewed under caution. I quite enjoyed it. I had a brilliant barrister who looked like someone from EastEnders – which is always disarming because people think they're stupid, and actually he's one of the most brilliant minds of our generation I think – had a speech to write which I got to rant in true Hopkins style, and frightened the police team, and then my case was taken to the CPS because the people that launched the complaint were the Society for Black Lawyers – I do wish there was a society for white lawyers, that be great and one would stick up for me – the Society for Black Lawyers, and if they didn't take the case forward they might be seen to be being racist, and so therefore the case had to be taken forward which... then it was discredited has being nonsense. But that's just the reality of what people like myself who are trying to keep some form of freedom of press, freedom of speech, that's what we're up against, and I'm happy to take that mantle. Because I'm a big old bird and I'm pretty tough now, and pretty robust and resilient, and that's actually one of my messages, kind of young people, when I speak in schools and colleges, I fail to see where this robustness and resilience has gone. It's gone in a generation or two. I'm 40-odd.

There seems to be this issue of a lot of students no-platforming people they don't like, and I hugely oppose that. And it seems to be a dual standard really, because like George Galloway won't appear on the same panel as someone who just happens to be Israeli. I mean, if he's got problems with the Israeli regime, of which many people have, then take them on and appear on a panel with them and take them apart.

I love the Israeli regime, actually. Benjamin Netanyahu is one of my heroes and his press spokesman, though he's now working in the UK, I think was one of the all time press greats in terms of being able to respond robustly to media challenges, particularly the time when they were bombing Palestine. I fail to see why Channel 4 and the great BBC, which of course is obviously not neutral, everything they did, every report they did from Palestine during the time of the bombings of Palestine, no one ever focused on the fact that rockets were being fired from hospitals, rockets were being fired from schools, and that people were burying underground – this was another tweet actually that got me into trouble, calling Palestinians rodents, so I'll just repeat it there for good measure – but I don't know why we have this kind of reporting bias, and I think what Israel does is it defends itself brilliantly, but linking that back to this and no-platforming, that's actually linked to Israel so it seems very... it sort of goes hand-in-hand that you no-platform people like myself actually, and that goes hand-in-hand with a ban on all Israeli products on the university campus, such as mangoes. Haha. That is power right there to those students! Power to those students! They do not have Israeli mangoes on campus. Go, you students, you are powerful people. Don't eat those mangoes.

I just buy mangoes.

Eat Satsumas! Yeah!

Do you ever worry about your personal safety though, for example? I mean, it's not just kind of militant Islamists; it might be when you're shopping in Waitrose that some upset housewife just happened to have purchased a kitchen knife.

Waitrose, darling? Waitrose? Oh, no.

Are you a Lidl person?

No, I mean, I go to Waitrose, what I'm trying to say is that's largely my supporter base obviously...

Oh, I see, right.

The elderly people of Waitrose love me, I'm not a hero to them! I get special passes in the aisle. But were I to go to... well, I don't know. I mean, people that go to Tesco and Sainsbury's are probably ill educated, therefore wouldn't know what I was talking about? I don't know where the left wing shop... where do the left-wing shop? You drink green tea, darling, you'll know.

Oh, I don't know. I stopped being left-wing about 20 years ago. But do people come up to in the street and kind of praise you and condemn you in equal measure?

Yes. So you'd imagine, and people imagine, that my life would be difficult – and I know I've had a slight transformation of look recently thanks to a craniotomy, or lobotomy as some people say, I do look a bit like Julian Clary, there's a bit of Ruby Wax, the thin version –

There were a couple of Julian Clary references on the tweet questions.

Yes, and I see... I mean, it's really... he's better looking, but I see it. And then there was sort of... I don't know where I'm going next, I'm hoping it's not Pat Butcher, but I... I mean, I do a) find myself funny, but people imagine my life would be difficult, needing security, people harassing me in the street because they perceive my Twitter feed to be my world, and of course my world's very different to that. Actually, my support... people of course that have unkind things to say would rarely have the balls to say them to my face. People that have very unkind things to say are actually small boys who still live with their mother and rarely see the light of day because

they're gaming, with virtually translucent skin so they can't see the sun because they would probably shrivel into nothing, and then mostly it's support. So the train pulled in today, a lady came up I thought should ask where the bathroom was, so I was prepared with the answer but she said, "I just love your show! I love your show!" So that's it, what you tend to get are the really overexcited supporters. And a gentleman... I had lunch somewhere and a gentleman was taking pictures just to annoy his community because it was a picture with me, just I'm like this kind of mascot.

Or a stick to beat people with, as it were. Here's a picture of me with Katie Hopkins.

Yes. And so... and then the people enjoy the kind of, "What are you doing next to her? What are you doing with her? Grr, shove her, kill her, do something else to her involving her bottom!"

Does no one actually just try to engage constructively with you and say, "Katie, you're right on a few things, but calling all Palestinians cockroaches is a bit harsh – some of them are quite nice."

It was migrants that got the cockroach treatment, and that actually related to this whole thing that we were taught in schools, or at least I feel like I picked up, maybe it's Christmas crackers, I don't know, about the fact that cockroaches are the only animal or insect that can survive a nuclear holocaust. So that was where that came from, obviously got layered on with other meanings, which is where I tend to typically get in trouble, so it became all about Rwandan genocide. God knows how.

And calling gypsies feral. I think that was one thing that...

I don't think that's far off the mark. Ultimately, feral animals live off of the sort of outputs of others, off the... putting out the bins, that's how feral foxes live, gypsies are feral in that nature. I pay my council taxes in order that they can live a free life and I have to build concrete platforms for their caravans and provide them with schooling, electricity and water, whilst they pay sweet Fanny Adams and I don't see how that's fair. That to me is a feral lifestyle.

It's the kind of view I used to hear when I lived up north and I lived on a council estate.

I'd do great up north.

And people used to say things like that.

I could be a Conservative MP for the North.

Yes, but in this in this kind of media village that we live in and blah, blah, blah...

Do we? I don't live in a media village.

But can you see how you would irk those journalists, then?

I'm annoying, yes. I'm annoying. And what's the sort of I suppose more annoying things about me is that I haven't gone away. So that would have been an ideal scenario for all of them, is that I would have just gone away – and I haven't. And in many ways I think I'm resurgent, now I have my new head, I'm epilepsy-free, I have the largest online platform with the Mail Online, and I now have the ability to talk on the airwaves. I feel like I am a resurgent, and I think that annoys them more than ever. And I think what we'll see as we go forward is, because people feel they have less space to speak openly and freely, particularly my supporters, the people that would typically be supporters of the things that I have to say... you know, I've just been warned today there will be an uprising of the people against the migrant flow into Europe and into our country. I think if we don't succeed in the referendum and we don't vote to leave Europe, I think we will see a reaction to that – and people like me, of course, are emblematic of this standing up for Britain, standing up for Great Britain, pushing back against a sort of authoritarian regime and pushing back against kind of sympathy for everyone, defending the fact that if you work hard, you own your piece of land, then you should expect other people to be respectful of that. That's those are the things I stand for. I feel like I am more British than the bloody Bake Off which is so far left-wing now it's ridiculous.

Do you ever worry though that you might incite the wrong kind of people and the wrong kind of supporters? Like for example I was looking at the gun question in America. Now, I'd ban them all, but there are some sensible people on the NRA – most of them are insane, I agree – but there some people...

You're agreeing with yourself at that point, by the way.

Of course. There are a small group of people...

Where is your accent from?

I'm from York, originally. Do I sound like a kind of comedic...?

No, I mean, I've always felt... obviously I find myself very funny and I've always said if I was a bloke, and also overweight, with a Northern accent, I could definitely do stand up.

Are you saying I'm overweight?!

No, you're not fat. I mean, you're verging on the chubby...

Oh, so that's fair enough.

But you definitely have a northern accent that you're trying to soften.

Well, I'm not trying to soften it overtly but I'm also definitely trying to be less chubby, I do accept that, this ridiculous calorie control thing is ridiculous.

Well, fasting for breakfast is not the answer. Stepping is the answer. I'm the queen of that!

I'll ask about that later, because of course you famously put a ton of weight on and then lost it again.

I know, and people occasionally post pictures of me at my fattest. "No, darling, you've missed the point." Yes, so I put on nearly 50% of my body weight, so I put on four stone to prove that fat people are lazy.

Did you enjoy the process of putting that four stone on? Because to be honest, pizzas and ice cream and all that stuff, it sounds all delicious .

I know, and that's such a funny girl question actually, so it's probably an ideal question for you, but most girls say, "You must have loved it! It must have been brilliant, all that cake, all those fish and chips." But actually, 8,000-10,000 calories a day, that's five main meals a day, and the problem is you're never hungry because you're so full, and also you've got these disgusting physical changes. I had this gunt – think canckle – and I couldn't see my, let's say feet, any more, and just physical things like trying to bend over – that's why fat people wear flip flops, as it turns out because doing up shoe laces is really painful when you've got a big gunt, and also the wearing of leggings – not something I approve of at all, I think they should be banned entirely – the leggings came into my wardrobe. It's gone again now. And also understanding why people shop in Marks and Spencer's because of course their clothing may be labelled a size 12 but actually that's a 16 plus, so just that idea. I suppose people over size 12, I say it's a size called fat.

Was it difficult to lose as well? I mean I ask as someone who is verging on the tubby, as you say...

Yes. As a chubber, I would advise you to get a pedometer... have you got one? Let me see your your wrist.

It's an Apple Watch, darling.

Yes, this is what you'd expect from a media luvvie like yourself.

Because I drink green tea.

Drink green tea, bought an Apple Watch, you probably don't even know how to look at the step tracker or the fitness function on it.

Absolutely not.

Right, so that's my first piece of advice is to find out how the thing on your wrist that you're wearing just to indicate your wealth or connection to the media age, find out how actually works. Use the pedometer on it and then I suggest actually get off your arse, step away from the radio and your podcast – which you could listen to as you walk, there's a thought – and then get stepping.

What, listen to my own podcast as I walk?

Well, you could listen to me, and you could think, "Oh, there's that scary woman, keep walking keep walking, otherwise she'll come and get me."

I will think that from now on! That's a good motivator actually But I got sidetracked there by your...

My wit and wisdom.

Yes, of course. But the serious question is do you worry though that you might incite someone, a kind of raving fan... let's say for example, do you not think someone might commit an act of violence or might do something quite stupid and then say, "Oh, I've been reading these writers," and they might cite one of you.

Are you saying will someone come and beat me up?

No, I'm saying someone might beat someone else up and then say, "I've been reading a lot of Katie Hopkins recently and I think migrants are cockroaches and Palestinians or whatever..."

What, that my writing would motivate someone into an attack on a migrant? I don't think that would happen.

Not that that's in any way your intention, but that was my point about the NRA. Sometimes, writing highly political, highly... some would say reactionary stuff.

And then you've got idiots, violent people potentially reading it, and that might tip them over the edge.

Oh I see. I mean, I wouldn't hold myself accountable but I absolutely accept there are people prepared to be tipped over the edge at any given juncture. I think what my writing does is give people hope that they may still have a voice. I think it gives people an aspiration to try and be braver or more brave. And I get quite a lot of e-mails, especially from different countries around the world, Australia clearly is my key audience because they are as lairy as it gets. South Africa, again, the stuff I write resonates in South Africa, but I think my followers and the people that support me are people that have a sense of reassurance that their voice will be heard, and actually that my detractors – who I admire many of them – I think they have a begrudging respect for me because they know I will be really happy to hear their opinion, and will sit and listen to them when they're saying things that other people couldn't handle about their personal selves, have no problem with it at all, and it's why I think I've ended up in an industry where my peers are all male, because it is a tough and competitive environment still, and I can withstand it. I do feel really strong actually. I feel there's a peculiar thing that happens at 40-odd as a woman I think is that you've had children and that, you know, had arms dislocated, I've had epilepsy for 20 years, I've survived brain surgery that went on for 12 hours, and meningitis. Now I feel kind of like this weird super – I won't say superhero – but like Superwoman. I do feel like I've took off my trousers now and got down to my pants. I think you'd be impressed actually, by my superpowers! But I do feel really strong. And I don't feel there's anything that can harm me. And if that involves taking people on in the street that have done something I consider to be morally abhorrent, or even on the train today, a "gentlemen" asked a pregnant woman to get up because that was his reserved seat. I will interject and sort those matters out.

And do people kind of film that and tweet it? That beastly Katie Hopkins just did x, y, z.

Yes, so Katie Hopkins just got a pregnant woman her seat back. Rock on Hopkins. There's a lot of that; there's a group of blokes the other day on bikes that were terrorising a family, and so I interjected in that. I fear less now and I see myself as a sort of social citizen that goes around defending the faith, and defending Great Britain – that's how I see myself.

When I... I've been driving 20 years, and if someone cuts me up...

That's what you're chubby!

Well maybe.

You should have been walking for those 20 years, sweetheart. I don't own a car, that's why I'm eight stone.

Well, I have my lessons there. But 20 years ago, if someone cut me up, I would have been the first to pap my horn and call them an arsehole and blah, blah, blah.

Yes.

But now I don't want to do that now because they're going to punch me in the face, or at least I think it's likely they will.

Yes, agreed.

Aren't you... you seem to be not worried about being punched in the face by random strangers on trains.

No. And I'm really... you see, this is where... I never like to call on the woman factor, obviously because I don't necessarily sit easily with the idea of being a woman at all, I don't identify as a woman – I'm not gender fluid druid, I just don't necessarily see myself as feminine – but there's women have got that distinct advantage. So I have the robustness of a man, but I am somewhere a woman – and you can insert yourself into anything, and nobody really is going to punch me. I go, "Okay, punch me. Go on then. See how that goes for you."

What about other women, though? Because when you watch these drunk documentaries where it follows the police around at chuck-out time, it's the women fighting the women which appals me, and it's particularly vicious.

Yes. I'm not amongst that community, to be honest. I wish them well and I hope they have a great time. I was one of them once and it was a good time in my life, but now in terms of my civil duty to defend the faith, defend what's right and wrong, will I step in? Every time. Every time. And do people applaud it? Yes. Because they're all thinking, "How on earth has that businessman just got that pregnant woman out of her seat?" And she was really pregnant. And so someone stepping in and going, "Actually, sir, that's very incorrect, she needs her seat back. I suggest you move on." No one's going to retort on that, no one's going to retaliate to me. They will move on and he did.

Do you think you're doing well in the media at the moment because you have quite a unique mix of attributes, as it were?

Haha. Because I look like Julian Clary.

Well, you're outspoken but you're also prepared to take the brickbats, as it were.

I think that's it. Look, we don't have many people now who – maybe Trump's one of the remainders, Piers Morgan – who are prepared to just take it back as well, to hear that yes, you are a big-nosed horse-faced angry woman in and you're abhorrent to look at, and your views are so right wing... I don't mind that. I have no problem with it at all. I struggle much more with compliments, and people can read into that whatever they like, but I don't mind it and I think that's why things like Celebrity Big Brother, which we all recognise is complete nonsense, I went in there purely for the cash for my kid's school fees, so I can reconcile if I attribute it to my children, I'm probably using them to make my conscience feel better. If you go in and you really... if what people think if you really doesn't matter, I mean genuinely, not the people that go, "I'm going to be myself," they say with fake tits, fake teeth, fake hair and fake face...

It is all fake.

Yes, isn't it. But I think if you go in and you genuinely have taken the cash and you can understand from a commercial perspective, the less time you spend in that house the more money you make pro rata – most people can't get their heads around that in that house, I tell you – but then you actually do rather well because people see that you really don't care what people think of you. And I genuinely don't – but I'm grateful, and I acknowledge, and I'm grateful for all the support, and particularly people that come up and say, "I like what you wrote," because the copy matters to me, and, "I like what you did on your show," because I like... if I've given someone else the chance to have their view heard, that matters to me and I will take people's emails – katie@katiehopkins.co.uk – and I always try and make sure the views are heard if I can.

Do you feel that you have enough outlets? Because a few people have mentioned over the years that the BBC aren't giving you the opportunity to appear. I mean obviously you've got your column in Mail Online, Twitter, LBC... you are in a lot of places, but then given your controversial views do you feel a lot of people turn you down? That they wouldn't even dream of having on their show? Or is it the opposite?

I think it may be the opposite. So Daily Politics asked last week and the Andrew Neil Show asked the week before – there's definitely BBC opportunities for me. But I would always be set up I think of the kind of peculiar woman saying ranting...

The reactionary in the corner.

Yes. The peculiar rantings of a woman of the right wing. But I accept that as well. I expect to see my platform on the BBC diminish at an increasing rate as we move into a time when being diverse is the most important thing, and our new White Paper sets out that the BBC can really only talk about things to do with Hinduism, Punjabi or Islam and that Christianity is no longer part of our British culture, and indeed unless something's truly diverse and challenging that we can't have it on our British BBC. I was rather hoping actually the licence fee was going to be abolished, which would of course shift the BBC into a much more modern model where you're actually paying for stuff that you want to see, but sadly no.

So in your view the BBC would become less diverse as a result of this white paper then, because people like yourself aren't going to be heard? So a shift to box-ticking.

Of course, and I think that's an article I addressed recently that was one of the most read on the Mail for I think this quarter, was about the job applications that are for black, Asian, minority ethnic only – so these are BBC jobs, they are only for those groups – which is fine except that it's 'whites may not apply'. And I find that racism is a curious thing, and if you talk about reverse racism and just throw those two words out...

Positive discrimination.

Well, people put that slant on it; I don't see anything positive about not being given the opportunity just because you got the wrong colour skin. And in this case, the wrong colour skin is white. And so that's the sort of thing I am interested in, is the... I will disappear, and certainly men say if you're a white male you've got zero chance, although at the moment there's still plenty of Tristans and Tobys at New Broadcasting House, but I think we might see them phased out over the next generation.

In one sense I agree with you. I mean, I tried to be an MP for well over a decade.

Did you?

Yes, for my sins. I stood for parliament in 2005 in a really strong Tory seat called Rydale, I was the Labour candidate.

There's your problem.

But the problem I have is... all-women shortlists was what the Labour Party had.

Oh, God!

Now, in one sense I can understand that because there are very few women MPs and we do need more, but on the other hand...

No, but you say that... I mean, do we though? We don't need more women MPs. So I'm sorry that you were up against an all women shortlist, that's a nonsense.

I didn't even qualify for it, of course.

Oh, for God's sake. You should have gone for the old, "I'm trans today." As Caitlin loves to do on a regular basis. But I feel that I genuinely would not want you not to have had an opportunity because of all 'wimmin' shortlists – that's a nonsense. 'Women' spelt with an 'l', clearly... and I think quotas are ridiculous. You have quotas for fish, you don't need quotas for women, and I think just throwing away phrases like, "Oh, it's important that we have women MPs," I mean, I think that that phrase is trite because it's not important. It's not important that we have a first female president of the United States. That's not important. What's important is that we have the best person for the job. Hillary Clinton isn't that person. And it's not the best female for the job – just as you've got an extra odd chromosome or a bit of an extra lump or bump here and there does not make you a better candidate for a job; I don't need to be represented by a woman. I need to be represented by someone who can get their point across.

Tell us about how you got into all of this, then. Why did you apply to go on The Apprentice? Did you always have a kind of evil master plan?

Haha, I know. People like that idea.

You can see, if you follow the Trump analogy you could end up prime minister!

Well, this is my hope! This is my true agenda. And I do get that quite a lot, Katie for PM, there are t-shirts out there that say 'Katie for PM', which is concerning. But yes, my true agenda is to become president of the States after Trump, so I will be in the White House after he gets in.

You're not a natural-born US citizen, of course, you don't quality.

Oh, come on! I'll find a way. There's always a way. I didn't have, don't have, a master plan. Clearly now I have a platform and I know how to work that to my advantage usually, but I do think that's about representing people's views rather than just coming up with weird stuff on my own, otherwise you'd be a nutter. But the reason I applied for The Apprentice, if we take it back to how many years, 20 years, 15 years.

15 years ago, oh we really are long in the tooth, aren't we?

Whenever my five minutes of fame up, as people keep reminding me...

It's a pretty long five minutes!

I know! This five minutes has gone on an awful long time! But basically, my husband, who I worked for – yes, I did marry my boss –

Good career move?

It was! I would recommend it to any other women out there, don't go for all female shortlists, just sleep with your boss! Actually, it proved quite a short cut in my life, did wonders for my pay package and actually made my divorce proceedings much more slick, because I knew things about him that course no one else might know. However, that may be poor advice from a deluded old woman. He ran off with our secretary, who spent too much time behind the desk and not enough time in front of it, in my humble opinion... but I mean, I can see why he did it to be fair, if I was a bloke I probably would have done the same. And so I got my taxi home from the maternity unit where I'd just given birth to my second child – his second child – and then I went home and thought, "What am I going to do? I can't go back to my work and sort of work for my husband who now is with my secretary." So I saw the... The Apprentice thing came up on my screen, I'd been in America working for 10 years on Madison Avenue and I had seen the American version of The Apprentice with Trump, and so I applied thinking that would be the show in the UK, and then I got in.

And presumably when you applied you wanted to get on the show. What was your motivation, then? You thought this could open doors to the next thing?

No, it was just... it was a... if you were going say, due north, it was about going due south. It was about doing the opposite of everything I knew, or the opposite of everything I was, getting out of corporate, getting away from management consultancy, getting away from men with bald heads who knocked off their secretaries, and it was about – I actually quite love my first husband now – it was about just completely changing. Right, media. Okay, let's go see what they're doing. And that's all it was. And I thought maybe they got good prizes when they did well. And Trump's candidate got to run a huge construction project – I mean, be the face of – a huge construction project in Manhattan, and I was thinking, "Actually this is the sort of area I could expand into." Ha! Who knew? I got onto The Apprentice which – and the selection for that was just ridiculous, I mean, the selection for the Apprentice is such a nonsense – okay, go into a room, don't speak, don't say anything, now line up – there's 12, 15 of you – line up in order who you think gets paid the most, who you think gets paid the least. I mean, talk about bonkers selection, and of course

they all shuffle, shuffle, shuffle, they all want to be paid the most because that's how they perceive themselves. Obviously, I was paid the most and went to the opposite end of the line because that's a good trick, isn't it?

So you had an eye on PR even then.

But I think the important thing is just knowing how to play the system, and that's all the apprentice was, just playing the system, be the best, sell the most. Always talk about why he should hire you, never talk about why he shouldn't hire that person. These are simple rules for life, these are simple rules you should be using now when you go for a job interview – don't think about what's on your CV, have something interesting to say the second you walk through the door.

Absolutely.

That's the candidate they'll remember. I used to go to job interviews and tell them I just ran over a squirrel and had to get out and bang it over the head with a shovel. I never had run over a squirrel, but it's just something they could remember. "Oh, the squirrel girl."

We call it an eyebrow-raiser in our sector.

Yes, but have something to say! Don't go in and say, "Yes, I had a good journey here."

Well actually, I couldn't name any of the people who've won The Apprentice frankly, but I can remember you, of course, because famously turned Alan Sugar down.

Oh yes, that didn't go so well.

I mean, was he genuinely gutted or was that just for the cameras.

Looking at it now, knowing what I know about the making of shows, I was a really irritating. So there's a very secure format to The Apprentice; the scaffolding and the rigour behind each of those episodes. It's intense and well-constructed, and this idea that this idiot woman would come on, play the system with this scaffolding that the viewer doesn't see but the candidates do, and then get to the very end, get offered their place and then fail to follow through on the format? If I was the series producer I would be mad as hell.

But why? Because is it still great telly.

No, because it was everything it wasn't supposed to be... Sir Alan – Lord Sugar now – was supposed to be the dream job, the aspiration of everyone, but telling him, “Actually I got paid more before I came here, I don't need your job and those two are more desperate than me,” that isn't the line that you're supposed to come out with. So I got taken at car park in the dark outside these huge sheds where they recreate the boardroom...

It's Pinewood, isn't it?

This huge studio.

Or is it Elstree?

No, no – it's out there, I think it's Pinewood. It was from the days when I didn't know Elstree like I do now. And I got taken out to the car park and walked around by the series producer, convincing me that I had made the wrong decision. But then we had to go and reshoot it with me acting a bit more sad about the fact I was leaving, not slamming the door on the way out and being a bit more, you know, grovelling.

Do you think the show is past it now?

Yes. Yes.

Do you think someone else should do it?

Well, I think from a purely formatting perspective – and I know that's the dullness about TV and nobody wants to talk about formats, but let's – is the minute they sort of took The Apprentice format, which is essentially do lots of weird things, and then prove you can do the things very well, and then we will give you job because you've done some weird things – that made sense to a viewer. Don't do Apprentice meets Dragons' Den, do weird things, prove you can do weird things really well, sell sausages for however much in France for no apparent reason other than the scenery looks good, and then tell me your business plan, pitch your business plan, and for that reason I am out? Don't mix Dragons' Den with The Apprentice format and try and sell that to me as a show because it doesn't work and it feels clunky, it is clunky and it lost the two key people that were authentic and kind of interesting, which was Margaret and Nick. But I think it's had its day. I don't know if the BBC... well, I suppose the challenge now the BBC would be to come up with something much more diverse. Who knows?

Also to reinvent it to make it a better show, but also to make it more diverse?

Well, that would just be mat-weaving or yoghurt-knitting...

What is yoghurt-knitting? You've mentioned that a few times.

Well, it's just something the left-wing does. Basket weave your own shoes. Basket weave your own Birkenstocks. That might be it. Basket weaving Birkenstocks on the hard shoulder left.

What happened after The Apprentice? Because there's a latency period isn't there, between when it's filmed and when it goes on air. Did you plot a media domination career at that point?

Oh my God, no! I know it's a nice idea to buy into this idea of kind of this ruthless strategy of my future success or doom, but no, I just went back to my job, actually. I had a job, at a different job at that point, I had... currently, to apply to The Apprentice I'd also applied to other more sensible corporate jobs and landed a cushy role in selling the weather to futures dealers, of climate change.

So you would have had to declare the fact that you were about to go on this TV show.

They let me go, actually, to go on The Apprentice, they thought it would be good for their corporate image! But anyway, so I just went back to my job. I went back to my job. And then eventually worked out that maybe writing, maybe media, maybe I wasn't too bad at doing this kind of synthesising things that were going on into soundbites that seemed to articulate the views of some but were a 180 off other people, and that really then became my new career.

But if you got a living doing it, haven't you? You've got to have income streams doing this.

Yes, but then for a long time I didn't earn a fraction of what I used to earn in corporate life. But certainly that's the reason I left The Apprentice, and I know I had to say I left for my children, but the reason I left The Apprentice is because if there is this six month period between filming and it going to screen, and people never imagine that to be the case, because people come up to you in Tesco – were one to be in Tesco – and say, "Good luck next week with the task!" And you're like, "Look, it was six months ago, darling." "Well done!" "Yes, yes, thank you, but anyhow six months and you're supposed to go for those six months to Brentwood with the other person and just stay in the Brentwood offices doing Fanny Adams, and I wasn't prepared to do that, of course, because I had a job.

I didn't realise they did that. So the candidates just have to sit there?

They're paid barely a pittance and you just have to go to Brentwood, report into Brentwood every day, and just sit there and do filing or some such.

Crazy.

Yes, so that's why I wasn't going to do that. Obviously I didn't think I'd get to the... I never planned to get to the end, but of course when I did it was rather inconvenient to imagine I would go and sit in Brentwood, I didn't even know where Brentwood is, one imagines you would never want to go to Brentwood and you'd rather go to KFC than go to Brentwood, surely. But to go into Brentwood for six months?

There might be a KFC in Brentwood.

So I suppose... well, indeed, probably is... and that's why people that do go through to the finals, they've just spent six months in Brentwood. I mean they're probably just glad to get out and see the sun.

And are the motivations of all the candidates the same as yourself, that they're looking for... I mean, what are the motivations? Are they all looking for superstardom?

Yes I think that's the... so for me I went in thinking it would be a 180 off of where my life was headed at that point, which was peculiar in my personal life and because my job was linked to my personal life, that isn't such a great idea, but other candidates I think genuinely do go on a) to see if they can get that money, their money sounds... because if you think about it, it's never explained what the job is. It's just it was always just that I think was £100,000, was it? And no one ever says... there's no articulation of the job, you're going to become a project manager for a bleurgh or an engineer for de-de-de, or a Group CEO for de-de-de. There's no job, there's just a cash sum and it seems that they see it like a jackpot almost, like someone playing the lottery.

And when did you think that you could media career might become self-sustaining in terms of revenue, then? Because the outlets that you're in are actually... suit you quite well don't they? LBC is quite an outspoken talk-based station and you're there arguing with callers etc. etc., and then you've got Mail Online which is an incredible audience, but again is slightly – shall we say right-wing? – it seems an ideal home for you. I can't imagine the Guardian...

It's very much the centre ground, the Mail Online.

Well, I don't think the Guardian would give you a column, put it that way, would they?

I think they should!

I'd go for their traffic.

Contractually I wouldn't be allowed, but I think from a traffic perspective I think it would do them an enormous favour. People often think I look like Katharine, the lady that's the editor there now.

Oh, Kath Viner?

Yes. I think it would do them a world of good to have somebody writing on the Guardian who had the opposite view. And actually I think would draw a number of Guardian readers who are pleased to hear an articulated view that is dynamically opposed, diametrically opposed to their own, or perhaps actually enables them to have a platform to say something that isn't just Guardian speak. I mean, you can tell, can't you? The lady the other day with the heels thing, so a petition, no more heels in work, that was right wasn't it? 100,000 signatures it went over, so MPs will be discussing what women's footwear will be at work. It's not like we've got an issue with Syria or 31,000 migrants arriving from Libya in the last quarter, or for example, that we have on our doorstep the possibility of migrants arriving in our country or that Syria is completely out of control or... you know, I could go on endlessly. But now we're going to discuss heels in the workplace. You know that woman will have a Guardian column, blog... I give it a week.

Well, but quite apart from that issue, what you were saying there about the left-wing...

Quite apart from that very interesting issue, is what you meant to say there!

But I was about to say that a lot of the comments below the line of Guardian readers are very similar to your own views.

I totally agree! That's what I'm trying to sort of get at really, without wishing to evidence the fact that I've read the Guardian articles and the comments section, because one should never read a comments section if you're feeling at all vulnerable. That's not me. But the comments section suggests that there's a strong audience for a Hopkins kind of corner.

Where would you go next, then? Because I mean you've got LBC, you've got Mail Online, you've got all the various things that you do...

I think America.

So America, then. Do they get you? What's the opportunity in America?

Yes, well Mail Online of course, their biggest and their focal point really is...

Is Trump going to put you in his cabinet if he becomes president?

Haha. I'm hoping he might put me in his cupboard.

I think you might end up secretary general of whatever!

Haha! I think I think to be a political adviser to Trump would be quite funny, but no... look, I think America's a good audience for me because I do quite a lot of work, as you would predict, abroad, as is predictable with Fox News and others. But I do feel like the American... the pursuit of freedom in all its guises is still most alive in America. But as for now I think I am content at where I'm at. I'm sufficiently irritating to the left to be of use. I'm sufficiently outspoken to give other people the feeling that they're having their voices heard. I'm grateful to the Mail Online for the opportunities that affords me, which are wide and broad, and the audience we pull on some of the stuff we write is if off the scale really, and they are brave. So the Maddie McCann article I wrote, no one would touch that or allow me to write about that in other papers that I worked for. I was never allowed to write about that topic. The Mail will back you and they will provide the legal support behind you to allow you that freedom, and that's quite impressive now because no one else is terrified of compliance, terrified of legal costs and terrified of their own shadow, whereas the Mail will back you, and I think that's got to be triumphed, and that's fantastic. So I'm just lucky. And also got my head sorted out, so I'm kind of like... happy with myself.

Do you ever regret some of the things you've said? Not in terms of necessarily the rhetoric, but things like getting things factually wrong. I mean, like the one I was about to suggest was Sadiq Khan, of course. I can't have a podcast with you without mentioning running down the street naked with a sausage up your bum. Because clearly you called that wrong. He won.

Oh, no. I mean, it was quite apparent that he wasn't going to win, and to be fair, this was the day before when most people were... I mean, all of the newspapers had already decided that Sadiq had won; I was I was aware of that. What I think has been interesting about the sausage up the bum challenge down Regent Street, which police have advised will not be tolerated and will not be seen as highly amusing, although I think it would be quite a hoot...

They'll have to set up a roadblock.

Haha! What's funny about that...

Because Daniel Hodges ran naked up Tottenham Court Road, didn't he?

Well, he had pants. And I can't honestly wear sausage and pants. Anyway, let's move on from the nudity element to the... of all the billions spent on the campaign, of all the messages that Goldsmith gave out, and of all of the press kind of gambit set up by Sadiq, and of all of the messages, all of the money, all of the door stepping, the one thing that the nation talked about that trended on Twitter, that got to the States, and was talked about in Australia was whether I was going to run with the sausage up my bum... makes you wonder, doesn't it?

It does! I mean, that that is just incredible of the sheer absurdity of the modern media, frankly.

And I get... my girlfriend sent me a picture, so The Week, I read The Week on a regular basis, you know, this little magazine, I get for my children, or rather Junior Week, and in there there's a there's a paragraph dedicated to the mayoral election, and actually it's all about Katie Hopkins and the sausage up her bum. Haha!

Do you... if you don't mind me asking, do your family ever give you a little bit of grief like, "Oh, you've gone a bit too far there."

No... well, my mum gets a lot of... because of her age and recognising my age, the profile that's attracted to me is older. They are defenders of Great Britain, it is not a UKIP audience necessarily, it's just people that want some common sense – a Daily Mail reader, really – my mum believes the Daily Mail; the Daily Mail once wrote that I was the biggest bitch in Britain, and my mum believed that for about a week and didn't speak to me. But so my mum really likes it because people say nice things about me to her and say, "Katie says everything we think, she's great," and my father would probably rather shut up and stop marrying multiple men, and he's told me I'm out of the will.

I thought you were going to say something else, then!

But if I marry anyone else my father's told me I'm out of the will. And my children...

Yes, but if the next husband was really rich it wouldn't matter whether you were in the will or not, surely?

Oh, I don't think rich men are advisable. I mean, I'd say that other women. I'd say go for poor. Poor but nice.

And slightly tubby.

Well, no... lovely Mark, my lovely Mark is the opposite of what people expect, so he's works for a charity. He has a skull as his wedding ring and he wears soft shoes and has an earring. Really surprising stuff. But I would say, going back to the point...

I've forgotten the point!

One does try! Is that my family, and what they think of what I do – there you are, found it –

Well chaired!

Thank you! Dementia has not set in just yet, but the children pick up the resilience that I have and I am very honest with them about not everybody likes what Mummy says, Mummy says what she thinks, and we have to accept that not everyone will always like what we say, and that you should be prepared to stand up for what you say. So someone said to Poppy the other day – Poppy wears boy's shoes because they're a bit more robust, she likes them – so someone said, "Your shoes are awful, they're boy's shoes. Your shoes are stupid, you're stupid." She said, "They're my shoes, my feet, you don't have to wear them. Run away little boy." And that's how she deals with them, and I think that they're getting a good... a good strong ability to take what people say but also respond – and I like that.

Would you ever stand for political office? I mean clearly you have that recognisability. I mean, I think you mentioned once about standing for UKIP? I mean, if we tire of Nigel Farage, surely you could be the next leader. And I think that is a very serious question.

Well, thank you, but no. No, and I think someone said actually the other day on my Wikipedia page, it says I've applied to be part of UKIP! I mean, Wikipedia is the craziness in itself I suppose. I once stood as an Independent in the south west. This was a long, long time ago, and I had the second highest number of votes for any independent candidate in the country, but I did horrifically, and I learnt about the power of the party and why independent candidates are just lunatics.

All political parties are lunatics these days.

I don't think politics... I don't think... it's all very well to see that you have a fan base and you have supporters and people will stop you in the street to be supportive, but do I have the slimy weasely nature required to be a politician? No. And could I ever trot out lines that someone else had written for me? Absolutely not. And would I ever be a morally duplicitous and say one thing and mean another? That's not within me.

So what would be next for you, then? I mean are you just going to get more hours on LBC?

Rot! I'm going to rot into an old grandma!

I mean, the Mail Online is the most widely read newspaper website in the whole world. That's a pretty good gig.

Yes, look, I am happy with where I'm at and obviously I have to take over LBC and get myself a daytime slot and remove a daytime slot from a left-winger – I can't think who, James O'Brien – but apart from that...

It is quite a male dominated line-up really. I mean, obviously Julia Hartley-Brewer's gone now, so...

I'm the only male in my area.

You are the only male!

That's what I like to say, I'm the only real man standing! But yes, there's a lot of boy and me, which is an environment I prefer actually, I don't really like to work with women, I don't understand them.

So if you're James Rea then, the managing editor of LBC, you wouldn't think, "I need to hire more women to gender balance the line-up."

Oh God, no! No, no – and I believe that isn't why he's hired me, I think he's hired me...

Oh, we know he hasn't hired you because of that! Absolutely know that.

How rude! What are you trying to say about my feminine charms?! As I spill boobs all over your desk. But I...

No. James Rea, no, I would never... and I don't believe he is, and I admire him for that. Never hire a woman in order to fill some kind of quota. Ultimately, this is about gaining listeners and not just gaining listeners, but involving listeners in a conversation – and I think we do that better with highly articulate people who are highly capable of increasing a dynamic on the radio that's interesting and a pull factor, and that isn't based on your gender, that's based on your ability to use language and create a picture for people, and also respond I think coherently to a force of attack from certain listeners that disagree with you, and I welcome that.

How did I do in this podcast? Because when I when I said that you were going to be interviewed, lots of people were saying, "You should go in hard, and your first question which should be: 'Ask her why she's a stupid cow.'" So should I have gone in tough and done the whole Paxman thing like, "You're

evil,” blah, blah, blah, which I don’t believe that myself, or... it’s very difficult because most of the podcast I just simply I am myself and I ask the questions. Lots of people have advised me before this podcast recording took place, how I... you know, what the tone should have been.

Oh...

How did I do?

Well, I’m glad they’re interested, that’s always a bonus, thank you for your interest. I think you did a good job. I think it’s interesting what they say, and I think they’re right in many regards, is going hard, say, “Most people think you’re a cow. How do you defend yourself against that?” And they’re wise, because when I do talks for a large audiences I always start off with, “Right, hands up who thinks I’m a complete cow?” And I wait, and I wait it out, and I wait. I give them a good minute and a half, and eventually – and it takes a good minute – for all of the hands nearly in the room to come up, and I thank them for being honest and I get down amongst them and they look terrified! And in that way, I have taken back the power for letting them know I know how they feel. And now I’m in charge, and I’m walking very close to where they’re sitting. And that’s the way to play this game, is to acknowledge what people think of you and then explain yourself – maybe in more than 140 characters, or a headline that someone else has written in the Mirror or a competitor newspaper – and then usually by then people come up and go, “I came in with this attitude about you and I’m going home with quite a different one.” That’s not my aim, to change people’s view about me, but I do acknowledge that if you show people the person behind the headline that someone else wrote, or behind 140 character there’s perhaps a bit more to Katie Hopkins than a cow.

Katie, it’s been a very, very interesting discussion, and you’ve been a very intriguing guest. Thank you ever so much for your time, I’ve hugely enjoyed it.

My pleasure!