

Culturally, we lost many great writers, actors and musicians in 2016. Write about someone who you will miss.

2016 was the year that we all lost some part of our childhood. It's the year that brought the world together in grief, but also nostalgia, and most importantly love.

When talking about love, the most difficult loss of 2016 for me was Victoria Wood. Not just because she was young, or because I know she had so much left in her, but because I genuinely felt as though I'd lost a friend, or that crazy aunty you wheel out at Christmas.

Because Victoria's genius wasn't in her fantastical, godlike style like Bowie, or in the magical essence of Alan Rickman. It was precisely her touchability, her warmth, her knack of making you feel as though you were just in the pub listening to an old friend, which made her so special to me.

When I think of Victoria I think of my mum, of watching Dinner Ladies on the sofa, of knowing what I was watching was intensely funny just by the feeling in the room, even if I didn't fully understand it.

Of course when I was older and started to understand the jokes more I fell even further in love with Victoria's work. It has a uniquely cosy feel to it, you are completely enveloped by her. Her song Barry and Freda snatches you up and takes you along the most ridiculous, and simply hilarious journey imaginable. Her seemingly sweet tale of domestic unrest lures you into a false world of milky tea and crumb covered cardigans and then smacks you round the head with lines like 'smear an avocado on my lower portions'!

This ballad is a particular Christmas favourite of my family and I can tell you, you've not lived until you've seen 4 generations of women all scream that line in unison, their cracker crowns half way down their faces, ecstatic because this year the youngest girl has also learned the lyrics and is now initiated into the Victoria Wood tribe.

Victoria had a way with characters that made you feel not only that you knew them, but that you could be them. Everyone at some point has been a doddering Mrs Overall, a Babs, or a Bren, who in her perfectly understated way ties together all of Victoria's charm as a performer.

When she died, the first thing people focussed on was her generosity. Her desire to always give the best parts to her friends and never try to take their limelight away. This selflessness can't be underestimated, it's so rare that someone with as much talent as Victoria had; to write, to produce, to act, would be so genuinely...nice.

But most importantly, Victoria dared to write women funny. She was proud to be a funny female voice in an industry even now dominated by men. Victoria Wood taught me how to laugh, she taught me how to make others laugh and she taught me all of this whilst dressed as a bumbling northern lass in a large yellow anorak and matching beret!

(500 words)