

## **C IS FOR CREATIVE WRITING**

This column times perfectly with the impending deadline for Tertangala's final print edition of the year, which focuses on creative arts. This means that this column will be the first of hopefully many more that will also appear in the print edition.

As you know, I study a double degree, Bachelor of Creative Arts (Creative Writing)-Bachelor of Journalism. I'm currently in my fourth year out of five. Obviously creative writing is my major and has been a huge part of my university life as well as my life in general, so it's only fair that I dedicate a column to it.

### **An Arm and a Leg**

I can't pinpoint when I started writing or where my love and ability for creative writing came from, but I know it's always been a part of me. I describe writing as another limb, it would be unnatural if I didn't write. When I was a little girl, I would write stories on any piece of paper I could find and I still do that now as an adult. My family and friends always asked me what my next big idea would be and they still do that. In high school I would write and print out stories and my friends would pass it around to read, which made me very proud.

I would always write short stories, on a rare occasion poetry and I loved being caught up in the characters and worlds I created. I have a family of twelve, there's twelve of them because there are ten adult children, I know their names, birthdays, jobs, what they look like, what kind of people they marry, why they act the way that they do and even when their children will be born and their names, however I haven't figured out what to do with them. I created this family about seven years ago. Any writer or at least any of the creative writing lecturers you will come across will tell you this isn't uncommon for writers to still be working on ideas alone for years, let alone an actual book or script. Nevertheless, it doesn't change the fact that I love doing it.

### **Exploring Career Prospects**

I always knew I wanted to pursue creative writing as some sort of a career but even at a young age I knew that creative writing wasn't the safest career especially with job prospects and because of this I kind of denied my writing ability and didn't pursue or look into too many prospects. I always thought journalism was the only way to go, writing career wise, so I did a couple days work experience at my local newspaper, The Daily Advertiser. I loved it there and was highly recommended for further experience.

I didn't know that studying writing or creative writing was possible until year 11 (2007) when my high school as well as some of the other high schools in Wagga Wagga decided to go on Discovery Days at UOW and there was a creative writing seminar. I was blown away by the possibilities of what I could learn, especially specialising in a field. I knew there and

then I would be coming to UOW one day. One day were the operative words as I knew I didn't want to go to university straight out of high school.

In mid-2009, I decided I want to start studying creative writing at UOW and applied by completing a portfolio of written work. The admission requirements at the time were to complete a 10-12 page portfolio of written work displaying abilities as well as an interview with creative writing lecturers on campus which would be scheduled later in the year. My interview was on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 a few hours after my journalism interview. I was interviewed by Dr Catherine Fargher, the then-scriptwriting lecturer. She said she liked my work, in particular the book reviews I wrote and asked me if I considered applying for the journalism degree as the reviews displayed journalistic tendencies. I told her that I had applied and it made me laugh as my journalism interview didn't go as well as the creative writing interview. The interview with Catherine went well but I didn't want to get my hopes up. In January 2010, I got my offer to study the double degree.

### **What I learnt in my three years studying creative writing**

A dream I never thought was possible came true, I was studying writing. My first session, the creative writing subjects were basically overviews, but one of my first challenges was learning to accept constructive criticism as I had never had my writing workshopped before. This later turned out to be a blessing and not as scary as I thought it would be, I also got used to it as it happened constantly in the three years of my creative writing studies.

For the first time in my life, I was in a room with like-minded people, my classmates became my friends, my second family and were my creative and intellectual soul mates and they still are. For the first time in my life I was understood and my writing nurtured.

In my second session of my first year, I was able to study specific subjects and chose to focus on prose and scriptwriting. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I was actually quite the scriptwriter and received my first distinction as a final grade in Writing for Stage and Screen which fittingly, Catherine taught. That being said, I made the choice over the years to continue studying prose over scriptwriting. When I chose to study a third year scriptwriting subject, Writing for Theatre 300 last year and again received a distinction for my final grade, I wondered whether I made a mistake or chose the wrong specialty as it came to me more naturally and clearly I was better at it than prose. I never received a distinction for any of my prose subjects. However there is no rule stating that I can't do both.

I also had to study theoretical subjects, which no offence to Joshua and any other Writing Theory lecturers I had, was a little boring at first. I only just passed Writing Theory in my first session by the skin of my teeth, but my final grades improved somewhat over the three years. I studied literary greats such as Homer, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald and I also got to write a mini-thesis on whatever theory and text I wanted in my

very last session of creative writing last year, so it wasn't all bad. I still am quite proud of my mini-thesis, despite the average mark I received.

### **How my writing changed**

When I started studying creative writing three years ago, I went into the classroom cocky because I had been published a few times, mostly in Canada and felt I knew what I was doing. But I ended up learning a hell of a lot such as to appreciate literary greats, to be open minded to other specialities, in particular script writing, as well as to appreciate constructive criticism. I also learnt how to set up and host creative writing events and also to research and talk about writing.

My style of writing has also changed—I have discovered that I am much better at writing micro-fiction than longer works such as novels and I don't write prose as much anymore. I have taken to writing about my experiences, so basically I am making a career out of talking about myself. However I would like to think that I'm not totally narcissistic, I aim to talk about myself to relate to other people and help in some way, giving back a little if you like.

### **You want to write? There aren't many jobs out there**

That is a sentence I got used to hearing, which would annoy me to no end. My loved ones and other people who knew me well weren't surprised by my decision to study creative writing and pursue it as a career and were supportive. But others would constantly throw that sentence at me.

For those who do question the validity of creative arts degree and majors, creative writing or otherwise as well as the career prospects, I will now happily tell you, I now have a writing job with a marketing company in Sydney and I have just started my own freelance writing business. I would also like you to think about your favourite TV show, movie, book and magazine because the people who created/filmed/wrote/made those most likely would have studied degrees similar to the creative arts degree.