The Power of Retrospect
By Rachel Loveday

When one manages to achieve something life-changing or comes to an end of an era, it is natural to be in a retrospective mood. For me, I am in said retrospective mood as I have finished one of my degrees.

The official title of my double degree is Bachelor of Creative Arts (Creative Writing)-Bachelor of Journalism and last year I finished the Bachelor of Creative Arts. I have spent the last three years studying what I love and have passion for—writing. I have learnt so much more than I could have ever imagined. In those three years I have learnt to: fine-tune my writing and hone my skills, how to pitch my work to book editors, literary agents and publishers as well as how to organise and hold professional events. I have learnt to appreciate writing— my own and the work of others.

Although I didn't just learn in the classroom, during these years I learnt many life lessons. During these first three years of my university life I have learnt to be independent as my parents do not live in Wollongong and because my parents don't live there, I have learnt to live with strangers who would end up becoming friends as I live on university accommodation. I have learnt how to manage my finances and organise my time. I have also learnt that the university as an institution can be very supportive when life throws you curveballs, as life does, especially when a fellow university student and a good friend of mine, George, died unexpectedly when he went surfing with friends and drowned. The accommodation I was living at organised buses for us all to go to his funeral at his home town a week later.

But the two lessons I didn't expect to learn in these three years was how fast the time goes by and how much I would change during this time.

I took a year off after finishing high school in 2008. I decided that 2009 would be my gap year. I decided to work full-time at the supermarket I had been working at casually to get away from the classroom after twelve years of schooling. During this year I learnt how

monotonous full-time work can be, (although I appreciated the job and my bosses letting me work full-time, the job wasn't for me), I also learnt how complicated relationships are and the emotional toll they take as I experienced my first relationship.

However the turning point was when I fainted at work and was taken to hospital. After a few hours and tests I went home and took the week off work to rest, during this week, I was writing for the first time in years, it was during this week that I realised that I love writing and it is what I was born to do.

Although I have no regrets of my choices during this gap year, I was incredibly unhappy. However the gap year was exactly what I needed. I can't fully appreciate the happiness that I feel every day and the successes that I have achieved, which is not limited to finishing one of my degrees, without looking back on the kind of person I was and exactly how unhappy I was before I ventured into university study.

I wonder what kind of retrospective mood I will be in when I graduate in two years time.