

Twin Peaks, Writing and Shortbread: an interview with alumni Charlie Onions

Charlie Onions graduated from Falmouth University with a BA(Hons) Creative Writing in the summer of 2018. Fast forward to November 2019 and Rupert Loydell and Charlie caught up over coffee and millionaire shortbreads at the V&A, having pursued an intermittent email correspondence, mostly obsessing about *Twin Peaks*, the subject of Charlie's dissertation and some of Rupert's research papers, conference talks and book chapters.

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Rupert Loydell: So Charlie, a year-and-a-half on from graduation you've moved to the big city. What prompted your move to London?

Charlie Onion: I know! It's bizarre how fast things have gone. Funnily enough I used to despise London, taking any opportunity that came my way to trash its inner-circle and gross saturation, but since attending fashion week in February my sentiments have softened tenfold. Admittedly the glamour of the week-long boozier, coupled with a wealth of rash, glittery encounters did indeed help the BS' cause. Nonetheless, the city succeeded in its steer, cementing my next move which would eventually happen three months later. After Falmouth I, like so many others, felt a little hollow. Three very beautiful years siphoned down to a glossy certificate and the onset of *adulthood* (the real one, not like when you turn 18, that's a wussy demo) is perhaps more daunting than your first day all those nights ago. I was earning, an imperative element in any crisis, however I didn't have the *dream job*. Very quickly I clicked that said *job* was never a guarantee and was certainly devoid of the immediacy some may expect. Fast-forward to now and I'm earning more, writing regularly for my website and dividing my time into what matters, not what I think a graduate should be doing. I've set up to get 'there' in time. My own time.

RL: And you've started a blog! Tell us about *The Red Wine Cowboy* – it isn't quite what I was expecting. How do country music, David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, films and creative writing all fit together?

CO: Haha! I guess most people expect a red wine review column or a translation of Bacchus with Oz Clarke! That's a good question and one I'm not entirely sure I possess the agency to answer (a cop out, I know), but for the sake of this interview I'll tell you what I think draws me there! The first iteration of *The Red Wine Cowboy* was a far more primitive affair, one which I created not long after graduation on a free blog-making site. Thematically it was a little more tongue-in-cheek; I tried my hand at some pretty ghastly memes, pushed Spice Girls deep-cuts and went on and on about Mark Kozelek and his music. This year I decided to put a little money in to make it official. Moving to London was a clean slate and so was my new site, if only systematically. I still love and laud Mr. Kozelek quite regularly, my humour seeps in here and there and the first few posts, to me, felt indulgent. Part of that was due to my incessant drinking, which I'm happy to say hasn't been present for over a month now. I'd lug

some cheap Bordeaux and spit out something meh, only to love it the further into the night I got. I've just realised I'm nowhere near to attempting your question! In truth, none of those things fit together, hypothetically. But now anyone can write a line, say it works and there will be an advocate for them.

RL: Looking back, how do you see your time at Falmouth University?

CO: I miss Falmouth, I really do. For the most part, it was a complete dream. I won't lie and say it was a breeze, because that's an awfully tenuous seaside pun but also because any stretch of time you live through is going to throw dirt your way, you've just got to skid past it all sexy and grown-up. To reiterate though, for the most part, it was gorgeous. I spoke to so many lush people, went out to that disgusting club and bloody loved it! I risk cliché here, but it was honestly such a little family down there. You get back what you put in and you're free from pussyfoots. I will always love it, regardless of how naff Fitfinder got towards the end.

RL: And how has your degree informed what you've done since? I know you've been hunting down and applying for writing jobs.

CO: It's hard to say conclusively, especially if you try and rack up some peer-to-peer comparisons. I know for sure that completing my degree helped to instill an underlayer of discipline, largely informed by a higher awareness of *my* own limits. In my final year when I was writing my dissertation, I spent a lot of time in the library, naturally. My goal was never to spend *hours on hours on hours* in there because I knew it'd be a waste. Some people use that as their crux at university and I believe it to be either a bad habit, an elaborate pose or both! Props to you if you can get an amount of work done that equates to the *whole day* you spent there. Be honest though and assess your limits. I learned that it's ok to reach a dead end. You're there a long time, you'll get it done. In the spirit of that, I've mainly been trying to get my life *outside of academia* sorted before I jumped in too eager. Coming to London opened a lot of doors in terms of career scope and I'm confident I'll be working on what I love very soon.

RL: And are you still writing?

CO: Definitely! Aside from *The Red Wine Cowboy*, I have a lush notebook bound in *boujje* leather (wouldn't have gotten away with that in Falmouth, sorry *Peta*) which I update occasionally if the laptop feels cold. Started writing a screenplay recently too, the first since the creative part of my dissertation *Apartment Story*. I think I had a good rest after graduating, but now I'm back in the saddle (almost literally).

RL: Any words of wisdom for our current students?

CO: Don't box yourself in. The university's got so many resources and points of aid. If you're struggling don't stow it away, you'll just wilt. Enjoy it as much as you can, take advantage of your surroundings and don't take any shit from the club I bouncers. I think that's it! Thanks Rupert, great to catch up!

RL: Thanks, Charlie! It's good to finally catch up.

You can visit *The Red Wine Cowboy* at <https://www.theredwinecowboy.co.uk/>