

same fandoms as me.' She has recently set-up an Instagram page dedicated to her, and her partner's Jake Johnson's characters. 'I've started making my own costumes and found it a positive way to cope with any stress I'm going through in my work, academic or personal life.' She says that the fun of making your favourite character come to life is one of the joys of being a cosplayer.

But there is downside. 'Female cosplayers get a lot of negative attention, particularly if they're cosplaying a 'sexier character.' Some people in the community argue that the more revealed cosplayers are not 'real cosplayers' and are just attention seekers. 'Which cosplayers do not want to be looked at, complementing our costumes?' she asks.

Chloe appreciates when people acknowledge and enjoys the hard work that goes into each costume. But this is not always a positive experience. 'People seem to think that they can fetishize cosplayers which makes it a very uncomfortable experience.' This can turn an enjoyable experience of self-expression into self-loathing. Chloe mentioned that she had been asked uncomfortable questions when she has been wearing her costumes.

Cosplay conventions are trying to help stop sexual harassment within the community. Venues display posters and signs reminding people that they are not actually the characters they are portraying. As well as mentioning that any harassment or anyone making a cosplayer

uncomfortable, will face negative consequences. 'If someone wants to cosplay a sexier character, then they should be able to without feeling like there is a potential for something negative to happen to them,' says Chloe.

Hannah Woolgar from Winchester has a story that is not too different to Chloe's. She started because a friend suggested it to her. Hannah says that her first cosplay was Cher from Clueless. 'I just do it for fun, really. It's like a massive, expensive hobby,' she says. 'I love seeing what people can create, as well.'

When it comes to the issue of sexism in the cosplay community, she says she was often treated differently to male cosplayers if dresses in a more 'revealing' way. 'I have had comments made by other con-goers and also photographers which have definitely made me feel uncomfortable.' But she thinks that the drama will never leave and that she has to ignore it and move on.

The cosplay community has come together to combat this issue in different ways. Now, more and more female cosplayers are coming out speaking out against the sexism that occurs in and out of conventions. Hannah also mentioned that to help out the pressure of perhaps unwanted attention, other cosplayers are there to help one and other. 'If you ever feel uncomfortable at a convention a lot of cosplayers before comic con seasons will say on their stories to come up to them and act like your best friends.'

## 'People seem to think that they can fetishize cosplayers which makes it a very uncomfortable experience.'



Hannah as Jessica Rabbit  
© Cris Ward Photography



Chloe as Rouge  
© Unmadesugarphotography

# Tube tales

Why do Londoners still read real books on the Underground?  
Penny investigates



R/DV/RS CC-BY 2.0

**T**he first impression of London's tube is that it is crowded, small, not air-conditioned, expensive, slow, and always on strike. But it is still so charming. A vertical and horizontal world has been built in the dazzling underground of London. The elevators go deep into the ground, and the mottled tiles sit beside the harsh railroad tracks, drawing another silhouette of London's daily life. But even in these circumstances, people still keep the desire to read books or newspapers.

Adam, a 43-year-old engineer who works in London and takes the Victoria Line every morning, explains why he reads on the tube. 'Honestly, reading on the tube is not my first choice and complete enjoyment,' he says. 'However, because of network signals, I had to keep this traditional reading habit, which is not bad, and even became a culture in London.' As Adam points out, even in crowded carriages at rush hour, people keep reading newspapers. 'I tried to read suspense novels on the subway. I was seeing a protagonist enter the tunnel when the subway happened to pass through the tunnel,' he says. 'Although you will feel that the space on the subway is small, the reading experience is amazing.'

London is where the world's first subway line opened 150 years ago. The first hipsters

boarded a train towed by a steam engine, sat in a wooden carriage with gas lights, and walked through an underground tube between Paddington and Farringdon Road. No one today calls it underground or subway, it is 'The Tube.' One unique to London. Today this 'pipe' is still busy. More powerful motors are pulling more durable metal boxes and carrying more people throughout London.

In addition to newspapers and magazines, people also take out paper books from their huge backpacks. From detective novels to economics, from fairy tales to mathematical principles, and even profound philosophies and original works from different countries. Even when it is not a long drive, there are still people reading leisurely. When they arrive at the station, the books are packed away, readers becoming rushed figure, hiding in the crowd.

Raminta is a student from Lithuania who is studying for A-levels in London. But she looks much younger than her actual age. She often commutes to Baker Street station. Many children like her will choose to read some romantic novels or love stories, but she took out a book on the tube that was beyond imagination. This is *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. As the saying goes, never judge a book by its cover. In other words, do not judge people's tastes based on their appearance.

'Reading on the tube is a wonderful experience, especially when the train goes into the dark and the lights on the tube light up. Combining scenes from the novel I was watching,' she says. 'I immediately enter a new world. Sometimes, when I read, I suddenly smile and enjoy.'

You will also see some interesting scenes as you pass by Euston Station. Two high school girls in school uniforms read newspapers together and started discussions about Brexit. After two stops, one of them takes out a novel and pays great attention to it without being disturbed by announcements.

While looking around, you can discover people's preferences. The first to bear the brunt is *Metro*. As free reading in the subway, its content is extensive. Whether it is a serious domestic and foreign message, or an entertainment life version, there should be some review articles, even comics and horoscopes. Students seem to prefer reading novels and famous books. Such an example is *Don Quixote* from the Spanish writer Cervantes, which I've seen a couple of times on the tube. Working professionals seem to choose books related to their work, while tourists are interested in this perfect tube experience. With so many choices, there is no wonder why so many people choose to spend their commute reading.

# Football faces Brexit

Kurt Mennie asks Coventry City and Walsall academy managers how Brexit will affect English football.



**Lower league clubs expect to be approached for their top talents** Coventry City and Walsall academies have lost valuable players in the past seasons. Walsall lost Rico Henry to Brentford in 2015. Coventry City lost England international James Maddison, and rising talent Sam McCallum was sold to Premier League Norwich in the January 2020 window. Coventry City's Dan Bolas argues that it 'goes both ways' and that while they have sold to clubs in higher divisions, they have also bought from the elite clubs, such as Fankaty Dabo, who joined Coventry from Chelsea in June 2019. Walsall's Nick Adshead explains that new rule changes prohibit Category 1 teams purchasing academy talents: 'We receive a large number of scout requests for our matches from Under 9's through to Under 18's, which we think is a good sign that we are doing well and continuing to develop good footballers.'

**The value of home-grown youth talents will not necessarily rise** Bolas explains that Coventry can offer players game time, which incentivises the players to perform and therefore see their value increase. He says: 'you're not a coach until you've coached a hundred games, not a journalist until you've written a hundred articles and you're not a footballer until you have played a hundred matches.' At Walsall, Adshead is optimistic about the potential for player valuations to soar:

'Through EPPP (Elite Player Performance Plan), there are policies and procedures in place as to how much a player is worth depending on his age and how long he has been at the Club.'

**Paperwork will be key in getting the best possible deal** Unsigned players sign a scholarship and then progress to a professional contract if they deserve it. Adshead says: 'We have one good Under 15 prospect currently who has already accepted a scholarship offer to start once he finishes his Under 16 season. This adds value to him as once a scholarship offer is accepted, the value of the player becomes negotiable. The same then applies for players on scholarship if we offer and they accept a Professional contract which is what we did with Rico Henry.' Promptly completing this paperwork is required to ensure that clubs most affected by Brexit – the elite – are not easily poaching players from other domestic academies. Even if the players are then approached, the compensation that is payable to the lower league club will increase dramatically, providing long term stability for the selling club.

**Brexit will not impact lower league academy recruitment** Both clubs insist that they operate on a policy of recruiting locally, with Adshead saying: 'We do not offer accommodation to players or put them into 'digs' like some local

clubs do.' This is perhaps not surprising, given the stringent budgets that lower league academies are allocated. Besides, it provides an incentive for local schools and communities to get involved and to engage with their respective clubs. While Brexit may change how top tier clubs recruit youth players, lower league clubs are likely to maintain their approach to seek nearby prospects to fill their ranks.

**Planning is purely speculative due to no communication** Both clubs said they have not had any direct communication at the academy level, not from the English FA (Football Association) or the EFL (English Football League). Whether executives and board members have been provided with information remains to be seen. However, the staff members directly impacted by the changes have not been provided with any indication as to what transfer window policies and regulations may come into place. Bolas anticipates that signing foreign players is already difficult for a lower league club due to the need for international clearance. Once Brexit comes into action in the footballing world, it is expected that players from the European Union will not only need international clearance but also work permits – where new regulations are likely to make the process stricter than in its current form.



**‘Behind  
Maokwo  
is my faith  
and beliefs  
without that,  
I’m nothing.’**

# Maokwo: life in the form of art

Laura Nyahuye tells Catarina Amorim about Maokwo and how art can act in people's life. The concept embraces the faith, the creation and the desire of a new way of expression.

**W**hen Laura Nyahuye left her home country of Zimbabwe, she did not expect to fight back racism with the help of art. Her experience as a migrant pushed her to make a promise to herself to 'make a space for fellow women, whatever colour or creed' where they can create and share art and Maokwo was born.

Maokwo is a project which aims to help with the inclusion and rise of artists, migrants and women in the society based on faith and God. It's a Shona word from Zimbabwe which means 'hands'. 'A child is born with clenched fists because they are holding their gifts,' says Laura. 'As they grow, they slowly let go, open their hands, sharing their gifts and talent with the world. When it's time to pass on, their hands are fully open.'

The project was formally registered in 2017 in Coventry. But for Laura, it 'was born when I was born' from faith, art and real testimonials, 'Behind Maokwo are those who shared and continue to share their most precious life events with me, their coffee, their tea or boiled water.'

The artist highlights some of the people who have helped her with the construction of the Maokwo project. Among them, Gogo Mabel, who 'continually encouraged me to see the connection between my creative gifts and the community at a time when everything around me was crumbling.' Hazel, who 'stood and fought for us when we were a few hours away from becoming homeless'; and finally Heather, who 'invited me to all sorts of community events and she brought to my remembrance the writer in me.' Laura recognises all that comes with titles as founder or CEO of a company. But she explains her role as something that she will implement through what she observe, absorb and sense. 'Behind Maokwo is my faith and beliefs without that, I'm nothing,' says the artist.

The project is not defined with a specific start, and it is actually compared to a domino effect. The influences echo through generations where humans are interconnected, 'in other words, Maokwo is about life's events,' affirms Laura. Moulded and shaped, the project is the reflection of Laura's mind. Her experiences from



*Above: from the Bearing Gifts exhibition, where participants were asked to submit an object that is meaningful to them.*

*Below: from is the Celebration of Refugee week in June 2019. The theme is Bearing Gifts, celebrating the tangible and intangible gifts, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have brought into our communities.*

© Laura Nyahuye



motherhood, to migrating to where she starts understanding the different ways of living and the need to respect each culture where Maokwo ends to be 'about life's events.'

When Laura left Zimbabwe she experienced a few episodes of racism and disrespect because of her colour and years later promised to herself she would 'make a space for fellow women, whatever colour or creed.' The first art workshop with women happened in 2007 and took place at Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre. Here is where Laura heard other women's stories of domestic abuse, racism, suffer and anger.

All this is meant to be a reflection of Maokwo, with no starts or endings. This is a project that gives voice to women from all walks of life. A project that aims and promotes the inclusion by 'building bridges, creating platforms, connecting communities, connecting humans, connecting women, connecting artists,' explains Laura.

They are supporting a range of artistic sectors, from painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, photography, illustration, filmmaking, design, crafts performing, conceptual and textile arts. Laura and her team work in partnership with theatre practitioners, writers and curate, organising events and exhibitions, showcasing the work done in the workshops.

Maokwo is also a fight for the inclusion of marginalised groups who watched their creativity limited. Laura talks about the result where they do not get to enjoy the real essence of the real diverse culture which leads to 'a belief system that says creativity is only for the white and privileged and as a result, we do not get the chance to enjoy the beautiful tapestry of the real diverse culture around us,' adds Laura.

On the other hand, Maokwo has been well welcomed by the public, with excellent audience response. In fact, there have been a lot of requests for more. Future events are now a certainty, offering those who desire to expose their voices and their own experiences of life through art.

Social media has started to play an essential role in the project now that coronavirus has to be considered, but the project will continue through hosting regular networking, support and showcase events for artists.

