THE OFFSPRING

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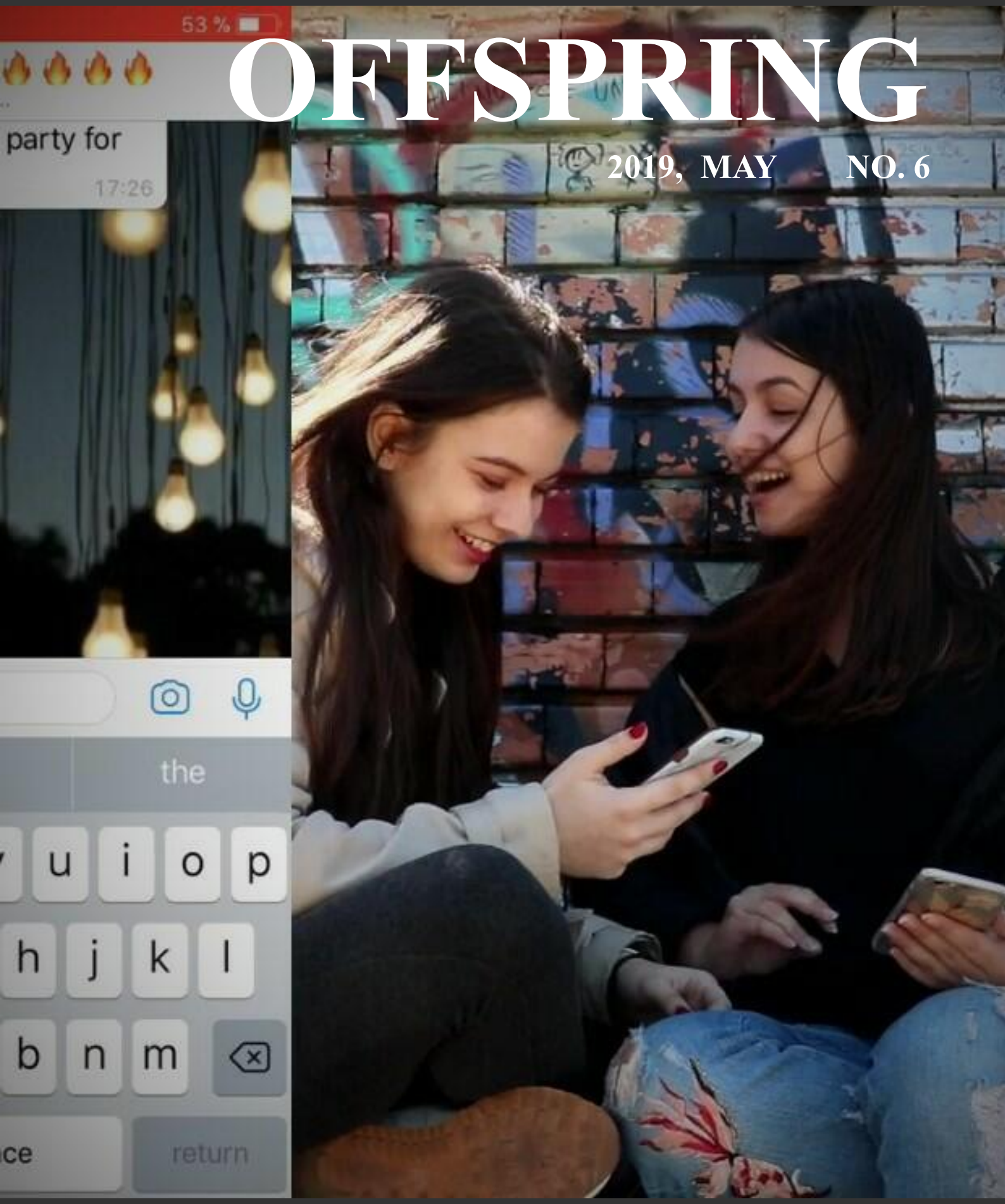

Our Team

Vladimir Traşă - editor in chief

Writers

Vladimir Traşă
Sergiu Dorobanţu
Dana Sburlan
Teodora Costache
Ana Frăguţa Neacşu
Tania Sorescu
Dan Șteflea
Maria Dina
Sarah Cristel
Briana Prejoianu
Cătălina Gavra
Salia Matinca
Răzvan Tătaru
Sara Șerbu
Ovidiu Păun
Paul Man
Luca Roşu
Ana Ciocoiu
Dragoş Constantin

Cover photos: Nikita Cornea

Coordinating teachers

Dorina Enciu

Ana Maria Georgiana Muşat

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Contents

Page

A word fom the editor and not only

Brexiting through the back door?... 4

The contemporaneity of _____ 5

Spiru on the inside

Haretiana Symposium – 2019 6-7

Blind date with a book 7

In My World

What would you change in the Romanian education system. . .… 8

The Relish of Playing Truant …… 9

10 years in a private (French) school 10-11

Social media and social validation 12

Social media beyond likes and unlikes 13

Aimless Inklings

A point of view 14

Hit-and-run 14

Antique shop 15

Lost in the ocean 16-17

The magical and enchanting Unicorn **...**..... 17-18

Extracurricular

Media Literacy – Can you spot the fake? 19-20

Did you know that about Queen Elizabeth II? 21

Share my passion for…

Being a DJ **.....**..... 22-23

MARe / Museum of Recent Art, a new memory of the place 24-25

The Greatest Showman 25

The Himalayas 26

BREXITING THOUGH THE BACK DOOR?...

Vladimir Traşă, 11 G

It's not the first time we are talking about Brexit... Judging by how things are panning out, it probably isn't the last time either: a delay of 6 months doesn't denote indifference, no matter how tough the voices of the politicians seem. It resembles a soft "...don't leave" after the hearts have settled in an equally large and lonely bedroom. The slamming door dictates when the clock strikes midnight: if it happens this time, it may, as well, happen again.

There's no discussion to be had in relation to why the UK voted to leave: some "alone time" now and then can be beneficial, if you have, of course, where to come back after. But the focus on a more patriotic approach is not a seldom sight. It seems to be a trend, not only in Europe – its more conservative parties gaining territory – but North America too. Not Canada, obviously. Nor the Mexicans. Not that they are not involved, they just aren't the ones having a fit about a long-lasting agreement shared by them and... the first. While the world is still on its path to globalisation, these seem to be sudden bumps, the big ones realising that their power is less relevant while in a team. As for the ones at the back, the struggle to maintain the position is... irrelevant.

A strike back was inevitable, the surprise is the channels through which it was carried. A modern approach to an old solution: propaganda, be it fake news, angry tweets or videos made with footage from, ironically, all over the world. The viral joke – which made the cut several issues ago – where the UK says "See EU later!" is taking a whole other meaning, "later" being, first of all, earlier than expected. During this short time, ignoring the sterling pound jumping head first into the English Channel, it began to turn out that it wasn't, in fact, such a good idea to leave. Well, at least the arguments for, however they may be considered, are now overshadowed by what actually won the votes: bots and algorithms spread everywhere on the British internet.

In the head that crumpled the, now, empty pillow, a feeling lingers, along the same lines. "See EU later!" Almost funny, how the verb isn't painting the people facing away but, rather, starting to look back, taking a look at what is *still* theirs.

Slowly opening the door, the light from the corridor reflects off the espresso machine: of course tea is far superior, but sharing a cup of coffee in the morning doesn't sound atrocious right now. The door is left half open, while the footsteps make their way to the balcony. The lighter sparks. The city that lies forward may offer great things, not only leeway... but no light shines through any windows in sight, except for the bed-side lamp behind. While weighing the decision, every drag taken is counted, just a few left. There's still time.

The contemporaneity of _____

Sergiu Dorobanţu, 12 E

Why are the classics called the classics?

Depending on who you ask, you will receive a different answer regarding who the classics of literature are, the must reads. Even more interesting is the reason why they are called so. As an adjective, classic means "judged over a period of time to be of the highest quality and outstanding of its kind", while the noun signifies "a work of art of recognized and established value" but that does clear up nearly nothing.

Let it be known now that I do not consider myself a literary expert, in my eyes I'm not even an avid reader, so my following opinion may be completely and utterly erroneous.

I think the existence of the classics is the fault of humanity itself. We pride ourselves as ever changing and constantly evolving, but the truth is we are not. We are stuck on a constant loop. Yes, the world is indeed changing, but only at the surface, not at the core. People read then about the falsehood of society, the bitter taste left by politicians, the inequalities all around them, the longing for love and the despairs of solitude and loneliness in a world so full of people. If we truly have become our better selves as a society why do we still read about these now? The authors of old spread with their works ideas of unity and peace, of love and kindness and acceptance. If their message was understood then, why are we still preaching them as new goals for this century. The sad truth is that we never learn, not all of us at least, and so this battle of minds between literature and society must forever be fought even though it cannot ever be won.

In order to prove my point, I intend to tell you about an author. I will not tell you their name or period that they lived in as it is not relevant. Maybe you will figure out who they are, or not. What you do need to know is that they were alive before us, and through their art they will be alive long after we are gone.

This dear friend of mine talks about suffering. They consider it as a minute. One that never ends and above which our only power is chronicle it. Through their eyes sorrow is a sun, its center is pain and from that pain it radiates. Are any of you brave enough to disagree? We have all suffered, we all know it well. We all know that never ending feeling of drowning that kills us every moment, yet makes us feel more alive than ever. Isn't their definition of sorrow the same as ours nowadays?

This old acquaintance of mine talks about friendship, the true kind. Trough their stories they dictate the laws of friendship: to give without expecting back, to help when needed, to see each other in the upmost equality and to think of their needs as of your own. Are those not the qualities we still search in a friend today?

This dashing companion of mine acknowledges love as the highest power. Their heroes forsake their lives, go in anonymity outside of society, kill themselves and others, cheat and play dirty at the game of life, all in the name of love, be it eros or philia. That much is clearly very much true today. Have you not done something despicable or tragic to yourself or others, for your love, or in hope for love? Can you call yourself an innocent?

All in all, I don't know if I have proven my point. Even when I have time to correct and reformulate my words, I tend to lose myself. To answer again, and more simply, the question that began this, a classic is a classic because the ideas presented in that piece of literature, the ideas of the author, still resonate with people today. Those "ancient" writings still embody the thoughts inside the modern person's mind, they still feel as if ripped from our own minds and put onto paper and they still prove that we are not alone in our daily struggle of existence, not then, not now, not ever.

Haretiana Symposium – 2019

Dana Sburlan

English teacher, Educational Counselor of CNSHB

The date of February 15 plays a significant part in the institutional culture of our college, as it is the date when we celebrate the birth of Spiru Haret, scientist, minister and reformer of our education system, whose name our school is proud to bear. On this day, our college resumed the tradition of the **"Haretiana National Symposium"**, first launched by Mr. Adrian Pascu, principal then, in 2000. The 2019 edition was organized with the support of the Bucharest Teachers House and the School Inspectorate of Bucharest. This year's topic: "**The Ethics and the Role of Moral Values in Today's Romanian School**" was from the very beginning considered to be both challenging and inspirational. The aim of the event was to reflect the continuity of a tradition in Spiru Haret National College, along with its desire to make the ethos accessible to teachers and the community. Noteworthy is the consonance between Alumni Day, held on December 12th of each year, dedicated to students and former high school students, and the Teachers' Symposium.

The latter comes to reinforce the very specific ethos of our educational institution. Seen as an academic activity, **Haretiana** is a good opportunity to exchange examples of good practice on topics reflecting the challenges and dilemmas of teachers. Since its first edition the event has displayed an inspired logo, designed by the school's Art Teacher, Mrs. Sanda Amarandei.

Conducted in two sessions moderated by Mrs Camelia Săpoiu, Ph.D, and Mrs Cristina Ştefan, Ph.D, the event created a momentuous context, where 24 papers written by teachers from all over the country put forward interesting issues and viewpoints. The symposium started with the consistent presentation of Mrs. Corina Buzoianu and Vice Principal Alexandru Constantinescu entitled "Ethics issues in the work of Spiru Haret, today" who managed to enliven the audience by disscussing the ideas of Spiru Haret, the great man of culture while presenting facsimiles from his works. Haret's ideas, sound and substantial, could still serve as guiding light to all attempts to seriously reform the Romanian education system. In her work "The code of ethics in Spiru Haret's educational vision" Mrs Cristina Stefan, Ph.D, teacher of philosophy, further delved into the importance of moral values from Spiru Haret's perspective. The point of view of a high school principal regarding the role of ethics in decision-making was presented in the work of Principal Mariana Comăniţă - "Ethics and Integrity in Educational Management".

Other questions were answered by the papers: "Value or model in the Romanian school?" – author Lizetta Mihăila, Special Secondary School of St. Nicholas, Bucharest, "Grit" – author Alina-Elena Grecu, Pedagogical High School Anastasia Popescu and "Ethics and Aesthetics in Vocational Education", author Nicolae Comăniţă, "Carmen Sylva" Art College of Ploieşti. There were teachers who chose to dive into other cultures to provide diverse insights, such as the inspired work of Mrs Ana-Maria-Georgiana Muşat, English teacher at Spiru Haret National College, entitled "Promoting moral values through cultural and civilization lessons: Bob Dylan - The Times They Are A-Changin'."

The education system and its benchmarks were further examined in the papers: "Highlights and Methods of Moral Education in Today's Romanian School" (Mrs Liana Hera, Romanian Language), "Transparency and Responsibility in the education system "(Mrs. Inocan Mihaela, Psychology). The work of Mrs Camelia Săpoiu, "The School of Caragiale. About morality" highlighted scenes in the work of our great dramatist with a potential to generate genuinely interesting (and super fun) debates on morality. In the paper "The Ethical Code - a useful document today?" Mrs Dana Sburlan made a comparison between internal regulations or codes of conduct in European countries and those in the USA.

The session ended with the presentation of a case study highly appreciated by all the participants, conducted by Mrs Georgeta Georgescu, PhD. "Some aspects of student perception of moral values" focused on comparing students' perspectives on moral values as emerging from the answers to a survey completed by students from different educational backgrounds. We also welcomed the presence of Mrs. Maria Elena Panaitopol, the Mathematics professor who stressed out how important it is for the values to be first internalized by the teachers before taught to students.

Moral education has always been of overwhelming importance in building a functional society, where respect for value must remain the fundament of teaching.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Bucharest Teachers House for promoting our event. A brochure containing all papers presented, ISBN 978-606-8923-30-7, can be consulted at the National Library of Romania.

Blind date with a book

Teodora Costache, 9 G

Almost everyone has been told, by their parents or teachers, at least once in their life, that reading is important. That it will educate and help you. Well, one student in particular, Anastasia, from Spiru Haret National College, seemed to have taken that to heart.

She organised a little book fair in the high school's hallways that took place from the 8th to the 10th of April. Students of all ages were asked to bring gift-wrapped books, with a short description, to be sold. In two days, more than 200 books were donated.

All the funds that were raised were then given to the Marie Curie Hospital's oncology wing to help improve the lives of people who truly deserve it. However, that is not the only good thing the event has done. It has also brought the student body of Spiru Haret a little closer together through literature and the simple desire to aid someone in need.

When Anastasia announced the event she said that she hoped it would become a tradition in the school. Needless to say, the fair was a success that I can't wait to take part in again next year.

After 12 years in school, any student knows what could have benefitted them most. We asked the senior students to share a few thoughts on what they would change in the Romanian education system. Their ideas have been voiced before. Yet, they should be put forward over again, exactly because so little has been done.

Too much theory and very little practical instruction.

There should be a wider range of optional courses.

Countryside schools should function with the same equipment and at the same quality standards as those in the cities.

Boring information with 0 impact.

School doesn't raise students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

School usually keeps students unconnected to society and social issues.

Students should be taught how to study. The current system of learning by heart is unacceptable.

Too much standardized testing. Evaluation methods should be radically changed.

School should encourage creativity and freedom of expressing an opinion.

There should be more than 4 profiles, two in science and two in humanities.

Students should be motivated to study using other methods than grades.

You come out of school with very few skills and too little knowledge of the things which make life easier.

The information given should be updated with the latest evolutions in the domain.

It should be the students who choose the optional courses and not the school.

Admission to university should be done only by special entrance exams.

All types of programmes should include Art and History of Art because it develops creativity and enriches the mind.

The curriculum should be rethought in such a way as to include only the relevant subjects in a certain type of program. For Biology classes for instance computer programming is irrelevant.

All literature texts in exams should be at first sight and the task should be to comment on what is given and not write general information about this or that writer.

Too much homework. Most of the training on any subject should be carried out in class.

We expect school to meet our highest standards. But even if it did, would we still be tempted to skip class every now and then?

THE RELISH OF PLAYING TRUANT

Ana Frăguţa Neacşu, 12 F

In case you haven't heard of the phrase 'playing truant' by now, I guarantee it is more than familiar to you. It means skipping class. Of course, it may happen under most unfortunate circumstances, such as having a terrible cold, a migraine, a broken limb or any other bad thing that has happened to you. Do you know which of the above is the most common? None. The worst but commonest reason yet is the fact that you went to bed extremely late because you were shuffling through weird memes on 9gag, watching random videos on YouTube or a Netflix series and you couldn't even hear the alarm clock ringing in the morning, let alone turning it off. Truth be told now, students really do face certain struggles, which is why they don't show up for class, and that happens in around 40% of cases. Due to that 'playing truant' is every teacher's and parent's nightmare.

The act of skipping class is negatively perceived and in most cases regarded as a sign of disobedience and rebellion. Adults see it as unacceptable and think that children are spiraling out of control or something like that. That is not true. Given the fact that skipping class occurs during teenage years, it is in an adolescent's nature to show resistance towards regulations and imposed standards. They are craving for freedom and despise the idea of being in line with everyone else.

Behind the act of playing truant lies elementary psychology. To begin with, everyone knows that adolescence is a time of freedom and teens just want to take advantage of that. Not attending class gives them a sense of independence, of making their own decisions. Young people want to initiate themselves in being more adult. They hate being controlled, and in this robotic world of manipulation and regulations they try to find a way to dodge society's demands and create their own way of living by doing whatever they want. The relish of playing truant is in fact the most harmless form of rebellion.

Apart from their core need of liberation, school becomes dull at some point and feels more like a burden on their shoulders. Only the idea of standing still on a wooden chair for six hours listening to a teacher becomes unbearable, putting aside the obvious, that they have to write down tens of pages and actually pay close attention to the lesson.

Another dimension of this subject is the fact that students resort to this with the intent of repurposing and valorizing the time they would normally spend at school. In their vision, there is no escape from going to school, but there is a loophole when it comes to remaining at school. The hours they spend away from home during the programme are inevitable. However, they choose to spend some of them in a different kind of way and sometimes in other places. They could either be in an empty classroom or in the courtyard talking or just out and about searching for a cozy café or a welcoming bistro to chat and snack on something else besides their usual ham sandwich prepared by their mom or their cafeteria food.

With all that being said, I encourage all adults to calm down on this matter and all students to keep rebelling against society!(not necessarily by the famous 'playing truant')

10 years in a private (French) school

Tania Sorescu, 9 G

I have studied at “Lycee Français Anna de Noailles de Bucarest” for ten years, since kindergarten, before moving to Colegiul National Spiru Haret. If I were ever asked to describe my old high school, I would choose the word discipline.

The system back at my private school was different from the one in public schools. The grades started from kindergarten up until the twelfth grade, also known as senior year. The general program started at 8.30 am and ended at 3.30 pm. The day varied if you had a free hour at the beginning or even at the end of the day. You could finish one or two hours later, but rarely earlier than the fixed school program. Normally, a day would last seven hours, including the one-hour lunch break mostly spent in the school cafeteria. A class would last one full hour, meaning sixty minutes. The break system is very different from the one in state-owned schools: between the first two classes there would be a three-minute break so you had enough time to go from class to class (you didn’t have your own classroom, so you had to change it for every subject). Once you were done with those two hours, you had a ten-minute break. That pattern repeated once more but it was followed by the one hour-long lunch break.

The school subjects weren’t grouped in the timetable, you could have science class (biology and geology) immediately followed by French. This brings me to the fact that, because it was a French high school, French was the most important subject. Imagine learning Romanian in a Romanian public school, but it’s French in a private French school. It has the same value and importance. You also had mathematics, which was a very important subject. The last subject of high importance was history-geography: you had the same teacher that taught you history or geography and he chose which one he would teach us whenever we had class with him. In total, there were about fifteen to sixteen different subjects, Latin class being an option. Sports class lasted for two consecutive hours, unless you were in sixth grade: you had one day with the normal sports program and one extra sports hour some other day.

The teaching method, even though going at slow pace, made you understand what you were being taught. This led up to good grades and a good understanding of the subject. The teaching method was very objective and right. That didn't stop the teacher's friendliness flow towards the students. You could really feel that all the teachers from the private school actually cared about the education of the children, hence the elite status the school has. The theoretical and practical part of classes (practical meaning projects, tests and even experiments), was evenly balanced: when we had finished a chapter from the given subject, we were assigned a project, had a test, or were meant to do an experiment. The manuals which we used came from the French educational system. The homework was usually given from the manuals or on hand-outs. It was correlated to what we were currently learning and wasn't much per subject. It seemed as if it was a lot to do at home just because we had homework assigned for every subject.

The school didn't have a lot of extra-school activities besides three clubs: theatre, science and book clubs.

One unforgettable memory I have left with from that place, is the project made by the science teacher: going one night on the school's rooftop to observe the planets and the stars through a telescope. It was incredible to see those astral objects for yourself in real life. On top of that, the ambiance was different as there was only our little group of students in the whole school at that time of the night. It was nonetheless pleasant.

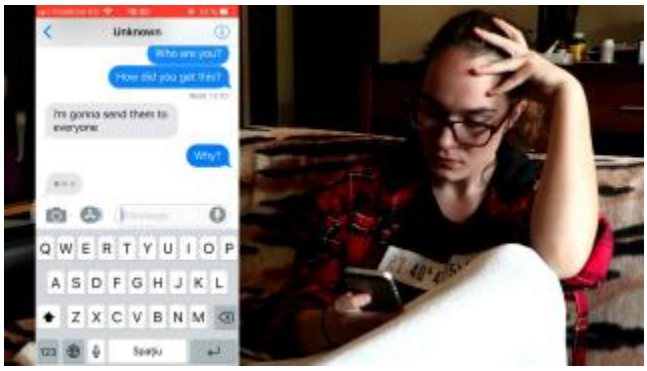
Why has social media enjoyed such unprecedented popularity? Does approval or disapproval on the internet bear any influence on our self-esteem?

Social media and social validation

Dan Șteflea, 12 F

What started out as a possible replacement for normal, daily human interaction has quickly, over the past decade turned into a massive black hole of addictive behavior revolving around one simple desire everyone has: Social validation?

Social validation is one of the many peculiar things that humans seek, particularly because it's almost always irrational. It's a fairly easy concept to put into words, unlike the way it actually functions in our world. To put it simply, social validation is a feeling that we encounter when our ideas that we've so carefully constructed based on the information we've gathered on a daily basis are agreed to on the public scene. As such, we feel good about ourselves, thinking that we actually matter in the grand scheme of things because another group of people agrees with us.



It's almost always about how it makes us feel, not so often about whether our ideas are actually good.

Neat, right?

As it would occur to anyone that has any sort of developed critical thinking, such a thing would never last, because feelings always complicate situations. That's why, for example, any legal system is created with the intent to objectively judge actions and not take into account the feelings of people involved, at least not when they're unnecessary.

Today's social media is, at its core, the modern version of acquiring social validation, but gone berserk. Despite the fact that we need social interactions to function properly, a need that the social media is capable of fulfilling, we've become addicted to the point of overzealous insanity. We've started begging for likes or shares on Facebook or other platforms, just as crippled poor people are begging for money, the only difference being that the latter actually needs the resources to survive, while the former is simply trying to stroke their ego.

At its root, this problem stems from this perpetuated notion that the larger someone's following is, the less they're prone to making mistakes, often even thinking that they're incapable of making mistakes. This type of behavior has spread into our persona out on the street, or into discussions with friends. Nowadays we have become prone to the act of directly dismissing someone else when they don't immediately agree with us, deeming their points as some ad hominem arguments instead of them countering just the idea that we've put forth.

All you hear today is how we should invite all sorts of ideas to the scene, while we refuse to acknowledge the catch of such a saying – an idea is accepted only IF it doesn't travel too far into the territory of what is deemed "unacceptable thoughts". Should an idea reach too far into such territory, you have sadly brought down on you the entire, uncontrolled, rage of social media and damned be the correctness of your idea.

Ultimately, this entire situation comes down to this: we don't want change, despite the extent we go to supposedly trying to achieve it. All we really want is to keep fueling this addiction of ours for social validation. At their core, humans have an innate selfishness. Even on social media, where we supposedly give our support to random ideas or people, we don't do it for them; we really just do it for ourselves.

Social media beyond likes and unlikes

Teodora Costache, 9 G

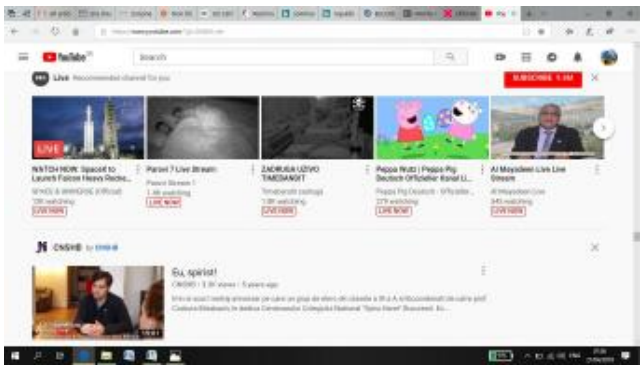
From what I have seen, there are two types of people that use social media. The ones that post a lot of pictures and thrive on likes and comments and the ones that go on forums and start conversations about different topics, from favourite movies to the current political climate. What they have in common is the need for human interaction and self-validation. I don't see that as a bad thing, though.

Social media has given people the opportunity to create and join communities where they feel welcome. Someone that might be considered a social outcast, now has the possibility to bond with another person, that likes and agrees with their opinions, whom they wouldn't have had the chance to meet because they might live in another country. Furthermore, someone that is really sociable is now exposed to even more could-be friends and can extend their social group even more. The constant circulation of 'memes', the inside jokes of the Internet, should be proof enough of the very real relationships that can be made online between users.

As the Internet is being made accessible in more and more parts of the world, it is bringing more people and cultures together. This is most evident when it comes to music. Although there had been an influx of African American artists for some years, the Asian representation had always been lacking, until recently that is. One drastic change in the music industry is the introduction of k-pop, a genre referring to songs in Korean, to the western civilization. It is enjoyed by people of all colours and it's helping break down barricades between races that had been there for too long.

Sites like kickstarter and patreon allow users to fund and donate to different creative projects (films, games, music, comics , etc.), making it easier for everyday people to follow their passion without having to go through the hardship of trying to get picked up by a big company in whatever industry they want to follow. Social media has given the little people a platform that they can use, freely, to share their stories. The "March For Our Lives" movement was started by a couple of students after the Parkland school shooting, to push for stricter gun laws in the United States. It was heavily talked about on the internet, spreading awareness, and it is claimed that around 800,000 people joined in, making it the biggests protest in the past 40 years.

The popularisation of social media represents the willingness of today's society to end the stigmas that have been put in place and create a real connection with each other. While there might be some superficial aspects to it, I believe that the human desire to find someone with whom to form a strong friendship, far outweighs them.



A point of view

Maria Dina, 10 C

Phone, you tube, likes and dislikes,
More superficial than you think,
More harmful than to stop to blink.
However, humankind is far from lost.
We sell our future for a cost.

The cost of wealth and vanity,
An overpriced obscenity.
Ignorance isn't lost for sure,
For everybody can ignore,
A homeless person on the streets,
A child who begs and weeps and weeps.

Kindness still breathes within our souls,
For gentlemen can open doors,
But no one opens up their eyes,
To see the world without disguise.

We argue on what food to have
And throw away expensive meals,
When children fall asleep at night
With stomachs bare and bleeding lips.

We haven't yet lost our souls,
We prove it every single day,
But not to people that deserve it,
To people vain and inhumane.

Despair is spreading like plague,
And ruining everyday life
And yet we still don't understand,
The human soul is losing life.

The news tell only of tragedy and pain,
Of children with disease and life restrain,
Of agony spreading inside their veins,
Of their future vanishing like dreams in vain.

Their life is easily forgotten when,
It played the role of sacrifice.
So that humans would understand,
There's more to life than just ourselves.

Hit-and-run

Sarah Cristel, 12 E

I'm a carmine smile
In a feral world
Sing praise to the wolves inside me
Least they swallow you whole-
'Cause I've got a pulse propelled by sanity
And a mind numbed in it,
I'm on a collision course
With my own mortality.

Saw me once, and now you're gone,
Paper girl with coal for bones
I won't forget that night at one
When the universe rained stones
And we became a hit-and-run
For a few broken moans...

Now choke on my vitriol laugh
And let me say goodbye-
Write your own epitaph
Then let God decide
Who to crucify.

Don't say I didn't ~~cry~~ try.

Antique shop

Briana Prejoianu, 10 B

When I was really little, and terribly naïve might I add, I used to annoy my parents about wanting a little sister. Day after day I would throw tantrums and act depressed around them, trying to emotionally manipulate them into submission. As time went by I grew up and realized how horribly immature I'd been, and oh how stupid. I only realized what the cons of having a sibling would be a little bit after my younger brother developed the ability to communicate with us using actual words and not incoherent blabbering. The moment he learned how to speak properly was the moment I realized how happy I'd been as an only child and also the moment I started plotting my first murder. Needless to say that plan didn't go too far as I am now seated here, on my brother's bed, staring at him blankly while he is trying to convince me to buy him an old vintage camera.

"Come on Kath! I'll give you the money and everything! You just have to go the antiques shop down the street and get it for me…" he says exasperated.

"I still don't understand why you just can't go buy it yourself?"

"My friends are going to log in any minute now and I have to be there for competitive play in Overwatch. You know how much I've worked for my platinum rank." he whines. I have to admit, I do know how much he's worked for it as he kept me awake at night a whole entire week last month, playing 24 hours a day just to get that stupid rank. I sometimes wonder how he managed to survive that week. He didn't come out of his room at all. Did he go to the toilet? Did he consume anything other than sheer determination and SR points? Nevertheless he still was the reason I failed 2 tests and now my physics teacher hates me so instead of convincing, he only manages to make me angrier.

"Me and my dark circles are very grateful for that."

"I'll do anything! Please? I really, really need it. I need to have it by tomorrow and I just can't not get it!" His reasoning is a bit off and he's still not all that convincing, but I decide to take it easy on him.

"If you promise- no! - swear to me to stop yelling at the top of your lungs every night…" I make a pause for effect and tension, to get his blood boiling just a little bit."… then I'll consider it."

"Fine" he says obviously not completely satisfied, but still with a tint of thankfulness in his tone.

So that's how I find myself standing in front of an old shop only ten minutes later. From the outside, the building looks small and it lacks any sort of advertisement. No flashy boards, no pamphlets, just a sign that reads "Anthony's Antiques". The windows are really dirty, colored an ugly yellow, probably due to lack of dusting. The door is unnecessarily wide and its knob is red with rust. It is definitely not the most endearing sight, but I have no choice but to go in. I take a deep breath of fresh air and make my way through the door.

The first most surprising thing is that the shop looks even smaller from the inside than from the outside. The second most surprising thing is that, at the owner's desk, sitting comfortably on a leather armchair and playing on his phone is a boy that looks like he couldn't possibly be a day over 25. I was expecting an old man with a weird obsession. In no way shape or form did I see this one coming. I must have been staring at him for too long because he abruptly looks up from his phone and gives me a weird look. He's probably as surprised to see a 16 year old enter his shop as I am seeing he is the owner. We stare at each other awkwardly for a few seconds before I break the silence with a really idiotic question.

"Hi! Are you..uh…a-are you Anthony?" I say staring at the plaque on his desk which clearly has Anthony written on it.

"Yes. Yes I am! How may I help you today ma'am?" he visibly cringes probably realizing I am younger than him. Great. At least we both messed up.

"I was actually looking for an old vintage camera."

"Old and vintage or just vintage?" he visibly relaxes, even giving me a small smile.

"Is there a difference?"

"The just vintage ones are basically imitations." He says letting out a small chuckle.

"I'll go for an oldie then"

"Great choice!" He suddenly sits up and hops over the desk excitedly. He walks over to a big row of shelves somewhere by the window.

"Knock yourself out. Just don't knock anything over." He laughs, very proud of his pun. I laugh too.

I start staring at the cameras trying to seem like I know exactly what I am doing and he leaves me alone to pick. Truth be told I have never owned any camera other than the one incorporated into my phone so I am incredibly confused. Calling my brother won't do any good now since he's probably already in game and my mum is probably already planning the next visit to the otolaryngologist. I could call one of my photography nerd friends, but unfortunately I don't have any photography nerd friends. I am quickly running out of options. I might just settle for buying the best looking one. It is the most expensive and the one that caught my eye first. It is pretty small, black, covered in a material which looks like leather. Its lens seems too big for its minimalistic design, but it gives it a unique look. I study the others a bit too, weighing my options and to be honest they don't seem all that interesting. There is another one that slightly piques my interest, but not as much. Its lens is way smaller, its body way bigger and the material that covers it is colored a toffee brown which isn't quite as elegant as black leather. So I choose the former. I take it off the shelf and go back to Anthony.

"You're taking this beauty away from me?" he says and I get the impression he's only half joking.

"Yup that would be the one."

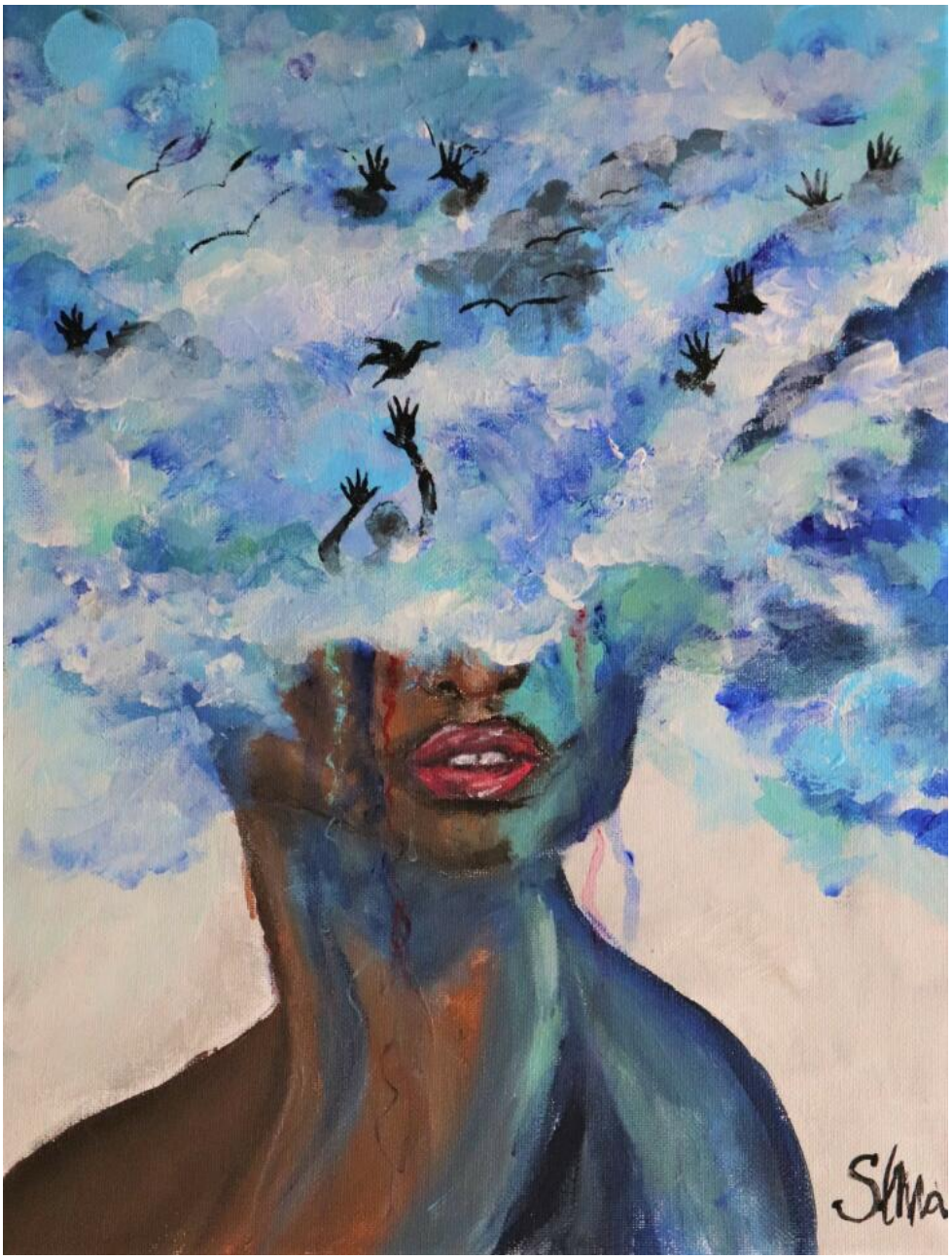
"Well that would be 399.99$ please" Incredibly overpriced. It's my brother's money though so I don't mind. I hand it over to him.

"Thank you and hope to see you here again soon" He throws me one last bright grin and I leave with my now new camera. Well, my brother's. Mission accomplished. 'If I hear his squeaky "I am going through puberty" 13 year old voice at 12 a.m. one last time this camera will fly out of the window!' I think as I make my way back home to finish watching Prison Break.

Lost in the ocean

Cătălina Gavra, 10 E
Illustration: Ioana Răducu, 11 G

On my good days perhaps I can be a little more than a handful of joy to those around me. I usually make pleasant company, if I do say so myself. And yet on my bad days, I am something so powerfully bleak, so violent and disturbing it gives me even more the reason to hate myself. The most recent bad day I experienced, or more accurately bad night, was highly peculiar.



I was only sitting on my bed and under the flickering light of the television I began to lose my mind. My bedroom door had become the very end of my world, which seemed strangely far, although it was only a couple of meters away. I was following the watermarks and the fretwork of the loss of time, carrying me through the deepest and most colourless corners of my mind. Noises came and went in waves and I was only able to catch infinite glimpses of sonic remains as they fell to the floor, dissolving into puddles of bizarre beauty. Now the intensity of my every move and thought was lying under the sign of my consciousness. Everything was well calculated, though nothing was important. As I was moving my hampered body through what wasn't my death-cage of a bedroom anymore, I found myself starring in the mirror and thinking "It wasn't me that was so scared that the mysterious liquid in the glass next to my bed was poisoned that I threw it into a wall, where it left a red stain. It wasn't me who threw all my bed sheets off, only feeling comfortable completely naked against the bare mattress. It wasn't me who screamed at the top of my lungs until I was gasping for air.

And it most certainly was not me who pushed the tip of the scissors into my heel, in an attempt to snap myself out of the despair or, perhaps, to just get a reaction."

In that room, as the sun came up and my alarm went off, I thought, "I need to feel the ocean again."

Over the course of years, my most significant struggle has been wrapping my head around the concept that my entire existance consists both of my good and bad days, that the essence of "me" can never truly be pure nor dirty and accepting it while working towards improving the uglier side of my personality.

For the longest time I reckoned that there could never be any hope for me. That I was stranded in my own mind, with nothing but its complexity alongside me. Now when I think there is absolutely nothing left for me, I remember the ocean. A metaphor I made up for a feeling of pure and unconditional love, the kind that can light up even the darkest, most abandoned corners of your mind.

The magical and enchanting Unicorn

Salia Matinca, 12 E
Illustration: Sarah Cristel, 12 E

Throughout history the unicorn has been depicted as a pale white horse with a single grooved horn extending from its forehead; a feature that is not found anywhere else in the animal kingdom. Sure, there are narwhals – the large arctic porpoise with a single long tooth extending from its mouth. There's the rhinoceros and the aptly named unicorn fish, with a large fleshy horn-like growth on its head. But there's no animal quite like the elusive and mysterious unicorn.

So, how did I find out that I love these beautiful creatures? Since I was a child, I loved all TV series like "My little pony", în which the main characters are...Well...Ponies! And although I knew about unicorns and Pegasuses from my parents and from books, I just couldn't resist their pretty fluffy faces, so I began searching and learning more and more about them. This was the first chapter of my journey, and today I'd like to explain why these mythical creatures still catch the eye of any (open-minded) person.

For a supposed legendary creature the unicorn appears a lot in documented history. Images of the unicorn were found etched into stone seals unearthed in areas previously inhabited by the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation, estimated to be from as long ago as 2500 BC. And interestingly, the unicorn doesn't make an appearance in ancient Greek Mythology but it does feature in the Greek records of natural history.

The Unicorn not only appeared in the Bible, translated from the word Re'em, but it was also painted, sculpted and woven into various scenes depicting the Virgin Mary. The famous bronze statue Virgin Mary Holding Unicorn is still on display at the National Museum in Warsaw today.

So, the unicorn started as a fierce creature found in the farthest corners of the known world. It had the head of a stag, the feet of an elephant and the tail of boar. So how did one end up on my fourth birthday cake – all pink and covered in glitter? That was my first memory about unicorns.

I didn’t realise then how much time I’d spend looking at unicorns over the coming years. I am 18 now and my room’s a paddock of mystical one-horned beasts. There are cuddly toys, fluffy earmuffs, necklaces, glittery stickers, emoji cushions, sparkly pencil cases. These were not hard to come by. Unicorns no longer have to be lured from magical forests by pure maidens, you can buy one in two clicks.

Why is that and why today unicorns are ’ubiquitous’’?

The unicorn has always had an association with young girls. Legend has it that only a female virgin could attract and tame the illusory creature. The tale went further to include that the said virgin would then be made to tame the unicorn so that hunters could slay the beast in order to retrieve its horn.

So girls and unicorns have been linked in stories, art and on tapestries since at least the Middle Ages and this is perhaps due to its symbolism of purity or maybe there's a fantasy that someday you will be recognized as the secretly beautiful, magical thing that you are.

Often considered the most wondrous of all mythical creatures, the unicorn is also a symbol of magic, miracles, and enchantment. The magical and enchanting unicorn appears to only a rare few and has the ability to bestow magic, miracles and wisdom to those who are pure of heart and virtuous in their deeds.

Nowadays, the unicorn is strongly associated with vibrant imagination and a sense of wonder. Present in numerous children books, it also appeals to adults because of its mysterious and fantastic attributes.

The horse is a symbol of travel and movement**.** And as the Unicorn is a spiritual horse it has the ability to travel and appear wherever, and whenever it wishes; it has the ability to appear throughout all realms and dimensions.

Dreaming of a unicorn depicts your innermost feelings and hidden emotions. Since unicorns are nothing but parts of fantasies, they embody what you think about your life and how you want to move ahead in it. Dreaming of a unicorn means that you have high hopes from yourself and your life. However, it may alternatively mean that even though you have a lot of talents, you are not exploring most of them and letting go of your dreams. If there is something that you wish to do, but are not doing because of other pressures or responsibilities in life, it is time for you to discover your own happiness, rather than dwell in things that you don't want to, anymore.

A group of students from our college attended a course organized by the U. S. Embassy in Romania, at the American Corner

MEDIA LITERACY focused on the need to identify different types of media we may encounter on a day-to-day basis and on recognizing bias in the media as well as confronting our own biases. Students analyzed articles for leading language and learned about psychological conditions like the "backfire effect" that make humans more prone to confirmation bias.

The course was delivered by **Mr. James Wilson**, an English teacher with a M.Ed. from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, whose research focuses on teaching methods that help foster creativity and critical thinking in secondary classrooms. He is currently the Fulbright ETA Fellow at the American Studies Department at the University of Bucharest.

Media Literacy – Can you spot the fake?

Răzvan Tătaru, 11 F

A few weeks ago, our class teacher told us about a set of training sessions on media literacy and fake news that was to take place at the Romanian National Library, in the American Corner, the area regarding all the US -related books and things. The idea of an American, originary from Dallas, teaching us on this subject, very trending at the moment, is something I've never been thinking of, for real, until now.

Me and my classmate, Ioana, were very interested as we are both in the debate club and I'm looking forward to attending the Faculty of Journalism within the University of Bucharest. So, we applied to go and this week, we attended the two courses along with other students from our school and also from other schools.

The beginning of our first course was an interactive game. We played thumb war with a partner, my classmate in this case, to earn a prize. Then, after the game stopped, we were asked "Did you play this competitively?" More than half of the students raised their hands. "Not a big surprise" I thought. Well, our trainer said "Why did you play it this way? To win, right?" There were mixed answers, like "It's an instinct" or "We heard it was about a prize". Then, he explained to us how media and competition are related.

"We want and we need to be first in everything, that's what schools are teaching, that's even in human biology."

We were taught about bias and, later in the lesson, about how our inclinations may be altered by information that can't be credible at all.

The training continued on spotting different types of media, like:

- Reports: the usual news we see on TV and in the newspapers or on specialized websites
- Opinion: a point of view of the author on a subject, usually economically or politically-related
- Infotainment: news edited to mock on someone or on a worldly subject, made for the amusement of the audience

- Marketing: everything ad-related, from entire news articles to just links inserted, usually, into the infotainment-type articles
- Scam or fakes: articles or ads that propose something that just can't be real and can make you reveal your personal data in order to be used by hackers
- Propaganda: articles that are written with the purpose of manipulating people and that contain a lot of unbelievable things, more or less true

We played a game of "spot the fake article" and Jimmy, our professor, showed us two "articles". One of them was posted on Imgur, a popular image sharing website where anyone can post, and the other was on CNN, a well-known news portal that broadcasts reliable information. It was very clear for me which was the real deal. The Imgur post revealed a so-called mutation of some flowers near Chernobyl. After we all saw this, we raised our hands. Somebody shouted "Someone has just found the Photoshop". Then, in the CNN article, we were shown a python that ate an alligator and then exploded. The picture looked pretty accurate, the language was formal and it cited other sources so I thought this was real. And, indeed, it was real.

After this, we started a Q&A session, where we found out the lecturer loves our **sarmale** and **Zdob si Zdub** and that the problems the US is facing are something very serious for him and for his country.

On the second session we saw a clip that proved what is known as the Wason Rule Discovery. The person that made this test gave some people three numbers (2, 4 and 8) and these people needed to find the rule by choosing other numbers. They could give any other set of three numbers to see if it fit the rule, but the number of attempts at guessing it was limited. (Spoiler alert: the rule is something very easy, they're in ascending order).

"We like and we are taught to make things complicated, like even a rule of choosing some numbers. And this happens in media, too"

We were then taught about confirmation bias, a form of believing some information, real or fake, just because it agrees with your own opinion on the subject. This is used by people that like to write propaganda. That's why we need to research a subject a lot before we can talk about it.

"It is more important to prove ourselves wrong on any subject than to criticize someone or something on behalf of a possible fake article. "

We played Factitious, an online game that has the purpose of teaching children and not only to distinguish between fake and real news. There was this funny article about Donald Trump giving marshmallows to the survivors of a wildfire. This was from a satire website, Initial Reaction News.

We were taught about the (S)CRAAP test, a way of testing if the news you get to read is authentic enough. This is an acronym for Self-Reflection, Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose. Jimmy then taught us how our biases can be defeated and understood by us.

This was a completely new way for both me and Ioana to learn something which you can't be taught in school.

I honestly think this is a very good way to improve your language skills because talking to a native speaker can make you understand the things that you can't say well enough and, by far, to learn the basics of how a journalist needs to write quality content, causing little to no controversies and remaining objective about his work.

So, I'm not yet fully prepared for spotting the fakes, but I can manage to find differences between "Enter your Instagram password to see these SHOCKING images" and "We sell <<Big Buck Bunny>> sweatshirts at this low price"!

Did you know that about Queen Elizabeth II?

Sara Șerbu, 12 E

In 2016, Queen Elizabeth II became the longest-living monarch in British history. She has been a queen for more than six decades and she has witnessed many events and changes around the world.
Despite being on the throne for 66 years, the Queen seldom gives interviews, leaving few people to know about her personal life, apart from her much-publicized love for the Corgi breed. According to papers and news feeds there are a few noteworthy curiosities about the Queen's life. I find this one pretty unknown by the people around the world: The Queen does not need a driving license. Can you believe it? I would definitely want to be a queen too to have such a privilege! Queen Elisabeth does not need a driving license because, as in the case of a passport, permits are issued on behalf of Her Majesty. However, Her Majesty has the right to drive and does not hesitate to do it. The Queen was seen driving in public when Her Majesty showed the Balmoral residence to the former Saudi King in a car ride.

Her Majesty boasts an eclectic collection of hats. But can you believe that, in her childhood, Elisabeth hated hats? Or that in her teenage years, she did not care twopence about her clothes? However, the future queen managed to turn heads, especially the one of the handsome prince Philip, with her thin-waisted coats created by her favourite designer, Norman Hartnell, who later drew her wedding dress for the 1947 wedding.

Did you know that the Queen has been married for over 70 years? In 2017, the Queen and Prince Philip celebrated 70 years of marriage, the platinum wedding. They were married at Westminster Abbey in London on November 20, 1946, and celebrated it with a private party at Windsor Castle. That's amazing and I know I am speaking about the royal family which has a tradition, but divorce was known to happen even among royalty. Nowadays we all see that more and more marriages do not resist in time, just because we live in a consumer society, in which non-values are promoted. I will attach below a picture of the young royal couple newly married. How beautiful youth is! I think we all should live the present of our lives, even when it gets hard, because the years of youth do not come back anymore. Look at the picture and see the happiness on the face of the two...

You will be astonished to hear that during her tour in 1953, in the Commonwealth countries, the Queen had a 100-piece wardrobe! Many young ladies would die to have such a big wardrobe, even in their dreams! Are you amazed yet? Just wait a second and let me tell you that when the Queen was engaged she only wore girlish dresses and pleated midi skirts designed in Hollywood style, accessorized with precious necklaces and well-placed brooches. Ooh, I forgot to mention that Cartier is her favourite brand!

I think I've made you quite envious, but we cannot all be princesses and princes or queens and kings in this world! Some of us are born to be part of royal families, but I trust me, this life is constrained by many rigours and it is not as simple as it seems!

Being a DJ

Reporter: Ovidiu Păun
Interviewees: Paul Man, Luca Roşu (DJ Luca Redd), classmates 10 E

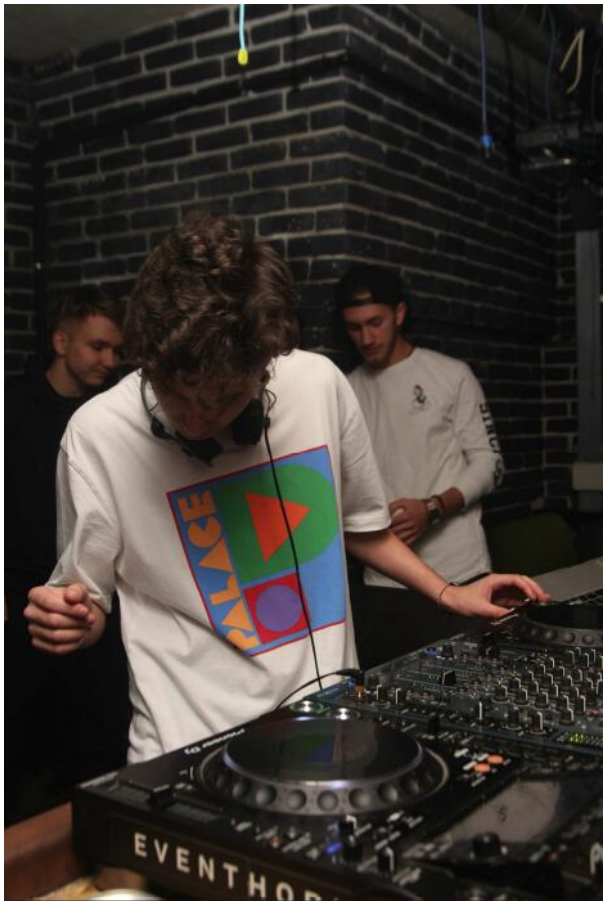
Paul, just beginning

Ovidiu: How did you discover your passion for mixing music? What types of music do you mix and how long have you been doing that?

Paul: It's been a year since I discovered my passion for "minimal" music. Minimal is a sub-genre of techno, but it's much more melodic and full of feelings than its "father". It was the 1st of May when it all happened. The sun was rising up above the sea and the harmony between the music and the whole image left me speechless. For me, it was love at first sight. But after a few months, after I went to more parties and festivals I decided to try to mix and since then I never stopped. Now I'm a 4 months upcoming DJ. But besides mixing, my favourite part is digging for new music. I send messages to people all around the world to exchange unrleased and very rare tracks that are of a much better quality than on YouTube or Soundcloud.

Ovidiu: What type of audiences have you mixed for? What was their reaction? What do you get from such shows?

Paul: Unfortunately, I didn't play in a club yet, because in this underground techno scene there are a lot of really talented DJ's, but I managed to host parties with my friends where I played 4 to 5 hours, and I always received very good feedback. Hopefully, if everything goes right, I'll play in a small club in my city this autumn.



Ovidiu: Do you intend to keep it as a hobby or develop it into a job? Explain.

Paul: These days you can develop this hobby into a job, but I'm not thinking about that. I just want to have fun doing the thing I love, but you never know what the future has to offer you.

Ovidiu: Do you just use your intuition and feeling or did you have any training?

Paul: No, I didn't have any training, I never needed any forum and I never watched any tutorial. Music is a very subjective thing so there aren't any rules you should follow. As long as you are 100% into the moment and feel every little sound you play, you are doing it the right way. Every DJ has a unique style defined by their preferences.

Luca, already on his way

Ovidiu: Hello, Luca. I'm going to ask you a few questions about your DJ career. First, I'd like to know how your passion for this hobby started.

Luca: Hello! Well, I've always loved listening to music and at a certain point I decided to take this hobby to a whole new level. That's how I became a DJ.

Ovidiu: Wow, impressive. What kind of music do you mix?

Luca: It really depends on the audience. If they are mainly teens, I play house, electronic and techno, combined with commercial music. On the other hand, if my listeners are a bit older, I mix EDM with older music, mainly from the 80's and 90's.

Ovidiu: I would also like to know, how you feel the crowd's moods.

Luca: In my opinion, this can't really be explained. It takes hours and hours of mixing and a massive experience to get to understand what the crowd's demand is. This is what DJ-ing really is about.

Ovidiu: I see. What type of events do you mix for?

Luca: Well, I have mixed for every kind of event, such as corporate events, birthday parties, clubs, high school parties, radio shows, festivals, house parties, pool parties, cafes, lounges and so on.

Ovidiu: Amazing! Now I'd like to know one last thing. Will this turn into a career?

Luca: I really hope so. I'm grinding really hard to achieve this dream and I'm sure that it is going to become true. If you work hard, there's no way that you won't succeed.

MARe / Museum of Recent Art, a new memory of the place

Ana Ciocoiu, 12 E

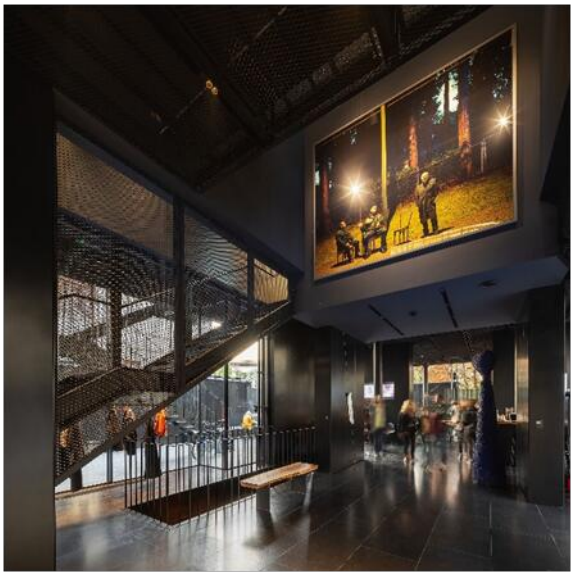
Photo: Cosmin Dragomir

Since September, Bucharest has a new museum - **MARe (The Museum of Recent Art)**, a private museum presenting the Romanian art from the Communist period to the present. In the permanent exhibition you can see all the ghosts that haunt the Romanian collective mentality. The recently inaugurated Museum of Recent Art has awakened much enthusiasm and, to be said, many controversies. It is a private museum of modest size, but with strong ambitions, including its architecture. The word "recent" refers first and foremost to the temporal coverage of the collection. International art is also present in the temporary exhibitions. The museum is much more open and accessible than most of the old ones in Romania and it also has a library and other spaces for culture and the city.

The location of the museum is significant: on the Primaverii Boulevard in Bucharest's luxury area, replacing a villa from the interwar period.

The preservation and reinterpretation of this familiar morphology to the house and the museum makes it possible to introduce another very important dimension of the project: the space of everyday life, of the individual, of subjectivity. It is clear that it is about the desire of a strong gesture, a truly "museum piece," as strong as a small building.

And the art here? I will not make any comments about the selection and the curatorial speech. I can say that I found many admirable works here. It is the feeling of unassuming and crowded space which appeals. The complexity of articulation and room types also leads to the sensation that the space seems so small.



Architecture and concept, therefore, are becoming stronger than the works themselves. This is, in fact, what is reproached to many museums (some famous) of the last decades.

Perhaps fewer permanent exhibitions and a rotation system would do no harm; of assistance would also be a contextualization by larger texts that would help connecting to the exhibits in a very enlivening way.

The museum has five levels of space. Apart from dedicated spaces, the building includes related functions such as an auditorium, a library, a café, a shop, a terrace and even a garden. In order to always find a dynamic balance between the permanent collection and the temporary exhibition, the museum wants to produce at least two temporary exhibitions with Romanian art and two temporary exhibitions with renowned foreign artists. In addition to the actual display, The Recent Art Museum is conducting a music and experimental film program. The library, fuelled with contemporary publications in Europe dedicated to contemporary art, will carry out both research and consistent educational programs.

In the permanent exhibition there are works by Ion Ţuculescu, Andrei Fădăre, Nicolae Comănescu, Ion Grigorescu, Paul Neagu, Ştefan Bertalan, Roman Cotosman, Pavel Ilie, Diet Saylerand many others.

Film review: The Greatest Showman

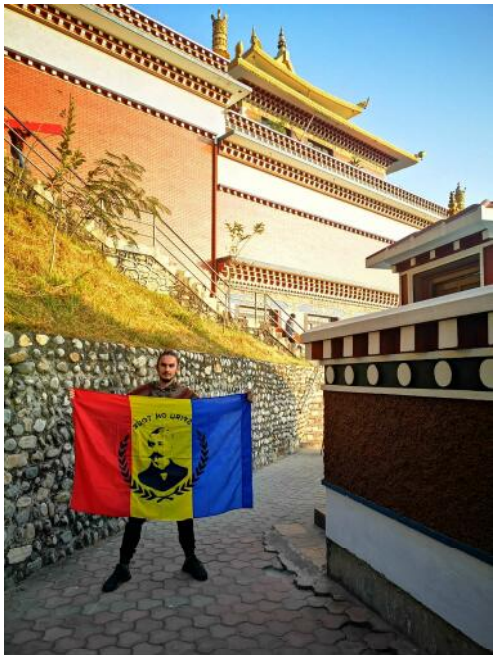
Salia Matinca, 12 E

"The greatest showman" is a movie addressing issues of love, greed and intolerance with unforgettable melodies and lyrics. Many magazines wrote about it because in the first months the reviews were very negative, because the main character is "a nasty, racist piece of work who exploited his workers without any qualms", as everybody said. But after some time, all the opinions changed. Why? I'm not sure, but I think that after a second watch, people started to understand the deep meaning. It's about feelings in their purest way, about the power of love and friendship that can change the way a person thinks. On a first view, people are tempted to say that the main character is evil and that he is attracted to money (he even cheats on his wife!). He loves to be the center of attention and when he gains that, he forgets where he started. Well, as I explained before, the movie is much deeper than that. And all of this is embraced by beautiful and meaningful melodies with touching lyrics. Hugh Jackman plays P.T. Barnum, the famous circus owner, and I can say that he brings the character's personality to life. Everybody in this movie can sing, everybody is weird but talented, everybody is loved (in the end), and this promotes the fact that "different" doesn't mean odd, it means special.

As Steve Persall said, The Greatest Showman is the feel-good (and feel good about it) movie every holiday season needs. P.T. Barnum is famous for saying there’s a sucker born every minute and he’s right. For 105 minutes I’m a sucker for his movie that may not be the greatest show on Earth but close enough.

The Himalayas

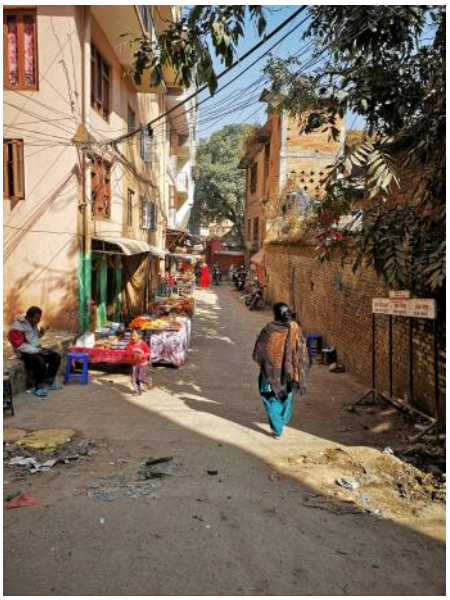
Text and photos: Dragoş Constantin, 10 H



I left in a hurry for the airport. First stop at Doha, capital of Qatar. Luxury, opulence, traditional Arab clothes, order. After another six hours of flight, I reached Kathmandu. Bright displays of colour, rich smells, ritual drum beats, temples carved in stone, but also small glass buildings full of monkeys and beggars.

It's like Nepal lives in another timeline, in another universe, and in fact they are. They follow the Bikram Samwat calendar, meaning they are 56.7 years ahead of the Gregorian calendar. They live in the year 2075. However, in terms of industry and culture, they are far behind other civilizations. As far as the city goes, it' just like a 20 km ghetto, in which only the centre welcomes tourists, while the rest of the capital is pretty dangerous for them. No building is over 15 m tall, and the streets are really narrow and full of people, so that it is pretty agitating (and gives a feeling of anxiety). It's also full of dust so you're in much need of a mask, or you're gonna have some breathing problems. In the streets, you can still find lots of people that wear traditional clothes. There are very few traffic lights and lots of motorcycles and scooters. However, despite the lack of traffic lights and road signs, the traffic is very fluid and there are almost no accidents.

People who live in villages near the mountains live a completely opposite type of life to the people that live in the big cities. There the villagers live a secluded life, but a calm and prosperous one. With no means of transportation between the villages, everything is carried and transported by men, sometimes with the help of donkeys. It usually takes about five to six hours to walk between villages. Tourism is the only way of making money up there, either by selling various souvenirs, by owning a "hotel" or just selling food.



Nepal is a really poor country with low infrastructure and lazy people, but one important aspect that really struck me was that everyone, despite being really poor and living in horrible conditions, was happy, at least they weren't sad or mad about anything, and I think that this is due to them not judging each other at all, no one stucking their nose in other people's business, and from what I can tell, gossip doesn't really exist there. This contributes to them being relaxed and feeling comfortable in their own skin. Also, being poor doesn't really allow them to feel superior from a material point of view, so that I think this helps people live a better life, despite the awful and unsanitary conditions they are in. In the face of destiny, the people of Nepal, mixture of Hindu and Buddhism, are very calm and confident, bowing to these beliefs that come from religion.

This trip of mine didn't have any special meaning on the spot, while I was actually there. Everything seemed normal, nothing surprised me, nothing seemed special. Only when I arrived home I finally saw the cultural, moral and social differences between the European and the poor, Oriental cultures.

Photographs:
Alex Avram - photo processing - *Brexiting through the back door?*
Dorina Enciu - *Blind date with a book , The Relish of Playing Truant*
Nikita Cornea - *Social media and social validation, Social media beyond likes and unlikes*
Luca Roşu - *Being a DJ*
Internet photo - *Did you know that about Queen Elizabeth II?, 10 years in a private (French) school*

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