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Travel Writing on Screen

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Observation of Edgewater Park and its Visitors

It is Sunday, September 4th, 2016, and I have arrived at Edgewater park. The time is 2:49 in the afternoon and the sun is already beating down upon my arms while I stay seated in my girlfriend’s ruby-red car. With the recent surplus of park-goers on the holiday weekend, we were forced to park on the withering grass under a lumbering maple tree. Its shade is sporadic as the sun-light escapes between the swaying mix of branches and leaves. The air conditioner brushes my face, blowing a subtly scented, all too familiar waft into my nostrils. The cheese burger wrapper and fallen fries trapped beneath seats from nights past linger in the air. They have been further cooking in the cars convection heat each blazing Cleveland summer day.

To my right, to my left, in front of me, and now behind me, I have been encompassed by cars of varying color and size. Each car and its condition illuminates a truth about its owner. The minivan unloading child after child, belongs to two stressed parents wagging their hands and grabbing their children’s attention. They’re caked in sunscreen over most of their bodies and have neglected to fully rub it in. The Yamaha motorcycle just unloaded a young individual in black basketball shorts and a grey graphic tee. He is surely dressed this way because he has had a lot of luck on his bike up until this point, evident by his neglect for the extensive recommended clothing that acts as the only shield between your flesh and the cheese grater that is the highway.

I imagine the motorcyclist’s journey to this crowded park. He leaves his home and enters onto the highway. On the down stretch of the on-ramp, his engine roars and the motorcycle’s back tire screeches along the pavement. As he races along the stretch of busy road, the camera first pans along his right side, steadily following him and slowly overtaking his position, but still focused at his base. The audience sees his shirt lifted from the air pressure differential as the air passing over his thick, blackened helmet moves faster than that trapped behind his hunched body. His slightly cocked head and deeply tinted visor show his immense concentration on the road ahead. The occasional blurred flash of a passed car appears on the screen and the revving engine are testaments to the riders speed. The camera point of view flashes directly above the rider and shows his expertise of avoiding traffic and weaving in and out of cars. Suddenly the camera stops and slowly pans up to watch the rider continue his journey down a stretch of unchanging, yet congested highway. As he vanishes into the distance, we return to reality.

I have changed locations to a crowded hilltop, overlooking the vast expanse of Lake Erie. My first thought is amazement at the sheer number of boats that have undocked and embraced the open water. There must be hundreds roaming the lake to find their perfect viewing spot before the Labor Day weekend air show begins. The winds are attacking the water, violently whipping at it until it is able to push the water into a moving crest. These crests rise and fall, collide or combine with their siblings, or continue until they lose the necessary energy to carry on. Without the overwhelming number of ships on the lake, it would surely resemble one large crinkled paper with creases all along its surface. There is no pattern, no rule set, only chaos in its design. No ship can escape rocking from side to side and each ship’s fate is entirely determined by the wave’s mercy. Though, it does not seem like the water will provide too much trouble to any of these ships today because the weather has not become violent enough to warrant such events. Nearly each boat’s hull shines from the sunlight reflecting off the water onto the boat’s dampened sides.

Our blankets covered the un-mowed and weed covered hillside. The ground beneath me is becoming beaten down as I put my wait upon it. Most of the park visitors have arrived with much more preparation than myself, as they rest comfortably in their foldable green or blue lawn chairs with their packed coolers at their sides. The city is in the distance and even though it is a clear day without a single cloud in the sky, the city looks very hazy, and even fuzzy. Perhaps there is a good amount of pollution between downtown and where I sit. The clash between the overhang of the trees and distant lumbering city spoke to the effect that urbanization has taken over Cleveland. Even though I have visited this park which should be protected from development, it is seemingly impossible to escape the city.

My family grows impatient with constant whines which mirrors the attitude of those all around us. It was common fact that the Blue Angels were scheduled to begin their famous routine at 3:00. They are already late by over 30 minutes and people are repeating this fact between their own groups. Someone points out of the corner of my eye and I focused to what they were motioning at. A cloud of thick grey smoke was originating from the run way and rivaling the height of the downtown skyscrapers. It floated across the skyline, stretching horizontally as it was pushed away by the wind. And then with unimaginable force, the Blue Angels took a perfectly vertical flight path into the sky. Everyone’s heads are angled to the spectacle, which is where I will end my observation. 56 minutes have passed.