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Essay 1, Draft 2.

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A Girl At a Café.

In this essay I would like to compare two photos of a girl sitting at a café, enjoying some meal. These photos are very interesting to compare, because at first it might seem that they look similar, but if to look closer – they have lots of differences.

On the first picture there is a girl sitting at the counter at some café. This picture was taken March 9th, 2018, at 4.45 pm, in Manhattan, West Village, Café “Burger and Lobster.” On a picture there is a young girl, late 20s, has blond hair, she is smiling, holding her hand to her chin. She is wearing flannel shirt in grey and light pink colors. Her head is really tilted to the right of the picture. There is a plate with some meal and fries on the counter in front of the girl, but what’s in it is not clear, because the plate is strongly highlighted with the lamp above the counter. The right side of the picture is not highlighted, there is a beverage the girl is enjoying.

Despite this picture is taken at a café, however, there are no other people in the picture. There are a few booths and chairs behind the girl, but there is barely anyone. It looks like this picture was taken by a bartender, because there is a ticket number “111” on the counter stand, that servers usually use to mark the guests seat numbers.

On the other picture there is the same girl. She is sitting at the table at a different café, called “Duet,” which is in Brooklyn, Marine Park, picture was taken March 11th, 2018, at 6.41 p.m. She is holding her hand to her chin and smiling. The picture doesn’t have any bright colors. Everything is brown, light grey and beige, very warm colors - the filter was used for this picture. Modern technology gives us a lot of opportunities to edit our photos until perfection, users can crop, tilt and rotate pictures, there a many different filters to be used for the final picture. Even on a phone you can create a masterpiece! There is no comparison to a professional camera and a talent of a professional photographer, but still, using simple filters, users can change the impression from a photo completely! Just like Susan Sontag says in her article “On Photography” - “the old-fashioned camera was clumsier and harder to reload like a brown Bess musket. The modern camera is trying to be a ray gun” (537).

There is a meal with french fries on the plate, there are strangely two knives instead of one, and the steak knife is put on a place with handle to the side of a photographer, not the girl, which seems weird, according to the table etiquette. There is a stem glass of red wine and a glass of water in front of a girl. There is another chair behind the girl, but nobody is sitting there, there is a stack of high chairs behind that. The whole café isn’t clearly observed, because the girl leans against the wall.

These two pictures seem alike at first sight, but they also differ. There is the same girl, in the same shirt, sitting at the café and holding her hand to her chin. On both picture she is about to enjoy her meal. Both pictures are taken by someone, it is not a selfie. The girl and the plate with meal are in the center of both pictures. However, while on the first picture the colors look sharp because of the strong high lightening, on the second picture the lightening is dimmed, which gives it a warm, comforting feeling. That comforting feeling is the dominant impression of a photo.

Despite that both pictures are great, I would like to add that modern society stopped cherishing the uniqueness of photos. They started to take pictures of everything, upload pictures to social media. And professional photos that actually *have* a meaning started to be a work of art and be displayed in expensive magazines and galleries. It started to be impossible to go to a café and *not* to take a picture. In the pictures that I have compared, the girl hasn’t even touched her meal – she wanted to be taken picture of it first. We lost that feeling of importance of the moment of picture, According to John Berger, “Understanding a Photograph” the message “I have decided that seeing this is worth recording” is blurred now. It’s also impossible to travel, without letting the whole world to know about it. Susan Sontag was right, “It seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along” (533).

Ultimately, photography is a great art, taking pictures can be for pleasure or become a business, or both. But we should forget about decisive moment, dominant impression from a photo, geometry of shapes, playing with light and shades. Finding that perfect picture can become an adventure for a photographer.

Works Cited:

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