

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Best in Show: Excerpts from a Novella-in-Flash

STUDENT: Valerie J. Weingart

DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Sciences and Humanities

DATE: May 2020

PAGES: 33

This project comprises excerpts from *Best in Show*, a novella-in-flash set at a fictionalized version of the Mile Branch Fair in Northeast Ohio. Inspired by Maria Romasco Moore's place-based novella-in-flash, *Ghostographs*, my project is a series of linked flash fiction and short stories, juxtaposing elements of magical realism with place-based realism. In this way, the scope of my project is both fantastical and gritty, compressed and vast. When writing this collection, I sought to recreate a real-life visit to the fair, with white space between the stories mirroring the real-life gaps between different stalls and barns along the midway. Individual flashes celebrate the setting's chaotic energy and diversity, while the interconnected nature compounds these snapshots, allowing tension, relationships, and character arcs to evolve. In this excerpt, the four narrators—Adam, Miranda, Peter, and Bea—grow into teenagers. While they revel in the fair's energetic atmosphere, they also explore more mature themes, such as violence, judgement, competition, and sexual desire. These stories not only depict the fun parts of the fair, but also ask the question: What do we put on display, and why?