

Michael G. Downs
award-winning author, editor, teacher
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EDUCATION

Master of Fine Arts (terminal), creative writing with a fiction emphasis, 1999
Thesis: *Rehearsal and Other Stories*
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas

Bachelor of Arts, journalism and political science, 1986
University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

The Strange and True Tale of Horace Wells, Surgeon Dentist, novel, Acre Books, May 2018
Finalist, Historical Fiction, Foreword INDIES Book of the Year
Finalist, Phillip H. McMath Post-Publication Award for the Novel

The Greatest Show, linked short stories, Louisiana State University Press, Yellow Shoe Fiction Series, Michael Griffith, ed., March 2012
Finalist for the 2013 Paterson Prize for Fiction

House of Good Hope: A Promise for a Broken City, literary journalism and memoir, University of Nebraska Press, March 2007
Winner of the *River Teeth* Literary Nonfiction Prize
Finalist for the 2008 William Saroyan Award in Nonfiction
Finalist for the 2008 Connecticut Book Award in Memoir and Biography

Hollywood's Team: Grit, Glamour and the 1950s Los Angeles Rams, Hock, Jim with Michael Downs, Rare Bird Books, a Vireo Book (Los Angeles), December 2016
Named by The Athletic.com as the best book to read about the Los Angeles Rams ("The NFL Book Club," July 2020)

SHORTER WORKS in literary journals and magazines

Nonfiction

"Arizona! You Won't Believe It!" book review at *Los Angeles Review of Books*, September 2024

"Last of the Menckenians: Struggling with an American Iconoclast," cultural criticism at *Los Angeles Review of Books*, January 2024

"Winesburg Days," a personal essay, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, Volume 37, Spring 2023, pp.67-74.

"Made Holy," a collage essay, *River Teeth: A Journal of Nonfiction Narrative*, 24:2, Spring 2023.

"Answer When You Can," personal essay, *The Southern Review*, Volume 59.1, Winter 2023, pp. 144-160.

"The *Babelbabuli*: Notes on Mencken and today's muddled topography of literary

journals,” *Menckenianna*, Fall 2022, No. 227, p. 3-8

“Letter from Kraków,” personal essay, *Baltimore Fishbowl*, March 18, 2022

“For Anyone Who Ever Played a Part,” personal essay, *Ploughshares*, Winter 2021/22, pp. 9-23.

“The City that Writes: H.L. Mencken,” *Baltimore Magazine*, January 2022.

“Night on Sefton Avenue,” flash nonfictions, *Ligeia*, Fall 2021, online

“Neighbors Gathered,” a collage essay of flash nonfictions, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3&4, Winter/Spring 2020, 22-33

“Open House” and “Crossword Puzzles,” flash nonfictions, *Baltimore Review*, Maryland Writers special issue, Oct. 2019, online

“The Vein of Jade: Restraint in Nonfiction,” craft essay, *Brevity*, January 11, 2019, online

“Horace Wells: The Consequences of Pain Relief Then and Now,” *Hartford Magazine*, January 2019, pp. 54-8 (adapted from earlier work published at *The Millions*)

“A Creative Homecoming: Ed Berlin and the Ivy Bookshop,” *BmoreArt*, No. 6, Fall 2018, pp. 94-5

“The Patron Saint of America’s Opioid Crisis,” *The Millions*, Oct. 30, 2018, online

“Jim at 2 a.m.: Something Like Opera,” *The Southern Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Winter 2018, pp. 64-71

“You Don’t Know Until You Test It,” *Scoundrel Time*, satire, online

“An American in Poland,” *AARP: The Magazine*, February/March 2018, p. 75

“Super Bowl Ring,” *Sport Literate*, Volume 10, Issue 2, p. 100

“My Lil All n All,” *The Georgia Review*, Volume LXXI, No. 2, Summer 2017, pp. 373-87

“Neighbors,” *River Teeth*, Spring 2017, Volume 18:2., pp. 31-45

“First Times: On a Mountaintop,” *Baltimore Style* magazine, Feb. 2017, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 69

“Double Play,” *Sport Literate*, essay, Volume 9, Issue 2, Fall 2015, p. 62

“Me, Myself, and I: Structure in Creative Nonfiction,” craft essay, *TriQuarterly*,

“The Morning After His Family Buried Freddie Gray,” essay, *American Short Fiction* online and Lithub, May 2015

“Thank God We Are Always Surprised,” personal essay, *Baltimore Fishbowl*, online, June 3, 2013

“Partners in Time,” personal essay, *AARP The Magazine*, September/October 2012, pp. 74-75

“The Reverend,” personal essay, *River Teeth*, Volume 11, Number 2, Spring 2010, pp. 1-11

Fiction

“Detour,” *Louisiana Literature*, Fall 2022, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 14-32

“Duty, Honor, Country,” *Prairie Schooner*, Vol. 86, No. 1, Spring 2012, pp. 109-116

“History Class,” *The Kenyon Review*, Winter 2011, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, pp. 73-85

“The Greatest Show,” *New Letters*, Summer 2010, Vol. 76, No. 3. pp. 9-30

“Go Forth, Christian Spirit,” *Louisiana Literature*, Spring/Summer 2008, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 19-34

“Son of Captain America,” *Alaska Quarterly Review*, Spring/Summer 2007

“At the Beach,” *The Missouri Review*, June/July issue, 2006, Volume 29:2, pp. 88-96

“Mrs. Liszak,” *Five Points*, Spring/Summer 2006, Volume 10, No. 1 & 2, pp. 163-183

“Ellen at the End of Summer,” *The Gettysburg Review*, Winter 2005, Volume 18, No. 4, pp. 629-637
“Elephant,” *Five Points*, Summer 2002, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 30-44
“193 Barker Street,” *New Letters*, Volume 68, No. 1, 2001, pp. 27-45
“Man Kills Wife, Two Dogs.” *Willow Springs*, No. 48, June 2001, pp. 67-77
“Prison Food.” *Witness*, Volume XIV, No. 2, Autumn 2000, pp. 50-66
“Ania.” *The Georgia Review*, Volume 53, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 83-103
“Boxing Snowmen.” *Oxford Magazine*, Volume 13, 1999, pp. 4-16
“The Lady with the Laptop.” *Blue Mesa Review*, No. 10, 1998, pp. 78-87
“Rehearsal.” *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Volume 37, No. 3, Summer 1998, pp. 547-64

Comic book script

“Dark Agnès: The Head of St. Denis,” *The Savage Sword of Conan*, January 2025, No. 6, pp. 54-62

ANTHOLOGIZED OR REPRINTED WORKS

“The Greatest Show,” republished in a special issue of *New Letters* (“Short Fiction in the American Voice,”), Volume 86, No. 3, p. 79-99, June 2020
“There Shall Be No More Pain,” an excerpt from *The Strange and True Tale of Horace Wells, Surgeon Dentist*, in *American Consequences* online magazine, Sept. 2018
“Rehearsal,” re-published in English alongside the Italian translation, “Le Prove,” by Marco Candida with assistance from Margherita Campinella-Popper. *The Journal of Italian Translation*, Volume 5, No.1, Spring 2010, p. 138-171
“At the Beach,” in *City Sages: Baltimore*; editor, Jen Michalski. City LitPress, 2010
“Elephant,” in *High Five: An Anthology of Stories from Ten Years of Five Points*; editor Megan Sexton. Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2006
“Man Kills Wife, Two Dogs,” *Best American Mystery Stories, 2002*; editor Otto Penzler; Guest Editor, James Ellroy. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
“Prison Food,” *Best American Mystery Stories, 2001*; editor Otto Penzler; Guest Editor, Lawrence Block. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
“Holy Parody, Batman!” in *Renaissance* CD database for libraries. Published by SIRS Mandarin, 2001.
“Rehearsal,” *Points of Contact: Disability, Art and Culture*, edited by Susan Crutchfield and Marcy Epstein. University of Michigan Press, 2000

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Lecturer, thesis advisor in creative writing (2024-present)

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Director emeritus, graduate program in professional writing (2019-2024).

Professor emeritus, specializing in creative writing, fiction and nonfiction, Department of English, Fall 2007-present. Directed several creative theses and independent studies.

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Adjunct faculty, Department of English, Spring 2022

AMERICAN INDIAN JOURNALISM INSTITUTE

(University of South Dakota)

One of five faculty teaching American Indian college students from throughout the country.
Summers, 2005-08

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Visiting assistant professor, specializing in print journalism, School of Journalism, Fall 2000-May 2007; Visiting lecturer, same department, Fall 1999-Spring 2000

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Graduate teaching assistant, Department of English, Fall 1995-Spring 1998

AWARDS AND HONORS

FELLOWSHIPS

Finalist, literary arts, Baker Artist Awards, 2024

Fulbright Scholar, J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, to Poland, awarded February 2020, executed Oct. 2021-February 2022.

Fellow, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts: August 2017, February-March 2015

Fellow, Anderson Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, Red Wing, MN.

Fellow, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, June 2010

Fellow, Towson Academy of Scholars

AWARDS, GRANTS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Oran Robert Perry Burke Award for Nonfiction, honoring “an exceptional work of nonfiction from the previous calendar year of issues.” For “Answer When You Other Notable Essays, Can,” from *The Southern Review*, 2024

Best American Essays, “Neighbors, Gathered,” 2021

Ruby award recipient, grant, Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, awarded 2016

Sabbatical recipient, Towson University, for AY 2014-15

Commitment to Student Accessibility Award, Towson University, 2015

Individual Artist Award, grant, Maryland State Arts Council, 2013

Other Distinguished Stories, *Best American Short Stories*

for “History Class,” 2011; for “Mrs. Liszak,” 2007; for “Ania” 2001

Short List, *Prize Stories: O. Henry Awards, 2001*, for “Ania.”

River Teeth Literary Nonfiction Prize, 2006

National Endowment for the Arts literature fellowship in fiction, grant, 2005

Tennessee Williams Scholar, Sewanee Writers Conference, 2004

Freedom Forum Professor's Publishing grant, 2000

Baucum Fulkerson Award, 1999

Truman Capote Fellow, University of Arkansas, 1998-99

Lily Peter Fellow, University of Arkansas, 1998-99

Lawrence Foundation Prize, Michigan Quarterly Review, 1998

First place, sports writing, Connecticut Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, 1992

Third place (shared), sports writing, Associated Press Sports Editors contest, 1991

GUEST OR VISITING WRITER

Notre Dame University of Maryland, October 2013; University of Maine-Fort Kent, Waneta T. Blake Visiting Professor, April 2013; Goucher College, Nov. 2012; Frostburg State University Center for Creative Writing, October 2012; American University, April 2012; Goucher College, Nov. 2011; University of North Dakota, April 2010; Anne Arundel Community College, March 4, 2010

SELECTED READINGS, PANELS, INVITED SPEECHES and TALKS

INVITED SPEECHES AND TALKS

Reading, CityLit Festival Baker Awards Literary Finalists, Baltimore, April 20, 2024

Invited Talk, Jagiellonian University, Department of American History and Culture “Fascination and Literary Pursuit” Oct. 16, 2024 at Collegium Paderevianum.

Open Seminar Series, Jagiellonian University, School of Polish Language and Culture, Kraków, Poland: “Bite-Sized Tastes of Reality: Flash Nonfiction’s Growing Relevance in Contemporary American Literature.” March 16, 2022

Invited Talk, Jagiellonian University, Department of History of American Literature and Culture: “Lost in a Laughing Gas World: On Horace Wells, History and Imagination” December 1, 2021 at Collegium Paderevianum.

Mencken Day Memorial Lecture, invited, Enoch Pratt Free Library and the Mencken Society, “The *Babelobabuli*: Notes on Mencken and today’s muddled topography of literary journals.” Sept. 12, 2021

Invited lecture, Trinity College, Hartford, CT: “Lost in a World of Laughing Gas: Marking the 175th Anniversary of a World-Changing Discovery.” October 19, 2020, via Zoom.

Invited lecture, Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, Wethersfield, CT: “Lost in a Laughing Gas World: Horace Wells in Fact and Fiction.” October 6, 2019

Guest speaker, Baltimore County Dental Association: “Breathe Deep: This Won’t Hurt a Bit,” May 28, 2019

Guest speaker, Pennsylvania Dental Association Leadership conference: “Just a Humbug: Horace Wells, Leadership, and Discovery,” July 28, 2018

Guest speaker, Maryland Writers Association, Carroll County Branch: “History and its Mysteries: How Fiction’s Imagination Works with History’s Facts”

Keynote speaker, Maryland State Arts Council reception for winners of individual artists grants, Baltimore, May 2013. Speech title: “Thank God We Are Always Surprised.”

SELECTED SERVICE WORK

- Peer review of creative writing applications, U.S. Fulbright Commission, 2024
- Good Contrivance Farm Writers’ Retreat, board of directors, president 2024-present
- *Baltimore Review*, board of directors
- Promotion review for Prof. Paul Bone, Evansville University, to full professor, August 2019
- Advisory Council, Baltimore Eastside Writers Co-operative, an affiliate of Strong City Baltimore (August 2017-January 2019)
- Program director, TACLIT, law-enforcement and literature pilot program, 2016-17