

Michael G. Downs  
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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

## CREATIVE AND SCHOLARLY 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

"Last of the Menckenians: Struggling with an American Iconoclast," cultural criticism forthcoming 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, pp. 19-24.

"Answer When You Can," personal essay, *The Southern Review*, Volume 59.1, Winter 2023, pp. 144-160. (winner, Oran Robert Perry Burke Award for Nonfiction)

"The *Babelobabuli*: Notes on Mencken and today's muddled topography of literary journals," *Menckiana*, 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*, online
- “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

#### 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

##### TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Director, graduate program in professional writing (2019-present).  
Professor, specializing in creative writing, fiction and nonfiction, Department of English, Fall 2007-present. Directed several creative theses and independent studies.

##### TOWSON UNIVERSITY

interim director, graduate program in professional writing, 2013-2014.

##### JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY 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

## COURSES TAUGHT

### TOWSON UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

#### *Graduate*

- Theory of Creativity
- Writing Short Fiction
- Writing Creative Nonfiction
- Freelance Writing
- Thesis direction
- Topics in Writing, “Longform Narrative Nonfiction,” graduate, team taught with Wil S. Hylton, contributing writer, *New York Times* magazine
- Independent studies (editing the literary journal; translating literary work; writing sports journalism; crafting the book proposal)

#### *Undergraduate*

- Writing Creative Nonfiction
- Advanced Fiction Writing
- Introduction to Fiction Writing
- Editing the Literary Magazine I and II: *Grub Street*
- Capstone seminars
  - Historical Literary Fiction by Contemporary Authors
  - Writing the Other and the Practice of Moral Imagination
- Elements of Fiction
- Independent study (Dante’s *The Inferno*; works of Nathaniel Hawthorne)
- Topics in Writing: “The Sports Pages,” literary writing featuring sports.
- Internships

## SELECTED AWARDS AND HONORS

### FELLOWSHIPS

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., June 2011

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

Can,” from *The Southern Review*, 2024  
Other Notable Essays, *Best American Essays*, “Neighbors, Gathered,” 2021  
Sabbatical recipient, Towson University, for AY 2021-22  
Rubys 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, 2006  
Tennessee Williams Scholar, Sewanee Writers Conference, 2004  
Freedom Forum Professor's Publishing grant, 2000

## **READINGS, PANEL PARTICIPATION, INVITED SPEECHES and TALKS**

### **INVITED SPEECHES AND TALKS**

**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.

**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. 11, 2021

**Invited lecture, Trinity College, Hartford, CT**: “Lost in a World of Laughing Gas: Marking the 175<sup>th</sup> 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**

- *Baltimore Review*, board of directors
- Good Contrivance Farm Writers’ Retreat, board of directors
- Promotion review for Prof. Paul Bone, Evansville University, to full professor, August 2019
- Co-director, Towson Literary Reading Series, 2008-2013, 2015-19
- Organizing committee, panelist and director (2024, 2019, 2014), Baltimore Writers’ Conference, 2007-present.