

APPROVALS

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Kim Todd's Untold Stories of the World

Revealing and Reestablishing the Legacies of the Forgotten

Two-In-One: How Science Can Enrich the Humanities

(by order of preference)

TEASER TEXT *Write this after you finish the story. All 3 must be different.*

WEBSITE TEASER <i>This will appear in both the department newsletter and on their website.</i>	Kim Todd always had a knack for finding the value in untold stories, and has made it her mission to reveal the histories of marginalized groups through time. Holding multiple degrees in both the humanities and sciences, Todd offers a glimpse into the advantages of interdisciplinary research.
CLA FACEBOOK TEASER	Kim Todd has made it her mission to seek out and share the more obscure histories of our world. From the origin of honeybees in America to the perils of girl stunt reporting in the 19th century, Todd manages to write on a breadth of subjects because of her devotion to cross-discipline research.

<p>CLA TWITTER TEASER</p> <p><i>280 characters or fewer--URL and @/# count as characters</i></p>	<p>What happens when you mix the humanities and sciences? You get a unique perspective to write from, which is the space Kim Todd often finds herself in when writing. Read on to discover how Todd unveils the forgotten histories of our world through her interdisciplinary research.</p>
<p>DEPARTMENT FACEBOOK POST</p> <p><i>This is not the same as the CLA teaser.</i></p>	<p>Director of the Creative Writing program Kim Todd has made it her mission to unearth the obscured histories of marginalized groups through time. From the origin of invasive species in America to the careers of 19th century girl stunt reporters, Todd has a knack for lending a voice to the forgotten. Read on to discover how she goes about writing these forgotten narratives.</p>
<p>DEPARTMENT TWITTER POST</p> <p><i>280 characters or fewer--URL and @/# count as characters</i></p>	<p>Kim Todd, director of the creative writing program uses both the humanities and sciences to inform her writing, and has a passion for uplifting the narratives of historically marginalized groups in both disciplines. Read on to find out how the two schools of thought complement one another.</p>

By Harrison Nelson

[Insert image & caption here when ready. Standard caption: Photo by [photographer's name], CLAgency student]

Kim Todd, director of UMN's creative writing program, showcases the value of an interdisciplinary approach to language and science through her nonfiction work on the natural world. The literature she writes is dually influenced by her MFA in creative writing and MS in environmental studies. While her interests may vary over time, her approach to research remains the same, and offers a glimpse into how one may go about skillfully coalescing the humanities and sciences.

Path to Environmentalism

Todd was an avid reader growing up, and points to her early fascination with literature as a fundamental motivation to write. Even before the idea of becoming a novelist presented itself to her, Todd always kept a journal and wrote stories in her free time. After graduating from Yale with a BA in English, she became a newspaper reporter in Seattle, which is where she first fostered her other devotion—to science.

Todd reported on a broad range of topics at the company, "it was a small enough paper that during my two years there we covered all the beats [referring to the swathe of subject areas a reporter might be assigned to write about]. So I was the education reporter, and then I was the crime reporter, and then I was telling people 10 things to do

with chicken.” Although she was capable of covering nearly all subjects, Todd took a particular liking to the theme of science and the environment, and discovered that her readers, too, were invested in those features. Scientific stories, Todd realized, “were really about what people thought of the world that they wanted to live in.” This idea stuck with her, even after she left the newspaper to attend graduate school.

Coalescing Nature and Narrative

Todd attended the University of Montana for her graduate studies, and credits her time there for strengthening the connection between writing and science. “I started doing just the MFA, and it was similar to our program [at the University of Minnesota]; you have a certain number of classes that you have to take outside of the department. So by the end of my MFA I realized, ‘oh look at that, I’m already more than halfway to this environmental studies degree just with what I took by being interested in the subject.’” The complementary nature of her courses allowed Todd to develop the two degrees simultaneously, especially since both departments respected the importance of the other.

The rugged expanse of Montana also offered Todd a peek into a local landscape teeming with native wildlife. This proximity, in tandem with her coursework, led to her understanding that each ecosystem is distinct to its given landscape and thus, one’s own environmental literacy must begin at a hyperlocal perspective. Since then, much of Todd’s writing has advocated for environmental awareness at the individual level.

Unveiling the Unremembered

Throughout her entire writing career, Todd has advocated on behalf of nature, acting as a representative for the voiceless plants and animals that cannot defend against rampant environmental destruction. Her first book, *Tinkering With Eden*, sought to unearth the untold stories of how non-native species were introduced to the United States. Todd’s current research continues her commitment to advocacy, but has diverted her attention towards another historically-marginalized group: female stunt reporters.

Female stunt reporters were daring women who infiltrated places such as mental asylums and factories to expose the hazardous and neglectful environments women were forced to occupy. Todd explains, “Because they were women, they were going undercover into women’s spaces, and were able to tell these stories of women that hadn’t been told before.” These reporters assumed pseudonyms and dressed in disguise in order to gain access to the facilities, all the while cataloguing their

experiences to later disseminate through the press in captivating first-person narratives. At their peak, female stunt reporters were more popular than their male counterparts, but over time their legacy has faded out. On why she wrote on these women, Todd says, “Here’s all these women doing what I consider to be pioneering undercover investigative journalism, but because it’s framed as this joke genre of girl stunt reporters, which is considered silly, it was dismissed right after they did it and has consequently been forgotten.”

If this topic seems disconnected from her earlier work, Todd has a response, “I think that I can trace that trajectory to the current project. What most relates to stunt reporters is the pushback that I’ve gotten when I suggested that a woman in history could have made a significant contribution. One of my previous books, *Chrysalis, Maria Sibylla Merian and the Secrets of Metamorphosis*, was about this very early female naturalist, and when I gave talks people would always raise their hand and say, ‘but she didn’t really do anything.’ It’s sort of like this feminist fantasy that she could have actually made a contribution in 1699 and see something that her male peers didn’t see. So that kind of pushback was really surprising to me, and unexpected.”

A Closer Look

The convergence of the humanities and sciences in Todd’s writing have amplified the significance of both. The two disciplines can succeed as an isolated practice, but Todd’s work stands as a testament to the advantage of employing a breadth of knowledge from cross-discipline schools of thought. In closing Todd explains, “Often the work gets its power from describing actual events in a way that—I hope—challenges our understanding of certain historical narratives.”

A complete list of Todd’s works are listed on her website: <http://www.kimtodd.net/>

This story was written by an undergraduate student in CLAgency. [Meet the team.](#)