

Elements

A Journal of Exploratory Research and Analysis

The “vision” thing wears thin after a while and we start to feel a disappointment with the pace of responsive attunement. Where are the elements of optimism and enthusiasm to light our way? At what point does the scope of the problem outstrip our capacity to respond from empathy or a personal sense of responsibility? Is there a vision for a better world that won’t simply wear thin into another “vision” thing? Can we suspend our doubts long enough to plant seeds of resilient hope and idealism?

The research presented here encourages us to envision elements of a more beautiful world, a world without the constraints of blind patriotic cant or blinkered attitudes to homelessness, without ethnic, linguistic disability or gender stereotyping or objectification, where science serves genuinely beneficial social goals and education stops testing long enough to excite the imagination...a world in which corporations can be responsible and new citizens can show the way in resisting marketing blandishments in the name of the environment, while prisoners of war learn resilience and survival strategies and the grief-stricken find solace in the power of the mind...a world where hope and idealism still have a role to play in framing productive human responses to spaces of indifference, concealment and marginalization, where powers of imagination frame the attunement and calibrate the critical eye and attentive ear of engaged inquiry.

To see the world in a new light, to acquire new points of entry to the world, is to become responsive in a new way. The capacity to respond to issues and concerns otherwise masked from view demands a special openness and attention to what we find strange and challenging. But we seldom see the world in a new light without first having the curiosity and willingness to explore unexpected or marginalized phenomena; nor

without learning to discern otherwise hidden facets of our filtered social constructions.

The challenge to see the world in a new light -- to “*open the universe a little more,*” as Salman Rushdie once urged in *Imaginary Homelands* -- calls for critical voices, exploratory minds and the empowerment of creative forms of expression, all carefully interwoven with sensitive analysis and personal concern...and it calls for attending to complexities in life often eclipsed from view by our more dominant ways of thinking, feeling and speaking. Above all, it calls for *an attentive ear*, the first condition for generating an *attentive response*. For, as Italo Calvino reminds us in *Invisible Cities*, “*It is not the voice that commands the story; it is the ear.*” What calls the ear to attention?

The articles comprising this fifth annual journal solicit your ear and seek to direct your attention to the *margins of normalization*...to spaces of multiplicity where the questions reveal unthinkable *difference* in the midst of what is unthinkable subject to the call of the *same*. Questions posed in this manner often challenge us to think more carefully in the *margins of difference*. The point is to expand our perspective by revealing silent facets of our surrounding world that call out for our attention: *new points of entry through which to expand the scope of life that matters to us*.

Exploratory research and analysis is the key to opening the universe a little more. The contributions to follow offer opportunities for reflective thought and further lines of study regarding phenomena that speak to us from the margins of our personal, human, social, political and institutional involvements. They endeavor to provoke our engagement with tangible elements of concern and curiosity so often concealed within spaces of indifference calibrated through misdirection to the absence of attention...if only to “open the universe a little more” and expand the scope of concern.

HONORS PROGRAM COMMUNITY STATEMENT

The Honors Program at CSU Stanislaus is a community of scholars bound together by vital principles of academic openness, integrity, and respect. Through focused study and practice involving exploration and discovery across a variety of disciplines, the Honors Program upholds these principles of scholarly engagement and provides students with the necessary foundations for further research and inquiry.

Our interdisciplinary curriculum is integral to this work, and is intended to facilitate creative understanding of the irreducible complexities of contemporary life and knowledge. Personal and intellectual honesty and curiosity are essential to this process. So, too, is critical openness to difficult topics and respect for different perspectives, values and disciplines. The Honors Program aims to uphold these virtues in practice, in principle, and in community with one another.

Honors Program Advisory Committee

May 14, 2004