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Editor's Preface

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Editor's Preface

Draftings In represents a new direction for the University of Northern Iowa Board of Student Publications: publication of noteworthy research and writing by UNI graduate students. *Draftings In* seeks to penetrate the often lonely domain of the scholar with samples of what fellow scholars at UNI are about. This series is designed to print interesting essays and valuable research for the university community and for the public at large. Like all serious scholarly journals, it seeks to print what is true, new, and important in disciplines across the curriculum.

Draftings In comes into existence as the happy union of technology with concept, the concept of the "community of writers." In 1983, Dr. Peter Elbow, author of *Writing With Power* and *Writing Without Teachers*, spent a weeklong residency on campus in connection with UNI's Iowa Student as Critic Conference. Elbow inspired many here with the vision of "writing communities." In such small writing groups, writers can share drafts of their research and writing with others, and ask for and receive the support and (often blunt) feedback they need. Indeed, Elbow maintains, it is through working with their own and others' writing with the goal of publication that students learn most about writing, and become better writers. Many here also recognized such "writing communities" as conducive to the high form of intellectual exchange often reserved only for faculty.

The same year this idea was taking root, the Board of Student Publications purchased state-of-the-art typesetting equipment to lower costs and facilitate production of the UNI student newspaper, *The Northern Iowan*. Though this investment was made primarily for *The Northern Iowan*, the Board was not unmindful of the fact that this advanced technology would make financially feasible the publication of other forms of student writing. *Draftings In* represents only one of what may be a variety of UNI student publications in the future.

Although this inaugural volume is devoted to *Draftings In Literary Criticism*, future volumes might consist of *Draftings In Physics*, *Draftings in Education*, *Draftings in Industrial Technology* or *Draftings in Business Ethics*. Wherever communities of writers spring up, a *Draftings In* volume might follow. *Draftings in Literary Criticism* emanates from a pilot writing community formed during the fall 1984 graduate seminar in "Literary Non-fiction: The New Journalism and the Nonfiction Novel." This diverse (but perhaps not atypical) group of graduate students—consisting of a Methodist minister, a Waterloo English teacher, a publications coordinator, and a fledgling graduate student—continued meeting as a writing community during the spring semester, even though members were no longer meeting together formally as part of a class.

At the close of the spring semester, they felt ready to share their research and writing with the university community. This volume includes Barbara Anderson's probe of Truman Capote's treatment of "normality" in his famous volume *In Cold Blood*, a theme only obliquely engaged in Capote criticism to date, and Denton Ketels' persuasive argument that the amorphous structure of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas* actually is a precise literary translation of the LSD experience. Ketels' research also led him to discover the probable source of Thompson's signature phrase: fear & loathing. A timely thought piece by Leesa Cutler follows on John Hersey and "The Fortieth Anniversary of *Hiroshima*," and *Draftings* concludes with the Rev. Walter Phelps reminder of the influence of Mark Twain on contemporary social satirist Tom Wolfe, and a discussion of how both writers draw on the ritual of cannibalism to satirize social processes of their times.

We offer these essays with the hope they will make stimulating reading, and that they will encourage the formation of other writing communities in a variety of UNI disciplines. In presenting this first *Draftings In* volume to the university community, we wish to emphasize that the *process* of involvement in a writing group—a community of writer/scholars—is as important as the final product. Communities of researcher-writers are their own excuse for being; volumes such as this are merely the beneficent fall-out. Graduate students and faculty interested in participating in (or learning more about) such writing communities are urged to contact the series editor.

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