



Donald Barthelme: The Genesis of a Cool Sound (Tarleton State University Southwestern Studies in the Humanities)

Helen Moore Barthelme

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Chronicling a literary life that ended not so long ago, *Donald Barthelme: The Genesis of a Cool Sound* gives the reader a glimpse at the years when Barthelme began to find his literary voice. A revealing look at Donald Barthelme's influences and development, this account begins with a detailed biographical sketch of his life and spans his growth into a true avant-garde literary figure.

Donald Barthelme was born in Philadelphia but raised in Houston, the son of a forward-thinking architect father and a literary mother. Educated at the University of Houston, he became a fine arts critic for the *Houston Post*; then, following duty in the Korean conflict, he returned to the *Post* for a short time before becoming editor for *Forum* literary magazine. After that, he was also director of the Contemporary Arts Museum while writing and publishing his first stories.

In the 1960s he moved to New York, where he became editor of *Location* and was able to practice the art of short fiction in such vehicles as the *New Yorker* and *Harper's Bazaar*. In a witty, playful, ironic, and bizarrely imaginative style, he wrote more than one hundred short stories and several novels over the years.

In this literary memoir, Donald Barthelme's former wife, Helen Moore Barthelme, offers insights into his career as well as his private life, focusing especially on the decade they were married, from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, a period when he was developing the forms and genres that made him famous. During that time Barthelme was finding his voice as a writer and his short stories were beginning to receive notice. In her memoir, Helen Moore Barthelme writes about Donald's early years and her life with him in Houston and New York. In open, straightforward language she tells about their love for each other and about the events that finally divided them. She also describes, from the point of view of the person closest to Donald during that time, the making of one of the most original and imaginative American writers of the twentieth century.

Scholars of avant-garde American literature will gain insider perspective to one man's life and the years which, for all their myriad joys and downturns, produced some of the best-remembered works in the literary canon.

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