



# Love, H: The Letters of Helene Dorn and Hettie Jones

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"It works, we're in business, yeah Babe!" So begins this remarkable selection from a forty-year correspondence between two artists who survived their time as wives in the Beat bohemia of the 1960s and went on to successful artistic careers of their own.

From their first meeting in 1960, writer Hettie Jones—then married to LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)—and painter and sculptor Helene Dorn (1927–2004), wife of poet Ed Dorn, found in each other more than friendship. They were each other's confidant, emotional support, and unflagging partner through difficulties, defeats, and victories, from surviving divorce and struggling as single mothers, to finding artistic success in their own right.

Revealing the intimacy of lifelong friends, these letters tell two stories from the shared point of view of women who refused to go along with society's expectations. Jones frames her and Helene's story, adding details and explanations while filling in gaps in the narrative. As she writes, "we'd fled the norm for women then, because to live it would have been a kind of death."

Apart from these two personal stories, there are, as well, reports from the battlegrounds of women's rights and tenant's rights, reflections on marriage and motherhood, and contemplation of the past to which these two had remained irrevocably connected. Prominent figures such as Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary appear as well, making *Love, H* an important addition to literature on the Beats.

Above all, this book is a record of the changing lives of women artists as the twentieth century became the twenty-first, and what it has meant for women considering such a life today. It's worth a try, Jones and Dorn show us, offering their lives as proof that it can be done.

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