

THESE DEALS WON'T
LAST FOREVER



SASHA HAWKINS

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SASHA AMARI HAWKINS

the operating system digital print//document

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edited and designed by ELÆ [Lynne DeSilva-Johnson] and Orchid Tierney



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This text was set in Steelworks Vintage, Europa-Light, Gill Sans, Minion, and OCR-A Standard.

Cover Art uses an image from the series “Collected Objects & the Dead Birds I Did Not Carry Home,” by Heidi Reszies. [Cover Image Description: Mixed media collage using torn pieces of paper and tape in red, white and yellow tones and a black and white charcoal drawing of a bird, with a piece of broken glass and the book’s title overlaid.]

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THESE DEALS WON'T LAST FOREVER

(prize)

“when I look long enough
at your side of the bed
I see eyes in the inked dipped
rounds of our covers, and the
iris under your shirt
moves black
as brando’s.”

on a note wrapped in sweaters.

in a room
with a door that faces the road,
car lights sow white
through plastic blinds
quick fade niceties
from strangers.

at the corner store with
tecate babe windows
he told her he was the baddest mother
fucker on this block.

on tv
in a dark room
to their dark faces
the tall plastic aliens
blow blue and wild from inside,
push rotting corollas and
say to let someone else talk;

these deals won't last forever.



WOMANMAKER, CA

kazt-tv channel 7.4

scene three

kersey
fills his hand
on a two finger gun
a thumb for the hammer
he goes bang
and harm
running
fills with fire
the hair
throws sparks
the pulp spray on the slum walls
are seeds of applause
human worry
spread wide from her back
her lips were parted
with last words of relief
a penlight in the pitch black alley
for a cooling gun:

“I believe you when you say
you meant to be there for me.”

but you are in a rolling car
that you never kicked from neutral
a thumb pressed
to a white metal carabiner
hanging a white towel
drawn twice around itself
saying “no more, no more!”
or at least go slower.

you never meant to be anywhere you've never meant to be anywhere
he backed from the body took his keys in hand
intention loomed under the car

and drank the brakes.

scene four

and he	turns off the street to the lot stepping out walking in sketched wind a brick wall the bride	three lanes textile factory cooling car unlit a couple looks down at him her hand	either way suits and bridal and headlights a wall wed in mural looking up tucked beneath the groom's coat his thumbs hung remembers
	grabbing at his love from belt loops	like she used to do he smiles	she was very pretty.

(end)

(skins)

on a 4:3 crt tv
carroll baker,
eli wallach
black and
white widescreen

gliding feet over cotton dust car parts
a spotted alley couch at the bank
near the limo on bricks, side doors along
the shortcut
lined touch-me-nots.
stars blush
under the china dish key.

the man's got light across his eyes
the girl's got light across hers
coming from an open mouth
in the seat across.
slits in the car's leather dry
leave sores

he says *don't you have any fun-loving
spirit about you?*

well, goes the girl *this isn't
fun.*

they shut the tv off.
she didn't want to watch four hours of violence
fed petals and displaced wants
but tennessee williams doesn't write much else.

her head back on the pillow,
rayon sand damp at the mouth
of passing affection's tide

she looks up through smudged ceiling mirrors
the smooth lines of healed and rehealed
just below his hair, just above the eyebrows
and she asks

“I just don’t get it

I don’t get how you know
you’re the camera or know you’re the virgin
when all boys ever ask
is can you hear me?”

LONNIE'S CHINESE MENTHOLS

kutp channel 45.2

scene one

I sit with her, she as margo and I as sam
and the kids as two
collaged of our soft breathing
in dark and darker places,
leaned into a dream.

we go left of the barriers, over
to two eyes in the underbrush
below the turn out, headlights wide white,
then narrow
like records:

“this is love.”

“let me hang you.”

she asks what’s spinning
on the high beams.

on tv, the man says sorry’s not gonna be enough this time
and the woman takes off her coat.

all’s on fire now.
I give out open hands
hesitant for the way she still tries
at her seatbelt,
like the well postered waiting room
of a doctor who’s cut tongues from the wrong mouths.
I turn out of sleep. I call out:

lonnie, answer the phone

scene two

he tightens his lip
he looks down then left to molasses swamp
an impounded diecast, pulling red cards when he needs the green
as a son
am I angry with my father
holding the door for me
I'm not
I'm the lightest blue you can get
watching the '05 sunfire
eat your hall and oates cassette then
spit your mother bloody
through its glass out
where no one
but queen
frostine can
save her.

scene three

her nails were loud at the glass
when you did him with rock.

cruisers blink
red siren girls.
stars are drawn long,
eraser ends from the desk
brushed onto the clearing
of clay roads and lincoln logs

you hide the end she's asking for.
his openness and
pouring a tenement hall,
her affection brassbound.
white line credits
the greek revival
on the green grass hill.

intermittent black
strokes the man on tv.
the blow of his denial
sends her to the mat,
palms down for
forgiveness.

light and smoke
effect on the driveway,
the celebrity idles.
the headlights get smashed.

you're at a window,
receiver at your ear:

lonnie, answer the phone

scene four

I watched you through wide laced fingers
a wasp
dragging from love-sent
flowers.

you ask, how far from
eighteen is that, friend?

I say two more stops
from here.

they aren't my cigs
they're mona's boyfriend mark's
but I tried one
in my date's sonata
in the black of missed curfew
I played like I was your lady
in whatever place you call home
I was all you wanted
for the hour
ever after.

you called one night
during dinner. my brother played loud with cars
and candyland.
the woman on tv barked. you said
escape was not chance
or of my own doing
but a man nice enough to say when.

outside
the road signs glowed red with closeness and
failing brakes.
hell opened motor first

turn back turn back
 get down get down get down

the lord is coming with fire.

(end)

(control)

the thick set sang in warning tones
red and mute.

she gets up and breaks
what's left of their light
over her bottom lip.

"I saw the note from your wife.

I saw in the mirror
that I am meant to be
a moment in and
of itself violent, changing

you'd tear me
and through snapped seams
you'd look just like brando
like you think she wants,
like you could ever hurt her so decent.

it'd be nice to love
separate
from broadcast
plains, a man bears
big teeth, screams: *I'm gonna let her die!*

and you come out of your wife,
howl with this voice
that's come too close
come too fast, does not care for us:
I'm gonna let her die!

*I- I've changed my mind,
I'm gonna let her die!*

I'm gonna be a winner
for what I've done to her
I've got my fingers
in her mouth—

“look, what are you trying to say?
scorpio's gonna get my wife—
s'gonna hurt her?

is that it?”

she went to the walls
and tried hard to see through
like you could any other killing jar
but all there was
was ending, then leopard
on tv
on all fours
down like that,
she thought,

‘that woman really does seem sorry.’

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kpaz-tv channel 21

scene five

and when she left
she walked out,
he said,
through a dark corner
opposite the door.

and when mark laid down marnie,
from the screen came
the sound of
love fate-certain and
crushing. a train's broken
heart pressing
the stalled chevy
in two, little eyes
at each window.

her robe's at her ankles
her robe's on the tracks,
and with hands out and waiting
on love to say when
she ran her wrists
down
armless.

shut it off.

AFTER-WORDS

DREAM IN FORM AND FUNCTION
A CONVERSATION WITH
SASHA AMARI HAWKINS

*Greetings! Thank you for talking to us about your process today!
Can you introduce yourself, in a way that you would choose?*

For sure! I'm 22-year-old girl from Laveen, Arizona with a life-long love of police procedurals, Roddy Piper, and describing myself with lists.

Why are you a poet/writer/artist?

I love writing, and I'm also deeply untalented at anything else. My whole life has been me running from writing even though people kept telling me to write, because school tells you it's some antiquated profession for, like, syphilitic, British noblemen and 50s well-to-do-alcoholic types. In college, once I decided the final frontier, astronomy, was absolutely not for me, I really began to focus on my writing. A calling is a calling. Me + writing, truly a match made in a Calvinist, pre-destined, ran-from heaven.

When did you decide you were a poet/writer/artist (and/or: do you feel comfortable calling yourself a poet/writer/artist, what other titles or affiliations do you prefer/feel are more accurate)?

I still haven't settled on calling myself a writer, definitely not a poet. It may just be insecurity on my part, but I feel like those titles formalize the act of creating too much. When I first started writing with, like, the intention of it being something I put out into the world the thought of calling myself either of those titles, being introduced as those titles, was paralyzing. 'Girl who writes' is my title right now.

What's a "poet" (or "writer" or "artist") anyway? What do you see as your cultural and social role (in the literary / artistic / creative community and beyond)?

I think my cultural role in the community beyond is to get people thinking. I think that's what most writers want to do, it's just a matter of about what. For me, it's media. In your literary and artistic and creative communities, people are going to start dissecting your work before you can even think to ask. I think of my role being fulfilled successfully as someone writing poetry is to get people who wouldn't normally dig into a text that way to do so.

Talk about the process or instinct to move these poems (or your work in general) as independent entities into a body of work. How and why did this happen? Have you had this intention for a while? What encouraged and/or confounded this (or a book, in general) coming together? Was it a struggle?

I kind of always write in groups, it's how I work through whatever I'm obsessed with at the moment. Like, I was obsessed with how Paul Kersey's daughter/wife/female compadre always bites it and the violence of their death is always something done to him, instead of that character being able to ruminate and reflect on her own loss in *Death Wish*. So I wrote the section of this book called "Womanmaker, CA," and I did my best to work out an answer, or at least give that experience back to that specific character. And then I got stuck on those movies everyone did in the 90s where some crazy guy terrorized a man through every avenue but the man himself. Like, he'll seduce his wife, his daughter, kill the dog, kill the maid, trash the car but their actual confrontation is treated as sort of sacred and one-off. So I wrote "Lonnie's Chinese Menthols" and tried to give those characters a voice within this world where they lack agency, to hear what they thought of this entire, you know, subsection of film which thrives on their anguish. And beyond that, further linking the two, is the question: what's up with me for being so drawn to these specific films which treat other women not so great? I wrote the pieces separately, but pushed them together after noticing that thematic through line of watching and doing nothing, inside and out of the poems. In total, it's two "films" and a framing story. It was a struggle to meld the framing story into the work because I'd written it without a larger project in mind and it had nothing to do with film, just using others and autonomy.

Did you envision this collection as a collection or understand your process as writing or making specifically around a theme while the poems themselves

were being written / the work was being made? How or how not?

Yes and no, because I always saw the two “film” sequences being in the same collection, but not necessarily the framing story. That’s from a batch of poems I wrote about professional wrestling, mainly their lives on the road away from their families and, like, the basic concept of accountability. As far as the promoters were concerned, the talent could poison themselves on whatever they wanted so long as they made it to their match that night. The complicity of those promoters in the early deaths of their main draws like Roddy Piper and Macho Man Randy Savage, and of myself for watching the products of that relationship really get to me. I guess guilt is the connecting theme, you know, between the “films” and the frame of this book. Around the time I started this project, news broke that Maria Schneider was sexually assaulted by Marlon Brando on the set of *Last Tango in Paris* in a scene that made it into the final cut. I am a big Brando fan, so I’d watched the film before, and I was horrified. I felt guilty. I got to thinking how much of acting is pretend and how much is discomfited, and why is this indistinguishability so rewarded, and why, if I’m so thoughtful, am I still telling people to watch *Cape Fear* every other breath when I know Polly Bergen got knocked around so much shooting her back bruised? I dunno, maybe these poems are, thematically, about how we’re not as good of people as we’d like to think. How we fail others, or something.

What formal structures or other constrictive practices (if any) do you use in the creation of your work? Have certain teachers or instructive environments, or readings/writings/work of other creative people informed the way you work/write?

At any given moment, I’m probably doing a trash Raymond Carver or Denis Johnson impression. Ariana Reines’ *Mercury* was a big factor in this work’s creation, structurally and in terms of focus. There’s a set of poems in there about Watchmen and feminist film theory that really crystallized what I wanted to do with my own work. My instructors at the University of Arizona were really helpful as far as honing in on what works about my writing. I had one instructor, Joshua Wilson, who was just the most encouraging about the most out-there things I would write. Just bonkers to the point where I as the author could not give an accurate summary of what I meant. And then my other two workshop instructors Farid Matuk and Susan Briante kind of challenged me to write with more control over what I wanted to, you know, actually say with my work. All three were super important to this chapbook being written, because

without them I never would have felt sure enough of myself as a writer to even attempt three storylines in a twenty-something page chapbook, nor would I be able to really get out what I wanted to say.

Speaking of monikers, what does your title represent? How was it generated? Talk about the way you titled the book, and how your process of naming (individual pieces, sections, etc) influences you and/or colors your work specifically.

The nice people at the Operating System actually suggested the final title (which thanks, I love it!). I feel it represents the finicky nature of using and being used, because eventually anything runs out of what makes it needed. The title of the actual poem sequences are things I overheard or saw, a lot of the time. I feel there's a certain level of danger and something very desirable about stuff you're not supposed to hear, even if you have nothing you can do with it. So in titling, I tried to think of phrases I heard that gave me a quick taste of a situation, but not the whole thing. My favorite title is written after a Roddy Piper promo, but it's not anything he said, it's the phrase "Womanmaker" on the back of the coolest panther shirt. He was a head to toe performer, down to the threads. He didn't have to identify what a "Womanmaker" was, because it has such a visceral, ugly ring to it. It's visceral, then you attach context in the form of a promo, or words or whatever. That's pretty much where I stole my process of naming: wrestling promos. They've got 2 minutes to get you to remember them over the fifty other dudes you just watched, so some pretty captivating stuff gets said. Anyway, somewhere in all of that is your answer.

What does this particular work represent to you...as indicative of your method/creative practice?...as indicative of your history?...as indicative of your mission/intentions/hopes/plans?

My work functions a lot like a dream, and how there's patterns to the symbols and plots as we experience them, and then I try to get them to a place where a reader can take something from it too. Like, for this work specifically, I thought a lot about why I kept coming back to these films where the majority of the violence and physicality and sexualization is a burden carried by women, when I myself am one. Why am I not identifying with these characters? My hope for this work would be that someone reads this and gets to thinking about the logic behind their own taste, good or bad.

What does this book DO (as much as what it says or contains)?

I feel that it works as a navigation of audience complicity in sexism, in violence against and in the sexualization of women, so long as we get something “great.” And I try to give a voice to those being used in these situations of sacrifice for something delivering that greatness. Does it do that? I dunno, you have to tell me.

What would be the best possible outcome for this book? What might it do in the world, and how will its presence as an object facilitate your creative role in your community and beyond? What are your hopes for this book, and for your practice?

Best outcome for my book is that it’s read, and people don’t feel like they’ve wasted life-force having read it. Maybe everyone else goes on their own journeys of self-challenge and discovery through their DVD collections. You know when they did the last episode of *The Hills*, and Kristin Kavallari leaves Brody to go find herself in Europe or whatever? But then it pans out and she’s on a set with crew, hugging Brody, there’s a wrap party, you can see payroll cutting the checks and you as an audience member go “oh, I have to consider this show as construct of choices? And what those choices say about the creator and what they say about us as an audience for watching?” Pretend that’s at the end of all you watch, and ask those same questions. That’s what I hope this book makes people do. For me, though, it poses a challenge to do more, and improve upon it with my next work, if the Lord is so kind as to land me a next time.

Let’s talk a little bit about the role of poetics and creative community in social and political activism, so present in our daily lives as we face the often sobering, sometimes dangerous realities of the Capitalocene. How does your process, practice, or work otherwise interface with these conditions?

I’d be curious to hear some of your thoughts on the challenges we face in speaking and publishing across lines of race, age, ability, class, privilege, social/cultural background, gender, sexuality (and other identifiers) within the community as well as creating and maintaining safe spaces, vs. the dangers of remaining and producing in isolated “silos” and/or disciplinary and/or institutional bounds?

It’s hard, because mainstream publishers aren’t going to take the chance on minority voices, often for fear of their pocketbooks getting lightened, but at the same time progress is confrontation. If only people like myself

read my book, I've affirmed their beliefs and their sense of community but I've made no real progress. And as someone who's grown up in Arizona, which has a population of, like, 4 other Black people, I know how that sense of community and belonging is important to the writing process, or even just existing sanely. Progress isn't only forward motion.

You need like-minded voices to sort of give you the push to put your work and yourself out there, into the hands of people that would otherwise not be into your work. But community is not everything. Way back when, my family lived in a community known as Black Wall Street in Tulsa, OK, where Black people started businesses and commerce amongst themselves. They bothered no one, they needed no one, but in 1921 a race riot decimates the community. Those that lived, fled. Even in isolation, it's too much for those that wish you ill based on constructs out of your control to let you live. To live and thrive is a direct counterargument to supremacy, and those who believe in that can't handle a challenge. Community is comforting, but as long as hate's hanging around outside, you're never safe. The push against sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, everything else needs to be constant, because the second we let up, we'll be burned to the ground.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



SASHA AMARI HAWKINS is a Phoenix, AZ based writer with a deep, abiding love for schlock films and professional wrestling. She is Managing Editor for The Volta, and has written for the University of Arizona Poetry Center blog.

ABOUT THE COVER ART:

The Operating System 2019 chapbooks, in both digital and print, feature art from Heidi Reszies. The work is from a series entitled "Collected Objects & the Dead Birds I Did Not Carry Home," which are mixed media collages with encaustic on 8 x 8 wood panel, made in 2018.

Heidi writes: "This series explores objects/fragments of material culture-how objects occupy space, and my relationship to them or to their absence."

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Heidi Reszies is a poet/transdisciplinary artist living in Richmond, Virginia. Her visual art is included in the National Museum of Women in the Arts CLARA Database of Women Artists. She teaches letterpress printing at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, and is the creator/curator of Artifact Press. Her poetry collection titled *Illusory Borders* is forthcoming from The Operating System in 2019, and now available for pre-order. Her collection titled *Of Water & Other Soft Constructions* was selected by Samiya Bashir as the winner of the Anhinga Press 2018 Robert Dana Prize for Poetry (forthcoming in 2019).

Find her at heidireszies.com

WHY PRINT:DOCUMENT? (AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DIGITAL MEDIA?)

The Operating System has traditionally used the language "print:document" to differentiate from the book-object as part of our mission to distinguish the act of documentation-in-book-FORM from the act of publishing as a backwards-facing replication of the book's agentic *role* as it may have appeared the last several centuries of its history. Ultimately, we approach the book as TECHNOLOGY: one of a variety of documents across a range of media that humans have invented and in turn used to archive and disseminate ideas, beliefs, stories, and other evidence of production.

Ownership and use of printing presses and access to (or restriction of) information/materials, libraries, and archives has long been a site of struggle, related in many ways to revolutionary activity and the fight for civil rights and free speech all over the world. While (in many countries) the contemporary quotidian landscape has indeed drastically shifted in its access to platforms for sharing information and in the widespread ability to "publish" digitally, even with extremely limited resources, the importance of publication on physical media has not diminished. In fact, this may be the most critical time in recent history for activist groups, artists, and others to insist upon learning, establishing, and encouraging personal and community documentation practices.

With The OS's print endeavors I wanted to open up a conversation about this: the ultimately radical, transgressive act of creating PRINT / DOCUMENTATION in the digital age. It's a question of the archive, and of history: who gets to tell the story, and what evidence of our lives, our behaviors, and/or our experiences are we leaving behind? We can know little to nothing about the future into which we're leaving an unprecedentedly digital document trail--but we can be assured that publications, government agencies, museums, schools, and other institutional powers that be will continue to leave BOTH a digital and print version of their production for the official record. Will we?

As a (rogue) anthropologist and long time academic, I can easily pull up many accounts about how lives, behaviors, experiences--how THE STORY of a time or place--was pieced together using the deep study of the archive: correspondence, notebooks, and other physical documents which are no longer the norm in many lives and practices. As we move our creative behaviors

towards digital note taking, and even audio and video, what can we predict about future technology that is in any way assuring that our stories will be accurately told--or told at all? How will we leave these things for the record?

For all our years of print publication, I've said that "with these documents we say: WE WERE HERE, WE EXISTED, WE HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY", but now, with the rapid expansion of greater volume with digital and DIY printed media, we add: we ARE here, and while we are, we will not be limited in what we add value to, share, make accessible, or give voice to, by restricting it to what we can afford to print in volume.

Adding a digital series is the next chapter of *our* story: a way for us to support more creative practitioners and offer folks independent options for POD or DIY-zine-style distribution, even without our financial means changing -- which means, each book will *also* have archive-ready print manifestations. It's our way of challenging what is required to evolve and grow. Ever onward, outward, beyond.

Elæ [Lynne DeSilva-Johnson]. Founder& Creative Director
THE OPERATING SYSTEM, Brooklyn NY 2019

THE 2019 OS CHAPBOOK SERIES

DIGITAL TITLES:

American Policy Player's Guide and Dream Book - Rachel Zolf

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Music Of Each Slain Creature - Frank Sherlock

The Grass Is Greener When The Sun Is Yellow - Sarah Rosenthal & Valerie Witte

From Being Things, To Equalities In All - Joe Milazzo

These Deals Won't Last Forever - Sasha Amari Hawkins

Ventriloquy - Bonnie Emerick

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DOC U MENT

/dəkyəmənt/

First meant “instruction” or “evidence,” whether written or not.

noun - a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record
verb - record (something) in written, photographic, or other form
synonyms - paper - deed - record - writing - act - instrument

[Middle English, *precept*, from Old French, from Latin *documentum*, example, proof, from *doce*, to teach; see *dek-* in Indo-European roots.]

Who is responsible for the manufacture of value?

Based on what supercilious ontology have we landed in a space where we vie against other creative people in vain pursuit of the fleeting credibilities of the scarcity economy, rather than freely collaborating and sharing openly with each other in ecstatic celebration of MAKING?

While we understand and acknowledge the economic pressures and fear-mongering that threatens to dominate and crush the creative impulse, we also believe that *now more than ever we have the tools to relinquish agency via cooperative means*, fueled by the fires of the Open Source Movement.

Looking out across the invisible vistas of that rhizomatic parallel country we can begin to see our community beyond constraints, in the place where intention meets resilient, proactive, collaborative organization.

Here is a document born of that belief, sown purely of imagination and will. When we document we assert. We print to make real, to reify our being there.

When we do so with mindful intention to address our process, to open our work to others, to create beauty in words in space, to respect and acknowledge the strength of the page we now hold physical, a thing in our hand... we remind ourselves that,
like Dorothy: *we had the power all along, my dears.*

THE PRINT! DOCUMENT SERIES

is a project of

the trouble with bartleby

in collaboration with

the operating system

These Deals Won't Last Forever is a chapbook about watching and being watched. With influences ranging from the Elia Kazan-directed 'Baby Doll' to episodes of 'WWF: Raw is War', it explores the roles of women within the power structures of popular film and television. This work is the consolidation media tropes across genres into three narratives, seeking to reveal some pattern in their destructive depictions of women and questioning authorial/audience complicity in their perpetuation.

THE OPERATING SYSTEM
BROOKLYN AND WORLDWIDE
C. 2019