

# Graywolf Press

## Rights List

**Fall 2021**

### *Subagents*

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Michael Meller Agency

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Israel: Deborah Harris Agency

Italy: Clementina Liuzzi Agency

Japan: Tuttle-Mori Agency

Spain, Portugal, Latin America:

Casnovas & Lynch

Turkey: AnatoliaLit Agency

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## FICTION

### ***Mother Country* by Jacinda Townsend**

Novel / May 2022 / World: Graywolf

A transnational feminist novel about human trafficking and motherhood from an award-winning author

Saddled with student loans, medical debt, and the sudden news of her infertility after a major car accident, Shannon, an African American woman, follows her boyfriend to Morocco in search of relief. There, in the cobblestoned medina of Marrakech, she finds a toddler in a pink jacket whose face mirrors her own. With the help of her boyfriend and a bribed official, Shannon makes the fateful decision to adopt and raise the girl in Louisville, Kentucky. But the girl already has a mother: Souria, an undocumented Mauritanian woman who was trafficked as a teen, and who managed to escape to Morocco to build another life.

In rendering Souria's separation from her family across vast stretches of desert and Shannon's alienation from her mother under the same roof, Jacinda Townsend brilliantly stages cycles of intergenerational trauma and healing. Linked by the girl who has been a daughter to them both, these unforgettable characters move toward their inevitable reckoning. *Mother Country* is a bone-deep and unsparing portrayal of the ethical and emotional claims we make upon one another in the name of survival, in the name of love.



### **Praise for *Saint Monkey***

"[A] compelling debut. . . . Townsend's writing [is] full of fresh turns of phrase and keen insights."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"An absolute marvel of a book. Jacinda Townsend is dazzling as she transports the reader to a different time and place."—Roxane Gay

**Jacinda Townsend** is the author of *Saint Monkey* (Norton, 2015), which won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize and the James Fenimore Cooper Prize. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and teaches in the MFA program at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

## ***The House of Rust* by Khadija Abdalla Bajaber**

Novel/ October 2021 / World: Graywolf

Rights sold: Italy (66th & 2nd), Arabic (Al Alamy), English/East Africa (Jahazi)

**\*Winner of the Graywolf Press Africa Prize**

An enchanting debut novel about a Hadrami girl in Mombasa

When her fisherman father goes missing, Aisha takes to the sea on a magical boat made of a skeleton to rescue him. She is guided by a talking scholar's cat—and soon crows, goats, and other animals all have their say, too. On this journey Aisha meets three terrifying sea monsters. After she survives a final confrontation with Baba wa Papa, the father of all sharks, she rescues her own father, and hopes that life will return to normal. But at home, things only grow stranger.

Caught between her grandmother's wish to safeguard her happiness with marriage and her own desire for adventure, Aisha is pushed toward a match with a sweet local boy that she doesn't want. Before she can fight her way to independence—as embodied in the book by the mirage-like House of Rust—she must first gain experience and skills to vanquish Almassi, the imprisoned snake-demon ruler of Mombasa.



### **Praise for *The House of Rust***

“Bajaber’s writing is matter-of-fact and gem-cut. . . . This debut carries the invigorating mystery of the sea, its unpredictable leap and roil.”—***Vulture***

“With sparse, sharply written prose and surreal imaginings, this vivid coming-of-age novel depicts the complexity of childhood, the importance of family, and the thirst for adventure.”  
—**BuzzFeed**

“Bajaber’s depictions of Aisha’s daring episodes and her feminist personality consistently shimmer. Fans of modern fairy tales will find much to appreciate.”—***Publishers Weekly***

**Khadija Abdalla Bajaber** is a poet and novelist with a degree in journalism. A Kenyan of Hadrami descent, she writes about the ill-documented history of the Hadrami diaspora. Her work has been published in *Brainstorm Kenya* and the *Enkare Review*. She lives in Mombasa, Kenya.

## ***The Swank Hotel* by Lucy Corin**

**Novel/ October 2021 / World English: Graywolf / Translation: Janklow & Nesbit**

A stunningly ambitious, prescient novel about madness, generational trauma, and cultural breakdown

At the outset of the 2008 financial crisis, Em has a dependable, dull marketing job generating reports of vague utility while she anxiously waits to hear news of her sister, Ad, who has gone missing—again. Em’s days pass drifting back and forth between her respectably cute starter house (bought with a “responsible, salary-backed, fixed-rate mortgage”) and her dreary office. Then something unthinkable, something impossible happens and she begins to see how madness permeates everything around her while the mundane spaces she inhabits are transformed, through Lucy Corin’s idiosyncratic magic, into shimmering sites of the uncanny.

The story that swirls around Em moves through several perspectives and voices. There is Frank, the tart-tongued, failing manager at her office; Jack, the man with whom Frank has had a love affair for decades; Em and Ad’s eccentric parents who live in a house that is perpetually being built; and Tasio, the young man from Chiapas who works for them and falls in love with Ad. Through them Corin portrays porousness and breakdown in individuals and families, in economies and political systems, in architecture, technology, and even in language itself.

*The Swank Hotel* is an acrobatic, unforgettable, surreal, and unexpectedly comic novel that interrogates the illusory dream of stability that pervaded early twenty-first century America.



### **Praise for *The Swank Hotel***

“Corin’s novel unveils the madness that permeates society by scrutinizing trauma, cultural expectations, and the political and economic climate of the twenty-first century.”—***Booklist***

“Delightfully askew, Corin’s work offers a memorable exploration of how a loved one’s mental illness can impact an individual’s outlook.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“Whenever the dull carapace of cliché seems to swallow the world, I reach for Lucy Corin’s books and the violent magic of her storytelling. Here is a writer light-years ahead of her time returning to explore the recent past of our ongoing American crises.”—**Karen Russell**

**Lucy Corin** is the author, most recently, of *One Hundred Apocalypses and Other Apocalypses*. She is the recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Rome Prize and a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship. She lives in Berkeley, California.

## **If an Egyptian Cannot Speak English by Noor Naga** Novel / April 2022 / World: Graywolf

### **\*Winner of the Graywolf Press Africa Prize**

A lyrical and formally innovative novel about a fateful romance between two unnamed narrators: an Egyptian American woman from New York and an Egyptian man from the village of Shobrakheit

Boy documented the Egyptian Revolution quite lucratively as a photographer, but in the crushing aftermath of the uprising he finds himself unemployed and addicted to cocaine. Girl has come to Cairo to “connect with her roots” but does not quite realize the power she will wield there as an American. The two meet through friends, and before long are in a heated if mutually punitive relationship. Boy abandons his roof-top shack and moves in to Girl’s fancy apartment, and things unravel from there.

Noor Naga examines power, tenderness, and accountability in relationships as well as in narrative. She asks: What are the new forms of colonial violence? How does one survive when one autocrat is replaced by another? Who suffers, and how? And who can tell these stories?



### **Praise for *If an Egyptian Cannot Speak English***

“In *If an Egyptian Cannot Speak English*, Noor Naga finds a form for diasporan consciousness: capacious enough to hold conflicting voices, inventive enough to capture the dream state of life in translation, supple enough to express varieties of heartbreak at the margins of culture.”

—**Sofia Samatar**

**Noor Naga** is an Alexandrian writer who was born in Philadelphia, raised in Dubai, and studied in Toronto. Her work has been published in *Granta*, the *Walrus*, the *Common*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. Her verse-novel *Washes, Prays* was published by McClelland & Stewart in 2020.

***Walking on Cowrie Shells* by Nana Nkweti**  
**Stories / June 2021 / World: Graywolf**  
**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth (Indigo)**

A standout debut collection that roves across genres and styles, by a finalist for the Caine Prize

Nana Nkweti's virtuosity is on full display in *Walking on Cowrie Shells*, as she mixes deft realism with clever inversions of genre. In the Caine Prize finalist story "It Takes a Village, Some Say," she skewers racial prejudice and the practice of international adoption, delivering a sly tale about a teenage girl who leverages her adoptive parents to fast-track her fortunes. In "The Devil Is a Liar," a pregnant pastor's wife struggles with the collision of Western Christianity and her mother's traditional Cameroonian belief system as she worries about her unborn child.

In other stories, Nkweti vaults past realism, upending genre expectations in a satirical romp about a jaded PR professional trying to spin a zombie outbreak in West Africa, and in a mermaid tale about a Mami Wata who forgoes her power by remaining faithful to a fisherman she loves. In between these two ends of the spectrum there's everything from an aspiring graphic novelist at a comic con, to a murder investigation driven by statistics, to a story organized by the changing hairstyles of the main character.

Pulling from mystery, horror, realism, myth, and graphic novels, Nkweti showcases the complexity and vibrance of characters whose lives span Cameroonian and American cultures. A dazzling, inventive debut, *Walking on Cowrie Shells* announces the arrival of a superlative new voice.



**Praise for *Walking on Cowrie Shells***

"Raucous and thoroughly impressive. . . . Nkweti's utterly original stories range from laugh-out-loud funny to heartbreaking, and are often both. . . . Sensitivity, nuance and keen attention to history shine through on every page of the collection. . . . These are stories to get lost in again and again."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Lively and fast-paced, funny and tragic, these stories refuse a singular African experience in favor of a vivid plurality."—*The New Yorker*

**Nana Nkweti** is a Caine Prize finalist and alumna of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Her work has garnered fellowships from MacDowell, Kimbilio, Ucross, and the Wurlitzer Foundation, among others. She is a professor of English at the University of Alabama.

**\*BACKLIST HIGHLIGHT\***

***This Mournable Body* by Tsitsi Dangarembga**

**Novel/ August 2018 / World: Graywolf**

**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth, ex. Southern Africa (Faber & Faber), Southern Africa (Jacana Media), French (Memoire d'Encrier), German (Orlanda), Russian (Eksmo), Swedish (Tranan), Brazil (Kapulana)**

**\*Shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize**

A searing novel about the obstacles facing women in Zimbabwe, by one of the country's most notable authors

Anxious about her prospects after leaving a stagnant job, Tambudzai finds herself living in a run-down youth hostel in downtown Harare. For reasons that include her grim financial prospects and her age, she moves to a widow's boarding house and eventually finds work as a biology teacher. But at every turn in her attempt to make a life for herself, she is faced with a fresh humiliation, until the painful contrast between the future she imagined and her daily reality ultimately drives her to a breaking point.

In *This Mournable Body*, Tsitsi Dangarembga returns to the protagonist of her acclaimed first novel, *Nervous Conditions*, to examine how the hope and potential of a young girl and a fledgling nation can sour over time and become a bitter and floundering struggle for survival. As a last resort, Tambudzai takes an ecotourism job that forces her to return to her parents' impoverished homestead. This homecoming, in Dangarembga's tense and psychologically charged novel, culminates in an act of betrayal, revealing just how toxic the combination of colonialism and capitalism can be.

**Tsitsi Dangarembga** is the author of two previous novels, including *Nervous Conditions*, winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. She won the 2021 PEN Award for Freedom of Expression. She is also a filmmaker, playwright, and the director of the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa Trust. She lives in Harare, Zimbabwe.

## NONFICTION

### ***Shelter: A Tale of Homeland, Baltimore* by Lawrence Jackson**

Nonfiction / April 2022 / World English: Graywolf / Translation: Serendipity

A personal exploration of the history of Baltimore, through the lens of homeownership and real estate

When Lawrence Jackson returns to his childhood home of Baltimore for a teaching job at Johns Hopkins, he decides to live in a somewhat wealthier (and whiter) and bourgeois neighborhood called Homeland, rather than the gentrifying neighborhood around the university where people seem to expect him to live.

With his search for a new home as a starting point, Jackson explores the history of not just his neighborhood, but of Baltimore and Maryland generally, revealing their Southern roots and how much they are still governed by the legacy of slavery. One chapter focuses on a boat trip Jackson takes down the shore to find one of the places where Frederick Douglass—a native Baltimorean—was enslaved. Other chapters trace Jackson’s on and off relationship to church-going, and his family’s history in the black Episcopal church in Baltimore; his involvement with a jazz concert in the Hopkins neighborhood of Homewood; and his efforts at home improvement.

Throughout, Jackson asks what it means to be from a place but outside of its history, and wonders about the proper (or available) responses to brutality while securing safety and security and a place for oneself and one’s family.



### **Praise for *Shelter***

“There are an endless number of wonderful things to say about Lawrence Jackson’s *Shelter*—from luminous to breathtaking to just being outright admirable. Jackson has the mind of a historian, but he is also something of a poet. *Shelter* is a singular achievement.”—Edward P. Jones

**Lawrence Jackson** is a professor at Johns Hopkins University, where he teaches literature and history, focusing on African American culture. He is the author of *Chester B. Himes: A Biography* (Norton), *The Indignant Generation* (Princeton), *My Father’s Name* (University of Chicago), and *Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius* (University of Georgia). He lives in Baltimore.



***Just Us: An American Conversation* by Claudia Rankine**

Essay / September 2020 / World: Graywolf

**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth (Penguin), German (Spector), Portuguese/Brazil (Todavia), Italian (66th & 2nd), world Spanish (Eterna Cadencia/Seven Stories), Denmark (Kronstork)**

A perceptive and relevant new work of nonfiction by the author of *Citizen*

Revelatory, funny, and ingeniously written, the essays in *Just Us* take place in transitional spaces—on airplanes, at a diversity training session, in a therapist’s office, at a dinner party, after a play, on the internet—where presumed neutrality gives way to American culture’s overwhelming whiteness. Claudia Rankine questions what it means in these spaces to interrogate white privilege, well-meaning liberal politics, white male aggression, the implications of blondness, and white supremacy in the White House, the Brett Kavanaugh hearings, and the alarming move toward Brexit.

With a brilliant interplay between text and visuals, *Just Us* examines intimacy and friendship, and brings us into a necessary conversation about what we don’t know.



**Praise for *Just Us***

“Rankine has emerged as one of America’s foremost scholars on racial justice. . . . [To] a past we have avoided reckoning, Rankine will be helping America understand itself, one conversation at a time.”—**The Associated Press**

**Claudia Rankine** is the author of *Citizen* and four previous books, including *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*. Her work has appeared recently in the *Guardian*, the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and the *Washington Post*. She is a MacArthur Fellow and teaches at Yale University.

***Names for Light: A Family History* by Thiiri Myo Kyaw Myint**  
Memoir/Essay / August 2021 / World English: Graywolf / Translation: Wylie Agency

**\*Winner of the 2018 Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize**

A lyrical meditation on family, place, and inheritance

*Names for Light* traverses time and memory to weigh three generations of a family's history against a painful inheritance of postcolonial violence and racism. In spare, lyric paragraphs framed by white space, Thiiri Myo Kyaw Myint explores home, belonging, and identity by revisiting the cities in which her parents and grandparents lived. As she makes inquiries into their stories, she intertwines oral narratives with the official and mythic histories of Myanmar. But while her family's stories move into the present, her own story—that of a writer seeking to understand who she is—moves into the past, until both converge at the end of the book.

Born in Myanmar and raised in Bangkok and San Jose, Myint finds that she does not have typical memories of arriving in the United States; instead, she is haunted by what she cannot remember. By the silences lingering around what is spoken. By a chain of deaths in her family line, especially that of her older brother as a child. For Myint, absence is felt as strongly as presence. And, as she comes to understand, naming those absences, finding words for the unsaid, means discovering how those who have come before have shaped her life. *Names for Light* is a moving chronicle of the passage of time, of the long shadow of colonialism, and of a writer coming into her own as she reckons with her family's legacy.



**Praise for *Names for Light***

“History, like light, is porous, multitudinous, endlessly haunted. *Names for Light* gives form to the unresolved and inaccessible remnants of the past, all of the ghosts that are proliferated just by our moving. We are constantly ghastly and ghostly, the text reminds us, and the indeterminacy of flesh is the indeterminacy of family and legacy. Thiiri Myo Kyaw Myint is one of the most remarkable writers of our time, and *Names for Light* is a piercing and heartbreaking revelation.”—Janice Lee

**Thiiri Myo Kyaw Myint** was born in Yangon, Myanmar, and grew up in Bangkok, Thailand, and San Jose, California. She is the author of *The End of Peril, the End of Enmity, the End of Strife, a Haven*. She teaches at Amherst College.

***On Compromise: Art, Politics, and the Fate of an American Ideal***  
**by Rachel Greenwald Smith**  
Essays / August 2021 / World: Graywolf

A strident argument about the dangers of compromise in art, politics, and everyday life

*On Compromise* is an argument against contemporary liberal society's tendency to view compromise as an unalloyed good—politically, ethically, and artistically. In a series of clear, convincing essays, Rachel Greenwald Smith discusses the dangers of thinking about compromise as an end, rather than as a means. To illustrate her points, she recounts her stint in a band as a bass player, fighting with her bandmates about “what the song wants,” and then moves outward to Bikini Kill and the Riot Grrrl movement, the Iowa Writers' Workshop, *Poetry* magazine, the resurgence of fascism, and other wide-ranging topics.

Smith's arguments are complex and yet have a simplicity to them, as she writes in a concise, cogent style that is eminently readable. By weaving examples drawn from literature, music, and other art forms with political theory and first-person anecdotes, she shows the problems of compromise in action. And even as Smith demonstrates the many ways that late capitalism demands individual compromise, she also holds out hope for the possibility of lasting change through collective action. Closing with a piercing discussion of the uncompromising nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and how global protests against racism and police brutality after the murder of George Floyd point to a new future, *On Compromise* is a necessary and vital book for our time.

**Rachel Greenwald Smith** is the author of *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge UP, 2015) and is a professor of English at St. Louis University.

## **POETRY**

### ***Customs* by Solmaz Sharif**

**Poetry/ March 2022 / World: Graywolf**

**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth (under offer)**

The devastating second collection by Solmaz Sharif, author of *Look*, a finalist for the National Book Award

In *Customs*, Solmaz Sharif examines what it means to exist in the nowhere of the arrivals terminal, a continual series of checkpoints, officers, searches, and questionings that become a relentless experience of America. With resignation and austerity, these poems trace a pointed indoctrination to the customs of the nation-state and the English language, and the realities they impose upon the imagination, the paces they put us through. While Sharif critiques the culture of performed social skills and poetry itself—its foreclosures, affects, successes—she begins to write her way out to the other side of acceptability and toward freedom.

*Customs* is a brilliant, excoriating new collection by a poet whose unfolding works are among the groundbreaking literature of our time.



### **Praise for *Look***

“Language, in this collection, is called upon as victim, executioner, and witness. . . . An artful lexicographer, Sharif shows us that the diameter of a word is often as devastating as the diameter of a bomb.” —Natalie Diaz, *The New York Times Book Review*

“A brilliant, even perfect, book of poems.” —Eileen Myles

**Solmaz Sharif** teaches at Arizona State University.

***The Wild Fox of Yemen* by Threa Almontaser**

**April 2021 / World: Graywolf**

**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth (Picador)**

**\*Longlisted for the National Book Award**

**\*Winner of the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets**

An incendiary debut that asks how mistranslation can be a form of self-knowledge and survival

A love letter to the country and people of Yemen, a portrait of young Muslim womanhood in New York after 9/11, and an extraordinarily composed examination of what it means to carry in the body the echoes of what came before, Threa Almontaser's polyvocal collection sneaks artifacts to and from worlds, repurposing language and adapting to the space between cultures. Half-crunk and hungry, speakers move with the force of what cannot be contained by the limits of the American imagination, and instead invest in troublemaking and trickery, navigate imperial violence across multiple accents and anthems, and apply gang signs in henna, utilizing any means necessary to form a semblance of home. In doing so, *The Wild Fox of Yemen* fearlessly rides the tension between carnality and tenderness in the unruly human spirit.



**Praise for *The Wild Fox of Yemen***

“The beautifully crafted poems can feel like mini-histories, intricate narratives spanning only a few pages. They overflow with richness and opportunities for interpretation, shifting between Arabic and English; yet they are self-contained and pointed as a missile.”—***Chicago Review of Books***

“With counterpoints of old and new worlds, and full love and care for possibility, in brilliant rushes of language, these poems know it’s so hard to be all we are, but they rise to every occasion.”—**Naomi Shihab Nye**

**Threa Almontaser** is a Yemeni American author from New York City. Her work can be found in the *Adroit Journal*, *Passages North*, *Diode Poetry Journal*, the *Rumpus*, *wildness*, and elsewhere. She lives in Raleigh, North Carolina.

**\*BACKLIST HIGHLIGHT\***

***Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz**

**March 2020 / World: Graywolf**

**Rights sold: UK/Commonwealth (Faber & Faber), World Spanish (Vaso Roto), France (Editions Globe)**

**\*\*Winner of the Pulitzer Prize**

**\* Finalist for the National Book Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Forward Prize**

*Postcolonial Love Poem* is an anthem of desire against erasure. Natalie Diaz’s brilliant second collection demands that every body carried in its pages—bodies of language, land, rivers, suffering brothers, enemies, and lovers—be touched and held as beloveds. Through these poems, the wounds inflicted by America onto an indigenous people are allowed to bloom pleasure and tenderness: “Let me call my anxiety, *desire*, then. / Let me call it, *a garden*.” In this new lyrical landscape, the bodies of indigenous, Latinx, black, and brown women are simultaneously the body politic and the body ecstatic. In claiming this autonomy of desire, language is pushed to its dark edges, the astonishing dunefields and forests where pleasure and love are both grief and joy, violence and sensuality.

Diaz defies the conditions from which she writes, a nation whose creation predicated the diminishment and ultimate erasure of bodies like hers and the people she loves. *Postcolonial Love Poem* unravels notions of American goodness and creates something more powerful than hope—a future is built, future being a matrix of the choices we make now, and in these poems, Diaz chooses love.



**Praise for *Postcolonial Love Poem***

“Diaz’s collection is no doubt one of the most important poetry releases in years, one to applaud for its considerable demonstration of skill, its resistance to dominant perspectives and its light wrought of desire.” —***The New York Times Book Review***

“Groundbreaking. . . . Entire dissertations could be written about Diaz’s use of light and color in this book’s lithe lyrics. . . . An unparalleled lyric work.”—***Booklist, starred review***

**Natalie Diaz** is the author of the poetry collection *When My Brother Was an Aztec*. She has received many honors, including a MacArthur Fellowship, a US Artists Ford Fellowship, and a Lannan Literary Fellowship. She teaches at Arizona State University.

**Recent acquisitions/forthcoming publications**

*Animal Joy* by **Nuar Alsadir** (Fitzcarraldo)

*The Tribe and Falsa Guerra* by **Carlos Manuel Álvarez** (Fitzcarraldo)

*The Sky over the Roof* by **Nathacha Appanah** (Gallimard)

*Aurelia, Aurélia* by **Kathryn Davis** (Wylie Agency)

*Ten Planets* by **Yuri Herrera** (MB Agencia)

*Predator* by **Ander Monson** (Wylie Agency)

*The North Sea* by **Dorthe Nors** (Ahlander Agency)

*Men in My Situation* by **Per Petterson** (Oslo Literary Agency)

*Virus and Revolution* by **Paul Preciado** (Casanovas & Lynch)

*When I Sing, Mountains Dance* by **Irene Solà** (Anagrama)