

**KEEP GRAYWOLF**



2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

# **MISSION**

**GRAYWOLF PRESS**

**PUBLISHES RISK-TAKING,  
VISIONARY WRITERS WHO  
TRANSFORM CULTURE  
THROUGH LITERATURE.**



# GRAYWOLF TODAY

As we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary in 2024, **Graywolf is widely regarded as one of the premier nonprofit literary presses in America.**

Graywolf publishes thirty to thirty-five books annually, encompassing poetry, fiction, literary nonfiction, and hybrid works, that reach nearly one million readers each year.

*Individually*, our authors—many of whom were published for the first time by Graywolf—have received significant national and international recognition, including the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Booker Prize, and the National Book Critics Circle Award.

*Collectively*, **Graywolf authors have redefined the boundaries of literature and helped shape the twenty-first-century canon.**

## VISION

**WHEN WRITERS ARE FREE TO DO THEIR MOST AMBITIOUS WORK, THEIR BOOKS SERVE AS PORTALS TO NEW POSSIBILITIES AND ENABLE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLE. READERS ARE CHANGED BY GRAYWOLF'S BOOKS, WHICH ARE FEARLESSLY ACQUIRED, ATTENTIVELY EDITED, AND ENERGETICALLY PROMOTED.**

# GRAYWOLF IN 2028

The 2024–2028 strategic plan’s overarching theme is **keeping Graywolf wild**. While the organization is larger and more celebrated than ever, Graywolf seeks to remain a publisher pushing boundaries, anticipating the future, and risking failure to move beyond the familiar. The challenge of the plan is to renew this wild spirit as a guiding value.

Graywolf’s ambition runs contrary to mainstream cultural forces. Many commercial presses focus on famous authors, familiar storylines, proven sales performers, and past award winners. Without innovators like Graywolf, literary culture risks stagnation.

This direction creates *opportunity*. When successful on our own ambitious terms, Graywolf will:

1. Provide risk-taking, visionary writers with partnership and support that can lead to enduring art and sustainable careers
2. Ensure every Graywolf book finds its audience—the community of readers who connect in a profound way with a singular book and are changed by it—and, in turn, create opportunities for more readers to discover the most essential books of our day
3. Enable *many* Graywolf books, including those by new authors and those working against the grain of dominant publishing trends, to achieve significant recognition, media attention, sales, awards, and cultural influence in both the short and long term
4. Remain a model for publishers, agents, reviewers, booksellers, libraries, and academics when it comes to the importance of staying open to unconventional and ambitious voices

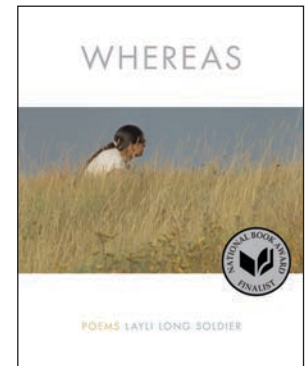
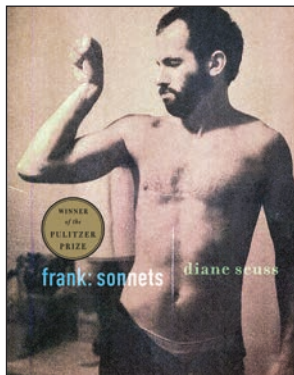
# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To realize our vision for 2028, Graywolf will:

- Identify, support, and champion risk-taking, visionary authors whose works, without Graywolf, might be overlooked by the industry
- Push innovations in production, distribution, marketing, and publicity to expand the audience for Graywolf books and authors
- Secure significant increases in contributed revenue commensurate with Graywolf's standing as a leading publisher by expanding our national network of stakeholders and donors
- Foster an organizational culture that attracts, develops, and retains an extraordinary staff

## VALUES

**EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE, PATIENCE,  
DARING, DISTINCTIVE THOUGHT AND  
INNOVATIVE EXPRESSION, INQUIRY,  
COLLABORATION AND DIALOGUE.**



# GUIDING EDITORIAL VISION

Each year, our editorial team considers *thousands* of manuscripts by aspiring and existing Graywolf authors from around the world for an annual list of *thirty to thirty-five* titles.

Our publication priorities are books and authors that:

- Defy expectations, with an ambition unconstrained by convention, subject matter, or genre
- Enrich the culture with their innovative and singular perspectives
- Reflect the complex lives of humankind
- Reveal vital new ways of thinking about pivotal issues of today and tomorrow
- Need Graywolf; in other words, books and authors that will particularly benefit from Graywolf's attentive, collaborative editorial process and the visibility provided by our highly engaged marketing and publicity program
- Enhance Graywolf's enduring backlist



# EDITORIAL INITIATIVES

The editorial team will acquire, edit, and publish books that change the literary landscape

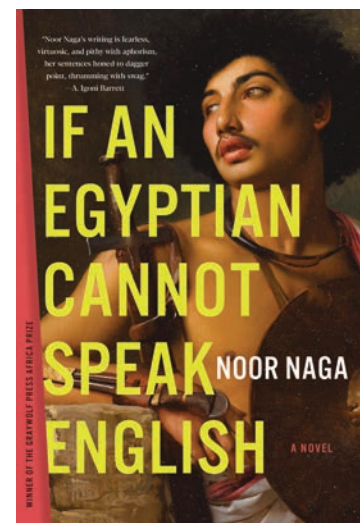
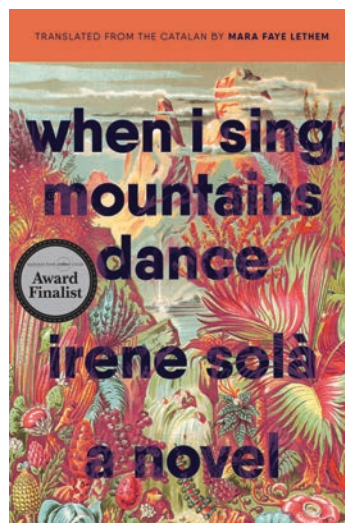
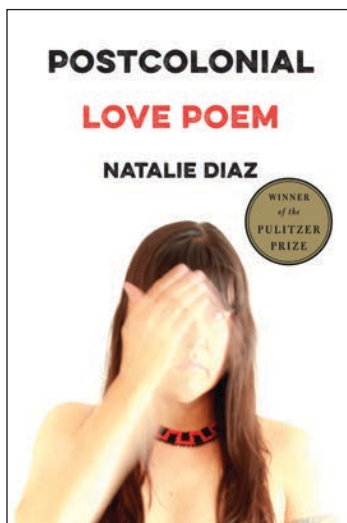
**REFINE GRAYWOLF'S IN-HOUSE LITERARY PRIZES.** Reimagine the **Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize** and **African Fiction Prize**, which together have sparked the careers of several prominent authors.

**SUPPORT MINNESOTA WRITERS.** Establish a new prize for writers living in, or inspired by, Graywolf's adopted home state.

**INNOVATE WITH HYBRID GENRES.** Acquire manuscripts that transcend or complicate common literary genres like fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, which are challenging in the marketplace but push contemporary literature in exciting new directions.

**EXPLORE THE WORLD THROUGH TRANSLATIONS.** Publish more translations of international poetry from languages that we've previously overlooked, and mentor translators of color working in languages that connect to their heritage.

**GRAYWOLF LAB.** Expand our interdisciplinary website that features new writing and helps editors scout for and publish authors who may not yet be ready to publish a book, but whose work is worthy of developing at a high level.





# MARKETING INITIATIVES

Innovation and boldness will enable Graywolf to find new readers across the changing media landscape

**FORTIFY THE GRAYWOLF PODCAST.** Use our podcast to build the audience for Graywolf titles, broadcast our mission and brand, and find new readers, writers, and book buyers.

**AMPLIFY SOCIAL MEDIA.** Remain current with the fast-changing social media landscape, where many new readers discover books, and continue to build on our 350,000 social media followers across platforms.

**HEIGHTEN ORGANIZATIONAL BRANDING.** Further establish Graywolf's brand recognition among adventurous readers as a publisher of the most compelling independent literature in the country.

**BOLSTER BACKLIST MARKETING.** Increase the impact of our backlist of 650 books by marketing these lasting titles to new audiences.



# OPERATIONAL INITIATIVES

While buttressing operations, Graywolf will become a more adaptive organization

**STRENGTHEN STAFF.** Add two new full-time marketing and development positions in future years, and, in the near-term, hire part-time help and consultants to successfully implement the objectives outlined in this strategic plan.

**OFFER COMPETITIVE SALARIES AND BENEFITS.** Retain staff at all levels of the organization by providing salaries and benefits that are competitive, not just in the nonprofit world, but also for the overall publishing industry.





# PERCIVAL EVERETT

## A CASE STUDY

Graywolf first published **PERCIVAL EVERETT** in 1996, with a trio of titles, including **Watershed**. For the next three decades, across sixteen books, Graywolf continued to publish his innovative, challenging, hilarious, and unclassifiable novels and short stories. These important books were sometimes reviewed in major publications, sometimes not. Occasionally one would be nominated for an award, but often not. He began to develop a cult-like following among a select group of readers. Through it all, Graywolf staff knew there was no other author like Everett—his singular work deserved an audience, and more readers needed the opportunity to find it. And so, for decades, Graywolf continued to publish him.

Then **Telephone**, a novel published in three different versions, with the variations known only to him and to our staff, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. His subsequent novel, **The Trees**, was a finalist for the Booker Prize. **Dr. No**, published next, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in fiction and won the PEN/Jean Stein Book Award, while his body of work received the Windham Campbell Prize.

Around the time of the Booker ceremony, Everett's novel **Erasure**, a scathing satire of the publishing industry deep on Graywolf's backlist, was being made into a movie called **American Fiction**. In 2024, the film won an Academy Award for best adapted screenplay and sparked think pieces and conversations across the media landscape, and sales of the book skyrocketed.

Everett's work was important and worth reading long before these mainstream indicators of success, which is why Graywolf has published him over the course of his long career. Our nonprofit status and mission allowed us the freedom to stand by his work. With its ethos of **keeping Graywolf wild**, this new strategic plan empowers staff, authors, and stakeholders to continue to find, publish, and treasure authors and books that may be so innovative and ahead of their time that the mainstream culture doesn't catch up for a decade or more. But in the meantime, readers of these titles will be enthralled, charmed, intrigued, challenged, and inspired.

In 2024, Everett's latest novel, **James**, was published by a major commercial house. Although we want to retain as many authors as we can, we would never stand in the way of an author earning an advance on royalties that exceeds what our nonprofit mission allows us to pay. And we were gratified to see in the acknowledgments section of **James** that Everett thanked Graywolf for twenty-nine years of "artistic freedom." That's what it means to **keep Graywolf wild**—to continue providing a space within the literary world for writers to pursue their artistic vision regardless of whether it will translate into near-term sales and attention. We hope you'll join us in this effort!



# INVESTING TO KEEP GRAYWOLF WILD

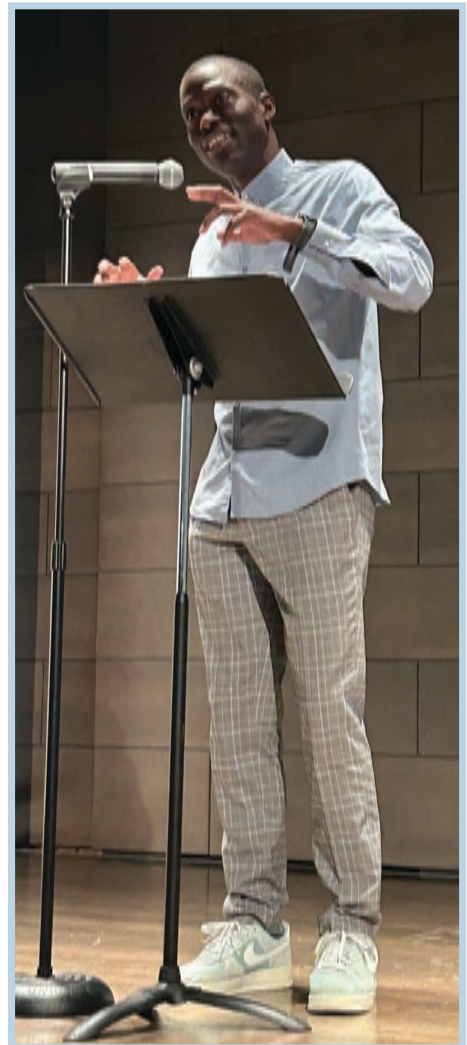
The past decade has been extraordinary for Graywolf, with our authors and books consistently achieving widespread acclaim and cultural influence. These accomplishments were fostered by financial strength from unprecedented fundraising and book sales.

Our operating budget in 2024 is \$5.1 million. The objectives outlined in this plan require the need to grow into a \$6.3 million budget by 2028—a 24 percent increase.

During this period, Graywolf plans to increase our annual contributed revenue from \$1.6 million in 2024 to more than \$2.5 million in 2028.

We will also nurture our backlist as an endowment-like asset, growing annual backlist sales from \$2 million to \$2.5 million.

Books are considered **FRONTLIST** during the first six months of their publication. Thereafter, they join Graywolf's **BACKLIST**, which includes over 650 titles still available for purchase.



This document is a summary of a new strategic plan approved by the Graywolf Press board of directors in February 2024. It is the result of a comprehensive process that took place in 2023 and early 2024, wherein director and publisher Carmen Giménez collected perspectives and ideas from the board and national council, staff, authors, institutional funders, literary community members, and other stakeholders while foregrounding her own vision and goals for the press. Colin Hamilton of Hamilton & Associates provided guidance throughout the planning process.

## **2023-24 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **BOARD**

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Art Berman

Aimee Lagos

Ed McConaghay

Sharon Pierce

Debra Stone

### **STAFF**

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Marisa Atkinson

Rachel Fulkerson

Ethan Nosowsky



**GRAYWOLF**  
PRESS