Call for Articles: “Critical Essays on Gloria Naylor” (advanced contract with University of Mississippi Press), edited by Maxine Lavon Montgomery, Mary C. Foltz, and Suzanne M. Edwards

Abstract proposals of 500-750 words and C.V. due by Dec. 1, 2021. Submit abstract proposals to: innaylor@lehigh.edu.

From her award-winning *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982) to her fictionalized memoir *1996* (2005), Gloria Naylor’s literary production spanned more than two decades. In her nuanced portrayals of the survival strategies through which Black women build and sustain community and her attentiveness to racism, sexism, homophobia, and capitalism as forms of structural violence, Gloria Naylor has long been recognized as one of the most important U.S. writers of the late-20th century. Naylor’s collected papers—donated to Sacred Heart University in 2009 and recently made more accessible through a partnership with Lehigh University—offer a fresh perspective on her published work. With over forty-seven linear feet of material, the Naylor Archive offers novel insights into her writing process; her writing for film, television, and theatre; the intellectual histories with which she was in dialogue; as well as late-twentieth century global literary networks that challenge current national frameworks for literary histories. Naylor’s collected papers not only expand our sense of what she wrote (to include private letters and journals, non-fiction essays and speeches, and unpublished works), they also open up new interpretive perspectives on her engagement with scholarly and public conversations about the African diaspora, African American history and theology, Black feminist theory, and Indigenous history.

We invite proposals for essays that showcase how Naylor’s archives open up new avenues for understanding her published novels and new directions in understanding Black women’s contributions to literary and intellectual history, including their own work as archivists. Abstracts of 500-750 words are due to editors by Dec. 1, 2021; please also include a current C.V. Completed essays will be due to editors by July 15th of 2022.

While editors are open to all proposals that suggest how archival materials expand current critical conversations about Naylor’s published novels, we are particularly interested in the following areas:

1) How does Naylor’s research material (bibliographies, archived articles, travel brochures and ephemera from research trips, etc.) suggest new interpretive possibilities for her published works?

2) How do Naylor’s reflections upon her published novels in correspondence with literary luminaries and academic critics expand current critical conversations about her novels and about African American literary history more broadly?

3) How does Naylor’s archival praxis grant greater insight into the literary renderings of archives in novels like *Linden Hills*? How does attention to her own archives illuminate her critical engagement with white supremacist histories and archives and her creation—in literary form and in physical collection—of Black feminist counterarchives?
As essayists may not be able to travel to the archives as you prepare your abstracts, we invite proposals based on perusal of the archives’ digital finding aid: https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/naylorarchive/archive-finding-aid/. A more detailed finding aid, with information about individuals, institutions, and subjects referenced in the archive, is available upon request. As most materials related to Naylor’s first three novels—The Women of Brewster Place, Linden Hills, and Mama Day—have been digitized, essayists can access these materials online as you prepare your abstracts by contacting the archives’ staff at innaylor@lehigh.edu. Essayists also are invited to schedule a trip to the physical archives, currently located at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA, or a consultation with an archivist as you prepare your proposal. Essayists’ with accepted abstracts will be provided travel funds for the spring or summer of 2022 to visit the archives through funding from a NEH Collaborative Research Grant, which will support our edited collection.

Editors seek to build a cohesive edited collection as well as a vibrant community of Naylor scholars. To this end, we will bring essayists together monthly via zoom for seminar-style meetings to discuss archival materials, approaches, and ideas in development during the spring of 2022. In addition, editors will support essayists’ research by providing digitized research materials, travel funding to visit the Archive, and individual meetings throughout the writing process during the months following abstract submission and acceptance. For more information about the edited collection or to discuss proposals, please contact us at innaylor@lehigh.edu.