

Early American Literature Book Prize for 2019

Lisa Brooks, Professor of English and American Studies at Amherst College, has been selected to receive the 2019 *Early American Literature* Book Prize, which is awarded in even calendar years to a first monograph published in the prior two years, and in odd years to a second or subsequent book. Brooks's *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* was published by Yale University Press in 2018. The prize selection committee consisted of *Early American Literature's* Advisory Editor, Sandra Gustafson; our Co-Editor for Reviews, Katy Chiles; the next Chair of the Modern Language Association's Forum on Early American Literature, Duncan Faherty; and the outgoing President of the Society of Early Americanists, Gordon Sayre, with *EAL* Editor Marion Rust as an *ex officio* member. We thank our publisher, the University of North Carolina Press, for continuing to support the award, which carries a \$2,000 cash prize.

According to Professor Brooks's professional and biographical statement, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*

reframes the historical landscape of “the first Indian War,” more widely known as King Philip's War (1675–78), by focusing on the stories of Weetamoo, a female Wampanoag leader, and James Printer, a Nipmuc scholar, whose stories converge in the captivity narrative of the Puritan “mistress,” Mary Rowlandson. *Our Beloved Kin* also highlights a wide map of Indigenous spaces, including the northern front of the war in Wabanaki country.

Drawing on tribal histories, a detailed knowledge and analysis of landscape, and underutilized written and printed sources, *Our Beloved Kin* ensures that, as one committee member puts it, “early American literary studies should never be the same.”

The generosity of this study is immediately apparent from the double meaning of “Our” in its title. As a member of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi, Brooks can be said to refer with these three letters to the Native peoples at the center of this story, including Brooks herself. As such, the word performs a necessary corrective, reminding non-Indigenous readers of the reorientation early American studies must achieve if it is to move beyond colonialist perspectives that have informed the field, including its accounts of a conflict whose very misnomer, “King Philip's War,” reflects the errors and incompleteness that result from such a narrow scope. At the same time, the book title's adjectival pronoun also invites non-Indigenous readers willing to welcome new “place-worlds” into their way of thinking to become part of a greater and desperately needed conceptual “Our” that has the potential to redefine future scholarship. In this sense, Brooks convenes us, setting “a benchmark for all later studies and an agenda for future scholars to pursue, including the neglected role of peacemaking efforts,” in the words of another committee member, not only in the later phases of the war but also among scholars working at a particularly rich and fractious contemporary moment in our field and beyond.

Any such agenda must include what a third committee member terms *Our Beloved Kin's* “strong feminist thread.” It must emulate Brooks's consideration of place as a mode—rather than mere site—of comprehension. (The website accompanying the book, <http://ourbelovedkin.com>, encourages this reconsideration by noting that its full-scale color maps “are not designed to

delineate fixed territories, but to locate the reader in and convey the author's conceptualizations of Native space.") And it must foreclose on a self-fulfilling literary and cultural historiography that, by ignoring *Our Beloved Kin's* nuanced attentiveness to what a fourth committee member calls "the ecological traces of history and the lingering markers of historical interpretation and memory," allows struggles with lasting implications for the present to be misconstrued as "extinction events." It is a privilege to honor Brooks's inspiring work as exemplified in *Our Beloved Kin* by granting her the *EAL* Book Prize for 2019.

For those who are planning to attend the Society of Early Americanists conference in Exeter, England, this June, please join us as we present Professor Brooks her award.

Next year's prize will be awarded to an author's first book; monographs published in 2018 and 2019 are eligible. The deadline for submission is March 1, 2020. Please consult the journal's website at <https://english.as.uky.edu/eal-announcements> for additional information.