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# Harriet Beecher Stowe's Poetic Border Crossings: Texts, Genres, and Translations

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## Abstract

The internationally famous Harriet Beecher Stowe died in 1896, and 2017 marks the 121st anniversary of her death. As such, a reconsideration of her lesser-known works is warranted. Chief among these is her poetry—a significant area of her oeuvre that has attracted very little scholarly attention. Stowe is, of course, best known for her abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), but she also wrote an unknown number of poems. In 1967, *Collected Poems of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, by John Michael Moran, Jr. was published by Transcendental Books in Hartford, CT and reprinted the same year in *The Emerson Society Quarterly*. Moran's collection ran one hundred pages and contains fifty-nine poems, about a dozen of them on the subject of slavery. These include works Stowe reportedly composed about characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, such as "Eliza Crossing the River," "The Death of Eva," "The Sale of Little Harry," and "Topsy at the Looking Glass." These poems—and others I hope to discover—provide an interesting example of how an author appropriates her own work, moving from the genre of fiction to poetry, using content that was also being appropriated in a wider cultural context following the novel's publication. The authorship of these poems is contested, and an analysis of them raises interesting questions about the boundaries between author and commissioned ghostwriter. This presentation will give an overview of Stowe's work as a poet, and focus on poems that address slavery. Stowe's longer meditation, "The Church and the Slave Trade," translated into several languages, will provide important context for a discussion of Stowe's transatlantic and border-crossing conceptions of slavery.

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