



# Between the Lines: Literary Transnationalism and African American Poetics (Imagining the Americas)

Monique-Adelle Callahan

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*Between the Lines* examines the role of three women poets of African descent--Frances Harper, Cristina Ayala, and Auta de Souza--in shaping the literary history of the Americas. Despite their different geographic locations, each shared common concerns and wrestled in their works with the sociopolitical predicaments of the late nineteenth century. Their verse vigorously examined slavery and confronted the existential struggle against boundaries imposed by race, nation, and gender.

The writers each conceived of the poem as a dynamic forum where new concepts of individual and collective freedoms could be imagined. In their work readers encounter the poem as a site of cross-cultural exchange, a literary space in which the boundaries of nation can be redefined. *Between the Lines* places national poetics in a global economy of identities, histories and languages. It looks to poetry to demonstrate how people translate from one cultural or linguistic arena to another, how literary expression writes identities, and how language is used to conceptualize history.

The book is the first to juxtapose Cuba, Brazil and the United States in a study of nineteenth-century women's poetry, and the first to include the Lusophone literary tradition in a comparative study of African descendants in Latin America, the U.S., and the Caribbean. With close readings and expertly rendered translations, Monique-Adelle Callahan situates the work of these three poets in a hemispheric context that opens up their writing to new interpretations and expands the definition of "African American" literature.



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