



# Heathen

*R. Flowers Rivera*

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## **Heathen** R. Flowers Rivera

Divided into four sections, *Heathen* is a unified collection of poetry satisfying both intellectual and emotional appetites. The vocabulary, phrasing, and figurative language prove author R. Flowers Rivera to be a master of technique. A few of the poems include "Black English" suggesting that they are universal in their application.

The characters in Part I, *Isle of Promethea*, bring classical mythology, especially Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, vividly to life through applications to modern life and a sense of being present. Part II, *I Am Hephaestus*, consists of a single poem with the same title divided into twelve sections and continues its mythological basis. In Part III, *Doubt*, there is more variety, suggested by epigraphs by authors as different as James Seamon Cotter, Jr, Gertrude Stein, and the author of the biblical book of John; personal and symbolic romantic love is introduced in such poems as "Vivid," "Anniversary Apart," and "Stay" although the "you" does not necessarily refer to a person. "Her," for example, describes a poet's pen as "a fickle lover" who refuses to produce the magic words of poetry. Part IV, "Mustard Seed," is the most personal section as "a conversation with myself." Here the author transforms the ordinary into provocative extraordinary expression. Her love of the South, the simple act of ironing clothing on a hot summer day, driving a car, braiding a child's hair, and observing a Muslim man praying at an airport are some of the subjects in this final group. This is an extremely satisfying collection of poems that invite the reader to return to it again and again.

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