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R. Flowers Rivera Wins National Poetry Award for Second Collection & Continues Book Tour

McKINNEY, TX — Celebrated poet R. Flowers Rivera—author of the award-winning collection *Troubling Accents* published in July of 2013—has been recently named recipient of the prestigious 2015 Naomi Long Madgett Poetry Award for her second collection titled *Heathen*, which will be published in February of 2015 by Lotus Press, and distributed by Wayne State University.

The manuscript of revisionist mythology poems was selected for publication by acclaimed poet and literary activist E. Ethelbert Miller. The award was established by Lotus Press to recognize an outstanding book-length manuscript by an African-American poet. **Beginning in February, R. Flowers Rivera will begin touring the southeast and select cities across the country to promote her collection *Heathen* with its publication early February. Representatives from colleges, universities, and other literary communities, organizations, and businesses who are interested in hosting reading events are invited to contact Rivera’s publicist Leah Shapiro at (901) 573-5756, or Leshapiro22@gmail.com.**

Heathen, divided into four sections, is a unified collection of poetry satisfying both intellectual and emotional appetites. A few of the poems include "Black English," suggesting that they are universal in their application. For instance, 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.

"I know the term *revisionist mythology* sounds high-brow," says Rivera. "However, most people have had some exposure to mythology, usually in high school, and it's either *The Odyssey* or *The Iliad*," says Rivera. "I became lost in the stories in middle school, and they stayed with me all these years. However, once I was older I began to question why Zeus's wife, Hera, got a bad rap when her husband was the one running around, or why all the gods assumed Hephaestus would just drop everything and make whatever they wanted—whenever they wanted—as if he had no life of his own. I just wanted a new way to explore these myths through the lenses of race, gender, and Southern culture. I became lost in all the ways the myths could be adapted as poems to reveal new perspectives, new voices."

Published in July of 2013 by Xavier Review Press, her first collection *Troubling Accents* has already received many accolades, including a nomination from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters and the 2014 Poetry Book of the Year award by the Texas Association of Authors. It is one of Xavier Review Press's highest selling books, nearing the 1,000 mark, and is available through Amazon.

"I can't deny that the labels are useful as a kind of shorthand: female, Black, Southern, Catholic, bisexual, lover, teacher, poet, mother, daughter, wife," explains poet R. Flowers Rivera. "However, at some point, one understands that she must subvert the identities. How long or why does a person continue to have allegiances to groups who demand that you deny parts of yourself?"

For additional information about R. Flowers Rivera, visit promethea.com. Order *Heathen* on [Amazon](#)

ABOUT R. FLOWERS RIVERA

A resident of McKinney, Texas, R. Flowers Rivera is a native of Mississippi. She completed a Ph.D. in English at Binghamton University, and an M.A. in English at Hollins University, in addition to an M.S. at Georgia State University and a B.S. at the University of Georgia. Her work has been anthologized in *Mischief, Caprice & Other Poetic Strategies* and published in journals such as *African American Review*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Columbia*, *Feminist Studies*, *Obsidian*, and *The Southern Review*. Her short story, "The Iron Bars," won the 1999 Peregrine Prize. Rivera was a finalist for the May Swenson Award, the Journal Intro Award, the Naomi Long Madgett Award, the Gary Snyder Memorial Award, and the Paumanok Poetry Award, as well as a nominee for The Pushcart Prize. Rivera was awarded the 2009 Leo Love Merit Scholarship in Poetry in association with the Taos Summer Writers Conference.

ABOUT NAOMI LONG MADGETT AWARD

In 1993, Lotus Press established this annual award to recognize an outstanding book-length manuscript by an African-American poet. Dr. Madgett founded Lotus Press, Inc. in 1972 and continues to serve as publisher and editor. Lotus has published more than 90 collections of poetry of high literary quality. Previous notable winners have included: Ruth Ellen Kocher, *Desdemona's Fire* (1998); Jerry Wemple, *You Can See It from Here* (1999); Remica L. Bingham, *Conversion* (2006); Crystal Williams, *Troubled Tongues* (2008). Read more about the award [here](#).

PRAISE FOR R. FLOWERS RIVERA'S *HEATHEN*

"R. Flowers Rivera remixes the classical and the Biblical, the usual and the typical until what we thought we knew of ourselves and others is new again. The mythic becomes particular; the particular becomes mythic in these fascinating poems of personalities and personas. Rivera's work is rich in empathy and invention. *Heathen* is a book of psalms for the present day." ~ Terrance Hayes, author of *Lighthouse*, *Wind in a Box*, and *Hip Logic*

"In language that sweeps from high lyric to downhome vernacular, R. Flowers Rivera undertakes the always more necessary work of re-weaving the ancient tales back into our daily lives. In doing so, she quietly makes a radical claim: that our lives cease to be as real as they can be when we neglect to recognize in them, not the every day chores of work and life, but the reality that comes when we can no longer ignore what is easiest to deny, that some aspect of myth's timelessness weaves itself throughout the mundane. It is a vision--and so are these poems--whose reminder to us is one we must be grateful for: what is past has not passed, and the old gods go on living their lives within our own." ~ Dan Beachy-Quick, author of *North True South Bright*, *Spell*, *Mulberry*, *This Nest*, and *Swift Passerine*

"Rivera's poems contain multitudes. Even when she speaks through the masks of Greek mythic figures, a voice that is Southern and female and humanly desiring erupts through the cracks. What all of her poetic selves have in common is a preference for reckless action over tedium, and that makes for excitement on the page. Hugely gifted, R. Flowers Rivera is a talent to watch." ~ Julie Kane, author of *Rhythm & Booze* and *Jazz Funeral*

"'A sudden blow' is how Yeats famously described Zeus's rape of Leda. R. Flowers Rivera revisits this scene (and many others) but eschews Yeats's cool third-person reportage. Instead, Rivera's Leda talks to her younger self, telling her that, soon, she "will begin to waste / slow hours watching the horizon." What follows seems a textbook description of trauma, and while Yeats never shied away from such psychological probings into myth, Rivera appears to take that act as her chief concern. No, retelling

mythical and Biblical stories is nothing new. When they are this good, however, who cares?" ~ Chad Davidson, author of *From the Fire Hills*, *The Last Predicta*, and *Consolation Miracle*

"R. Flowers Rivera's book, *Heathen*, is amazing work. It includes many persona poems based on mythology, but the voices are so down-home, so real, so irreverent and alive, that they lack all pretension, the kind of pretension that is too often present in persona poems. Other poems in this stunningly beautiful collection allude to the Bible and to literary figures, yet all the poems have a clarity of vision, a sureness of voice that makes these poems unforgettable." ~ Maria Mazziotti Gillan, author of *All That Lies Between Us*, *The Girls in the Chartreuse Jackets*, *Ancestors' Song*, and co-editor of *Identity Lessons*