



MODERN ENGLISH TANKA PRESS

P.O. Box 43717 • Baltimore, Maryland 21236 USA

Telephone: 443-802-1249

Email: dmg@themetpress.com

WWW.MODERNENGLISHTANKAPRESS.COM WWW.THEMETPRESS.COM

DATE: September 5, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Greetings from Luna Park, Sedoka by James Roderick Burns, Published by Modern English Tanka Press

Reviving the neglected sedoka form, James Roderick Burns' second collection explores the interplay of love and work in turn-of-the-century Coney Island: a Scottish spirit merchant, marooned at the end of the season by an affair gone sour, writes to his son in order to understand himself; the madam of a boardwalk whorehouse sounds out seven of her customers; a carnival barker revolts against the crude methods he must use to pull in the crowds. *Greetings from Luna Park*, with its vision of duty and vanished pleasure, creates a place where for a moment we find and lose everything.

Baltimore, Maryland – September 5, 2008 – *Greetings from Luna Park*, a collection of sedoka poetry by James Roderick Burns, has been published in trade paperback by Modern English Tanka Press. In this, his second collection, Burns demonstrates the ageless beauty of sedoka is not lost in English. A marvelous collection, like a dream visit to Coney Island.

“I’m delighted Rod Burns’ collection has introduced me to the pleasures of the surprisingly flexible sedoka form. These small poems distill intense moments then string them together like beads in vivid sequences. I particularly enjoyed the kaleidoscope of voices that makes up the central section, ‘Coney Catching’. Together they capture the jostling sensations of the pleasure park, with its glimpses of flesh and exploitation, but every now and then a moment of personal grief or shame intrudes to haunt the fun. The tension between the discipline of the form and the extravagant setting of Luna Park is at the heart of the collection as long-dead lives come briefly back into focus. The overall effect is eerie and resonant like fairground music heard from a long-way off.” —Esther Morgan, author of *The Silence Living in Houses*

“These postcards from a true Coney Island of the mind offer beautifully varied privileged personal moments—narrative glances, quiet mood swings, implosive epiphanies, sudden switchbacks in perception. But what I admire most about *Greetings from Luna Park* is the flat-out ambition of these poems as they gather, collectively, to illuminate a particular historical moment and its implications. We all sense the failure of our franchised attempts to provide distraction from the quotidian, from the oppressions of work and ‘duty.’ But I don’t know of another writer who has so persuasively argued not for the nostalgic novelty of our sideshows and thrill rides but for their human necessity. This is a startling, transforming book. I love the risks this sequence takes as James Roderick Burns’ bright intelligence dances so gracefully with imagination and memory in the ‘winter ballrooms’ of Luna Park.

“Right now a sudden gust of wind is either rustling the leaves outside or bringing rain. I’m not sure I would have heard that ambiguity before *Greetings from Luna Park*. It’s that kind of book.”
—Ron Overton, author of *Psychic Killed by Train*

“The sedoka is a Japanese form seldom attempted by Western writers. It contains two verses (katauta), each with a 5-7-7 syllable count. To have attempted the form is in itself an achievement, but James Roderick Burns has succeeded brilliantly. In his hands the two halves of each poem fit together like the necessarily dissimilar shells of an oyster.

“Individually the poems convey a mood and illuminate a personality. Together they tell three stories set against the background of Coney Island. Each story has a different narrator, distinguished clearly by vocabulary and voice: the merchant missing his family; the shell-game specialist, himself trapped by Coney Island’s ladies of pleasure, and, perhaps most poignant of all, the intelligent and impoverished actor obliged to play the part of an uncivilised ‘savage’ in a sideshow. It’s a measure of Burns’ success that we can be caught up in the narrative without being conscious of the great skill he displays in sustaining the form in these extended sequences.

“This is a brilliant work which fully realises the poetic and narrative potential of the form, and it reads wonderfully.” —Colin Will, author of *Sushi & Chips*

About Author:

James Roderick Burns was born in Stockton-on-Tees in 1972, and educated at Balliol College Oxford and the State University of New York. His tanka collection, *The Salesman’s Shoes*, was published by Modern English Tanka Press in 2007. He is also editor of the recent anthologies *Miracle & Clockwork* and *Still Standen* (Other Poetry Editions). He is currently completing the Creative Writing programme at Oxford University, and lives with his wife and daughter in Edinburgh, Scotland.

For media inquiries or to arrange an interview with the author, contact James Roderick Burns by e-mail at jamesroderickburns@googlemail.com. Complete publisher information is available at: www.modernenglishtankapress.com.

This book is available from www.Lulu.com/modernenglishtanka, from major booksellers, and from the publisher. Complete information and a mail or email order form are available online at www.modernenglishtankapress.com. Price: \$14.95 USD. ISBN 978-0-9817691-1-0. Trade paperback. 108 pages, 6.00" x 9.00", perfect binding, 60# cream interior paper, black and white interior ink, 100# exterior paper, full-color exterior ink.

About Modern English Tanka Press:

Modern English Tanka Press is an independent equity publishing house in Baltimore, Maryland, dedicated to producing books and periodicals of lasting literary value, especially poetry. A family business, we treat our customers and partners in publishing like family. We use modern print-on-demand production and distribution methods. Our special mission is to promote the tanka form of poetry and to educate newcomers about this most ancient poetic form. We operate www.TankaCentral.com, the internet megasite for tanka, with its popular “Tanka News” blog, and the poetry web hub, www.ShortVerse.com.

Contact:

Denis M. Garrison, owner

Modern English Tanka Press

443-802-1249

Email to dmg@themetpress.com.

www.modernenglishtankapress.com www.modernenglishtanka.com www.atlaspoetica.com

www.shortverse.com www.tankacentral.com www.tankanews.com www.modernhaiga.com

###