



Uncontested Grounds - Poems: Poems by William Conelly

William Conelly

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Uncontested Grounds, William Conelly's first full-length collection of poetry, is eclectic in people and places, deftly moving from vineyard to beach, to a Hollywood filmmaking set, and even to the cockpit of a jet fighter. This is also a collection of contrasts—the din of war in “The Lead Man” versus the “hot reductive shore” of “R & R,” the tragedy of suicide in “Ernest in Elysium” versus the stir of the unborn “In the Ninth Month.” This collection of masterfully crafted poems of vivid insights, often delivered with minimalist verve and directness, is fittingly a finalist for the 2013 Able Muse Book Award.

PRAISE FOR UNCONTESTED GROUNDS:

Uncontested Grounds is a splendid, memorable book. The stylistic precision and trim architecture of these poems may remind us of Edgar Bowers and other California formalists. William Conelly, however, has a voice all his own—shrewd, wry, engaging. Even in his more expansive pieces he writes with epigrammatic force. The perceptions fueling his art are equally alert to the world's kindness and cruelty, and his work is impressive not only for its elegance but for its quality of lived experience—in short, for a kind of wisdom rarely found these days in verse.

???—Robert B. Shaw

This generous collection of the poems of William Conelly is all the more welcome for being long overdue. Here is a poet who finds extraordinary dimensions in ordinary experience, as in “Treasure” and “The Ford Birthday Ode,” two memorable moments of childhood; as in “Aubade,” “The Sailor,” “Memento,” and “In the Ninth Month”—this last from the point of view of a woman about to give birth. Conelly commands both strict form and free verse, and his language is often fresh and unexpected. Uncontested Grounds will stand as a notable book in this or any year.

???—X.J. Kennedy

Midwestern by birth, William Conelly has lived on both US coasts, as well as in England and the Middle East. He is smart and imaginative, and brings a thriving intelligence to life's experiences. I found the poems in Uncontested Grounds original, diverse, and lucid.

?Many are poems of place. The first of these features a bankrupt farmer who ponders the “blue, remorseless beauty” that first lured him onto the stricken acreage he must sell. But the places vary, and some exude enchantment. I am taken by the touch of a drowsy wife's feet in “Aubade,” and the couple along Florida's “Gulf Coast” pitying “those who'll wake alone.”

?Conelly writes so well, in a variety of forms, I initially absorbed his insights heedless of their traditional underpinnings. These poems easily bear rereading then; they compose a fine selection from one of our best writers.

???—William J. Smith

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

William Conelly followed his father into the military. He later reconsidered, resigned, and took a Master's Degree under the distinguished American poet Edgar Bowers. After stints in transport and financial services, sales and commercial writing, Conelly returned to the academy in 2000 where, by turns, he has served as an associate professor, a tutor and an instructor of creative writing. His poetry has been published in *Iota*, *The*

Lyric, Measure, Pebble Lake Review, Pleiades, Poetry Durham, Poetry Porch and elsewhere. He is a dual citizen of the US and the UK and maintains a permanent residence in the West Midlands town of Warwick. He is married with three grown sons. Uncontested Grounds was a finalist for the 2013 Able Muse Book Award.

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