



Successful Tragedies: Poems 1998-2010

Priscila Uppal

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Canada's Priscila Uppal has gained an international reputation for her boldly provocative poetry in just a dozen years, since publishing her first collection, *How to Draw Blood from a Stone*, at the age of 23. Noted for their startling imagery, unforgettable characters and visionary lines, her poems are exact and penetrating, yet surreal and deeply moving. Drawing from the scientific to the literary, the medical to the historical, Uppal is as concerned about the inheritance of the past as she is about the tragedies of the present, which makes her both a witness of the terrors and inconsistencies of the past and a messenger of an incomprehensible future. *Successful Tragedies* includes work from six books published in Canada, including *Ontological Necessities*, which was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2007, and *Traumatology* (2010), but excludes her later collection, *Sabotage* (2015). In these poems she meditates over spilt milk with Freud, has sex with Christopher Columbus, issues warnings to gynaecologists, sets up shelters for virgins from Greek myths and organises a protest on Abraham's lawn, and much more... Readers experiencing Uppal for the first time will enter a turbulent but vital landscape, discovering a poet dedicated to uncovering the motivations behind our cruelties and our compassions and determined to explore the absurdity of the world. 'Audacious, irreverent, funny and, at the same time, deeply serious, Priscila Uppal's poems explore our notions of identity and various other conventions we live by striving to see through the lies. The ever-present horrors of our age; the injustice, the violence, the abuse and slaughter of the innocent, are almost always present. Uppal is a political poet who sounds like no other political poet, someone bound to get in trouble in every political system in the world. Her subject matter tends to be dark, but her telling of it is exhilarating. Every poem in her book comes as a surprise, and that includes the free translation of the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Wanderer* which in her version deals with the Iraq war and the fate of people displaced by such calamities. Uppal has done the rare and difficult thing: she has brought a brand new voice to poetry' – John Burnside, Charles Simic & Karen Solie, Griffin Prize judges.

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