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Notes on Leaving

Laisha Rosnau
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The difficulty of humanness—the state of flawed consciousness in which human beings exist—is the key to this collection of poems inspired by memory and imagination. This poet seems to understand the necessary mistakes that people make, and she acknowledges her speaker's culpability in participating in those experiences that people sometimes learn from, sometimes don't—a gift indeed. Perhaps it is for that reason that Nightwood Editions, with support from Canadian and British Columbia Arts Councils, has chosen to publish Rosnau's debut collection of poetry. These esteemed Canadian institutions must have suspected she would be a good bet because of the quality of her first novel, *The Sudden Weight of Snow*.

Using a chronological structure that is both familiar and comforting, Rosnau begins with childhood poems that explore her speaker's way of hitting the world full force. The first poem describes riding a bike downhill and, realizing she is going too fast, she deliberately crashes, thus meeting the world, quite literally, head on. "Fearing movement without end, / I steer myself into a fence post, / weighted to the ground with dirt, / end my flight, meet it with my face." This kind of clear description and steady rhythm sets a pace for the arc and life of these poems: direct, building on an experience that is both energetic in its physicality and reflective in its figurative resonance.

Readers will find these forty-plus poems insightful and accessible. The use of language is tight and clear, the metaphorical values fully explored and, because of the narrative line, the arc of the collection as a whole will draw in the reader. This collection will be especially absorbing to young women, world travelers, and people seeking insight into how friendship and love operate to shape lives.
(October 16, 2004)

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