

TIGHTROPES

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Lacking in one capacity, you need another,
fair balance at the end of the pole,
to walk the tightropes. Some people
are unable to see horizons, but compensate
by concentrating intensely
on the next two steps ahead.

I've cultivated stability
by keeping my horizons straight.
Now of a sudden we're crossing
very mountainous country. The peaks around
draw my attention to the gulfs below;
I'm suffering from nausea. Dangerous for acrobats,
this upness and downness, the landscape running crazy.

Concentrate, woman, concentrate.
Free verse is harder to bring off than rhyme,
liberty than slavery. Remember,
the pole-end weight, the accepted convention,
has dropped off.
Nor are you equipped with an inbuilt spirit-level.

Late in life, though, to acquire that habit
long unadmired in others
of seeing no further than the pace or two ahead
on a quaking rope.