

POULP

edited by

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TIGHtROPE — Unlike prose, good poetry draws its power from briefly glimpsed images that provoke a visceral response, rather than relying on such shaky ground as plot development, characterization, and dénouement. The pieces in Carol Burnes's *Fine Lines* (Headland) put a hypodermic needle to your chest and ask coyly, "Are you sure you want this?" Take the challenge and read her exquisite reflections about loss, renewal, love, and resentment. When she begins a poem about a horse being put down with "Today is the killing day as planned," and ends with "Life is a bullet in the head," you know you're hooked. She makes you want that damn horse back alive for your own sake, makes you see yourself lying in the grass with the farmer's gun to your head. The everyday world becomes somehow darkened and illuminated at the same time, as if you were final-

ly seeing the monster under your familiar childhood bed and realizing that you've known him all along. The writing itself is well-crafted and lyrical, and with shy grace she tells how she does it: "I stitch words to the page in patterns, / embroider dreams / while papers pile and shift, / pencils and pens scatter with books, / and paper clips star against old wood." She sews together astounding writing and empathetic themes without ever once showing a seam.

— Elizabeth Gunderson

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