

CARLA HARTSFIELD
LEAP AND FALL

Where is Hart Crane,
the disinherited, the fly by night,
who gave
the drunken Dionysus firmer feet?

—Robert Lowell, “Seventh Year”

I have long pondered why
I fall in love with suicidal folks.
They tend to be writers, but
a couple of visual artists also hover
in stasis gliding my heart, swan-like,
their beautiful, tragic lives full of pain.
Beyond the last breath,
we don't know if a soul could survive
on a rope with Tony Bourdain.
Where is Hart Crane?

In 1932, the year Plath was born,
Crane leapt into the Atlantic
wearing a topcoat—bones jellied,
the sea his epic inkwell blotched
and mooring. Bourdain's suicide
is still as fresh as his savvy political insight
through ten seasons of *Parts Unknown*.
In any of those exotic settings,
Sylvia's acerbic lines could incite
the disinherited, the fly by night,

the continually and maybe
permanently unknown artists,
who travel and toil in hopes
of creative stardom. Millions
strive against the odds,
become slaves to urges, crave
stability, and fail.
We push dark thoughts to a corner
of our craniums and misbehave—
who gave

such power to this suicidal wave?
Baby boomers now lead,
up twenty-five per cent. Bourdain
and Crane were famous drunks,
but not Plath. I have had moments
when drink felt like the ultimate treat
until the numbness briefly erased me.
Which method—pills, gun, knife, gas,
poison, fire—could unseat
the drunken Dionysus' firmer feet?