

## A SPOIL-SPORT

because it's a boring evening  
someone suggests we compile a list  
of things we would not want to do  
with various famous writers.

for instance, you would not want  
to bake a cake  
with sylvia plath.  
presumably you would not  
want to take a caribbean cruise  
with hart crane  
or ford a river with  
virginia woolf.  
hemingway would not be the one  
to clean a shotgun with.  
you'd avoid rimbaud's personal physician.

at last we are beginning  
to show a little life,  
but then this girl who is  
drinking with us for the first time  
has to go and say,  
"this is sick; this is a sick joke."

so we all shut up  
and the evening goes back  
to being a bore.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

## THE HISTORY OF A TOUGH MOTHERFUCKER:

he came to the door one night wet boney beaten and  
terrorized  
a white cross-eyed tailless cat  
I took him in and fed him and he stayed and  
got to trust me until a friend drove up the driveway  
and ran him over  
I took what was left to a vet who said, "not much  
chance, give him these pills and wait, his backbone  
is crushed, it was crushed once before but somehow  
mended, if he lives he'll never walk again, look at  
these x-rays, he's been shot, look here, the pellets  
are still in him, also, he once had a tail, somebody  
cut it off ...."

I took the cat back, it was a hot summer, one of the hottest summers in decades, I put him on the bathroom floor, gave him water and pills, he wouldn't eat, he wouldn't touch the water, I dipped my finger into it and wet his mouth and I talked to him, I didn't go anywhere, I put in a lot of bathroom time and I talked to him and gently touched him and he just looked back at me with those pale blue crossed eyes, after days went by he made his first move

dragging himself forward by his front legs  
(the rear ones wouldn't move)

he made it to the litter box  
crawled over and in,

that was like the horns of chance and possible victory  
blowing away in the bathroom and into the city, I  
related to that cat -- I'd had it bad, not that kind of  
bad but bad enough ....

one morning he got up, stood up, fell back down and he  
just looked at me.

"you make it, man," I said to him, "you're a good one...."

he kept trying it, getting up and falling down, finally  
he walked a few steps, he was like a drunk weaving, the  
rear legs just didn't want to do it and he fell again,  
rested, then got up ....

you know the rest: now he's better than ever, cross-eyed,  
almost toothless, all the grace is back, and that look  
in the eyes never left ...

and now sometimes I'm interviewed, they want to hear about  
life and literature and I get drunk and hold up my  
cross-eyed shot runover de-tailed cat before them and I  
say, "look at this!"

but they don't understand, they say something like, "you  
say you've been influenced by Céline ...."

"no," I hold the cat up before them, "by what happens, by  
things like this, by this, by this! ..."

I wobble the cat, holding him up under the front legs in  
the smokey and drunken light, he's relaxed, he knows  
things ....

it's about then that almost all the interviews end  
although I am very proud sometimes when I see the inter-  
views later and there I am and there is the cat and we  
are photographed together ....

he knows it's bullshit too but it helps get the old  
catfood ...

right?