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 interviews 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?