

buy it to read me." he went on coveting
his thermos and 35 minutes from word one
he was mumbling inaudibly and nearly
fell from the stage.

I looked over at stetler who had been
laughing all evening, then I looked back to
the face of one of the ugliest men alive
and wondered: is there some sort of sacrifice

going on here? knowing, that in the end there would
be no forgetting his scarred face and performance.
what he had been in his books was the real McCoy.
I see santa claus coming down from the mountain.

OFFSPRING

three red and green rattlesnakes snap
at each other across my back
but never touch

life has been an army of pepper
marching on my lungs

my mother is now locked in a padded
cell where she sculpts
and reads the classics
beneath an unshaded light

my querulous father buys
3 quarts of oso negro in mexico
each month
and is racked with varicose veins
and premature baldness

i am here by myself
with three restless rattlers dancing
across my shoulder blades

doing all i can to overcome
my genetics
and sing my own song

WINGS

-- for Robert Peters

on a tour of the house
i was taken from room to room
a drawing of three dead
elephants resting in african grass

then in the room beyond
his son's bedroom hanging
above the waterbed a mobile
bobbing in the orange air
several sets of wings with
feathers folded back
some with wide span and brown
some tiny sets in ebony
while
balancing the wings were
spent shotgun shells
charred around the edges
he was a young son
who had put together
a thing of beauty
to sleep beneath

HEARTBEAT

a sweet woman lives nextdoor.
she's married to a busy doctor who never
pays her no mind,
he just keeps her in silver thins & cold cream.

I can hear her arguing with the gods
while throwing fresh eggs against the shower walls
to loosen the knots of her frustrations.
it is a bad scene.

lately, the talk up & down the block is,
that some action will have to be initiated,
maybe lock her in a bell-tower.
she has all the local kids

gathered about her
and involved in her practice.
she roams the tract,
stethoscope dangling about her neck

hunting for dogs to examine:
st. bernards, beagles, danes, pomeranians.
she listens to their heartbeats.
i think it is funny.

the topper is,
that the residents around here aren't
worried about their children, no,
but about their dogs.