

1940-1980

That looks like me in the doorway.
My daddy cleaned bricks in Hamburg.
I used to sleep with a Ms. Schneider.
Flood waters are rising, I press on headphones.
Night after night my stricken singing
wakes the wife.

I tried sleeping in the attic,
woke up naked on the ridgepole,
yelling like a wild Indian.
My son ran up to hug his daddy.
Mommy called the police,
no sirens, no lights.

Each son's made from every other son.

IN ONE OF MY MOTHER'S TINY PICTURES

the two Reddig cousins are crying
but my sister and I are monkeyshining,
our ugly mouths spread out
on the inside of the backseat window
like two huge snails.

Now, turning on the kitchen light
twenty years later,
I knock my mother's pictures down.
Bending to pick them up,
I see, for the first time, really
the four wishbones
my father has set riding
atop the black frame,
one for each of us,
as African a thing as he ever did.

IMAGINE GERMAN BEACHCOMBERS

if you can. Almost a year they marched
Saco Bay beach like a beat.
Dressed like a quilted blue polar bear,
she nosed out sand dollars
like they really bought something.

A botany major and one of the world's
great rock painters, he once

nailed a stick and 38 driftwood scraps
into a salmon, mounted it on a board,
and hung it above the fireplace.

Before supper they toppled
driftwood 8 x 6's end over end
grunting together tough as life.
Then the saw hacking back and forth
between them coughed and coughed
sawdust onto the sand,

my mother and father
breathing and pulling together.

MY DAUGHTER ASKS IF I HAVE A PHILOSOPHY

she needs one for her yearbook.
I feel too small for a philosophy,
I'm trying to see through a hedge
to back onto a busy street.
We settle on: 2 is half of 1.
She asks if it's mine.
I say yes.
It's the first spring day.
It's weather for an affair.

INARTICULATE PEOPLE

i.

Inarticulate people get to the bottom
of things first.
At the Twin Tavern, Dave,
the unglib one, lumps and bumps
and makes a quick movement
before belting out the mot juste.
I've even been developing
some ambitions for my younger son
who doesn't talk good.
We didn't think he could talk at all
until a lady in her own kitchen
said, "Isn't that a nice dog?"
and he said,
"That's not a dog, it's a horse!"

ii.

One fall afternoon pulling grape
vines down out of the trees