

“The Lives of Inventors”

When Leonardo is 11 and still sober,
he brings home a dead wren to disconnect.
His parents hope he is a genius and not
just another morbid little boy dressed funny:
balloony pants, purple shoes, poofy hat.
They hope his brain isn't the Devil's
cricket. We shouldn't laugh. Back then
backwards handwriting was a scary thing.
People died from infection of the finger.
You couldn't just go someplace warmer
in a helicopter. No wonder Leonardo's
not even sure they are his parents,
he thinks he dropped from a flap
in the cosmos. He thinks if he could
pull a man apart and reassemble him,
the man could fly. Most of what we know
about Leonardo's brain is conjecture
because when the Egyptians pickled him,
all the other organs were carefully
packed in nitron and surrounded by
mummified cats but the brain
was tweezered out and discarded.
In some cultures, eating the brains
of your ancestors is the polite thing to do.
Once in a drive-in, I ate approximately
one ninth of a brain sandwich which
tasted like the meat of sad and horrifying
dreams, the kind you'd have if
you were completely wrapped in bandages
or dropped from a flap in the cosmos.
My girlfriend then could play the piano
without any training at all.
So for awhile the song passing through
our heads seemed passing through
everyone's head then only ours
then only mine then it wasn't a song,
it was a mechanism, part tank, part bellows,
and I got out of there quick.