

Restaurant of the Mind

Blake Bennett



Restaurant of the Mind
reads the sign
on the door. Today's specialties:
Pan-seared Sylvia Plath,
Steamed Stephen King Crab,
Roasted Robert Browning.
I step in from the din of New York traffic
and embrace the warm aromas
of coffee and the mustiness
of old books.
My eyes chew on the spines
lined up like racks of smoked meat.
I pull and pluck and taste
the tang of Twain's wit,
the acid in Achebe's voice,
the bitterness in Hemingway's sentences.
My hunger not yet sated, I follow a man
carting paperbacks through a back door,
and watch, mesmerized,
as he beheads them.
Faulkner, Joyce, Vonnegut,
Hardy, Shelley, Sinclair, Frost,
covers ripped from pages, tossed
away like dry bones.
I watch, a wet balloon rising
in my throat, my eyes threatening
to pour. When he finishes his slaughter
he removes his butcher's gloves,
exposing sweaty red hands
with not so much as a papercut.
I lift one of the naked manuscripts

from the iron-metal ossuary,
hold it close and steal
down the alley.
In the daylight I look down
to see a thumbprint halo
over Ray Bradbury's head.