

David Rachel

## BOULEVARD ST GERMAIN

The pavement and the first bright leaves of the plane trees  
were washed like a watercolour as I walked past  
the statue of Danton, and read the words on the pedestal:  
"After bread, education is the first need of the people."

I crossed the street and passed a man on his knees,  
holding a sign that said,  
"Help me, please. I'm hungry."

Then I realised what I'd seen, I went back  
and put a coin in his hand. He was about thirty.  
He wasn't kneeling down, in comfortable meditation,  
but kneeling up, like a medieval penitent.

Others can explain this.

I only know I dream with Danton  
of a day when it's no longer possible  
for a man to kneel in the street with a sign saying

M'aidez

SVP

J'ai faim,

while another grown man weeps useless bourgeois tears  
all the way down Boulevard St Germain.