

## Poetry

*Manikin de Vin*

They're all lined up under the lights,  
Christmas tinsel stuffing their mouths.  
And now a cloud hides behind that hill,  
arguing about philosophy. In the distance,  
a murmur, perhaps below ground: yes,  
it comes from the tunnels filling up  
with commuters commuting, no one knows why  
on this day given to festivities.  
The French, they say, have a word for it,  
something to do with eating in the open air,  
and now they spit the tinsel out. Hesitating,

*I had meant to write*, he wrote — too late,  
the intended recipient has dropped off the twig  
into the South Pacific, still he writes on:  
*The days seem endless here...* lucky fellow,  
his future written out on the little label  
on the back of a bottle of claret: you will live  
forever, says the manikin in the sketch,  
but none of your wishes will ever come true.

JOHN TRANTER