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