

The story of Julian who will never know we loved him

there's a drunk on the train spouting Kant

Immanuel Kant

that's the dude who changed my life.

he lurches up the aisle woolies bag swinging
off his elbow slips sideways through space

lands on shrinking laps apologies sways
on *Kant changed everything.*

the man sitting next to me tries to become
invisible plugs in his ear phones climbs

into his computer but the drunk spies him
and like fate see-saws towards him

stands by his seat holding the rail his
weaving hips unknotting the tight Sydney night.

ever wonder where your ideas come from?

'not really.'

he is thrown – sinks
into the seat opposite chuckles

takes a swig from his goon cask
and it sways like a pendulum at his elbow.

but where do you get your meaning?

'from my wife and children.'

again he is thrown – and flashes a grin
like the sun coming out its spark

lighting the dark with all its vanished
promise. he leans forward whispers

that's a bit old fashioned, man.

'yeah, I know, but that's ok with me'

and it's done – he thrusts his hand across
the divide – *friend! I'm Julian, brother*

and laughs opens his phone
a flash on the screen

my son Jeremiah named after a prophet
and the curtain falls.

it begins at his forehead a crumpling
of skin pulls his mouth into such

a contortion we have to look away.
the man next to me unplugs his ear

phones puts away his computer
and offers up his attention

it's enough to make a philosopher
weep.

when the police step in at the next station
he has slipped into a narcolepsy of grief

and booze as they take him away we

say 'take care of him'

'he's a philosopher'

'he's in pain'

'aren't they all,' they mumble.

the train rattles on without him

no Kant no bursts of light

people get up from their seats

and ask questions about jail cells

his grazed cheek and chipped tooth.

he has gone –

and he'll never know we loved him

on a late Sydney train last March.