**Downtown Life During the 2010 Olympics (or, Sleepless in Yaletown)**

Air horns, cowbells. The national anthem

Hoarsely roared by drunk revellers at three AM;

Two hours later, dump trucks clanging and banging

Through the alleys like furious beasts.

Fireworks like dropped bombs

My elderly friend Ron

Says the searlights slicing up the sky at English Bay,

The hovering helicopters, remind him of the war.

Stoned with sleeplessness. The weather a wonderland

Of trance-blue skies, stained glass tulips,

Pink smog of cherry blossoms.

Waves of junk food odours sail on the breeze,

Grease and vinegar from platters of poutine,

Flaps of pizza drooling with microwave cheese,

Beards of bristly candy floss.

Outside BC Place, I am swept into a sea

Of red, a mass of strangers

Wearing flags like superhero capes,

Faces aglitter with maple leaves,

All bared teeth and whirligig eyes.

Drums beating, chests heaving.

Scarf of pot smoke hanging in the air.

We run a gauntlet of hawkers, their hands

Like the disembodied hands reaching

From the walls of a haunted house,

Thrusting out tickets for sale. Signs and souvenirs!

Athletes on billboards, bus shelters, high-def TV

Their babyish, half formed faces

Draped in medals and patriotism,

Dazzled and half blind in their spotlight,

In their fleet and vanishing prime.

Their frozen moment.

All night, the pulse from the hordes on Granville Street.

The chant, the clamour, the hoot and holler.

Pray for the annihilating silence of rain.