

WHATEVER YOU DO

Whatever you do, do not
slam the year open with a bang,
waken the child
sleeping under that tree
into terror, that tree
dying in our back yard,
birds lining up to mourn. You

wanted a cheer for new
lang syne? Have you looked at the under
cutting of the North Shore mountains,
have you heard four wheel drives
passing your sweet coupé
on the rain slick of Burrard?

Let that babe sleep, let
chainsaw rest in watershed,
tell politico it's all right to be short,
tell him forget auld acquaintance,
have a look at this
sleeper 'neath our tree,
wake this sweet bairn if need be
with a cup of kindness, two handles,
show this dear drowsy head
the home made paper you're holding-
it's the deed, hand it to that kid,
say keep this here, don't
let them take it anywhere, south or up the tower.

That's right, compañero, and say, that wee critter
looks powerful like you, you
must be proud, lucky dad.

As an earthquake rocks a corpse
in its coffin in the clay
so are you rocked in your desire,
so do you meet a living January,
so does Nature, call her that again,
depend on your doting, how we have
reversed our lot, oh Death
we address not, but list with new ear
to the Spirit herself utter her fear
of us.

Look, we've wakened the child, how
can we teach her be not us,
how give her power and sweetness,
and tell her what acquaintance should
be forgot?

Spread a rictus along your jaw,
dad, help raise a whoop and pretend
this will one day all be hers,
poor orphan, whose face even now
is shaded by that dead branch.