

Abraham Lincoln and the Suicide March of Lemmings

For Gregory (aged thirteen) on the day of the Presidential Inauguration

Proud as any President
At his Inaugural Address
Or Poet at his Inaugural Publication
Today you said you'd successfully repeated
The entire Gettysburg Address
For your new Grade
Of your new Junior High School
In this your new world
Of three years' standing.

Proud as any parent
Pupil
Poet
Doomed or elated President
I ask you to repeat
Your command performance
Lying on my bed
Invoking influenza
For a mild bronchial infection
And a deep desultory depression
At the fact that
In this first year in office
Of the newly elected President
Of these United States
West and East are still precariously poised
On the brink of Nuclear Extinction.
The hands of the Doomsday Clock
On the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*
Still stand at six minutes to twelve.
Another twelve above-earth explosions
Will (it is said) irreversibly poison
The atmosphere of the earth.

Will you my son be here
Blonde
Blue-eyed
Vital
Shyly smiling
When the hour and minute hands overlap?
The ominous chimes proclaim
The Last Midnight?

Oblivious of my faint-hearted fear
You gabble rapidly
More off by tongue than heart
Your precarious link with Lincoln.
Proud of your achievement
You blush and say
"I gotta go."
(Spoken like a true American).
Proud of your achievement
I flush and say
"I'll see you."
(Spoken like a true American).

Yes, Greg.
All gotta go.
All gotta go.
All Presidents
Parents
Poets
Prize pupils
Pioneers
Prisoners
Princes
Paupers
Peoples.
All gotta go.
All gotta go.
Saying

Sadly or blithely
"I'll see you"

Whether or not
The hands for the Cosmic Midnight
Nudge forward
Whether or not
In God We Trust
Whether or not
We tell our love
Shyly or slyly
By rote of head or heart.
All gotta go.
All gotta go.

Meanwhile
While there's still light of sorts
In this dark and bleary world
Let's sing it
Off-by-heart
Let's trill it
Thrill it
Chill it
(All together)
Persistent-on-Parade
As Presidents
Parents
Prize pupils
Peoples
Poets
Surging like lemmings
Towards our dwindling destiny.

I'll see you.
 See you.
 See you.
 See you.
 See you.