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"Father" and "Rhinoviruses in the Anthropocene" [two poems]

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"Father" and "Rhinoviruses in the Anthropocene" [two poems] Cover Page Footnote These poems, "Father" and "Rhinoviruses in the Anthropocene," have already been accepted by the Journal and are due to be published soon. This submission constitutes a revision of these poems, and I send them pursuant to my email conversation with Julia Brown. Many thanks! Maria Rouphail, Ph.D.

These poems have already been accepted, and this is the pre-publication final revision Maria Rouphail / mgr@ncsu.edu

Father

Was it the infant you cradled in your arms

Was it the milky breath of baby hair

Was it her feathered eyelashes

Was it her closed eyes rocking like little boats in the sea of sleep

Was it her lips parted in sleep, the flickering smile

Was it her fingertips you kissed as she slept

Was it her toes

Was it the fevers and fluxes in the middle of the night

Was it the songs you sang in the car

Was it the bedtime stories

Was it your daddy jokes

Was it her toothless giggle

Was it her birthday shoes, the pizza party

Was it the new sled

Was it the first day of school, the kindergarten graduation

Was it the fact you could not save your child

that made you remember and remember and remember?

Each memory a torment, each a lash against the heart. And surely the mute adolescent anger, the rage and the rifle of a boy's stalking darkness you could not foresee, against which you could give no safety, obliterating your light on that December day.

Even the President wept.

Was it *all* of that, father? And the torpor of the nation the shameless torpor of us, with the rants of squalid men which caused the earth to fall finally and forever from its axis and made grief take you down into its cave to crush you?

Rhinoviruses in the Anthropocene

How they lie in wait for us, invisible as snipers. At the airport, say. On laptops slipped from hand to hand through TSA, and on the plane.

How, searching for my seat (of course, it was in-between), I waded through somebody's sneeze.
As the slats and flaps cranked out for take-off,

my row mate hacked his lungs onto the seat-back. Oh yes, I'm sure *he* was the one, the Trojan passenger, (though I take into account that he, too, was a victim).

How the swarming mist-borne nanoparticles platooned from his nasal passages into mine, and pitched their RNA on the moist loam of my palate.

How these smallest of colonizers planted their victory flags at the entries of my sinuses, their battle drums thundering in my skull. On the third day, I was done for, a conquered citadel.

How my fever came to seem to me a fractal in a larger symmetry of delirium of the earth in this age, with its human-induced inflammations and infections—

and earth's immunological feedback of fire, flood, and cyclone wind. How it is the germ's will to expand, bud, and bloom. And the host, resilient for a time, might not be the better for surviving.