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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 Roupail, Ph.D.

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.