Interglacial
(Poems 2015–2021)

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A SHELTER IS NOT NECESSARILY AN ISLAND

as title for something cogent right now
comes to mind & brings to mind
Eric Mottram’s 1971 book title

   Shelter Island & The Remaining World

so now is shelter
the opposite of the
“remaining world”
— when the remaining world is
helter-skelter (late 16th century adverb: a rhyming jingle of
unknown origin,
perhaps symbolic of running feet or from Middle English skelte
‘hasten’) —
or not? No,
s altered is island
      island is always plural
is always already part of
     some
multiplicity, an archipelago
“a series of sound groups a local thrush
    chickadees at their red plastic spinning bins
active for dark brown striped white sunflower seeds
gull’s white crab and cree low over wrinkling shore planes”
(E.M. Shelter Island)
FROM THE SECTION: SPRING & NOTHING

3/30
Thinking of a possible essay on “commissure” that piece, that place conjoining Celan & Olson, I just came across this in an old notebook, 8 June 1971, London, a day on which I threw the I Ching & got:

21 ———> 27
/ 
Biting Through The corners of the mouth
/ 
the clinging, fire, above the keeping still, Mountain, above the arousing, thunder arousing, thunder

3/31
We are eternal only while we are alive.

4/1
These buds on the branches here this year too their steadfastness, my surprise

*

Nachhaltige Nicht-Nachhaltigkeit
= title of a German book translates as:
  sustainable non-sustainability
(or: the empire strikes back...)

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So in the last dream, Derrida comes down the majestic red-carpeted staircase just before day breaks and with a large smile & an even more expansive wave of his left arm (the other rests on the baluster) gives the order for the gerrymandering to begin or to end. I can’t be sure how this one links to the long black and white dream just before (only a quick pee separates them) in which I talked lengthily to various politicians and a few pundits (me included, it seems) about the evil of gerrymandering, and we are all absolutely certain, as certain as one can only be in a dream, that our lives depend on ending that terrifying trend and now that I woke up for good I would really like to go back into the last one and ask Jacques if his gesture meant to begin or to end what the
dream proposed. But I can’t, I can’t, the sun has risen behind me where I can’t see it but I do see its reflection in front of me, reddening the East Coast buildup West of here on Staten Island just across the Verrazano Straights — much quieter today, these waters, not half as roiled as yesterday, or as my dreams made me today.

DURING A ZOOM READING by Jerome Rothenberg

Two thousand run of the mill Buddhas tread water

There are no mirrors anywhere in the world : only others

In several parts the whole is & is not

The whole is & is not in separate parts

In acts of cruelty the present is miscarried again and again
Time you say is a bullfight
I say time is kneeling
in the sand-hour facing the bull

*

4/14

So what is there left
except for the light
of a watery sun slanting
through clouds,

some cars, some runners
all wearing masks except
for those three in a circle
(what is a circle of three?)

(( there is
no way of
squaring that one
except as the four-line
stanza, come in without asking
& now broken up))

based on 6 feet distance
who are smoking in concert
and that 5-kid family of
orthodox Jews rushing toward

the pier and maybe the water
will part and they can
escape the plagues of New York
— no pharaoh will chase them to
no paradise.

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This morning’s birds,
no owl in Owl’s Head Park,
but

6 or more
Northern Flickers (my first sighting
after Nicole’s excited reports)
the usual mess of robins,
my gaggles of sparrows, some
common house, some white-throated, some chirping balls
of white bellies stuck out &
red-brown Mohawk aimed at
the rising sun,

the usual array of doves, never think of calling
them mourning, in or
out of same, they’re just a
bit sad,

but then a ring of doves
with capitals in English
but without in the Arabic
tawq al-hamanah is
a major treatise on love
by Ibn Hazm
(to be looked into
when home-in-shelter from
early morning birding
walk).

4/29

Merle Bachmann: “I am in exile from exile.”
one-hour morning walk nets
a day to be named “Grey Catbird
Day” in honor of the multiple sightings
in Owls Head Park —
a walk ending w/ 7 cormorants off
Pier 69, & in between
one Eastern Towhee
any number of robins
one female cardinal
one “Elster” — ah, yes, magpie,
and all the sparrows,
all the sparrows!

5/11

Days ago
I wrote about a dove,
& thinking back on it
& Ibn Hazm’s Ring
of same I turn
to the window
& there she is
on the branch of
the tree, keeping a cool
6 feet
social distance,
as I raise my head
& she’s gone
except for the
cooing, still
hanging in the
air — even after the
sharp warning wing
whistle
stopped.