Wherever you are, stay hard at work creating, reworking, reading and with luck publishing,—and enjoying summer regardless of temperature.

Success by our long-time participants, Susan Sonde:

Sustenance

Lord, You thread my veins with light, sparse
as the pallor shed from a pleated paper globe.
In this ambiguous in-between of seasons I wear
the suit of fallibility. You palm my soul and drink.

Your massive hand squeezes the raw dark flesh,
draining off its color. Soul, soul, the color of my
soul. What am I to make of these metabolic changes?
You toss my hat into the blue dizzying heights of
ozone.

I have dread. I have temerity. My skin turns black
and the slag slides off. I am cold. A fistful of earth
houses within my skeletal cage. As if blood were
pearls
and each a seed from which shelter might spring.

Oh tree, oh root, a cold wind rides my bones. There
are
uses: peasants make bitter wine from my flesh. The
newts
have been sunning themselves in the house of my
bones.
The ground is a pillow of stone, a citadel housed in
glass.

So there it is and here I stand outside it—lost, all
talent
for self consolation, moist hair flatted against my
head,
sun bronzing the day, which makes everything
seem lonelier when it wanes and the light stands
down,
my mind racing, mis-judging, angling over the
ungilded cliff.

Susan Sonde won the Capricorn Book Award for her collection *In The Longboats With Others* (New Rivers Press). Her recent chapbook, *Drumming On*

Water, was published by Finishing Line Press, and Dryad published *Inland Is Parenthetical*. Sonde has been a finalist in the National Poetry Series and has contributed to *North American Review*,*Barrow Street*, *Narrative*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Mississippi Review*, and many other journals. "Sustenance" appears in her new collection-in-progress.

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The beginning of a fine essay by Cynthia Ozick, and the rest is attached:

W. H. Auden at the 92nd Street Y
Cynthia Ozick, an essay in Narrative but also in Paris Review
—from “Canzone”

AH, THE FABLED Sixties and Seventies! Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs! The glorious advent of Howling! Of Getting Stoned! The proliferation of Ginsbergian Exclamation Points!

To secure the status of their literary subversion, these revolutionary decades were obliged, like the cadres of every insurrection, to denigrate and despise, and sometimes to blow up, their immediately predecessor, the Fifties—the middling middle, the very navel, of the twentieth century. The Fifties, after all, were the Eisenhower years, stiff and small like Mamie’s bangs (and just as dated), dully mediocre, constrained, consumerist, car-finned, conformist, forgettable, and stale as modernism

itself. Randall Jarrell, one of its leading poets and critics, named this midcentury epoch "the Age of Criticism"—and what, however he intended it, could suggest prosiness more? And what is prosiness if not the negation of the lively, the living, the lasting, the daring, the true, and the new?

The reality was sublimely opposite. It was, in fact, the Age of Poetry, a pinnacle and an exaltation; there has not been another since. Its poets were more than luminaries—they were colossi, their very names were talismans, and they rose before us under a halo of brilliant lights like figures in a shrine. It *was* a kind of shrine: the grand oaken hall, the distant stage and its hallowed lectern, the enchanted voices with their variegated intonations, the rapt listeners scarcely breathing, the storied walls themselves in trance—this was the Poetry Center of the 92nd Street Y in the heart of the twentieth century.

And bliss was it to be young and enraptured in the dusk of that cavernous arena, at $20 per season ticket!...

Franco Arcebal's brief portrait of his life in the Philippines during the war—he was tortured with electric shocks, baseball bats, and water; but he escaped the "monkey house," a makeshift prisoner-of-war camp the Japanese soldiers used as an execution house. He could never really answer his great-granddaughter's questions about the war, and that every time she asked, he was filled with silence…until he participated in the writing workshop with his fellow lolas ("grandmother" in Tagalog), all of whom were widows of World War II Filipino American veterans. Here is an excerpt of his letter:

We were six in the monkey house.

I was the youngest. 20. What they considered fresh and young and robust, something that needed to be broken.

I was the most severely tortured. My body still remembers. Sometimes I want to forget. But this body, it remembers…
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Geoffrey Hill, Dense and Allusive British Poet, Is Dead at 84 **By WILLIAM GRIMES NYTimes** JULY 1, 2016

Geoffrey Hill at his home in Cambridge, England, in 2007. CreditChris Floyd

Geoffrey Hill, often hailed as Britain's finest living poet, whose dense, allusive verses ranged from dark meditations on morals, religious faith and political violence to rapturous evocations of the English landscape of his native Worcestershire, died on Thursday at his home in Cambridge. He was 84. His death was announced on Twitter by his wife, Alice Goodman, and on the website of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he taught in the 1980s.

Mr. Hill, in a variety of poetic forms, reworked Christian symbols, memories of childhood and Britain's violent past in a poetic language that required much of the reader. He was a devoted practitioner of the high style, committed to a loftily intellectual sense of the poetic vocation, with an encyclopedic range of historical and literary references embedded in syntactically knotty lines.

"The idea that the intellect is somehow alien to sensuousness, or vice versa, is one that I have never been able to connect with," he told ***The Paris Review*** in an interview in 2000.

It became commonplace by the 1980s to place Mr. Hill in the top echelon of contemporary British poetry. The critic Harold Bloom called him "the strongest British poet now active." And when "Broken Hierarchies: Poems 1952-2012" was published in 2013, it was a major event.

"If the phrase 'greatest living poet in the English language' has any meaning," the literary critic Nicholas Lezard wrote in The Guardian of London, "we should use it now."

More than any other poet of his time, Mr. Hill engaged in a continuing dialogue with English history, usually rooted in the soil of Worcestershire. This bent, which caused some critics to brand him a conservative nationalist, although he was a lifelong Labour voter, produced the astonishing sequence of 30 prose poems that make up *"Mercian Hymns"* (1971), which blend the story of Offa, ruler of the kingdom of Mercia in the eighth century, with scenes from the author's childhood.

"The princes of Mercia were badger and raven," one verse begins. "Thrall to their freedom, I dug and hoarded./Orchards fruited above clefts. I drank from honeycombs of chill sandstone." ***Mercian Hymns*** won the inaugural Whitbread Prize for Poetry.

Mr. Hill burnished his growing reputation with "Tenebrae" (1978), which the poet Hayden Carruth, in Harper's Magazine, called "the best book of devotional poetry in the modern high style since Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday,'" and with "The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy" (1983), an extended poetic sequence about the French nationalist poet who died in World War I.

Afflicted by paralyzing depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behavior, Mr. Hill wrote with agonizing difficulty until he was treated with drugs after moving to the United States in the 1990s. In rapid succession, a spate of poems ensued.

Paradoxically, the easier it was for Mr. Hill to write, the more difficult the poetry became. "The Triumph of Love" (1998), an anguished survey of the 20th century's endless bloodshed, and "Speech! Speech!" (2000), a poem consisting of 120 12-line stanzas, created imposing obstacles to comprehension. Some critics rebelled. "Hill has made it brutally plain that the common reader is of no interest to him," the poet William Logan complained in a review of "A Treatise of Civil Power" (2008) in The New York Times Book Review. But he added: "And yet. And yet. Hill is the most glorious poet of the English countryside since the first romantic started gushing about flowers, his verse so radioactive in its sensitivities that his landscapes have been accused of cheap nostalgia."

Geoffrey William Hill was born on June 18, 1932, in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, where his father, like his father before him, was a village constable. After graduating from the local high school, he earned a degree in English literature at Kemble College, Oxford, where his poems appeared in student publications.

Already apparent were the preoccupations with theology and violence. The narrator of the Blakean poem "Genesis," either God or poet, proclaimed: "By blood we live, the hot, the cold,/To ravage and redeem the world:/There is no bloodless myth will hold."

The American poet Donald Hall, also at Oxford, was deeply impressed by Mr. Hill's work and published him in the Fantasy Poets series. These poems were included in his first collection, "For the Unfallen: Poems, 1952-1958," published in 1959.

It took Mr. Hill nearly a decade to produce enough work for his second volume, "King Log" (1968), which included one of his best-known poems,"Ovid in the Third Reich," on art in the presence of evil.

"I just found it incredibly difficult to write in any way that satisfied me," he told *The Paris Review*. "Certainly between about 1959 and 1964 I doubt if I had written more than seven or eight poems."

In 1954 he had begun teaching at the University of Leeds, where he remained until 1980. He became a lecturer at Emmanuel College after spending a year at the University of Bristol on a Churchill Fellowship. At Cambridge, the scholars Christopher Ricks and Eric Griffiths championed Mr. Hill's poetry, helping greatly to elevate his reputation. In 1988 he was hired as a professor of literature and religion at Boston University. With Professor Ricks, who had arrived before him, he founded the Editorial Institute to train scholars in the preparation of authoritative, annotated texts and served as a director for the next decade. He returned to Britain in 2006 and in 2010 was elected to a four-year term as professor of poetry at Oxford.

His criticism was gathered in the collections "The Lords of Limit" (1984), "The Enemy's Country" (1991) and "Style and Faith" (2003). His "Collected Critical Writings" (2008) won the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism. In 2012 he was knighted for his services to literature.

Mr. Hill's first marriage ended in divorce. In addition to his wife, an Anglican rector and the author of the librettos for the John Adams operas "Nixon in China" and "The Death of Klinghoffer," he is survived by three sons, Julian, Andrew, and Jeremy; two daughters, Bethany Hill and Alberta Hill; and four grandchildren.

Mr. Hill had a ready answer for critics who found him difficult. "Human beings are difficult," he told *The Paris Review*. "We're difficult to ourselves, we're difficult to each other. And we are mysteries to ourselves, we are mysteries to each other. One encounters in any ordinary day far more real difficulty than one confronts in the most 'intellectual' piece of work. Why is it believed that poetry, prose, painting, music should be less than we are?"