

ARTISTS ALMANAC – AUGUST 2020

The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we waste our powers:

Little we see in nature that is ours;

Wordsworth

We are all of us locked down, whether working remotely, at the office, or retired. Shopping can be done by computer and groceries by drive-up or even home delivery. Our friends and family are reached by phone, email, or skype. Even television is a wasteland, unless we are satisfied to binge 24/7 on politics, fake news, and the new national pastimes, demonstrations, shouting, and looting.

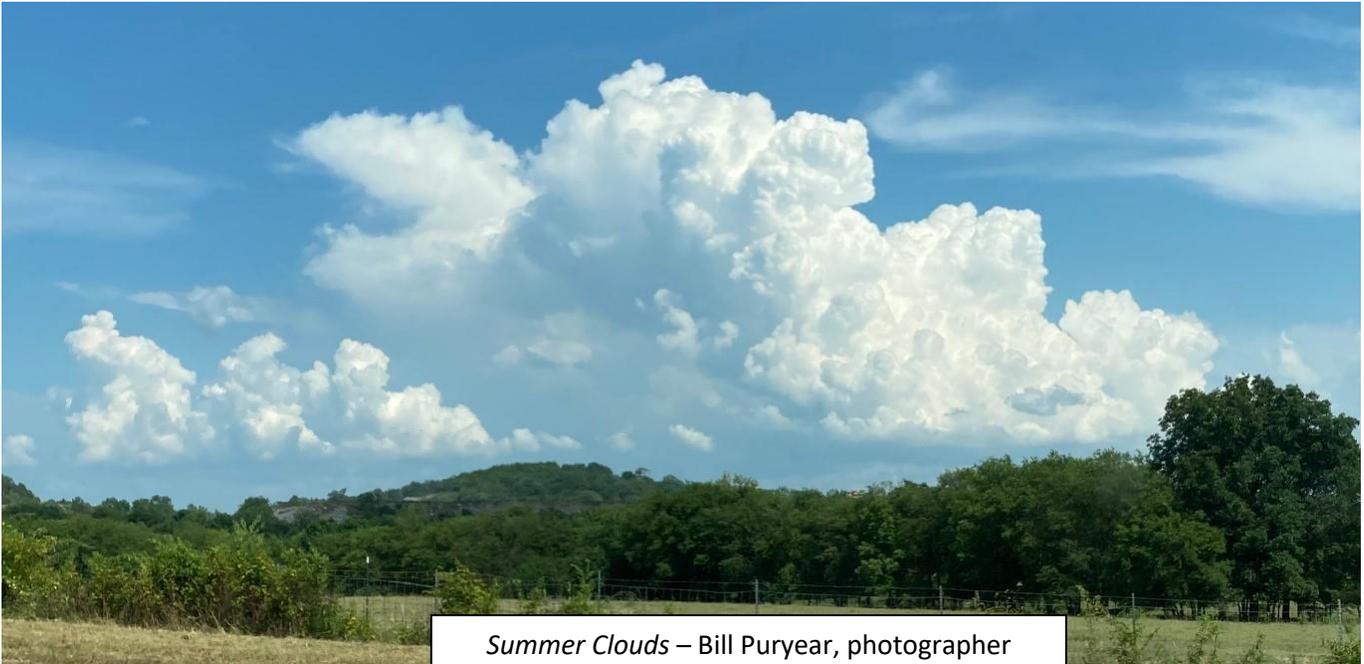
Yet for our lawns, pastures, and gardens it has been one of the finest summers in memory. Daily rains have so far spared us the droughts all too common to our hot summers here. Instead we have been surrounded by colorful roses, peonies and gorgeous azaleas and crepe myrtles are full of color. The subtle scent of viburnum perfumes our patios, and magnolias



bloom to their topmost tiers. Outside our window, our tall zinnias entertain hummingbirds, butterflies, and goldfinches.



Big rolled bales of hay fill the fields, backed by immense cloudscales such as only August can produce.



Summer Clouds – Bill Puryear, photographer



August clouds. Robin Hood, photographer

We here are fortunate to have the healing power of all this natural beauty surrounding us; for all is not well. A worldwide epidemic has closed schools, businesses, and has cost livelihoods and brought ruin to many small businesses. Worse, it has closed our churches, our sources of solace, renewal, and mutual support. The isolation of unemployment and financial loss has been devastating for many. Social distancing has cost sick and dying relatives the comfort of family at the hour of their death. It appears there may be no football nor baseball seasons this year, only more shouting, burning, and looting.

What are we to make of all this? The confusion of this age reminds us of the prophecies of *Revelation* about wars and rumors of wars.

German abbess and mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, during similar troubled times in tumult and wars of the early Middle Ages in Germany, dictated to a monk her mystic visions of the meaning of those chaotic times and the prophecies for our times. Many of these have already been fulfilled and are still widely read today. She is the patron saint of gardeners.

The American-born British poet and playwright, T.S. Eliot, was completed in a time of even greater chaos in 1942 after he had survived the blitz in London. His conversion to Christianity in 1926 informed his philosophy and poetry thereafter, until his death in 1965 at the age of 76. In his poem *Four Quartets*, completed during the London blitz, he tries to make sense of life and time, concluding,

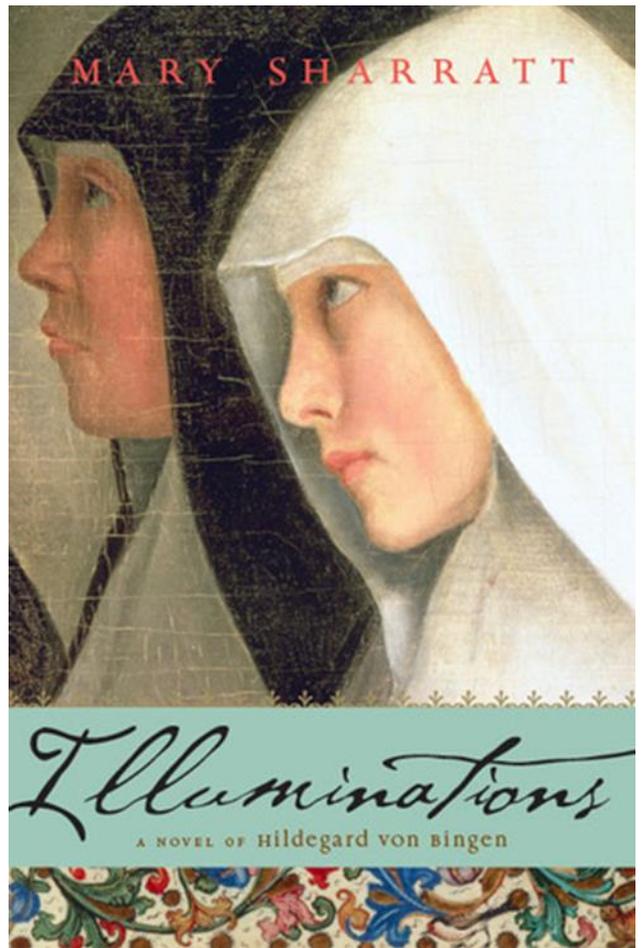
We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

The poem concludes, as does St. Hildegarde, Romans 8, and St. John Paul II when they tell us to *Be not afraid*.



*And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.*

T.S. Eliot



Late Roses, Bill Puryear, photographer