



## “Mono no aware”

On my daily walk I pass a neighbor who has a magnificent vegetable garden. He often invites me to share its abundance and I leave with my backpack laden with tomatoes, beans, peppers, figs, butternut and basil.

Last week, as we stood together in his garden, which has peaked and already has *Fall* about it, he said, “Mono no aware” – a Japanese expression meaning *a transient, gentle sadness, a beautiful sadness, a bittersweet awareness of impermanence.*

“A gentle sadness,” I thought, as I walked home. I now have a name for what I’ve been experiencing. This year has crested. Fall is in the air, so too my sabbatical, my life, turning 70. I am aware of the *bittersweetness of impermanence.* It’s more pronounced, I believe, because of the pandemic. There is a sadness recalling pre-Covid life, dashed dreams, hopes and plans, celebrations.

The Japanese, influenced by Buddhism, take the sentiment one step further. There is, they say, impermanence in everything (the Cherry Blossoms). However this calls us “to vital activity in the present moment and deep gratitude for another moment granted to us.”

Walking home on a carpet of golden sycamore leaves, my backpack heavy with abundance, I was flooded, for a moment, with the awareness of *now*, of thankfulness and joy.

Perhaps we need to refrain from looking too far ahead for the vaccine, for the end of masks and social distancing and instead gently embrace “Mono no aware.” Then, as Rilke says in *To Be Patient with Sadness...*

“The quieter we are, the more patient and open we are in our sadnesses, the more deeply and unerringly a new revelation can enter us, and the more we can make it our own. Later on when it ‘happens’ – when it manifests in our response to another person – we will feel it as belonging to our innermost being.”

– Borgeby gård, Sweden, August 12, 1904  
*Letters to a Young Poet*

*Peace and fortitude,*

*Michael*

September 7

This high summer we love will pour its light  
the fields grown rich and ragged in one strong  
moment

then before we’re ready will crash into autumn  
with a violence we can’t accept  
a bounty we can’t forgive

Night frost will strike when the noons are warm  
the pumpkins wildly glowing the green  
tomatoes

straining huge on the vines  
queen anne and blackeyed susan will straggle  
rusty

as the milkweed stakes her claim  
she who will stand at last dark sticks barely  
rising

up through the snow her testament of  
continuation

We’ll dream of a longer summer

but this is the one we have:

I lay my sunburnt hand

on your table: this is the time we have

– Poem 28 of

CONTRADICTIONS: TRACKING POEMS  
in YOUR NATIVE LAND, YOUR LIFE: POEMS  
by Adrienne Rich

## Michael news

Michael shared that each day is a challenge to be intentional, creative and in balance – finding a new daily discipline. He continues to remember you each time he lights a candle for prayer or liturgy in his chapel.

## New Camaldoli reopens

The Hermitage community has returned home after having evacuated. They’re now mopping up from weeks of ash and serving as a base camp for the gallant firefighters. The Hermitage is open once again to guests and visitors.

Please visit: <https://contemplation.com>

## Retreat recordings a good way to practice mindfulness

Amidst the chaos of the pandemic and western wildfires, Michael’s retreat recordings are a great way to focus on your well-being. All 13 of Michael’s retreats are available as downloads. Each is a full retreat, consisting of 5 talks, totaling over 5 hours. To view all the available retreats, please visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/audio-retreats>

## Support much appreciated

Michael is grateful for your kind support. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael’s 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

Visit: <https://www.hermitfish.com/donate>

Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, [enigmala.com](http://enigmala.com)