

THE USES OF THE ADVERB

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The uses of the adverb are clapboard.
Lights, camera,

adverb. The uses of the adverb,
degrees. Compare an apple

to another apple. Say
they are different, but who knows.

The adverb knows. It goes
by as fish: swimmingly.

Or a filter that colors
the movements of a scene.

Interior, exterior. Surprise, Meryl
Streep makes an entrance. Tries

on an accent. She speaks (volume
control, articulation, pitch)

the language of another apple.

DEAR RAT REPAIRING A PUMPKIN

Beloved know-it-all: quick
to seize on a vegetable's woes

for your own rodent purpose.

Dear little tattler, bringer
of the plague and hantavirus:

put back together

what is broken beyond
repair. Consider the gourd's

shell crazed with craquelure.

Dance with me amidst
the ruins of a trellis, the one

who must inherit

the earth. *Bagai tikus
membraiki labu.*

Dear mickey on a budget:

o commonplace failure:
make me a disciple.

The italicized line is a Malay saying, which means "like a rat repairing a pumpkin."

IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE WE DO NOT SPEAK

You inhabit the days, unmindful
of who I am. What I am doing

to anchor myself at the hinge

of each hour. I am a stranger
in this country. As you are. Instead

of words we swallow pills: sweetbitter

in every color. We grow older, more
unsure of what we soon

discover. And not much longer than

a half-life, decaying by the minute.
Even the clock has become muted

of its ticking. The weather goes by wind

-less in this country. Nothing else
for us to say. Nothing to do but

sleep: our backs turned against each other.