

Basic Skills in Writing Dynamic Metaphors

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Or How To Get Rid of “Like”

“She had skin, soft like a flower.” No, it’s not a bad line, it’s actually a good line, so why would you want to “get rid of the *like*?” Well, like, when every song is, like, it has to have *like*, it may be funny from, like, some perspectives, but if every song, like, has only lines with *like*, like, then the liking might at some times become, like, repetitive, ya dig?

So, how do you get rid of the “like?”

When you use the word “like,” what you also often use is “is,” as in, “is like.” An example would be, “She is hard, like cold nougat. You just have to warm her up.” Again, not a bad metaphor, but when every metaphor uses “like,” every metaphor starts to sound the same and is in effect also static: it focuses on *being*, not *doing*.

Getting rid of the “like” means you have to make your metaphors dynamic, rather than static. So in “She had skin soft like a flower,” how do we make this dynamic?

Picture a flower, any flower. You’re picking a rose right? I’m Dutch, so I’m changing it to tulip. That adds variety to the metaphor and inspires me to think about function. A rose is more like a dress to tango and a tulip is more like a stately dress. That would imply the lady is either from or in a different milieu.

This also offers room for fun, because she might change from a tulip into a rose.

So, we determined it’s now a tulip, and “skin soft like a tulip petal” can easily be made into the subject of a sentence by changing the “like” part into an adjective or adverb. This way it becomes a subject that does something rather than just being, which makes it dynamic. This means, we are now talking about “tulip petal skin.”

To then further the dynamics, to stay within the realm of metaphors, what the tulip petal skin does is perform an impossible feat and go beyond the realm of physics. You could say, “Her tulip petal skin cut straight through the bunker shielding my soul, obliterating all my defenses, devouring my heart. From then on, it was hers.”

So, again, to write dynamic metaphors: (1) turn the “like” into an adjective or an adverb, (2) make the subject perform an impossible feat, that (3) reaches beyond the realm of physics.

Metaphors are great fun. They spawn completely incomprehensible discussions on *subtext*, even though the subject to be taught is metaphors. Study them and learn to love writing even more.