

## IN DEFENSE OF ADVERBS

I recently read another advice column for writers recommending the trimming of almost all adverbs from our language. This is akin to a cook telling us to throw out all the onions. The enchiladas are still spicy but lack something texture wise. Without adverbs there is no possibility of the motto: "Hold firmly to your belief in male enhancement pills"! Now admittedly "as I wandered weakly, wearily" sounds, well, weak. But no one would seriously prefer "through a dark glass" to "through a glass, darkly", would they?

English is not a verb rich language like Dineh, the rainbow hued tongue of the Navajo Nation. Much of their fine humor depends upon the rich variety of verbs in their idiom. There are many ways to say 'sit' in Navajo depending upon the class of object and type of sitting. To use the squishy sitting verb used for fruit for instance to describe, say, ones mother-in-law is the height of hilarity! The only way we could do anything akin to this in English would be with adverbs. Otherwise we must resort to endless metaphor. An extended twenty-page comparison or thirty similes a page is fine for Tom Robbins but quickly becomes tedious from a lesser pen than his.

I am not recommending the immoderate use of adverbs ending in -ly God knows! The judicious use of modifiers includes adjectives, adverbs, and everything in between from the simple "akin to" above to long prepositional phrases such as (in this sentence).

Consider the King's (Steven's) infamous injunction against dialog markers. Without the use of adverbs one is almost reduced to said, stated, asked, queried- boring stuff indeed! But if we were allowed those pseudo-stage directions our 7th grade Language Arts teachers loved, currently *mots non grata*, immediately we would explode off the flat page onto the gas lit boards of mentally spoken performance art.

Granted, such restrictions as King's can spark creativity- requiring us to invent words: "Wow!" we might exemplarate, or tag. Alas more likely we drop the markers of speech and begin to wonder- who spoke, and why?! Diderot once found the lingua franca inadequate to his needs and likened writers to foreign language learners frustrated by the paucity of their vocabulary. Why limit ourselves, mere babies, more than we already are in our tepid language bathwater? Writers, I beseech you on bended knee, use all your language freely!

Respectfully,  
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