

Poetry Month: 'Totally Like Whatever'

 [npr.org/2005/04/20/4608329/poetry-month-totally-like-whatever](https://www.npr.org/2005/04/20/4608329/poetry-month-totally-like-whatever)

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Totally like whatever, you know?

In case you hadn't noticed,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're saying?
Invisible question marks and parenthetical (you know?)'s
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions? You know?

Declarative sentences — so-called
because they used to, like, DECLARE things to be true
as opposed to other things which were, like, not -
have been infected by a totally hip
and tragically cool interrogative tone? You know?
Like, don't think I'm uncool just because I've noticed this;
this is just like the word on the street, you know?
It's like what I've heard?
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions, okay?
I'm just inviting you to join me in my uncertainty?

What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society become so, like, totally...
I mean absolutely... You know?
That we've just gotten to the point where it's just, like...
whatever!

And so actually our disarticulation... ness
is just a clever sort of... thing
to disguise the fact that we've become
the most aggressively inarticulate generation
to come along since...
you know, a long, long time ago!

I entreat you, I implore you, I exhort you,
I challenge you: To speak with conviction.
To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks
the determination with which you believe it.
Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.
You have to speak with it, too.

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