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Young Linguists

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YOUNG LINGUISTS

Chris O’Hara

I used to know a girl,
(her locker was next to mine),
who proclaimed daily to her spray-tanned,
fake blonde friend,
"ohmygod I'm like literally gonna
kill myself."

And her friend would always respond
with an apathetic
"that's hilarious."

One day, as they had their suicide talk,
I asked:
"well how come you never do?"

She informed me that a recent conference
of adolescent linguists had decided
to change the English language
to be less descript, less difficult.

The conference had decided that
literally now means "probably not gonna happen"
and
hilarious now means "this could,
in some contexts be misconstrued
as something vaguely humorous."
and
starving no longer refers to African babies,
gaunt, hollow eyed, with distended bellies.
Real starvation is "I haven't eaten in
twenty minutes."
and
freedom, the way politicians use it,
is no longer Thoreau out in the woods,
rather, a prisoner behind concrete walls
and iron bars who now has the freedom
to use the prison library whenever he wants.

And my locker neighbor, Megan,
ever once surprised me,
by not being there in the morning.