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TEXT 1

THE MYTH OF GENERATION SNOWFLAKE: HOW DID "SENSITIVE" BECOME A DIRTY WORD?

If my generation are a heap of fragile snowflakes, then the internet is a snow machine – and that's no bad thing.

1 I don't remember the exact words my father used to describe my home-made shortbread but they weren't kind. I was ten years old, I had made the biscuits during my Year Seven cooking class, and for homework I had to ask a family member to taste and "review" my work. A week later, when I peered over at my classmates' worksheets as we handed in our homework, I realised most of their parents had marked them a respectable but diplomatic seven out of ten. My father, not bothering to shield his disgust, gave me a "four".

2 I wasn't raised wrapped in bubble wrap. My parents never once called me "special". My schools never offered medals for participation. I'm telling you this not so that you feel sorry for me (do, though) but because, by popular logic, my upbringing should have made me tough as old boots. I'm not. I sobbed uncontrollably at 4 a.m. on the night Donald Trump won the US presidential election. Go on, say it. I am a snowflake.

3 For those who have somehow missed this, the insult of the year, a "snowflake" is a young person who is perceived to be too sensitive, easily offended and weak. Not content with insulting us individually, however, baby boomers have also coined the expression "Generation Snowflake" to tar everyone born in the Nineties with the same brush. This definition entered the *Collins English Dictionary* last year, and can be found, much like a reference to Hitler, in every internet argument.

4 How can an entire generation be too sensitive? One theory, put forward by Claire Fox, the author of *I Find That Offensive!* is that we were all mollycoddled as children. Other writers have argued that "participation medals" (which, incidentally, have been around since ancient Greece) made every last one of us feel entitled to praise.

5 Fox and her ilk are wrong. No one I know ever got a medal for participation in their youth, and we all got plenty of scraped knees. Yet it is undeniable that we are more sensitive (to my mind, this is not an insult) than earlier generations. Why?

6 We have the internet to thank for this. I grew up in a town of 6,000 people. Most of them were white and even more of them were old. Collectively, we were outnumbered by the local sheep. As I was never confronted with anyone remotely different from myself, I spent my teenage years thinking that being offensive was the highest form of wit. I didn't meet a single person who changed my mind – I met thousands. And I met them all online.

7 Having instant access to millions of different viewpoints at once changed everything. Blogs opened my eyes to experiences outside my own, YouTube videos allowed access to the lives of strangers, and tweets flooded my narrow world with opinions. In particular, the social media project Everyday Sexism – which encourages women to tweet their experiences of normalised sexism – made me realise that the street harassment I faced wasn't just "life".

8 Yet if the internet is the reason we all became more empathetic, it is also the reason the "snowflake" myth spread. According to *Time* magazine, generational nicknames originated "with writers and journalists", but the internet meant that a term first coined on an obscure blog could quickly spread into mainstream use. "Special snowflake" was used in the Noughties on Tumblr, the social blogging site, to insult those with dyed hair and alternative gender pronouns. It was not until the past couple of years that "snowflake" morphed from someone who thought they were special to someone who was weak and sensitive. How did

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that happen?

9 The internet has allowed both students' ideas and mainstream disdain of them to spread beyond university walls. It was in June last year that the term "Generation Snowflake" was given its greatest boost, when a *Daily Mail* article described us as "a fragile, thin-skinned younger generation that can't cope with conflicting views, let alone criticism". From that point on, the right-wing media ran with the insult. Last week, Michael Gove used it to describe anyone who was offended or irritated by Boris Johnson comparing the French president, François Hollande, to a Nazi guard.

10 Social media allowed my generation to become more sensitive and also allowed exaggerated myths about our sensitivity to spread. If we are snowflakes, the internet is a snow machine. Now, we must use online networks collectively to adopt our pejorative[1] nickname and wear it as a badge of pride. If that fails, at least the internet offers up a few decent shortbread recipes.

[Adapted from the original written by Amelia Tait, *New Statesman*, 27 January 2017]

Glossary:

[1]pejorative – expressing contempt or disapproval

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TEXT 2A

Should we be worried about AI?

Suppose you enter a dark room in an unknown building. You may panic about some potential monsters lurking in the dark. The dark room is the future of artificial intelligence (AI).

Let an ultra-intelligent machine be defined as a machine that can far surpass all the intellectual activities of any man however clever. Since the design of machines is one of these intellectual activities, an ultra-intelligent machine could design even better machines; there would then unquestionably be an "intelligence explosion", and the intelligence of man would be left far behind. Thus the first ultra-intelligent machine is the last invention that man need ever make.

Once ultra-intelligent machines become a reality, they may not be docile at all but enslave us as a subspecies, ignore our rights and pursue their own ends, regardless of the effects that this has on our lives.

Stephen Hawking, for example, has stated: "I think the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race."

[Adapted from <http://www.sciencefocus.com/article/future/should-we-be-worried-about-ai by Luciano Floridi>]

TEXT 2B

We Should Be as Scared of Artificial Intelligence as Elon Musk Is

Elon Musk recently commented on Twitter that artificial intelligence (AI) is more dangerous than North Korea. It's not the first time that the entrepreneur has warned about the dangers of AI. Should we all be afraid as he is? Will AI lead to a huge disaster or robot takeover that destroys humanity?

AI technologies are developing fast and so are their attendant risks. AI applied to warfare and policing is certainly a concern. Autonomous armed robots, which can track and target people using facial recognition software, are just around the corner. Let loose, such machines would keep on killing until they ran out of targets or ammunition. This reminds us that AI has no social awareness, conscience, mercy, or remorse.

What makes this scenario so dangerous is that it isn't being planned by some overarching master intelligence or machine overlord. We are creating the very technology that could lead to our demise. This makes AI difficult to protect against or control.

[Adapted from <http://fortune.com/2017/08/18/elon-musk-artificial-intelligence-risk/ by Steven Finlay>]

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TEXT 3

[Source: <https://mpk732t12016clusterb.wordpress.com/2016/05/09/share-a-coke-to-open-happiness/>]

TEXT 4

[Source: <http://www.artofmeganlorraine.com/pepsi-hypothetical-ads.html>]

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TEXT 5

[Source: <https://www.google.co.za/search?q=instant+gratification&source]

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TEXT 6A

While many people have only recently become aware of the global plastic pollution crisis, others have been wrestling with it for years. One such is Mandy Barker, the Leeds-based photographer whose images illustrate this article. "I grew up in Hull and spent a lot of time on Spurn Point nature reserve," she says. "Returning each year, I was shocked to find the amount of rubbish building up there."

Since emerging as a professional photographer in 2011, Barker has focused her work on plastic pollution, drawing material from beaches and harbours around the world and from a voyage to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – an ocean current that traps exceptionally large amounts of floating debris. Her approach is to reveal unexpected beauty in plastic pollutants, which she often photographs as if they were rare and precious sea creatures. "I want to stimulate an emotional response in the viewer, using the contradiction between an initial aesthetic attraction to the images and a subsequent awareness of the harm these objects are doing," Barker says.

[Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/30b30b1e-004a-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>]

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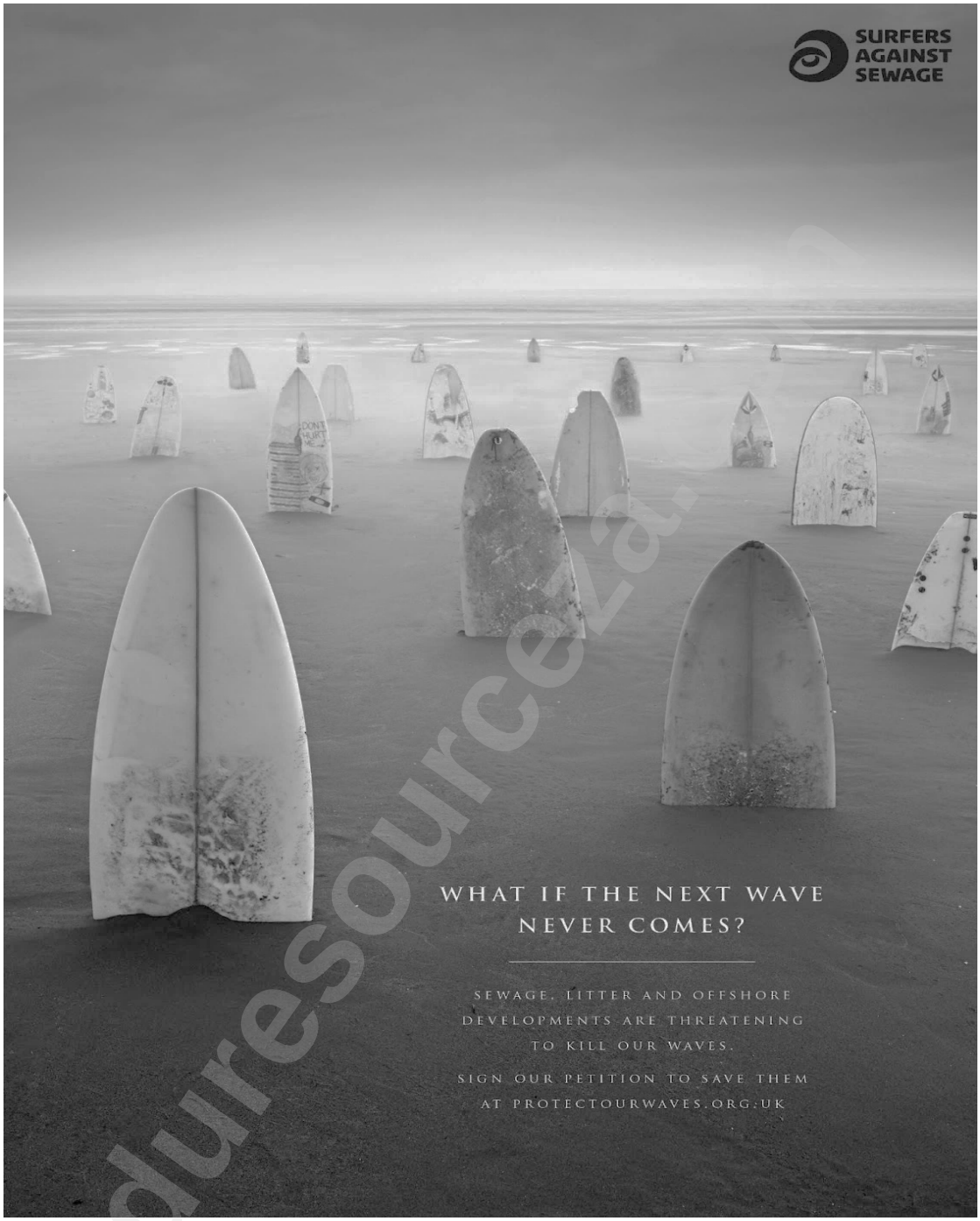
TEXT 6B



[Source: <http://persuasion-and-influence.blogspot.co.za/2013/03/this-surfers-against-sewage-ad-has-been.HTML>]

What if the next wave never comes?

Sewage, litter and offshore developments are threatening to kill our waves.
Sign our petition to save them at protectourwaves.org.uk

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TEXT 6C

[Source: <https://www.zanews.co.za/cartoons/2018/04/05/r-i-p-winnie-mandela#.WtcV0S5uaM8>]

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