

by Derek Morrison

*Snowflakes falling on Ivory Tower
Privileged pressure exerting power
Primed for insult and outrage too
Detecting heretics from any clue
Exorcise those now deemed incorrect
Such bygone stars deserve no respect
So only safe ideas can they exchange
All falling within the comfort range
Learning only where none feels hurt
With no requirement to explore the dirt
In building silos of righteous thought
Militant intolerance has been wrought
Divergent opinions now shut down
For new Puritans to claim the crown
Proclaiming safe speech they defend
But thought-crime is the actual trend
New Hate Weeks they now opine
Defining those that crossed the line
No platforms; don't hear them speak
Drowning message with shout and shriek
And what Trojan is this free speech zone?
This meme nursery, where weeds are sown
Establish new orthodoxy; apply the codes
Whims and affectations travel scholar's roads.*

[To listen to this verse select below]

<http://www.cyberstanza.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Snowstorms.mp3>

Def: Snowflake Generation

"The young adults of the 2010s, viewed as being less resilient and more prone to taking offence than previous generations"

(Source: [Top 10 Words of the Year 2016](#), Collins Dictionary)

Def: Hate Week

An event in George Orwell's 1948 dystopian novel '1984' in which the purpose was to focus the population's hatred on whichever opposition was perceived to merit it most by the leadership. The population had to be wary, however, because the target could change without warning and it was essential to hate 'correctly'; for yesterday's enemy could be redefined as today's ally. Orwell also incorporated a daily [Two Minutes Hate](#) into '1984'.

Instinctively I feel there is something wrong here. Something I'm not comfortable with ... It's something to do with psychology, and I think it's this. The more you delineate a space as safe, or shut down debate, the more you are emphasising the dangers of what lies outside that comfort zone. And if you do that it gets bigger and more dangerous. It's almost as if by staying in your safe space you're kind of feeding the monster. What you're doing is repressing, and the repressed always returns, and if often returns in a bigger more dangerous form ... When you are making spaces 'safe' what you are really doing is you're not making anything safe. What you're really doing is intellectually perpetrating a form of self-harm. (Professor Andrew Hussey, [No Platform](#) Archive on 4, BBC Radio 4, 12 Nov 2016) @55-56m)

Whether education was shaped by Christian or Jewish religion, or the classical philosophies of Greece and Rome, the aim was to nurture resilience and determination. A lack of realism in our view of the world was considered not just an intellectual failing, but also a moral flaw. Clear thinking wasn't just a matter of being logical, it required courage. The willingness to accept a certain amount of intellectual suffering as the price that must be paid if you are to understand why the world is what it is. No doubt children need to be sheltered from all the hazards of life, but no one can grow up if they spend their lives avoiding thinking about the dangers that go with being human. The result can only be a perpetual condition of childishness. The true purpose of education is to understand that the world is never going to be a safe place. At the bottom of the demand for safe spaces is a refusal to engage with the human world. For me, it's this, more than the violation of free expression that inescapably follows, that makes trigger warnings and de-platforming of controversial speakers so oppressive. For a time painful conflicts can be shut out by calming music in nursery-like retreats. But they will not be gone for long. They will persist and fester, and sooner or later,

destroy the false peace that is found for a time in the pillow filled rooms. (John Gray, [Against Safe Spaces](#), A Point of View, BBC Radio 4, 2 Oct 2016)

Further Reading/Listening

[Safe Space](#) (Cyberstanza, 15 Apr 2017)

[Victims](#) (Cyberstanza, 21 Oct 2015)

[Big Brother](#) (Cyberstanza, 9 Apr 2015)

[1984](#) (George Orwell, 1948, University of Adelaide eBook edition – public domain)

[Spiked: nine out of 10 UK universities 'restrict free speech'](#) (THES, 11 Feb 2017)

[How campus policies limit free speech](#) (David Hudson, Adjunct Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University in *The Conversation*, 1 June 2016)

[Free Speech Zones](#) (First Amendment Center, 13 Sep 2002)

['Poor little snowflake' – the defining insult of 2016](#) (Guardian, 28 November 2016)

[The 'snowflake syndrome'. Are today's students too touchy?](#) (Ray Ryan, The Careers Blog, University of Warwick, 21 March 2017)

[Boris, Tatchell, Greer: were they actually no-platformed?](#) (The Guardian, 5 May 2016)

[No Platform](#) (Archive on 4, BBC Radio 4, 12 Nov 2016)

[Against Safe Spaces](#) (John Gray, A Point of View, BBC Radio 4, 2 Oct 2016)

[The Coddling of the American Mind](#) (Greg Lukianoff & Jonathan Haidt, *The Atlantic*, September 2015)

[Oxford University sorry for eye contact racism claim](#) (BBC News, 28 April 2017)