



Sex in the city? Why have sex in just one city when you can have sex in any city on earth?

The Internet, it is said, brings people together, and nothing brings people together on the Internet like love.

Would you like a husband from Bahrain? Here you go: "hello beautiful woman, my name is Quadri and i was once married and my wife is late, i am looking for the right woman of my life that we can start racing a family."

Or, there are poetic Nigerian ladies. ("I dream nightly of running down the runway after getting of the plane. Tears stream down my face and my bosom hitches from the passion ready to burst forth from my heart!!! Can u send me \$500?")

Finally, there are several million Russian ladies, all called Elena or Natasha, with very similar heart-rending histories ("I was born in small village Ilyinka on October, 23, 1979. Studied in high school. When to me 17 years I were executed has gone to city Yoshkar-Ola to enter the university. Now I work as the bookkeeper in small firm. My grandmother is the sick. Many men tried to have me with acquaintance but character traits do not allow me to answer them mutually.")

You guessed it — all these potential dates have one thing in common; they're frauds. Absurd as it seems, this is big business — in one case, a victim sent US\$125,000 to his lady love, who turned out to be a lad love working out of an Internet café in Lagos instead, and the annual turnover of these scams runs into tens of millions.

It's become so bad that US embassies post specific information on their websites on how to avoid romance scams. It's also invaded popular networking sites like MySpace.

A (ahem) friend of mine answered one of these e-mails, and shortly received the reply: "Look you, my love I wait, that you will send to me of money and we shall be together. My girlfriend Jewel, has told to me that the fastest remittance it Western Union! Western Union it is the fastest remittance!"

Thanks for the commercial, but no thanks.

All things considered, I think you might just be better off with the devil – or angel – that you know.

CT

DESIGNED FOR SEDUCTION!

Little Arrows

BOOKS AND TOYS FOR BIG GIRLS AND BOYS.

44B APLIN STREET • CAIRNS • 4780
PH: 4031 1081



GERM WARFARE

What is it about Germaine Greer? The barrage of abuse launched at her over her Guardian article following Steve Irwin's death has certainly been as extreme as anything seen in our daily press.

"Bitter and twisted, sexless non-entity," said one male letter writer to the paper. "Malevolent old hag," said another. A woman correspondent referred to her as a "female monstrosity". Someone even suggested that a great service to humanity would have been performed if Greer had died in Steve Irwin's place.

Not very nice stuff to be frank. Germs might not be everybody's favourite guest for afternoon tea and scones but you could be forgiven for thinking that she had personally loaded the poisoned barbs on to the stingray's back and then operated the remote control button to direct them.

In fact, for those who haven't seen the piece, what she wrote is mostly unexceptional, commonsense stuff — that wrestling with crocs and snakes is not necessarily the best way to manifest respect for animals or pass on wildlife information to the public. The only really controversial sentence in the whole article, which has caused most of the outcry judging by the number of times it is mentioned, is her remark that "the animal world has finally taken its revenge on Irwin". Probably not the most sensitive thing to write about a popular, just deceased personality, but hardly a hanging offence. John Howard apparently said that Steve Irwin died in a "quintessentially Australian way", which plays to the myth of a long-gone bush stereotype, but ignores the fact that wild animal attacks make a negligible contribution to Aussie mortality rates. I didn't see Howard being pilloried for his silly remark.

Greer, whatever her many failings and sometimes childish desire to shock, has enlivened public debate across a range of different areas for nearly 40 years.

Greer, whatever her many failings and sometimes childish desire to shock, has enlivened public debate across a range of different areas for nearly 40 years. She is a cerebral lioness who ought to be respected for her many literary achievements. She is someone that Aussies should surely be proud of, an institution in her own right, who has contributed massively, through her writings, lectures and broadcasts, to intellectual output worldwide. Living in London for six years in the 1980s, I was certainly aware of her massive impact, along with Clive James, Barry Humphries and others, in helping develop the present day perception of Australia as a confident, cringe-free country.

Some have said that the attacks against Greer are misogynist. That is usually interpreted to mean dislike or hatred of women by men and there is certainly plenty of evidence for that in the letter writers. It would be hard to imagine insults such as "sexless non-entity" or "malevolent old ?" (what is the bile-laden male equivalent term for 'hag' or 'crone?') being directed at John Singleton, Bruce Ruxton or John Elliott for the outrageously offensive comments that they have made over the years. But misogyny can also apply woman to woman as shown by the "female monstrosity" letter and others like it. I doubt any man would ever write a letter referring to another man as a "male monstrosity" with all its undertones of Frankenstein-like sexual aberration.

For the most part, the keys to the assaults on Greer are a powerful combination of anti-intellectual populism and celebrity culture promulgated by the shock jocks and the tabloid media to feed their voracious, self-serving appetites. The deaths of 'icons' and 'legends', compared to Lady Di and JFK (that's right, a President's 43-year-old assassination has been dragged into it), are wonderful symbols for a surrogate bout of media-promoted public emoting. Any dissenting voice in such an atmosphere of groupthink becomes hard to tolerate.

Everybody in the Far North who met Steve Irwin speaks of his friendliness, genuineness and passion. His death is a great loss but, while public grief may be harmless enough and even have cathartic personal benefits, let's not make our sadness at his passing become an orgy of hate toward those with the temerity to put a slightly different slant on aspects of his life. As a freedom-loving guy, Steve Irwin wouldn't have wanted that I'm sure.

Denis Walls