

WHO THE FUCK IS MARIANA?

By Nicoleta Esinencu

Diana and her European diet

Diana is my next door neighbor!
Diana is well aware that since 1989 it is her right!
The right to think freely and to express her opinion freely!

– “Yeah... You aren’t allowed to! You’ve got to come in person....What special circumstances? Well arrange for a proxy then.... That’s right! Go to a notary.... obviously—a notary! Otherwise, there’s nothing we can do.... No, there are no exceptions! I told you, get yourself a proxy! An appropriate person! Your wife or children! If you haven’t got one, what I am I supposed to do about it! Proxy! Open `til 3! Saturdays `til 12! Goodbye!”

– “What do you want?” asks my neighbor Diana when I call her up.

– “Hello! I want to pick up my passport!” I tell her.

– “Listen, this guy who’s calling every five damn minutes has got no legs, but he’s applied for a passport! Hmm! So where’s he off to then? Well? Tell me then, where? Wait here,” says Diana on her way out. “They’ve brought some Oriflame cosmetics to the office, shall I get some for you?”

After making it to the passport office and handing over the money for the visa, Diana left for Italy.

Every month Diana sent me a video of herself telling me about what’s in her bathroom cupboard.

– “These are really neat little sticks for cleaning your ears,” Diana said. “Do you guys still think matchsticks and cotton wool will do the trick?”

What she’s got in her bedroom cupboard and the kitchen:

– “This is sour cream, but it’s not like ours. It doesn’t have as many calories. Good, says our president, we have to think in terms of calories, if we really had the recommended minimum calorie intake, we members of government would need four doors. We have to calculate how much physical effort we exert. But what about when we’re sitting around and holding meetings? Not that we want people to go around with their stomachs bloated by hunger, but we don’t want them to be all flab and fat either! If you want us to start building Europe here in Moldova, then slim down!” concludes Diana with pride, quoting the president.

So here we are eight years later and my next door neighbor Diana comes back home from Italy.

– “Those bloody Italians!” she starts. “What a lousy bunch! They’re all slobs and ignorant peasants! Just as well that we Moldovans came along and shook them all up! Them and their fucking spaghetti! By the way, I wanted to tell you I’ve got myself an absolutely sexy Italian bedroom – you should come and see it! I can even offer you some coffee...”

On shit and ass

– “You write a load of crap, you really do, don’t you?” Diana asks me suspiciously. “Oh well, sorry, forget it,” she says cutting me off immediately before I can get a word in.

As I was saying, on some TV program (I don’t know why it was cut either, maybe the picture wasn’t clear or my face wasn’t lit right) recently, practically every discussion on literature and art in Romania and even more so in Moldova can be summed up in one

word: "shit." I said it no longer matters who the writer is or what they write. The only thing that counts is the shit factor.

Turning out shit is a bit like saying you're up the boss's ass!¹ No big deal, right?

So I'm out on the balcony, undecided whether or not to watch the match and someone shouts out my name. It's... Diana!

– "Who are you rooting for?"
– "Ivory Coast!" I tell her.
– "What? Those fucking niggers? Those monkeys should stay locked up in their cages! They're fucking useless on the pitch! Or maybe you like black guys? Well? Well, why don't you go and marry one then! Well? You'll never bleach Africa you know!" Diana says—it must be her idea of a joke.

Two weeks later or thereabouts...

– "Mais pourquoi, mais pourquoi, mais pourquoi?" cries the French commentator after Zidane head butts Materazzi in the chest.
– "If it was pourquoi—then kill the fucker!" says Diana grinning from the next table. And Diana continues:
– "Right, 'cos Zidane is a nigger like all the others! By what right can he possibly call himself French? Fucking Muslim terrorists, the lot of them! It's gotten to the point where I'm scared to go out on the street! Anyway, good for you that you fucked Europe, your mother², no, that should be their mother, I meant to say..." Diana looks at me while she tries to explain to a nearby German what the difference is.³

Here's some useful advice for tourists thinking about visiting Moldova:

It's really important to recognize and bear in mind the difference between fucking your mother and fucking someone else's.

You should never tell the person to whom you are speaking to go and fuck their mother, since the person is a direct descendent of the mother in question and the reaction you risk provoking could endanger your life!

You should tell them to go fuck someone else's mother, thereby making it clear that you are in no way referring to the person's own mother and, at the same time, you are presenting a prospect which the other person will quite possibly find acceptable.

A few days later, I see Diana waving a newspaper and explaining things to her 10-year-old son who says there's no way he's ever going to put on a soccer jersey with Zidane's name again.

– "Mom... is... Zidane's mom a cannibal?"
– "Where on earth did you get that idea from?"
– "I saw on TV that he wanted to eat Materazzi's balls!"
– "Well, really! You eat meatballs don't you? Rather than sit in front of the TV, you'd do better to read the papers! Look what it says here: Zidane's action should be seen as setting an example to all those who respect their parents and their origins! Who's going to protect me if you won't even wear a soccer jersey? Tell me. Who then? We must understand Zidane as a human being," she continues. "He's human, isn't he, and at the

¹ "Despre sulă si prefectură sau ce are pizda cu pizdeala?" – Is a strongly sexualized slang phrase in Moldovan Romanian, figuratively meaning "they have nothing to do with one another." Derived from "pizda" (cunt), "pizdeala" means colloquially "clouts, brawl, smash someone in the face."

² The author's play "Fuck you, Eu.ro.Pa!" triggered a hefty political controversy in Romania and Moldova after it was published in the reader for the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005. In Moldova performances of the play were suspended for a time. Renamed "Stop Europe" by the author, it was classified for audiences over 16. In Romania, the play was the subject of several parliamentary questions.

³ Obscene expressions like "în pizda mă-tii" (get back into the cunt of your mother – personal insult) or "în pizda mă-sii" (get back into the cunt of the mother) are common phrases in Romanian

end of the day it was only a head butt – it's not as if he kicked him in the face! And you know what? I paid 30 euros for this shirt! Go on, put it on just this once!"
What's soccer got to do with literature?
And what's fucking got to do with fucking shit?
No more than being up the boss's ass.

Who the fuck is Mariana?

Now Diana's working at the museum where the entrance fee is just 2 lei, if you were born in Moldova, but if you're a foreigner, it's 30 lei.
On Tuesday you can get in free! But for Diana, there is no Tuesday.

– "Anyhow, I don't understand what it says here! How are they supposed to know it's free today? And anyway, why shouldn't they pay?" Diana asks me. "Do you think they can't afford it? Do you know how much cash they've got? They're all loaded with money, fucking capitalist scum! By the way, when are you going back?"
– "Tomorrow," I tell her.
– "Oh well, if you have to go, you have to go! Send me an invitation, 'cause I sure don't want to spend the rest of my life in this museum like an exhibit!"

One evening on my way home, I came up with a play on words: the right to think freely, the right to think, free right or free to think?

Diana was on the balcony. She was smoking and was surrounded by some guys.

– "Hey, do you fuck?" one of them asks Diana.
– "Shhh, the neighbors will hear!" she whispers.
– "Hey, are you deaf or something? I asked you if you fuck."
– "If Mariana fucks then so do I!" Diana responds.

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English translation by Paul Bowman.

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