



Fuckin' Foreigner

Igor Ilic

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Although Igor Ilic is called a “fuckin’ foreigner” only once in his memoir of a Croatian immigrant’s life in California, the title is less about that insult than it is a description of how Ilic spent most of his time in America. “Fuckin’” is an adjective, a descriptive nickname for a man who has sex with almost as many women as there are chapters in his book, and who does so repeatedly, proudly, and, if he can be believed, to the great mutual satisfaction of all involved.

The memoir does not begin as a sex book, but by page 85 of this 263-page work it becomes just that—and little else. This is a shame, because the first third of the book is at times poignant and insightful. In these early chapters, Ilic offers an intriguing look into the culture of Croatian immigrants (legal and otherwise) who also came to America with the intent to stay just long enough to make some money, but who became “taken over by life in California” and “probably will never go back” to their native land.

The author’s portrayal of members of the Croatian expatriate community in California and how they provide a support system for their fellow countrymen is believable and compassionate, as well as inspiring. Although the lack of paragraph breaks makes for difficult reading at times, there is much of value to be found in those run-on pages. Or at least there is until Ilic turns from writing of his quest for work and money to his admitted “hunt” for women and sex.

Ilic hops from bed to bed with reckless and exhausting abandon. After eighty pages of this he appears to mature, and he writes of his girlfriend, Dolores, “It is nice to have someone who thinks of you and gives you their attention. With whom you can also talk, share some ideas or secrets, and whom you are not only using for sex and satisfying your lust.” Two pages later that relationship is history, and Ilic is back on his quest for women with “perky breasts” and “perfect booties,” neither of which, as he notes, are in short supply in southern California.

Ilic gives the impression that while a few of his conquests have their imperfections, all of these women are beautiful and eager to satisfy their Croatian lover. The author’s graphic descriptions of his sexual conquests are both lurid and boastful, and quickly become boring and tedious. Ilic obviously enjoyed his sexual tour of the West Coast, but—even if his stories are all true—by choosing to focus on his lusty adventures, he moves away from his original and far stronger theme.

What Ilic has to say about an immigrant’s life in America is not merely obscured but also overwhelmed by what becomes little more than a collection of letters from the Penthouse Forum. Had Ilic stayed true to the themes, style, and honesty he shows in the first third of his book, *Fuckin’ Foreigner* could have been a valuable addition to the oral history and study of what life is really like in the Croatian immigrant community in California.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (July 17, 2012)

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