

Antonella Giorgioni
Restaurateur
(1956-2017)
In Memoriam

Antonella Giorgioni: I was born in '56, on November 8, '56, from a very simple family. My father was coming out of eight years of war, my mother was, I would not say semi-illiterate, but she had only completed second grade, and so my dad. Back from the war he had to roll up his sleeves, he already had a daughter, my older sister, and became a miner. He worked in a sulfur mine for the old Montecatini, which later became Montedison. Unfortunately I only knew one grandmother because the others all died before I was born, anyway my family and the entire entourage, my whole family, cousins, all, was a peasant family, a family of sharecroppers, that is, extremely poor.

During school I was a militant of a group of the extreme left, called Lotta Continua [The Struggle Goes On], there we distributed flyers in factories, we picketed schools, protested the Vietnam war, anyway we were all under police surveillance and for these three years, I was in Lotta Continua until when feminism was born, we, women of Lotta Continua held a meeting in Rome and we split and joined feminism.

Back home from Ravenna, from the school in Ravenna, I began to be a little active in the Communist Party of my village, in the branch of the Communist Party, in a Catholic village, they voted Christian Democracy. And then gossips and more gossips, that I was the lover of this one, that I was sleeping with that one, that I was sleeping with that other one, all sorts of things, you know, old ladies in the village, they have nothing to do, it was a whole bla bla bla...I worked for a certain period in the branch of the Communist Party and then with the feminist group of UDI [Unione delle Donne Italiane, Union of Italian Women], which was the part of the Party, the feminist part of the Communist Party.

Then I would like to explain to the new generations what was feminism for us. One must consider that in the years in which feminism was born in Italy women were very.. as I said before, the fact that I worked in the branch of the Communist Party meant I was a loose woman, the fact that there were only men, that I was the only woman... feminism for us represented a certain freedom, the freedom to be friends with boys, to feel freer. We could not go out with boys in the evening, at 10pm we had to be home. We could not go out and have pizza with friends, it was not possible. And this is just what regards the time

I was a young girl, but feminism represented many other struggles, it means abortion, divorce, independence, right to work, not having always a man as a boss, the possibility of a career. This has been the story of feminism.

I remained in Albania eight years and I would like to explain why I stayed in Albania for eight years. I immediately liked Albania. First of all, people moved on foot only, and in the afternoon there was this tide of people that began at the museum, came down to the university, and then went up on the other side, practically they walked all this route, and it was beautiful. There were no cars, as I said, I was the only one who had a car, there were very few cars and people were curious, had such curiosity, because they knew almost everything about Italy, but they knew it only illegally, because they had to hide to watch TV, and they knew only through TV, but then the first tourists, the first internationals came, and people went crazy with curiosity.

Imagine that when I went there in '92, the Hotel Daiti, which I think now is closed, I don't know, perhaps they are renovating it, was not open to the public, when I went there, these people came in sleeveless t-shirts and slippers from the villages during the summer to see this hotel Daiti, where all the big shots used to go, it was incredible.

And then I saw Albania in its splendor, all those beautiful things, the sea, the sea is very beautiful, I mean, from Dhermi, you pass Saranda, you pass Vlora, you go along the southern coast, it is something splendid. The Museum of Berat, which unfortunately was looted in '97, and then looted again during the troubles of '98, but is very beautiful, with the works of Onufri, with that very beautiful Orthodox Church. In Fieri there is a monastery which has been now returned to the Orthodox monks, but they had made a restaurant of it, the church is very beautiful with frescoes, at the time of Enver Hoxha they used it as a granary, imagine. Thus, I saw the beautiful part of Albania. And the South is exceptional, so much so that even now, when I go on vacation, I don't go to Italy, I go to the seaside in Albania.

How did I come from Albania here? I had a very large clientele, in the meanwhile in Albania there were several international missions at that time, I am talking about '99, but many had completed their mission in Albania and had already moved to the missions [in Kosovo] after September, they had come here, to Kosovo, even before September, and every once in a while they would come to close their project in Albania and would say, 'Antonella, come on, come to Kosovo, come to Kosovo, come to Kosovo! We cannot eat there, there is nothing, we cannot eat, there is no food, there is no atmosphere, there is nothing, there is nothing.'

And one morning I wake up and tell myself, 'Beh, why don't I go to Kosovo?' Let me premise that during the exodus from Kosovo we had hosted, my partner and I - we had a small tavern under our restaurant which was reserved for events such as birthdays and it was as big as the restaurant, with two

bathrooms, it had everything to be self-sufficient -, we had hosted a family of 15 people from Prizren, practically two adults and the rest were children. So, Kosovo, 'I know where they live, I may go to Kosovo. I stop by Xhema, the only man who accompanied all that family, I will ask him, and then I will go to Pristina.'

I now have been here in Kosovo for 13 years, I no longer like to go back to Italy. I am fine there for fifteen, twenty days, I don't feel at home anymore, it is a completely different world. Here I go out, shop in the small shop, which is open from Monday to Sunday, next to my home. Children call me *teta* Antonella, which means Aunt Antonella, the whole neighborhood knows me. What would I do in Italy? On Saturday I would go to shop at the supermarket for the whole week, and then throw away half of the refrigerator, no, I don't feel at home there anymore.

My projects...I already said, it is perhaps ugly talk, but I have already said to my kids [the waiters], 'Surely I will die here.' The restaurant will be theirs because nobody from my family will come here from Italy, the walls are not mine but what is inside the restaurant is theirs, and they can do what they want with it. And they should bury me here, there is a very beautiful village near Prizren on the right side, yes, on the right side, between Prizren and Gjakova there is a very beautiful cemetery up in the mountains, a Catholic cemetery. I would also go to a Muslim cemetery, it is not a problem, no. They should bury me up there with a sheet, a simple coffin, and that's it.