



Chiara Ottaviano
Presents

terramatta:

Directed by
COSTANZA QUATRIGLIO

Distributed by
ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTÀ

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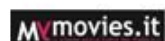
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CREDITS

Directed by
Story & screenplay by
Film editor
Photography
Original score
Sound recordist
Sound editor
Sound mixer

Costanza Quatriglio
Chiara Ottaviano and Costanza Quatriglio
Letizia Caudullo
Sabrina Varani
Paolo Buonvino
Antonio Dolce
Vito Martinelli
Andrea Malavasi

The piece *Celentano*, written and composed by V. Moretto, is arranged and performed by ...A Toys Orchestra C&P 2010 urtovox.

Narrating voice

Roberto Nobile

With the participation of

Turi, Tano and Giovanni Rabito

The autobiographical memoirs of Vincenzo Rabito were awarded the “Pieve – Banca Toscana” award in 2000 by the National Diary Archive Foundation of Pieve Santo Stefano.

They were published in 2007 by Giulio Einaudi Editore as TERRA MATTA.

Co-production
In collaboration with
Associate producer
With the support of

Cliomedia Officina and Cinecittà Luce
Film Commission Region of Sicily
Stefilm
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Province of Ragusa, City of Ragusa, Municipality of Chiaramonte Gulfi, University of Catania

and the patronage of

Organization for Cinecittà Luce
Co-ordinator for Cliomedia Officina
Assistant to the director and research at the Luce Archive

Maura Cosenza
Gianpaolo Fissore

Giovannella Rendi

Archive footage

Luce Historical Archive

and

AAMOD – Audiovisual Archive of the workers’ movement; Film Library of the Region of Sicily; Tommaso Bordonaro; Enrico Russo. The film-makers wish to thank the Friuli Film Archives for their collaboration

DISTRIBUTION

Communication
Istituto Luce Cinecittà

ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTÀ

Maria Carolina Terzi - mc.terzi@cinecittaluce.it

Year: 2012

RUNNING TIME: 74 min.; b/w and colour, HD CAM

Vincenzo Rabito, a person who had been illiterate all his life, made up a language and left an autobiography of over one thousand pages.

His memoirs won an award at the national diary-writing Competition in Pieve Santo Stefano in 2000.

Giulio Einaudi Editore published them as "TERRA MATTA" Making them an extraordinary publishing success.

SYNOPSIS

A symphony of past and present landscapes, archive footage, electronic music and near and far away lands. A made-up language, neither Italian, nor dialect, yet musical and expressive like the one of a story-teller. Born in 1899, Vincenzo Rabito, an illiterate Sicilian, narrates the 20th century in thousands of densely type-written pages collected in booklets held together with string. From extreme poverty to the economic boom, it is a century of wars and adversities, but also of redemption and work. This novel point of view is of a scarcely considered person who, in writing his own autobiography, rereads the history of Italy in a passionate and sweeping narration that thrills and moves you, forcing you to come to terms with contradictory and uncomfortable truths.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The semi-colons separating every word are blue craters on the rough surface of yellowed pages held together with string. The type-written letters are huge, I bring them into focus one at the time; each is the outcome of a battle and, when the word is written, the battle seems to be won, even though the warrior cannot rest, because another battle and another war awaits him; the focus is our punctuation to interpret an ecosystem of misspelt words which are consistent and extremely effective, however, owing to their expressive strength.

The language of Vincenzo Rabito is a language of bodies, of blood shed in war, of bear feet and sleepless nights and, accompanied by the chatter of the typewriter, we plough across that sea of words to reach the coasts of near and far away lands: Chiaramonte Gulfi, Ragusa, Regalbuto, as well as Slovenia, Ethiopia and Germany. I filmed words and landscapes using long-focus lenses, capable of ripping out the letters from the sheets of paper to restore meaning to the detailed narrative of Vincenzo Rabito.

Like a story-teller, this elderly lengthman from Chiaramonte Gulfi has an epic vision of himself, compares his "*dishonest life*" to that of *Guerin Meschino*, clarifying to his readers that that world of chivalric adventures is nourishment for himself and his self-representation. I went along with this: the voice-over narrates not the man, but what man is a bearer of, namely imagination. This is imagination made up of individual and collective memories. The tone of the voice conveys a feeling of intimate adhesion offering us right from the very start the univocal point of view of a person who is both the protagonist and the spectator.

Rabito crosses an entire century on foot, rightfully stepping inside the folds of major collective events with the ungrammatical ink of his typewriter. In so doing, he soils History with a capital H and together with History, he tells us the story of a lifetime, of man who in old age defines his own identity in his urge to narrate.

This is why, in getting my hands on the visual memory of Italians, I contradicted the official version of image-based historiography to reinvent the meaning of those black and white film clips, soiling them in turn with blue, green and yellow ink. In so doing, I wanted to give a pop flavour and impose a different meaning, another narrative place to regime images. Rabito knew how to narrate with irony, subtlety and pain. And this is exactly what I wanted to render through this work of recovering the meaning of solemn and sometimes well-known images, such as those of Mussolini. In so doing, the relationship with viewers is based on the dialectic between collective imagination and singular narration which becomes plural because it concerns all of us. The memory of what we were. There is more to it: imagination has to come to grips with its dark side, the one hidden between the folds of History written in the masculine. With the accuracy of a reporter, Rabito narrates that he took part in a gang rape of a young woman at the end of World War I. Sixty years later, he makes us relive that moment without asking to be forgiven or feeling guilty, by delivering us pages that are as disagreeable, as they are meticulous in their description of this horrendous act of revenge.

In the film, from the standpoint of language, every part has its own specificity. I broke down the story into acts, playing with the cinematographic memory of viewers.

The first World War is organised as if the entire sequence were a mute film where the scenes or acts are separated by boards where words become units of measurement, albeit in the form of a made-up language or joined-up words: “Madrepadre”, to say *madrepatria* or homeland and “vambadifuoco” to say bomb or trench.

The experience in colonial Africa is like a regime film. Rabito witnesses the propaganda but at the same time contradicts the Fascist rhetoric by playing the anti-hero and using his life as an ordinary man as the banner of his disturbing truth.

As the decades go by, the visual game of the film has to come to terms with recent history and hence the advent of television is described through a visit paid to the club in the main square of Chiaramonte where even today elderly men recall the crowded family nights in front of the TV set.

And then we move to the super8 memories, where the world of Rabito becomes his family and the “beautiful epic” of youth filled with hope for the future.

In making *Terramatta*; I took on the challenge of showing what you do not see, of filming the off-screen, the invisible, to respect or rather underscore the evocative strength of the writings. In this way, I sought the traces of yesterday in today, by filming places as if they were inhabited by the narrator. Dry-stone walls and cattle tracks became worlds to be lined with words which, flowing in streams of night-time projections, seem to loom up from an old film, thus becoming a memory too. *Terramatta*; is therefore a subjective-shot film that takes on the point of view of Vincenzo Rabito: he used to go on foot everywhere and I filmed the roads thinking about how he walked along them. Long, dusty roads, sweet and silent alleys. An obstinate and solitary gait, just like the chatter of his typewriter.

Costanza Quatriglio

BIO-FILMOGRAPHY

COSTANZA QUATRIGLIO (Palermo, 1973) has a degree in law and graduated in film direction at the Experimental Cinematography Centre. In 2003 she made her debut with *L'ISOLA*, invited at the Cannes Film Festival, within the framework of the "Directors' Fortnight" and distributed in Italy, France, Belgium, Canada, Spain and Latin America. Among her documentary films, which were awarded prizes at several festivals both in Italy and abroad and aired mostly by RaiTre, as well as Tele+, La7 and Sky Cinema, it is worth recalling *ècosaimale?*, Special Jury Award at the Turin Festival in 2000, *L'insonnia di Devi*, broadcast by Tele+ in 2001, *Racconti per l'isola*, presented at the Venice International Film Festival in 2003, *Raiz*, a miniseries of three 50-minute episodes broadcast by Rai Tre in 2004, *Il Mondo Addosso*, co-produced by Rai Tre and presented at the Rome Film Festival in 2006, *Il mio cuore umano*, also co-produced by Rai Tre, Special Event at the Locarno International Festival in 2009, *Breve film d'amore e libertà*, presented at the Rome International Film Festival in 2010 and *Io, qui lo sguardo delle donne* produced by Indigo Film in 2012.

Filmography including places where the premieres were held:

2012 documentary film **Terramatta; (75 min.)**

2012 documentary film **Io, qui (15 min.)** Campagna On line

2010 commercial **Solo per parlare - campagna Navigare Sicuri (90 min.)** Campagna On line

2010 short film **Breve film d'amore e libertà (14 min.)** – Rome Festival

2009 documentary film **Il mio cuore umano (52 min.)** – Locarno Festival/RaiTre

2008 short film for the collective film All Human Rights for all **Art.11 (4 min.)** - RaiTre

2007 commercial **Affidarsi - campagna Affidato Familiare (4 min.)** - Mikado/Rome Film Festival

2007 documentary film **Migranti in cammino (35 min.)** Campagna On line

2006 documentary film **Il mondo addosso (90 min.)** – Rome Film Festival /RaiTre

2005 documentary film **Metro ore 13 (5 min.)** - RaiTre

2004 documentary film **Comandare una storia zen (12 min.)** - SKY Cinema

2004 documentary film **Raiz part I, II, III (50 min. x 3)** - RaiTre

2003 documentary film **Racconti per l'isola (25 min.)** – Venice Film Festival, New Territories

2003 feature film **L'isola (103')** – Cannes Festival, Directors' Fortnight

2002 documentary film **La borsa di Helene (23 min.)** - La7

2001 documentary film **L'insonnia di Devi - viaggio attraverso le adozioni internazionali (68 min.)** - TELE+

2000 documentary film **Il bambino Gioacchino (25 min.)** - Festival dei Popoli

2000 documentary film **Ècosaimale? (60 min.)** - Torino Film Festival

2000 short film **Una sera (9 min.)** - TELE+

1999 short film **Il giorno che ho ucciso il mio amico soldato (16 min.)** - Helsinki Film Festival

1998 short film **Anna! (9 min.)** - Cannes Film Festival, short film

1997 short film **L'albero (6 min.)** - RaiTre

questa; e; la bella; vita; che; ho; fatto; il sotto; scritto; rabito
 vincenzo; nato; a chiaramente; gulfe; dallora; provincia; di; siragusa; figlio; di; f
 u; salvatore; e; di; curriere; salvatrice; chilassa, 31. maezo; 1899. e; per; sventura
 domiciliato; nella; via; tommaso; chiavola; la; sua; vita; fu; molta; la lettrata
 ta, e molto; travagliata; e molto; disprezzata; il padre: mori! a; 40. anne; e; mia;
 madre; resto; vedova; a; 38. anne; e; resto; vedova; con; 7. figlie; 4. maschele; e; 3. f
 emmine; e; senza; pensare; piu; alla; bella; vita? che; avesse; fatto; una; donna; c
 on il marito? solo; pensava; che; aveva; li, 7. figlie; da; campare; e; per; darece;
 ammanciare; il piu, crante; di; queste; figlie; si; chiamava; giovanni; ma; giovanni;
 di; questa, nomiosa; famiglia; non ni; voleva sentire; per, niente; se; antava; al
 lavorare; quelle; poche solde; che; guadagnava; non bastavano; neanche; per, lui;
 quante; quella; povera; di; mia madre: era; completamente; abilita; con tante; figli
 e? mio madre; con quelle; tempe; miserabile; per potere; campare; 7. figlie; con
 il tanto; la vore; nimori? con una pormentita? per non antare; arrobare; e; pe
 r; volere; camminare; onestamente; ma; il patreterno? quelle; che; vogliono; viver
 e; o; nestamente; in vece, di aiutarle; li famorire? cosi; il se conto; di; questa;
 nomerosa; famiglia, era; io; e dera; io; cincenzo; che credeva; ammia; madre; che; c
 he; cosi; piccolo; sapeva; che; mia madre; aveva molte; bisogna; dai figlie; per
 he; era; senza; marito; io; non la, voleva; sentire; lamentare; perche; non aveva; nie
 nte; per darece; ammanciare; ai suoi; figlie; i; tempe; erino; miserabile; li, nostr
 e; parente; erino; miserabile; come; noi; e; quante; non zipoteva; antare, avante
 i; nesuno; modo; cosi; io; che; aveva; da; 7. anne; che mi avevino; portate; allavorare
 che; da; piccolo; volevafare; solde; per forza; macare; quanto; cera; vivo; mio; pa
 dre; quante; io fui; nato; per; fare; una mala; vita; molto; sacrificata; e; molto; de
 sprezzata; quante; mia madre; era; con la stessa; mentalita; di mio; padre; che; non
 voleva; antare, arrobare; per campare; ai; suoi, figlie; e neanche; mia; madre; vo
 leva; fare; la butana; come tante; famiglie; che; fanno; tutte; le; porcarie; per
 potere; sfamare; ai suoi; figlie; tante; mia madre; voleva antarere; avanta; on
 esta; amante; io; era piccolo; maera; pieno; di coraggio; con pure; che; invece; i; mi
 diantare; alla scuola; sono; antato; allavorare; da; 7. anne; che restava; completamtra;
 ente; inafabete; quante; io; che capiva; che cosa; voleva; dai suoi, figlie; mia amma
 madre; per fare soldei; minantava; magare; allavorare; lontano; di chiaramente; i pi
 basti; io; portava; solde amia; madre; perche; mia; madre; non dermeva; alla; notte; di
 perche pensava che aveva 7. figlie; che; lo; piu, crante; era; da; 14/ o; 15. anne; bel
 io; Vincenzo; niaveva; 11; 12. anni; e la; piu, piccola; figlia; niaveva; 3. mese; vitt
 quante; io; solo; la capeva; quello; che aveva da; bisogno; mia; madre; io; solo alle
 pensava; che per manciare; ci volevino; solde; per non morire; di fame; questa; famu; in
 iglia; senza; padre; cosi; mia; madre; sempre; diceva; menomale; che; cene; vincenz vino
 o; che porta; qualche; lira; per dare; aiuto; alla famiglia; e deceva, sempre; che che,
 quante; portava, solde; mio; figlie; vincenzo; sempre; veneva; cantanto; e alle; le; e
 ro; ma; quanto; non portava solde; veneva; arrabiato; e bestimianto; perche; per mri
 che; non poteva; sentire; la mentare; al sua madre; perche; non cerantente; che; man; chi
 ciare; che brutta; vita; che; io; faceva; giovanni, neanche; ci pensava; vite; era; rno;
 di; 9. anne; e; magare; che; faceva; qualche cosa; faceva dase; mia, sorella; aveva, ; ch
 7. anne; antava, alla; scuola; ma, con quelle; miserabile; tempe; il desonesto; covera; ne
 no; non dava; neanche; uno; centesimo; per potere; comperare; uno; quaterno; ogni
 perche; voleva; che tutte; li povere; fassemo; inafabete; cosi; io; queste; lo; ilo;
 capeva; pure; poi; il desonesto; coverno; che comantava; non dava; maie, a segne; ogle
 e; dovemmo; stare; per forza; non i nafabete; solo; ma magare; molte; di; fame; ; ter
 ma io; mi piaceva; il manciare; ma; mi piaceva; ma gare; dicercare; il lavoro; per a; su
 che; era, sempre; pieno; di coraggio; e di cercare, lavoro; compure; che; aveva; aut che
 o; la; sventura; che restava; senza; padre; e mia madre; senza; marito; e; i poveritto;
 e; miei; fratele; e; li, piccole; 3. sorelline; restammo; tutte; senza; quida; e aese

The first page of the manuscript by Vincenzo Rabito

“Fifty years of Italian history experienced and narrated with extraordinary narrative strength. A handbook on involuntary and miraculous survival”

Andrea Camilleri

Notes – by Evelina Santangelo

There are books that have the power of putting yourself into question profoundly. *Terra Matta* by Vincenzo Rabito is one of these. Editing this autobiography of an obscure, semi-illiterate Sicilian labourer (sent to the Diaries Archive in Pieve di Santo Stefano with the approval of one of the members of the jury which sounded like “the masterpiece that nobody will ever read”) did not only imply reconsidering almost one century of Italian history – from World War I to the economic boom in the Sixties – but also proved to be one of those experiences that changes your vision of literature, your understanding of the act of “narrating”.

When, around the year 2003, I picked up the three volumes of the manuscript, those 1,027 pages crowded with apparently intricate characters, when, in other words, I found myself before that insurmountable wall of typewritten words (an old Olivetti typewriter which Rabito borrowed from his son Giovanni), I had no idea that I would have gradually discovered a world of highly acute thoughts on the most sensitive issues in our national history, the day-to-day and obstinate struggle to survive in times of misery, and that, in addition to all this, I would have come across a daily gesture (pursued for years in solitude) which had a lot to do with the gesture of the writer, of those writers who engage in a battle with their expressive capabilities (all writers have their expressive limits and linguistic intuitions) in the attempt to yield a world capable of going beyond the self-evidence and dullness of our day-to-day lives.

It took me some time to understand this, of course. At the start, bewilderment and the fear of getting lost in that jungle of words prevailed. After a while, however, I identified something that helped me find the way, so as to speak. I understood that every time that this labourer had something really urgent to say (about himself, his life, the collective life of a community of have-nots, or about History with a capital H where he had found himself involved on several occasions), in other words, every time that his desire to give shape to an intuition, a consideration or a human affair prevailed over his expressive limits, Vincenzo Rabito was able to find all the words he needed in a miraculous manner. Not many, but powerful ones. I called these moments of expressive happiness “narrative glades”. I pigeon-holed them patiently and gradually saw them proliferate whilst reading the manuscript which took me three years.

The other key to my work, which I found by plunging literally into the typewritten manuscript, has to do, instead, with my role of editor. Rabito is somebody who, wherever he ended up in the world, has always tried to build himself a house, a place made with his own two hands, using whatever he found. So, when I realised how important “a house” was to Rabito, I also understood that this autobiography was in some ways his “final house”, the only place where this obscure labourer had succeeded in fixing his identity, in accounting for his worth. He did not write for himself, Vincenzo Rabito (otherwise he would not have sought a language comprehensible to the majority), but for others, for posterity and for those who one day might read his memoirs. This is why, as the editor, I had to absolutely find a way of “disappearing” amidst those autobiographical pages. And I did it in a microsurgical way, by taking pieces of narration and using them as the necessary stitches to link those happy passages which I called “glades”, without ever trying to fill the

gaps or normalise that language, so powerful and alive even (and above all) with all its grammar mistakes and expressive distortions.

This is why it was a wonderful surprise to discover that, in making the film, Costanza Quatriglio too had decided to follow a similar criterion, orchestrating from behind the scenes that universe of words – made of written characters and disturbing orality underlying that idea of narration in an admirable way, the urgency of which Rabito expresses as follows: “If in this life a man never faces adventures, he’s got nothing to tell”. So, the strength of Costanza Quatriglio’s film lies in this too, in the way in which she let the epic narrated by Rabito come across entirely through his words engraved in things, landscapes or allowed to flow in an uninterrupted stream of orality. On the other hand, those same words, conquered one by one, are what allow us to listen to the history of our country as we had never listened to it before: from the point of view of those who often do not play an active role in History.

Evelina Santangelo, writer, edited together with Luca Ricci the publication of the manuscript by Vincenzo Rabito.

Rabito's places. The Diaries Archive of Pieve Santo Stefano.

Camillo Brezzi

Scientific director

Since 1984 when an ingenious journalist and wanderer, Saverio Tutino, came up with the idea, perhaps a little crazy, of collecting diaries, memoirs, testimonies and collections of letters of ordinary people, men and women who represent and forged the history of our country, in Pieve Santo Stefano, a small town in the Valtiberina in the province of Arezzo, almost 7,000 stories have been received, a collective heritage of memoirs. The journey of the seven booklets written by Vincenzo Rabito, all bound, densely typewritten for a total of 1,027 pages, is a story in the story.

In October 1999 Giovanni, in agreement with his brothers Gaetano and Salvatore, personally delivered the seven booklets to the Archive in Pieve, which won over the readers of the people's jury first and the national jury later. The latter decided to assign the highest award to the autobiography of this lengthman from Ragusa. Saverio Tutino writes: "after sixteen years we thought we had seen everything in this original experience. Until the Reading Committee received the monumental manuscript of a Sicilian whose surname was Rabito and name Vincenzo. And the reactions were amazing. Reading the diary of an entire life seems almost impossible. (...) Reading Vincenzo Rabito pushes the effort you need to make to read about a complicated life to the extreme limit".

I have been a member of the national jury for many years which in September awards the Pieve Prize to a diary forwarded the previous year. The work of the jury in 2000 was marked by great enthusiasm for the autobiography of Vincenzo Rabito, which is mirrored in the motivation drafted on that occasion: *Reading the manuscript of the lengthman from Ragusa, Vincenzo Rabito, is an unprecedented event in the history of our Archive. Lively, impetuous, non-tameable, the human matters of Rabito brim over the pages of his autobiography. The work is written in an oral language mixed with "Sicilianism", with a semi-colon separating every word. Rabito struggles in writing about himself for almost the entire 20th century, giving us his version of the history of Italy and battling with his typewriter, but creates such a dense tapestry of Sicily as to be comparable to a popular version of "The Leopard"*.

The difficulty that such a manuscript may face in being published, first and foremost owing to its length, prompted the jury to add a sort of "provocation" in its motivation: *The harshness of these writings – amounting to over two thousand pages – deprives us of the hope of seeing this document published in its entirety, which would surely delight linguists. "The masterpiece that you will never read", is how one jury member suggests headlining the news of the unlikely publication of this manuscript.*

From September 2000 onwards, another story in the story began which "seemed a huge challenge" as Saverio Tutino put it.

The work of Vincenzo Rabito is an autobiographical encyclopaedia. Everything that you normally seek in an autobiography is present in *Terra matta*.

For the Archive of Pieve, the work of Rabito is emblematic and hardly classifiable: extraordinary in the obvious meaning of the term. For the reader, it is a memorable emotion. This is the impression of the thousands of readers of *Terra matta*, overwhelmed by the stream of words of Vincenzo, "a real master of popular writing" as Saverio Tutino put it.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Chiara Ottaviano – Producer for Cliomedia Officina

The production of *“Terramatta. Il novecento italiano di Vincenzo Rabito analfabeta siciliano”*, (“Terramatta. The Italian 20th century by Vincenzo Rabito, an illiterate Sicilian”) which I produced as Cliomedia Officina together with Cinecittà Luce and of which I wrote the script together with Costanza Quatriglio, was possible because many people at various stages (idea, funding and production) believed in this project, taken first and foremost by the strength of the autobiographical story written by Vincenzo Rabito. This text was a revelation for many. The difficulty in reading through those pages is rewarded not only by the compelling narration, capable of moving and shocking you and making you laugh and smile, but also and above all, capable of helping you understand the past of our country, that 20th century during which we witnessed many, profound changes in Italy and Europe. The point of view, of overpowering and sometimes disarming truth, is that of a scarcely considered person. The 20th century is the “century of the masses” and the lengthman from Chiaramonte Gulfi is conscious of having taken part in “History” with a capital H, but only as one of the many cogs in the compulsory effort of having to constantly adapt. Rabito thought and acted like many other Italians who, however, generally do not leave any mark.

But how could we translate the story and that knowledge into original images? How to account for the more or less disturbing pages, when we could not be helped neither by the documents of the huge Luce Historical Archive, nor by the many other public and private archives consulted? The test was not one of the easiest and Costanza Quatriglio deserves all the credit for having succeeded in passing it, thanks to her remarkable qualities, such as the ability to obtain the best from all the people she involved thanks to her enthusiasm.