

fascists pointed to its more critical sections as proof that America was morally degenerate.

His most famous work, the novel *Le lettere da Capri* (The Capri Letters), follows the experiences of two American expatriates living in Rome, Capri, Paris and Philadelphia. The book, which garnered immense public and critical support, also won the 1954 Strega Prize (see **literary prizes**). Other works include *La verità sul caso Motta* (The Truth about the Motta Case) (1941), a psychological thriller, and *A cena col commendatore* (Dinner with the Commendatore) (1950), a collection of three long stories set in the world of art and music. The autobiographical novel *Le due città* (translated as *The Malacca Cane*) (1964) portraying a young man interested in a film career, is set in both Turin, which represents purity, and Rome, a symbol of decay. *L'attore* (The Actor), about a television director, was awarded the Campiello Prize in 1970. In a more psychological vein are novels such as *Il vero Silvestri* (The Real Silvestri) (1957), in which a dead man's lover and his best friend analyse his persona, and *L'Architetto* (The Architect) (1986).

A talented and multifaceted personality, Soldati has been involved in a wide variety of artistic activities, and has been at various times a journalist, art critic, radio lecturer, television producer, an actor and has also written knowledgeably on food and wine. In the 1930s he collaborated with Mario **Camerini** on the screenplays of many of his best films including *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni!* (Men, What Rascals!) (1932) and *Il Signor Max* (Mister Max) (1937), both starring Vittorio **De Sica**. Between 1938 and the late 1950s he also directed over thirty films, including elegant adaptations of two novels by the nineteenth-century author Antonio Fogazzaro, *Piccolo mondo antico* (The Little World of the Past) (1940) and *Malombra* (1942), and a moving film version of **Moravia's** novel, *La provinciale* (The Woman from the Provinces) (1952).

### Further reading

- Heiney, D. (1964) *America in Modern Italian Literature*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press (for a discussion of Soldati's works, see pp. 29–34 and 87–104).  
 Mauro, W. (1981) *Invito alla lettura di Mario Soldati* (Invitation to the Reading of Mario Soldati), Milan: Mursia (a critical overview of Soldati's works).

LAURA A. SALSINI

## Soldini, Silvio

b. 1958, Milan

Film director

One of the most impressive representatives of the **New Italian Cinema**, Soldini made his directorial debut with a short entitled *Drimage* (1982), the title being a collage of three words: dream, image, and age). In 1983 he created *Paesaggio configure* (Landscape with

Shapes), but it is with his 1985 fifty-eight minute production, *Giulia in ottobre* (Julia in October) that his cinema finally acquired its distinctive form, as Soldini found his own particular characters in those individuals who live alienated lives in a desolate urban environment. This is the characteristic landscape of his first feature, *L'aria serena dell'Ovest* (The Serene Air of the West) (1990). Then, with *Un'anima divisa in due* (A Split Soul) (1993), a startling and dazzling film in which a neurotic Milanese falls desperately in love with an enigmatic gypsy, Soldini confronts a foreign culture and tries to follow alternative existential and cultural paths as the tale is, at first, formally and stylistically divided into two and then merges differences into one narrative and stylistic flow. In 1997 he directed *Le acrobate* (The Female Acrobats).

MANUELA GIERI

## Solmi, Renato

b. 27 March 1927, Aosta

Editor, translator and literary critic

Solmi, like his father Sergio **Solmi**, has left behind ample testimony of his dedication as translator and literary critic. Renato Solmi's interests, however, have centred more on political-economic theory and on contemporary German philosophy, in particular the work of Adorno, Lukács, Benjamin and Brecht, which he edited and translated and thus helped to disseminate in Italy. Solmi also helped to found the journal *Discussioni* (Discussions), and from 1951–63 was editor at the **Einaudi** publishing house. He subsequently taught history and philosophy at the Liceo Scientifico Galileo Ferraris in Turin.

SHERRY ROUSH

## Solmi, Sergio

b. 16 December 1899, Rieti; d. 7 October 1981, Milan

Poet, art and literary critic

After graduating in law from the University of Turin, Solmi founded the Crocean-inspired journal *Primo tempo*. His earliest critical contributions were on French literature and included studies of Alain and Montaigne. During the Second World War Solmi fought in the **Resistance** movement and was captured and imprisoned in the jail of San Vittore, which served as the backdrop for much of the poetry of his 1950 collection, titled *Poesie*. This was followed in 1956 by *Levania* and *Dal balcone* (From the Balcony) (1968). Solmi's visions of cosmic isolation, especially in these last two volumes, link his