

## Agamben, Giorgio

b. 1942, Rome

Philosopher

Professor of philosophy at the University of Macerata and later at the University of Verona, Agamben was also for some time Director of the Philosophy Programme at the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. He attended Martin Heidegger's seminars in Le Thor in 1966–8 and, beginning in 1982, produced the Italian edition of the collected works of Walter Benjamin. Associated with the magazine *Aut aut*, Agamben came to be one of the most widely read and influential of the new Italian philosophers. His works include *Stanze* (Stanzas) (1977) on the problem of representation; *Infanzia e storia* (Infancy and History) (1979) on the relationship between experience and knowledge; *Il linguaggio e la morte* (Language and Death) (1982), an analysis of the place of negativity in philosophical discourse; and *La comunità che viene* (The Coming Community) (1990) on the contemporary forms of sociality. *Homo sacer* (1995) and *Mezzi senza fine* (Means Without End) (1996) are a rethinking of political categories in a period of crisis for the nation-state. Agamben writes in an erudite and epigrammatic style, and his work is a mixture of philology and contemporary linguistics imbued with references to medieval scholars and theorists of Judeo-Christian scripture.

LAURENCE SIMMONS

## Age and Scarpelli

Perhaps the most famous and versatile scriptwriting team of Italian postwar cinema, Age (Agenore Incrocci, b. 1919, Brescia) and Scarpelli (Furio Scarpelli, b. 1919, Rome) began their long partnership by writing some of the **Totò** movies. However their real triumph was to bring Italian film comedy out of **neorealism** and into the so-called comedy Italian style (**commedia all'Italiana**). Eventually they also played an instrumental role in the major transformation of the genre in the 1970s. They scripted many of the early classics of the genre: **Monicelli's** *I soliti ignoti* (Big Deal on Madonna Street) (1958) and *La grande guerra* (The Great War) (1959), Dino **Risi's** *I mostri* (The Monsters) (1963) and **Germi's** *Sedotta e abbandonata* (Seduced and Abandoned) (1964). In the 1970s they wrote some of **Scola's** best films, from *C'eravamo tanto amati* (We All Loved Each Other So Much) (1974) to *La terrazza* (The Terrace) (1980), a caustic and

self-reflexive critique of both comedy Italian style and the society it portrayed and perhaps produced. In the mid-1980s their fertile collaboration came to an end.

MANUELA GIERI

## Agnelli family

The most famous entrepreneurial dynasty of Italy, owners of **Fiat** and Juventus, a popular Italian football team, the Agnelli are the very emblem of private family-based capitalism, Italian style. In spite of the tremendous growth of Fiat in the century since its foundation, the family has succeeded in retaining control of the company through financial holdings whose exclusive shareholders have always been members of the family and by solid alliances with other entrepreneurial families such as the **Pirelli**. Nevertheless, what might be called ‘the Buddenbrook syndrome’—that is, the fear of the extinction of the dynasty and its vocation for business—has surfaced as a recurring threat in the family’s history, obliging it to face the choice of either continuing their entrepreneurial tradition or becoming simple rentiers.

Management, in fact, has been quite a demanding inheritance, and transmission of it has never turned out to be smooth. In 1945, Giovanni Agnelli, the founder and, until then, absolute ruler died with no heirs to take his place, since Edoardo, his only son, had been killed in 1935 in an air crash, and Gianni, his elder nephew, was still too young. The family thus appointed Vittorio Valletta, a powerful manager who had been the founder’s right hand, as chairman of the group. After Valletta’s exit in 1966, Gianni (a cosmopolitan figure, then considered a golden boy of the international jet-set) and his younger brother Umberto felt obliged to take a leading role, but soon neglected their managerial responsibilities. Gianni, nicknamed the Lawyer, (*l’avvocato*), became leader of the **Confindustria** (the Employers Association), while Umberto, pursuing political ambitions, was elected a senator for the Christian Democrat party. One of the Agnelli sisters, Susanna, also followed a political career in the Italian Republican Party (**PRI**) which culminated in her becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs in the **Dini** government (1995–6). During the 1970s, even Gianni was unable to disguise his ambition to achieve prestigious public office such as Italy’s ambassador to the United States. Moreover Edoardo, Gianni’s son, showed no entrepreneurial vocation at all, declaring himself deeply distrustful of science and technology and rather fond of Eastern philosophy. No wonder that in the harsh crisis of the mid-1970s, rumours spread that the Agnelli were about to abandon business.

The dilemma was again resolved by hiring dynamic external managers such as Cesare **Romiti** and Vittorio Ghidella, who succeeded in relaunching Fiat’s fortunes. Finally in the 1990s, the Agnelli had to prepare the succession in view of Gianni’s (and Romiti’s) exit, though this could no longer be only a family affair since external shareholders (such as foreign banks) had gained a large influence and Fiat needed strong international alliances to cope with the challenge of global markets. All the family’s hopes were placed in Giovanni, Umberto’s son, a promising young manager educated in the United States, who had already successfully run Piaggio (the motorbike company which produces the