

The Displaced Homo Viator / Liminal Personae - Emilio Pettoruti and Lina Bo Bardi Defying Classification in the Cultural Spaces between the Old and New Worlds

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*'The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these people elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space.'*¹

*'... Travellers are often cast in the role of structuralists, necessarily binarized, engaged in an outsiderly process of judgement and comparison.'*²

The list of Italian cultural contributions into South America is exhaustive. Typical of most immigrant groups, Italians often contributed objects that resembled or represented the displacement of their European culture, sometimes with little regard for their new context. The architectural works of Ernesto Vespignani's *neo-Lombard Romanesque* in Argentina and those of Marcello Piacentini's own signature *stilo littorio* in Brazil strangely represented misplaced Italian architectural movements that were both associated with debates of Italian nationalism. More sentimental examples resembling Italian-ness in a foreign condition could be found in the everyday scenes of Italian immigrant life in rural and urban landscapes depicted by Italian painters such as Lorenzo Gigli in Argentina and Alfredo Volpi in Brazil.

The cultural productions of Italo-Argentine painter Emilio Pettoruti and Italian architect Lina Bo Bardi differ, I argue, because they were able to adorn the guise of 'liminal personae' in order to critically '*engage in an outsiderly process of judgement and comparison*'. The gaze of the wayfarer, a *homo viator* of modernity in a strange world, that both Pettoruti in Italy and Bo Bardi in Brazil adopted, enabled each to avoid the strict confines of national identity, political affiliation, and classification of any single artistic movement.

This essay presents the works of Pettoruti and Bo Bardi as *threshold people*, in contrast to many others who contributed elements of Italian cultural production in Argentina and Brazil.

¹ V.W. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), 81.

² Curtis and Pajaczkowska, "Getting there: travel, time and narrative" in *Travellers Tales Narratives of home and displacement* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 201.