
LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF BRANCUSI'S STUDIO*

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Abstract: *This essay examines two novels, the main character of which is Constantin Brancusi: **The Interview** [1944] by Ilarie Voronca, and **The Saint of Montparnasse** [1965] by Peter Neagoe. Although dissimilar in style and genre, the two novels share the same pattern of shaping the artist's image, grounded on mythical elements that are traceable at some points back in the Renaissance. The studio plays the key role in structuring the narrative of the two novels. Seen as an extension, if not as a double of the sculptor character, the studio is a space of seduction and authority, malleable and metamorphic, meant to set up the encounter with the artist.*

Keywords: *Constantin Brancusi – Ilarie Voronca – Peter Neagoe – the artist's studio – the legend of the artist – fiction and art history.*

Mots-clé: *Constantin Brancusi; Ilarie Voronca; Peter Neagoe; le studio de l'artiste; la légende de l'artiste; fiction et histoire de l'art.*

The mythologies of modernity have carved out for the artist a place at the intersection between inherited stereotypes and the new status the artist creates for him/herself. The myth of the modern artist slides along a groove that runs between the public's desire to explain or at least capture within discourse the mysterious nature of the artist, and the labour the artist himself exerts in the service of his own image. In the earlier twentieth century in particular, the shaping of the artist's personality is not external to his work, but an integral part of it. In keeping with a tradition that goes back to Renaissance times, the originality of the work sometimes demands to be confirmed by the originality or even eccentricity of the artist as a person.

There are modern artists whose myths are of extremely wide currency, such as

Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, and Salvador Dali. The popular conception of these artists relies on a number of general types of the exceptional person, which, taken together, make up the imaginary figure of the artist. In each case, whether we are talking about Van Gogh "the saint", Picasso "the genius", Duchamp "the hero", or Dali "the fool", the notoriety belongs rather to the person and the biography, and the artist's work plays almost a decorative role within this kind of discourse.¹

The myth woven around the figure of Constantin Brancusi does not necessarily fall under any of the aforementioned categories, but the mechanisms whereby it is constructed are to a large extent similar. The artist fostered contradictory interpretations about himself, allowing himself to be perceived now as a fashionable figure, now as an aesthete, now as a peasant in the middle of Paris.² These paradoxes are believed to be an extension of his artistic strategies. Numerous critics have emphasised his intention to create a body of work outside time, which would be simultaneously archaic and modern. His sculptures made reference to archaic cultures, be they from the European space or not, while their formal outlook were

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absolutely modern. For example, some critics have considered that the fragmented character in certain works by Brancusi is analogous to the archaeological fragment, which, once removed from its original context, loses its primary functions and meanings. Similar to the mutilated and de-contextualised object, Brancusi's corporeal fragments are supposed to be a substitute for a wholeness that is almost impossible to situate spatially or, above all, temporally.³ At another level, the extreme polish of his works, their seriality, and the transposition of the same object in different materials are features that may be seen as having points in common with industrial production. It is no accident that these features are also responsible for erasing the authorial imprint that every artistic object must bear in accordance with tradition. As in the case of Duchamp – and through unexpected convergences of trajectory between the two artists – the impersonality of the work fosters a mythical image of the artist.⁴ Brancusi's charisma is described by numerous contemporary artists, art lovers and persons close to him, as well as by people who had fleeting, chance encounters with the sculptor. What connects most such accounts is the space where the encounter took place, the space of the sculptor's work par excellence: the studio.⁵ A total work of art, Brancusi's studio was the stage set where the sculptor guided his visitors according to a ritual established in advance. It was a *site of seduction*⁶ in which artist and work merged together, leaving the visitor with the impression that he/she was experiencing something out of the ordinary. Likewise, it was a site of artistic authority, because the interactions that Brancusi conceived for his works, which were exhibited as genuine installations within the studio, the aphorisms with which he adorned his conversation, and not least his constant photographing of the studio were all effective strategies whereby he could monopolise interpretations of his work. His studio functioned as a "*proto-white cube*," which, on the one hand, conferred autonomy

on his sculpture, and, on the other, guided its reception.⁷ Consequently, it is not at all surprising that the accounts of those who visited Brancusi are similar. Nevertheless, they provide ample material for research into the myth that the sculptor contributed towards shaping and maintaining during a considerable part of his artistic career.

There is a separate species of descriptions of encounters with Brancusi that transcends what we might cautiously call the documentary accounts, and becomes an artistic, specifically literary expression in its own right. Among the relatively many writers who dedicated texts to the sculptor, two stand apart as having made Brancusi their main character in a novel. They are Ilarie Voronca, who published *The Interview* a year before the end of the Second World War,⁸ and Peter Neagoe, whose biographic novel *The Saint of Montparnasse* was published posthumously in 1965.⁹ Even if they are very different at first glance, the two novels converge inasmuch as both construct their text around the motif of the studio. This motif dates from the nineteenth century, when numerous writers, beginning with Honoré de Balzac and his much commented *The Unknown Masterpiece*, made the artist a character that might, or might not be based on a real person.¹⁰

The circumstances in which Voronca and Neagoe met Brancusi are also different. Peter Neagoe belonged to the same generation as Brancusi, whom he had met at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest. They met again in Paris, where the writer spent a number of years during the inter-war period. Some critics have remarked upon a number of biographical similarities: running away from home; studying at the School of Fine Arts; leaving Romania and settling in the West. Neagoe emigrated to the United States, where he wrote his literary work and where, somewhat like Brancusi, he had problems with the authorities, being accused of immorality. In any case, the Brancusi character in his novel seems to be a kind of *porte-parole* for the writer's own artistic conception.¹¹

Voronca's relationship with Brancusi evolved according to a completely different pattern. On the one hand, the Romanian avant-garde of which Voronca was a member regarded Brancusi as a hero of modernity and attempted to co-opt him, especially during its early years. Here, for example, is a passage from a letter he received by Brancusi from M. H. Maxy, the founder of *Integral* magazine, in 1926: "And we are proud, for far away from us, as our spiritual leader, you have remained pure throughout all the struggles of all the experiments, providing us with a clear example for our movement."¹² On the other hand, Voronca was part of the very numerous group of Romanians in Paris who visited the sculptor at the recommendation of mutual acquaintances. The poet was a habitu  of the studio, and the friendship between him and Brancusi is mentioned in the memoirs of a number of contemporaries.¹³ In addition, Brancusi agreed to provide him with illustrations for a volume of poetry, *Plants and Animals*, which was published in Paris in 1929. Fifteen years later, *The Interview* celebrates the friendship between Voronca and Brancusi and attempts to reinforce it with an existential dimension by means of literature: according to the preface, the novel is "the encounter between a poet and a sculptor." Because they share the same visionary qualities, the Poet and the Sculptor are privileged interlocutors for one another. "My sympathy lies only with the poets," says the Brancusi character at one point in the novel. "They alone realise sometimes that routine and the world of comfort and conformism prevents one from seeing, hearing and feeling the most astonishing aspects of the universe." The fact that the novel was written and published during a period of crisis – the Second World War had not yet ended – might also be significant to a certain degree. In the preface the author argues that only the experience of death allows any understanding of the book's contents. On the one hand, this might refer to the

introduction of a literary motif that was to appear in the novel proper, namely that of the descent into hell: the visit to the studio of the sculptor character takes the form of a ritual of initiation. On the other hand, what might be read here is the oppression of war and a strange premonition of death: Voronca was to commit suicide less than two years later.

One significant similarity between the novels of Neagoe and Voronca is the fact that both set in motion the same mythic materials. In both cases, the Brancusi character embodies the artist/demiurge, who recreates the world and masters time. *The Interview* opens by introducing the novel's nameless main character, who is identified absolutely with his craft (creator/sculptor): "Through a series of rather extraordinary circumstances I had managed to be recommended to the great creator."¹⁴ It is only in the afterword that Brancusi is revealed to have been the source for the construction of the literary character. From the same romantic conception Peter Neagoe draws other elements with which he endows his literary character, as to whose real identity there can be no doubt. The Brancusi character works in solitude, defying material hardships, without paying any attention to the artistic trends of the time, and in spite of being misunderstood by his contemporaries. Neagoe dwells in particular upon Brancusi's apprenticeship years and the period before he established his sculptural repertoire. For this reason, the character is shown searching persistently for the essential form that will become a new point of departure for sculpture.

Another element may be added to the list of themes the two novels have in common: the integration of what was soon to become an established way of commenting on the work of Brancusi, which was also later embraced by a branch of professional interpretation. This direction is founded on the supposition that Brancusi's artistic strategy was aimed at transcending the appearances of the sensible world and seeking a spiritual principle.¹⁵

Having pointed out the intersections between the two novels, I shall now analyse each in turn, tracing the ways in which the Brancusi myth participates in the construction of the main characters. Above all, this analysis will in both cases aim to shed light on the image of the studio and the way in which it structures the text.

In *The Saint of Montparnasse*, Peter Neagoe chooses the studio as the main axis of the narrative structure. The history of the studio is identical to that of the sculptor himself. Just as in the studio multiple stages of artistic production exist together simultaneously, so too the history of the studio marks the stages of the artist's career. Moreover, each hypostasis of the studio contains within it all the others.

Neagoe chooses the biography for his account on Brancusi in which he melts historical facts, art historical interpretations, and fictional events or persons. Ever since the Vasari, in the artist's biography, fiction and history have been nested within each other.¹⁶ Following Hayden White, Philip Sohm considers their coexistence impossible to disentangle: "the migration of fact into fiction is a necessary and even a desirable of writing history, [...] all biography constructs a text from other text."¹⁷ In Neagoe's novel we are also dealing with what Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz have called "the legend of the artist".¹⁸ This might ideally consist of all the recurrent motifs to be found in the biographical texts dedicated to artists, and which provide them with a kind of structure. The "legend" sets in motion a circuit, as it reflects the reception of the artistic personality, on the one hand, and nourishes it, on the other. The authors make an inventory of these recurrences and point to their possible ancient sources, and they propose a host of hypotheses about their recurrence. They might be understood as mythemes that organise and configure the myth of the artist. It might be surprising that the majority of the mythic units investigated by Kris and Kurz, especially those to be found in ancient authors, and in the lives of

Giorgio Vasari, can be found in a novel published in New York in 1965. Although some features of the figure of the artist does not seem to have undergone any major changes in the realm of the imaginary, Neagoe introduces also modern elements such as the revolution in both art life, the spiritual meaning of his art, the marginality of the artist which pairs with a later acknowledgement of the work, and the Boheme way of life. They were not at all a literary concoction, but a reflection of a new image of the artist shared, in different formats and degrees, by popular culture and by art historical writing. For both, the features mentioned above serve as evidence of modernity.

The second chapter of *The Saint of Montparnasse (Workshop in the Woods)* introduces the first such unit: the precocious child tries out his talents by himself and thanks to a chance encounter they are recognised, which opens a new biographical stage.¹⁹ At the age of thirteen Constantin has his first workshop, where, as chance would have it, he is visited by Mihail Romanov, probably an imaginary character, who admires his work and obtains a place for him at the Arts and Crafts School in Craiova. On the other hand, to his family, the workshop is a strange, useless place, "neither house nor stable," in which Brancusi makes "queer toys" and "amusing pieces". This first studio seems to have had the same functions and qualities that were later to be attributed to the Parisian studio on the Impasse Ronsin, the one with which Brancusi was to be identified. Here, it is a mysterious place for withdrawal and meditation, "a thing indefinable,"²⁰ but which does not exclude other people. It is a space that is already prepared to receive and potentiate essential encounters.

The Paris studio is almost a reconstruction of the workshop in the woods. As in the case of the first studio, what is emphasised here is the fact that each object bears the artist's imprint: "He [a visitor] was almost blinded by the

luminosity of the room, was enhanced by the whitewash on the walls. The decorated peasant spreads on the table, lounge, and chests lent brilliant touches of colour, and brought the world of peasant handicraft to a corner of Paris.”²¹ There is a symbiosis between studio and artist, which, once established, will be impossible to dissolve: “A sculptor has to build his own world around himself the way a crustacean builds a snug shell.”²² The objects in the studio, among which the sculptures seem to occupy, at least for the moment, a marginal place, form a whole whose effect is magical and at the same time strange. As Peter Neagoe was interested in the civilization of the Romanian village, a major theme in his writing, he exaggerates the peasant side of Brancusi here as well as in other contexts. At the same time, this element guarantees, in a way, other features of the character and his artistic work: sincerity, simplicity and spirituality. The contrast with the studio of Rodin, the only other studio mentioned in the novel, thus becomes more powerful and significant: manual labour stands in opposition to the almost industrialised world of the studio-factory.

The novel’s narrative is guided by the destiny of Brancusi as an absolute innovator in art. The key moments that are described at certain points in the narrative represent leaps, which leave behind them formula after formula, whether it be academicism or the art of Rodin. As each “formula” completes its pedagogic function, it disappears without trace. The refusal to work based on ideas or practices configured by others takes concrete form in the radical decision to gut his own studio: “I’ll clean the place thoroughly. It’s important that the studio be perfectly clean.”²³ It is only now that the studio achieves an original mythical state, and is consequently ready to receive the new sculpture: “Without the clutter of the old form, the studio looked empty, but for Constantin it was a living, vital emptiness that called him to work, to fill the emptiness with forms grown out from his

own mind, such as no other sculptor has ever conceived. He was called and he was chosen.”²⁴

The studio seems to be an autonomous structure capable of protecting art from all kinds of perversion, and perhaps this is why it endures in time and history. The upheavals of war, for example, have no impact upon the hermetically enclosed space. The last chapter in the novel is also dedicated to the studio. Brancusi had already become an artist whose merits were unanimously acknowledged. Here, we are dealing with a “classic” description: the studio is invaded by the white light mentioned by every visitor. The light causes the sculptures to vibrate and animates the space, but it also becomes a metaphor of the mysterious and singular life of the studio. What recurs here with greater force than in other episodes of the novel is a version of the old topos of the artist who rivals and even surpasses nature, as the works in the studio “find no equal in nature ... but rather they are the fruit of the sculptor’s imagination.”²⁵

The parallel the writer constructs between Brancusi’s life and the history of his studio is pursued to the very end of the novel. The life of the studio ends at the same time as that of the sculptor, and the natural consequence of this is the disappearance of the vivifying light. For the first time, the studio seems to have entered history and begins to reveal signs of the passage of time: “Dust had already begun to settle on the studio. Soon it would take possession of the place.”²⁶ This change of status no longer interests the writer, and so the studio as legacy of Brancusi is not mentioned, although Neagoe was probably aware that it had been donated to the French State on the condition that it be preserved in the state in which the sculptor had left it.

Despite a number of features shared by *The Saint of Montparnasse* and *The Interview*, the latter is shaped by the poetic temperament of its author. Voronca’s novel is rather a series of prose poems arranged

according to a narrative thread. The trigger is the visit paid by the narrator, in the guise of a reporter, to the studio of “the Great Sculptor”. Significantly, the studio is situated on a secret island accessible only to the initiated. Solitude has always been taken as a guarantor of the artist’s uniqueness, and Voronca takes care to fix this co-ordinate in the very first pages of the novel. The creator or sculptor “fashioned his works in nature herself,” while living in a modern, effervescent metropolis, which is not named (although it is recognisably Paris), but presented as the centre of the art world: “the artists’ inventions haloed the buildings, boulevards and parks.”²⁷ Just as the novel, published in 1944, contains thematic and linguistic echoes of Voronca’s surrealist writings from his avant-garde period in Romania, so too it is possible to find relationships between the image of Brancusi that it constructs and the way in which the sculptor was perceived by the avant-garde of the 1920s.

Brancusi’s correspondence confirms that almost all the members of the Romanian avant-garde met him, but with the exception of that with Milița Petrașcu it does not provide very many clues as to the relations between them. A letter signed by Marcel Janco, a former member of the Cabaret Voltaire, and poet Ion Vinea invites Brancusi to send works to the international exhibition organised by avant-garde journal *Contimporanul* in 1924. The text associates Brancusi with the avant-garde: “An exhibition of Cubists, Suprematists and Constructivists is inconceivable without you.”²⁸ Although Brancusi was to send only a few photographs, the presence of his works in the planned exhibition was by no means negligible: pieces from the Storck collection made up for the lack of response counted on by the authors of the letter.²⁹ Alongside Tristan Tzara, Brancusi was both a model and a legitimising figure in the early years of the Romanian avant-garde in particular, as emerges from the numerous

texts, from poetry to interviews, and reproductions published in its journals. The issue of *Contimporanul*³⁰ dedicated to Brancusi is conclusive in this respect, and the texts contained therein reveal the influence of the myth of the artist, perpetuated by the avant-garde. In the article written by Marcel Janco for the issue in question one can find the same ideas that Voronca would later include in *The Interview*. It is not at all possible to establish any direct link between Marcel Janco and Ilarie Voronca, not only because of the long period of time that separates the publication of the two texts (almost twenty years), but also because much of what Janco writes in his article can be encountered in countless other commentaries on Brancusi. Modesty, simplicity, wisdom, austerity, originality, and audacity are the features that characterise the artist and his work for both Janco and Voronca. But it is not here that the two texts intersect most meaningfully. Although Janco’s article cannot be regarded as literature, it is possible to detect a way of referring to Brancusi that draws upon poetic rather than critical means. Undoubtedly, such means better serve the article’s intention to praise Brancusi. The passage in which he mentions the sculptor’s studio refers to the same common stock of ideas upon which Voronca would later draw: “His studio is a consequence of the natural laboratory. In the middle of it stands the enchanter like a giant.”³¹

At the end of the 1920s, poet and philosopher Benjamin Fondane, who had emigrated to France but still maintained close links with the avant-garde in Romania, published a substantial article about Brancusi in *Cahiers de l'étoile*. The manner in which the sculptor is described in the article is consonant with that of Fondane’s peers in Bucharest. Purity, ardour, labour, and a “childlike” attitude make up the portrait of a creator with supernatural powers: “Brancusi takes the failed creations one by one; he has repaired the cockerel, the bird and Socrates.”³²

Evoking the refusal of the United States customs authorities to recognise Brancusi's works as art, Fondane turns an apparent agreement with them into a rhetorical device: the sculptor's works thereby become similar to the works of antiquity, which have neither "author" nor history. "Let us not believe that the artist's intention is to make art; Brancusi believes it least of all," writes Fondane.³³ Although the writer and the sculptor were not friends, and Fondane was conscious of the myth created around Brancusi, the dominant impression in the text is that of a figure removed from time and space, whose presence in the everyday is seen as almost miraculous: "For Brancusi does not belong to the present, or to his homeland, or to his century."³⁴

Brancusi also appears in the guise of a literary character, albeit episodically, in the writings of another member of the Romanian avant-garde. *May Venom* is a late, posthumously published novel by Ion Vinea, written before 1964, at a time when Brancusi was being rediscovered in Romania, at a time when socialist realism had relinquished its hold. Here, Brancusi, alias the sculptor Gorjan, appears in the guise of the *bon viveur*, a side neglected even in Peter Neagoe's biography. A number of pages give a detailed description of the meal the sculptor prepares for two visitors, beneath whose masks might be concealed Ilarie Voronca and Ion Vinea himself. Although a part of the vocabulary referring to Gorjan is similar to that used by Janco and Voronca, Vinea's attitude is much more detached, and in places ironic. For example, the conversation littered with aphorisms is treated as a boring sermon, while the image of the wise man that Brancusi had constructed for himself is deflated with stinging humour: "Geniuses, when they grow old, take up moralising and cast themselves as examples of life in accordance with nature."³⁵

The mythic image of the sculptor and his studio, which Voronca constructs in *The Interview*, is foreshadowed in prior

references to Brancusi which are more concise but no less significant. The *Preface to Other Poems* of 1932 summons up the figure of Brancusi via a description of the studio, which is laden with thaumaturgic powers: "I shall rejoice in that limestone dust which I shall inhale through my mouth and clothes, and in the suddenly luminous silence I shall hearken by the master's side to how life hardens like a stalactite in the cave within us."³⁶

Ilarie Voronca is not interested in Brancusi's biography. His novel focuses on the encounter with the creator and the space in which this takes place: the studio. The studio does not have any definite spatial or temporal co-ordinates, however, as it is composed of multiple, intersecting studios, which are superimposed upon one another or stand in for one another. The text records the narrator character's first impression, which is one of an agglutination of forms and matter without any definite purpose or use. It is easy to detect here one of the "classic" images of Brancusi's studio, which has already been given expression: "Everywhere there lay blocks of stone. By the door there rose an endless column. Hewn from transparent marble an enormous fish vibrated in the center of the room. In the corners there were scattered pieces of wood, crosses, large wheels."³⁷ Imperceptibly, the sculptor's studio is transformed into the workshop in which the world is created. The creator performs the duties of a host, explaining his experiments in detail to his visitor. The sketches, fragments and indefinite forms undergo a change in status: they are no longer mere heaps of objects, but the leftovers of genesis.

Symbolically, the world of the studio is created in six days, but without taking definitive shape. Only limited human nature can be content with such a stage, by ignoring the subsequent works, explains the creator. The obsession with origins and creation that can be detected by taking as a starting point the very themes of Brancusi's works was widely commented on during

the period. An unsigned article translated from English and published in the aforementioned issue of *Contimporanul* begins as follows: "The work of Constantin Brancusi is the expression of a cosmogonic concept."³⁸ Concerns of this kind, as well as the insistence with which contemporary articles about Brancusi dwell on them, coincide with a theme current in the 1920s. The avant-garde in particular had reasons to prize his work, given that the search for an original world converged in some ways with the desideratum of a new artistic and social order.³⁹

To return to Voronca's creator character, he promises the visitor to his studio that he will reveal his secret work. It is hidden from the eyes of the public because, on the one hand, the public cannot perceive it or is not initiated, and, on the other, because the artist wishes to prevent anybody from appropriating it. The process whereby the rest of the world comes to know the unknown work involves modifications of time, of which the creator is also capable. Now, the space of the studio, which has already been described as unbounded, dilates and metamorphoses as the visitor character undertakes an initiatory journey. The length and breadth of the real world, the world of the imagination and the world of the person are explored with the aim of gaining a complete knowledge of the universe. Only this can prepare him to draw close to the secret work. It is interesting to note that the pedagogic journey made possible by the creator is not solely visual in nature, but also incorporates other senses, such as taste and hearing. The central part of the novel, which is the most substantial, agglutinates short fantastic tales and memories, an opportunity for Voronca to make autobiographical inserts. Like in any other initiation, the person initiated is transformed: here, the character's passage from one existence to another takes him "from the most abstract things to their most concrete aspects." Voronca projects onto the visitor character one of Brancusi's major concerns, namely metamorphosis as an essential trait of any living being.⁴⁰ This

was easily detectable in the studio, where each object shifts its qualities and meanings by means of a permanent re-contextualisation, identical to that which Brancusi incorporated into his artistic strategies.

The promise of the revelation of a work unknown to anybody else is constantly postponed by the creator, and the visitor character finds it impossible to leave the studio: "You find yourself eternally between its walls," the creator tells him. This constant postponement is justified by the need for initiation, on the one hand, but on the other hand, it provides a pretext for the exploration of the studio, which itself becomes the secret work. Consequently, entry into the studio is not merely a visit, but an existential act. As in surrealist poetry, art has an effect upon life: it cannot be cloistered in an autonomous space because it is above all experience.

The purpose of the novel's afterword is not in fact to provide sufficient clues in order to identify Brancusi as the creator character, but rather to reveal, through a change in register, the background to the writing of the text. The author's voice separates itself from the voice of the reporter character who has been the first-person narrator hitherto, and sculptor B. is declared to be one of the models for the main character. It might be argued that Voronca wishes to preserve a certain ambiguity to the very end. At the same time, it is also a self-referential discourse coloured by irony, which raises the question of the relation between fiction and reality, between fiction and autobiography. While the writer has the power to build various and meaningful bridges, the two nonetheless remain distinct. This lesson is also valid in the case of Peter Neagoe's novel, even if, in contrast to Voronca's, it claims to be documentary. What is interesting in the literature that makes art its subject is ultimately not so much its documentary value as its capacity to put forward images, myths and stereotypes of the artist and art, and thereby to create a parallel history of art.

¹ Nathalie Heinich has dealt at length with each of these types in *L'élite artiste. Excellence et singularité en régime démocratique*, Paris, 2005, p. 280-294. See also the discussion concerning biographical clichés in Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*, Yale University Press, 1989, especially chapter two, and in Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist. The Historiography of a Concept*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

² Anna Chave, *Brancusi's Masquerade: Social Standing, Self-Image, and Photographic Im/Posture*, in *Constantin Brancusi. Masterpieces from Romanian Museums*, New York, Gagosian Gallery, 2011.

³ Margit Rowell, *Brancusi: Timelessness in a Modern Mode*, in *Brancusi 1876-1957*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1995, p. 43.

⁴ See Rosalind Krauss's elaborate analysis in *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 1998, p. 84.

⁵ The publications and exhibitions on the artist's studio in the modern era is extremely large. I quote here only a few of the recent examples: *Pygmalions Werkstatt: Die Erschaffung des Menschen in Atelier von der Renaissance bis zum Surrealismus* [eah.cat.]; *Ateliers. L'artiste et ses lieux de création* [eah.cat.], Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2007; *The Studio Reader. On the Space of Artists*, Eds. Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Gabner, University of Chicago Press, 2010. Brancusi's studio has been for many decades now a favoured object of art historical inquiries and studies of which only a few are quoted in some of the notes below.

⁶ The phrase belongs to Anna Chave, *Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Basis of Art*, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 276.

⁷ Jonathan Wood, *Brancusi's White Studio*, in *Brâncuși la apogeu. Noi Perspective*, București, 2001, p. 50; reprinted in *The Studio Reader...*, p. 269.

⁸ Ilarie Voronca, *L'Interview*, Marseilles, 1944. Written in French and printed in a very limited number of copies, the novel did not enter Romanian culture until very late, via a translation published in 1989: *Interviul. 11 Povestiri*, București, 1989.

⁹ Peter Neagoe, *The Saint of Montparnasse*, New York, 1965. The novel was translated into Romanian in the 1970s, when Brancusi became the object of special attention on the part of Romanian art historians and the communist authorities: *Sfântul din Montparnasse*, Cluj-Napoca, 1977.

¹⁰ Nathalie Heinich, *Artistes dans la fiction. Quatre générations, in Images de l'artiste – Künstlerbilder. Colloque du Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art Université de Lausanne. 9-12.06.1994*, Berna – Berlin, 1998, p. 205-220. See also: Philippe Junod, *L'atelier comme autoportrait*, in *Chemins de traverse. Essais sur l'histoire de l'art*, Paris, 2007, p. 287.

¹¹ *Dicționarul scriitorilor români*, Eds. M.Zaciu, M. Papahagi, A. Sassu, III, Bucharest, 2000, p. 385.

¹² *Brâncuși inedit. Însemnări și corespondență românească*, Eds. Doina Lemny and Cristian Velescu, București, 2004, p. 243.

¹³ See: Sorana Georgescu-Gorjan, *Constantin Brâncuși și Ilarie Voronca*, in *Sud-Est. Artă, Cultură, Civilizație*, 3, 2006, on line: www.sud-est.md, 23.04.2012.

¹⁴ I. Voronca, *L'Interview*, Marseilles, 1944, p. 15. ("C'était par une suite des circonstances assez extraordinaires que j'avais obtenu cette introduction auprès du grand créateur.")

¹⁵ See, among others: Carola Gideon-Welcker, who was the first to interpret Brancusi's work in this way: *Moderne Plastik. Elemente der Wirklichkeit, Masse und Auflockerung*, Zürich, 1937.

¹⁶ See the proceedings of the conference *Fictions biographiques, XIXe-XXe siècle*, Université Stendhal Grenoble 3, 11-14.05.2004 published in *Recherches et travaux*, 6, 2006, on-line: <http://recherchestravaux.revues.org>, 11.06.2012.

¹⁷ Philip Sohm, *Caravaggio's Deaths*, in *Art Bulletin*, 3, Sept. 2002, p.450.

¹⁸ Ernst Kris, Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, Yale University Press, 1979, p. 2.

¹⁹ For similar examples of narratives of the artist's childhood see: E. Kris, Otto Kurz, *op. cit.*, p. 25-26 *et passim*.

²⁰ P. Neagoe, *The Saint of Montparnasse*, New York, 1965, p. 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ The comparison of the work of art with nature was a criterion for evaluating artists as early as antiquity. See: E. Kris și O. Kurz, *op. cit.*, p. 61-71.

²⁶ P. Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

²⁷ I. Voronca, *op. cit.*, p. 17. ("Les inventions des artistes entouraient d'un halo les maisons, les avenues, les parcs.")

²⁸ *Brâncuși inedit...* p. 218.

²⁹ Cristian-R. Velescu, *Contemporanul 1924 – Brancusi, Klee et l'interférence de leur poétique*, in *Ligeia*, 57-60, 2005, p. 155-158.

³⁰ *Contemporanul*, IV, 52, 1925.

³¹ Marcel Iancu, *Brâncuși*, in *Contemporanul*, IV, 52, 1925, p. 2.

³² Benjamin Fondane, *Constantin Brancusi* [1929], Paris, 2007, p. 11. ("Brancusi reprend une à une les créations manquées; il en a déjà corrigé le coq, l'oiseau et Socrate.")

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 13. ("Mais ne pensons jamais que l'intention de l'artiste est de faire de l'art; Brancusi, moins que personne, n'y pense.")

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35-36. "Car Brancusi n'est pas vraiment d'aujourd'hui, ni de sa patrie, ni de son siècle."

³⁵ Ion Vinea, *Venea de mai*, Craiova, 1990, p. 235.

³⁶ Ilarie Voronca, *Prefață la alte poeme*, in *Act de prezență*, București, 1932, p. 84-85.

³⁷ I. Voronca, *op. cit.*, p. 28. ("Partout gissaient de grosses pierres. Une colonne sans fin s'élevait près de la porte. Taillé dans un marbre transparent un énorme poisson vibrat au milieu de la pièce.")

³⁸ *Constantin Brâncuși*, in *Contemporanul...*, p. 5.

³⁹ Anna Chave, *Constantin Brancusi. Shifting...*, p. 132-143.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Teja Bach, *Brâncuși. The Reality of Sculpture*, in *Brancusi 1876-1957...*, in particular p. 23-24.