

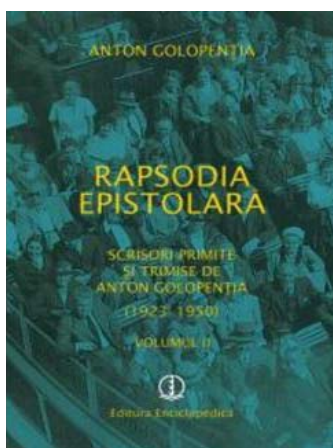
SOCIOLOGISTS IN LOVE, SOCIOLOGY AS PASSION*

MIHAI CERNEA **

ABSTRACT

In *Sociologists in Love, Sociology as Passion*, Michael Cernea reacts to the correspondence between Anton Golopenția and Ștefania Cristescu published in *Rapsodia epistolară* (Rhapsody in Letters), vol. II as a passionate reader and a sociologist. He thus warmly and essentially concludes this triptych in which each of the authors felt the need to address not only St. C. the sociologist, but also the person.

Keywords: sociologists in love, sociological vocation, the Sociological School of Bucharest.



“... I was profoundly touched reading, and reading, and reading the correspondence between Ștefania and Anton in Rapsodia epistolară.

There is no other book of this kind in all of Romania’s sociological literature.

In my modest and limited knowledge, I’ve never heard of a similar book anywhere else either.

What is obvious and beyond any doubt, what moved me – at times to tears, I must confess – in reading these intimate exchanges, are at least three most meaningful qualities:

* Excerpts: personal letters from Mihai Cernea to Sanda Golopenția.

Editor’s Note: When concluded, the series *Rapsodia epistolară* (Rhapsody in Letters) will include the whole of sociologist A. G.’s surviving correspondence, representing, together with the epistolary trace of his short life, a vibrant image of 1920–1950 Romania. Volumes I–III, published between 2004–2012 by Albatros and Editura Enciclopedică in Bucharest, include 1 390 letters resulting from exchanges with 135 different persons: sociologists (D.C. Amzăr, E. Bernea, M. Constantinescu, C. Galitzi, C. Groșorean, D. Gusti, M.S. Handman, T. Herseni, Lükö G.), ethnographers and folklorists (V. Butură, P. Caraman), ethnomusicologists (H. Brauner, C. Brăiloiu), historian of religions M. Eliade, demographers (D.C. Georgescu, S. Manuilă), geographers (I. Conea, Șt. Manciulea), writers (E. Bucuța, E. Cioran), literary and art critics or historians (A. Ciorănescu, P. Comarnescu), painters and sculptors (Mac Constantinescu, P. Iorgulescu-Yor), diplomats (B. Coste), former school or university colleagues, friends and family. Vol. II represents the core of the series and is comprised of a single exchange: 545 letters written to each other by sociologists Ștefania Cristescu and Anton Golopenția between 1932 and 1950.

** Romanian Academy; Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

First, that this correspondence is the minute record of a great love story. Ștefania and Anton loved each other intensely. Their letters are poetry. They both were very gifted writers, effortless and spontaneous writers. They wrote about themselves and their feelings, their desire of each other, their longing for and their missing of each other. Their confidence in each other, their insecurities, their dreams, their worries, their happy and high moments and their low moments. Their hopes, their courage, their fears, their uncertainties and their aspirations. They come alive out of these letters, either jotted in a hurry or distilled slowly from their hearts at small hours of the morning. They are impressive and admirable.

There is a constant music that can be heard in their writing to each other. For they loved each other intensely, a beautiful love story between two young sociologists, their love and loyalty overcoming distances, enduring over separation, surviving personal hardships and the difficulties of loneliness and sporadic communication.

Second, it is explosively obvious to me what an intense passion for sociology they both had. Sociology was not a mere profession; to them it was a vocation, an inspiration. A way of learning and a desire of doing and giving back. I believe that sociology cannot be done well with a cold heart, just as a cerebral exercise. One needs to love it, to be good at it. They wrote each other what they were learning about, what they were writing, what they were planning to do in sociology. Their next steps are first prefigured in their letters. They advised each other. How lucky they were to each find hers and his soul mate in life.

... And third, this correspondence is an extraordinarily open window into years of growth and glory for Romania's sociology. Their personal exchanges have a documentary, genuine testimonial value for the better understanding of moments, events, and interactions between the members of the "Sociological School". For grasping realities and subtle underpinnings in interpersonal relations between Ștefania and Anton with other members of the School, with Gusti, with Stahl, with Vulcanescu, and many others...

... These all are valuable additions to what you yourself wrote elsewhere, and to what Zoltan Rostas discovered through his secretly recorded interviews with other members of the Sociological School.

... I am personally grateful to you, dear Sanda, for making accessible the music and the knowledge encapsulated in the correspondence between Ștefania and Anton. There couldn't be a more fitting title to these exchanges than the one you found: "Rhapsody in Letters". And I am also grateful, as a sociologist, for the exceptional effort that you invested in bringing these volumes into broad daylight, thus enriching the history of Romania's sociological scholarship..."