

Foreword to the Bilingual Edition

The present book is a bilingual (French and English) edition of “Correspondance Grothendieck-Serre”, published by the Société Mathématique de France in 2001. The French text is supplemented by the parallel English translation, so that the English text (on right-hand pages) corresponds to the French text (on left-hand pages).

The original edition of the book was prepared by Pierre Colmez and Jean-Pierre Serre. An English translation was done by Catriona Maclean, with the help of Leila Schneps and Jean-Pierre Serre. La Société Mathématique de France and the American Mathematical Society wish to express gratitude to these people for their contribution.

Foreword

A large part of my correspondence with Grothendieck between 1955 and 1970 is reproduced in the present volume of the series “Mathematical Documents”.

I have chosen those of our letters which seemed to me most likely to be of interest to the reader, either from a purely mathematical point of view or from a historical point of view.

Of course, this choice is far from representing all the questions I discussed with Grothendieck over these fifteen years: when we were both in Paris, our usual means of communication was the telephone. The letters reflect rather the periods when we were separated: one of us being in Princeton or Harvard and the other being in Paris.

I have also included several of the letters that we exchanged between 1984 and 1987, at the moment when *Récoltes et Semailles* was being written.

The only changes which have been made to the original texts are the following:

- suppression of abbreviations, such as “com.” for “commutative”;
- correction of both spelling mistakes and obvious mis-typings.
- suppression of certain personal passages¹ which have been replaced by suspension points between brackets [...].

On the other hand, wrong statements have been preserved as they were. They are corrected (insofar as it was possible) in the *Notes* placed at the end of

¹For curiosity’s sake, here is one of the suppressed passages, on the subject of a mathematician whom I will call X: “... the horrible prose of X, grand master wizard of the den of horrors, who of course is careful to keep from writing a clear little paper, in which the helpful claims would appear in a usable form...” It will be understood why I wished to spare X from reading this passage.

the volume. These notes also give some more recent results. They are indicated in the text by reference numbers in the margin.

Jean-Pierre Serre, Paris, December 2000

This volume would never have seen the day without the help of a large number of people. Jean Malgoire authorized publication of this correspondence in Grothendieck's name. A (small) army took on the work of typing the letters in \TeX which in certain cases was no light task. Once the typing was finished, the readers pinpointed a certain number of points deserving commentary, which contributed to filling out the notes written by Serre.

When the volume was reasonably advanced, we had to think about publication. Since none of the S.M.F.'s existing series had room for a volume of this kind, it was decided to create a new series, "Mathematical Documents", whose *raison d'être* would be the publication of historico-mathematical texts.

I would like to thank all the people mentioned above for the enthusiasm with which they participated in this undertaking, and I hope the reader will have as much pleasure consulting this correspondence as I had editing it.

Pierre Colmez, Paris, January 2001