RÉCOLTES ET SEMAILLES : A TALE OF CREATIVITY AND REJECTION*

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I had my first contact with *Récoltes et Semailles* while I was still a student at Turin. One day our algebraic geometry professor left on his desk Allyn Jackson's beautiful two-part article "As If Summoned from the Void", which succinctly presented Grothendieck's life and work through quotations from *Récoltes et Semailles*. It is no exaggeration to say that this article changed my life: reading Grothendieck's lucid as well as poetic sentences made me realize that I could do mathematics in the way I had always dreamt of, in a way so different from what I had been used to, but which I could feel the strength and power of: it was not 'just' a question of solving specific problems but of developing a global vision in which to understand them. I remember that after reading the text, I rushed to my professor to thank him.

To my great dismay, he replied, "you must know that this man has ruined the lives of a generation of mathematicians..." I was frozen: how could he talk like that about a mathematician with such a deep sensitivity and inexhaustible creativity, capable of opening up completely new horizons in the history of thought? Well, as I was to discover more closely over the following few years, my professor's ambivalent attitude towards Grothendieck's genius was by no means an exception. Indeed, as we learn from *Récoltes et Semailles*, very many mathematicians of his generation maintain a love-hate relationship with his figure.

Going back to my first encounter with *Récoltes et Semailles*, I remember that at the time, in my naivety, I said to myself: "It is a pity that he is a geometer, and that I will have almost nothing to do with his themes of study, me who is primarily interested in logic!" And yet... continuing my studies, I went from logic to categories, from categories to toposes, and from toposes to their discoverer, Grothendieck! As I realized in the following years, toposes can serve as 'bridges' to transfer knowledge between the most diverse areas of mathematics, in particular between geometry and logic! In *Récoltes et Semailles*, a text of inexhaustible richness which stupefies by the sensitivity of its author, as well as by the extraordinary variety and depth of the ideas it contains, one can read about toposes, contestations and so many other things.

*Translated by Sayantan Roy.

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