

1046-01-378

Donald G Babbitt and **Judith R Goodstein*** (jrg@caltech.edu), California Institute of California, Institute Archives, MS 015A-74, Pasadena, CA 91125. *Grading the Greats: What G. Castelnuovo and F. Severi thought of one another in the 1930s*. Preliminary report.

Guido Castelnuovo and Francesco Severi were two of most important figures in the history of Italian algebraic geometry who both carried on a fascinating correspondence with their more junior colleague, Beniamino Segre. The correspondence to Segre has fortunately been preserved and offers an interesting socio-mathematical apercu into Italian algebraic geometry. Among this correspondence, there is a 1932 letter from Severi to Segre that offers the former's opinion of who was overrated and who was underrated among the major figures, including Castelnuovo, in (not just Italian) algebraic geometry from 1850 up to the early 20th century. He also gives an unsurprisingly immodest appraisal of his own contributions. There is also a 1938 letter from Castelnuovo to Segre that contains a paragraph assessing Severi's contributions to algebraic geometry focusing mainly on the first, probably most prolific, years of his research career. Our talk will discuss these two letters together with some background on the temperament and politics of these two personalities, who could not have been more different. (Received August 28, 2008)