

Changing Channels: Constructing and comparing national identities in French and British mathematics, c. 1800-1840 / Des effets de Manche: sur la construction et la comparaison d'identités nationales dans les mathématiques françaises et britanniques, 1800-1840

ID de Contribution: 1

Type: **Non spécifié**

The construction of national, cultural, and philosophical divides between French and British mathematics: a historiographical reassessment

vendredi 24 mai 2024 10:00 (1 heure)

A locus classicus in the historiography of (early) 19th century mathematics is that of the divide between French and English practices and conceptions of that science – a divide often framed in terms of foundational approaches, and pedagogical practices, and cultural matrices. A closer look at this historiography, however, reveals that it draws on a rather narrow conception of its subject: be it by the limited sample of mathematical topics it engages with or by the few locales it visits – to put it bluntly, calculus and its foundations in Paris and Cambridge exclusively. This paper proposes to reassess this narrative in light of a more expansive selection of episodes in the history of mathematics, and, in doing so, to question the relevance of such sweeping national and cultural categories.

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