

**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**

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## **Lending authority from 'French analysis' in the work of Mary Somerville**

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As a woman in late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century Britain, Mary Somerville was almost unique in cultivating for herself a reputation as an expert mathematician. Much of this reputation relied upon recognition of her studies of mathematics recently developed in Paris, especially the work of Pierre-Simon Laplace in physical astronomy. Indeed in 1827, the President of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge stated that if Somerville was not to translate Laplace's *Mécanique Céleste* into English, then 'none else can, and it must be left undone'. Restricted from other forms of legitimisation, such as the title of Wrangler for successful Cambridge students or the full membership of a learned society, Somerville deftly positioned herself as an expert in the science and mathematics that was seen by some as the answer to a perceived decline in British science. Rather than critiquing delineations between French and British mathematics, this talk will treat them as actors' categories and investigate how they were used by Somerville to find community and respect as a mathematician.

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