

1116-01-228

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Making a Name in Mid-century Mathematics: Individuals, institutions, and the American reaction to Nicolas Bourbaki.

Nicolas Bourbaki is widely considered one of the most influential mathematicians of the twentieth century, though he is just as widely held to be merely the pen name shared initially by a radical group of French mathematicians from the mid-1930s. His personhood or lack thereof has tended to be treated as a curiosity, illustrative of the distinctive approach to mathematics that came to be associated with his name but in itself presenting little more than a provocation or a challenge of nomenclature. My presentation examines Bourbaki's reception in the 1940s, when the enigmatic mathematician's personhood became a visible and contentious problem in an international mathematical community responding to the Second World War and then rebuilding in its aftermath. Placing in context Bourbaki's two failed attempts to join the American Mathematical Society, I develop an account of the reconfiguration of individuals and institutions in mid-century international mathematics that ties together the effort to revive the International Mathematical Union and International Congresses of Mathematicians, the changing funding landscape for elite mathematics, and the changing role of publications and reviews in establishing and connecting research communities. (Received August 15, 2015)