

The Empress Eugénie in the British Papers, 1853-1870

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Abstract: From her wedding with Napoleon III in 1853 to her exile in 1870, Empress Eugénie was one of the most influential fashion icons of her time, not only in France but also in Great Britain. During her many public appearances, the Empress's attire was scrutinised in the European press of the period, including in Great Britain, one of the epicenters of the development of many newspapers and women's magazines from the mid 1850's onwards. This article aims at examining the various mechanisms that built Eugénie's sartorial image in the United Kingdom through the local and national British press and more specifically through editorial and advertising content of women's magazines. This analysis will encompass Empress Eugénie's influence from an aesthetic, political, diplomatic and commercial standpoint.

Keywords: Empress Eugénie, Second Empire, Press, Great Britain, Imperial Patronage, Political wardrobe.

Resumen: Desde su matrimonio con Napoleón III, en 1853 hasta su exilio, en 1870 la emperatriz Eugenia fue uno de los iconos de la moda mas influyentes, no solo en Francia sino también en Gran Bretaña. Durante sus numerosas apariciones políticas, la indumentaria de la emperatriz era escrutada por la prensa europea de este periodo, incluyendo Gran Bretaña, uno de los epicentros del desarrollo de numerosos periódicos y revistas femeninas desde mediados la década de 1850 hasta épocas posteriores. El objetivo de este artículo es examinar los diferentes mecanismos que construyeron la imagen vestimentaria de Eugenia en el Reino Unido, a través de la prensa británica local y nacional, y mas concretamente a través de los editoriales y publicidad en las revistas femeninas. Este análisis incluye la influencia de la Emperatriz Eugenia desde el punto de vista, estético, político, diplomático y comercial.

Keywords: Emperatriz Eugenia, Segundo Imperio, prensa, Gran Bretaña, patronato imperial, vestuario político.



Introduction

Born in Granada, Andalucía, Spain, on the 5th of May 1826, Eugénie de Palafox, Portocarrero de Guzmán y Kirkpatrick, known erroneously as Eugénie de Montijo, met Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte during the French Second Republic. Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was then the President of the French Republic and would soon become Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, following a referendum in 1852. A year later, Eugénie married Napoleon III at Notre Dame de Paris on the 30th of January 1853. After the wedding, Eugénie, Countess of Teba, became the Empress of the French and with this new title came new responsibilities. Among all of them, representing what France had the most to offer in terms of fashion was one of the most important. As stated by many scholars and dress historians, her influence was of course very important in France (Chabanne, 2008: 38-51) and from her wedding in 1853 to her exile in 1870, Empress Eugénie was one of the most influential fashion icons of her time. However, her impact on fashion crossed the borders of France and can be observed in various European countries, including Great Britain. Surprisingly, the study of her sartorial influence in Great Britain has never been fully explored.

For the fashionable ladies of the Victorian era, newspapers and women's magazines were the main medium to turn to in order to grasp precious advice on fashion's newest trends. From the mid 1850's onwards, Great Britain was one of the epicenters of the development of many newspapers and women's magazines. Pages of such magazines were a great resource thanks to articles and fashion plates alike. Columnists would provide guidance on what to wear and most importantly how to avoid any faux pas in terms of fashion (Salva, 2016: 50-51). Fashion leaders of the time such as the Empress Eugénie were therefore discussed at length. During her many public appearances both in France and Britain, the Empress's attire was indeed scrutinised in the British press of the period. This article aims at examining the various mechanisms that built Eugénie's sartorial

image in the United Kingdom through the local and national British press and more specifically through editorial and advertising content of women's magazines.

Methodology

To achieve this research, the author has mainly drawn his information from the press of the period through various newly digitised resources available such as the British Newspaper Archives website or other databases such as the Gale Historical Newspaper archives. By making newspapers of the nineteenth century more accessible, those databases helped to research the various occurrences of Empress Eugénie in the British press and define how she was described and talked about. While researching for this article on newly digitised resources, the author was able to search for key words in the full texts of preeminent English fashion magazines such as the *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* (EDM), which quickly became the main focus and corpus of this article. Furthermore, this research mainly focused on Eugénie's public appearances when she was wearing what was deemed suitable for an Empress. This systematic analysis of Eugénie in the British papers helped to begin understanding how she was perceived by an intended British readership throughout the United Kingdom. Key themes, as suggested by Kate Nelson Best when studying the history of fashion journalism will also be taken into account throughout this study. As such, the commercial nature of the fashion press but also its role as cultural arbiter and in the democratization of fashion will be addressed through Eugénie's case in point (Best, 2017: 5-6). Fashion magazines had a key role in disseminating the latest styles in fashionable dress. EDM, for instance, was especially targeted towards the consuming middle-class women (Auerbach, 1997: 122). Its readership mainly consisted of middle-class women who wanted to reproduce, at home, what was worn by high-class ladies in Paris or London. In order to achieve that, the EDM suggested non-expensive ways

of reproducing luxurious items and included descriptions of the dresses worn by court ladies or paper patterns (Beetham, 1996: 78). *The Illustrated London News*, known as the world's first illustrated newspaper, was also aimed at the middle class with a strong interest in the royal family's activities and pages dedicated to fashion throughout the year. Thus, women's magazines such as EDM and titles such as the *London Illustrated Magazine* are part of this study along with more local newspapers with a different audience and therefore a different point of view and agenda.

In the *Study of Dress History* Lou Taylor underlines the bias of relying on one source of information such as fashion plates that would eventually provide an «idealised image» of the subject «rather than any kind of stylistic or social realities» (Taylor, 2002: 136). Subsequent studies have shown how «periodicals and journals have been overused in the past when analysing Eugénie, so that the underlying "real" persona, has been obscured» (Viney, 2007: 7). While acknowledging the boundaries of using the press of the period as the main corpus for this essay, the aim is indeed to study the various aspects of Eugénie's public persona that the press considered suitable for their audiences and understand how they played a part in the evolution of the fashion system and fashion industry in Britain.

Firstly, the various existing approaches on Eugénie through major studies will be assessed. Eugénie's political agency through fashion will be tackled through her support of the Lyon manufacturers as a prime example of this strategy. This first assessment will be the backdrop and will help foreground new perspectives on Eugénie and the British press such as the perceived Scottish elements in her wardrobe, and how Eugénie's name and Eugénie's patronage were used to validate both French and English makers of fashion garments and accessories worn on both sides of the Channel. Finally, this article will focus on the influence Eugénie had not only on the higher ranks of society but also on the Victorian middle-class.

Existing approach

Eugénie's agency and impact on fashion has been the subject of major studies. Alison McQueen's *Empress Eugénie and the arts: politics and visual culture in the nineteenth century* stresses Eugénie's political awareness through the arts. As stated by Juliette Peers in her review of the book

«McQueen's text prompts a suitable opportunity to return Eugénie to the central position in the fashion imaginary that she once held and to "re-run" Eugénie not as a passive customer or a pictorial subject, but as an alert agent who shaped the fashion arena as much as she was shaped by it» (Peers, 2013: 519).

Eugénie's influence on fashion was indeed far from being fortuitous. Through what she referred to herself as her «political wardrobe» Eugénie was expected to promote French taste and French manufacturers all over Europe (Dolan, 1994: 26 and Chabanne, 2008: 42). This attitude towards clothes was stimulated by Napoleon III's wish to re-establish Paris as the capital of the world and stimulate luxury consumption to promote trade (Dolan, 1994: 22). The influence Eugénie had in Britain in terms of fashion was indeed considered even more important after the signing of a free trade agreement between Britain and France in 1860 (Tétart-Vittu, 2008: 211). France was indeed selling a lot of fashion items and fabrics to Britain. Between the signing of the treaty in 1860 and 1881, France sold 43% of its export of silk to Britain (Cadier, 1988: 371-372). Thus, Eugénie was expected to promote it through her own wardrobe.

Queen Victoria seems to have been the first one to be charmed by «the very gentle, graceful» Eugénie, as she stated herself (Queen Victoria, 1961: 30). Victoria was undoubtedly observing very carefully Eugénie's attire. For instance, on the 16th of April 1855, Victoria wrote in her diary:

«The Empress wore a wreath of pink chrysanthemums, and a grey silk dress trimmed with lace, underneath which there were little pink bows, and pink bows trimmed round the



Figure 1. "The Empress Dress" (on the left). Fashion Plate. «The Fashions», *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, February 01, 1866, Volume II, Issue 14.

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body; a necklace and brooch of emeralds and diamonds, no earrings, beautiful bracelets. The profile and the line of the throat and shoulders are very beautiful, the expression, charming and gentle, quite delightful. The pictures of Winterhalter are very like her» (Queen Victoria, 1961: 32).

This description is one of many others made by Victoria when she encountered Eugénie and shows Victoria's interest in Eugénie's wardrobe. It is also a very good reflection of Queen Victoria's abiding friendship with Eugénie, which intrigued the English public and sparked their interests for the French Empress. Dresses, accessories, colors and fabrics worn by the Empress were also reported by many newspapers. While studying newspapers across the United Kingdom, one cannot help but realize that Eugénie's attire was copied by a lot of individuals. During what was called "Drawing Rooms", la-

dies from the British nobility were presented to Queen Victoria. The dresses worn during these important social events and their descriptions by British newspapers provide evidence of Eugénie's influence among the higher ranks of British society. It was very usual to call Eugénie's favorite colors after her name or to associate Eugénie's name with garments or fabrics she had been wearing herself (Chabanne, 2008: 44-45). Several cases in point are Lady Clermont who was wearing in February 1868 at Dublin Castle a «corsage à la Eugénie» (The Drawing Room, 1868: 4) or the Marchioness of Headfort who was wearing in April 1855 at St James's Palace a «Court train of rich Eugénie blue lace silk» (The Queen's Birthday, 1855: 4). As stated in the English edition of *Le Follet* in March 1854, blue was indeed one of the Empress's favourite colour: «Blue is a favourite colour, doubtless on account of the frequency that the

Empress wears it» (*La Mode*, 1854: 1). Eugénie's influence was therefore extensive amongst the British nobility and was used to promote French taste but also the French fashion industry and its manufacturers.

Eugénie's influence on this matter was very striking when a recession brought unemployment to the silk town of Lyon in the late 1850's. In order to promote the city, Eugénie wore dresses of heavy brocaded silk made in Lyon throughout the 1860s (Wilson and Taylor, 1989: 24). Subsequently, it is not surprising that important magazines started to promote dresses made of silk from Lyon. In February 1866, the EDM published two fashion plates that pictured dresses made of *gros de Lyon* which is a cross-ribbed, silk fabric made in Lyon (Tortora and Johnson, 2013: 272). The fact that these two dresses were named respectively "The Empress dress" (fig. 1) and "The Impératrice dress" shows the link that was made by the press between Eugénie and the silk made in Lyon. The "Empress dress" was an "Indoor Toilet" and described as follows:

«The Empress dress, in blue *gros de Lyon*, is closed down the front with large jet buttons, edged with blue silk. The ornamentation consists of Cluny guipure insertion put on in points, and large rosettes with end of ribbon, and a black button place in the centre. The sleeve is very small, and has a cuff and epaulettes of guipure, with rosette to match the skirt» (The Fashions, 1866: 63).

Similarly, "The Impératrice dress" was described as a "Dinner or Evening toilet" in the following terms:

«The Impératrice dress is made of white *gros de Lyon* and has a short double-breasted bodice, fastened by a violet gros-grain silk waistband, and edged at the top with narrow guipure. This bodice is cut with violet satin revers, joined on the shoulders with gold cord and clasp. The sleeve is quite tight, and closed at the wrist with three white silk buttons. The full skirt is open in front from the waist and on the sides from the hips, showing graduated tulle

puffings. A gold cord edges the long pointed revers, which are joined together by cordeliers and clasps. These cordeliers are continued all round the bottom of the dress.» (Our Large Fashion Plates, 1866: 21).

Three years later, in the same magazine, an article was published describing the Empress's visit to Lyon. When the wives of the most notable silk manufacturers of the town presented her with twelve dresses, the Empress was described by the journalist as «struck by the beauty of these tastefully chosen dresses» and «she promised to do all in her power to bring into fashion again the beautiful brocaded and figured silks which have too long been abandoned for plain *faille* and *poult-de-soie*». The impact of this new fashion for plain *faille* and *poult-de-soie* on the silk industry in Lyon was described by the journalist:

«This change of fashion was extremely prejudicial to the Lyon manufacturers who excelled chiefly in the figured silk line. It was almost ruin to the city when that failed and no demands were made for the handsome dresses, the designs of which were always composed on purpose by special artists. Each of these dresses was in itself a work of art, and was unique in its style; but now-a-days quantity is preferred before quality. In former times, a lady – ay, even a rich one – was content with one or at most two silk dresses, carefully packed away, and worn only on very grand occasions; for the rest they thought stuff dresses quite good enough. Now things are very different; it is by the dozen a lady with the least pretension to elegance requires silk dresses, and that is why she prefers glacé silks *poult-de-soie* to the handsome brocaded and figured silks of former days» (The Fashions, 1869: 202).

Nevertheless, despite Eugénie's willingness to bring Lyon's figured and brocaded silks back into fashion, the journalist could not help but share his doubts with the reader: «In spite of the Empress's efforts, therefore, I doubt whether the rich Lyon's manufacturers' trade will ever be as flourishing as it was» (The Fashions, 1869: 202).

New perspectives on Eugénie and the British press

Having in mind the scholarly framework established by previous studies on Eugénie's wardrobe and her political agency through it, this part of this essay will aim at deepening our understanding of the reception of Eugénie's fashion in Britain through the lens of the press. It will try to underline what the press thought would interest different readership in different parts of Great Britain, through local and national coverage.

State visits made by the imperial couple in Britain were the perfect settings for Eugénie to feature her wardrobe in the British Press. Eugénie came to Britain several times as an Empress: firstly in 1855 with Napoleon III, then in 1857 to visit Queen Victoria at Osborn and in 1860 to rest in Scotland after the death of her sister the Duchess of Alba. In the context of those visits, the Empress's attire was used as a means for the new imperial regime to show its sympathy towards Great Britain. For instance, on the 16th of April 1855, during the imperial couple's first official state visit to Britain, the *London Daily News* described Eugénie's arrival at Dover and noticed that «Her Majesty was most simply attired in a *Chapeau de Paille*, a grey paletot, and –rejoice Caledonia– a tartan dress, of a quiet and unobtrusive pattern» (Visit of the Emperor and Empress of the French, 1855: 5). Furthermore, on April 21st 1855 the *Lady's Newspaper* chose to illustrate its front page with a pictorial depiction of the «Landing of their imperial majesties the Emperor and Empress of the French». On this illustration one can clearly recognize the «grey cloak, underneath which the rich colours of a Tartan dress could be distinguished» that is also described in this newspaper (The Imperial visit, 1855: 1) (fig. 2). As explained by Seta K. Wehbé in an article entitled *La Mode à l'Écossaise: Textile of Diplomacy*, tartan was used by Eugénie to strengthen the personal friendship that flourished between the French imperial couple and the British royal couple, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. In order to maxi-

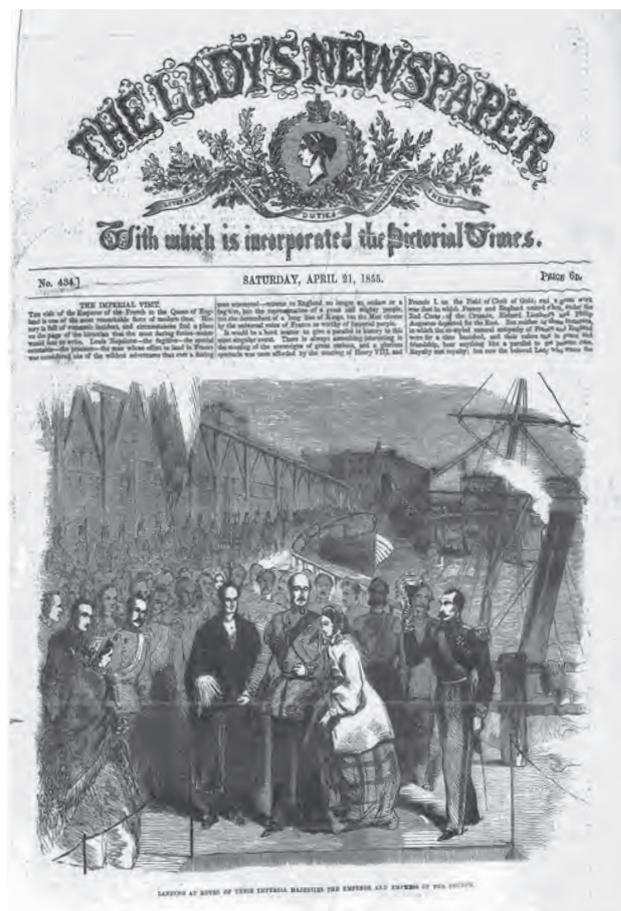


Figure 2. “The Imperial Visit”. *The Lady's Newspaper*, April 21, 1855, No. 434, p.1

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mize the symbolic effect of this fabric, Eugénie decided to wear tartan again on her return to Paris a few days later, as reported by the press: «His majesty wore the uniform of a General of division, with the riband and star of the Garter; and the Empress, a silk tartan plaid, with black velvet mantilla and white bonnet with black lace veil» (Departure of the Emperor and the Empress of the French, 1855: 8). The mantilla worn by Eugénie is an obvious reference to Eugénie's Spanish origins and the tartan dress can be seen as a tribute to her Scottish origins. Indeed, as stated by the *Illustrated London News* on April 21st 1855, Eugénie's great-grandfather was «Mr. Kirkpatrick from Conheath», and «The Kirkpatrick family is of great ancestry in Scotland». Through her mother, who was the daughter of

William Kirkpatrick, a Scottish wine merchant from Conheath established in Malaga, Eugénie was indeed a quarter Scottish (Wehbé, 2006: 51). Accordingly, seven months after Eugénie's first visit to Britain and during the Parisian Great Exhibition of 1855, a local Scottish newspaper described Eugénie visiting the British Gallery. *The Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*, which catered to the interests of its local audience, reported:

«The Empress, on a late visit to the British Gallery, selected from Mr. Morgan's case three tartan plaids - one (The "Argyle") for the Emperor, and two for herself. The lovers of the national manufacture will be glad to know that her Majesty expressed great admiration of their Scottish production. The shawl the Empress specially inquired for was the "Victoria" –a compliment to our Queen– and on being informed that Mr. Morgan had honored another shawl with the name of Eugenie, her majesty also made choice of it, on account as she expressed it, "of its beauty as well as in acknowledgment of the compliment paid to herself." These tartans have caused quite a sensation among the Parisians» (Paris News, 1855: 4).

A few years later, a journalist from the same journal described in laudatory terms the Empress wearing a tartan shawl, certainly brought from Glasgow after her trip to Scotland in 1860:

«The Empress looks much better since her journey, and has expressed herself warmly of the kind reception she met with, particularly in Scotland. She wears a tartan shawl which I suppose she bought in Glasgow. The finest tartan shawls ever made were manufactured in Paisley, vix., those exhibited in Paris in 1855 by Mr. Morgan, and of which, it may be remembered her majesty testified her admiration - purchasing several herself, asking for and naming the particular clan she liked bear, and expressed her gratification at the compliment paid her in calling a very handsome new tartan the "Eugenie"» (French Empress at home, 1860: 6).

Finally, in January 1864, Eugénie was described in another local Scottish newspaper,

the *Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser*, as yet again wearing tartan in an article entitled "The Empress Eugénie and the Tartan". The article stated:

«The greatest sensation was produced the other evening by the toilet adopted by her majesty. It was a velvet plaid (the Macduff tartan) made with low tight corsage and position jacket of blonds, mixed with plaid ribbons to suit the dress» (The Empress Eugénie and the Tartan, 1864: 6).

As suggested by Zoe Viney in a study of the Empress's consumption of textiles, one of these tartan shawls might have made its way to England after Eugénie's flight from the Tuileries in September 1870 (Viney, 2007: 50). In his memoirs, the Comte d'Herrison who took upon himself to rescue some of the Imperial belongings, provides an unspecific enumeration of some of the items of clothing Eugénie hastily packed away in a traveling bag. Among various items such as chemises, stockings, handkerchiefs, collars or shoes, a tartan shawl is described by Comte d'Herrison:

«Lastly, a very small Scotch plaid, one of those tartan shawls which are to be seen in any shop devoted to English goods» (Viney, 2007: 50).

The fact that Eugénie wore tartan several times in 1855 and carried on buying tartan throughout her reign offers new insight into the various non-verbal messages sent by Eugénie through clothing and seems to be another manifestation of Eugénie's willingness to set an example for an economic collaboration between France and Britain, epitomized by the 1860 free trade agreement. Eugénie's political awareness towards clothes was indeed motivated by commercial and economic purposes.

Eugénie's sartorial influence in Britain can also be seen in the various imperial patents she granted throughout her reign. The importance of royal patronage in the nineteenth century has been stated by many scholars. In her study of the House of Redfern from 1847 to 1892, Susan North did highlight the fact that royal patronage was a key to the success of the tailor, in particu-



Figure 3. W. C. Brown, Label from a riding hat, 1850s. Royal Collection. Accession number: MoL D328 & MoL A19071. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

lar that of Alexandra, Princess of Wales (North, 2008: 1). Therefore, seeking royal patronage became a common practice for fashion houses in order to secure their reputation and conquer the British market (Tétart-Vittu, 1992: 48). Thus, when the French dressmaker Adèle Lebarre arrived in London in October 1855, she described herself in the *Townsend's Selection of Parisian Costume* as «designer of the Empress» (Tétart-Vittu, 2008: 210). From 1855 onwards, many advertisements were also placed by Madame Lebarre as «designer of fashion for the Empress Eugénie» in the English edition of *Le Follet*. One of the most famous dressmakers who benefited from Eugénie's imperial patent was of course Charles Frederick Worth who became Eugénie's main supplier during the 1860s, after his introduction to the imperial court by Princess Pauline von Metternich (De la Haye, 2014: 14). Having Eu-

généie as patron surely played a huge part in the success of Charles Frederick Worth's flourishing business throughout Europe. Following Eugénie's lead, many European royal households such as Sweden and Norway appointed Worth and Bobergh as official suppliers. Charles Frederick Worth and his partner Otto Bobergh were therefore not shy to inscribe the French Imperial coat of arms on both the labels of the dresses they created and the invoices they provided their clients with (Trubert-Tollu *et al.*, 2017: 34). From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, labels became indeed increasingly important in order to show a brand's royal or imperial patent. For instance, when he became tailor and dressmaker to Queen Victoria and Princess Alexandra, Redfern was given the permission to put the inscription "By Appointment" on his label (Serrière, 2012: 26). Similarly, when the French shoemaker Viault-Esté started to sell products at Thierry and sons on Regent Street in London, he expounded his imperial patronage by adding Eugénie's coat of arms on his label (Staniland, 1997: 152). French brands were not the only ones to claim themselves as manufacturers to the Empress. English manufacturers such as Creed and Cumberland used the Empress' imperial patent to promote themselves. According to the royal patent still exhibited in Creed's Parisian boutique,¹ Empress Eugénie granted her patronage to Creed and Cumberland on the 18th of October 1855.² The "*Marchand de Nouveautés à Londres*"³, as described on the patent, was appointed "*Fournisseur de S. M. L'Impératrice des Français*".⁴ Advertisements in the British press confirm the date in which the Empress gave her imperial patent to the tailor. Indeed, in the *Morning Post* dated from the 19th of January 1854, Creed and Cumberland were

¹ The Parisian boutique is located at 38, avenue Pierre 1er de Serbie. As of May 2021, the imperial patent granted to Creed and Cumberland by the Empress Eugénie still hung on the walls of the boutique along with the royal patent granted by the Prince of Wales in July 1863 and Queen Victoria in March 1885.

² Brevet de Fournisseur de l'Impératrice, N° d'Ordre 73. 18 October 1855. Le ministre d'Etat de la Maison de l'Empereur.

³ *Ibidem*

⁴ *Ibidem*

advertising as mere tailors (Creed and Cumberland, 1854: 1), whereas a year and three months later, in March 1856, they were advertising as “Tailors, Habit and Paletot Maker to the Empress of the French” with the inscription “By Special Appointment” at the beginning of the advertisement (By Special Appointment – Creed, 1856: 1). Moreover, a yachting costume worn by the Empress Eugénie for the inauguration of the Suez Canal and labeled “Henry Creed and Co”⁵ provides evidence that Eugénie was still a customer of the house in the late 1860s (Chabanne *et al.*, 2013: 114). The fact that a well-known brand such as Creed and Cumberland started to advertise as tailor to the Empress as soon as they received the imperial patent shows the influence Eugénie had on the British market. Creed and Cumberland were not the only British brand to advertise as manufacturers to the Empress. The hat maker W.C. Brown was appointed by Queen Victoria but was also using Eugénie’s fame and influence in order to promote himself (Staniland, 1997: 152) (fig.3). Eugénie was therefore influential for French manufacturers wanting to conquer the British market as well as British manufacturers in their own country.

At court or through royal patent, Eugénie’s approval on a fashion was therefore perceived as very important. However, Eugénie’s influence didn’t just shape the upper classes’ taste. Eugénie’s sartorial image was also influential amongst the rising middle class of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century saw the rapid growth of the middle-class with a new type of demand and purchasing power, especially towards clothing (Jefferys, 1954: 8). This rising middle class was looking for ready-made and fashionable clothes. In order to meet this demand, new forms of distribution and advertisement, such as department stores and fashion journals were developed (Jefferys, 1954: 8). Many manufacturers, retailers, warehouses and department stores began to use Eugénie’s name in order to promote their products, attract new consumers and sell fashion items. Using Eugénie’s name was seen by the middle-class

consumers of the nineteenth century as an allusion to the presumed quality and superiority of French taste in terms of fashion. Therefore, it was not unusual to see manufacturers reproduce clothes that may have been worn by Eugénie. For instance, in the *Illustrated London News* of the 18th of June 1859, the French Muslim Company based in Oxford Street, London, was advertising for a «New seaside dress (...) as now worn by the Empress Eugenie for morning dress. Price 14s 9d.» (Fashions for October, 1859: 599). Another interesting example is the “Conheath mantle” sold by the famous Jay’s General Mourning Warehouse based in London since 1841 (Adburgham, 1964: 65-67). This mantle was advertised and depicted in the *Illustrated London News* as «an elegant and highly fashionable style of outdoor for mourning» and «unquestionably one of the most striking novelties of the season.» According to the article, it was «named the Conheath Mantle after the ancient domain in Scotland belonging to the family of the Empress Eugenie.» The advertisement went on to say:

«The Empress has evinced her partiality on the “Conheath Mantle” by having frequently worn a cloak of this form, but made in various materials, during her recent excursion in the south of France. To Messrs. Jay of Regent-Street the fashionable world is indebted for its introduction to this country, where it will doubtless speedily secure the favor it enjoys in the *beau monde* of Paris.»

Moreover, the mantle was described as made with a scarf:

«The scarf which is the peculiar feature of the Conheath mantle and which imparts to it its peculiarly novel and *distingué* effect is disposed somewhat in the manner in which the Highlanders wear the plaid; or it may be likened to the graceful mode in which her Majesty wears the ribbon of the Order of the Garter» (Fashions for October, 1857: 316).

With this mantle, Jay’s General Mourning Warehouse was hinting at Eugénie’s Scottish origins in order to appeal to British customers. It is interesting to see that even manufacturers or retailers who did not have any imperial patent

⁵ According to *The Bradford Observer* (August 9, 1860) Creed and Cumberland dissolved their partnership in 1860.



Figure 4. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Portrait of the Empress Eugénie*, 1854. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Claus von Bülow Gift, 1978. Accession Number: 1978.403 (www.metmuseum.org)

were using Eugénie's name in order to advertise their goods.

Eugénie was of course seen as an example to follow in terms of what was fashionable or not and the EDM included a lot of descriptions of her various attires. For instance, in the December issue of 1863, the magazine stated:

«We are asked by many of our readers whether crinolines are still worn as much as ever. This we cannot but answer very positively in the affirmative, for in Paris, at least, all attempts to put them down have as yet completely failed, and it is probable, as long as the graceful Eugenie is the acknowledged guide and ruler in matters of taste and fashion, they will remain triumphant.» (The Fashions, 1863: 93).

The crinoline provides indeed a striking example of Eugénie's fashion influence in Britain. Even though the crinoline made its first appearances before the Second Empire, somewhere

around 1842, Eugénie was a key figure in popularising this new form of dress (Paz, 2013: 178). With such extravagant underpinnings, Eugénie and her ladies-in-waiting were directly referring to the tradition of the *Ancien Régime* and asserted themselves as direct heirs to the French court of the eighteenth century and more specifically Marie-Antoinette's (Paz, 2013: 189). As suggested by her portrait as Marie-Antoinette painted by Winterhalter in 1854, Eugénie demonstrated a real admiration for the eighteenth century and the former Queen of France (fig. 4). This fashion was soon to be followed by the whole of Europe and Great Britain more specifically. Indeed, when the most important manufacturer of cage crinolines in Europe and the United States sold crinolines in the 1860s, the association with Eugénie was made. As suggested by surviving examples at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Museo del Traje (fig. 5), W.S & E.H. Thomson, called their products "A favorite of the Empress"⁶ between 1860 and 1865 and "Thomson's Empress"⁷ between 1865 and 1868. Once again, looking at contemporary newspa-



Figure 5. Thomson & Co., "Thomson's Empress" Crinoline, ca. 1860. Museo del Traje, Madrid (MTCE092280).

⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum. Accession number: T.150-1986

⁷ Victoria and Albert Museum. Accession number: T.51-1980.



Figure 6. «Caraco Eugenie». Fashion plate and paper pattern. «Our Practical Dress Instructor», *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, June 1854, 49-50.

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pers provides evidence that these underpinnings were precisely named after Eugénie. In the *Bath Chronicle* of February 1861, Thomson was advertising its crinolines as “The Empress Eugenie’s Favourite”. They were described as «the leading style of Messrs. Thomson’s Patent Crown Crinolines, for the spring 1861, and the best ever manufactured.» (The Empress Eugenie’s Favourite, 1861: 7). One year later, another advertisement published in the *London Evening Standard* stated that «The Empress Eugenie always uses Thomson’s patent Crown Crinolines -

the only one combining comfort with elegance.» (The Empress Eugenie, 1862: 4).

Paper patterns were another effective way of disseminating fashion through the middle-class. Therefore, including a paper pattern became a common practice in women’s magazines (Seligman, 2003: 96). With the section called «Our practical instructor», EDM was one of the main publications to offer paper patterns to their readers and gave them access to «the original articles furnished by the first Parisians houses» as stated by the magazine (Beetham, 1996: 78). During the 1850s, EDM published two paper patterns named after Eugénie: the “Eugenie Mantelet.” (Our Practical Dress Instructor June, 1853: 47) and the “Caraco Eugenie” (Our Practical Dress Instructor, June 1854: 49) (fig. 6). Because they were very affordable, these paper patterns may have had a major impact on the fashions of middle-class women. As suggested before, Eugénie’s appreciation of eighteenth-century fashion was strong and informed her choices for her own wardrobe. This infatuation for the eighteenth century was soon translated by manufacturers into the promotion of the crinoline and can be seen again in the aforementioned “Caraco Eugenie” paper pattern. The caraco was indeed a popular form of woman’s jacket in the late eighteenth century. This paper pattern would have therefore exerted an even bigger impression on British women of the middle class by hinting at the splendor of the French eighteenth century fashion and Eugénie’s passion for it. Besides, the invention of the lockstitch sewing machine in 1846 followed by the global commercialization of Isaac Singer’s machine in 1851 made those paper patterns accessible for a wider range of middle-class women. As stated by Margaret Beetham, EDM and the paper patterns «helped to create a mass fashion industry» and it seems that Eugénie was very much part of it (Beetham, 1996: 78).

Conclusion

This research in the British press begins to highlight Eugénie's influence on the British readership through the description of her clothes, her role as a patron of fashion houses and the use of her name to sell goods. Aesthetic, commercial or diplomatic, Eugénie's influence on British fashion is made of various layers. It acted on the higher ranks of society as well as the emerging British middle class of the nineteenth century. Even more, it seems that Eugénie's name has been commodified and used as a means to sell clothes and items of fashion. Eugénie's sartorial influence can therefore be seen as a construction mainly achieved by the press and the clothing industry in order to increase sales. On the other hand, clothing was used by Eugénie herself in order to serve her diplomatic agenda. However, after the fall of the Second Empire and the death of Napoleon III in 1873 followed by the tragic death of her son in 1879, Eugénie emulated Victoria in her widowhood by wearing black until her own death and thus lost her fashion influence as suggested by an article published in EDM of January 1871. In this article, the columnist Ballon Monté answers vigorously to critics against Eugénie and her attire. The ex-Empress of the French, in exile at Camden House, was indeed targeted as wearing clothes that would not reflect France's current political ordeal after the fall of the French Second Empire in 1870:

«I cannot help beginning this letter with a protest against the statement I have seen in English papers that the Empress Eugénie wears coloured costumes, and continues to start new models in fashions, while the whole of France is in mourning and distress. I can assure the readers of this Magazine that this is a mere ruse of chit-chat writers and their wit's-end for new fashions, for I know personally ladies of rank who have repeatedly seen the Empress at Camden House and report that the ex-Sovereign of the French is always in deep mourning, as well as all the ladies of her suite. No, there are no ideas as to new fashions to be had in that way - most simple and uniformly black is the attire of Eugénie; long robes of sable

woolen materials, with deep cape trimmings, are what she wears now and all thoughts of fashions and frivolities are very far from her heart.» (January Fashions, 1871: 32).

Eventually, after having described the very simple attire worn by the ex-Empress, the columnist wonders in distress: «But if the ex-Empress has abdicated her rank as leader of the fashions, where shall we turn for new models?» (January Fashions, 1871: 32).

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