Succession: the establishment of Melnotte and Dufossée as legitimate shoemaking references in Paris and London in the 19th century (1800-1870)[a]

Sucessão: a consolidação de Melnotte e Dufossée como referências legítimas da produção calçadista em Paris e Londres durante o século XIX (1800-1870)

Cecília Elisabeth Barbosa Soares[b]
Doutora em Sociologia, Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

Abstract: This study describes the pioneering activities of French shoemakers Melnotte and Dufossée towards the expansion of their companies and the role of "sucession" to label a shoemaker as legitimate and successful. It is based on the analysis of shoes from both companies and their competitors, newspaper ads and other primary and secondary sources to indicate the companies' strategies and their development during the 19th century. Examples of the companies' customers are used as a complementary source to indicate the economic strength of these businesses and their typical production. The conclusion is that Melnotte's London shop worked as a local hub to the "French *nouveautés* ecosystem" destinated to elite customers who would buy not only shoes but other valued imported articles (umbrellas, corsets, etc). Dufossée benefited from a legitimate scenario with a privileged clientele, stores at strategic addresses and a relevant commercial network, developed during Melnotte's management. However, companies could also face conflicts of interest and suffer from fights between associates. Finally, alliances via wedding were also relevant for the next generations taking over

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[b] ceciliaebsoares@gmail.com

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the family businesses. These elements had an impact on the business' future trajectory and contributed to the fact that the references are mostly unknown today.

Keywords: Paris. London. Melnotte and Dufossée. Shoemakers. 19th century.

Resumo: O artigo analisa as atividades pioneiras dos sapateiros franceses Melnotte e Dufossée em Paris e Londres após as guerras napoleônicas, e o papel da "sucessão" para rotular um sapateiro como legítimo e bem-sucedido. O estudo baseia-se no levantamento de sapatos de ambas as empresas e de seus concorrentes, nas etiquetas de papel contidas em seu interior, em anúncios de jornais, e em fontes primárias, como notas fiscais e inventários post-mortem, para indicar as estratégias corporativas e o seu desenvolvimento durante o século XIX. Conclui-se que um negócio "sucessor" podia se beneficiar de uma clientela, da reputação criada ao receber prêmios em competições, da escolha de endereços e do networking previamente estabelecidos. Alianças entre famílias através do casamento eram outra ferramenta típica de articulação entre negócios de calçados. Eles também podiam enfrentar conflitos de interesses e sofrer com disputas entre sócios e más decisões financeiras, repercutindo na trajetória da empresa e contribuindo para que tais marcas sejam, hoje, pouco conhecidas.

Palavras-chave: Paris. Londres. Melnotte e Dufossée. Sapateiros. Século XIX.

JEL: L67.

Introduction

On February 21, 1828, the London newspaper *Morning Post* announced that a shoemaker had "just arrived in Town" (MP, 1828a, p. 1): Sieur Melnotte (1784-1851)[1], from Paris. Thanks to the "condescending patronage" of the British Nobility and Gentry, Melnotte had moved from 228, Regent Street to the number 186 in the same street. His former depot was now replaced by a "ladies French shoe warehouse" and the shoemaker had "brought a large Assortment with him". After a few years with an indirect retail presence in London, Melnotte decided to open a standalone store in town. This is one of the first pieces of evidence concerning the operation of a major French shoe reference from the early 19th century.

Around 1805, Jean-Claude Melnotte (Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle, 1784; Archives de Paris, 1813; 1829; 1851; Archives Nationales, 1852) bought a "shoe confection fund" ("fonds de confection de souliers") for circa 600 francs and, within a short period, became a central reference for shoes during the Regency (GDT, 1855, p. 1). While evidence from before the 1820s is scarce, from 1828 onwards, the scenario is quite different. Until the 1850s, Melnotte was often mentioned in texts as a reference to shoemaking excellence, and, especially, his pairs seem to be a commercial success. In 1843, the *Dublin Monitor* (1843, p. 3) would go as far as to call Melnotte the "prince of shoemakers" ("prince des cordonniers"), and, in 1845, the *Pictorial Times* (1845, p. 3) would consider him as "[…] the most celebrated shoemaker on both sides of the Channel". As soon as 1837, Delphine de Girardin (1837) dedicated a few lines from one of her *Parisian Letters* to correct a third-party description of the capital's main references concerning an elegant outfit. She denounces this misunderstanding of urban grammar, where the names are tied to the wrong specialties. Melnotte is shown as a turban creator instead of a shoemaker, which is rectified by de Girardin. Other names that she mentions are Baudrant, Fossin, and Chevet.

[1] Jean-Claude Melnotte was born on December 8, 1784, in Blémerey, Meurthe-et-Moselle, in the Eastern region of France. The Melnotte family had at least one shoemaker, Antoine (Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle, 1784). Jean-Claude married Philippine Claire Caux on May 1st, 1813, and died in Paris on February 1st, 1851.

During the peak of his fame, Melnotte would be highly associated with a typical shoe style for women, that thrived in the first half of the century: flat silk shoes with leather soles, often called *ballerines* or slippers (Barbosa, 2024). Indeed, they can remind us of contemporary ballet pointes, but without the rigid cast structure that they have today. The countless descriptions enhance that, often, these shoes were sold in plain colors, such as black, off-white, pink, or blue. They would also be strikingly minimalist. Instead of being embroidered, these flat shoes would rather present ribbons or similar attires, if any. In Figure 1, we can see a very typical example of these slippers: while the upper/external part of the shoe is made of silk, the sole is in leather. These shoes, at first, had no formal division between left and right feet, a structural element that would be developed by the shoemaking industry from the 1830s on, and was generally perceived as a French innovation (Riello, 2003).

Figure 1 – Melnotte shoes. Black satin upper, edges bound with black silk ribbon, black silk ribbon decoration at throat; square toe and raised square tongue, pair of folded side seams sewn with black cotton thread; cream leather insole and sock, cream cotton lining. Printed paper maker's label stuck onto insole of right shoe, 'A [shield with flags at either side] PARIS / No 20, Rue de la Paix / MELNOTTE / Bté de L.L.M.M la Reine des / Français et la Reine de Belges. / 23, Old Bond Street. / London."51' stamped on leather insole, left side, towards heel. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Inventory number T.532&A-1913.[2]

[2] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O170942/pair-of-shoes-melnotte/>. Last seen April 05, 2024.

Although Melnotte was an important fashion reference and had pioneer business initiatives as a shoemaker from as early as the 1820s, it is still challenging to reconstitute his path and the milestones of the company. This paper uses several elements from the material culture to discuss not only Melnotte's sharp establishment as a prestigious shoemaker but also a few strategic decisions concerning his successor, Denis Jean Baptiste Dufossée (1800-1869), who seems to have taken over the general company even before Melnotte's death in 1851. The Dufossée business would operate until, roughly, the 1870s (LF, 1876, p. 3) and the reasons why it closed are still unknown.

To be able to reconstitute the general scenario of these shoemakers and their shops, the paper relies upon different pieces of evidence: first, a sample of shoes, which are distributed in different museum collections throughout the world. Many items detain an inside paper label with information concerning the shoemaker, and the shop address(es). Possibly printed in regular prints[3], the labels become strategic references because of their shape and contents. Newspaper ads, shop invoices, post-mortem inventories and general secondary sources are used as complementary material, indicating the names of a few customers, their acquisitions, and/or information concerning Melnotte's associates throughout the decades. The articulated use of this material allows us to reconstitute the timeline of Melnotte's addresses in different cities, and, indirectly, to infer upon the business' core strategy. We can also map a few commercial conflicts and negotiations, therefore analyzing a successful case and its impacts concerning aesthetics and the exportation of French fashion worldwide.

[3] A first-hand analysis indicated that the labels were often made of general cellulose and printed with regular printing solutions of the period. Most printing services were not specialized and took several jobs, including labels and similar products. Although, between 1811 and 1870, it was mandatory for French printing services to indicate their names on their work, the "travaux de ville" such as labels, invoice headers, lettersets, etc, were an exception. Consequently, there are no clues concerning how they were developed or if the shoemakers chose to print the labels at the same places that would print their invoices. Personal communication with Élisabeth Parinet. All mistakes are, of course, mine.

1. Down and out in Paris and London: Melnotte's strategies in the 1820s

In the early 19th century, shoemaking was generally a handcraft with a focus on internal consumption. A generally skilled shoemaker would be trained to execute the entire process of creating a pair of shoes, from the conception to its embellishment and even sale (Barbosa, 2023; Carlier, 1948). He could have one assistant or more, although the manual work processes and their divisions are not very well known today.

France, and especially its capital, Paris, were already building a strong reputation as a major fashion center, that would be a world reference in the matter (Roche, 1979). At the time,

> skilled artisans were major producers of French goods, often receiving assistance from extensive social networks. Trained for years by masters of their crafts, these artisans were taught how to create finished goods. Although the guild system was abolished during the French Revolution, traveling the country to diversify their talents and gain new techniques remained popular for many artisans-in-training. […] Journeymen on the *Tour de France* — the circuit of cities traveled by young artisans — received great support from their societies of fraternity brothers called *compagnons*. Members of these brotherhoods found work and lodging for each other, visited their sick in the hospital, and allowed promotion within their ranks (Bradshaw, 2019, p. 57).

In this context, several commercial models existed to supply local demands and operated in parallel scenarios, including wandering sellers, who would offer or deliver the pairs to their customers' houses. In the case of fixed (work)shops, the stores would sell to a local clientele or develop a limited connection with retail solutions. There might be a geographical and physical superposition between the professional's workshop and the point of sale, where the customers could order, try, and/or pay for their pairs.

Figure 2 illustrates these dynamics, where a team of workers is busy with different shoemaking steps, a customer is putting boots on, and

another client is debating about a pair of shoes with a third lady. Clients and workers are divided by strategic use of colors: while the customers are vividly depicted, the team of shoemakers detains neutral tones, wearing similar clothing, in a sort of uniform. The scene is framed by different examples of shoes and tools used by shoemakers. A pair of *ballerines* is shown on the left side of the frame, marked by the letter "b".

Figure 2 – Atelier de cordonnier – bottiers ("Shoemakers' workshop"). Anonymous, 19th century. Musée Carnavalet, Paris, inventory number G.35334.

In this manual scenario, it was very common to use paper labels to attribute specific shoes to a particular (work)shop. Figure 3 shows a compilation of labels with different origins – the UK, Ireland, the USA, Brazil and the Czech Republic. Shoemakers seem to try to differentiate themselves from each other by stylizing the labels. But all the cases share a main structure, which makes sure that the reader can identify the name

of the (work)shop/identity of the professional, their address and city, and an occasional highlight of their connection with royal courts or other prestigious clients.

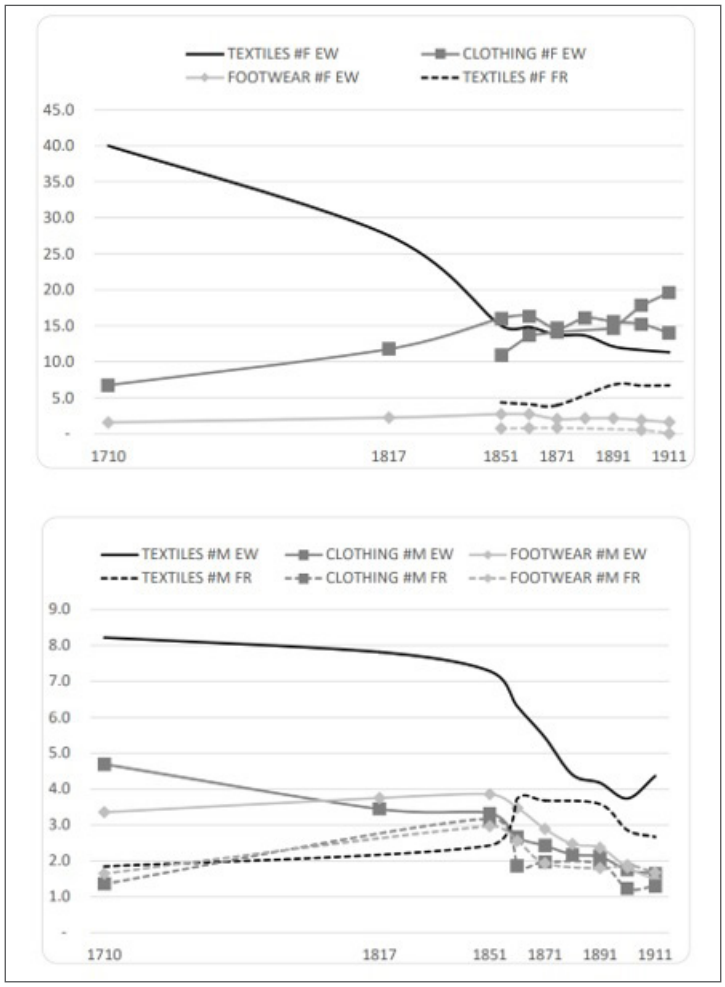
Figure 3 – Examples of paper labels from different shoemakers in the UK, in Ireland, in the USA, in Brazil and in the Czech Republic. Compilation by the author.

However, this very crafty structure of production was adapted due to a transformation in demand. Between the 1820s and the 1830s, France witnessed a new boom of business foundations, which would lead to an acceleration of the French market, and the unification of national marketing, therefore creating a very positive wave for an economy based upon individual initiative and smaller companies (Démier, 2017). The next wave of industrialization would not be unleashed in the country until the 1880s (Daviet, 2001).

If, at first, the customer demand was "over the counter", the structures of *confection* and *commission* highlighted new shoemaking processes, where the artisanal procedures were little by little challenged by mass production, with a particular destination – the overseas. *Confection* is the French equivalent for slop-trade. In the case of *commission*, "the exporter or *commissionnaire* placed his orders with master-craftsmen, who often subcontracted the work; the exporter might also deal directly with homeworkers himself" (Sibalis, 1987, p. 32).

The UK was a privileged consumer of these imported goods. After the French Revolution, both the UK and France had an expansion of their footwear industries, as we can observe in the graphs from Figure 4. The constant increase in industrial capacity for footwear between the early 18th century and the mid-19th century, both for women and men, can be understood as the reflection of a constant increase in demand for these goods (Litvine and Shaw-Taylor, 2021, p. 50-51). However, in the case of France, this increase was especially led by external demand, with a particular specialization of the local production of quality goods.

Figure 4 – Textile, clothing and footwear industries in England and Wales, compared to France (1710-1911). Source: Litvine and Shaw-Taylor, 2021, p. 50-51.



A few reasons behind this productive scenario were the differences between the production costs (when comparing the two countries), the

absorption of automatization, and the concentration of specialized workers:

> In England, productivity gains caused by the introduction of the sewing machine and agglomeration effects through lower transport costs led to lower share of the population employed in this industry. In France, productivity gains combined with English imports forced small-scale urban shoemakers to specialize on upmarket luxury goods and almost completely wiped out the scattered rural shoe industry (Litvine and Shaw-Taylor, 2021, p. 48-49).

This mix of an early adaptation of skilled artisans to mass production, in a sort of "artistic compromise with industry" (Green, 1994, p. 725), and the growth of an external clientele, thirsty for social markers and with an increasing buying power, created a predisposition for the sales of French goods abroad (Verley, 2001), particularly in London, which was the nest for a "[…] relocation of the Parisian luxury market" (Reboul, 2017, p. 118) since the early 1790s. At the time, the city was indeed seen as a "European marketplace" (Ackroyd, 2000 *apud* Cornick, 2013, p. 1) with the presence of different continental nationalities, and as one of the major commercial hubs of the northern Hemisphere. This position was enhanced by the consolidation of general British predominance over the globe, brought by the victory of several conflicts during the 18th century, especially the Seven Years War (1756-1763). If the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (1793-1815) had consequential blockages between the UK and France (O'Rourke, 2006), afterward, the period witnessed

> the setup of a system for the extension of life commoditization, based upon free enterprise and competition. This development, once triggered, has a self-sustainable feature and presupposes the changing of the country's social and geographical structures. The registration of patents indicates a global increasing movement, that becomes irregular but is not detained by the *French Wars* (Lemarchand, 2007, p. 144).

Indeed, after the conflicts, the commercial trades were reestablished[4], and liberal decisions were gradually adopted in Britain (Daudin, O'Rourke, and La Escosura, 2008, p. 4).

The Free Trade Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1826, would work as a *coup de grace* concerning the impact of French shoe importation on local production. This act reduced considerably the taxation of foreign boots and shoes (Table 1). Until 1816, importation of French shoes and boots was forbidden in the UK. Between 1816 and 1826, the taxes had very high values – 142% (1816-1819) and 75% (1819-1826) *ad valorem* respectively. Just after the act, the taxes dropped to as little as 31% *ad valorem* – a striking opportunity for products that were already seen by the upper-class clientele as a major fashion reference and had a generally inferior production cost when compared to the British pairs (considering raw material and wages)[5].

Table 1 – British Duty System on Boots and Shoes (1815-1850). Source: Riello, 2003, p. 109.

In pence per pair	Women's shoes	Women's boots	Men's shoes	Men's boots	Boot fronts	
To 1816	Prohibited					
1816–1819	142 per cent *ad valorem* (as 'leather manufactures')					
1819–1826	75 per cent *ad valorem* (as 'leather manufactures')					
1826–1829	31 per cent *ad valorem* (as 'leather manufactures')					
1829–1840	18 to 29	30 to 36	24	55.6	31 per cent *ad valorem*	
1840–1842	18.9 to 30.4	31 to 37	25.2	58.4	31 per cent *ad valorem*	
1842–1848	9.8 to 12.6	7.5 to 15.5	14.7	29.4	44.1 per dozen pairs if less than 9 inches long	69.3 per dozen pairs if more than 9 inches long
1848–1860	4 to 6	6 to 7.5	7	14	21 per dozen pairs if less than 9 inches long	33 per dozen pairs if more than 9 inches long

[4] As mentioned, the blockages did not seem to have totally interrupted shoe production and circulation, also because the military situations demanded more pairs on both sides; rather, they delayed a growing consumer demand, connected to a fresh circulation of fashion styles. It is reasonable to estimate that shoes were smuggled from one country to another during the blockages. Although the research did not find a direct database for the smuggling of finished footwear, both the UK and France had solid silk and leather industries, so possibly, during the embargoes, the demand for smuggling was contained in a scenario where internal demand was supplied by internal production. This hypothesis would benefit from further studies. For the impact of Napoleonic wars on smuggling, see Daly (2007); for silk smuggling during the period, see Farrell (2016).

[5] Riello (2003) also considers that the retailing business model was considerably different between the two countries. While, in the UK, the footwear would be a credit business, in France it was a cash business, which contributed to reducing the French production costs as compared to the British ones.

The British predomination in French exportations was undeniable, particularly concerning footwear. In 1827, one year before Melnotte settled in London, England was the 5th main destination for exported manufacturing goods from France, which summed a total of 24.3 million francs at the time (Danson, 1850, p. 301)[6]. In the 1840s, France would account "[…] for nearly 95 percent of all imported footwear" (Riello, 2003, p. 110) in Britain, with a strong participation of home consumers; while, for men, over 40% of the importations would be re-exported to other markets (including North America and British colonies), only 5% of the female footwear was re-exported. Therefore, as in the case of clothing, commercial warfare for footwear was "a war over women" (Green, 1994, p. 740).

The shoes came from several cities: not only Paris, but also Boulogne, Calais, Dieppe, and Le Havre (Riello, 2002, p. 251). In the 1830s, Devlin Dacres considered that French shoes could be sold "in all places – in squares, bazaars, millinery and toy shops" (Dacres, 1838 *apud* Riello, 2002, p. 181). The numbers were striking: "a London wholesaler was importing 12,000 pairs of French shoes at a time; another was selling ninety pounds worth of French shoes per day and a third was selling 5,000 pairs every week" (Riello, 2002, p. 256). Indeed, "[…] following the cessation of the Napoleonic wars, the official value of imports to Britain and Ireland from France increased by over 400% between 1815 and 1840" (Alexander; Doherty, 2019, p. 12).

Besides the economic opportunity, French shoemakers highlighted the individuality of their production and their management, perhaps because of local regulations. In the 18th century, "the Parisian *Compagnie de Cordonniers* […] imposed that every producer had to mark his own products with a distinctive label. This rule — conceived to avoid the commercialization of products by unregulated producers — had a positive effect in creating a modern notion of branding" (Riello, 2003, p. 119). On the other hand, "[…] French shoemakers could not rely entirely on the fashionable aspect of their goods. They soon […] recognized that their direct presence on the London market relied upon French fashion remain-

[6] The 4 first destinations were the USA (62.9 million francs), the Netherlands and Belgium (44,3 million francs), Spain (30 million francs), and Germany (27,9 million francs). Data from Danson (1850, p. 301).

ing influential in English shoemaking" (Riello, 2003, p. 127). One of the solutions for this was to manage the stores as closely as possible, printing their view of the London fashion market.

We can see an example of how widespread the slipper model was by their depiction on fashion plates, such as the ones used in the magazine *La Belle Assemblée* (Figure 5). They composed the ideal image for the fashion trends of their time (Taylor, 2002). Moreover, this model is the main shoe style from the period available in different museum archives around the world (Figure 6). This stresses that the slipper trend was indeed adopted by, at least, elite customers from different places.

Figure 5 – 'Evening Dress. Dinner Party Dress', November 1828, probably by William Read, published by George Byrom Whittaker, published in La Belle Assemblée or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine. Hand-coloured etching and acquatint, published 1 November 1828. NPG D47626. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 6 – Models of slippers from different shoemakers. From up to down, from left to right, kilim woven silk fabric. Johann Lirsch, Prague, around 1840. Lenght 24 cm, Ladies' shoes, white satin. J. Hodek, Prague, 1848 (missing ribbons to be tied round the ankle). Lenght 22 cm. © Photos: Ondřej Kocourek, The Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. Shoes by Schenk, made for Queen Desideria's coronation in Sweden, c. 1829. Livrustkammaren, accession numbers 1867: 43:68:a[7]. Cream satin shoes by Richard Carleton, Dublin, c. 1850-1860. Victoria and- Albert Museum, London. Accession number T.212&A-1915.[8]

For this, Frenchmen seemed to privilege the choice of "commission agents" and/or members of the shoemakers' own families, if not themselves, to be responsible for the entire work abroad. This meant that the general manager would be in direct contact with the company owner and, eventually, would even live in the same building that was used as a store. This contributed to financial concentration within a single family since few external people were hired to work for the company in commercial positions, such as salespeople (FJ, 1842, p. 3). As soon as 1814, Sébastien Érard's nephew became "the British head of the family's harp empire" (Reboul, 2017, p. 117). In 1851,

[7] Available at: <https://samlingar.shm.se/object/E2E34AC4-5286-4F99-AC6C-5F4A7D1E26B3>. Last seen April 06, 2024.

[8] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O170938/pair-of-shoes-carltone-richard/>. Last seen April 05, 2024.

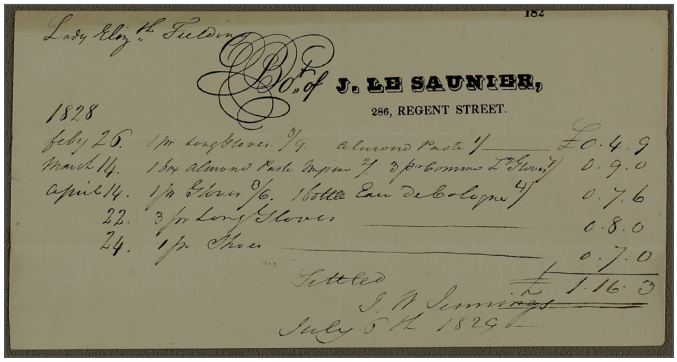
> Charles Lehocq's shoe shop [in London] housed four individuals from Boulogne-Sur-Mer: the manager Elandone Coarbet, two shopwomen and one shopman. At 160 Regent Street, L.T. Piver's shop selling perfume and gloves housed the firm's local partner Jules Lauvergnat, along with three shopmen born in France. At 216 Regent Street, Houbigant was represented by Ferdinand Pinault, Perfumer and Glover. Born in France and the long-term manager of Houbigant's London operation, he was assisted by a shopman from France (Alexander; Doherty, 2021, p. 26).

In 1885, Georges Vuitton, Louis Vuitton's only son, would personally go to London to manage the local family store (Bonvicini, 2023, p. 166-167).

The flood of French importations would have relevant negative impacts on British shoe production and distribution, which faced sharp competition. The reduction of the economic barrier for foreign shoes, with the lowering of the taxes and the resuming of relevant import volumes, triggered protests, strikes, and adaptations from the local workforce to keep the competitiveness of their production (Riello, 2003). However, French shoes had come to stay. Several retailers would settle, between the 1820s and 1860s, on Regent Street and other addresses nearby, selling imported French goods (Alexander; Doherty, 2019, p. 11).

The indication that Melnotte bought a shoe *confection* as early as 1805 indicates that his structure was already prepared to face mass production, with a focus on exportation – perhaps mixing *confection* and *commission*. He seems to have followed the general strategy of, at first, selling his shoes indirectly in London, via a third-party seller: Mr. Lesaunier, whose store was already established in Regent Street (Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Invoice from Lesaunier, 1828. Wiltshire and Swindon Archives. 2664 - Talbot family of Lacock. 2664/3/3D/2/56 Accounts for Captain and Lady Feilding, 1828-1837.



Jean Louis Lesaunier's (c. 1796 – 1845) experience with boot and shoe retail can be tracked from the 1820s to the 1830s. Described as a "confectioner seller merchand" (The London Archives, 1824), he seems to be responsible for the imports of the "fancy boots and shoes"[9] (Figure 7), the management of the warehouse, and the retail itself. Before 1828, he was responsible for reselling at least Melnotte's shoes in London. In 1834, he was a victim of swindling at his commercial address – 292, Regent Street[10]. Two women were accused of organizing the swindle to keep some shoes, that would be charged in 4 pounds 6 shillings (MC, 1834, p. 4).

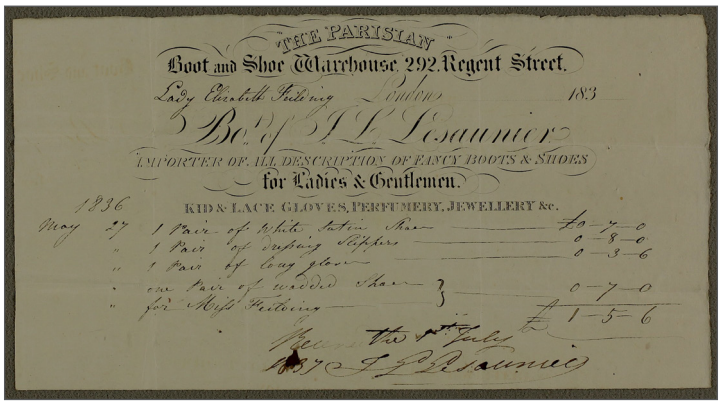
Other pieces of evidence indicate that Lesaunier was a strategic hub to re-export shoes: still in 1834, Walter Richards Osborne announced in the *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier* that his store, at 3, Great George's Street, received "[…] a large addition to his stock of Lesaunier's Parisian shoes in leather, prunella, and white and black satin" (SRCCC, 1834, p. 3). Both Lesaunier's and Osborne's stores sold other items, such as boxes, perfumes, and soap (Figure 8). However, for unknown reasons, in the same year Lesaunier sold the store and its operations to Jean Jacquinot, a shoemaker himself (Archives Nationales, 1845). Nevertheless, the shop seems to keep the name of its founder, since an 1836 ad announces that Lesaunier had "[…] the honour to inform the Nobility and Gentry that he has received from Paris the finest assortment

[9] Lesaunier seemed to be a general importer of French goods, including Normandy pippins and dried fruit (PLDA, 1830, p. 1).

[10] His personal address was 23 Villiers Street, Strand, London (The London Archives, 1824).

of ladies' shoes that has ever been imported into this country, and also begs caution to his customers against misrepresentations of a clerk who has lately quitted his employ" (MP, 1836. p. 7)[11].

Figure 8 – Invoice from Lesaunier, "The Parisian", 1836. Wiltshire and Swindon Archives. 2664 - Talbot family of Lacock. 2664/3/3D/2/56 Accounts for Captain and Lady Feilding, 1828-1837.


THE PARISIAN
Boot and Shoe Warehouse, 292 Regent Street.
Lady Elizabeth Feilding London 183
Bo.t of J. L. Lesaunier
IMPORTER OF ALL DESCRIPTION OF FANCY BOOTS & SHOES
for Ladies & Gentlemen.
KID & LACE GLOVES, PERFUMERY, JEWELLERY &c.
1836
May 27 1 Pair of White Satin Shoes £0 7 0
" 1 Pair of Dancing Slippers 0 3 6
" 1 Pair of Long Gloves
" one Pair of wadded Shoes 0 7 0
" for Miss Feilding £1 5 6
Rec.d the 1st July
1837 J. L. Lesaunier

This apparently stable commercial situation would be shattered with Melnotte's initiative to cross the English Channel and directly manage his business. By June 20, 1828, four months after his first newspaper ad, Melnotte informed in the *Morning Post* that 186, Regent Street was "[…] the only Warehouse in London, for the SALE of SHOES made at his Manufactury, *Rue de la Paix*, no. 22, à Paris; and that Mr. LESAUNIER is no longer authorized to sell for him" (MP, 1828b, p. 1). He "returns his sincere thanks for the favors he has already received" as well, hinting that there were backstage arrangements for him to be able to carry on with his international expansion.

What were his possible motivations for doing so? While a direct answer is not possible yet, since we lack documentation concerning Melnotte and Lesaunier's personal communications, it seems to be closely related to the conjunctural points brought up previously. The earlier predisposition of the French shoe production (particularly for women's footwear) might have converted into a concrete increase in sales, that Melnotte wanted to watch closely.

[11] Since Elizabeth Feilding's invoice is signed by Lesaunier himself in 1837, it is possible that he sold the business but still worked there.

Melnotte's move was a pioneer one in many senses. Alexander and Doherty (2019; 2021) see his company as a *maison spéciale*, which "[…] was associated exclusively with a recognizable proto-modern brand and represented a new mechanism for market shaping" (Alexander; Doherty, 2021, p. 17). While

> […] modern brands provide the consumer with both transactional and sophisticated transformational information, […] brands before the twentieth century were little more than identifiers of information associated with logistical functionality and should 'be referred to as proto-brands' by proposing an intermediary stage of brand development (Alexander; Doherty, 2021, p. 3-4).

In other words, the company's dynamics anticipated elements that would be present in the forthcoming retail structure, considering that

> It is only in the last decades of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of branch store or chain store operations, that the specialist retailer is seen as representative of organizational development and modernity (Alexander; Doherty, 2019, p. 7).

While several retail spaces dedicated their operations to selling French goods, Melnotte and other companies

> […] possessed names with reputations that encapsulated meaning, which they sought to project and protect. However, in doing this they encountered institutional voids that restricted marketing activity. They did not have the legal protection of trademark legislation and registration. They encountered underdeveloped promotional and retailing systems. Therefore, firms responded to deficiencies in the host market by internalizing operational functions through innovative organizational arrangements which were reified in the marketplace in the form of *maisons spéciales* and their associated marketing practices (Alexander; Doherty, 2021, p. 17)[12].

[12] For an interesting reflection on the differences between "mercantilist" and "modern" brands, see Câmara, Lopes and Fredona (2024).

Indeed, Melnotte chose to increase distribution channels by settling in at relevant addresses. His ambition includes shipping shoes to the entire planet, as the store invoice says on its header (Figure 9)[13]. The addresses' selection indicates a sharp comprehension of strategic urban localization, where "[…] the shop is […] expressing its busy activity in synchrony with street life" (Riello, 2002, p. 176). In Paris, the store/workshop was first located at 22, rue de la Paix, in the 2e arrondissement, a very dynamic commercial center that would benefit from Haussman's renovations and cultural innovations, such as the city's Opéra. During the 19th century, the northwestern arrondissements of the City of Lights would become synonyms for wealth, taste, and fashion trends, and would be increasingly visited by foreigners, whenever they were in town[14]. Couturier Charles Worth's store, one of the core fashion references of the century, would begin his operations at number 7 from rue da la Paix in 1858.[15] In 1914, almost a century after Melnotte began his shoemaking operations, illustrator Sem would affirm: "Rue de la Paix. These four words […] are a motto" (1914, p. 63)[16]. Still today, major fashion companies' headquarters indicate the very same addresses.

In London, Regent Street expressed the same ideals: this street was one of the first planned spots in town and began as a fashionable address for the upper class. Later, it became well known as a major retail hub. In both cases, the stores are strategically located in accessible addresses, that are already familiar to the potential customers; therefore, the shoemaker decided to be in two central consumption arenas of the period, with Regent Street representing "[…] a center of cosmopolitan consumption practices" (Alexander; Doherty, 2019, p. 10).[17] The synergy between the

[13] Sadly, the absence of the account books prevented the research from checking if global shipping was really a company practice. The examples of Melnotte shoes sent abroad were more likely initiatives from individuals who sent parcels from Britain to relatives living in different places, such as New Zealand.

[14] As soon as 1824, Melnotte's Parisian store was visited at least once by a foreigner, who advertises in English that he or she found a purse in the store, "containing several gold pieces", and would return it to the owner "on giving a description of the purse and its contents". This single episode highlights the shoemaker's upper-class clientele in the 1820s already (GM, 1824, p. 4).

[15] The company was first named Worth & Bobergh; Otto Bobergh was Swedish and became Worth's business partner in their fashion entrepreneurship (Grossiord, 2013).

[16] In French : "Rue de la Paix. Ces quatre mots […] sont une devise".

[17] Alexander and Doherty consider that London's consumption arena was an area of "[...] Regent

addresses is such that J.R. Best considers that Regent Street is "[…] quite like Rue de la Paix and *les élégantes* here, too, spend most of the day lounging about - for what else should they do?" (1829, p. 102).

This replacement of indirect retail by direct management of a store abroad could be seen as a bold move. Decisions such as Melnotte's,

> in a context of increasing trade between France and Britain, […] were a response to market failure and the institutional deficiencies encountered by firms entering the London market. Internalization of retail activity facilitated control of marketing activities. However, the establishment of an international retail unit required local management and associated control mechanisms (Alexander; Doherty, 2019, p. 13).

In this sense, this shoemaker detains pioneer elements for the first quarter of the century. More than a name for an individual, "Melnotte" was now a company, dealing with production, distribution, reputation, and loyalty. Instead of dealing with a particular workshop, the man directly buys a *confection* in a very urban address and explores the exportation opportunity. This recognizable proto-brand, positioned in strategic consumption arenas, is seen as a main reference for shoe aesthetics and quality. Nevertheless, in terms of business management, Melnotte seems to remain "a single man, […] who never mixes with […] a true management team, with a few accountants even advising to keep secrecy concerning his accounts and therefore his profit" (Daviet, 2001, no page)[18]. The absence of account books concerning Melnotte or even Dufossée, highlighting the companies' performances, culture, hiring practices, bills, etc., prevents us from diving into the company's detailed structure. Neither shoemaker seems to be a member of relevant French shoemaker *compagnonnage* communities, such as the Devoir.

Melnotte's reputation seems to have spread quickly to other countries. Jane Forbes Skene (1787-1862), from Scotland, kept four invoices

Street bounded by Leicester Street to the south, Argyll Street and Maddox Street to the north" (2019, p. 9).

[18] In French: "[…] Un homme seul, […] il ne se confond jamais avec […] une véritable équipe de direction, certains comptables lui conseillant même de garder secrets certains éléments de ses comptes et donc de ses bénéfices".

from the shoemaker, which could be estimated to have been produced between 1821 and 1828 (Winterthur, 1821-1828a; b; c; d). They all possess printed billheads. In one, we can read: "The modern taste – 19, Rue de la Paix – near the boulevard des Capucines – Melnotte – Md. Shoemaker for Ladies – Ships to all countries – Paris" in a stylized decoration (Figure 9). The three other invoices map the exact transition between the end of Melnotte's "third-party warehouse era" and his arrival in London. Two are marked as from 1827 (Winterthur, 1821-1828b; c), and their headers indicate the Parisian address of 22, rue de la Paix, and the warehouse address at 228, Regent Street (Figure 10). The last one is from 1828 and shows a much different style, with an updated address in London – 186, Regent Street (Figure 11).

This choice of a printed billhead seems to be another bold move to refine any items related to the store[19]. Fellow shoemaker Schenck, who delivered customized shoes to Empress Marie Louise d'Autriche, wrote at least one invoice entirely by hand (Archivio di Stato di Parma, 1822). The printed element – that we can see both in the invoices and in the inside labels – enhances the role of standardization and precision in building professional commercial communication.

Jane was the daughter of banker William Forbes. Her husband, lawyer and amateur artist James Skene, inherited the Rubislaw domain and was a close friend of Sir Walter Scott. She belonged, therefore, to a wealthy family of scholars and businessmen. Although the family's domain was near Aberdeen, the Skenes were based in Edinburgh but lived in different countries between the 1820s and the 1840s. Since the Skene family did a tour de France in 1820-1821, she might have bought the pairs directly at Rue de la Paix (Skene, 1820-1821). The family's seventh child, daughter Felicia, was born in Aix-en-Provence in May 1821, thus during this tour de France. When Felicia was six years old, the Skenes moved to Paris "for the sake of their children's education" (Rickards, 1902, p. 19) and later relocated to Versailles. The third invoice of the set is indeed addressed to "Madame Eskine, Hôtel du Réservoir, Versailles" (Winterthur, 1821-1828c). Mrs. Skene's first invoice indicates that Melnotte did sell

[19] Carlo Belfanti observes that "if one looks at Paris, the capital testifies to the numerous, articulate strategies used by the merchants-entrepreneurs and shopkeepers to attract consumers through advertisements which presented the logo of the firm through flyers or bill heads" (2017, p. 11).

other items beyond his creations (Winterthur, 1821-1828a). The writer, Melnotte himself,[20] lists (in French) each item and its price, but also states who the customers were – two Mademoiselles and one Madame[21]. The other invoices list the buying of *pantoufles*, satin shoes, and shoes for children, among other items. Particularly, the 1828 invoice lists several acquisitions between January and May of that year. The total sum of 68 francs was paid on June 11, 1828 (Winterthur, 1821-1828d).

Figure 9 – Invoice from Melnotte (header). Circa 1821-1828. The Winterthur Library -The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Folder 4: French Bills to the Skenes, 1821-1828 .159 - Billhead - Melnotte (Shoemaker for ladies), Paris, France. Several pairs of shoes.

[20] I compared the invoice's handwriting with a separate letter written by Melnotte to Édouard Robert (1835), then director of the Théâtre Italien, concerning the loss of shoes destined for the Countess Alfred and Countess Arthur. The shoes were described as "2 pairs of demi-bottes with fringes and strong cork" (« 2 paires de souliers demi-bottes avec de la frange et à gros liège »), and possibly the Countesses intended to wear them during a play.

[21] Although the names are not easily readable, they do not seem to match any given name to Jane's daughters: Eliza, Catherine, Caroline, and Felicia.

Figure 10 – Invoice from Melnotte (header). 1827. The Winterthur Library -The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Folder 4: French Bills to the Skenes, 1821-1828 .173 - Billhead - Melnotte (Shoemaker for ladies), Paris, France. Several pairs of shoes.

Figure 11 – Invoice from Melnotte (header). 1828. The Winterthur Library -The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Folder 4: French Bills to the Skenes, 1821-1828 .219 - Billhead - Melnotte (Ladies Shoemaker), Paris. Shoes for a woman and a child, and polish.

Figure 12 shows a yellow *ballerine* that, most likely, is from the same period of the invoices. The paper label on the shoe's interior (Figure 13) has the same decoration, with stylized printing, and the same address from Figure 9. No London address is shown.

Figure 12 – Silk shoe, 24,1 cm long. Paper label on insole: "M No 19 Rue de la Paix, près le Boulevard des Capucines, MELNOTTE, Md Cordonnier pour les Dames, à Paris". Circa 1830. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Accession number T.23-1937[22].

Figure 13 – The shoe's inside paper label.

[22] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O356532/shoe/>. Last seen April 5, 2024.

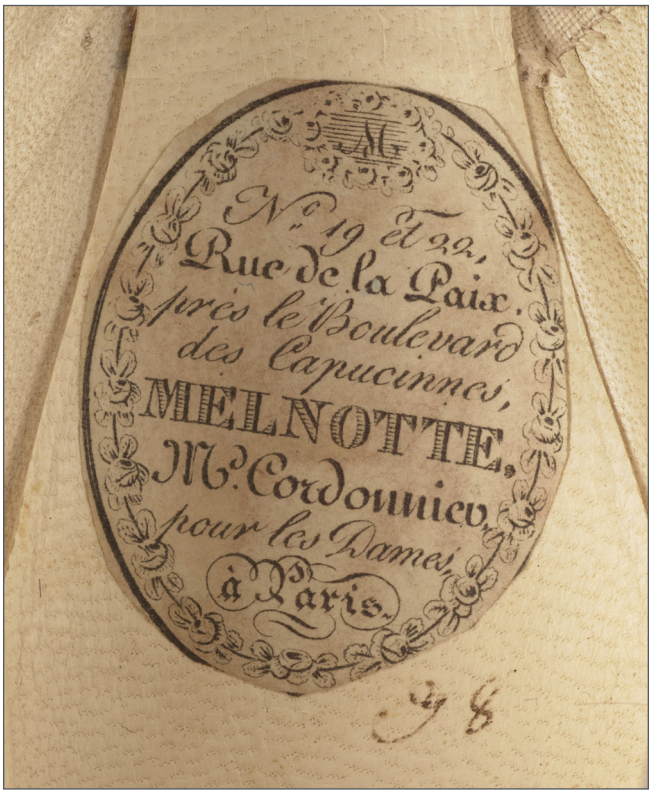
In 1830, Melnotte moved from 186 to 164, Regent Street, where he would stay until 1845 (TMH, 1830, p. 1)[23]. Meanwhile, the company's Parisian address hops between numbers 22, 20, and 19 at rue de la Paix. This seems to be a partial effect of a building renovation on number 4, which then became numbers 4 and 6. Consequently, the buildings on the even side had their numbers added by 2 or 4 (LRAFIDL, 1923). Some inside soles even indicate "numbers 19 and 22", as seen in Figure 14 – a lilac silk pair with a kid insole and delicate ribbons. The stylization of the inside label is very similar to the one seen in the yellow pair.

Figure 14 – Woman's slippers that belonged to Alicia Ramsay. Melnotte, circa 1830. 70 x 50 x 230 mm. France, by Melnotte. Gift of Mrs Tudor Atkinson, 1982. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Te Papa (PC002648)[24].

[23] Other commercial references from Regent Street, close to Melnotte, were Box, Gass, Ackermann, and the Swissman Verey (ILL, 1843, p. 1).

[24] Available at: <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/52294>. Last seen April 5, 2024. The museum estimated the shoe's production date as circa 1850, but the style of the inside label and the address indicated seem closer to Melnotte's configurations in the 1830s or even late 1820s.

Figure 15 – The shoe's inside paper label.



While the Skenes lived in the Parisian region and were able to buy directly at Melnotte's local shop, the owner of the lilac pair of shoes was Alicia Ramsay, who lived in New Zealand. This sharp example of globalization stresses the pace of fashion: even in the first half of the 19th century, it was already possible for ladies living on different continents to keep up with major trends.

2. The shoe dynasty

By the 1830s, Melnotte was a consolidated business, which in the following years would enjoy a fresh wave of customers and a good reputation. In 1832, the *Dublin Observer* (1832, p. 2) mentioned the brand as a refined shoe reference. In 1839, the shoes were valued to the point of being mentioned in a theft notice from the *Nottingham Review*: Sir George Eyre's carriage was stolen supposedly "[…] between Mansfield and Alfreton" (NR, 1839, p. 6), and an oak travelling case was taken away. Among several valuable items, including brooches, dittos, gold chains,

and books, the victim mentions that "leather and satin shoes, maker's name, Melnotte, London", were inside the chest as well.

However, the same elements that enhanced Melnotte's position as a major successful reference might open commercial breeches and even disputes. While the ads suggest Melnotte took direct control of his London store, just like several other businessmen, he did not manage the store single-handedly. J. Petit worked at the shop for almost ten years, until he decided to quit and open his own business (TMH, 1837c, p. 1; MP, 1837a, p. 1)[25]. In 1837, Petit, who identified himself as a "[…] late agent to Melnotte", announced that he was opening his own warehouse at 260, Regent Street, in a "[…] private entrance to Argyll House". He "[…] earnestly solicits a continuance of that preference with which he has been honored for the last ten years" (TMH, 1837b, p. 1). As we saw with Lesaunier, such moves were not rare. Even though we know little about the work conditions[26], these sellers not only had the opportunity to refine important soft skills but also developed their own list of customers and knew important information from their previous workplaces, which had now become their competitors.

While no further information concerning J. Petit was found (not even his given name), he insisted on heavily repeating the information about his new warehouse in different newspapers between 1837 and 1838 (TMH, 1837c, p. 1; MP, 1837b, p. 1; MP, 1837c, p. 1; TMH, 1837d, p. 1; MP, 1837d, p. 1; TMH, 1837e, p. 1; MP, 1837e, p. 1; TMH, 1837f, p. 1; MP, 1838, p. 1). In 1839, he thanks his customers, asks for them to keep coming to the store, and stresses that, beyond boots and shoes, they will also find gloves, perfumery, and "[…] a great variety of NOUVEAUTÉS from the best manufacturers in Paris" (TMH, 1839, p. 1)[27]. In late 1841, J. Petit starts to identify himself as "J. Petit from Paris" (MP, 1841, p. 1) – it is unclear if it was an attempt to enhance the legitimacy of a "Parisian native" or if Petit moved to Paris because of unknown reasons.

[25] On December 05, 1837, Petit "[...] earnestly solicits the patronage of those Ladies on whom he had the honour of attending during the ten years that he had the entire management of mr. Melnotte's business" (MP, 1837c, p. 1).

[26] The category of "agent" is brought by J. Petit himself. It is unclear whether he worked for commissions or if his hiring conditions were those of a regular employee.

[27] The same ad is repeated until June 1841 (TMH, 1841, p. 8). "Nouveautés" was the French term for fashion goods at the time (Green, 1994, p. 725).

The same ad is repeated until 1844, when Petit announces that he has moved to 124, Regent Street. Besides boots and shoes, his new selling point offers "gloves, Lubin's perfumes, Gilt and Black Jewelry, and great many *nouveautés*" (MP, 1844, p. 1). In 1853, Petit informs that he still sells at the same address, but he has now a manufacture in Paris, at the 10, rue Bailleul "à l'entresol, near the Louvre" (MC, 1853, p. 1). Therefore, he is "[…] able to attend immediately to any private order with which he may be favoured" (idem, ibidem). In 1854, Petit opened a new warehouse in Brighton, at 33, King's Road (BG, 1854, p. 4). In 1856, his Parisian manufacture had moved to 334, rue Saint-Honoré[28], and, by the end of the 1850s, Petit expanded his production with shoes for children (TMH, 1856, p. 8). In 1862, J. Petit earned a prize medal at the London Universal Exhibition for his "excellent taste and quality" (TMH, 1862, p. 1) in shoemaking. He would still be mentioned in the foreign register of the *Business Directory of London* of 1884 (1884, p. 106).

For over 15 years, and even after Melnotte's death in 1851, J. Petit connected himself with his former-boss-become-a-competitor. In 1848, the very same page of the *Morning Herald* has ads from both Melnotte and J. Petit, describing himself as a "late agent to Melnotte" (Figure 16). In August of the same year, Melnotte publishes a particular ad, to stress the separation between him and his former employee: "in consequence of the repeated mistakes that are continually occurring", he states,

> and of parties who do not scruple to make use of his name, MELNOTTE begs most respectfully to apprise the Nobility and Gentry who honour him with their patronage that he has for the last THREE YEARS REMOVED from 164, Regent Street to the above address [Old Bond Street], it being the only house in England where Melnotte's shoes can be purchased (TMH, 1848b, p. 1).

[28] This address corresponds to the hôtel de Noailles. Curiously, two addresses informed by J. Petit are from important homes in both cities – Argyll House in London and the hôtel de Noailles in Paris. It is hard to understand where exactly he operated in these spaces since they are domestic places.

Figure 16 – Shoe ads from both Melnotte and J, Petit. Source: (TMH, 1848b, p. 8).

MELNOTTE, 23, Old Bond-street, London; 22, Rue de la Paix, Paris.—LADIES' BOOTS and SHOES, Improved Elastic Boots, fancy Slippers, and Children's Shoes of every size. The most select assortment of Paris novelties, Gloves, Bijouterie, Perfumes, Silk Stockings, and Lingerie.—Depot of Josseline's Ladies' Stays.

LADIES' FRENCH SHOE WAREHOUSE, No. 124, Regent-street, Private Door.—J. PETIT, from Paris, late agent to Melnotte, respectfully informs Ladies that he continues to import LADIES' FRENCH BOOTS and SHOES of the most modern shape. He begs to return his thanks to those ladies who have so kindly patronised his warehouse, and earnestly to solicit a continuance of the kind and very liberal support he has hitherto been favoured with. Gloves, Lubin's Parfums, and a great many nouveautés from the first manufacturers in Paris, are always imported.—Observe, 124, Regent-street, private door.

This connection is seen not only throughout the recurrent newspaper ads but in the shoes' inside paper labels as well. We can see an example in Figures 17, 18, and 19, where the inside label indicates "J. Petit" and "Melnotte" in capital letters. Petit is shown as an "ex-agent of Melnotte's"[29]. Thus, this pair was not made by Melnotte; however, J. Petit insists on mentioning this brand as a source of legitimacy. It is only after establishing his manufacture that Petit regularly announces himself as a "shoemaker" and no longer mentions Melnotte, who seems to be not only a hirer but somewhat of a mentor and central reference. Figure 20 has an interesting detail: a new version of the label, where we can read "gloves, perfume and *articles de nouveautés* from Paris"[30].

Figure 17 – Silk shoes by J. Petit, circa 1840s-1850s[31].

Figure 18 – The shoe's inside paper label.

[29] In French: "ex-agent de Melnotte".

[30] In French: "gants, parfumerie et articles de nouveautés de Paris".

[31] Available at: <https://www.etsy.com/il-en/listing/629905735/antique-1800s-1810s-1820s-regency-era>. Last seen April 05, 2024.

Figure 19 – Evening slippers. Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Herman Delman, 1954. Object Number: 2009.300.1461a, b[32].

Figure 20 – The shoe's inside paper label.

While J. Petit developed his business, Lesaunier's former store would play a new role in the succession stories. In 1837, Charles Hubert announces, in the *Morning Herald*, that, as a "[…] successor to K. Lesaunier", he resumes selling French boots and shoes at 292, Regent Street (TMH, 1837a, p. 1). Contrary to Lesaunier, pieces of evidence suggest that Hubert followed a similar pattern to Melnotte and J. Petit's approach, by producing the pairs in France and having a Parisian (46, rue Neuve des Petits Champs) and a Londoner address (figure 21). Beforehand, he had a (work)shop at 20, rue des Saints Pères, which he received from his parents as a wedding gift (Archives Nationales, 1830)[33], and shipped the shoes to England[34]. Ten years after Melnotte's London move, the idea of

[32] Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/156179>. Last seen December 30, 2024.

[33] Hubert's father, Louis Charles, was also a bootmaker. The store's operation was estimated in 30,000 francs (including 5,000 francs of shoe stock) by the wedding's clerk (Archives Nationales, 1830).

[34] An invoice from 1834 indicates "Au goût moderne – Hubert – Cordonnier breveté – Send ladies

maintaining a centralized production with shops in the two countries seemed to spread among the shoe business. Hubert's business would operate for several decades. In 1901, the company attended the Glasgow International Exhibition, stating that it produced "court, naval, military and hunting boots and shoes of every description" (GIEOC, 1901, p. 80).

Figure 21 – C. Hubert inside paper label, c.1837.
National Trust Guernsey Costume Collection.

Meanwhile his competitors organized themselves with their own alliances, in 1845 Melnotte moved his headquarters from 164, Regent Street, to 23, Old Bond Street, looking for "[…] greater convenience, […] and more privacy for fitting shoes" (TMH, 1845a, p. 8), besides having a larger shoe assortment. This search for a new street might be an

shoes to England". Digital copy available at: <https://tinyurl.com/successioninvoice>. Last seen May 28, 2025.

attempt to distance himself from the retail dynamic of Regent Street and particularly J. Petit[35].

A large sample of Melnotte's shoes detains an updated version of the inside label, with the Old Bond Street address. While the shoe's aesthetics, or their confection, haven't changed much between the 1820s and the 1840s, it was possible to track the business' changes through the paper labels. In Figures 22-30, we can see several pairs with the same inside label, which allows us to infer they were produced during the same period. Besides indicating addresses both in Paris[36] and London, Melnotte stresses his position as a "breveté de L.L.M.M. la Reine des Français et la Reine des Belges". Moreover, there is still room to interpret the heraldic illustration depicted in these labels.

While there is scarce information about how *cordonniers* became *brevetés*, this is a clear indication that the professional had personal approval from a noble/influential person. Shoemakers Schenck and Schacherer, who were Melnotte's fellows in Paris, also stressed their positions as *brevetés*. One shoe from 1811 indicates: "Schacherer who goes by The German, shoemaker *breveté* from H.M. the Empress and Queen, rue Saint-Denis n°226 in the corner of the rue du Petit Lion à Paris"[37]. As for Schenck, the inside label of one of his shoes for Queen Desideria of Sweden, made in the 1820s, states: "Schenck, known as The German, shoemaker, authorized by H.R.H. Mlle d'Orléans, 10 rue du 29 Juillet in face of 32, rue de Rivoli in Paris"[38].

[35] Curiously, by 1850, Melnotte had still not cancelled his lease to 164, Regent Street. It was due to expire "at midsummer next", that is, circa July 1851. The place was occupied by a Mrs. Jackson while Melnotte was at Old Bond Street. The leasing price was 220 pounds per year since a premium of 500 pounds had already been paid for it (TMH, 1850, p. 8).

[36] In May 1845, Melnotte still indicates that his Paris address is 22, rue de la Paix. However, all the labels show "20, rue de la Paix" (TMH, 1845b, p. 9). This may be connected with the addition of 2 numbers on the even side of the rue de la Paix, mentioned before, and perhaps the producer considered that it was useless to throw away the labels since people would still be able to find the shop.

[37] In French: "Schacherer dit L'allemand, cordonnier breveté de S.M. l'Impératrice et Reine, rue Saint-Denis n°226 vis à vis celle du Petit Lion à Paris". This text is from the inside sole of a baby shoe made for the Roi de Rome, Napoleon's son with empress Marie Louise d'Autriche. Available at: <https://www.osenat.com/lot/21004/4364504-exceptionnel-ensemble-ayant-appartenu-au-roi-de-rome-1-robe>. Last seen November 10, 2024.

[38] In French in the label: "Schenck dit L'Allemand, Cordonnier, breveté de S.A.S. Mlle d'Orléans, 10 rue du 29 Juillet ci-devant 32, Rue de Rivoli à Paris". The shoe belongs to the collection of the Livrustkammaren, Sweden. Inventory number 17551_LRK / Nr 1867: 15:525.

By stating their connections with royal customers, their reputation reached full legitimacy and might also boost sales through a capitalization on "[…] their relationships with the social elite" (National Trust of Guernsey, 2019). In the UK, royal warrants "[…] have been issued by the British royal family since the 15th century [and] are a mark of distinction for companies who have provided goods and services for at least five years" (NYT, 2018) to these aristocratic clients.

In the 19th century, this practice was not used by shoemakers only, but by several professionals, including milliners and perfume makers[39]. They enhanced their connections by including, in the pieces, statements such as "makers to the Royal Family", "shoemaker to Her Majesty" (Figure 3), "hatter to Queen Victoria, the Empress of the French and the Elite of Europe" (Imbert, 2021, p. 56), or similar. In an illustrating cross-border case, Creed and Cumberland, tailors and *marchands de nouveautés* ("*nouveautés* sellers") in London, granted the *breveté* from empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III, in 1855 (idem, ibidem). In an exactly inversed situation, C. Hubert's paper label indicates "breveté de sa Majesté la reine Adélaide", a probable reference to Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen (1792-1849), wife of King William IV, whose final year of reign was 1837, when Hubert resumed the 292, Regent Street operations. Therefore, makers would rely upon validation from royal courts everywhere, not only in their country[40]. Besides their statements, shoemakers were careful enough to indicate women as their major validators, since they were their main customers as well.

In comparison to other *cordonniers*, and even considering his very positive reputation, Melnotte did not connect himself to royal legitimacy until late in his shoemaking journey. The mentioned royalties must be Marie Amélie de Bourbon-Siciles (1782-1866), the last queen of France, and Louise d'Orléans (1812-1850), queen of Belgium, who were mother and daughter[41]. They both reigned between 1832 and 1848.

[39] There were circa 800 royal warrant holders throughout Britain in 2018 (NYT, 2018).

[40] The connection between courts and brevets also highlights the family ties throughout European metropolis and their colonies and/or connections, especially after Queen Victoria had issue. In the case of Sweden, queen Desideria was French and close to Napoleon (Castro, 2019). These ties hint how the shoe distribution might also benefit from broader political structures besides the liberal import-export procedures. This idea could benefit from further research.

[41] Schenck's Mlle. d'Orléans could be Madame Adelaide, sister of Louis Philippe Ier. This would indicate a stark connection between the brevets and the Bourbon-Orléans branch.

Figure 22 – Heedless ladies satin slippers; square toe and throat, cream satin upper with edges bound in cream silk ribbon and pair of side seams double stitched; cream silk double ribbon at throat (right shoe only), cream cotton string-pulls at throat; cream leather insole and quarter lining, cream linen vamp lining; brown leather sole stamped and inscribed. Sole of both shoes inscribed at toe in black ink, '36 el'; both shoes stamped with a '6' or is it a '9' at the side of the sole near the heel; Printed paper maker's label stuck to insole at waist in both shoes, 'A PARIS / No. 20, Rue de la Paix. / MELNOTTE, / Bte. de L.L.M.M. la Reine des / Français et la Reine des Belges. / 23, Old Bond Street, / LONDON.' Circa 1850. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Access number T.555&A-1913[42].

Figure 23 – The shoe's inside paper label.

[42] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O171649/pair-of-shoes-melnotte/>. Last seen April 05, 2024.

Figure 24 – Figure 1's inside paper label.

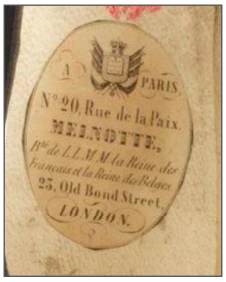


Figure 25 – Pair of silk woman's shoes, about 1830, made by Melnotte, France. Circa 1850. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Access number T.533&A-1913[43].

Figure 26 – The shoe's inside paper label.

[43] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O171643/pair-of-shoes-melnotte/>. Last seen April 05, 2024. The museum estimated the shoe's production date as circa 1830, but the style of the inside label and the address indicated seem closer to Melnotte's configurations in the 1840s-1850s.

Figure 27 – Black satin uppers with edges bound with black silk, pair of folded seams at sides and small black silk bow at throat; cream leather insole and sock, cream cotton lining, remnants of black silk ribbon ties sewn into sides of shoes at seams; brown leather sole. Printed paper maker's label stuck to insole of right shoe, 'A [shield with flags at either side] PARIS / No 20, Rue de la Paix / MELNOTTE / Bté de L.L.M.M. la Reine des / Français et la Reine de Belges. / 23, Old Bond Street. / London.'. Circa 1800-1824. Victoria and Albert Museum. Accession number T.527&A-1913[44].

Figure 28 – The shoe's inside paper label.

Figure 29 – Woman's slippers by Melnotte. Owned by Priscilla Saxton. 65 x 50 x 240 mm. 1846-1850, France, by Melnotte. Gift of Mrs C Saxton, 1952. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Te Papa (PC000069)[45].

[44] Available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O170943/pair-of-shoes-melnotte/>. Last seen April 05, 2024. The museum estimated the shoe's production date as circa 1800-1820, but the style of the inside label and the address indicated seem closer to Melnotte's configurations in the 1840s-1850s.

[45] Available at: <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/35473>. Last seen December 30, 2024.

Figure 30 – The shoe's inside paper label.

Curiously enough, the first pieces of evidence of a formal collaboration between Dufossée and Melnotte are contemporary to the relocation of the London store to Old Bond Street. A few pairs indicate they were made by both shoemakers and detain a double address: 22, rue de la Paix and 164, Regent Street. In 1845, illustrator Bertrand Lacoste drew the store's façade as a part of the text *Merveilles de Paris* (Perle d'Amour, 1845), to complement the short chapter *On shoes and small feet* ("De la chaussure et des petits pieds"), written by Eugène Nus (Figure 31). In the scene, two women discuss at the entrance of the shop, while the glass showcases are entirely filled with *ballerines*. The illustration indicates the "22, rue de la Paix" as the shop's official address. A second text indicates: "Providers to H.M. the Queen and several royal foreign courts"[46]. Interestingly, the drawing stresses the role of Dufossée as "s* de Melnotte", which we can interpret as "Melnotte's successor".

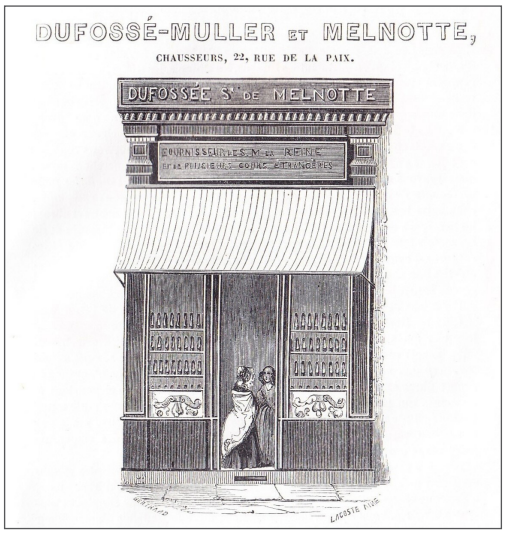
The name Dufossée is also mentioned as "Dufossée-Müller", a reference to Denis Dufossée's marriage to Anne Julie Müller (c.1801-1832) in 1827. Anne Julie's uncle, Jean Pierre Müller, was a shoemaker himself. He gifted his niece, as a wedding present, a comprehensive structure, including a (work)shop ("établissement de cordonnier pour dames"), shoe-making tools, and furniture, with a total working capital of 9,000 francs. The wedding contract stated that these goods would be shared by the newlyweds and considered that, in the case of the death of any of the newlyweds, the surviving person could keep the business. Nevertheless, Dufossée seems to have been a solid professional by the time he got mar-

[46] In French: "Fournisseurs de S.M. la Reine et de plusieurs cours étrangères".

ried, since his part of the wedding contract was worth 2,000 francs, including objects, clothing, and money (Archives Nationales, 1832). Müller died in 1832, and her postmortem inventory included detailed descriptions of raw materials, shoemaking tools, and other possessions that would be left for her husband, as well as the business conditions established by the time of the wedding (Archives Nationales, 1832). It is not clear if the contract demanded that Dufossée keep the "Müller" reference for a specific period.

The entire sample of Dufossée-Müller and Melnotte pairs mapped in the research comes from Swedish collections. Miss Emélie Brahe seems to have bought different pairs, including fair ones for her wedding. The heraldic depiction is very similar to the 20, rue de la Paix / 23, Old Bond Street version of the labels (Figures 32-39). This label version also states: "providers for H.M. the Queen and several foreign royal courts"[47], thus anticipating the "breveté" slogan. The rue de la Paix address is indicated at number 20 instead of 22, but the number adaptation could have been seen as a minor change that did not prevent the use of the labels once printed.

Figure 31 – Dufossée-Müller et Melnotte's shop façade. Source: Perle d'Amour, 1845, no page.



[47] In French: "Fournisseurs de plusieurs cours étrangères".

Figure 32 – Cream colored shoes with leather lining. Equipped with silk ribbon to be able to tie the shoes around the ankle and a small silk flower as decoration. Manufacturer: Dufossée Müller et Melnotte, Paris, France. Probably from the mid-1800s. Enköpings Museum, EM07316[48].

Figure 33 – The shoe's inside paper label.

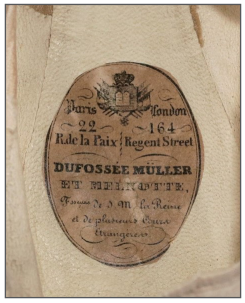


Figure 34 – Ballerines from Dufossée Müller and Melnotte, circa 1840. The inside indication is "M Brahe"[49].

[48] Available at: <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021028562308/skor>. Last seen May 11, 2024.
[49] Available at: <https://www.olsensauktioner.se/en-US/inventories/1324>. Last seen May 11, 2024.

Figure 35 – The shoe's inside paper label.

Figure 36 – Black silk shoes, never worn. Long black ties preserved. Written in ink: "Mlle Emélie Brahe" (Mademoiselle/Miss Emélie Brahe) in one. Label in the left shoe, with company mark: "Dufossée Müller et Melnotte, Paris" etc. Set together with wedding dress 14127, dress SLM 14130, bridal hat 14.127: 6 and a waist 14.128, hat 14.150, pieces of fabric 14.152, handkerchiefs 14.151 (three pcs) and three pairs of shoes 14.129 in a box marked "Wedding dress from 1835" etc. Box with label from "A.W.Bauer tailoring in Stockholm", and addressed to "Ryttmästaren herr F. von Celsing" etc. The carton marked 14.127:7. Sormlands Museum, Sweden. Inventory number SLM 14129[50].

Figure 37 – The shoe's inside paper label.

[50] Available at: <https://sokisamlingar.sormlandsmuseum.se/objects/c24-331473/?cat=43042&offset=76>. Last seen May 11, 2024.

Figure 38 – White silk shoes, probably bridal shoes, circa 1835. Small bow in front. The shoe edge is cut up at regular intervals along the entire upper part of the shoe. Ties cut off. Lined with linen and leather. Written in ink: "Mme La C de Brahe" (Madame la Comtesse/Countess de Brahe) and "droit and gauche". Label in the left shoe, with company mark: "Dufossée Müller et Melnotte, Paris" etc. Set together with wedding dress 14127, dress SLM 14130, bridal hat 14.127: 6 and a waist 14.128, hat 14.150, pieces of fabric 14.152, handkerchiefs 14.151 (three pcs) and three pairs of shoes 14.129 in a box marked "Wedding dress from 1835" etc. Box with label from "A.W.Bauer tailoring in Stockholm", and addressed to "Ryttmästaren herr F. von Celsing" etc. The carton marked 14.127:7. Sormlands Museum, Sweden. Object number SLM 14129 2[51].

Figure 39 – The shoe's inside paper label.

At this point, Melnotte had a large clientele, composed mostly of ladies from the upper class and nobility, such as Catherine Montagu (Figure 40), the wife of Alexandre Colonna-Waleswki (1808-1834). While the general pairs were sold in plain colors, customized work could be very detail focused. In 1845, the *Pictorial Times* dedicated a few lines of a section called Pictorial Illustrations to describe a mule from Melnotte, worn

[51] Available at: <https://sokisamlingar.sormlandsmuseum.se/objects/c24-331472/?cat=43042&offset=91>. Last seen May 11, 2024.

by the Duchess de Nemours during a ball at Buckingham Palace: "[...] they have white heels; they are of a dark blue velvet, embroidered in gold *fleurs de lis* and instead of a *ruche*, they are trimmed round the edges by diamonds of surpassing beauty, one larger than the rest being placed in the middle of the *rosette*" (1845, p. 3)[52]. On this occasion, the Duchess wore a dress made of "[...] Pompadour *satin broché à couleur*, and interwoven with metallic thread" (idem, ibidem).

By the 1840s, indirect distribution was still an important channel for the company. Pairs were available in Belfast, in general stores[53], or shipped to relatives in distant countries. Priscilla Saxton's pair (Figures 28-29) was probably shipped from England in one of the regular parcels sent by her family to Nelson, New Zealand, where she settled with her husband and children.

Figure 40 – Pink silk shoes owned by Catherine Montague, Count Walewski's first wife. Melnotte, circa 1830[54].

As in the 1820s, in the 1840s, Melnotte's London store did not sell shoes exclusively. Other dressing items were available as well, such as corsets made by Mlle. Josselin, who sometimes visited London and dealt directly with her clientele (TMH, 1848a, p. 1). The variety of the goods can be seen in Elisabeth Feilding's invoices from 1828, 1836, and 1842 (Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 1828-1837; 1842). Just like Jane Skene, Mrs. Feilding (1773-1846) belonged to a noble and illustrated family. She was the daughter of the 2nd Earl of Ilchester and married William Davenport Talbot. After Talbot's death, she married Rear Admiral Charles Feilding in 1804. This second marriage faced weakened fortunes from

[52] The *rosette* is an elaborate decoration made from fabric and usually put in the front of the shoe, where it is especially visible to other people.

[53] See the store at 13, Castle-Place (BN, 1840, p. 2).

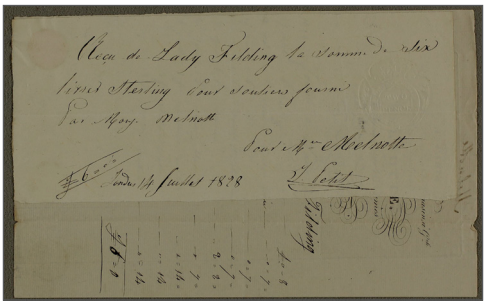
[54] Available at: <https://larkabout.wordpress.com/2009/08/21/queen-victorias-shoes/>. Last seen April 06, 2024.

both sides of the union (Google Arts and Culture, no date). However, they reverted the situation. Elisabeth was a long-time customer for several characters mentioned here, including Lesaunier (Figure 7), when he no longer was Melnotte's representative, and Melnotte himself, during and after J. Petit's period as a manager (Figure 41). The 1828 invoice lists several purchases between April and July of that year, for a total sum of 6 pounds, including shoes in black silk or in white satin, and douillettes[55]. In March 1834, Elisabeth wrote to her son William Henry, asking him to "bring […] some shoes [from] Melnotte" (Talbot, 1834).

The 1842 invoices have a detailed printed header, where one could read: "In Paris, no. 22 rue de la Paix, second shop on the left by going through the boulevard – Melnotte – shoemaker for ladies – *breveté* from H.H.M.M. the Queen of French and Queen of the Belgian – 164, Regent Street – Opposite New Burlington Street – London" (Figure 42). Between stylized laurel wreaths with ribbons, the header indicated other items sold at the shop: "*bijouterie*, artificial flowers and *articles de fantaisie* from Paris" were noted on the left. On the right, the text indicated "gloves, silk tights and *articles de nouveautés* from Paris".

The invoices listed regular acquisitions throughout the entire year instead of a single purchase. They seem to have been distributed into a total of 6 invoices since the two from the collection are numbered "2/6" and "3/6". Mrs. Fielding was charged ten pounds, thirteen shillings, and sixpence for all the purchases and paid on August 27, 1842.

Figure 41 – J. Petits receipt for Mrs. Feilding, following an invoice from Melnotte's, 1828. WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON ARCHIVES. 2664 - Talbot family of Lacock. 2664/3/3D/2/56 Accounts for Captain and Lady Feilding, 1828-1837.



[55] Douillettes were a specific sort of shoe. See Lacroix, Duchesne and Seré, 1852, p. 111.

Figure 42 – Mrs. Feilding's invoice from Melnotte (header), 1842. Wiltshire and Swindon archives. 2664 - Talbot family of Lacock. 2664/4/2/94 Bills for Lady Elisabeth Feilding.

The invoices show that the store offered shoes in different colors and materials, but also had gloves, and even parasols. Mrs. Feilding seems to have been a habitué of the shop, passing by regularly and often buying something. This successful business would soon belong to Dufossée.

3. The business relay to Dufossée

Mentorship was the shoemakers' main solution to share their knowledge with apprentices and prepare new professionals. The profession's connections with brotherhoods and similar structures had been developed in different countries, with traceable material since at least the Middle Ages. It was not only common but expected that shoemakers would take apprentices, sometimes with a predicted rotativity between masters and pupils (Gille, 2011). However, the apprentices' destiny was not necessarily tied to a single shop or business.

At least two people declare themselves to be Melnotte's pupils. In 1826, a Monsieur Lejeune, Md., "pupil of Sieur Melnotte, rue de la Paix, Paris" (LCEG, 1826, p. 1)[56] announces that he's arrived in London. Located at 322, Strand, he's ready to visit his potential customers in their places, if necessary; Lejeune stresses that his France-based store is at rue de l'Écu, Boulogne-sur-Mer. A second case is Monsieur Cliquet, who, in 1845, opened a shoe store in Bath, at 21, New Bond Street. He calls himself "Melnotte's pupil"[57]. An ad from November of the same year lists

[56] In French : "élève du Sieur Melnotte, rue de la Paix, à Paris". The ad was published in French.

[57] In French: "élève de Melnotte". Cliquet informs that he has "boots in Bordeaux calf, in verni de Nice, shoes in Strasbourg Morocco and in Lyon silk. Everything of first quality and the last fashion in Paris" ("bottes en veau de Bordeaux, en verni de Nice; souliers en maroquin de Strasbourg et en

the following models and prices: dress boots in *verni de Nice*, 28 shillings; ditto, in Bordeaux calf, 22 shillings; ditto, in cork soles, 25 shillings; ladies' shoes in Strasbourg Morocco, 5 shillings; ditto, in *verni de Nice*, 6 shillings; ladies' boots from 7 s. 6d. to 12 shillings (BCAWG, 1845b, p. 3). Although Melnotte was famous for being pricey[58], these prices seem higher than the ones paid by Mrs. Feilding just 3 years before. It is not clear how neither of those pupils organized their businesses and which role they played in it – whether actual shoemakers, managers, both, or others.

While very little is known about Melnotte's practices as a mentor and teacher, once again, his name and the store's address are used as markers of legitimacy by previous pupils, maybe even as justifications for charging expensive prices on their creations; and this even before the Melnotte brand itself crosses the channel. The pupils adopt a tone of "French shoe ambassadors", and mention Melnotte as a validator of positive shoe quality, variety (of models and raw materials), and perhaps even of the positive general consumer experience. However, it is interesting enough to observe that, if Melnotte did not follow the traditional path of shoemaking formation through *compagnonnage* groups, he seems to have become a professional mentor/reference, acting as expected in this sense.

Contrary to Lejeune and Cliquet, Denis Dufossée doesn't seem to be a pupil from Melnotte. Their connection began at least in 1832, when Melnotte was one of the *priseurs* of Anne Julie Müller's postmortem inventory (Archives Nationales, 1832). The *priseur* was a technical person responsible for evaluating specific goods in the inventory, which makes sense since Müller left a relevant shoemaking-related inheritance. After this short first wedding (1827-1832), Dufossée married Anne Legoyt in 1835 and had several children[59].

soie de Lyon. Le tout de première qualité, et la dernière mode de Paris"). Due to the description, it is not clear if he is importing shoes from several cities or if he is mentioning the origin of the raw material. He stresses that "such objects are impossible to find in any other shop in Bath" ("ces objets sont introuvables dans aucun autre magasin à Bath") (BCAWG, 1845a, p. 3).

[58] In 1829, Hortense de Beauharnais (1829) wrote to her friend Églé Auguié (Madame Ney) that she intended to "quit" her position as a loyal customer of Melnotte's since he had become too expensive.

[59] Denis Jean Baptiste Dufossée was born on April 26, 1800, in Paris, 6e arrondissement. He married Anne Julie Müller on February 24, 1827. His son Jean-Pierre was born on March 20, 1827

As early as 1839, Dufossée-Müller and Melnotte are listed in the *Almanach Général de la France et de l'Étranger* (1839, p. 43); they also figure in the 1842 edition of the *Almanach Bottin de Commerce de Paris* (1842, p. 278). In the same year, one of Denis's patent demands was approved for 10 years, thus confirming that he was the same professional who worked at 22, rue de la Paix[60]. However, there is no mention of the last name "Müller", which eventually disappears from the store as well. Moreover, as we saw, several pairs made after 1845 still indicated Melnotte as a single creator. Even if Melnotte was already working with Dufossée-Müller, it seemed that the "Melnotte" reference was solid enough to postpone what we could see as a rebranding *avant la lettre*. In 1847, although the inside labels of the pairs of shoes still indicate a single "Melnotte", the mentions of Dufossée as the business successor increase: the *Annuaire Général du Commerce et de l'Industrie* indicates directly the 23, Old Bond Street and 22, rue de la Paix as addresses for "Mr. Dufossée, […] successor of Melnotte, *breveté* of H.M. the Queen of the French and provider to several foreign royal courts". The text notes that

> […] the house of Melnotte has had for a longtime an European reputation, which tends to increase under Mr. Dufossée's management as his successor. This skilled manufacturer has been able, through several improvements, to make his shoes more flexible and lighter when worn by the feet of his rich clientele, so much that it seems that he did an anatomical and moral study of the female foot. The application of elastic rubber, when combined with ingenious proportions, explains the difficult problem that he has solved to the general satisfaction of his practices. We don't know any store with a greater variety of shoes and where they fit every taste, as well as every fantasy, better

(Archives Nationales, 1832). From his second marriage, he fathered Joséphine, Bathilde, Louisa, Charlotte, Clara, and Henry Dufossée.

[60] "M. Dufossée (Denis-Jean Baptiste), cordonnier, demeurant à Paris, rue de la Paix, no. 22, auquel il a été délivré, le 18 avril dernier, le certificat de sa demande d'um brevet d'invention et de perfectionnement de dix ans, pour des moyens de substituer la gamme au caoutchouc, aux élastiques métalliques, dans tous les usages auxquels ces élastiques sont susceptibles d'être employés, tels que corsets, ceintures, bottines, jarretières, bretelles, etc." (Bulletin des Lois du Royaume de France, 1842, p. 155).

(Annuaire Général du Commerce et de l'Industrie, 1847, p. 1512).

In this sense, Dufossée and Melnotte seem to have tried a different kind of partnership and eventually settled for a full business transition, including a final name replacement. By the end of his life, Melnotte struggled with a legal battle concerning the mortgage of a house at 112, rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain[61]. The long process cost him a considerable sum and was the cause of bitter situations until his death in 1851 (Archives Nationales, 1851; GDT, 1855, p. 1)[62]. But the shoe business control had already been taken by Dufossée[63], who was regularly mentioned in different newspapers and magazines as a "bootmaker for ladies" in the same addresses previously announced by Melnotte (LS, 1850, p. 160) and stressing his handcraft quality, since he won prizes in different international exhibitions[64].

This pair of skilled shoemakers dedicated considerable time and effort to prepare a smooth transition, where Dufossée would probably be able to enjoy a loyal clientele and had proven himself enough to be able to satisfy their needs and desires while innovating on shoes. Besides the legitimacy of the "Melnotte" (proto) brand and direct connection to an established shoemaker, Dufossée inherited prestigious addresses with the network for different providers[65], a full list of clients, including nobility and royal courts, and earned relevant prizes of his time, including for the excellence of his handcraft and a Prize Medal at the London Exhibition in 1851. All these elements were listed in the header of one Dufossée

[61] Melnotte decided to buy the house by trading his summer residence and paying a total of 145,000 francs, to which interests applied. However, the house demanded an expensive renovation of 55,000 francs and had a previous debt of 130,000 francs that he did not know beforehand. Eventually, the house was legally taken from the family and sold to a third party. Melnotte's widow still appealed in court but lost the case in 1855 (GDT, 1855, p. 1).

[62] The shoemaker's passing away happened just after a stark economic and political crisis in France, between 1848-1850 (Démier, 2017).

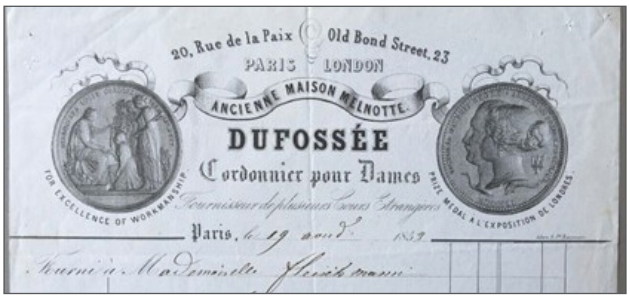
[63] The summary of Melnotte's mortgage legal battle indicates that the company was sold in 1840 for 200,000 francs, but does not say who bought it (GDT, 1855, p. 1). Although the research found no formal documentation concerning this transaction, it is unlikely that the buyer was other than Dufossée.

[64] "Chaussures pour dames. Dufossée, succr. De Melnotte. Paris, 20, rue de la Paix. London, 13, Old Bond Street. Médaille à l'Exposition Universelle de Londres" (LC, 1851, p. 2).

[65] Still in 1853, an ad for the "pomade cornélienne", a balm to prevent hair loss, indicates that it could be found in London "[...] at Melnotte's, 23, Old Bond Street" (CDLM, 1853, p. 4).

invoice from 1853[66] (Figure 43), which blatantly stresses that Dufossée is "the former maison Melnotte" ("ancienne maison Melnotte"). The customer, Miss Fleischmann, ordered 4 pairs of black and white satin shoes, 1 pair of golden kidskin and mules in vernis.

Figure 43 – Mlle. Fleischmann's invoice (header). Dufossée, August 19, 1853. Property of the author.



It is intriguing to observe, however, that, while several collections detain Melnotte, J. Petit or even Dufossée-Müller and Melnotte models, Dufossée models are quite scarce. This research only found two. One evening boot belonged to Mme. G. B. Roberts and belongs, today, to the Met collection in New York City (Figure 44). The modernization of the company's portfolio was perceptible since at least 1850 when a newspaper ad announced that Melnotte offered "improved elastic boots, fancy slippers, and children's shoes of every size" (MP, 1850, p. 1). In 1876, the newspaper *Le Figaro* would highlight that Dufossée's "running boots and his shoes for sea-bathing and for traveling are tiny marvels"[67] (1876, p. 3), listing other innovations from the company. Mrs. Roberts' boots follow the modernization trend, both of style and of materials. Although silk is still the main material, as in the case of slippers, this boot's structure closes on the side with an interwoven thread that crosses several holes with prefabricated metal rings[68]. The second pair are black kidskin shoes

[66] The invoices also can be used as good pieces of evidence on the evolution of printing throughout the decades.

[67] In French: "ses bottes de course et ses chaussures pour bains de mer et voyage sont des petits chefs d'œuvre".

[68] Winterthur Museum detains two pairs of similar boots, called "half boots" in their archives. They are identified as English boots from 1804-1840 and show the same structure of closing on the side with a thread. However, they have flat soles and a simpler finishing when compared to Dufossée's. Items number 1997.0003.003 A, B and 1997.0003.002 A, B. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/winterthurboots>. Last seen May 24, 2025.

with details in taffetas and low leather heels, which were sold in an auction sale from Daguerre (Figure 45). It is the only case where we can get a glimpse of an inside label from Dufossée (Figure 46). Even in low resolution, it is possible to read: "Paris - 20, rue de la Paix – Dufossée – Successeur de Melnotte – Fournisseur de plusieurs cours étrangères – 23, Old Bond Street – London".

Figure 44 – Evening boots from Dufossée, circa 1855-1865. Label: «Paris/20 Rue de la Paix/Dufossée Succr de Melnotte/Fournr. de Plusieurs cours Etrangères/25 Old Bond Street London». Inscribed: "Mme. G.B. Roberts" Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; Gift of Mrs. G. Brinton Roberts, 1946 2009.300.4514a, b[69].

Figure 45 – Dufossée slippers, from Restauration. Black kidskin, tone-on-tone taffeta braid hiding slides tied under the upper. Small leather heels, handwritten inscriptions to distinguish the right foot from the left foot. 19th century[70].

[69] Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/168721>. Last seen May 11, 2024.
[70] Available at: <https://www.daguerre.fr/lot/92576/9070333-paire-de-souliers-de-dame-a-lesearch =&>. Last seen April 20, 2024.

Figure 46 – The shoe's paper inside label.

While few Dufossée pairs survived the deeds of time, the shoe dynasty seemed well prepared to deal with the business and fashion challenges. In 1861, ten years after Melnotte's death, Jean-Pierre-Léon Dufossée was mentioned as a "shoe seller for ladies, rue de la Paix, 20".[71] It's Denis Dufossée's son, and the same young man who married Julie Adèle Viault in 1854 (Archives de Paris, 1854; JDDPEL, 1854, p. 4). Julie belonged to another clan of bootmakers: the Viault-Esté.

As early as 1828, when Melnotte first arrived in London, mme. Esté was an established *cordonnière* who shared the same urban references as her fellow professional: settled at the very rue de la Paix (figure 47), her shoes were available in London at 211, Regent Street, in a store that also sold fashion clothes (MP, 1828a, p. 1)[72]. In 1855, one year after Jean-Pierre-Léon and Julie Viault's wedding, Mr. Viault, Julie's father, was already a shoe "provider to the Empress" (Arnoux, 1855, p. 484-485) – that is, Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III (Imbert, 2021)[73]. In the 1860s, Viault-Esté pairs would be sold both in Paris and at 278, Regent Street, by Thierry and Sons (Figures 48-49).

[71] In French: "marchand de chaussures pour dames, rue de la Paix, 20" (PDLS, 1861, p. 91).

[72] Curiously enough, mme. Esté's ad is just above Melnotte's in the same edition of the *Morning Post*. We can read: "Mme. Esté, Cordonnière rue de la Paix, à Paris, ayant l'honneur de fournir la très honorable lady Granville, informe respectueusement la Noblesse et le Public qu'elle continue de tenir à Londres un Dépôt de CHAUSSURES de toute espèce. On trouvera également chez elle un joli choix en Modes, en nouveautés, 211, Regent Street, la porte à côté du Cosmorama". The ad was published in French.

[73] The Bowes Museum detains a relevant collection of Empress Eugénie's pairs of shoes.

Figure 47 – Inside paper labels from Esté.[74]

Figure 48 – Shoes belonging to Sarah Dutton Leverett Tuttle. White silk over kidskin, lace, silk ribbon by Viault-Este company, Paris, France, 1860s. 23 cm x 7 cm. Massachusetts Historical Society[75]**.**

[74] First label available at: <https://www.coutaubegarie.com/lot/81639/7776957-paire-de-chaussures-de-bal-a-letiquette-este-rue-de-la-paix?search=&>. Second label available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/168479>. Last seen December 31, 2024

[75] Available at: <https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=3538>. Last seen June 19, 2025.

Figure 49 – The shoes paper labels.

Figure 50 – View of No 292 Regent Street, 1898. Photograph taken by S.B. Bolas and Company, 77 Oxford Street, W. National Archives, CRES 43/166/46.

In a true revelation of alliances, the Thierry family developed a long-lasting association with Charles Hubert from 292, Regent Street (LCD, 1895, p. 1457), which would not be dissolved until 1884 (LES, 1884, p. 6). Alexandre Alphonse Thierry had its own production headquarters in 301, rue Saint Honoré[76], and also married a Viault-Esté. Indeed, his wife Héloise Séraphine was the sister of Julie Adèle; therefore Jean-Pierre Dufossée became Alexandre Thierry's brother-in-law. A new dynasty was under preparation. The more it changed, the more it stayed the same.

Conclusion

When Jean-Claude Melnotte first bought his shoe manufactory, the early 19th century witnessed a positive economic moment and the consolidation of fashion trends and references as very successful selling arguments, especially when related to France. This shoemaker's approach is particularly rich because of its mix of standard elements of the time and other peculiar dynamics.

On the one hand, we see that shoe production was already quite standardized when it came to the aesthetic of the models and the use of paper labels as major shoe (work)shop identifiers. For those who managed to obtain royal warrants, the validation was also included in the labels and elsewhere, both as a legitimator and as a possible sales booster. These paper labels eventually became strategic research pieces of evidence on shoe marketing, market development and shoemaker positioning, especially because general documentation, account books and other information are scarce. On the other hand, neither Melnotte nor Dufossée seem to have followed the traditional path for becoming a shoemaker, without any indication that they belonged to the Devoir or other shoemaking collectivities that were relevant in France.

Finally, Melnotte also was able to buy a fully structured *confection* in the very early 19th century, when most professionals still worked in very artisanal conditions and lacked the capacity to explore exportation

[76] Contrary to the other examples mentioned in this article, the Thierry family decided to produce shoes in Liverpool, but with a French workforce (LA, 1844, p. 1). Alexandre Alphonse's sons, Jules and Alfred, not only kept the family business but also worked on at least one patent, which was published in 1899 (United States Patent Office, 1899).

in general, and particularly the vast opportunity of the British market, which (re)opened after 1815. Established competitors, such as Charles Hubert, made a point of informing their clients that, even though they did not have a local store in London, they could ship the pairs to their customers. Negotiations with third-party sellers were also at the core of the distribution structure until the 1830s. Melnotte was skilled enough to not only produce enough shoes to get into the exportation battle but to face different business challenges that would bring competitivity to his business. He had a pioneering perspective on reading economic conditions. Instead of sticking with the third-party retail solution where he focused on production and the entire sales and distribution was managed by other people in London, he decided on betting on a single retail shop model, directly under his supervision and managed by the same person for a long time. This solution would eventually be explored by other bootmakers, but Melnotte anticipates it by almost 10 years.

In this sense, Melnotte contributed directly to the development of a particular brand, which became well-known among a rich, noble and loyal clientele, who did not mind paying for the shoes. His main competitive elements seem to be the productive capacity, and the consolidation of a reputation, where his production became synonymous with the major fashion reference of a long period – roughly, between the 1820s and the 1850s at least. This did not prevent him from facing commercial conflicts, such as the direct confrontation of J. Petit in the same Regent Street that became a major reference for imported goods. But Melnotte also developed ties with different providers, by allowing the sale of several goods that could be a part of the "shoe and accessories ecosystem", such as gloves, tights, umbrellas, perfume, etc. The store can almost be seen as a commercial embassy for French production on many fashionable elements, and the result of good negotiations between the different providers.

Once again, this very structure would be present in different competitor shops. Melnotte also indicated that he was open to selling shoes in third-party stores (as in the case of Belfast) and even shipping worldwide. While we have no clues confirming that the business did ship to clients in other continents, the fact that the company announced this possibility is an indicator of a global perspective, enhancing the logistics

that would contribute to fashion globalization. Moreover, the choice of printing invoices early on stresses the role of standardization and precision as major elements to be able to expand.

However, the lack of formal business documentation and the direct connections between the different agents – Melnotte, Lesaunier, Petit, Dufossée – stress that the business structure still depended greatly on the vision of each man. Melnotte did grant a solid reputation that, at the same time, was closely tied to the success of the slipper model. In this sense, the challenge of fashion renovation was faced by his successor Dufossée. Meanwhile, just as Melnotte and other producers validated the quality of their goods by stressing the French (even, Parisian) origin, competitors used their connection to Melnotte to legitimate their own quality and trust. This movement is made easier by the increasing confusion between third-party sellers, the opening of actual company stores by French families, and their internal alliances. Melnotte anticipated the gesture; however, by the 1830s-1840s, we can see at least two other businessmen taking the same path: Hubert and Thierry. In 1843-1844, the Thierry bootmakers insisted on denouncing fraud and misunderstandings in the shoe business. Lesaunier and Petit also refrain from explaining that they are no longer related to Melnotte since they consider that his reputation will benefit them as well.

The transition between Melnotte and Dufossée includes a collaboration of the two shoemakers. The relay does not seem to follow a traditional master-and-disciple structure, even though Dufossée is younger than Melnotte. While Melnotte and Dufossée started working together in the 1830s, the shop's name was not quickly replaced, even after Melnotte died in 1851. Dufossée takes some time to deal with his own dynasty ideas and expectations, particularly by innovating in the use of raw materials and by starting to work on different shoe models.

Once the "Dufossée" name replaces the "Melnotte", instead of relying entirely on a familiar succession, Dufossée's son marries Mlle. Viault, the daughter of another important name in the shoe industry, who is responsible for Viault-Esté shoemakers[77]. In a true succession move, Jean-Pierre Dufossée becomes the brother-in-law of Alexandre Thierry, himself

[77] Esté shoemakers operated at 13, rue de la Paix. After the marriage of Louise Esté and Isidore Viault, in 1828 (Archives de Paris, 1828), the companies merged and became Viault-Esté.

an associate of Charles Hubert. The same 292, Regent Street from which Melnotte wanted to distance himself, became a selling point for Viault-Esté shoes by Thierry & Sons, adding marital layers to the business negotiations. Indeed, a solid wedding and the constitution of a family might be game changers to maintain a business' stability and even the key to social ascension (Démier, 2017). This might explain the scarce mentions to Dufossée after the 1860s: the alliance of the new generation chose a stronger name, "Viault-Esté", as a local brand, thus inaugurating a new chapter in this story of succession.

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