Introduction

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Recent research on fashion and luxury sheds new light on the role women played in the development of consumption and trade. To what extent did a growing demand for consumer goods lead to social change? In what ways did new commodities affect the lives of women in Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire? Some historians have analyzed the importance of gender and class in shaping consumption.¹ Other studies have examined the impact the world of goods had on modelling individuals in past and present societies.² For instance, a conference held in Berlin in 2016 analyzed the emotions that “colonial objects” stirred in Europeans in the Early Modern period.³ Similarly, another conference, also held in Berlin in the same year, assessed the relationship between “objects” that circulated between the Ottoman Empire and Europe as well as the networks created along the roads they travelled.⁴

This volume proposes new approaches to the study of women in Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Signalling new research themes, exploring lesser-known geographical areas, and researching new archives, the chapters in this book contribute to debates regarding both the history of women and the social history of consumption and luxury. In addition, the book aims to integrate research on Southeastern Europe into the general framework of studies on gender, luxury, and consumption. Scholarship in the countries of Southeastern Europe considered the Ottoman occupation or domination a “dark age” and gave little attention to this period until recently. Historiographical approaches such as those promoted by the Annales School and Italian microhistory, which placed women amongst the actors of history, had a beneficial impact on the history of the Ottoman Empire in western scholarship; in the former communist countries, however, similar research lagged behind. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberalization of

1 See Maxine Berg, “Women’s Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth-Century England”, *Journal of Social History*, 30 (1996), 415–434.

2 John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: 1993).

3 <http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/events/emotions-movement-cultural-contact-and-exchange-1100-1800/>.

4 <https://www.wiko-berlin.de/en/events/workshops/workshops-20152016/workshopdetail/2015/people-trade-gifts-and-beyond-the-circulation-of-goods-and-practices-between-the-ottoman-empire/>.

political regimes opened up new research avenues. Progress is evident in this respect, particularly for recent history. The history of communist regimes succeeded in arousing the curiosity and interest of many young researchers, who received financial support from important national and international research programmes.

Historical sources constitute a problem for reconstructing “women’s past”. Analyzing the lives of Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Armenian and even Turkish women in the Ottoman Empire becomes difficult given the rather sparse sources. The illiteracy rate among women was higher in Southeastern Europe than in the north of the continent. The analytical perspectives presented here work under the assumption that women were relegated to the domestic space, being considered only for their roles as mothers and wives, at least until the 19th century. In the Ottoman Empire, the Christian population applied Byzantine property laws which gave women ownership rights over their dowries.⁵ At the same time, women had the right to seek legal protection for crimes committed against them and could be held accountable for their own reprehensible acts.⁶ Divorce, seduction, slander, and rape brought before the courts a large number of women who filed complaints, defended themselves, testified or provided evidence in support of their cases. Therefore, in the Ottoman Empire and the Romanian countries, many of the historical sources for the 17th and 18th centuries come from the judicial archives kept by ecclesiastical courts.

More recently, studies dedicated to the history of fashion brought women once again to the forefront of research. Philippe Perrot, Ulinka Rublack, and Suraiya Faroqhi are just some of the scholars who have discussed the role of women in shaping new styles in fashion or in propagating new rules of conduct.⁷ However, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Croatian historiographies still neglect the presence of women in the public space.⁸

5 Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, “Mariage et parenté à travers les actes dotaux roumains (1700–1865)”, *Annales de démographie historique*, 1, 2011, 141–160.

6 Amira El Azhary Sonbol (ed.), *Women, the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic Society* (Syracuse: 1996); Olga Todorova, *Zhenite ot tsentralnite Balkani prez osmanskata epoha (XV–XVII vek)* [Women of the Central Balkans During the Early Centuries of Ottoman Rule] (Gutenberg: 2004); Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (London: 2011), 101–122; Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul 1700–1800*, (London: 2010).

7 Philippe Perrot, *Les dessus et les dessous de la bourgeoisie: une histoire du vêtement au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: 1981); Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: 2012); Suraiya Faroqhi, Christoph K. Neumann (eds.), *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity* (Istanbul: 2005).

8 For the Ottoman Empire, see Amila Buturović and Irvin Cemil Schick (eds.), *Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History* (London: 2007); Duygu Köksal and Anastasia

On the one hand, the sources used to examine the relationship between women and consumption are, in the most part, written by men. Drafted by men, dowry lists, wills, post-mortem inventories and probate inventories all contain goods and objects that inhabited the female universe. Travel accounts follow the same pattern and male travellers, consuls, and missionaries provide information about the Orient. On the other hand, correspondence where women talked about themselves and their needs, is a more reliable and direct source of information. However, in the Romanian countries, for instance, letters, together with memoirs and journals, which we have used as complementary sources in our research, only started to proliferate in the 19th century. Until 1810, when Elena Hartulari began keeping her diary, information about the thoughts and concerns of contemporary women in the Romanian countries is found exclusively in travel accounts and the images that usually accompany them.⁹ Artemis Yagou, Nina Simončič, and Giulia Calvi show the role these sources play in understanding the female universe and warn against the traps they pose, in line with studies that have already become classics.¹⁰

This volume, therefore, is a periegesis of narrative sources, images, and objects from museums or private collections. Silk, brocades, clocks, glasses, musical instruments and objects that have a direct relationship with the female universe and decorate rooms, salons, and offices provide information about transformations produced in society. Buckles, combs, mirrors, and books are objects mostly found in paintings and images traced by Artemis Yagou. The objects identified in prints and lithographs were later confronted with the “originals” kept in museums and private collections in Athens, Munich, and Bucharest. Belonging to so-called “Greek” families, these objects travelled with their owners from Ioannina to Bucharest and from Constantinople to Athens or Iași, modelling behaviours, stirring new emotions, and forging new words. For instance, Yagou draws a direct line between *tambouras* music-playing and the social group of high socio-economic status, cultivated women. This finding holds true for the Romanian countries as well, where music education became an integral part of the values attached to the so-called boyar class. In addition

Falierou (eds.), *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women. New Perspectives* (Leiden: 2013); Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (eds.), *Ottoman Women in Public Space* (Leiden: 2016).

9 Elena Hartulari, *Istoria vieții mele de la anul 1810* [The Story of My Life from 1810], in *Convorbiri Literare*, 58–61, 1926–1928.

10 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: 1997); Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (eds.), *Under Eastern Eyes. A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest: 2008).

to music, reading and education shaped a new feminine model tasked with representing the family through sociability.

Printed in Venice in 1713 (reprinted in 1804) and distributed among Christians in the Ottoman Empire, the influential Greek epic poem *Erotokritos* had a high circulation in the Romanian countries in manuscript form, being reproduced in numerous miscellanea collections. Accompanied by beautiful miniatures, the 1787 Romanian translation of the work inspired generations.¹¹ *Erotokritos* stimulated literary creativity and is referenced in poems, songs, novels and memoirs, thus contributing to the literary instruction of an important social group, including women. At the same time, this epic poem modelled behaviours and structured an ethics of love inspired by the gallant language and gestures of the main character. No wonder, then, that the Greek Church intervened and considered the reading of this poem a punishable sin! In the Romanian countries, where the number of women engaged in reading was low, *Erotokritos* failed to arouse similar passions. However, only a few decades later, the Wallachian Orthodox Church criticized the fad for trendy French literature, cursed Voltaire,¹² and rebuked women's literary education. It has to be stressed that luxury, consumption, and education were reserved for the elites and certain social groups, such as the wives of boyars, wives of rich merchants, and well-to-do townswomen. The limitations of the primary sources inherently leaves outside our gaze groups of women who, either because of their age or status as slaves, could not accumulate material objects or express themselves, thus having no impact on the circulation of goods and ideas. David Celetti bridges this gap in his chapter on women crossing borders and boundaries by entering mixed marriages.

The accumulation of goods and luxury objects, their usage and display occurs during a period of political instability and economic uncertainty. People in South-Eastern Europe lived under the pressure of the three empires surrounding them, finding themselves involved in the frequent military clashes between the Ottomans, Habsburgs and the Russians throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Giulia Calvi discusses, via Ignatius Mouradzea d'Ohsson, the situation of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. In their private sphere, they regularly broke the various prohibitions imposed by the sultan by enjoying music and dancing, and by consuming goods bought on the commercial

11 Eugenia Dima, *Poemul Erotocrit a lui Vincenzo Cornaro în cultura română. Versiunea lui Alecu Văcărescu* [Vincenzo Cornaro's *Erotokritos* in Romanian Culture. Alecu Văcărescu's Version] (Iași: 2014).

12 Ilie Corfus (ed.), "Cronica meșteșugarului Ioan Dobrescu (1802–1830)" [The Chronicle of Craftsman Ioan Dobrescu (1802–1830)], in *Studii si articole de istorie*, VIII, 1966, 341.

market. Indeed, norms were negotiable; a bribe to the local authorities easily redeemed any such trespass or breaking of the law. Nicolae Suțu, son of the Phanariot dragoman and, later, Prince Alexandru Suțu of Wallachia (1818–1821), describes in his memoirs the necessary precautions he took to avoid any conflict with the Ottoman authorities: “God only knows the precautions we had to take even for our children’s pastimes during the bloody reign of Sultan Mahmud. One summer evening, we pretended to dance without music in one of the vast chambers of the Chebapi House,¹³ which had a beautiful sea view. The windows were open and our party was only lit by a lousy candle. Bostanji basha (the police chief), cruising offshore, saw our dancing and found it outrageous. Upon landing, he called the city guard chief and charged him to bring in the next day at the Constantinople Police headquarters the owner of the house wherein the described scene took place. The guard then excused himself, saying he did not have the authority to bring in a bey¹⁴ and invited bostangi basha to arrest the bey himself.”¹⁵ At times, the whims of a senior official prove fatal to an ignorant Christian. The same Nicolae Suțu recounts how Aleco Vlahuți, a close family friend, was beheaded after being seen at the window of a house in Therapia with a sarik wrapped around his head, not knowing that the turban had just been banned.¹⁶

As G. Calvi, A. Falierou, N. Simončič, and C. Vintilă-Ghițulescu show in their chapters, the sarik, made out of muslin and embroidered with precious gems, together with cashmere shawls and lace were among the textiles that played an important role in defining social identity and in delineating social distinctions. Many of the portraits from this period contain important clues about the spreading of luxury from Constantinople to the imperial peripheries. It was the era when the price of “lace was equal to the value of gold”¹⁷ and when cashmere shawls became a mandatory adornment for the elite women’s shoulders. The increased demand for luxury products, such as cashmere shawls or lace, and their distribution from Constantinople to Athens, Bucharest, Dubrovnik

13 The house is located in Arnavutköy, the place where many of the Phanariot families used to seek refuge while awaiting new appointments to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia.

14 Alexandru Suțu, former prince of Moldavia, self-exiled in Arnavutköy, waiting for a new appointment in the Romanian countries.

15 Nicolae Suțu, *Memoriile Principelui Nicolae Suțu mare logofăt al Moldovei* (1798–1871) [Memoirs of Prince Nicolae Suțu Great Logothete of Moldavia (1798–1871)] (București: 2013), 55.

16 Ibid., 59. For more on this, see Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: 2011).

17 For more, see N. Simončič’s essay in this volume.

and Sofia stimulated the development of a specialized trade. Simončić writes that, during the mid-18th century, two or three caravans from Istanbul would arrive daily at Split, dropping off goods for the city elites or carrying them further to Dubrovnik and, then across the sea, to Venice. All these “goods”, logged in customs records and later found on dowry lists, first and foremost reflect visible changes in language and vocabulary. “Turquerie, a culture in motion¹⁸” is spreading throughout Europe, acquiring different meanings, specifically for Christians in the Ottoman Empire and those on the periphery, for whom oriental luxury plays into the logic of prestige.¹⁹ The long and difficult roads across the Balkans further increase the value of these luxury goods, which only the very wealthy can afford. Furthermore, because of their economic and symbolic value, luxury items become integral parts of the dowries of elite young women. However, these “foreign adornments” antagonized local authorities who, with the help of the Church, tried to limit their usage by passing sumptuary laws. The appetite of local elites for these oriental luxury goods was partly fuelled by the need to create markets for the distribution of the finished Ottoman products. The consumption of luxury goods crossed religious boundaries. We find Muslims, Christians, and Jews as both members of commercial networks and reliable customers, although religious beliefs played a crucial role in shaping tastes and preferences for colour, models or cuts. Class and gender were the two important factors in luxury consumption. Rich and well-to-do families chose certain clothes, colours, or jewellery to create “social codes”, and were willing to disregard religious prescriptions or any other rules. Religious and political authorities tried to control their subjects by focusing on the textiles reserved for the upper classes, be they cashmere shawls, as G. Calvi argues, or white satin in the Romanian lands. After 1800 however, sumptuary laws fell into oblivion. Throughout the region, new styles, unanimously called “the French fashion” gained ground and redefined society. Beginning with the 19th century, women freely chose their outfits; numerous portraits reflect this desire to display their social status, wealth, class, and elegance. These paintings were a fashion trend in themselves in that period, when the homes of the rich were adorned with portraits of their family members as a sign of the changing times. However, despite the West being the main model for change, each social or ethnic group, each religion, and each gender embraced change in a different way. Nation-building in Southeastern Europe and modernization also took

18 Alexander Bevilacqua and Helen Pfeifer, “Turquerie: Culture in Motion, 1650–1750”, *Past and Present*, 221 (2013), 75–118.

19 For more on luxury consumption and prestige, see Norbert Elias, *La société de cour* (Paris: 1985).

divergent paths. The Balkan societies were greatly influenced by their aspiration to become western, but the main factor in their transformation was their own dynamism. Luxury, fashion, and travel were outward signs of the overall reshaping of the Balkan societies. E. Davidova illustrates what Maria Karlova used as material markers for “progress and modernity”; fashion trends, hair-styles and furniture listed in her diary were categorized as being either “western” or “Balkan.” Naturally, trade routes but also consuls, missionaries, and scientists setting out to discover the Orient contributed greatly to the growing curiosity and taste shifting toward the West.

Merchants speculated in the new appetites for western fashion. To their consignments of goods from Vienna, Paris, Leipzig, London and Berlin, they added luxury items, books, new ideas, and a new lifestyle. Charles Frédéric Reinhard, who was appointed commissioner for commercial relations in 1806, drafted a report on Wallachia and Moldavia as potential markets for French products: “At the moment there are no direct commercial exchanges between France and these two provinces [...] Small attempts were made regarding luxury objects with red caps that are made in Orléans and with champagne, and they were successful, but it is known that by the nature of things such speculations are not successful on a large scale. In time, owing to its paper money and the Danube, Vienna shall undoubtedly gain ground on Paris.²⁰ As for luxury goods, even though people in Iași read ‘Le Journal des Modes’, the tastes are not refined enough to distinguish between the fashion of Vienna and that of Paris.” Nevertheless, the great empires surrounding the Balkans found fervent consumers of luxury products in the local elites. Diplomatic correspondence reveals the constant concern for finding new markets for distributing luxury products and for importing raw materials. The discovery of the Black Sea by European diplomacy and the prospect of opening up new markets²¹ stirred the interest of western European states to become involved in a more efficient administration of the Euxine region.

Women who brought along French fashion often accompanied official delegations. As David Celetti shows, the status and role of these women were

20 *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, ed. by Georgeta Filitti, Beatrice Marinescu, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, Marian Stroia, Paul Cernovodeanu (București: 2004), vol. I, 274–275.

21 Constantin Ardeleanu, “The Discovery of the Black Sea by the Western World: The Opening of the Euxine to International trade and Shipping (1774–1792), in *N.E.C. Ștefan Odobleja Program Yearbook 2012–2013*, (Bucharest: 2013), 21–46. See also Idem, “The Opening and Development of the Black Sea for International Trade and Shipping (1774–1853)”, in *Euxeinos*, 12 (2014), 30–52.

sensationalized: diplomatic archives keep a detailed correspondence providing precious information about the consumption of French products in the ports of the Ottoman Empire. However, the women from D. Celetti's research do not resemble the women followed by Evguenia Davidova on their journeys, even though they all travelled to the Ottoman Empire. The two chapters sketch various profiles of female travellers (teachers, wives of merchants and consuls, nuns, prostitutes, etc.), enriching the overall picture and offering significant details on the ways in which they interact with the realities they encounter. Of all these female profiles, Nicoleta Roman focuses on the particular social category of women merchants, analyzing their role in using and marketing luxury products.

A number of researchers posit the connection between consumption and modernity. Does this assumption hold true for Southeastern Europe as well? Objects travel together with the people who set out to search for the world they have discovered in the books they read. E. Davidova's study is a good example in this respect. Haris Exertzoglu clearly associates cultural consumption with progress and argues that women are major promoters of change and new ideas.²² Indeed, Southeastern European societies underwent significant transformations during the 18th and 19th centuries. As each chapter in this volume shows, the elites preferred the "French fashion" and began to purchase more western luxury objects and consumer goods. But the West transferred not merely fashions or lifestyles, but also political ideas, books, sociability, a system of thinking and even political revolutions.²³

It is clear that in the 19th century, Southeastern Europe altered its appearance dramatically, prompting Daniel Chirot to argue for the "Balkan colony", dependent on western products.²⁴ Other historians consider this change to be an Europeanization or Westernization of Southeastern European and Ottoman societies, who adopted French fashion as well as western political, educational, and legal systems.²⁵ However, as Donald Quataert argues, owning "western

22 Haris Exertzoglu "The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003), 78.

23 For instance, the 1848 revolution in the Romanian countries.

24 Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (London: 1976), 89–91.

25 Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York and Oxford: 1996), 37–43. Also, see Anastasia Falierou's essay in this volume.

goods” does not “westernize” the owners.²⁶ For instance, high society women in Bucharest read French literature, dressed according to the latest fashions from Paris, and still owned gypsy slaves.²⁷ As Wendy Bracewell and Alex-Drace Francis argue, even when it compromises “national authenticity”, Europe is a “system of values” and a guarantor of “modernity”.²⁸

Political change and the birth of independent nation states in the Balkans took place with the support of western political powers, whose aim was to remove Ottoman domination and gain economic advantage in the region. Thus, consumption was a means of communication, as Arjun Appadurai rightly argued: a circulating object also carried social and political messages.²⁹ State and society in the Balkans quickly accepted and adopted western ideas. Social and political reforms were imposed on an administrative structure moulded on the Ottoman one; therefore, the outcome diverged greatly from western European intent. We can speak more readily of cross-influences between the Balkan states and the surrounding empires.³⁰ Consumption, modernization and circulation of ideas first established roots in the towns and cities of the region, which consequently changed and flourished under the new influences.³¹

As the title suggests, our objective is to explore the relationship between women, consumption, and the circulation of ideas by analyzing the topic from different perspectives and examining a multitude of sources, ranging from literature to correspondence, and from judicial and diplomatic archives to probate inventories. We wanted to find out how material objects, such as fabrics, jewellery, or books contribute to the transformation of society. More importantly, we tried to understand the direct relationship between luxury,

26 Donald Quataert, “Introduction”, in Donald Quataert (ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922. An Introduction* (New York: 2000), 5.

27 See also Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, “Constructing a New Identity: Romanian Aristocrats Between Oriental Heritage and Western Prestige (1780–1866)”, in Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu (ed.), *From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth–XXth Centuries)* (Newcastle: 2011), 104–128.

28 Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, “Foreword”, in *Under Eastern Eyes*, ix.

29 Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value”, in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: 1986), 31.

30 On this topic see: Vangelis Kechriotis, “Requiem for The Empire: ‘Elective Affinities’ Between the Balkan States and the Ottoman Empire in the Long 19th Century”, in Sabine Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans. Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe* (Vienna: 2013), 97–121.

31 Miloš Jovanović, “‘The City in Our Hands’: Urban Management and Contested Modernity in Nineteenth-century Belgrade”, *Urban History*, 40, 1 (2013), 31–50.

consumption and the behaviours and effects experienced by the female population. Charlotte Jirousek considers fashion the most visible object of consumption.³² The “fashion revolution”, which travelled through the Ottoman and Southeastern European regions, brought people closer to western values and helped these societies undergo major political, economic, and social change.

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32 Charlotte Jirousek, “The Transition to Mass Fashion System Dress in the Late Ottoman Empire” in Donald Quataert (ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922. An Introduction* (New York: 2000), 202.

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