

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra. And today I'm joined by Dr. Gwendolyn Collaço, collections curator at MIT's Aga Khan Documentation Center. Dr. Collaço has been reevaluating how we view wedding trousseaus as curated collections that were meticulously displayed and evaluated before they were ever used in a household. So why don't we start with the basics for anyone who doesn't know what is a trousseau and what was their significance?

GC: Well, a trousseau is the material part of a dowry. Now, the immaterial part of it can include cash gifts from the bride's family, but this part was specifically goods, be it clothing, furniture, utilitarian objects that were often very expensive, and sometimes even property. But it's particularly significant in this case, because it's the biggest transfer of wealth in a family aside from death inheritance. And so what's interesting, though, is that this was a form of women's wealth that they controlled throughout their entire lives that could not be sold or manipulated by any men in her household. And she took a very keen role in curating that collection in its construction, in the works that were purchased for it, and its display during weddings.

AT: You mentioned the financial aspect, obviously, of this. And in a situation where women didn't have a lot of financial security, this was a form of protection for them as well.

GC: Oh, yes. So basically, when a woman gets married, all of this money would essentially bolster her share of an inheritance, because women in general in the Ottoman Empire during the pre-modern period were not always given the equal share as their male counterparts. So, for example, among Muslim women, it's usually about half the amount. And while that changes when you get into the non-Muslim demographics like Christians and Jews, particularly during the period that I cover, which is the 17th, 18th century, there are numerous laws that come about that pretty much make the dowry the only form of inheritance a woman has. And if she gets divorced, if her husband dies, she's able to sell off that dowry herself or liquidate its contents, be it melting down gold jewelry to sell at price for its weight or value of its jewels. And also, she can sell off her property as well or pass it on to her daughters who might be in need of these materials. So basically, this is property that would stay within the woman's or under the woman's name throughout her entire life. And what's interesting about that is that it's one of the few cases where we have a collection that is verifiably tied to a woman. Many objects we have in museums, for example, we don't necessarily know who owned them at a particular point in time unless it was royalty. But in these cases, we can kind of get a glimpse into women's property and how they were handling it. So yes, in this instance, this is a case where it would be material entirely controlled by the woman and codified under the law, oftentimes with legal contracts before the wedding, that would show specifically what a woman brought into the household and what she would be able to control moving forward.

AT: It's a level of detail that we don't necessarily have for women a lot of the time.

GC: Yeah, although it's funny because this is something that survives today in the form of like a gift registry, even though that's not something that the woman puts together, but it is a wish list

that the couple puts together for people to gift them. And so it's kind of that level of detail. And in this instance, though, we have to kind of also remember that in the Ottoman Empire, the household is really like the domain of the woman in terms of how she uses that for the reception of her guests, how she hosts family events and entertain visitors. And so this is very much how she constructs her personal space as well.

AT: Yeah, it did definitely give me wedding registry vibes, which I found interesting because I can't speak for everyone, obviously, but when I got married, we'd already been living together for a couple of years. So like we don't need an air fryer because we already have an air fryer because we've already been living together. So it's interesting how that tradition carries on into modern situations where obviously it's a very different living situation at the time of marriage.

GC: Yeah, and in many cases, this kind of also, I think dovetails nicely into how these collections were displayed, because this is the construction of a new household. And in many ways, when these works were paraded in a procession across the neighborhood, you would see all these elements that would come together. It's kind of like turning a household inside out temporarily for the community to see. And once it was actually within the household, you can see how it would be activated by the new bride as she kind of takes these works out of the realm of just display and puts them to use as she's constructing that new household. And so in many ways, though, you are putting the wealth of a new family on display. And in doing so, also showing the importance of the two families that are being joined, and their wealth and status through all of these objects. So that's one way it's incredibly important for the families involved to really participate in, especially during a time of economic flux, especially among some of the families that I deal with in the 17th, 18th century, which are newer notables that are really gaining power in society. So the household had a very important role to play. And all of these objects, while some of them are functional, like, yes, you can have a frying pan or a bed. A lot of the times, though, these are when we're thinking of the pre-modern objects, these are the same works that are being shown in museums today. These are gorgeous viewers or pictures, wash basins that are inlaid with gold. And so the types of things people are bringing to their households are really the treasures that would set them up to project a certain identity and social class to everyone around them.

AT: I did find it really interesting when you were talking about the Greek, and I'm going to mispronounce this, Phanariots, who very much struck me as sort of the ostentatious nouveau riche who were displaying their wealth because we're here and it might have been seen as kind of gauche. Could you tell us a little bit more about the context of the specific period that you chose to focus on? Why did you choose this? And what does it tell us? Because it's a very interesting, from a larger societal standpoint, what's going on in the empire at this time.

GC: Oh, absolutely, especially if we're talking about the 18th century. For most of that century, this is a time where the royal family has first reestablished itself in the capital of Istanbul. So they're in a very interesting position, but also particularly towards the middle of that century and

well into the first part of the 19th century. We don't actually have the imperial family doing these types of wedding processions and displays, which they had done in the past. And that's incredibly interesting because it used to be a way for the imperial family to inscribe their royal presence onto the landscape. And while we don't know entirely why they stopped doing that, it's incredibly interesting that you have these demographics of urban notables, Phanariots among them. These are the Christian Greek families that are heavily tied to diplomacy and trade, also Armenian families as well, who are really taking this opportunity to show the immense success that they've had. And so you see all of these very lavish descriptions from not only travelers, but also in literature of how these families are essentially showing the formation of their, I wouldn't say sudden new wealth, because this has been accumulating for some time, even over the previous century. But it is a moment where you start to see this shift in their wealth being performed in a whole new way. And I think it does in some ways correspond to the amount of power that certain families were wielding in terms of politics and the economy.

ATL It is really interesting when you think about it, again, going back to if this were a modern context, if say the British royal family just said, we're not going to do these giant royal weddings anymore, because it seems like anytime there's a royal wedding, everybody just freaks out. And it's a huge thing. And I mean, if I was British, I'd be wondering how much of my money is paying for all this. But it's very much a, you know, your royal family is presenting itself to the public in a massive display, even today. So it's just really interesting to think about what if they just stopped doing that? And how would we respond today? Because I'm assuming in that society, it was similarly like, "what?!?"

GC: I mean, unfortunately, there aren't too many sources that really talk about that, that hiatus. And I mean, that's also really interesting. And we know that especially after a huge revolt that occurred in the middle of the 18th century, you know, you have a new sultan that's kind of put into power. And so there are possibilities that we can turn to maybe they didn't want to overexert their imperial power off the bat after, you know, rebellion had just completely overthrown their predecessor. Maybe they were in financial straits. You know, there are all these reasons that we don't necessarily know. But what's for certain is that the fact that these, especially Christian families were, you know, taking this this opportunity to really perform and adapt, I think these imperial codes of status and wealth to a new kind of level as urban notables, that is a fascinating shift in terms of who in terms of how people are interacting with the city's landscape in the capital and also in other areas of the Ottoman Empire. Since these occur, not only, you know, within the central Ottoman lands, but we can also look to the Arab provinces, for instance, in Cairo, Damascus, and also in the Balkans. And yeah, and what we see though is that there's this flourishing of material that's being transferred in these families. And this is also something that coincides with what historians have called the age of Aions, which actually has to do with this age of the urban notable, where you have these types of regional power players who are taking on a much more, I think, active role in local governments and where you have many individuals who are now, in some ways, trying to establish their own, like, mini courts within their provinces or even within, you know, their neighborhoods. And I think this is one way to signal to a neighborhood, this we have arrived. And also, this is what we can do for the community,

because in many instances, you have cases of trousseau processions also involving the distribution of money and gifts to people around. So it's a huge, very performative spectacle that has immense implications for one's social and political significance.

AT: And the distinction between new money and old money makes me think of New York's Gilded age where you had all of this ostentatious display of wealth. But there was also that conflict between the established folks and the new people who were coming in. But as you were saying, it's very much, these are not suddenly wealthy people. This is a gradual growth and development of folks who have been here for a long time.

GC: So in the 18th century, what we have are families that have been there, like they've been active, but there are numerous changes, I think we can point to that really make this a little bit more of a growth and development of a demographic that had always had some power. But especially if we think of the 18th century as a time with increased interactions with Europe, for example, those Christian families are kind of at the heart of these networks that are dealing with ambassadors that are visiting the Ottoman Empire. Many of them are interpreters for many of these embassies. And of course, the trade families have connections to some of the richest cities in Europe and are bringing in all this material that's very much in vogue during this time, not only among the royalty and the elite, but also in other demographics of society too, including these kind of middling sorts that are from administrative and mercantile classes. Though we do see some similarity in terms of not just the elite, but how critics responded to these displays and this kind of flourishing of these families' wealth. And one of the ways they do that is by, well, basically censoring women for their immense profligate spending. There are numerous sources that talk about how women during this period were driving their husbands to poverty, over buying belts and robes, which, you know, of course, we can read into all of the judgments behind that. But I do think it's interesting too that we also have a rise in sanctuary laws, which are laws that try to control how people dress.

And in many ways, these are sometimes coming from within these minority or Christian communities as well, where you have, for instance, the patriarchy of the Greek Phanariots saying, you know, women should only go out wearing one ring and, you know, one set of bracelets or, you know, they really get down to these kind of granular details in order to halt the, I guess, manifestation of jealousies within the community. So, you know, there's a lot of interesting kind of responses to ways, especially in which women are using and displaying their wealth. But this instance of, like, the wedding procession, especially of the trousseau, is something that is a little bit more while it's socially accepted. It is also not without its own responses, because laws were also issued that were meant to kind of curtail the excessive expenses, because some individuals or some families rather were inflating their trousseaus beyond their actual means. And what that meant was that you have families that were going broke, giving their daughters these incredible trousseaus. And then after doing that, they had no inheritance to give to their sons, or even to live off of themselves. And so you see this, like, kind of immense importance placed on this public perception and this moment of the wedding procession. So, there's a lot to think about in terms of, I guess, the criticisms and judgments that are passed not only from above, but from within a neighborhood and community. You see how

women become these agents in their own projection of status and wealth in society through these events.

And one of the ways they do that is in how they construct these works. And some of them, they're making them by hand, like beautiful works of embroidery, which are sought after not only within the Ottoman Empire, but Europeans were coming to the markets of Istanbul, buying lace work and embroideries that were made by Ottoman women, and in some cases, elite Ottoman women as well. So these were not throw away handkerchiefs if, you know, we can use those terms. But rather, each one of them was considered a collectible not only within their own context, but also from an outsider's view as well.

And then on top of that, though, just thinking of how they wanted to present that household in a procession really becomes its whole performance. And we have amazing descriptions from travelers who witnessed these types of processions going through cities, also too some accounts from Ottomans. In fact, one of my favorites is from the Ottoman Armenian interpreter, Dorsan, who at the end of the 18th century writes this whole kind of description of how different types of wedding processions were supposed to occur. And, you know, there are some fabulous details that are woven into these accounts, but specifically to how women were involved, not only in basically creating these works, but shepherding them through this whole process, especially the mother of the bride, becomes this figure who accompanies the wealth, because funny enough, the bride is not even with her stuff when this material is being presented to the public. She comes far later in the process.

These are week-long weddings, but funny enough, these trousseaus are actually the first and perhaps spectacular element of the entire process. And really, that's the mother-in-law's time to shine, because once that trousseau procession makes its way across the city and everyone can see it and also be drawn to it, because there are often musicians that are kind of announcing this parade of riches to the neighborhood. But once you reach the group's house, it's the mother of the bride that ends up setting up all of these sumptuous items within a room, which is its own kind of display area or gallery. And throughout the rest of that whole wedding week, guests could come and look at this material and judge not only the handiwork of the bride in terms of her embroideries and weavings, but also how much money her family put into buying all these works.

There's some hilarious stories about how one family takes a great amount of pride in putting together all of these works so that their daughters so would rival that of a sultans. And I believe the family is of a regional pasha. And one of the father who, the father involved, is very proud of the fact that he buys this gold-inlaid brazier, so this type of mechanism that's meant to heat and also perfume a room. And so this is on display. And after it's put on display, he ends up just watching the guests to see how they respond to this display and all of the works within it. And he sees one old woman just look at it and go, "what a waste." And then jumps out and says, "why? Why is it such a waste?" And the old woman says, "you forgot the tongs." These are utterly useless without tongs because, of course, you have to turn the coals that are in a brazier. And that's a late story, by the way. But in this period, we do have accounts of women putting together these absolutely incredible displays that were met to show every dimension of these objects from the different types of metal wrapped threads that were woven into the textiles. And we have descriptions of very ornate wardrobes being displayed open and withdraws also open

so that guests could kind of peek in and see everything that was in there as well. And in many ways, this had a purpose because it allowed everyone to confirm, especially everyone in the family, to confirm that everything in that wedding contract was accounted for in the final delivery of the trousseau. But also, it allowed people to kind of assess the monetary value of these works because in these contracts, it's not just a list of objects. Most often you have the full valuation of the collection, and sometimes also individual works. And I know specifically in Ottoman Jewish families, you would have elders or respected members of the community come in and actually do the price evaluation when it's displayed, for instance. So this is all very much an integrated part into the whole ceremonial process.

AT: It seems like there's a lot of artistry here, not just in terms of, you know, you framed this as a curated collection, meaning the women were curators. The women were also textile artists with the embroidery. And it definitely seems like there was an element of performance art as well going on.

GC: Oh, yes. I mean, I think there are so many performative elements. Even when we think of how these works were constructed, the first time they would be seen is not even at this wedding procession, but it's when other women are scoping out young potential brides for their sons. And one of the things that happens is that you have these house calls. For instance, if women are at a hamam and they see a young lady that the thing might be suitable for their son, nephew, they'll visit her home and she'll actually see like what this woman has made for her trousseau and evaluate that before there's even any kind of engagement that occurs. And there are some wonderful Ottoman poems about this particular process and how these works are meant to be put into this little trousseau chest. And so they're all laid out all these gorgeous floral designs. And the response that a young woman should want. So says one poet is that, you know, they should look at it and say, "oh, what a perfect work." And, you know, squadrons of thousands are supposed to come and see these.

And of course, that's an exaggeration. But it kind of gives you a sense of how this plays into the performative kind of selection process for potential spouse. And then yes, when you actually put these works together in a procession, this is, I mean, I'm sure many of you have probably seen processions on holidays and such. But these are very orchestrated events. Sometimes with choreographed unfurling of certain elements, and that was no different for these wedding processions. We have accounts of coordinated costumes for the servants that would accompany these trousseaus. And I mentioned to you how the gifting of elements would also be choreographed into this as a type of performance and also act of beneficence for the community. So that's another aspect. And then finally, once that whole trousseau is set up in a room in the groom's home, and everyone can come and look at it. Once the bride does arrive on the final day of the wedding, you have another kind of performative event where she herself becomes part of that display. And numerous descriptions and also Ottoman paintings show a bride sitting amongst this pile of wealth and gold and textiles. And you know, this also allows others to evaluate her as a part of this household. But also too, she's there to receive more because the guests by this point are also coming with gifts. And so the wealth just increases. And to the point where you see some depictions of these brides and Ottoman costume albums

with turbans that are covered with numerous bejeweled aspects, not just like aigrettes, which are the typical turban ornaments, but also you see numerous bracelets that are being like tossed into her lap and numerous like gold embroidered handkerchiefs that are scattered around her. So you know, this might also be a part that's more familiar to like contemporary viewer, right? Because we know that the bride often gets a ton of gifts during her wedding. But this whole idea of having a woman become a part of a display and quite literally in this point, because when she has several bejeweled broaches and elements that are covering her costume, and in some cases, she's wearing numerous gowns and robes. So her whole body is weighed down by all of these elements, like she is a part of this mobile wealth that is coming in. And she is the vehicle by which it is all arriving. And that I think is made very clear. And in numerous instances, we have accounts where these women could scarcely move because they were wearing so much in terms of clothing, scarves, and jewelry. And in some instances, too, you have gold being applied to their cheeks to kind of add-on to this whole display that makes her this embodiment of family wealth. And so it is performative to an absolutely incredible degree. And even after this display happens, sometimes you'll have performances of the trousseau, where if a woman is wearing many outfits, she might actually display them individually, either in a dance before the groom, or this is tabulated verbally. There are numerous ways that historical accounts have displayed this type of or preserved rather this type of tabulation of trousseau elements. But all of it is very performative. And oftentimes, the bride is a central part of that final performance that really brings the whole package together.

AT: So in your article, you mentioned that this period of wedding trousseaus has been studied less than medieval ones. Do we know why that is?

GC: Oh, I think there are numerous possibilities, but no definitive reason as to why. I think for one part, the sources on trousseaus in the medieval period, and we're talking specifically about like Fatimid and Mamluk Egypt, have been studied a bit more in part because they've often been royal trousseaus that are studied. And so oftentimes, of course, most of the sources are about royalty.

But also, especially in Egypt, there is a very rich source known as the Cairo Geniza, which is a treasure trove of receipts and documentation about all aspects of life. But there's a great deal specifically about women's lives in that source. So you have royal chronicles and sources, and also this other contained, relatively contained, and well-published body of sources that allows scholars to really dig into this material. And for the Ottoman period, the royal trousseaus have been more studied. But I think because the the trousseaus of non-royal women require a more piecemeal approach to stitching together sources from legal documents, from poetry, from narrative accounts, and also from material objects, it becomes a much more complicated task. And especially because we often don't have the exact objects to attach to, for instance, the works within a legal document, a wedding contract. And so many times we're making comparisons then to works that are quite similar based off a description in, for instance, museum collections. And so it presents a challenge in that regard.

But also, I think too, it's just, it's also a shift, I think, towards thinking about women outside of the palace in the Ottoman case, because there have been books written about Ottoman women

patrons, almost all from the royal family. And there have been books written about women who participated, for instance, in the arts in the late Ottoman period. But in these, that's because the documentation is much easier to follow, because you have newspapers and you have a much bigger archive of printed works as well, that's often digitized that you can turn to.

And so in many ways, I was trying to figure out, can we put together a interdisciplinary body of sources to tell a story about this particular topic? And it's also interesting that we have very few accounts that are actually from the women themselves, like all of these sources are written by spectators, who are often men. Even the literature in the Ottoman case, like we have numerous poems that talk about wedding trousseaus, those are also written by men. And we also have travelers, largely men. And of course, the legal accounts are presumably dictated by women when they are bringing these contracts, but they are recorded by men. And so, you know, this is an interesting way to kind of read, I guess, against the grain of your archive to re-inscribe women's agency onto a particular set of activities or practices. And I think we can construct a lot from these sources, but we just have to be very careful about how we approach them. And the way we approach the gaps that each one inherently has.

AT: More broadly, I feel like we don't hear about women's history in general in terms of, you know, what we see in museums and that sort of thing. And particularly in the context of domestic spheres, and the fact that this is part of a larger pattern of textiles, like when we're talking about women's embroidery, you know, that's very traditionally been women's work. And as such, it seems like it's largely been undervalued and getting into the sort of like craft versus art debate.

GC: I think that you're really onto something because up until I think relatively recently, you are correct that it, works like Ottoman women's embroidery or just embroidery in general was characterized as craft or folk art. I think because in the non-western, you know, perspective, this is something that this is a category that I think many art historians are trying to push back against and how problematic these terms are since that also, you know, implies like a certain lack of formalized training, for instance. But these are skills that women were learning from a very young age. And some of them were doing embroideries professionally as well. So, you know, clearly, this was a refined art that now we have numerous displays of. I mean, we can just think about one of the many exhibitions that, for instance, the textile museum over in Washington, D.C. has done on Ottoman embroideries. And I think that this category of domestic life and especially women's domestic spheres is sometimes, I wouldn't say overlooked, but it is sometimes categorized as more of a frivolous history of consumption, at least in the past. I think this is changing now. And I think that's a very good thing that it's been changing in the past couple of decades. But in this instance, we tend to think of weddings just as, they are spectacle. But I think that there is something quite serious to consider underneath the spectacle. And I think this type of topic makes us reassess perhaps even our own biases that we might bring to these events. And thinking of them primarily as convivial, festive moments, whereas a lot of it was very strategic. And I think when we start taking apart the tactics that these women were using in constructing their trousseaus and displaying them to a public in a way that in many instances, they probably would not have been seen in the public in great capacity outside of



these types of events. So you have to remember, especially for Muslim women, they're covered when they go outside. And this idea of performing a woman's presence on an urban landscape in the procession of her wealth is probably one of the most significant statements a woman can make about who she's meant to be within the society. And also the power that she wields in that society, because I mean, wealth is power, and the way that people wield it.

And the, I think, skill that they show in displaying it says a lot about the aspirations of a family or the individual woman, and also what she's going to be able to do when she becomes this fully participating member of a society as a spouse, and also as the head of a household, because this is women's personal spheres, which are often in these herm settings or homosocial settings, such as like bathhouses where women would also go to trade information and plan weddings, for instance, these are important spaces that need to be taken seriously, because as we know, weddings are not just, especially in the pre-modern period, these are not just love matches, they are matches that are made to preserve and augment family wealth and power. And for a woman to participate in that process, I think is incredibly significant, and we shouldn't overlook it as necessarily just a domestic sphere activity. It's an activity that really affects how a family will progress in its social standing.

AT: When I think of a young woman's debut, because that's very much what this sounds like to me, you know, American brain, typically when I think of a young woman's debut, it is presenting her into society so that she may be courted, so whether we're talking about, you know, London society in the 1800s or, you know, the American South debutantes. So it is interesting to think that that juxtaposition exists between here is a young woman for your consideration to marry versus this woman is now married, and this is part of that process.

GC: Yeah, I think, you know, these might be different kind of interpretations of when a woman is really becoming an active participant in society. And, you know, in the Ottoman case, while there's this whole lead up to creating that trousseau, I think because it's such an intimate kind of dialogue between a woman, her family, and her community, that makes it, I think, particularly significant in the Ottoman case. While I know less about, for instance, the debutante balls of Europe, it is rather interesting to me, though, that it's this, it is a codified event where you have, in many ways, this process that's meant to facilitate the growth and expansion of family status. So I think the purposes are quite similar, even though in these instances, they might take place at slightly different times in a woman's, in a young woman's life. But I think it's just playing two similar types of objectives for individual families. And as you were saying, you know, it's not as though these weddings are happening without people having done their proper research and everything, it's just that the debut season is not necessarily part of that research.

Yeah, and I also wonder, too, if it has something to do with the fact that it's at debutante balls, it is also the woman who is on display in a different way, because she herself is on display for society. In this case, you know, like I said, with many women you have in the Ottoman Empire, these are not women who are going out and about uncovered, for instance. So I think even in this instance, when they, in the last stage of the wedding display, where you see her become a part of the trousseau presentation, the only people that are really seeing this are other women or members of her close family. It's slightly different for Christian and Jewish women in the

Ottoman Empire, since this is actually where we get a lot of those travelers accounts. But even then, it was known to be a very special kind of event where a man could enter the woman's quarters of a household, the woman's side of a household, and see these riches. So it's, I think it's a different degree of access that might have some part to play in why these traditions manifested differently. But of course, you know, there are million other contextual reasons we could consider. But I think that, you know, we do have to think about the ways in which women across different religious backgrounds are interacting with their urban space. And this is probably the biggest difference that comes to my mind when I think of this comparison.

AT: And so Ottoman art is obviously one of your specialties, but was there a particular reason? I mean, obviously this is fascinating, but was there a particular reason that you really wanted to study this? Was it just the lack of scholarship on it or were there other elements?

GC: Yeah, I think, to a degree, lack of scholarship is always a reason. But what really sparked it for me was that I'm someone who focuses a great deal on histories of collecting and specifically how objects move. And in the past, that's taken the form of looking at art markets and how people bought art. But then I realized I wasn't really considering a very large transfer of wealth across time that happened completely, well, not completely, but adjacent to the market, which is through weddings and inheritance. And when I really took a moment to think about it, some of my favorite works in the museums, these gorgeous pieces of jewelry, these incredible metalwork pieces that have some of the most inventive designs and ornamentation were the types of things that you would find in a true cell. And so part of the reason, too, why these objects were saved is because they were passed down either through inheritance or possibly because they were reused as parts of a true cell. So I really want to think of this kind of adjacent economy in a way where we can think about how art objects survive to us. And also whether or not that could shed light on a group of collectors that we less often consider, because especially for the pre-modern period in the Ottoman Empire, when we think of collectors, we're thinking of royalty, oftentimes we're thinking of men. But when we start to look beyond, I guess, the typical modes of collecting art, which is working with an atelier or a workshop or buying things from a market, we have some of the most incredible works that women have been in control of all this time. And I think this is why we also need to take the science and, the skill behind a trousseau seriously, because it was not only, it was not only the collection of works that a woman was going to use, clearly families even down the line saw the value in these works, if not monetary, then also the social importance of these works to maintain them for familial status and numerous other aspects. And so that's the main crux of what drew me to it. And I know it's funny because it's not necessarily about the women first and foremost, but it's what brought me to this topic that I think made me appreciate how art played a role in women's histories in a whole different way.

AT: Dr. Collaço's article, *No Small Ostentation: Rituals of Collection and Display in Urbanite Trousseaus of the 18th century Ottoman Empire*, will be published in the 2024 volume of *Mukarnis*, an annual on the visual cultures of the Islamic world. Join us next time on the *Infinite Women* podcast, and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.