Three Traditions in the History Painting of Angelica Kauffman: Prudence, National Pride, and (In)famous Women in *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida*

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Abstract:

This thesis addresses three socio-cultural contexts or "traditions" within which I interpret the history paintings of Angelica Kauffman. Two works featuring tales from English history, *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* (1769-1770) and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* (1770-1771), offer insight about Kauffman's lived experience as a female artist in the latter half of the eighteenth century, England's developing cultural identity as related to the country's history, and the sustained tradition of *donne illustri* that values women according to their virtue and character. Kauffman depicts Rowena and Elfrida as historical hinges in their own narratives, couching her affirmation of their agency with the aesthetics, historical details, and social politics of the era, all of which she was prudently aware.

Cette thèse adresse trois contextes socio-culturels, ou «traditions» dans laquelle j'interprète des peintures historiques d'Angelica Kauffman. Deux œuvres qui présentent des contes Anglais historiques, *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* (1769-177), et *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* (1770-1771), offrent des informations sur la vie réelle de Kauffman en tant qu'artiste à la fin du 18e siècle, l'évolution identitaire d'Angleterre par rapport à son histoire, et la tradition soutenue du *donne illustri* qui valorise les femmes selon leurs vertus et leurs caractères. Kauffman évoque Rowena et Elfrida comme des acteurs historiques dans leur propre discours, formulant son affirmation de leur pouvoir dans les esthétiques, les détails historiques, et la politique sociale de l'époque, dont elle était prudemment consciente.

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Six of Angelica Kauffman's history paintings, created between 1768-1771, reside in Saltram House in Plympton, England, four of which feature scenes from archetypal classical texts; the Iliad, Odyssey, and Aeneid. Kauffman shows female subjects such as Penelope, Venus, and Andromache participating in their respective narratives, which the learned visitor to the country home of Lord Boringdon, then owner of Saltram House, would have known well. The two other history paintings, however, features stories that have remained more obscure in subject and meaning. *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena at the Banquet of Hengist, the Saxon General* (1769-1770) and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida after her Marriage to Ethelwold* (1770-1771) occupy a niche in both Kauffman's own oeuvre and in broader trends of art making in the second half of the eighteenth century that has not yet been thoroughly addressed by scholarship.

This thesis situates an interpretation of these paintings within a context of national historicism, classicism, and feminism, arguing that Angelica Kauffman's work demonstrates a significant understanding and incorporation of the contexts and traditions with which she intersected. Said contexts are her own immediate experience as a female artist, the current socio-cultural context of Britain, and the tradition of (in)famous women that stretched from the fourteenth century into Kauffman's time. Kauffman's depiction of Rowena and Elfrida places them in each of these traditions, particularly the final one, which interprets women through the values of power and virtue. By showing these women at pivotal points in their own lives that also resonate with broader historical narratives for England, Kauffman makes them dynamic agents while remaining prudent about realities of taste and social discourse in which she worked as a successful professional.

The first context this thesis explores is literary, with an an examination of how the genre of history writing shifted at the start of the eighteenth century in a way that sets the stage for an informed examination of Britain's interrogation of its past. Following this literary preface, a broader look at Britain's self-image and specifically its relationship with the classical past of Greece and Rome informs the precise social and cultural context and artistic developments that impact Kauffman's work. The main development is the founding of the Royal Academy of the Arts in 1768 and Sir Joshua Reynold's accompanying *Discourses*. In this context of grappling with their national past and identity, the learned English were also developing their own school of art and deciding what they wanted their national artistic style to emulate. The hierarchy of genre plays a major role, but tensions arise as it becomes apparent that the academic ideal of history painting is less popular with patrons than portraiture. Angelica Kauffman and Benjamin West serve as two examples of how artists both fit in and stood out from this milieu. Indeed, as Angelica Kauffman arrived in London in 1766, she entered the previously described context while also embodying the classical training of her early career in Italy. For a multitude of reasons, she appealed quite well to English taste. Said taste was nebulous at that moment, as will be explained in detail later, but the wealthy primarily patronized contemporary English artists for portraits and animal paintings while spending large sums on Old Masters from Europe.[1] This was seen as cosmopolitan collecting, rather than unpatriotic spending. Kauffman brought an appealing Continental flair due to her training, yet she also endeavored to appeal and adapt to English taste during her time in that country. Only a few years after the advent of her tenure in

[1] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 174. Fifty percent of paintings costing more than £40 (a large sum at the time) bought by Britons between 1711-1760 were by Italian artists (Colley, 165).

England, she painted six diverse but interrelated history paintings, two of which will be the focus of this thesis.

Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena at the Banquet of Hengist, the Saxon General (1769-1770) and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida after her Marriage to Ethelwold* (1770-1771) stand apart from Kauffman's own work up until that point, as well the work of her contemporaries (Figures 1 and 2). These two subjects, hailing from the fifth and tenth century respectively, operate uniquely to comment upon the social, cultural, and historical moment in which they were made, as well as Kauffman's own practices as a female artist and an older, pervasive mode of representing women in moral narratives. These paintings participated in an early modern expression of the tradition of *donne illustri,* dating to Boccaccio in the fourteenth century. Rowena and Elfrida are historical hinges in their stories: their appearances and actions directly impact both their own fates and coming historical events. Kauffman's characterization of these female figures threads the needle of highlighting this dual agency without being too explicit about either the power exhibited by the women or their bodies which enable said power. This artistic decision of hers is informed by the various lenses through which one can view her work, her historical precedents, and her contemporary life.

The first tradition, or critical lens through which we can analyze this pair of paintings, pertains to a single artist's patterns and choices as they relate to her reality, while the second tradition is broader and considers an entire nation's increasing pride and self-interest. The third tradition spans centuries and countries to include humanist interpretations of the role of famous women in classical narratives in both Renaissance Italy and early modern England. Applying the contexts of these three critical lenses to *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* can reveal a great deal about each individual framework within

which the paintings functioned. The specific depiction of the titular female characters, Rowena and Elfrida, indicate the boundaries within which Kauffman had to operate as a female history painter, here applied to the specific reception of these English historical women in addition to Kauffman's classical Greco-Roman heroines. The provenance of the works, which were abandoned by their commissioner and scooped up along with more traditional history paintings to be displayed in an upper-class English country home, locates them in the contentious, contradictory context of late eighteenth-century English taste, which will be examined in detail below. Though Rowena and Elfrida exist outside the classical and religious texts from which Giovanni Boccaccio drew inspiration in his work on famous women, (*De claris mulieribus*, 1361), their representation by Kauffman demonstrates the continuous relevance of the tradition of depicting female heroines from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The influence of established theories and scholars on this thesis can also be broken down into three corresponding traditions or sections. The first, regarding the contextualization of Kauffman and her depictions of figures in the genre of history painting as a female artist, is indebted to the work of Angelica Goodden, Angela Rosenthal, and Wendy Wassyng Roworth. These three scholars have made significant strides in establishing Kauffman in the written canon of art history while taking into account the impact her gender had on her career.[2] Angelica Goodden's approach considers the artist's social life and surroundings, aiming to prove that Kauffman purposely deployed visual traits of softness and femininity in her work to shape a

[2] Goodden, Rosenthal, and Roworth are the major scholars of Kauffman who published monographs/broadly in English: Angelica Goodden, *Miss Angel: The Art and World of Angelica Kauffman* (London: Pimlico, 2005); Angela Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman: art and sensibility* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Wendy Wassyng Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England* (Brighton: Royal Pavilion Art Gallery & Museums, 1992) and multiple articles.
For German publications, see Bettina Baumgärtel, *Angelika Kauffmann* (Hatje, 1998); Angela Rosenthal, *Angelika Kauffmann: Bildnismalerei im 18. Jahrhundert* (Reimer, 1996); Waltraud Maierhofer, *Angelika Kauffmann* (Rowohlt, 1997).

conscious philosophy of aesthetics and representation. Similarly, Angela Rosenthal engages with the inescapable impact of masculinity on eighteenth century art and culture, specifically the gender-based expectations of the male gaze on Kauffman herself in addition to her work. Regarding her depictions of human bodies, Rosenthal asserts that the artist suspended distinctions between genders and created novel ways of representing the male body, thus allowing the possibility for both heroism and femininity to be represented within one individual. Wendy Wassyng Roworth, through multiple articles and chapters, touches on disparate themes in Kauffman's oeuvre such as the genre, patronage, and her later years in Rome. In a catalogue for the 1992 exhibition, "Angelica Kauffman: A Continental Artist in Georgian England", Roworth examines her in the English context, particularly her social and artistic reception there as well as her history paintings. These three scholars have laid the groundwork for how to think and write about Angelica Kauffman in the modern age, and in doing so, recognize the intersection between Kauffman's reality and her creativity. I echo this attention, with a focus on her prudence and attention to her surroundings rather than a deliberate expression of gender identity.

Roy Strong and other scholars have recognized the intersection of a growing English self-interest in the eighteenth century and the evolving English school of art as the source of new subjects and genres.[3] Concerning Kauffman's specific work in this context, Juliet Feibel posits that the myth of Rowena had a significant effect on the development of English national history and identity while Elfrida has a more complicated reception within this patriotic discourse.[4] However, Feibel's dissertation places the peak of Rowena's social impact in the 1790s, while I

[3] Roy Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father? The Victorian Painter and British History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.
[4] Juliet Feibel, "Clio's Palette: The Historical Arts and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Britain" PhD diss., (University of Michigan, 1998); Feibel, "Vortigern, Rowena, and the Ancient Britons: Historical Art and the Anglicization of National Origin," In *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24, no. 1 (2000).

instead posit that the rehabilitation and relevance of her character occurs two decades earlier, via Kauffman's work in 1770. Finally, on the third tradition, that of famous women and their reception, Margaret Franklin and Mary Garrard provide perspective on how Boccaccio's treatment of famous women was adapted by artists in his own time.[5] Following this, Ela Nutu does the same regarding how the tradition evolved in the hands of female artists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[6] With a thorough socio-historical background, the application of these concepts, and specific visual and contextual analysis, this thesis makes clear how Kaufmann's pair of paintings speaks to three distinct art historical traditions.

English History Writing: Rapin, Hume and a Changing Genre

At the turn of the eighteenth century, English history writing began to move away from the chronicle style written so far, towards a more modern sense of the genre. History grew to be valued for what it could teach in the present, not for the sake of recording the past itself. Paul Thoyras de Rapin and David Hume were the main sources for English history at the time, with the former dominating the first few decades of the 1700s and the latter emerging mid-century.[7] However, it is worth noting that earlier historical works still had a major influence at the beginning of this transition. Historian Pat Rogers calls the 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia* "one of the key works in the formation of the eighteenth-century mind."[8]

[5] Margaret Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society*, London: Routledge, 2006; Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.
[6] Ela Nutu, "Framing Judith: Whose Text, Whose Gaze, Whose Language?," in *Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue*, eds. J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 117-143.
[7] Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father? The Victorian Painter and British History*, 13-14.
[8] Stuart Piggot, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination: Ideas from the Renaissance to the Regency* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 11.

Paul Thoyras de Rapin was a French Huguenot and his *Histoire d'Angleterre* was first published in the Hague between 1723 and 1725, though he died that final year.[9] He was highly influential and widely read as the main figure in the writing of English history during the first half of the eighteenth century.[10] Part of the success of his book was its readability, as "Rapin included every great story of lust, violence and betrayal from the English annals, however unlikely, lest the interest of the reader wander."[11] First translated into English by John Knapton in 1725, *Histoire d'Angleterre* became crucial to the development of a English culture of historical writing and reading. This text was not rivalled in readers or influence until the 1750s, when David Hume overtook Rapin as England's chronicler.[12] Like most historians of the mid-eighteenth century, Hume defined himself in relation to Rapin.[13] Hume started his *History of England* in 1752 and published it in 1754, with first two volumes and then two additional ones in 1759 and 1762. Very much a self-described historian of England, Hume aimed to make a new popular history, working within and growing the market that Rapin had created.[14]

Both Rapin and Hume endeavored to keep the attention of their audience throughout their texts. The most important aspect for Hume was the flow of his narrative, free of extraneous or boring details.[15] In his work, Rapin preserved many of the more dramatic and romantic tales from the English past, a method for which he was derided. Rapin held the reader captive "by focusing on a single moment of human passion or drama as its [the historical narrative] motor."[16] He did exactly this with the story of Vortigern and Rowena, so masterfully that his account

[9] M.G. Sullivan, "Rapin, Hume and the identity of the historian in eighteenth century England," *History of European Ideas* 28:3 (2002): 149.
[10] Sullivan, "Rapin, Hume and the identity of the historian in eighteenth century England," 147.
[11] Ibid, 150.
[12] Ibid, 155.
[13] Ibid, 147.
[14] Ibid, 156-7.
[15] Ibid, 158.
[16] Ibid, 159.

inspired painters to depict this subject in historical works of art for the rest of the century. Hume, on the other hand, "took the occasionally racy style of Rapin but sunk [an] academic apparatus below the surface of the carefully composed and engrossing narrative," thus moving his text away from Rapin's methods and toward his own.[17] Hume favored a style of writing with a flowing narrative that maintained the interest of his audience but contained no extraneous or boring detail that might delay or distract the reader from the author's clear path of story-telling.[18] However, Hume did argue in a commentary that history can be at once amusing and educational, that it lived as a genre between the novel and the didactic text. He believed that women should read more histories, which contain the same interests as the gossip and romances they enjoyed, adding that "it is an unpardonable ignorance in persons of whatever sex or condition not to be acquainted with the history of their own country."[19] Hume fashioned himself as the singular, authoritative voice in English history, and aimed to create a new popular history for the nation to appreciate and with which they, inclusive of gender, could engage.

Indeed, history as a literary genre boomed in England during the second half of the eighteenth century when Hume was writing. It became more accessible to the general learned public as it moved from a specialized, pedagogical genre into a popular one. The previous style had been more antiquarian, concerned with meticulous descriptions of every discovery, as opposed to the style of Hume.[20] In addition to the two texts already mentioned, Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788) played a major role in this shift, as did the nation's growing historical imagination and interest in national history.[21] David Hume remarked

[17] Ibid, 159.
[18] Ibid, 158.
[19] Ibid, 157. Hume quote: "On the Study of History" in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, edited by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, Vol. 2, 1898, p. 390
[20] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 7.
[21] Ibid, 4.

in a letter to his publisher in 1770 that "this is to be the historical age, and this is the historical nation."[22] When he speaks of history, Hume refers to "neo-classical narrative history" like that written by himself and Gibbon, modeled to some degree after the traditions of Roman historians such as Livy and Tacitus.[23] Rapin had come close to this neo-classical tradition previously, but his literary style was considered insufficiently elevated for the current moment, and his success in England would always suffer to a degree on account of his French origins.[24]

The English Relationship with the Past and 18th-Century Self-Image

In terms of socio-historical context for interactions with the past, before delving into how this was reflected in the arts, it is important to note that English self-confidence had been growing since the 1740s. Their constitution had been established, the economy was thriving, and there was "a consequent desire to explore and dignify the national traits that had brought their [recent success] into being."[25] In addition, Grand Tourism began to boom and the widened cultural horizons that accompanied travel to the Continent had an impact on how the English viewed themselves at home and abroad, particularly in Italy. This country, which was meant to be the locus of a glorious, classical past that had long been studied in English schoolrooms, now seemed worn and decrepit in comparison to contemporary England. As Jeremy Black puts it, "Italy appeared outside the process of civilization, indeed a denial of it, as was made cruelly obvious by the Classical ruins that attracted more attention during the century."[26] The early modern Britons admired ancient Greece and Rome and drew social and cultural customs from

[22] Ibid, 5.
[23] Ibid, 5.
[24] Ibid, 27.
[25] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 126
[26] Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Have CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 6-7.

them, but scorned the medieval history of Italy, due in part to the fact that the artistic accomplishments of those eras were linked to Catholicism. Though there had been a degree of inferiority in the English sense of self in the seventeenth century, this was no longer the case. As a visual example, when Canaletto visited London, his paintings of that city reflected the country's new sense of pride and national self-confidence. London was far ahead of Italian cities in terms of the scale of its secular architecture and development, thanks specifically to an improving economy and generally to the confidence of having just defeated France and Spain in the Seven Years War.[27] England was also going through an agricultural revolution that made Italy's countryside and small-scale farms pale in comparison, as did that country's conservative politics. The nature of Grand Tourism and its written record cultivated a culture of comparison that left contemporary Italy quite disparaged.[28] England's improvements only widened the gap between the Italy seen on the Tour and the one imagined from centuries ago.

As a result, the newly-confident nation "sought to appropriate Classical Italy and to make it a part of their cultural heritage that was defined on British terms."[29] They remained interested in and engaged with the classical tradition they recognized and respected, while being highly selective about the parts of the past (both Italy's and their own nation's) that they wished to appreciate and highlight in their written histories and cultural production. While they rejected the Catholic art of Italy's intervening medieval period, the ancient past and its revival in the Renaissance were acceptable and desirable to the English antiquarians of the early modern period. In the same breath that they claimed ancient Roman glories as their own, Brits denounced the remaining ghosts of a fallen empire, further stating that eighteenth-century Italians were not

[27] Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour,* 150-1.
[28] Ibid, 153.
[29] Ibid*,* 157.

suitable heirs to their own history.[30] Britons at this point lacked a strong enthusiasm for their own ancient past, and this perceived dearth drove gentlemen, historians, and artists alike to the gilded annals of Rome.[31] It is through this entanglement of traditions and a nation's developing sense of self that a number of influential cultural figures set out to define and promote a uniquely English art tradition.[32]

England "Orders" the Arts

The latter half of the eighteenth century marked the first concentrated efforts by creatives and critics to establish and "order" the arts. In support of this movement was Horace Walpole, who published the first full scale history on this topic, *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762).[33] The history painter James Barry also called for the promotion of the arts for the sake of national honor in 1774.[34] But there was no voice more vocal for this effort than that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. As England's premier artist, he was the foremost advocate for the elevation of English art and the main manifestation of this was the Royal Academy, which he founded in 1768. Before this, a Royal Charter in 1756 had established the Society of Artists of Great England, but after twelve years, thirty-four artists lead by Reynolds broke from that group and formed the Royal Academy.[35] This sustained royal support in the early years of King George the Third's reign (crowned 1760 – died 1820) emphasized the necessary prestige of a "English School." School here applies to both the literal training given at the Academy and the broader stylistic and theoretical unity that was exhibited by English artists of this time. Training at the Academy was

[30] Ibid, 159-60.
[31] Goodden, *Miss Angel,* 119.
[32] Feibel, "Clio's Palate," 22.
[33] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 463.
[34] William Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 13, no. 2 (1990): 12.
[35] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 9.

seen as a necessity for artists to create pictures of which the nation could be proud.[36] Feibel calls nationhood in this context "the product of imagination and creativity, and the formation of a national identity is thus intrinsically an artistic act."[37] Theory played a major role in the Academy as well, and this aspect also relates to nationhood, as Mark Cheetham notes that "the ready identification of British or English art and art theory with the nation is both habitual and lasting in large measure because a theoretical perspective from which to cement such connections is missing or denied efficacy."[38]

Joshua Reynolds aimed to establish that missing theory, or at least provide it a solid foundation, in his role as the President of the Royal Academy, and specifically in his *Discourses*. The nonexistence of an English School was a topic that came up multiple times in Reynold's *Discourses,* which were originally commencement addresses to the academy's students. Like Walpole, Reynolds thought no such School existed yet, but this was what the Royal Academy hoped to accomplish.[39] In his ninth Discourse on October 16th, 1780, Reynolds stated:

> It will be no small addition to the glory which this nation has already acquired from having given birth to eminent men in every part of science, if it should be enabled to produce, in consequence of this institution, a school of English Artists. The estimation in which we stand in respect to our neighbours will be in proportion to the degree in which we excel or are inferior to them in the acquisition of intellectual excellence.[40]

Reynold's *Discourses* were his own thoughts on art, theory, and how his Academy and the visual arts within ought to be ordered, all with the aim of promoting English glory in every field possible. William Vaughan describes Reynolds as "an eclectic, who sees the duty of the moderns

[36] Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," 11-13.
[37] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 21.
[38] Mark Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism in Britain: The 'Englishness' of English Art Theory since the Eighteenth Century* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 2.
[39] Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," 12.
[40] Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 167.

as being the crystallization of the excellent of the past."[41] It is for this reason that he focuses so much on the genre of history painting. Regarding the eclecticism of this view, Reynolds was one of the only voices actively discussing the dearth of this genre at the time, especially in comparison to the "neighbours" he references in the above quote, mainly the rival Academy of France.

As an educational institution like those in France and Italy, the Royal Academy ranked the genres as such, from lowest to highest: still-life, everyday genre scenes, landscapes, portraiture, and history painting. History painting occupies the highest echelon because it depicted the loftiest subjects, demanded the most formal education of the artists, and aimed for the highest rhetorical impact. The viewer was meant to behold a history painting and yearn to be as brave, refined, or impressive as the figure seen before them.[42] However, history painting never had the same grip on English audiences as on Continental ones. This concerned people like Reynolds, that their country seemed to lack a taste for what was meant to be the most revered and morally elevated genre.[43] In his *Discourses*, Reynolds emphasized the importance of intellectualism in painting, and in his own portraits, would elevate the sitter with aspects of this historic style.[44] This can be seen his portrait *Mrs. Nesbitt as Circe* (1781) (Figure 3), wherein the lady depicted has iconographic identifiers that liken her to the Homeric witch and thus add an element of classical gravitas to her portrait (and Reynolds' reputation). History painting was not meant for all artists, however, as Reynolds praises Thomas Gainsborough for not attempting to work in the genre, as he lacked the training, while criticizing William Hogarth in his fourteenth

[41] Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," 12.
[42] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 10.
[43] Ibid, 33.
[44] Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1975), 80-82.

Discourse (1788) for the opposite, he who "very impudently, or rather presumptuously, attempted the great historical style"[45] with seemingly no knowledge of his own deficiency in that area.[46]

Reynolds was not the only advocate for history painting in England. Fellow artist James Barry, in his *Inquiry into the Real and Imagined Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* (1775) writes:

> History painting and sculpture should be the main views of any people desirous of gaining honour by the arts. These are the tests by which the national character will be tried in after ages, and by which it has been, and is now, tried by the natives of other countries […] As to the notion that the portrait painter can also, when called upon, paint history, and that he can, merely from his acquaintance with the map of the face, travel with security over the other regions of the body, every part of which has a peculiar and difficult geography of its own; this would be too palpably absurd to need any refutation.[47]

History painting was in part the highest regarded genre because it was the most difficult. As Barry alludes, artists had to be able to masterfully paint the ideal human form, but also architecture, clothing (especially classical drapery), and landscape backgrounds.[48] The ability to render the male nude was an essential skill, as these works often centered on the embodiment of virtue in a masculine form.[49] This necessary ability was exclusionary for female artists such as Angelica Kauffman, as both male and female students could begin their practice by copying from Old Masters and ancient statues, but the next step was live model study. This would be considered demeaning for a female artist as well as disruptive and provocative for all men

[45] Reynolds, *Discourses,* 254
[46] Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," 12.
[47] James Barry, *Inquiry into the Real and Imagined Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England* (London, 1775), 132-4,
[48] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 11.
[49] Wendy Wassyng Roworth, "Ancient Matrons and Modern Patrons: Angelica Kauffman as a Classical History Painter," in *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 189.

involved.[50] The Scottish artist Catherine Read, born just a few decades before Kauffman, had a similar start to her artistic training. She studied in Italy in the 1750s and in Rome she observed the antiquities collection of Cardinal Albani, just as Kauffman would in her own education.[51] However, her career never reached the highest genre, as explained by her patron Peter Grant: "Was it not for the restrictions her sex obliges her to be under, I dare safely say she would shine wonderfully in history painting, too, but as it is impossible for her to attend public academies or even design or draw from nature, she is determined to confine herself to portraits."[52] Instead, Read returned to London and was very successful with her pastel portraits.[53]

Thus, up to a certain point, Read and Kauffman had similar experiences in their artistic careers, but where Read was turned away, Kauffman moved forward. Her biographer, Giovanni Gherardo de Rossi describes how Kauffman was able to circumvent the issue of drawing from nude male models (which is what Grant references when he says it was impossible for Read to draw from nature): "Modesty prevented the young girl from applying herself to the study of real bodies; but this obstacle, which impedes the progress of the fairer sex in the art of drawing, her father endeavored to remedy, striving to make her redouble her studies of casts, and encouraging her to diligently practice copying the real in heads and limbs."[54] Thus, Kauffman did draw from live models, if selectively. She hired a man named Charles Crammer for this purpose, and Crammer himself attested that their sessions had been supervised by her father and only his individual limbs were bared.[55] When speaking of Read, Grant also mentions that she was barred

[50] Wendy Wassyng Roworth, "Anatomy is destiny: regarding the body in the art of Angelica Kauffman," in *Femininity and masculinity in eighteenth-century art and culture*, ed. Gil Perry and Michael Rossington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 4.
[51] Heidi A. Strobel, "Royal 'Matronage' of Women Artists in the Late-18th Century," *Woman's Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (Autumn 2005 – Winter 2006), 3.
[52] A. Francis Steuart, "Miss Katherine Read, Court Paintress," *The Scottish Historical Review* (1905), 40-42.
[53] Strobel, "Royal 'Matronage' of Women Artists in the Late-18th Century," 3.
[54] Roworth, "Anatomy is destiny," 47.
[55] Ibid, 45.

from public academies, but Kauffman was a member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome as well as academies in Florence and Bologna by the year 1765.[56] As will be discussed later, Kauffman was also a founding member for England's new Royal Academy in 1768, though she was not invited to formal dinners or professional positions within the school, and voted mainly in absentia.[57] This marginalization can be seen in Johann Zoffany's *The Academians of the Royal Academy* (1772-1772) (Figure 4), which depicts every founding members attending the study of a male nude model. The two female founders of the Academy, Angelica Kauffman (left) and Mary Moser (right), can be seen in the background, hung on the wall as portraits, looking down upon the proceedings from the physical and intellectual distance at which they were held.[58]

History painting was demarcated as the most prestigious by influential artists, critics, and theorists, in part due to "its putative status as the only truly civic form of two-dimensional imagery: as the only art that could address its audience as a public body, by cultivating its viewers' awareness of the interests which they shared with one another, and which bound them to promote the good of all."[59] This is the lofty aspiration for which the Royal Academy stood, and that Reynolds so ardently promoted. History painting also reflected its context, and it was believed that the highest-regarded genre of art in any society represented the quality of said society. Thus, if England and its artists were producing remarkable history paintings, it would

[56] Wendy Wassyng Roworth, "The Residence of the Arts: Angelica Kauffman's Place in Rome," in *Italy's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paul Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine Sama (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 154-56.
[57] Amy Bluett, "Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman: the RA's founding women." International Women's Day series, Royal Academy of the Arts. Published March 2, 2015. https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/mary-moser-and-angelica-kauffman.
[58] Ibid
[59] David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

demarcate England as itself remarkable.[60] As a genre, history painting had a plethora of lofty associations; from nobility of birth and character to moralism, heroism, and classicism.

However, there again arises a contradiction, a tension between the artists, the audience, and most importantly, the patrons. Even as Reynolds gave his *Discourses* and history paintings held pride of place at exhibitions, these were the beliefs of a select few individuals who, though influential, did not decide the taste of an entire nation.[61] Vaughan describes this as Reynolds "having to balance a complex set of interests" wherein his aspirations "can only come into being through the correct combination of high-minded education and enlightened patronage."[62] Of Reynolds' somewhat futile exhalation of this grand style, Gainsborough remarked that "betwixt friends Sir Joshua either forgets or does not choose to see that his instruction is all adapted to form the history painter, which he must know there is no call for in this country."[63] Rather, portrait painting reigned supreme in practical and financial terms. Despite his postulations to the contrary, Reynolds remained the foremost portraitist in England, never making the leap to history painting as he was limited by the demands on his talents for portraits. Only two artists were consistently identified as history painters: Kauffman and Benjamin West. Neither of these two Academians were English (Swiss and American respectively) and there are caveats to even their success: Kauffman supplemented her income with portraits while West benefitted from royal patronage. In 1775, Jean-André Rouquet wrote in *The Present State of the Arts in England* that even if English artists could create history paintings, they did not do so since it was so

[60] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 12.
[61] Ibid, 23.
[62] Vaughan, "The Englishness of British Art," 12.
[63] Thomas Gainsborough, *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. M. Woodall (London: 1963), 95-7. (cited in Goodden, Ch. 6, n.28, pg. 347).

poorly valued in England.[64] Artist and social critic William Hógarth offers one explanation for the country's lack of interest:

> Portrait-painting ever has [sic], and ever will, succeed better in this country than in any other… [A]mong other causes that militate against either painting or sculpture succeeding in this nation, we must place our religion, which, inculcating unadorned simplicity, doth not require – nay absolutely forbids – images for worship, or pictures to excite enthusiasm. […], Can it excite wonder that the arts have not taken such deep root in this soil as in places where the people cultivate them from a kind of religious necessity […]?[65]

It is true that resonances of the iconoclasm of the Reformation were still felt, and English Protestantism did not promote an atmosphere of veneration and holiness that accompanied the subjects of history paintings in Catholic Italy. Moderation of feeling and comportment did play a role in underscoring the differences between these cultures and their artistic production.

This context constitutes one of the traditions through which the English history paintings of Angelica Kauffman will be understood in this thesis. While the other two traditions operate on individual (small) and transnational (large) bases, this mid-scale tradition applies mainly to the nation of England. Yet to understand how this English context of reinvigorated history writing, a developing English School of Art, and the push and pull of genres in the Academy applies here, we must now consider Angelica Kauffman upon her arrival in London.

Enter: Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807)

While working in Italy, where she had lived as a young adult after her childhood in Switzerland, Kauffman met Lady Bridget Wentworth in 1764, who offered social encouragement for the artist's move.[66] She also received profession encouragement from the English clients and artists

[64] Wendy Wassyng Roworth, ed., *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England* (Brighton: Royal Pavilion Art Gallery & Museums, 1992), 24.
[65] Goodden, *Miss* Angel, 119.
[66] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 68-9, 71.

she knew in Italy, such as John Parker and Benjamin West. She had overlapped with West in both Rome and Florence, where they exchanged ideas in a social and professional capacity.[67] Before her move to England, Kauffman had experienced considerable success in Italy. In 1763, she had toured the country with her father and first visited Rome in her early twenties for the sake of artistic edification. After a visit to Naples, Kauffman produced her first history paintings: a set of works based in Greek myth and Roman history, depicting Coriolanus and the pair of Chryseis and Chryse.[68] Upon her return to Rome, Kauffman became the acquaintance of the renowned German intellectual Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who at the time was completing his written history of ancient art, and she fully immersed herself in the classical tradition.[69]

Upon her arrival in 1766, part of Kauffman's appeal on the London art scene was her classical training, which some English artists lacked, and her ability to tap into contemporary tastes.[70] There developed a sort of cult of personality around her during her years in England, such that the Danish Ambassador remarked in 1781, her last year in England, that the whole world was "Angelica mad."[71] Immediately upon her arrival, she found many clients for portrait painting, such that she was busy enough to move studios.[72] In a letter to her father, she listed the people she was meeting and working with: Lady Spencer, Lord Baltimore, the Duchess of Lancaster, and even the Queen (Figure 5).[73] The patronage of Queen Charlotte was a major accolade for Kauffman, and the queen was reportedly quite fond of the artist's company as well

[67] Wendy Wassyng Roworth, "Between 'Old Tiber' and 'Envious Thames': The Angelica Kauffman Connection," in *Roma Britannica: Art Patronage and Cultural Exchange in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, ed. David R. Marshall, Susan Russell, and Karin Wolfe (London: The British School at Rome, 2011), 293-294.
[68] Roworth, "Ancient Matrons and Modern Patrons," 194-5.
[69] Elizabeth Mansfield, *Too Beautiful to Picture* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007), 76.
[70] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 38.
[71] Alison Cooper, "Reynolds and Kauffman: Royal Academy Connections at Saltram," National Trust, 2018. https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/reynolds-and-kauffman-royal-academy-connections-at-saltram
[72] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 81.
[73] Cited in Goodden, 82; Quoted in Wilhelm Schram, *Die Malerin Angelika Kauffmann* (Brünn, 1890), 45-7.

as skill. Her next noteworthy sitter was her mentor in London, Sir Joshua Reynolds. She painted his portrait in 1767, in a serious, familiar style that reflects both his scholarly aspirations as well as their friendship (Figure 6).[74] Her rapid and successful work in portraiture in England speaks to that country's taste for this form of representation, but it was not Kauffman's genre of choice. History painting still reigned supreme in her own estimation, as it did in the Academy.

Out of the thirty-six founding members of the Royal Academy, Kauffman was one of only six designated history painters.[75] Before the first exhibition of the new Academy in the coming spring of 1769, there was a special exhibition for Christian VII of Denmark in 1768. There, Kauffman showed three history paintings with ancient subjects: *Penelope Taking Down the Bow of Ulysses*, *Hector Taking Leave of Andromache,* and *Venus Directing Aeneas and Achates to Carthage* (1768) (Figures 7,8,9). These three works appeared again in the inaugural Royal Academy show in 1769, joined by a fourth: *Ulysses Discovering Achilles* (1769) (Figure 10).[76] Each depicts a subject drawn from the Iliad, the Odyssey, or the Aeneid – the classical tradition's three most venerated texts. These history paintings, perhaps the first of her work in this genre that the English public had beheld in person, were critically successful and helped cement her reputation in this new country where she was described as "an Italian young lady of uncommon genius and merit."[77] At this exhibition, West was the only other artist to exhibit history paintings, two Roman narratives. Despite his promotion of the grand style, Reynolds stayed true to his niche and submitted two portraits.[78]

[74] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 97.
[75] Roworth, "Ancient Matrons and Modern Patrons," 188-9.
[76] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 42-3.
[77] Ibid, 44.
[78] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 123.

Around this time, Neoclassicist architect and designer Robert Adam was redesigning the Grand Saloon at Saltram House in Plympton.[79] The Parkers of Saltram, John and Theresa, were among Kauffman's first patrons in England. Kauffman had met John Parker, the first Lord Boringdon, while they were both in Italy in 1764 and she painted his portrait (Figure 11). After this trip Parker began collecting art in earnest upon his inheritance of Saltram in 1768, with the aid of Sir Joshua Reynolds. As part of this effort, the Parkers acquired all four of the history paintings Kauffman exhibited at the 1769 Royal Academy exhibition. As the Saltram account books begin in December of 1770 and do not mention a payment for these four works, they must have been bought before then.[80] It is also not entirely clear if they were bought upon sight at the spring exhibition or commissioned, though a letter from Theresa Parker to her brother describes them as "what subjects Angelica painted *for us*."[81]

In that same letter, she mentions the two paintings that are the focus of this thesis. She goes on to describe Kaufmann's history paintings:

> The prettiest, and I think the best, she ever did, is the painting of Hector and Andromache. We have also got Ulysses discovering Achilles disguised in woman's clothes by his handling the sword, Venus conducting Aeneas in the character of a huntress – Penelope hanging up Ulysses' armour and two subjects out of the English history which you may remember was part of a commission given to her and West (for which purpose he painted the Death of Wolfe and his other English subjects), I forget by whose order, but the pictures were left upon the painters hands, and the two that we have of Angelica's are the feast given upon the landing of the Saxons where Rowena presents the cup to Vortigern, and Elfrida receiving King Edgar.[82]

[79] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 43.
[80] Ellis Waterhouse, "Reynolds, Angelica Kauffmann and Lord Boringdon," *Apollo* 122, no. 284 (October 1985): 271-2.
[81] Theresa Parker to Fritz (brother), August 24th, 1775. British Library, Morley Papers, Vol. II. MS_48218. Emphasis mine.
[82] Theresa Parker to Fritz (brother), August 24th, 1775. British Library, Morley Papers, Vol. II. MS_48218.

In the second Royal Academy exhibition in 1770, Kauffman exhibited *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena, at the Banquet of Hengist, the Saxon General* (1769-70) (Figure 1). Mary Moser, in her papers, notes that fellow artist Henry Fuseli remarked that "Angelica made a very great addition to the show."[83]

The above sections show a natural shift in how England regarded history. First, history writing as a genre began to incorporate more narrative aspects as seen in the work of Paul de Rapin and David Hume, and the public was thus able to better engage with the stories from their own past. This contributed, or was at least related, to England's relationship with its history and that of the more "classical" Greco-Roman world. Relations to the classical tradition informed the arts, specifically the genre of history painting that, while popular in continental Europe, had a complicated status in England. A confluence follows, then, of Angelica Kauffman's own awareness of the above situation (she, at least, read Rapin and Hume, and was a close friend to Joshua Reynolds during his active role in the Royal Academy) and the work she produced as a result: *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida.*

With this important historical setting in mind, it is now worth comparing the two paintings to contemporary works in a more immediate, socio-cultural context. Looking at related subjects in the same context can help determine how Kauffman's works stand out, fits in, and relates to the socio-political and artistic period in which they were made. Doing so will provide further context for understanding the ways in which these paintings are very much the product of said period and indeed speak to the conflicts, contradictions, and complications of the moment.

[83] Lady Victoria Manners and Dr. G. C. Williamson, *Angelica Kauffmann, R.A. Her Life and Her Works* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Limited, 1924), 37.

London in the Second Half of the 18th Century: Kauffman's Context

Kauffman had few true contemporaries during her time in London – there were only six designated history painters in that initial membership of the Academy.[84] One of these six was Benjamin West, an artist who was similar to Kauffman as both a foreigner and a history painter who operated outside of the traditional modes and subjects. Previous to their time in England in the 1770s, Kauffman and West were part of the same circle in Rome, both patronized by Cardinal Alessandro Albani and friends of Johann Winckelmann and Anton Raphael Mengs.[85] In addition to these and other important European figures, Kauffman and West met influential Brits and future patrons in Italy.[86] When they arrived in England, West in 1763 and Kauffman in 1766, both were considered outsiders, but their impressive performances and production abroad backed up their reputations.[87] In this new context, West and Kauffman both diverged from the tradition of history painting to demonstrate an attentiveness to the current national interest in history and identity.

In the same year that Kauffman exhibited one of the first history paintings of medieval English history, *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida, after Her Marriage to Ethelwold*, West submitted to the 1771 Royal Academy show *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) (Figure 12). In this work West defied a stricture of the grand style set forth by Reynolds by depicting the characters in this scene in contemporary clothing.[88] Indeed, it is a contemporary scene, memorializing the English General Wolfe who had been slain in the struggle to conquer Québec hardly more than a decade prior. By eschewing the classicizing costumes typical of the genre,

84 Roworth, "Ancient Matrons and Modern Patrons," 188-9.
85 Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 55.
86 Roworth, "Between 'Old Tiber' and 'Envious Thames'," 293.
87 Alan McNairn, *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 109, 122.
88 Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 104.

but still evoking a moralizing, commemorative narrative, West's painting was a sensation, as the viewers were "delighted and instructed" in the way audiences were meant to be when faced with an effective history painting. However, reports from the time do not indicate that the general public was aware of the particular groundbreaking nature of the painting. Nor did the critics of the era, such as Horace Walpole and Richard Cumberland, remark upon the costuming.[89] This implies then that the debate about the specificities of genre and style was largely contained within the walls and between members of the Academy itself. A Mrs. Delaney wrote of the 1771 Royal Academy exhibition, "this morning we have been to see Mr. West's and Mrs. Angelica's paintings, introduced by Mr. Crispin, whom I like extremely. My partiality leans to my sister painter, but I like her history still better than her portraits."[90] This indicates that the two were thought of in tandem as history painters, as does the note in Theresa Parker's letter that the same person who commissioned West to paint *The Death of General Wolfe* also commissioned Kauffman to paint her two English history paintings.[91] Thus there was demonstrated, visualized interest in (at the very least) three unusual and distinctly English subjects.

Both Parker's letter regarding the circumstances of the commission and the status of the two artists as the Royal Academy's most prolific history painters bring their two works into conversation, making it clear what Kauffman and West have in common by way of standing out. Both diverge from a select few rules of history painting: Kauffman eschews the Greco-Roman canon in depicting English subjects while West forgoes togas for tailored jackets in a distinctly North American saga. The Society of Artists, which preceded the Royal Academy, had been

[89] McNairn, *Behold the Hero*, 125.
[90] Manners, *Angelica Kauffman R.A.*, 38.
[91] Theresa Parker to Fritz (brother), August 24th, 1775. British Library, Morley Papers, Vol. II. MS_48218. "…two Subjects out of the English history which you may remember was part of a Commission given to her, and West, (for which he purpose he painted the Death of Wolfe and his other English subjects) I forget by whose order, but her pictures were left upon Painters hands…"

offering "premiums" for English subjects in history paintings since 1760, and while Kauffman and West were among the first to answer this call, they did so in unique and perhaps unexpected ways.[92] Kauffman's pair and West's *Wolfe* both depict English history but from two extremes of chronology. The royal couples hail from the nation's distant, inchoate past while Wolfe's death was still fresh in the minds of the contemporary public.

Another factor that may play into Kauffman and West's decisions to depict and exhibit these distinctive scenes is the emergence of an appreciation of variety in English art. Variety was an important aspect of the hopeful English School, mentioned often by Reynolds as distinct to the country's artists. Diversity in forms and subjects became a point of pride, a "multa in unum" type of variance in styles. Of this, critic William Sandby writes:

> Each of the great masters in this modern English school has taken his own view of nature, and his treatment of his subject. It cannot be said that all of our modern artists of celebrity have imitated those under whom they were educated, and thus one of the objections against art-teaching in academies is at once disproved, at least as far as our own school is concerned. Nature is the great teacher of all who attain to eminence as artists; and there is enough of diversity and variety in her aspects of things around us, and in the passions and emotions of the human hear within us, to afford abundant material for artists to take diverse paths.[93]

It is Nature's diversity that English artists would do best to imitate, and many did. Besides West and Kauffman, other history painters experimented with variety in their works. Gavin Hamilton's forms in his *Achilles Lamenting the Death of Patroclus* (1760-3) (Figure 13) were kinetic and fluid as the Greek natural ideal demanded. Even Reynolds, for all that he occasionally failed to practice what he preached, brought innovative horizontal motion into the composition of his *Death of Dido* (1781) (Figure 14). When artists lean into the variety that Nature herself provides,

[92] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 62.
[93] William Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy of Arts, From its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time* (London, 1862), 70-1.

they can then include and incorporate diverse influences and explore multiple styles.[94] Perhaps it is this valuation of variety that is responsible for the thrilled acceptance of West's innovation in *The Death of General Wolfe,* and the Parker's willingness to scoop up Kauffman's two English subjects along with the four classical ones they had already acquired. The novelty of the subjects and their resonance with the new English confidence and interest in history also factor into the valuation of these works.

The English Subjects

The two stories depicted by Kauffman were turning points, moments in which women represent the pivotal point of the narrative. They were empowered in their situation by their great beauty, a form of currency utilized by them and by the men in their lives. This is first seen in *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena, at the Banquet of Hengist, the Saxon General* (Figure 1). The narrative depicted here hails from the distant yet not quite ancient past, where mythology fuses with fact such that there is often a hazy lack of distinction between the two. The interrelated threads between factual events and tales of legend create what Geoffrey Ashe calls a "mythic dimension" and a "quasi-history."[95] Two occupants of this hazy period are Vortigern and Rowena, whose existence Ashe describes as "fairly certain."[96] Located in the fifth century CE, their story begins with the political machinations of the titular Vortigern the Thin, overlord of Gewissei (near modern Dorchester on Thames). Rome had withdrawn from the island, leaving behind Constantine III, who was assassinated and replaced by his son Constans and his right-hand man: Vortigern.[97] However, Vortigern soon began consolidating power to

[94] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 113-14.
[95] Geoffrey Ashe*, Mythology of the British Isles* (London: Methuen London, 1990), 11.
[96] Ashe, *Mythology of the British Isles,* 173.
[97] Ibid, 169-70.

seize the throne for himself.[98] With the help of the Picts, a northern tribe from modern Scotland, Vortigern had Constans killed and named himself king.[99] In the fourth year of his rule, the Saxons arrived on the shores of England; led by the brothers Hengist and Horsa.[100] Like Vortigern, Richard Barber tells us that these two men "might as well have been historical figures."[101] With them travelled Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, who was known for her unmatched beauty.[102] The two groups hosted a banquet and there Vortigern met Rowena, an encounter that Kauffman represents in this painting.

The focal point of this composition is slightly left of center, as Rowena kneels to hand a cup to Vortigern, both are bathed in light. The couple is dressed in matching colors of soft tans and light blues, and Vortigern's left hand caresses Rowena's extended arm as he holds the goblet in the other. Watching closely are Hengist and Horsa, her father and uncle who conceived of the meeting. They lean on the banquet table and one taps the shoulder of the other with a single finger, lending tension and meaning to the loaded interaction via their status as observers who double the viewer's act of observation. Around the table and into the background are many banquet-goers, as well as a bard on the far right. Beyond his head is a castle in the far distance, which is contrasted to the close-up view on the left of fabric draped in the immediate background, perhaps to create a more intimate setting for the event. There is a large, balding man tucked behind Vortigern, who may be the translator who facilitated the exchange between the couple wherein Vortigern responds to Rowena's salutation in the Saxon language.

98 Richard Barber, *Myths and Legends of the British Isles* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1999), 51.
99 Ashe, *Mythology of the British Isles,* 171.
100 Ibid, 174.
101 Barber, *Myths and Legends of the British Isles*, 51.
102 Ibid 54-5.

Soon after this auspicious encounter, Hengist offered the king his daughter's hand in marriage (Vortigern's first wife, Sevira, was already dead) in exchange for present-day Kent. Vortigern accepted and the Saxons gained geographical and personal influence over the king, who then allowed them to bring more men over from Germany. The marriage, and its repercussions, was criticized by many, including Vortigern's children, and one source claims that Rowena later poisoned one of her stepsons, Renwein.[103] Vortigern met his own end shamefully, losing more of his land and power to the Saxons in an extended decline that culminated in him roaming the island in exile, despised. It was this deposition that began the shift of power from the Britons to the Saxons, which makes this painting an odd combination of a romantic moment and an ominous foreshadowing.[104] Indeed, this shadowy sense of romance pervades the palette of the work, giving it an indistinct, softer style compared to Baroque works characterized by their vivid intensity of both color and composition (to be discussed later in this paper).

We know that Kauffman's historical sources for this narrative were David Hume and Paul Thoyras de Rapin, the eighteenth-century writers who had shaped history writing in the time that Kauffman was working.[105] Both Rapin and Hume offer accounts of the meeting between Vortigern and Rowena. Of the pivotal moment that Kauffman depicts, Rapin writes:

> Hengist perceiving with Joy the sudden Effect of Rowena's Charms on the King, is unwilling to give his growing Passion time to cool. He makes a Sign to his Niece, who immediately going to the Side-Board, fills a Gold Cup with Wine, and presents it on her Knees to the King, saying in her Language, *Liever Kyning, wafs heil*, that is, *Lord King, your Health*. Vortigern, agreeably surprised, turns to his Interpreter and asks what she said, and how he must answer her after the Saxon manner. Being informed, he looks very amorously on Rowena, and answers in Saxon, *Drinck Hail*, that is, *Do you your self drink the Health*.[106]

[103] Ashe, *Mythology of the British Isles,* 174
[104] Ibid, 176.
[105] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 122-5.
[106] Paul de Rapin de Thoyras and Nicholas Tindal, *The history of England* (London: James, John and Paul Knapton, 1732-47), Vol. 1, Book 2, pg. 31-2.

For his part, David Hume does not provide a detailed account of this moment in history. He does describe Vortigern as a prince "who, though stained with every vice, possessed the chief authority among them."[107] According to Hume, Vortigern's known vices made him an easy target for the machinations of Hengist and Horsa. On the role of Rowena, he writes: "The British writers assign one cause, which facilitated the entrance of the Saxons into this island; the love, with which Vortigern was first seized for Rowena, the daughter of Hengist, and which that artful warrior made use of to blind the eyes of the imprudent monarch."[108] Working from these sources, Kauffman had made concerted efforts to educate herself about the subject she was painting as it would have fallen outside of her initial classical training in Italy.

The following year, 1771, Kauffman submitted to the Royal Academy exhibition another standout history painting featuring English history. *The Interview of Edgar and Elfrida, After Her Marriage to Ethelwold* (1770-71) (Figure 2) was accompanied by a few other history paintings from Homer and Ovid, a scene from Torquato Tasso's poetry, a three-quarter length portrait of a lady and child, and a kitcat portrait of an artist.[109] The artist Michel Vincent Brandoin painted a scene of the exhibition itself during this year, and Kauffman's *Return of Telemachus* (1771) (Figure 15) is visible as the object of scrutiny in the bottom left of the composition (Figure 16). This series of works shows that it was characteristic of Kauffman to send in a diverse collection for exhibition, ranging anywhere from her well-known history painting and portraits to scenes from contemporary theatre or simple types, like *A Grecian Lady at Work* or *The Holy Family* (1775).[110] *The Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* was very well-

[107] David Hume, *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Cesar to the accession of Henry VII* (London: 1762), 11.
[108] Hume, *The history of England*, 15.
[109] Manners, *Angelica Kauffmann, R.A.,* 236. "Kitcat" pertains to a specific size/style of portrait popular at the time.
[110] Ibid, 40.

received at this show and was said to have "raised her reputation in England to the highest point."[111] It was made immediately into a print by William Wynne Ryland (Figure 17), who usually printed her history scenes and for whom this work did very well.[112] It is believed by multiple scholars that this scene was among the first history painting to feature a scene from England's medieval history.[113] There is one known preceding history painting of Edgar and Elfrida, submitted to the 1761 Society of Artists exhibition by the Italian artist Andrea Casali.[114]

Whereas the painting of Vortigern and Rowena had depicted a story from England's hazy past of the fifth century, King Edgar is a certain figure who claimed the still-new throne of the nation in 959 CE.[115] According to Geoffrey Ashe, the ninth century is when mythic tales began to solidify into concrete history, and soon after this point comes the story of Edgar and Elfrida.[116] Edgar had already been married twice when he wed Elfrida (also known as Aelfthryth).[117] She was born in the mid-940s and known for both her beauty and her social standing.[118] Her first marriage was to Ethelwold (Æthelwold) , an ealdorman and the son of a powerful regent, half-king, to Edgar's father Edmund.[119] There are no concrete details about this first union but there are any varying stories about how it came to be and ended.[120] One story, from William of Malmesbury (d. 1143), tells that Edgar had heard of Elfrida's beauty and sent Ethelwold to

111 Ibid, 38.
112 Ibid, 38.
113 Baumgärtel, *Angelika Kauffmann*, 175; Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*, 116; Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 60; David Irwin, "Angelica Kauffmann and Her Times," *The Burlington Magazine* 110, no. 786 (1968): 534.
114 Dustin M. Frazier Wood, "Seeing History: Illustration, Poetic Drama, and the National Past," in *Romanticism and Illustration*, ed. Ian Haywood, Susan Matthews, and Mary L. Shannon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 80.
115 Elizabeth Norton, *Elfrida: The First Crowned Queen of England* (Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley, 2013), 34.
116 Ashe, *Mythology of the British Isles*, 11.
117 Barbara Yorke, "The Women in Edgar's Life," in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975: New Interpretations*, ed. Donald Scragg, (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2008), 144.
118 Norton, *Elfrida*, 7.
119 Ibid, 15-17.
120 Ibid 19-20.

confirm this and secure her hand for him. Ethelwold then decided to marry her himself and told Edgar she was not worth his attention. Later, Edgar and Elfrida met face to face and she seduced him, causing him to have Ethelwold killed on a hunting trip so that they themselves could marry. Another medieval version of the story, from Geoffrey Gaimar, makes Ethelwold more of a villain and Elfrida more of a victim.[121] The story is the same, with Ethelwold reporting to Edgar that Elfrida is "misshapen, ugly, and dark" in order to gain the king's permission to marry her.[122] Both Malmesbury and Gaimar's accounts post-date the events by over a century and thus are considered critically, as modern historical research supports a natural death for Ethelwold and a good relationship between Elfrida and the family of her first husband. Regardless, both stories end with Edgar killing the deceitful Ethelwold.[123]

In her marriage to Edgar, Elfrida became the most dominant of his queens (as he had been married previously).[124] However, of all the variations of her story that persisted through history, the negative versions were the most long-lasting and compelling to chroniclers. She was accused of evil machinations, both in the murder of Ethelwold and in the later poisoning of Edward, Edgar's son from an earlier marriage.[125] Despite this, and further controversy about her legitimacy as a queen rather than just the king's wife, she was an influential figure.[126] Edgar too was very important in English history as part of an early royal dynasty. The image of Edgar as a model, Christian king was cultivated during his reign, but his behavior, especially regarding his violent sexual proclivities, complicated this picture.[127]

[121] Yorke, "The Women in Edgar's Life," 155.
[122] Norton, *Elfrida,* 22-3.
[123] Ibid*,* 26, 33.
[124] Yorke, "The Women in Edgar's Life," 146.
[125] Ibid, 156.
[126] Norton, *Elfrida,* 61. Wives of kings were negatively perceived in the past, and as such were not called queens, but ladies, though there was indeed a specific Old English word for queen (Norton 62). Gaimar's account mentions the consecration and crowning of Elfrida – thus making her the first true Queen of England (Norton 64).
[127] Yorke, "The Women in Edgar's Life," 157.

Returning to Kauffman's known sources, both Rapin and Hume address this story and retell it in considerable detail in their respective volumes. Both include a scene wherein Ethelwold learns that Edgar, having previously believed Elfrida to be unworthy, desires to meet her himself. The treacherous Ethelwold then appeals to Elfrida to conceal her beauty in order to save him and their marriage. Of her response, Hume writes, "Elfrida promised compliance, tho' nothing was further from her intentions. She deemed herself little beholden to Ethelwold for a passion, which had deprived her of a crown; and knowing the force of her charms, she did not despair even yet of reaching that station, of which her husband's artifice had bereaved her."[128] She had estimated her own beauty well, as Rapin reports in the same vein that "the moment Edgar cast his eyes on her, he fell desperately in love, and from that instant was resolved to make her his own. The better to effect [sic] his design, he pretended to see nothing extraordinary in Elfrida's Beauty; at which the Husband was overjoyed."[129]

It is this tense moment of meeting that Kauffman depicts in her painting. The composition is divided into two halves, with the titular figures providing the division. On the left, Elfrida stands with her palms open at her waist and her body oriented towards Edgar. She is finely attired with an elaborate hairstyle and an entreating expression of her face. She is flanked on her left and behind her by ladies in waiting or maids, and a dark-clothed male figure stands to her right, drawing back a heavy red curtain. Of all the figures dressed in earth tones, this unknown man's black outfit stands out, as does the metaphorical significance of his action. In the narrative, this is the point that Elfrida's beauty (and thus Ethelwold's lie) is revealed, which is symbolized by the literal unveiling.

[128] Hume, *The history of England,* 88.
[129] Rapin de Thoyras, *The history of England,* 109.

On the right side of the composition, a group of men stand gazing at Elfrida. The frontmost is King Edgar, who has arrived to behold Elfrida and judge her beauty for himself, and his opinion is clear in his besotted expression. Though he wears a black, feathered hat instead of a crown, his royalty is clear in his bright, bejeweled attire and the sword at his hip. Edgar is perpendicular to Elfrida, with his left shoulder tucked into the attendant at his side, who is clutching his chest, perhaps in shock at Elfrida's beauty. Edgar's right hand is low, open, and partially extended and though there is a clear gap between them, it mirrors Elfrida's hand on the other side, thus perhaps symbolizing their imminent, yet not immediate, union. Edgar's other hand is raised to his face, indicating his disbelief at the falsehood of Elfrida's supposed homeliness. Curiously, Edgar is notably smaller than Elfrida, standing below her and depicted as waifish and slight. A third man is behind Edgar and the attendant could be Ethelwold. His leaning posture, hesitant expression with a furrowed brow, and clenched fist make him very much the worried traitor whose actions have come to light. A fourth figure is on this right side to balance the number of figures but faces away and is indistinct. Two spotted hounds flank this group, with the rightmost dog more distinctly rendered and making eye contact with the viewer, a classic rhetorical device in history paintings. The light is brightest in the center of the painting and diffused outward, highlighting the light colors and creating a hazy affect at the edges. Edgar is dressed in cream with a white shoulder cover that reflects the light, as does Elfrida's elegant neck and face, which are turned attentively to the king. The titular couple are visually linked here, reflecting their narrative connection and imminent union.

Kauffman's paintings are rooted in a rich history, though a contentious one. She depicts specific moments, beautiful women being doubly observed by enamoured men and plotting others, that contain all the drama and twists of classical Greco-Roman stories. Rowena and

Elfrida, depicted in a romantic palette lacking crisp distinctions or colors, represent a form of ideal femininity while still holding power as agents in their own narratives. These characters hail from England's own past, one that had for a few decades already begun taking its own place in the mind of the evolving nation's public. Though perhaps not as well known or quickly recognized as a scene from the classical tradition, these stories must have had some appeal to viewers and buyers, as their lives did not end in Kauffman's studio.

Commission and Display: The Parkers at Saltram

John Parker II, the first Lord Boringdon, inherited the family estate in Plympton, Saltram House, in 1768 and married Theresa Robinson in 1769.[130] A highly regarded choice for Lord Boringdon's second wife, she was the goddaughter of Maria Theresa of the Holy Roman Empire. Her virtues included "mature judgement," and a joyous engagement in society which was tempered by a serious regard for her loved ones with "a touch of nobility about her."[131] Indeed, Theresa was described as "a cultured, sensitive woman, with delicacy of perception as well as thoughtfulness in judgement."[132] As such, she was quite involved with the renovations of the family country house Saltram, particularly regarding the decoration and art acquisition.

Saltram had been in the Parker family for two generations, first bought by John Parker's grandfather. Lady Catherine, mother of John, commenced the first round of renovations in the 1750s, turning Saltram into a well-known estate.[133] A wealthy family's country house was a reflection of national, familial, and patronal identity.[134] Therefore, the art inside was part of a

130 Waterhouse, "Reynolds, Angelica Kauffmann and Lord Boringdon," 271.
131 Ronald Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram 1769-89: Everyday Life in an Eighteenth-Century House* (London: British Broadcasting Company, 1970), 22. 25.
132 Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram*, 13.
133 Ibid 14-16.
134 J. Carter Brown, "Introduction," in *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*, ed. Gervase Jackson-Stops (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 10.

larger schema pertaining to the Parkers' taste and ideals of civility. This schema was advertised to all, from family and close friends to "acquittances and the large number of country-house visitors who trooped around the seats of the great and the good during the summer month."[135] One such friend was Joshua Reynolds, who in addition to dining with the Parkers in London, visited his friends at Saltram, hunting and participating in the estate's growing renovations.[136] Reynolds was a key figure in the Parkers' design and acquisition choices, acquiring Old Masters for them and painting portraits himself.[137] There is a clear connection between Reynold's philosophies regarding the role of the classical past in English art and the type of work that ended up gracing the halls of Saltram. Indeed, his demonstrated, palpable influence on the Parkers' acquisitions can explain why the couple ended up with six of Angelica Kauffman's history paintings despite it not being the most popular genre of the time. Here in his friends (the buyers) and his peer (the artist Kauffman), Reynolds had an opportunity to enact the sort of collecting and appreciating for which he so passionately advocated in his *Discourses*.

As previously mentioned, the architect Robert Adam was involved in the design process, bringing his Neoclassical aesthetics.[138] Additionally, the Parkers commissioned Italian artist Antonio Zucchi to decorate and contribute paintings to the rooms.[139] Said decorations, mainly paintings on the ceilings and over doors as well as medallion heads, are characterized by Goodden as "charmingly playful" and they tempered, to a degree, the serious grandeur of Kauffman's history paintings and Reynold's portraits.[140] These influences converged in the Saloon, or Great Room, located in the center of the house and "the hall-mark of the wealth, taste,

135 Kate Retford, "Reynolds's Portrait of Mrs. Theresa Parker: A Case Study in Context," *The British Art Journal* 4, no. 3 (2003): 81.
136 Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 67.
137 Waterhouse, "Reynolds, Angelica Kauffmann and Lord Boringdon," 271.
138 Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram*, 20, 22.
139 Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 117.
140 Ibid 182.

and culture commanded by a family."[141] Here, they would entertain their more distinguished guests after dinner: reading, playing cards, and conversing.[142] Adam's style is on display in the Saloon, as is Theresa's influence on the design of her new home. Her letters reference her interest in finding pendants for paintings already in the family collection as well as the ideal fabric backdrops for the featured works.[143] The light colors and tall ceilings contributed to the elegant but livable nature of the Saloon, as did the Greco-Roman visuals that pervaded the space.[144] Kauffman's paintings were meant to hang over the doorways, contributing to a classical theme from top to bottom, and enjoying prominence in the scheme of the room.[145]

Angela Goodden is not positive if the four classical-themed history paintings were commissioned by the Parkers before Kauffman exhibited them for the Royal Academy, or if Theresa saw them on display there and purchased them.[146] Wendy Wassyng Roworth believes they were "specifically commissioned" as part of the Saltram renovations with the input of Adam and Reynolds.[147] Kate Retford highlights Theresa's involvement in the artistic aspect of Saltram and asserts that it was her who "instigated the commissioning" of four history paintings for her Saloon.[148] Theresa's letter to her brother that mentions these works supports her role as commissioner, as she describes the four classical works as "what subjects Angelica painted *for us*."[149] The four classical paintings do not show up in the Parker's account books which begins in the last month of 1770, but the English paintings do. *Vortigern and Rowena* is logged on May

[141] Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram*, 73.
[142] Ibid 84.
[143] Retford, "Reynolds's Portrait of Mrs. Theresa Parker: A Case Study in Context," 80.
[144] Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram*, 75-78.
[145] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 48.
[146] Goodden, *Miss Angel*, 117.
[147] Roworth, *Angelica Kauffman: a continental artist in Georgian England*, 44.
[148] Retford, "Reynolds's Portrait of Mrs. Theresa Parker: A Case Study in Context," 80.
[149] Theresa Parker to Fritz (brother), August 24th, 1775. British Library, Morley Papers, Vol. II. MS_48218. Emphasis mine.

16th, 1771 and *Edgar and Elfrida* in June of 1772. This tracks with their individual exhibitions at the Royal Academy of 1770 and 1771 respectively. The Parkers paid forty pounds sterling for each one,[150] which was "a price that only the rich and titled were likely to afford."[151]

How, then, does the extra pair, picked up by the Parkers after being abandoned by their original commissioner, fit into this classically inspired home? More broadly, how do the two English couples fit into, or stand out from, English art at the moment? Though these narratives are not from the Greco-Roman canon of myths, the figures still embody the ideal forms of antiquity. Kauffman's figures, particularly Elfrida and Rowena, possess a smooth, idealized beauty that indicates her adherence to the postulations of both Winckelmann and Reynolds. Both believed that the ideal form turned away from the realities of Nature and instead elevated a superlative beauty in the grand style that synthesized forms from different models.[152] This is something Kauffman also does with her Greek figures, like Andromache (Figure 8). However, by depicting subjects from England's own past, Kauffman demonstrates her ability to thread the needle between diverse, simultaneous contexts and in doing so, use the familiar style of history painting to incorporate and normalize the new subjects. This is not a claim that Kauffman inserted Rowena and Elfrida into the classical canon, but rather that she recognized and utilized the aesthetics of that canon while also being aware of contemporary interests in homegrown narratives, and combined the two in order to appeal to the enigmatic nature of English taste.

Between her classical teachings and her novel historical subjects, between the various genres and nationalities she inhabited (Swiss by birth, Italian by training, and now happily claimed by the English as one of their own), Kauffman's success hinged upon her ability to adapt

150 Waterhouse, "Reynolds, Angelica Kauffmann and Lord Boringdon," 272.
151 Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation,*165.
152 Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 198; Cheetham, *Artwriting, Nation, and Cosmopolitanism*, 43.

and appeal to patrons and customers wherever she found herself.[153] According to Françoise Forster-Hahn, "she successfully merged both into her own, very personal manner, proving her intuitive and sensitive talent in blending gracefully into the 'Englishness of English art'."[154] The three traditions to be applied to *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* are, in ascending order of scale and chronology: the artist's own modes of representing women as impacted by her personal and professional circumstances; England's growing interest in their own history as a result of changes in eighteenth-century literature and art; and the continuous tradition of conceptualizing and representing famous women that originated in the fourteenth century.

Tradition One: Kauffman's Use of Modest, Dutiful Women

Benjamin West's choice of subject for his divergent English history painting was, as previously mentioned, in tune with current sentiments. It must be acknowledged that female artists like Kauffman had additional strictures to consider when doing choosing their own subjects. Careful calculation enabled her to operate within the double standards and expectations of the Academy and her peers, often by choosing scenes with themes of virtue, loyalty, and duty, especially when exemplified by women. Kauffman, of course, is not the first female artist to exercise this level of consideration, as she follows in the tradition of Sofonisba Anguissola and Artemisia Gentileschi. This strategy coincided with the ability to avoid male nudity and activity as possible, thus playing to her strengths and avoiding social pitfalls.[155] This is exemplified in her own tradition of depicting women mourning, such as her early Royal Academy submissions of featuring

[153] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 68.
[154] Françoise Forster-Hahn, "After Guercino or After the Greeks? Gavin Hamilton's 'Hebe': Tradition and Change in the 1760's," *The Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 867 (June 1975): 371.
[155] Roworth, "Anatomy is destiny," 46.

Andromache and Penelope, wives of the Trojan and Greek heroes who are dedicated, honorable, and modest.

Though Rowena and Elfrida follow in this tradition of conservative visual depiction, their individual stories are bloodier and more dramatic than those of Andromache and Penelope. In popular histories, they are not presented as the paragons of virtue that their classical predecessors were, but Kauffman does not depict them as wanton seductresses as do several of the male authors, because this sort of representation might have cast a pall on Kauffman's reputation or reception. She cannily selected singular scenes from their narratives wherein they are, at first glance, beautiful objects of admiration. Hers is not wholesale objectification, however, as there is also a degree of utility and agency in these particular moments. This representation creates tension for viewers who knows the full story being shown. In this moment, Rowena and Elfrida are placid and receptive, but it is this presentation that allows them to play an active role in the main conflict of their respective stories. Rowena, though she kneels and offers a cup, is actively winning over Vortigern's affections and thus securing land and influence for her family and the Saxons. Elfrida, while passively meeting King Edgar upon his request, deliberately beautified herself so as to betray Ethelwold and make herself queen. Both of these scenes are moments when a man falls in love with a woman who uses her beauty as a persuasive tool to achieve a goal. Kauffman as an artist also used beauty as a tool, and her own self-awareness and "resourceful caution," especially regarding the human form, to paint effective scenes that engaged audiences while allowing her to navigate her unique social, professional position.[156] The relevance of her gender will be explored further in the context of the third tradition, with regard to how a woman famous in her own right depicts historically famous women.

[156] Roworth, "Anatomy is destiny," 58.

Tradition Two: English Pride and Self-Interest

Already operating in her own tradition and style, Kauffman then participated in another contemporary tradition when she (or the mystery commissioner) selected these distinctly English subjects and integrated them into the grand style so valued by the Royal Academy. The Academy encouraged artists to paint in this style while it also appealed for historical English subjects.[157] Roy Strong argues that the new attention to English history, detailed at the start of this paper, provided history painters with new subjects that were national instead of classical.[158] Specifically, Strong posits that "the initial desire to paint scenes from English history reflected not only a change in attitude to our national past, but also the alignment, in the second half of the century, of the aspirations of English artists with the rise of antiquarian studies."[159] With historians paying more attention to the country's indigenous past and artists paying more attention to this newly focused history, as we know Kauffman did with Rapin and Hume, it is understandable that paintings such as this pair would be created. Strong identifies two salient factors behind the trend: "the revival of history writing and the desire of British artists to fulfill academic theories on the primacy of history painting over any other genre."[160] Both of these influences, having been described already in this paper, can be seen in Kauffman's work, as she was a learned professional who educated herself on her subjects and was close friends with Reynolds, the loudest advocate for history painting.

This artistic movement to embrace English history was backed up by other scholarly fields. As has been mentioned already, attention to native history was in dialogue if not conflict with Greco-Roman history, regarding which was the most glorious heritage to claim. John

[157] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 13.
[158] Strong, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?,* 16.
[159] Ibid, 13.
[160] Ibid, 13.

Lockman, in the preface to his 1747 *New History of England by Question and Answer*, (which was an abridged version of Rapin's book) argued that English history "affect[s] us in a stronger manner than does classical history because it contains incidents which happen among [our] near relations."[161] An affective connection grew from the start of the eighteenth century as the study of Anglo-Saxon history in particular rose in popularity. Though the field had its own ebbs and flows through the following decades, there was still a high level of interest in the nation's own antique past as well as how the Anglo-Saxons had contributed to contemporary government.[162] Books were being published on the Old English language as well as Anglo-Saxon customs and there was also a growth in organizations dedicated "to promot[ing] understanding of what was widely felt to be a precious national heritage."[163] By the mid-point of the century and certainly by the time Kauffman was working in London, the learned English public had gained a deeper understanding of their national history.[164]

Following this, now the question must be asked of why did Kauffman depict these English subjects in particular? The stories of these couples are not quite as morally straightforward as the classical myths previously portrayed by Kauffman, as both contain a fair amount of deceit. Hengist and Horsa strategically use Rowena's beauty to gain favor with Vortigern, only to overthrow him, while Ethelwold lied to Edgar about Elfrida's beauty so that he could claim her for his own. But beyond this theme of deception, both paintings tap into the moment of pride and self-interest found in English art discourse and taste at the moment. Kauffman demonstrates an awareness of this contemporary tradition, the second of three

[161] Frazier Wood, "Seeing History: Illustration, Poetic Drama, and the National Past," 73.
[162] John D. Niles, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England 1066-1901: Remembering, Forgetting, Deciphering, and Renewing the Past* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 165.
[163] Niles, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England 1066-1901*, 172.
[164] Simon Keynes, "The Cult of King Alfred the Great," *Anglo-Saxon England* 28 (1999): 292.

discussed in this thesis, in her depiction of Rowena and Elfrida, with attention to how the reputations of both women influenced their role in this growing patriotic moment.

Kauffman's interpretation of Rowena can be best understood in conversation with the other versions of this myth that were produced in the second half of the eighteenth century. Hers was not the first, as three known versions precede her 1770 version. The earliest known painting was by Nicholas Blakey, called *Vortigern and Rowena; or the Settlement of the Saxons in England* (1751-2) (Figure 18). Like many history paintings of the time, its legacy was cemented in print form. Another painting made for prints was Francis Hayman's *Vortigern and Rowena* (1758-60) (Figure 19), which was created as an illustration for Tobias Smollett's *History of England*. Thirdly, Henry Fuseli sketched the subject in 1769 but its current whereabouts are unknown. Kauffman's version was also circulated broadly as a print after its creation, but it seems to have been the first painting of Vortigern and Rowena that was exhibited as a history painting of merit. The same subject would not have been seen on show at the Royal Academy until 1779, when John Francis Rigaud submitted his V*ortigern and Rozoena, or the first Settlement of Saxons in England* (Figure 20) to the exhibition, as did John Hamilton Mortimer with the same subject in the same year.[165]

Juliet Feibel credits the popularity of this legend to England's growing interest in its own national origin, linked to the rise of antiquarian research and a Welsh cultural revival. That latter influence, relevant because of Vortigern's final days spent in Wales, fades in visual depictions as the myth became "an English mythology of origins, reinterpreted to represent the glorious foundation of England."[166] Feibel argues that this transformation is located in the depiction of Rowena and by transforming her from a deceptive seductress who facilitates a Welsh tragedy

[165] Feibel, "Vortigern, Rowena, and the Ancient Britons," 2.
[166] Ibid, 2-3.

into a proto-English Rose who enables Anglo-Saxon victory. On this, Feibel asserts that "by permitting, even encouraging the combination of different historical references and resonances, eighteenth-century history painting could and did alter national history."[167] According to Feibel, this transformation happened after Kauffman's 1770 version of Rowena, in the last decade of the eighteenth century. I disagree and instead believe we can locate the beginning of Rowena's visual character rehabilitation earlier, in Kauffman's version when compared to earlier iterations and in conversation with Kauffman's other work.

In the version of the meeting by Nicholas Blakey, which survives as an engraving by Gerard Jean Baptiste Scotin II and dates to the early 1750's, Rowena is depicted as a seductress (Figure 18). Her breasts are exposed, which while historically accurate for a Saxon woman, would have been interpreted as titillating for an early modern audience. Moreover, her body language is self-possessed, and the viewer and Vortigern are both made aware of her power at the moment she offers the cup of wine. John Francis Rigaud painted another iteration of this scene in 1779 that postdates the Kauffman picture but offers further comparison for Rowena's character (Figure 20). She is again topless but this time her body language is even more confident as she leans into Vortigern, who clasps one of her hands in his and rests his own on her shoulder. Rowena has established all this physical contact and secured the affections of the king before she has even handed over the goblet. Kauffman's Rowena, on the other hand, maintains her distance from Vortigern with the only points of contact being her arm (Figure 1).

Kauffman creates a pastiche of costumes in order to create a historical sense that verges on fantasy, though it is not without intent and meaning. The artist is historically accurate with regards to the Roman influence of Vortigern's costume, and here she achieves an effective

[167] Ibid, 4.

degree of classicism. However, she covers Rowena's breasts with a garment with inconspicuous straps that harkens back to the accurate sleeveless costume while still preserving the modesty of her subject and herself.[168] Unlike Blakey and Rigaud, Kauffman's figures were under a high level of scrutiny due to her gender and as such, she was conscientious of how to depicts them.[169] This is seen in her compositions for her classical history paintings as well. In the group that preceded her English pair, Kauffman's female figures are all fully covered, even Venus. More than this, Rowena is portrayed in Kauffman's tradition of self-sacrificing women. Like Penelope as she takes down the bow of her missing husband Odysseus and prepares to remarry (Figure 7), Rowena too does what she must for her family. Andromache, Kauffman's quintessential moral woman, mournfully understands that the defense of Troy comes before her own family's safety. Like the classical heroines, it is the actions of Rowena that enable her people to succeed and establish an Anglo-Saxon presence in England. Here is the presence of Kauffman's personal tradition in the national tradition of English historical subjects. Granted, the Rowena of Kauffman's painting is not quite at the sanitized, moralized level depicted by William Hamilton in 1793 that leans heavily on Marian iconography with virginal attire and beams of pure light (Figure 21).[170] However, with a consideration of the other versions bracketing Kauffman's own as well as her own unique tradition of representing women, she does indeed move towards a more modest iteration of Rowena.

Regardless of differing interpretations of Rowena's characterization, Feibel and I both observe Kauffman's use of historical aspects to increase the presence of national identity in the painting. Vortigern wears a distinctly Roman outfit with a skirt and sandals, contrasted with

[168] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 144-46.
[169] Roworth, "Anatomy is destiny," 46.
[170] Feibel, "Clio's Palette," 175.

Horsa and Hengist on the other side of Rowena, who wear doublets, stockings, and boots in the style of Elizabethan England.[171] Their helmets are also different, and by underscoring these divergences, Kauffman makes Vortigern historical, a piece of the past even in the present moment of the story, whereas the Saxons are both of the moment and of the future. In doing so, she references the English identity and dominance that is to come. All of the costumes are classicized to a degree, perhaps to create a romantic, historical effect while avoiding distancing the viewer from the story. Working in a context wherein English historiography *and* national pride was on the rise, Kauffman endeavored to thus make a direct connection between this quasi-ancient myth and its new nationalist resonances in the country of her day. Vortigern and Rowena are a subject for which Kauffman had contemporary sources in Hume and Rapin and could fit into her tradition of moralizing women in grand style history paintings.

The reputation of Elfrida was also very much subject to change, based on the context within which she was viewed or how she served the narrative in which she is found. This evolution of her representation was part of "the operation of… Romantic attitudes toward history and historical figures at work in an Enlightenment tradition of popular literary and artistic medievalism."[172] Indeed, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Elfrida was featured prominently in historical writing as well as creative literature and visual art. Her life lends itself to dramatics due to her involvement with important male figures of the time: her second husband King Edgar, her step-son Edward the Martyr (who she purportedly had killed), and her own son Æthelred the Unready, such that her character was "co-opted into an important strain of British patriotic Anglo-Saxon medievalism" as these figures and their stories came to light.[173] Thus, for

[171] Feibel, "Vortigern, Rowena, and the Ancient Britons," 7.
[172] Frazier Wood, "Seeing History: Illustration, Poetic Drama, and the National Past," 71.
[173] Ibid, 72.

her early appearances in cultural works, she was cast as murderous, evil old woman, such as in illustrations for John Lockman's 1747 *New History of England by Question and Answer* wherein she is unnamed in an illustration of Edward's suspicious death.[174] A few years later, she becomes the protagonist of William Mason's *Elfrida, A Dramatic Poem* (1752) which told the tale of her first marriage. This work cast her sympathetically in the conflict over her between Edgar and Ethelwold, wherein she maintains a wifely devotion to her first husband. Critics panned this version of the story, which contradicts Rapin's narrative in which Elfrida betrays Ethelwold, but for our purposes, it demonstrates that there were two versions of Elfrida that existed in the historical narrative.[175]

The first visualization of Elfrida in the art of this period was a history painting submitted to the Society of Artists 1761 exhibition by Andrea Casali, which is now lost but was noted to be based on Rapin's book.[176] Casali was an Italian painter who worked in England from 1741-1766 and his work, *An historical picture of K. Edgar, Elfrida, and Ethelwold*, preceded Kauffman's Royal Academy submission by a decade.[177] In the intervening years, Samuel Wale represented Elfrida in illustrations for Temple Sydney's 1773 *A New and Complete History of England*.[178] Wale depicted the assassination of Edward as well as the earlier event of Elfrida meeting Edgar for the first time. In this representation (Figure 22), Elfrida offers Edgar a seat on a raised dais, a position that technically belongs to Ethelwold, who watches the interaction with great consternation. This indicated that Elfrida has purposefully chosen Edgar over Ethelwold, as recorded in the Rapin version of the story.[179]

[174] Ibid, 73.
[175] Ibid, 76-7.
[176] Ibid, 80.
[177] Keynes, "The Cult of King Alfred the Great," 297.
[178] Frazier Wood, "Seeing History: Illustration, Poetic Drama, and the National Past," 75.
[179] Ibid, 85.

Kauffman's *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* exists somewhere between the two opposed iterations of Elfrida's actions. In this iteration (Figure 2), she is located upon the raised dais, emphasizing her influence on the men beholding her, current and future husband alike. She is beautifully attired, which counters Ethelwold's plea that she misrepresent her appearance to Edgar in order to preserve the original deception, and which could be interpreted as her intent to claim her place as Edgard's queen. However, though she presents herself fully to the king, she does not directly offer herself to him as in the Wale illustration. Rather she merely appears as her true self, which is enough to unravel the deceit and set the rest of the narrative in motion. This touches on the first tradition, of women represented with the powerful force of their simple morality. Simply by being a loving wife, Andromache humanizes the tragedy of the Trojan war. Here Elfrida exists as she is, beautiful by birth, and the narrative spins around that.

In addition, Kauffman taps into the attention being paid to this very history in current writing, as there was political Anglo-Saxonism in Rapin's version of the tale that the artist referenced.[180] Patriotic medievalism is taken a step further in a subsequent version of this story, as William Hamilton demonstrates the growing interest in such subjects. His *King Edgar's First Interview with Queen Elfrida (Aelfryth)* (Figure 23), painted in 1774, further emphasizes the medieval drama of the tale by placing it in front of a castle.[181] The eponymous couple are lit up by beams of light as if in a theatre, as Ethelwold poses in exaggerated tension behind the king. Rearing horses and darting dogs contribute to the spectacle of the reveal as Elfrida tranquilly and beautifully extends a hand to the king. This strikes a middle ground between Wale's version of Elfrida who directly choses Edgar and Kauffman's more reserved iteration.

[180] Ibid, 78.
[181] Ibid, 80.

Simon Keynes succinctly summarizes the relevance of this tradition to Kauffman's work by stating that "the development and progress of English history painting in the second half of the eighteenth century is (needless to say) inseparable from its political, social, and cultural contexts; and the increasing popularity of history painting, as artists began to draw upon what was seen to be a rich and for them a fresh source of inspiration, is thus but one aspect of a large and complex story."[182] That Kauffman drew from said source of inspiration underscores her attentiveness to the precise moment in which she worked.

Tradition Three: Instrumentalization of Famous Women

These two paintings, a pair if not pendants, relate to the English historical revival simultaneous with the emerging efforts for an English school of painting that befit the nation's new self-pride and was part of the grand style of painting (as has been explained above). However, they also relate to a third tradition: the broader and longer heritage of representing heroic women, which may have attracted the mind of Kauffman, as she had already painted many such figures. The root of this tradition was first based in literature, specifically in Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* (1361), which opens with the query:

> If we grant that men deserve praise whenever they perform great deeds with the strength bestowed upon them, how much more should women be extolled – almost all of whom are endowed by nature with soft, frail bodies and sluggish minds – when they take on a manly spirit, show remarkable intelligence and bravery, and dare to execute deeds that would be extremely difficult even for men?[183]

[182] Keynes, "The Cult of King Alfred the Great," 293.
[183] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 9

In the Renaissance, this text was a guide for acceptable conduct among women that Margaret Franklin describes as being used to "draw the teeth from the challenge of unconventionally powerful women by co-opting their stories into the service of contemporary Italian standards and mores."[184] *De claris mulieribus* served as an interpretive middle ground between historical figures and contemporary society, helping them to fit in and be effective examples despite the differences in contexts.[185] Mary Garrard identifies this text as the beginning of a "humanist defense of women" wherein these female figures from mythology, classical history, and the Christian tradition demonstrated how women could be moral, virtuous members of society.[186]

In the transition from literary/theoretical tradition to a visual one, worthy women from antiquity appeared in decorative arts in the fifteenth century.[187] This can be seen in the *cassoni*, or marital chests, that featured moralizing messages of various *donne illustri*.[188] Such women were venerated for qualities such as "patriotic heroism, the capacity for shrewd leadership, and even military prowess," but this visualized admiration was at odds with the restricted roles of contemporary Renaissance women.[189] As a result, some mid-fifteenth century images follow the conventions of socially and spatially contained women while others are more dynamic and powerful in how they occupy space.[190] Thus, representations of *donne illustri* can either confirm or challenge ideals of female virtue.[191]

[184] Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines,* 8.
[185] Ibid, 15.
[186] Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 145.
[187] Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines*, 14.
[188] Cristelle L. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism, and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.
[189] Margaret Franklin, "A Woman's Place: Visualizing the Feminine Ideal in the Courts and Communes of Renaissance Italy," in *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 189.
[190] Franklin, "A Woman's Place," 196-8.
[191] Ibid, 202.

This form of representation continued to evolve in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at the hands of Kauffman's predecessors. Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614) and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) both represented heroic women in ways that further complicate this tradition. Both artists depicted the story of Judith and Holofernes multiple times within their careers, demonstrating that interpretation of female power and virtue can be in flux even within the mind of one creative, much less an entire visual tradition. Fontana's second version, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1600) (Figure 24) uses rich colors and assertive forms to convey the drama of the moment. While the maid and the decapitated body make lively shapes in the background, Judith raises her face to the divine light that blesses her bold action.[192] Artemisia Gentileschi's depictions of Judith are much more violent, showing the protagonist mid-beheading. Her second version, *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (c. 1620) (Figure 25), is divided by her use of three primary colors, one for each figure in the struggle. Unlike the Mannerist Fontana, Gentileschi includes the blood and the action, exemplifying all the *chiaroscuro* and dynamism of the Baroque period in which she worked.[193] Their own differences aside, the paintings of Fontana and Gentileschi demonstrate the continued evolution of the *donne illustri* tradition to include increased agency of the women declared to be paradigms of virtue.

Kauffman's history paintings exist within this complex tradition and gendered context, as Boccaccio and his followers postulated iconographical guidelines for *donne illustri* as paradigms of feminine morals.[194] Specifically, the pair functions in relation to Boccaccio's ideas of virtue. In his text, virtue is determined by asking if the woman possesses legitimate or illegitimate power. The former is gained by an assumption of duty (Rowena) but the latter is gained for the

[192] Nutu, "Framing Judith," 112-3.
[193] Ibid, 125.
[194] Franklin, *Boccaccio's Heroines*, 18-19.

sake of personal ambition (Elfrida).[195] Rowena seduces Vortigern for the sake of the Saxons, so that they could gain land and power, whereas Elfrida seduces Edgar for her own sake, so that she could be queen. Indeed, Boccaccio included negative exempla, women who "craved fame and glory or who otherwise exerted a malign influence in the affairs of men and so undermined male interests," as opposed to the heroines who "do whatever is necessary in support of the male who rightfully occupies the dominant role in her life."[196] This is based on traditional modes of feminine duty and explains how and when it is acceptable for a woman to be powerful within patriarchal society. Thus, according to tradition, Rowena has virtuous, legitimate power that is used for the sake of familial duty, while Elfrida's power, though it comes from the same source as Rowena (great beauty) is illegitimate in that she uses it for personal gain to become queen.

Beyond an overly simple dichotomy of these two female figures as good and bad, the paintings speak to a common utility that is assigned to women deemed worthy. In the tradition of *uomini/donne illustri*, men gained fame for virtuous acts whereas a woman's fame was centered on their chastity which often necessitated self-sacrifice (although there is an important tradition of female warriors).[197] After all, what is a woman's utility if not her beauty and purity, her market value between men. In narrative painting, as Griselda Pollock tells us, female subjects are not signifiers for feminine meaning. Women like Penelope, Rowena, and Elfrida are mere signs, "communicated between men in their use of women's chastity or sexuality as the token of their relations to, commerce between, and competition with each other."[198] This can be clearly seen in

[195] Ibid, 8.
[196] Ibid, 21.
[197] Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 18-19.
[198] Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 111.

the depicted relationships between Vortigern and Horsa as well as Edgar and Ethelwold. In depicting this, Kauffman represents a very old tradition indeed.

However, it is worth noting that the tradition of *donne illustri* continued, or at least had a branch in eighteenth-century England where Kauffman now worked. In this manifestation, the moralized figures were called "women worthies" and were often used as historical citations of value in discourses of the period. The texts that evoke such women were not so much didactic, moralizing texts to be followed as behavioral guides, but moreso arguments for the inherit worth of women then and now. As with Boccaccio, there was a long historical view of this tradition, as writers cited both Roman matrons and "medieval courtly models of womanhood."[199] This discourse and the texts it produced had varied motivations: national pride, commercial benefit, and social feminism.[200] There is no way to say which motivations caused Kauffman to paint the subjects she did or Theresa Parker to buy them. Still, it proves that female artists and female patrons were active participants in this mode of representation: creating, collecting, and displaying such works in contexts where they would participate further in the social discourse, hung prominently as they were in Saltram's Saloon.

In recognizing that the *donne illustri* tradition had a presence in the literature of eighteenth-century England, one must also recognize that for it to have a visual presence as well, there were some necessary changes to fit this new context. Rowena and Elfrida very much fit in this historical discourse of morality and femininity, but Kauffman had to adapt them to suit English sentiments and taste. Early modern London was not Baroque Rome and did not value the

[199] Phillip Hicks, "Women Worthies and Feminist Argument in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 2 (2015), 175-6.
[200] Hicks, "Women Worthies and Feminist Argument in Eighteenth-Century Britain," 179.
A select few titles include George Ballard, *Memoirs of Several Great Ladies of Britain* (1752); Anonymous female author "Sophia," *Woman Not Inferior to Man* (1751); a dictionary entitled *Biographium Fæmineum: The Female Worthies: or, Memoirs of the Most Illustrious Ladies, of all Ages and Nations* (1766).

frenetic, violent, contrasting colors of that earlier period. Compared to the bright, rich colors used by Fontana and Gentileschi to depict Judith, Kauffman's canvases are decidedly more muted in their coloration. In addition, the story of Judith and Holofernes is a violent one wherein a woman enacts change through a murder, while Kauffman's narratives from English history are less bloody. However, though the tenor of the depicted scenes of meeting is much more sedate, Rowena and Elfrida are still historical hinges upon which dramatic stories unfold. Kauffman's representations of these women maintain the spirit of the *donne illustri*/women worthies tradition but does so while appealing to the taste and style of her current context.

A note about the reality of Kauffman working as a female artist within this tradition: thus far I have considered the gender of the artist when relevant but not as a guiding factor in her life or work. Rather, the central pair of paintings has here been interrogated neither in direct dialogue with to nor in ignorance of Kauffman's gender. Still, it remains important to acknowledge that feminism does have a history prior to the modern era and while we may not know a female artists' exact stance on their gender and place in the world around them, we can recognize that they did not work in a socio-political vacuum.[201] For this thesis, I do not find it productive to mine the details of Kauffman's personal biography for relevance with the stories of Rowena and Elfrida yet I am still attentive to the inevitable inscriptions of femininity on her work.

Characterizing Kauffman's oeuvre as a whole reveals a distinct focus on female figures. It has been noted in critiques penned her own time as well as modern scholarship that the male figure offered issues of propriety for a female artist: this is read into her work for better or worse. Her history paintings featuring classical antiquity, some but certainly not all mentioned in this thesis, focus primarily on female characters and the role they play in their various epics.

[201] Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 141.

Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida* do the same, as do other history paintings she submitted to the Royal Academy. Five years after this focal pair, she debuted two more works featuring couples from English history: *The tender Eleanora sucking venom from the wound of her consort, King Edward I* (1776) and *Lady Elizabeth Grey imploring of Edward IV the restitution of her deceased husband's lands* (1776).[202] Thus, Rowena and Elfrida were not necessarily isolated incidents but part of a larger interest Kauffman clearly demonstrated in both women's narratives and England's past. I would posit that when looking at said history, she may have been drawn to figures and stories that fit into a tradition with which she was already familiar, that of famous women.

Conclusion:

In painting *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena* and *Interview of Edgar and Elfrida,* Angelica Kauffman participated in three distinct but inter-related traditions. The first was of her own making, wherein she painted women in a highly moralizing but modest manner that capitalized on the effectiveness of their characters in their narratives while also being conscious of her unique position as a female artist. It was an inevitability of her time that critics would find fault in her history paintings based on both her gender and the idealized, masculine tenets of that genre. Despite acknowledging her professional familiarity with antiquity, Johann Rudolf Füssli still found fault, claiming that Kauffman "understood the Ancients, [but revealed] too much of her own sex in her male figures."[203] German essayist Helfrich Peter Sturz elaborated on this deficiency and how it affected the entirety of her work:

[202] Manners, *Angelica Kauffman, R.A.*, 237.
[203] Johann Randolf Füssli, *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon* (1763-76), quoted in Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman: art and sensibility*, 190-1.

> As a painter she lacks important parts of the art.…she therefore has to avoid action-laden inventions; even in the single figures she cannot dare difficult poses and foreshortenings.…she hints at the anatomy of the nude with uncertainty and fearfulness…in her female figures is a singular, inimitable femininity, such a retaining and yearning, such a charming yielding, such a consciousness of gender dependency, which appeals much to her male critics…Surely something of this character also seeps into her men; these stand so coyly and silly, like dressed-up girls, that she will never succeed in painting heroes or villains.[204]

It is not the aim of this paper to point out the misogyny of the eighteenth century, but rather to acknowledge the lived experience of Kauffman as a female artist and to seek a better understanding of the depiction of her narrative figures. Rowena and Elfrida follow in the tradition, that is, Kauffman's individual mode, of depicting Andromache and Penelope. Carefully balancing an active/passive characterization, Kauffman represented her female characters as modest, moral agents in their own story while situating them in broader traditions of famous female virtue and utility in male-dominated narratives. It is worth noting as well that the works featuring these narratives were acquired by a contemporary "illustrious woman," Theresa Parker, herself regarded as noble in character by many and an active voice in Saltram's art collection.

The two history paintings examined here are also inextricably linked to the socio-historical moment in which they were painted. Shifts in English culture during the eighteenth century, concentrated in the latter half, resulted in a growing pride in its past and its arts, which then resulted in the development of a revival in history writing, the foundation of the Royal Academy of the Arts, and the (attempted) promotion of history painting as a genre. History painting followed history writing, as authors such as Paul Thoyras de Rapin and David Hume brought renewed attention to narratives that artists could depict to capitalize on the emerging national self-interest. Hailing from England's quasi-ancient and medieval past, Vortigern,

[204] Helfrich Peter Sturz, *Schriften* (24 August 1768), quoted in Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman: art and sensibility*, 190-1.

Rowena, Edgar, and Elfrida, are subjects that stood out from the popular Greco-Roman classical tradition and instead made a case for homegrown pride. Despite not being English herself, and only working in London for fifteen years (1766-1781), Kauffman's paintings with English historical subjects were "regarded as groundbreaking achievements by many artists until well into the nineteenth century. The works represented a significant contribution to the development of English national history."[205] This demonstrates a harmony between Kauffman's well-timed, well-informed choice of subject and the public's engagement with history closer to home.

Most broadly, Kauffman's work participated in the tradition of representing in/famous women in a way that reflects sustained gender politics and the instrumentalization of female characters. Drawing from the literary tradition of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* that artists visualized in the Renaissance, Rowena and Elfrida can be interpreted through lenses of virtue, legitimacy, and power. Regardless of the individual circumstances of their narratives, Kauffman painted two meetings at a singular moment when Rowena and Elfrida, in both their appearance and their choices, are instrumental to what happens next in the schemes of the male characters and the nation itself. Though the origins of the famous woman tradition are rooted in Biblical and classical stories, Kauffman drew upon that background and applied the same tradition of forms and genre to the specific past of the country in which she was working.

As Marry Garrard notes, "though every image of a mythic or allegorical character may bear value-laden inflections, every imaged reoccurrence of that archetype also strengthens its universal familiarity and its potency as a template in the memory to reinforce specific beliefs, even contradictory beliefs, that different people or groups might hold."[206] This applies to Kauffman's pair of English history paintings on multiple levels: by using a visual "template"

[205] Tobias G. Natter. *Angelica Kauffman: A Woman of Immense Talent* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2007), 275.
[206] Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 149.

from diverse yet intersecting traditions, she appeals to a broad variety of viewers, or perhaps a broad variety of beliefs and taste within a single viewer. As they interact with the values of an English public learning to value their own past and encourage a native school of art, these works can help us better understand one aspect of a nation's artistic evolution while also telling the story of a single artist who was foreign both in birth and gender, but still made successful, artistic contributions in her time there.

Figure List

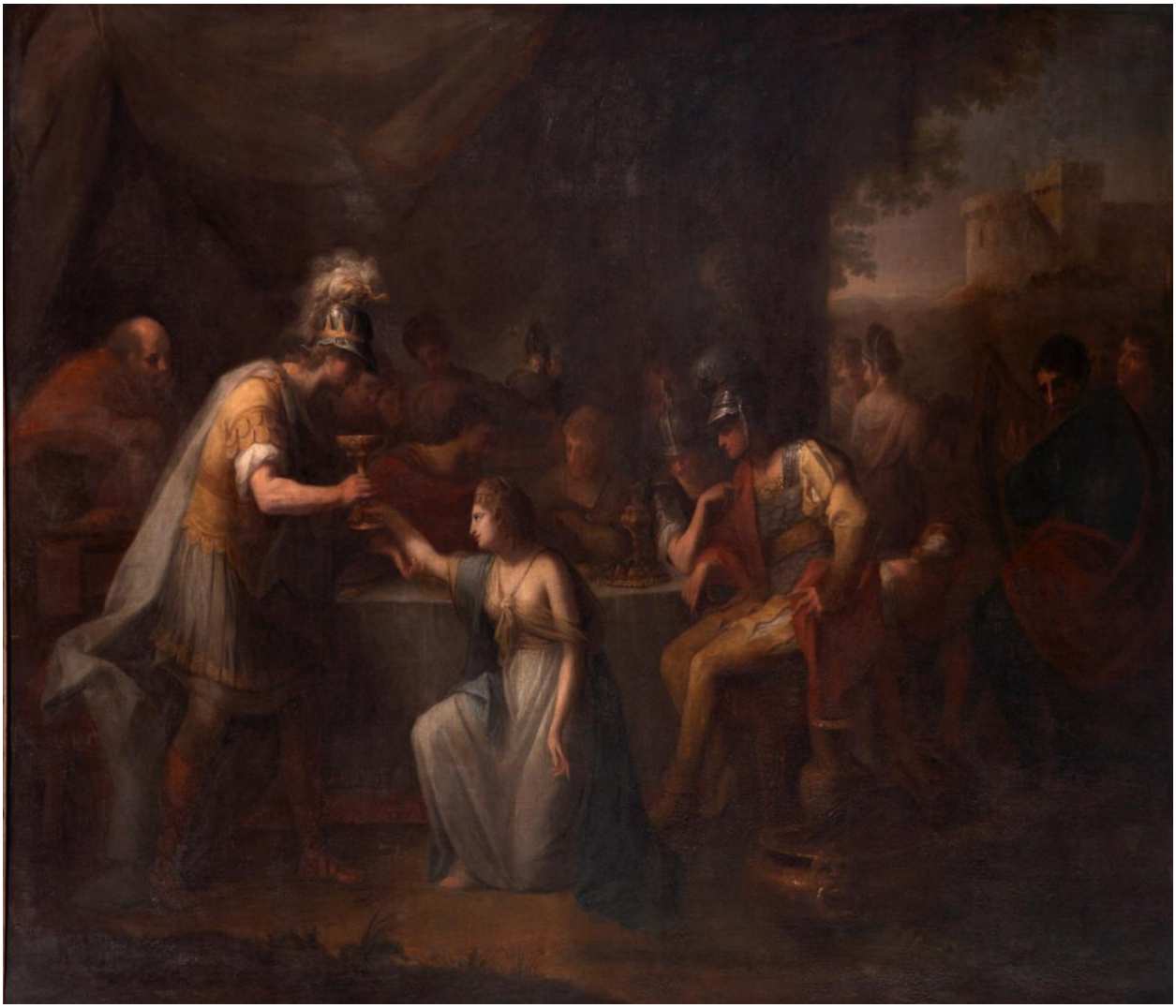
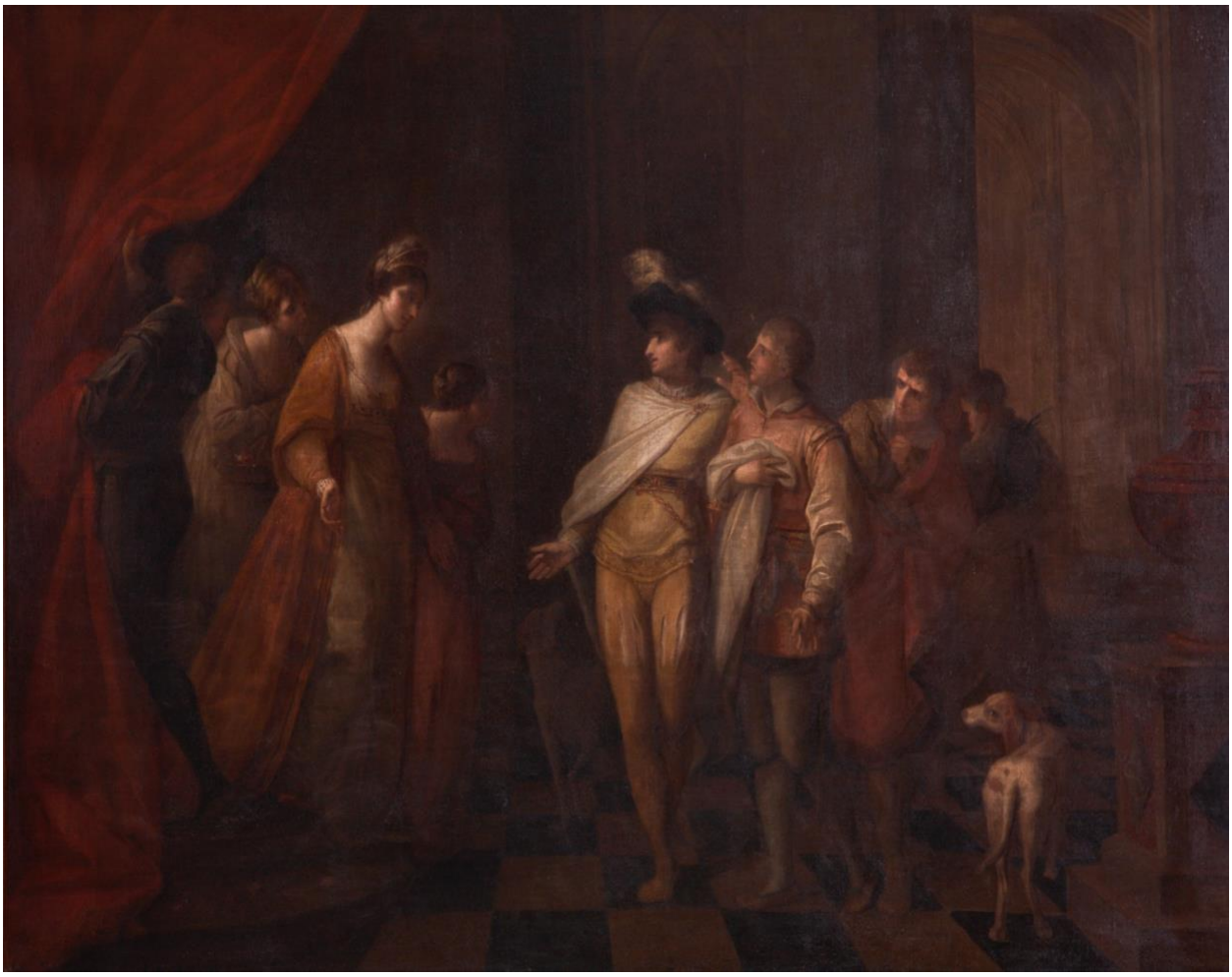


Figure 1: Angelica Kauffman, *Vortigern, King of Britain, enamoured with Rowena, at the Banquet of Hengist, the Saxon General*, 1769-70. Oil on canvas, 153 x 215 cm. National Trust Collection, Saltram House.



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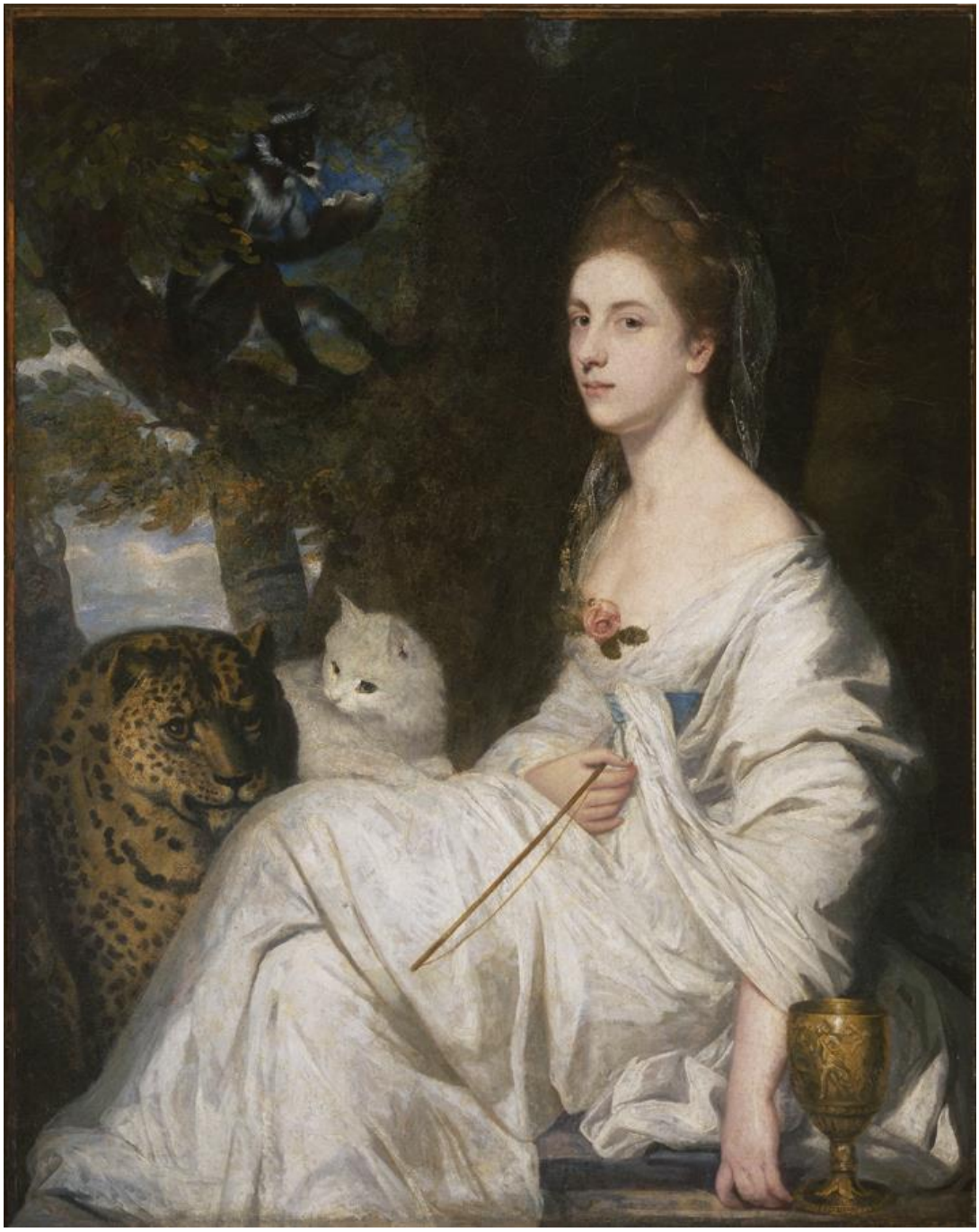

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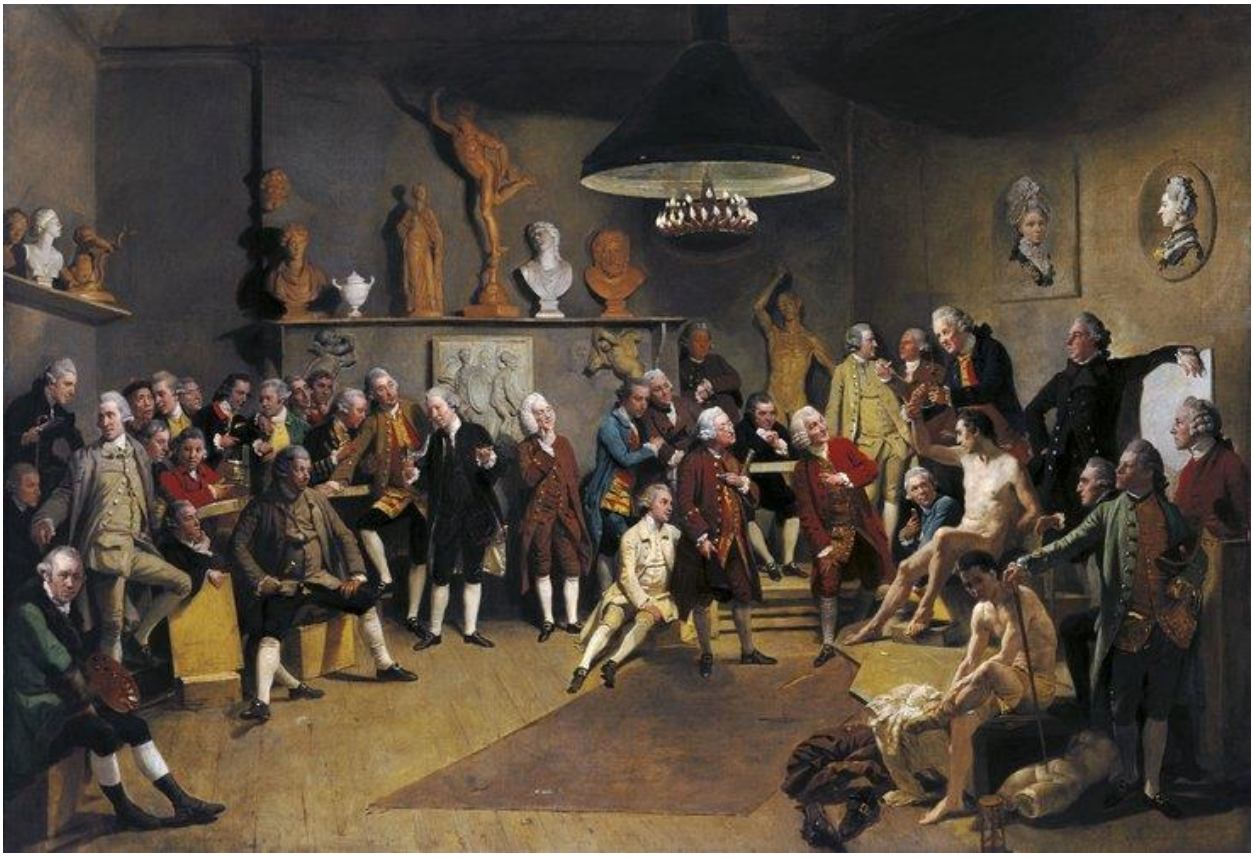

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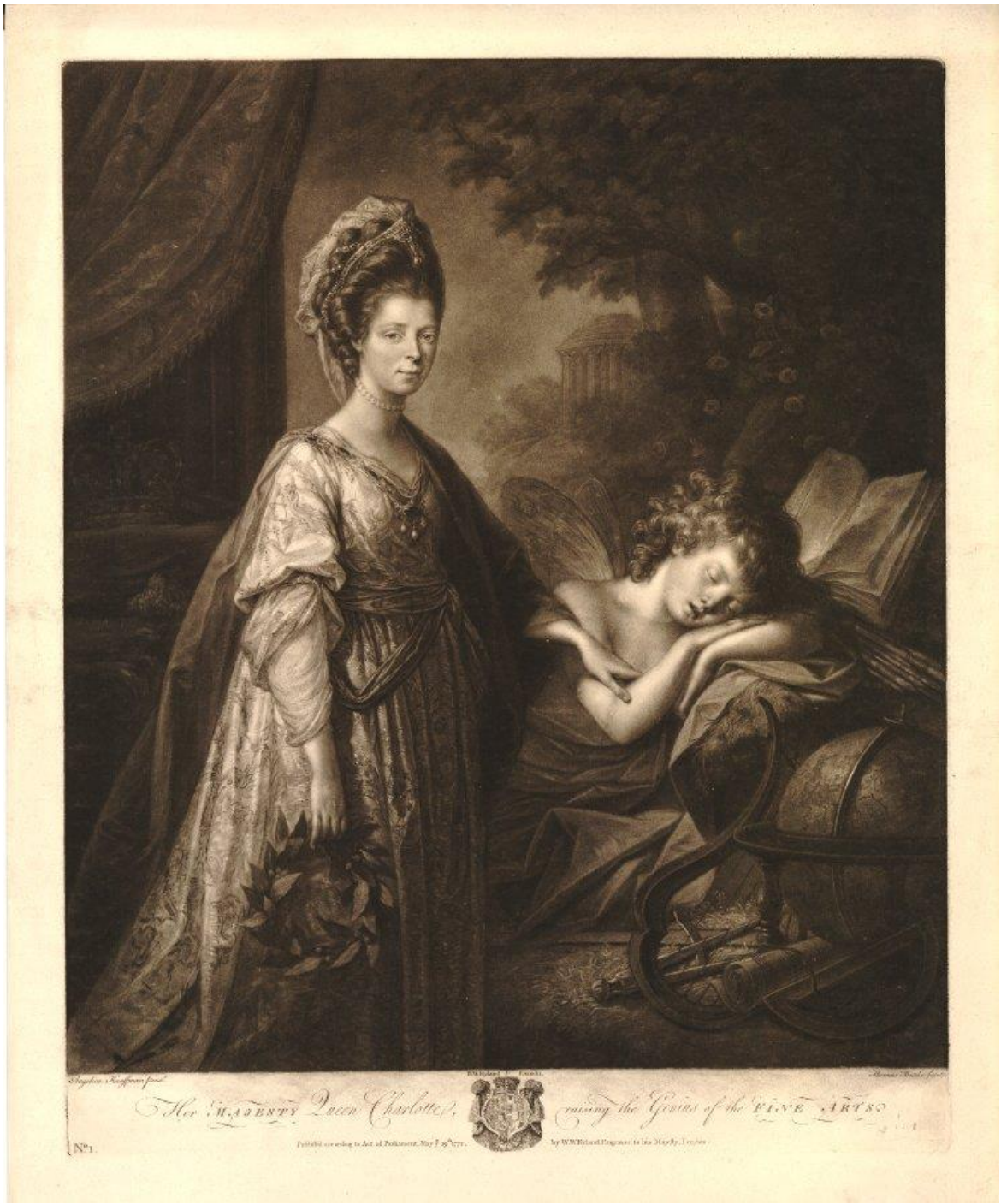

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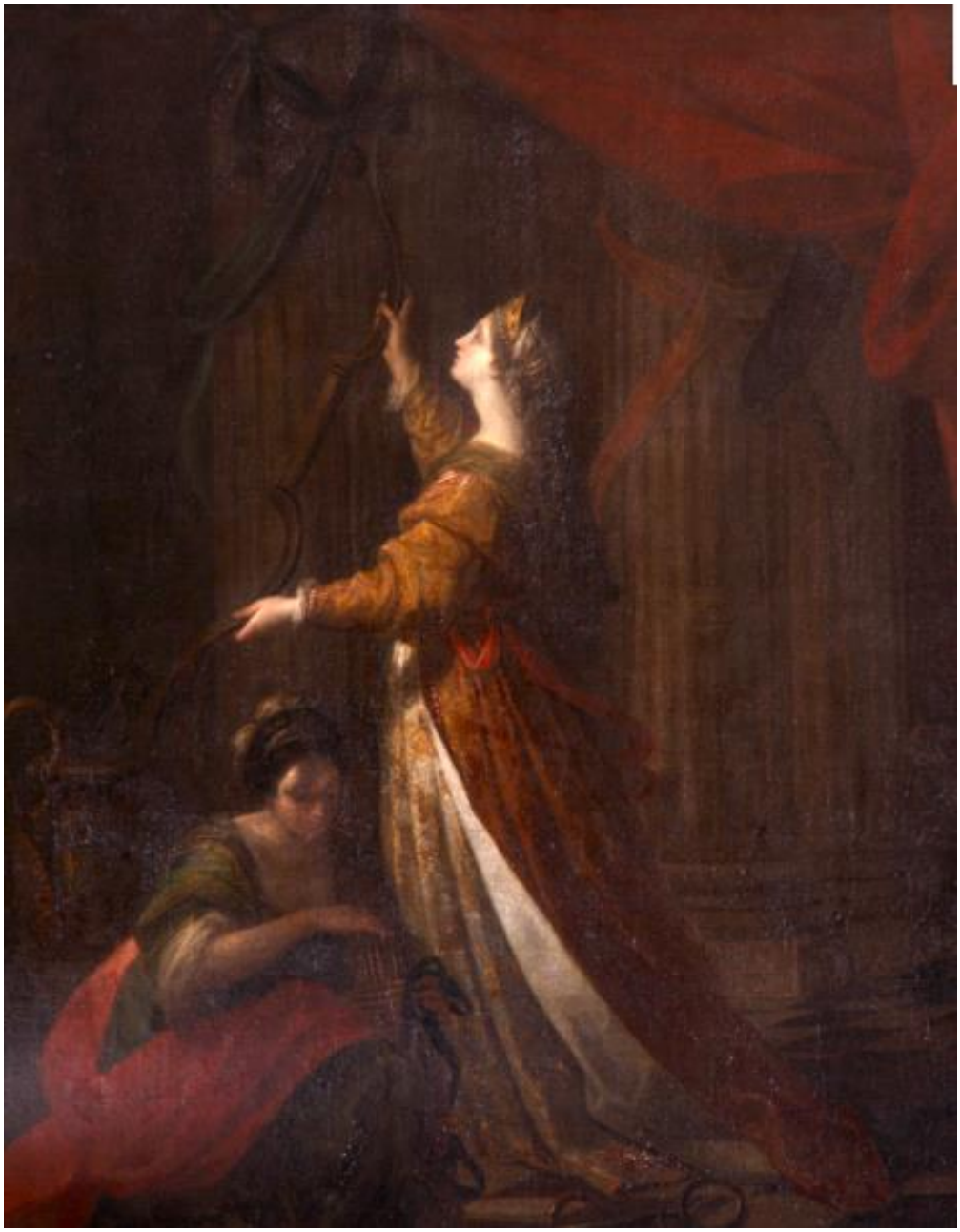
National Trust Collection, Saltram House.



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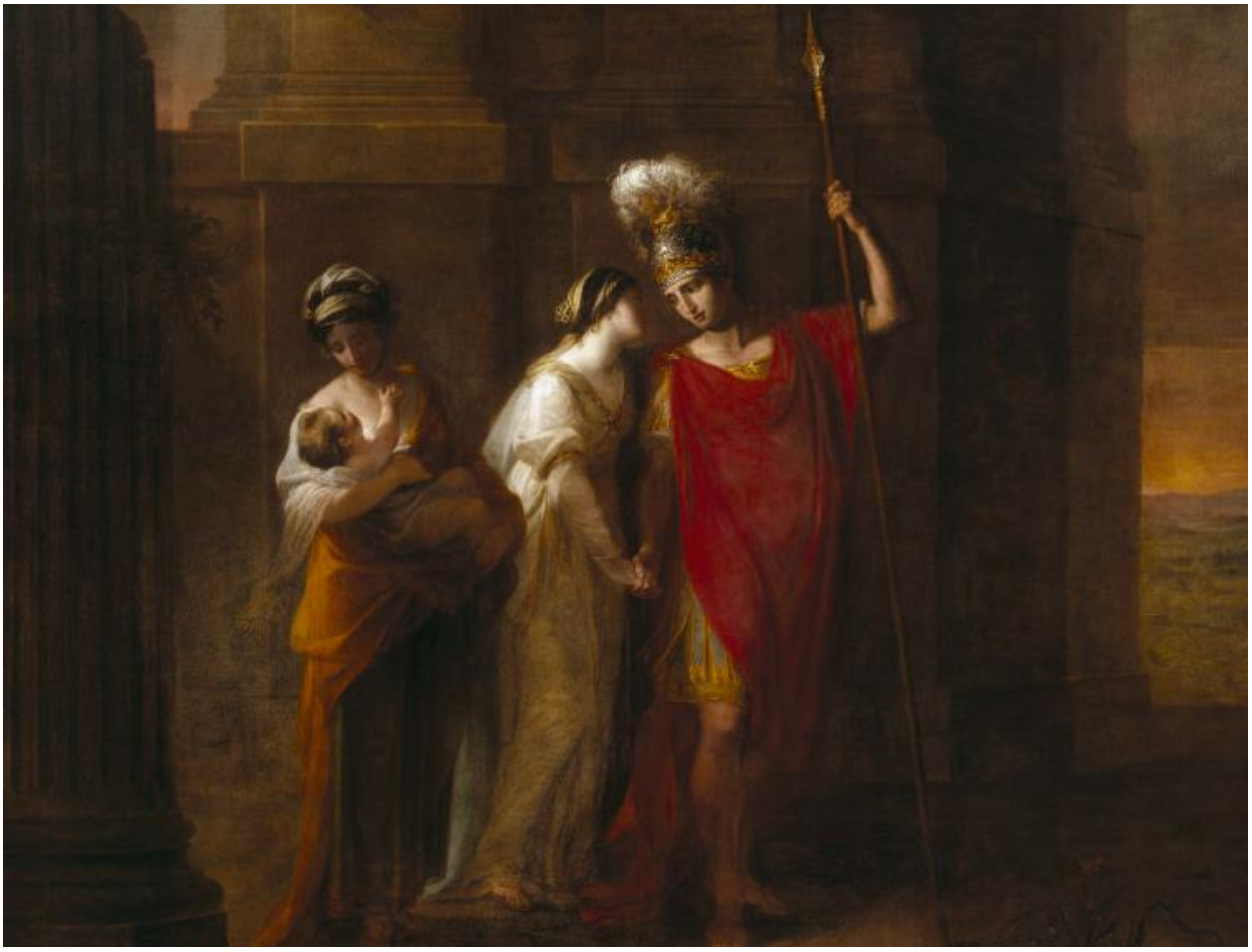

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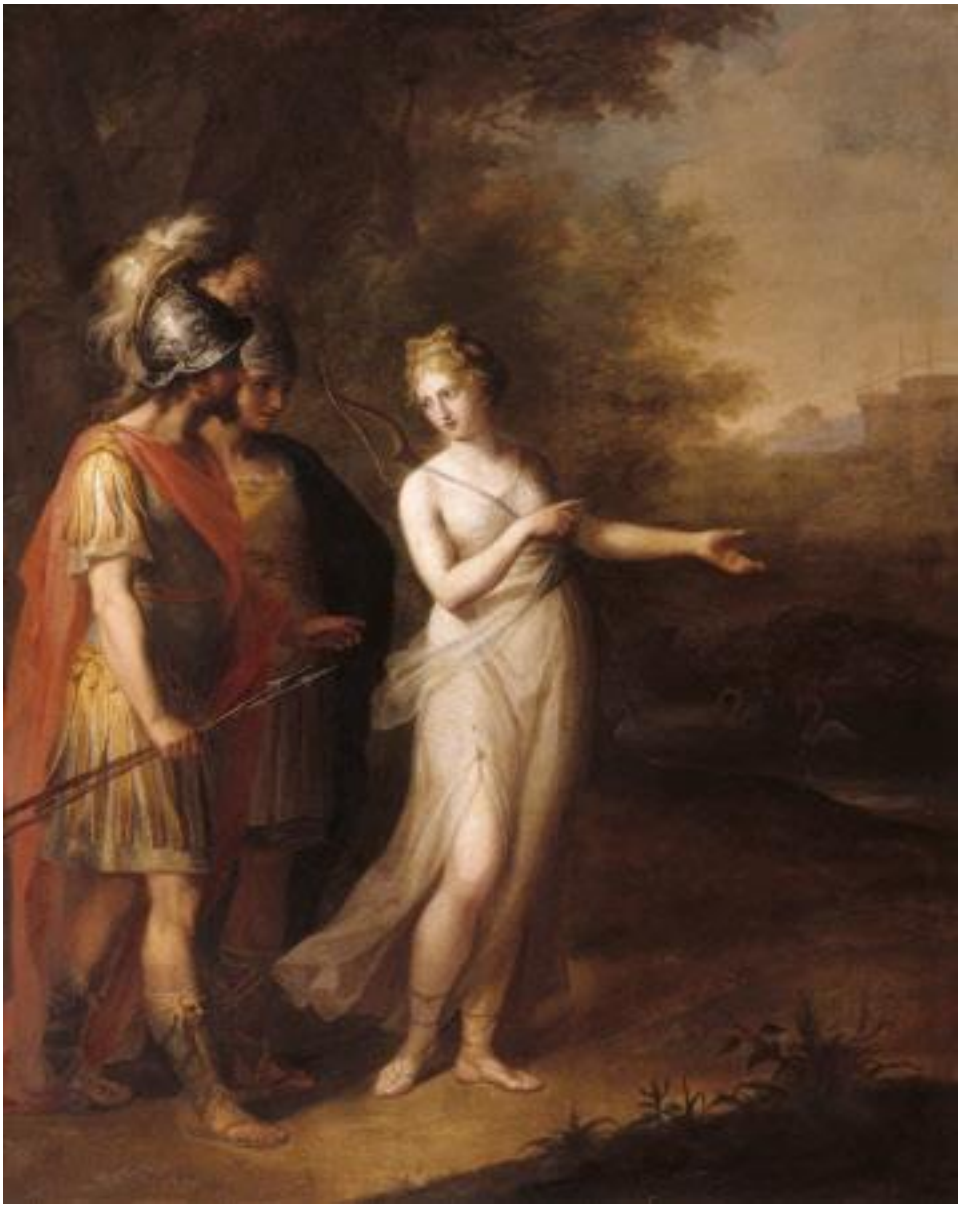

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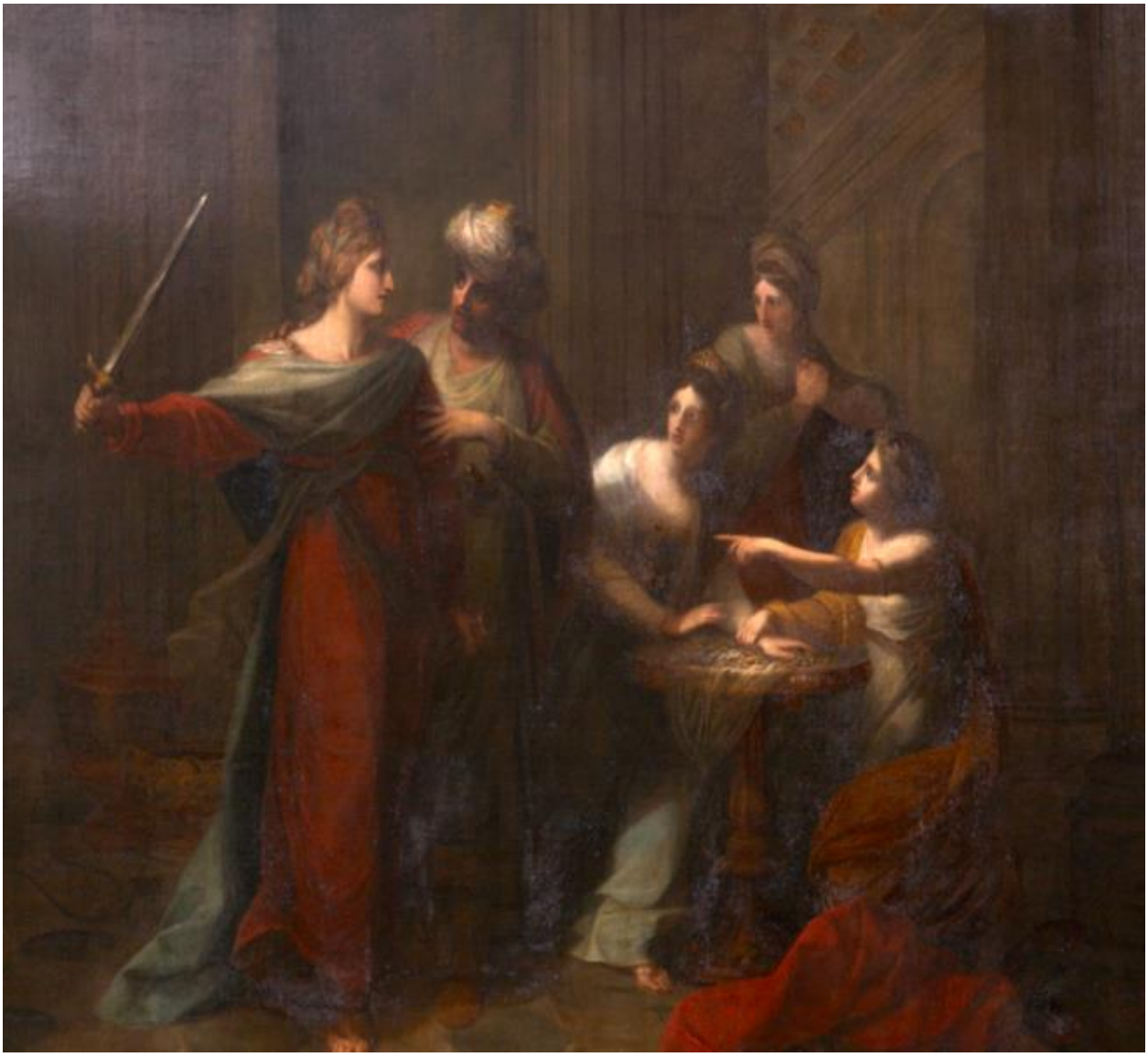

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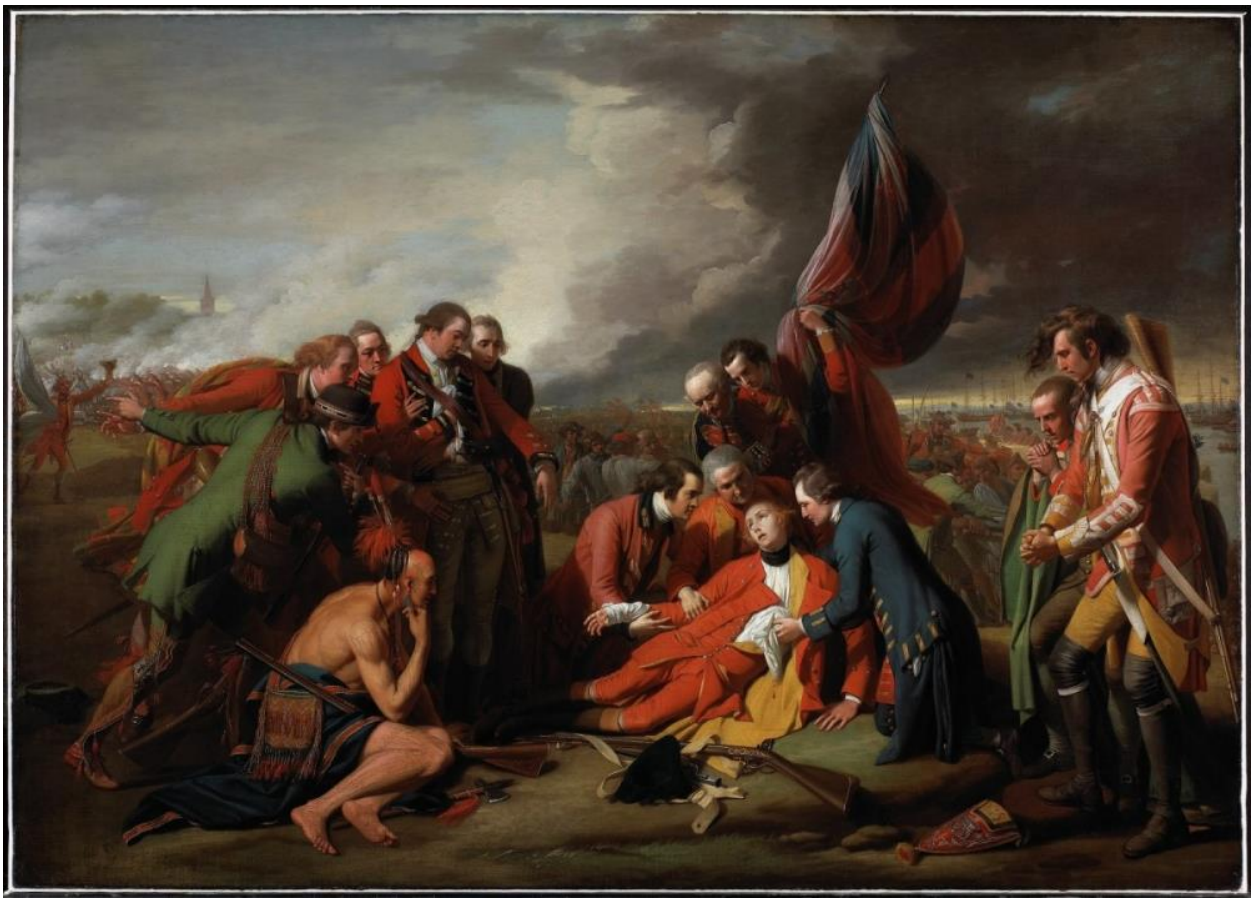

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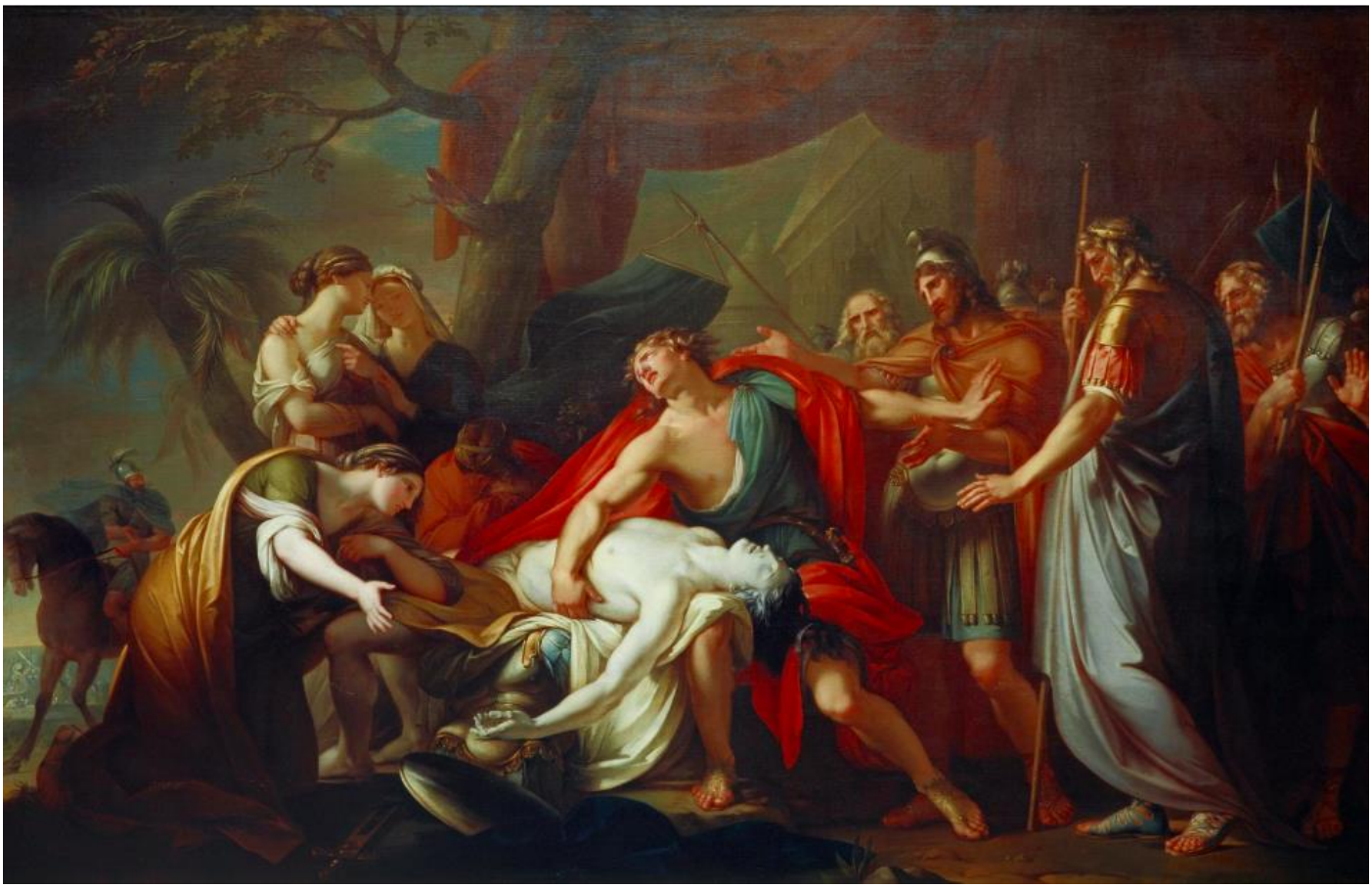

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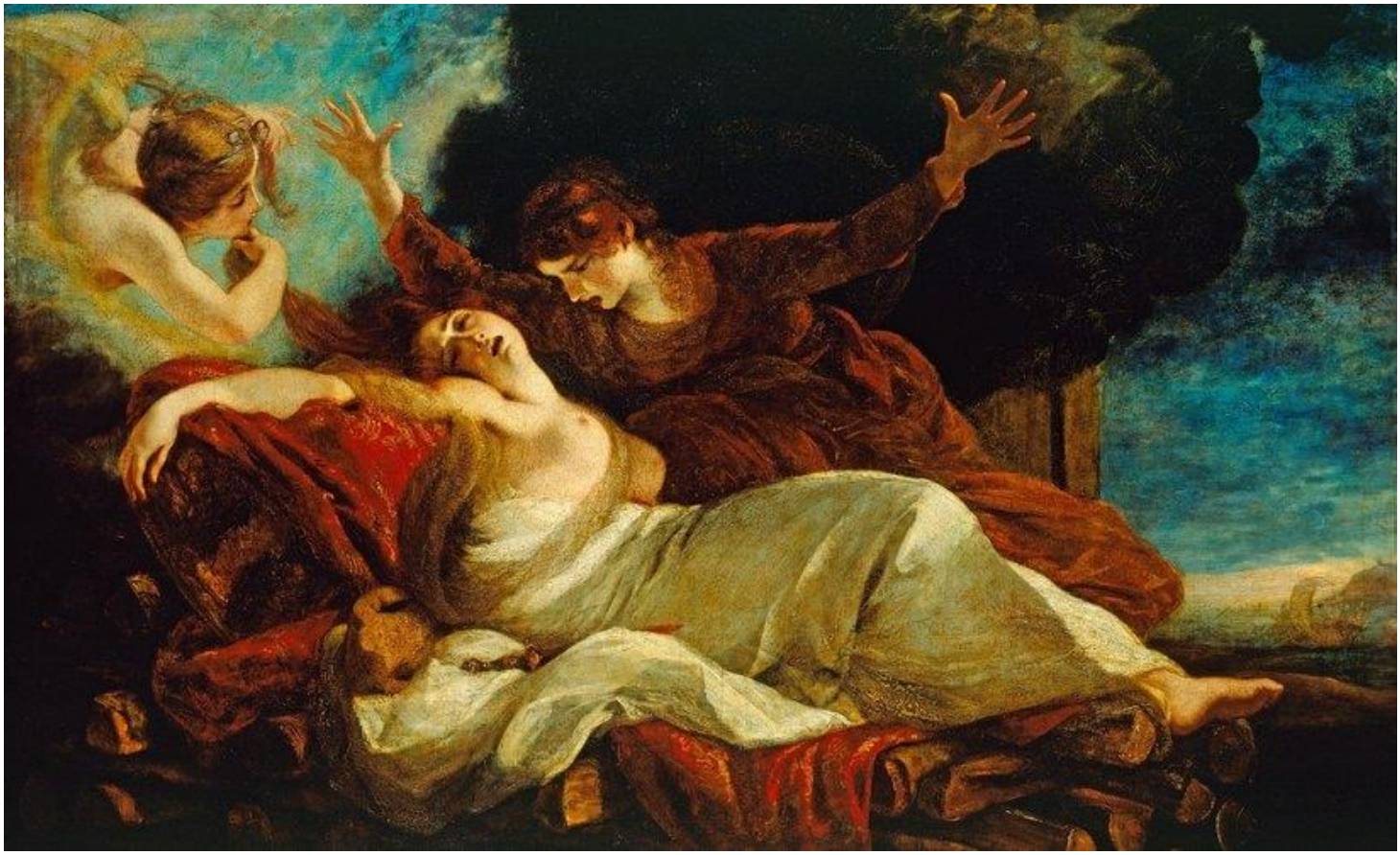

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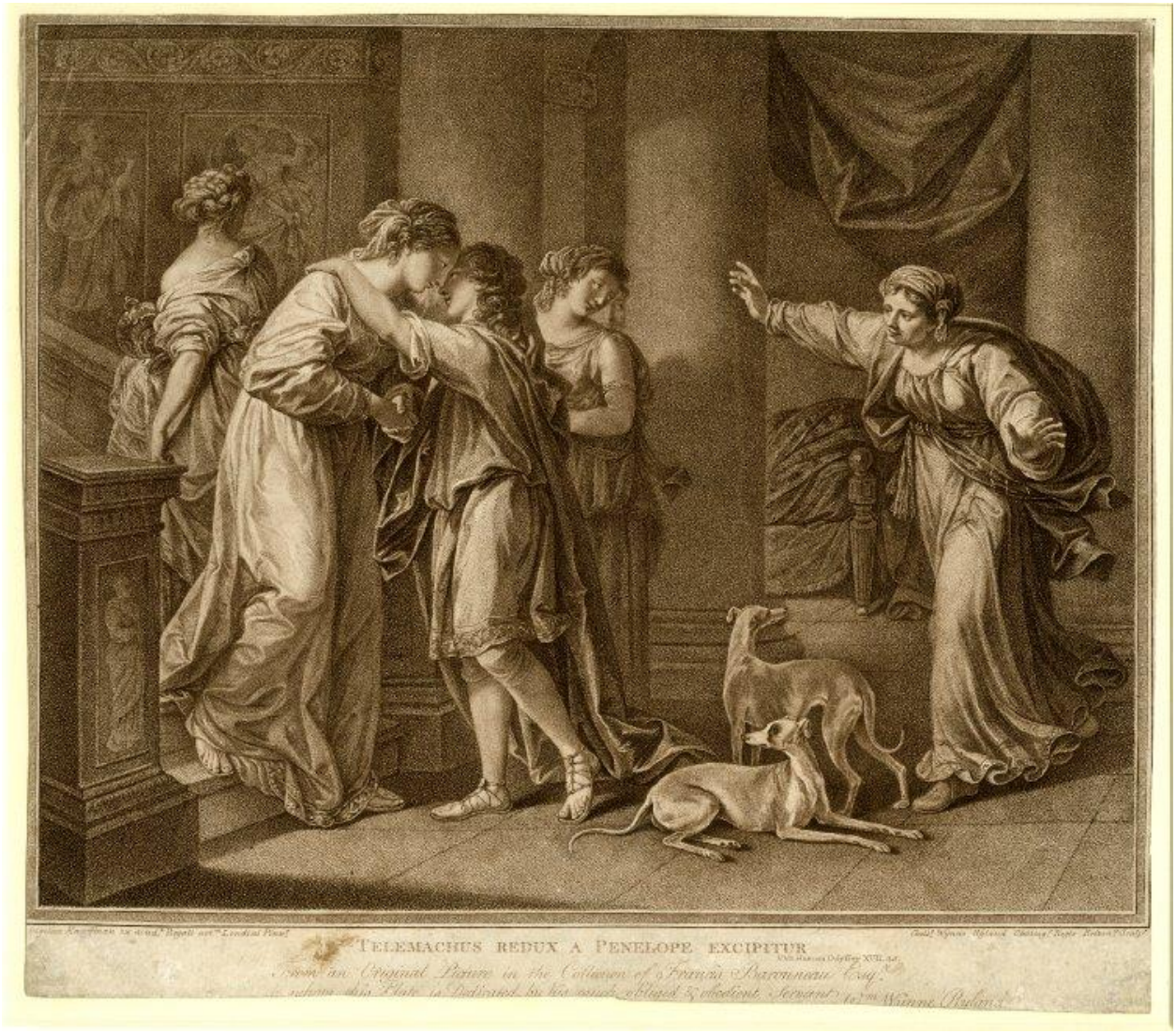

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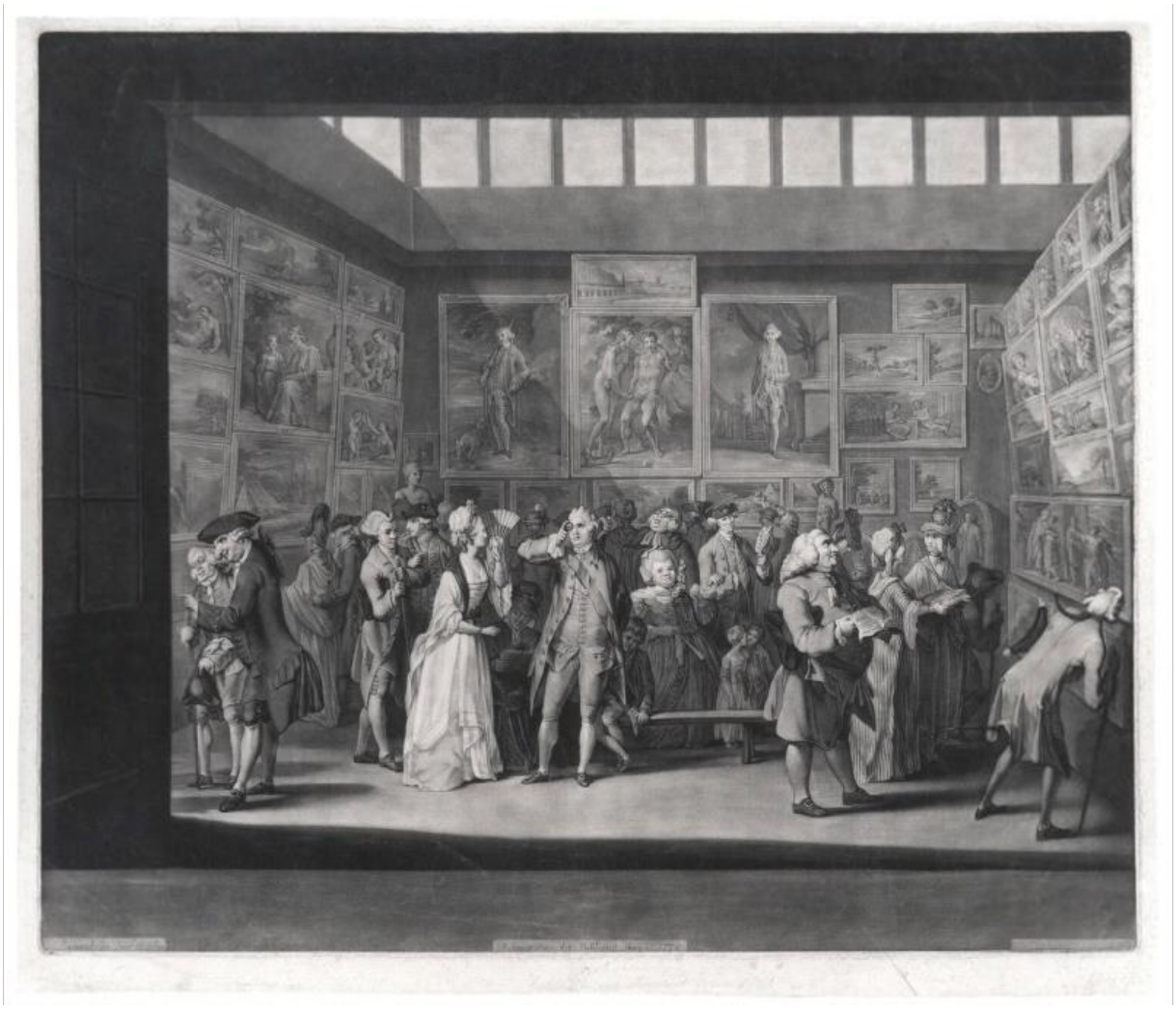

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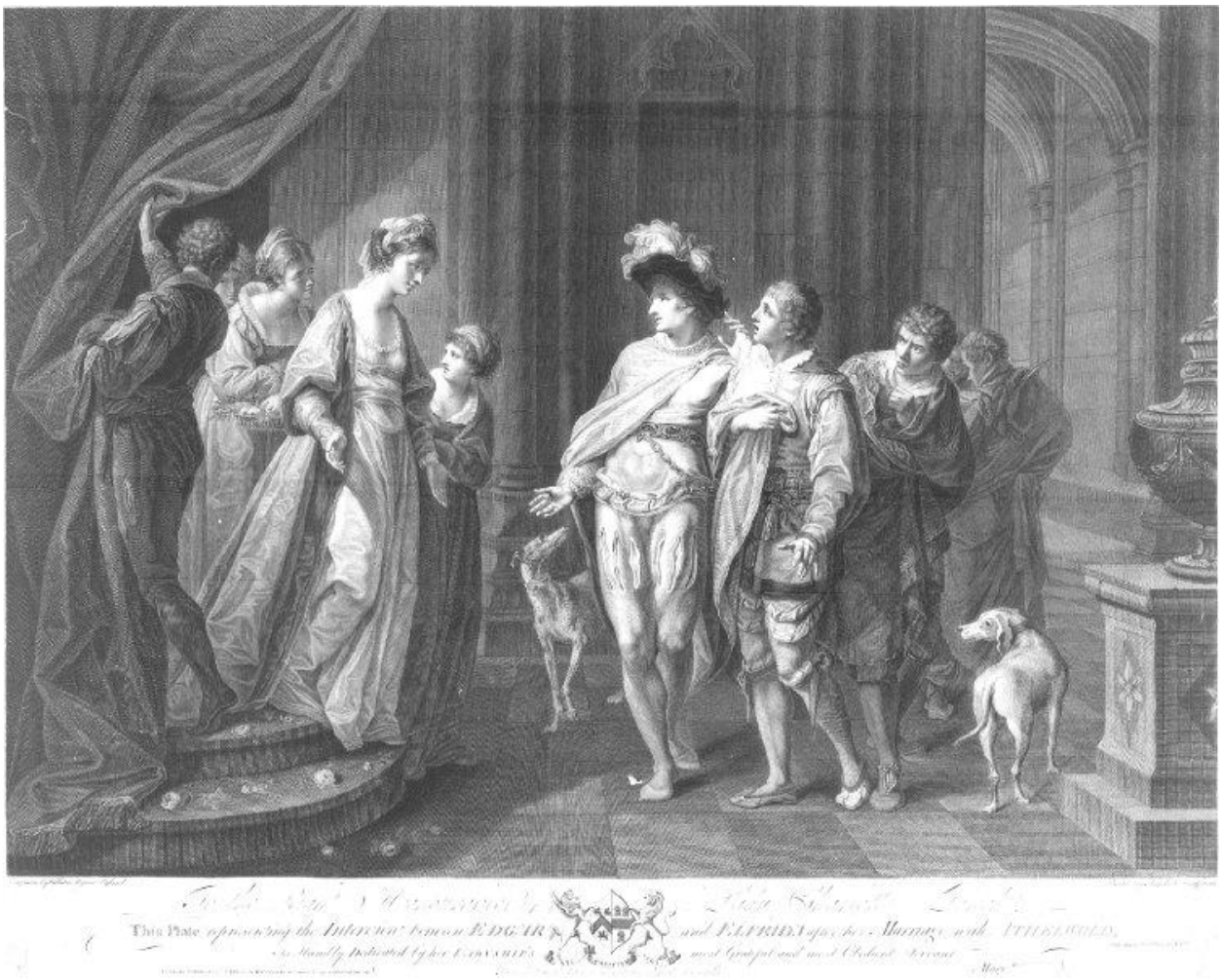

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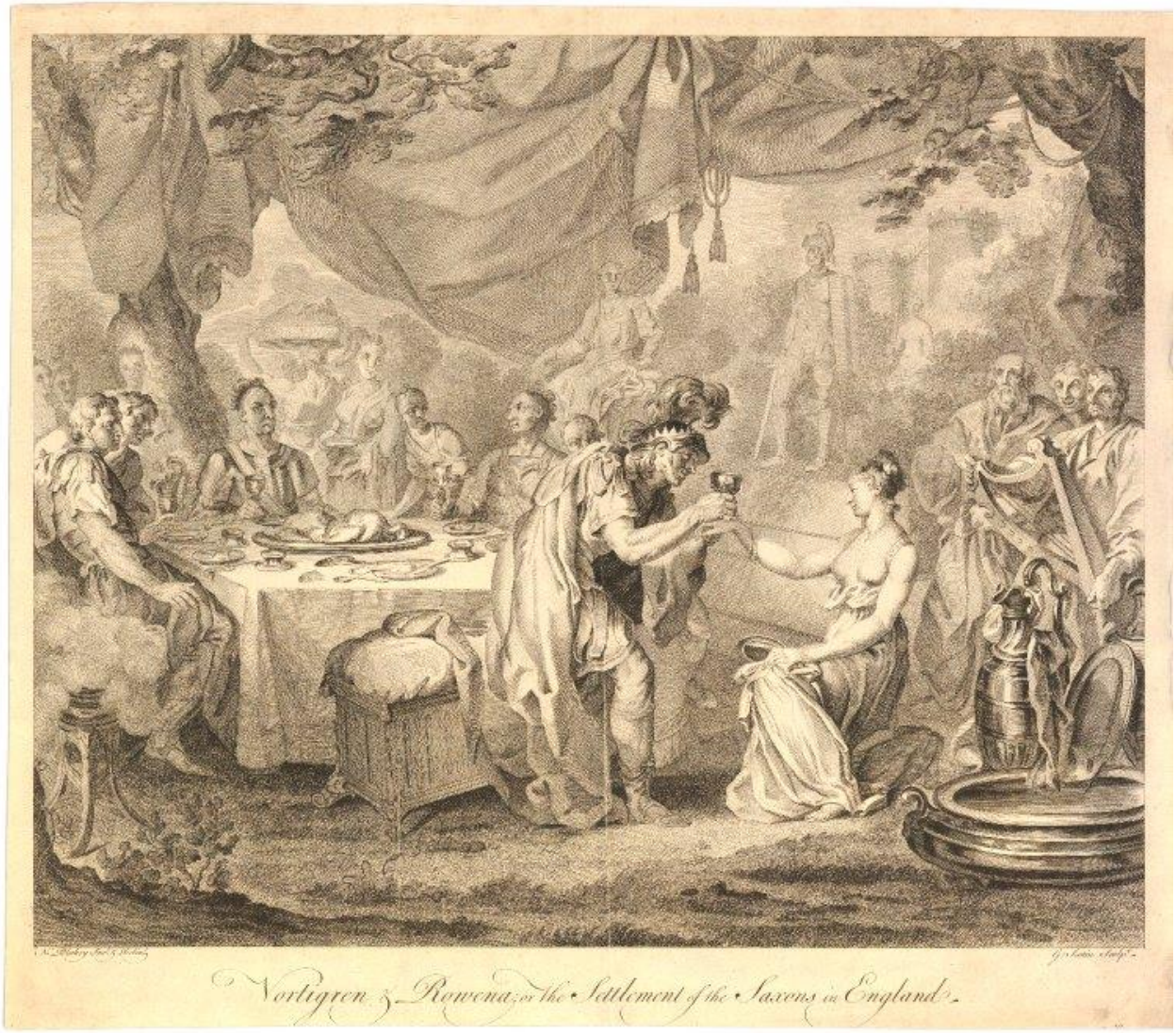

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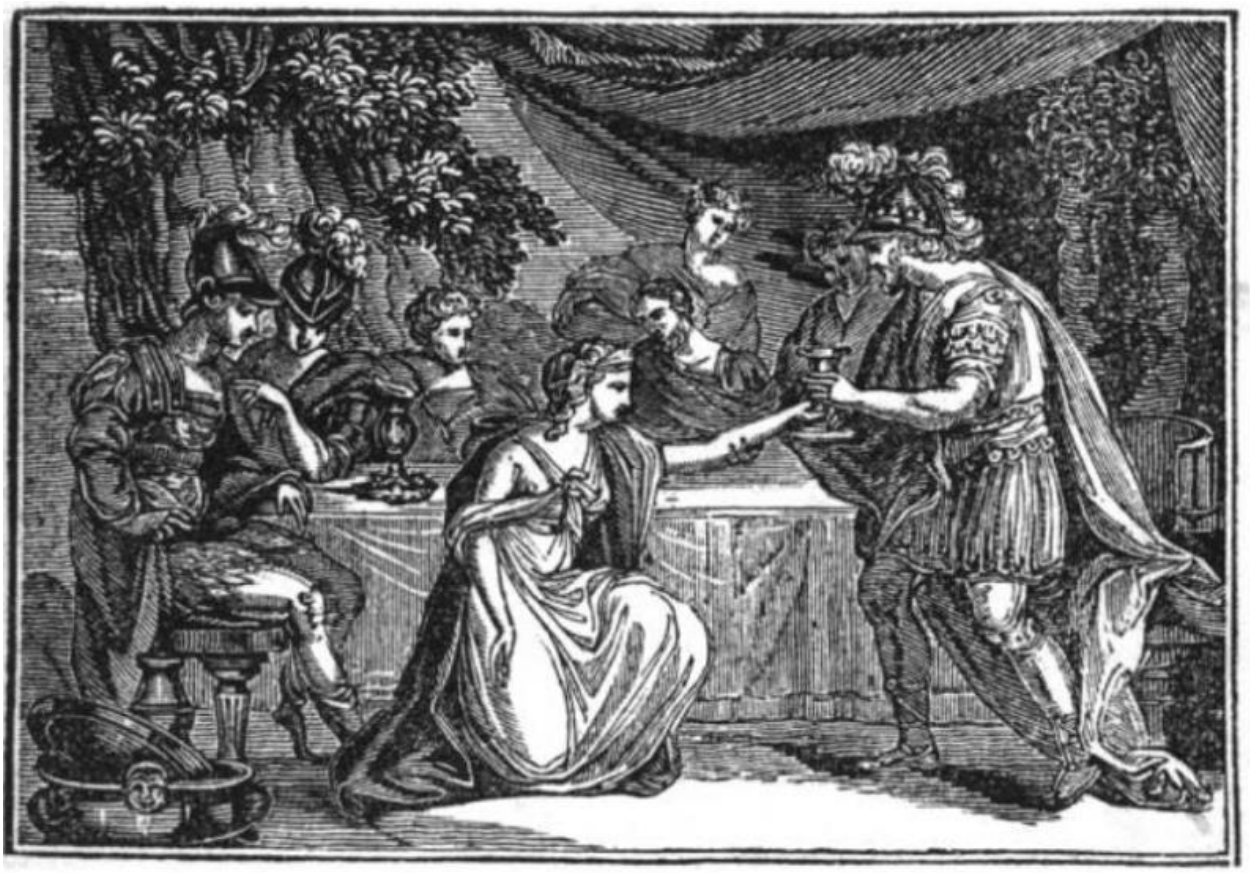

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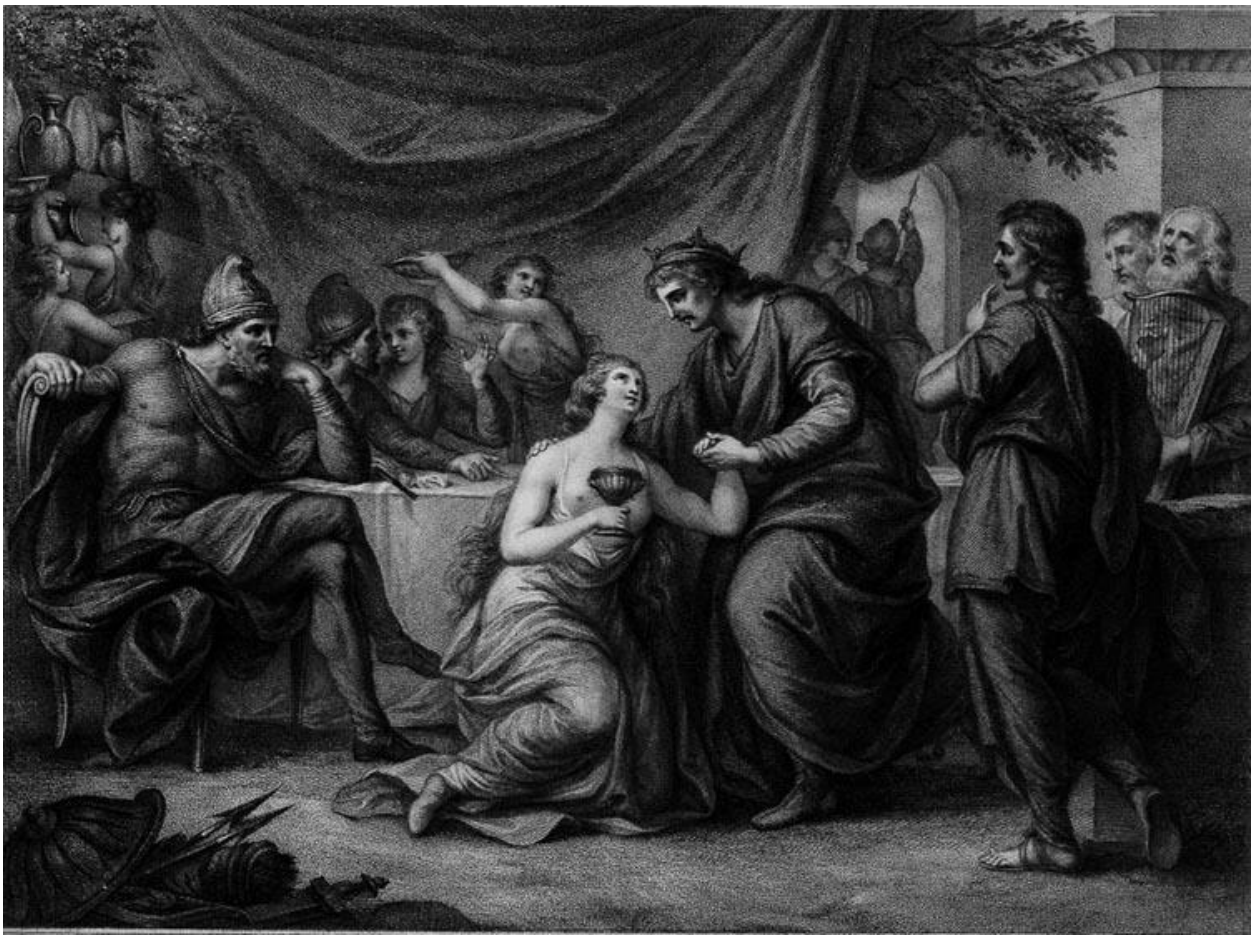

Figure 20: Francesco Bartolozzi after John Francis Rigaud, *Vortigern and Rozoena, or the first Settlement of Saxons in England. 1779*

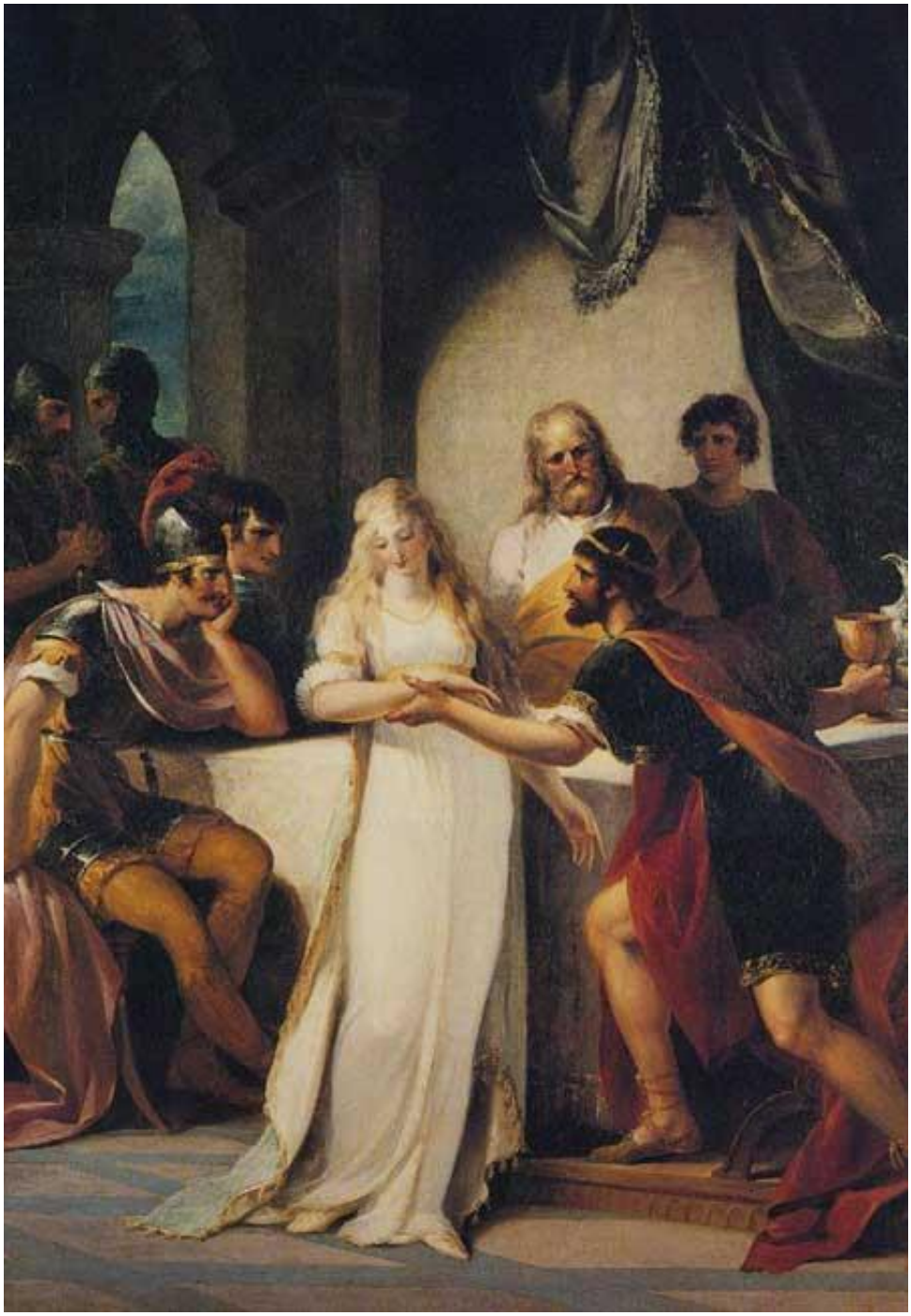

Figure 21: William Hamilton, *Vortigern and Rowena*, 1793. Oil on canvas. 200 cm x 150 cm.

Location unknown.

Figure 22: Rennoldson after Samuel Wale, *King Edgar's First Interview with Queen Elfrida*. From Temple Sydney's A New and Complete History of England. 1773. The Spalding Gentleman's Society.

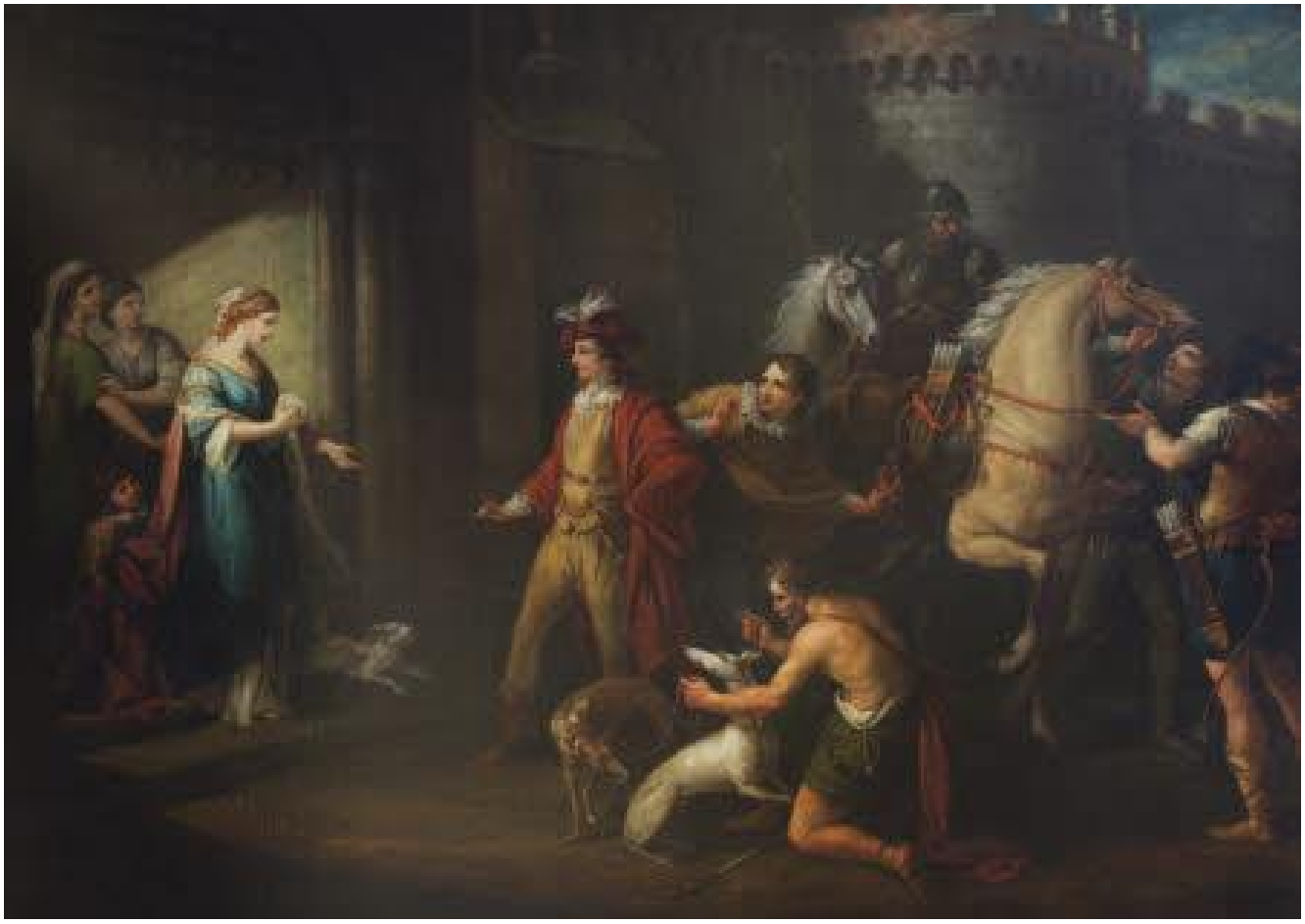

Figure 23: William Hamilton, *King Edgar's First Interview with Queen Elfrida (Aelfryth)*, 1774.

Oil on Canvas. 134.6 x 182.9 cm. National Trust, England.

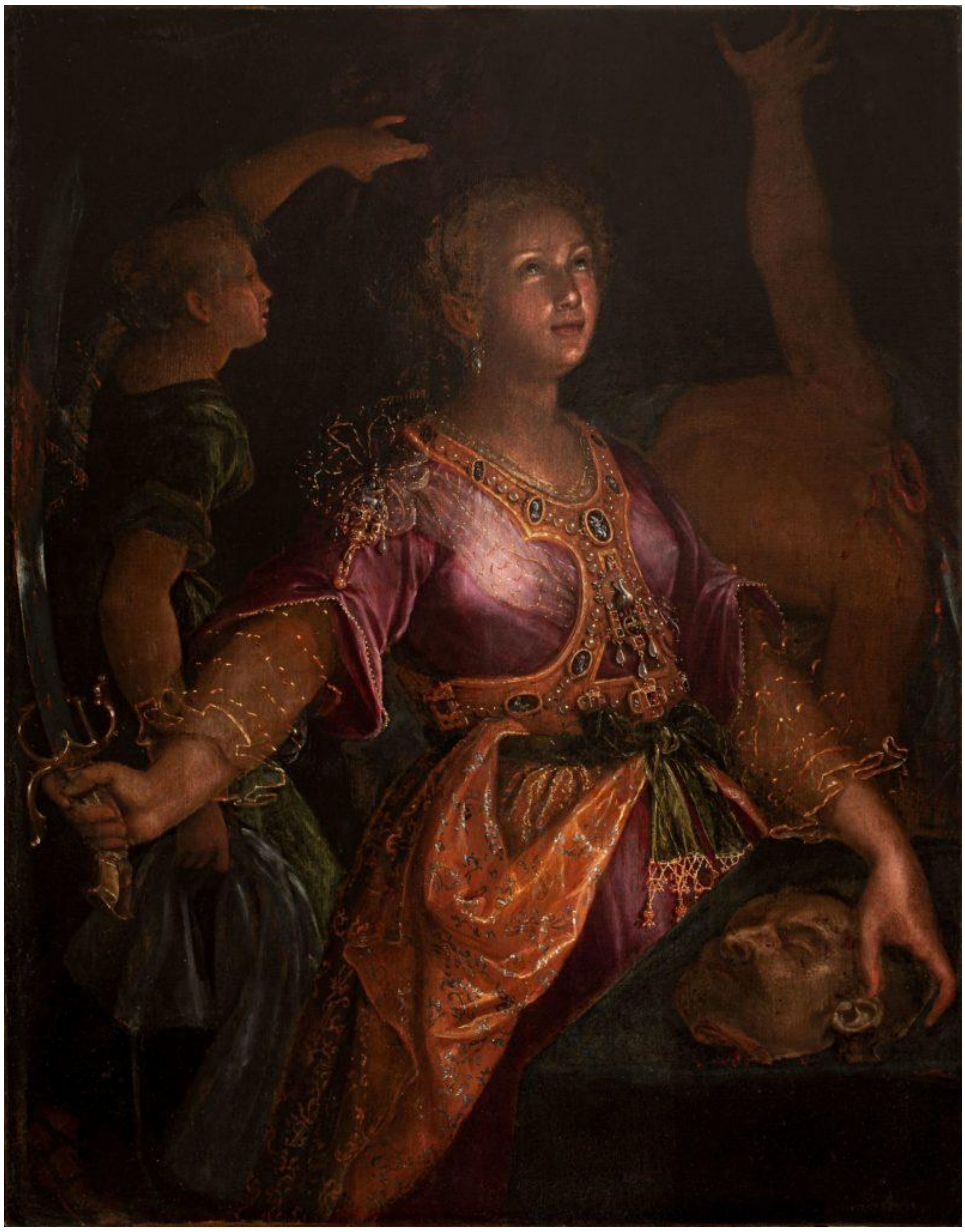

Figure 24: Lavinia Fontana, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1600. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Fondazione di culto e religione Ritiro San Pellegrin, Bologna.

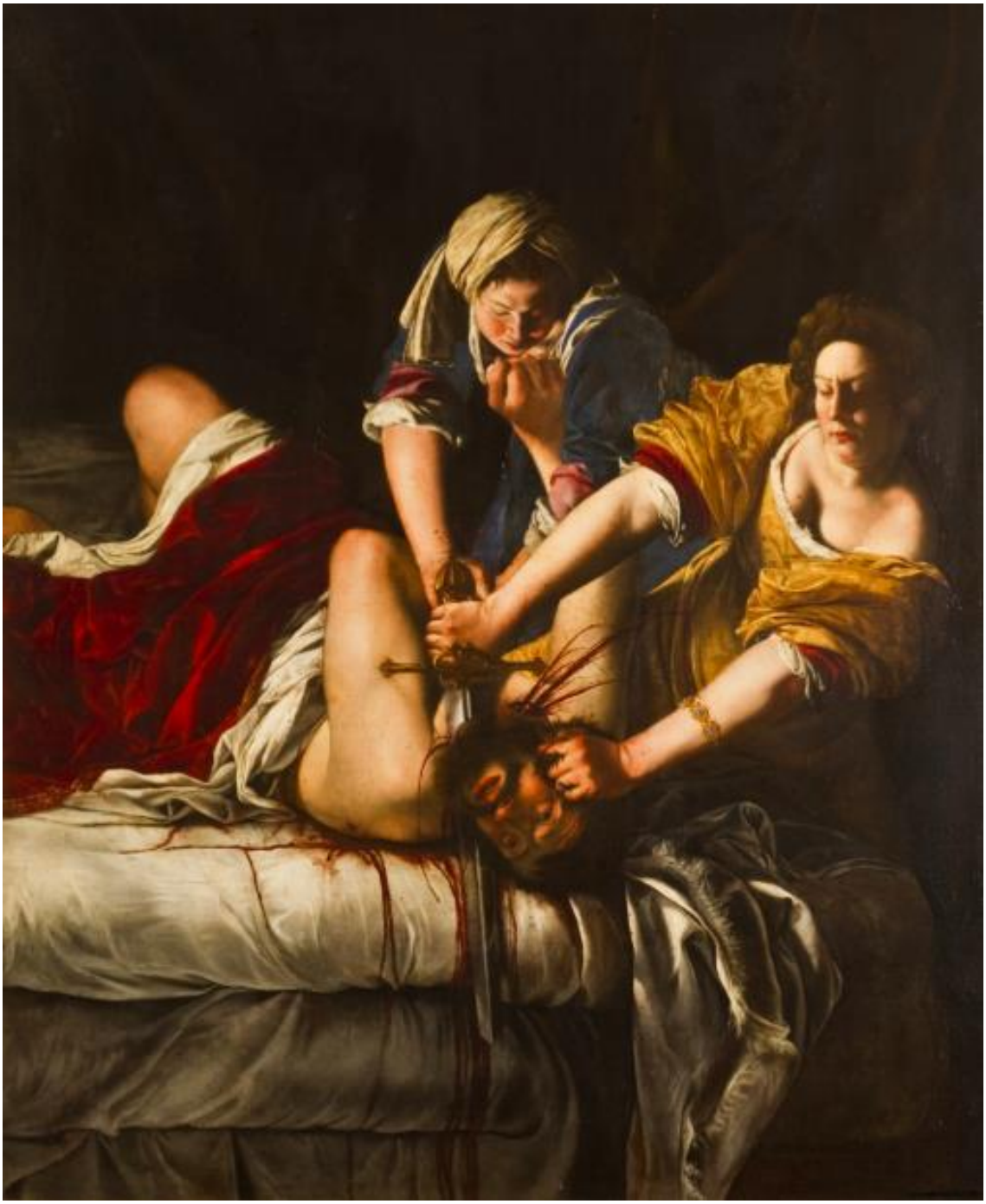

Figure 25. Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, c. 1620. Oil on canvas, 146.5 x 108 cm, Galleria Uffizi, Florence.

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