

## CHAPTER SIX

### WHY, WHY, DELILAH? TEXTUAL, PICTORIAL, MUSICAL AND FILMIC PORTRAYALS OF DELILAH

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The story of Samson and Delilah has attracted throughout the ages the imagination of many readers as well as of a great number of authors and artists, who have offered their version of the story in different genres and media.<sup>1</sup> It is a story of intense love and national heroism, telling about a super-hero who was subdued by a woman, a mythical story about the encounter between Eros and Thanatos, light and darkness.<sup>2</sup> Women play a central role in Samson's story: in the cycle of stories that constitute the Samson saga in the Bible (*Judges* 13–16) he has three problematic meetings with women.<sup>3</sup> In the first encounter and the events that follow (*Judges* 14–15), he is betrayed by his Timnath wife (she reveals the answer of his riddle to his foes), forced to take dangerous actions (to pay the wager) and puts himself at risk in various confrontations with the Philistines; and in

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<sup>1</sup> For the variety of these adaptations, see Fishelov 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew name *Shimshon* (Samson) is clearly related to *Shemesh* (sun), and the name Delilah is associated with *Lylah* (night). For the ways in which the Bible attempts (unsuccessfully) to conceal the mythical overtones of the story in order to highlight its national dimension, see Fishelov 2003.

<sup>3</sup> One may add the fact that the cycle opens with a detailed story about Samson's enunciation, in which his mother, Manoah's wife, plays a leading role. For the attention Samson's mother has received in post-biblical adaptations, see Fishelov 2000, 93-100. For an enlightening psychoanalytic analysis of this dimension of the story, see Kutz 1989.

the second meeting, the one with the whore from Gaza (*Judges* 16.1–3), he is almost caught by his enemies and is forced to carry off the city gates with him in order to escape. But it is the meeting with the third woman, Delilah, which proves to be fatal and finally brings about his downfall. Delilah seduces him to reveal the secret of his strength, and after shaving off his hair she hands him over to the Philistines.

The Delilah story is analogous to the story of Samson’s first wife, the Timnath woman —both of whom betray his secret to the Philistines— but whereas his Timnath wife had betrayed him only under duress (her fellow Philistines had intimidated her: “Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father’s house with fire” —*Judges* 14.15), Delilah seems to have been motivated by other reasons. According to the Bible, Delilah betrayed Samson through sheer greed:

And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. (*Judges* 16.5)<sup>4</sup>

Not all post-biblical adaptations of the story, however, have been content with this simple, business-like description of Delilah’s motivation. In this article I present several textual, pictorial, musical and filmic portrayals of Delilah that shed new light on the biblical story and suggest, explicitly or implicitly, various explanations for her fatal act of betrayal. The ways in which these post-biblical adaptations (verbal, pictorial, operatic, cinematic) portray Delilah create a variety of rhetorical effects, sometimes evoking sympathy towards her, while at other times denouncing her even more severely than in the biblical story. The means by which various artists have created and moulded the audience’s judgment of Delilah —what can be called the rhetoric of the texts— constitutes the core of this article.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Quotes from the biblical story are taken from The King James Version.

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘rhetoric’ is used here in the sense introduced by Wayne Booth in his classical study on the rhetoric of fiction, in which he describes the author’s communicative goal: “to mold the reader into the kind of person suited to appreciate such a book he is writing” (Booth 89).

## Samson and Delilah in Painting

Of the many pictorial representations of Samson and Delilah, I have chosen to focus on four paintings, all taken from the first half of the seventeenth century. Note, however, that even within one relatively short period we can find a great variety as far as the artists' (and audience's) attitude towards Delilah is concerned. Some artists decide to portray her in favourable light, others to harshly condemn her. The first painting belongs to one of the greatest painters of that period, which also inspired, as we shall see below, another great contemporary artist:



Fig. 1. Rubens's *Samson and Delilah* (1609-10). Source: Google Images.

Rubens's painting is not only a great artistic achievement but has become probably the most famous pictorial representation of Samson and Delilah.<sup>6</sup> I draw attention to several details in the picture that encourage the viewer to develop a

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<sup>6</sup> A search in Google-Images (conducted on June 2011) offers 28,300 results for this painting, compared, for example, to only 13,900 for Rembrandt's *The Blinding of Samson* (or *Samson and Delilah*).

favourable attitude towards Delilah despite the fact that it focuses on the crucial moment of her betrayal, which will ultimately lead to Samson's death.<sup>7</sup> First, Delilah has a tender expression on her face; had we not known the context (and if we disregard the soldiers in the background), we could have easily mistaken her expression as a loving one. Second, her tender expression is reinforced by the fact that her left hand is gently placed on Samson's shoulder, as if she is caressing or protecting him. Third, whereas her bare breast evokes sensuality, it also has maternal associations, almost evoking the impression of suckling him.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the *Pietà*-like posture of the two clearly works in her favour as far as the viewer's verdict is concerned.

I move now to another contemporary great master, whose own version of Samson and Delilah is closely modeled after Rubens' picture:



Fig. 2. Van Dyck's *Samson and Delilah* (1), (1618-20). Source: Google Images.

Van Dyck's version differs from Rubens's not only in terms of direction ("left-to-right" as opposed to "right-to-left") but also in its rhetoric. Notwithstanding the resemblance in overall composition and in many specific

<sup>7</sup> A painter could have chosen a totally different scene from the story that does not necessarily carry the weight of moral judgment, such as painting Samson and Delilah's first encounter in the valley of Sorek ("And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah" —*Judges* 16.4).

<sup>8</sup> For the maternal overtones evident in Delilah's portrayal by Rubens, see Kahr 1972.

elements, the rhetorical impression created by Van Dyck's painting is that Delilah is a guilty person. This is supported by several details. First, Delilah's (right) hand does not caress Samson's shoulder in the way her (left) hand does in Rubens's painting. Second, she uses her (left) hand to hush everyone present, highlighting her leading role in the plot against him, as if she is worried that he will suddenly awake and discover the nature of her action. Third, her right hand is in proximity to the hand of "the barber," as if she is assisting him, thus emphasizing the active role she plays in the plot and reinforcing the impression that she is in control of the whole situation. Finally, her breast is partly covered, thus not only concealing her sensuality but also removing any maternal association from the picture —literally and rhetorically.

Did Van Dyck adopt a negative attitude towards Delilah in his take on Rubens's painting because he was a devoted misogynist? Not necessarily. The next painting is also by Van Dyck, but here the viewer's impression of Delilah differs totally from that given by the 1618-20 version. In the later version, dated to ca. 1630, Van Dyck emphasizes the theme of a tragic love between the couple rather than that of a dominating conspirator. Whereas his earlier version represents a similar situation to that depicted by Rubens, the later painting focuses on the moment immediately afterwards, when Samson is captured by the soldiers:



Fig. 3. Van Dyck, *Samson and Delilah (2)* (c. 1630). Source: Google Images.

Despite the fact that Delilah has orchestrated the entire event, she seems in this painting to be moved, even desperate, by Samson being torn from her: her

right hand clutches the bed sheets in despair while her left hand reaches out for his, as if refusing to leave her beloved Samson, and attempting to stop the Philistines who are brutally dragging him away. Her whole posture and appearance suggest that she is already regretting her fatal decision to betray him. And, had we not known the painting's topic and the biblical story, we might easily have titled the picture "The Tragic Separation of Lovers."

Is this rhetorical shift —from condemnation of Delilah to exoneration— a direct outcome of Van Dyck's decision to focus on "the moment just after," as opposed to focusing on the situation of shaving Samson's head? The next example clearly demonstrates that this is not the case. The rhetorical effect in Rembrandt's *The Blinding of Samson* (1636) is quite different. As opposed to creating the impression of a painful separation (not only for Samson but also for Delilah), Delilah in Rembrandt's version antagonizes the viewer. This negative impression is created by several significant details. First, Rembrandt introduces into the "the moment after" the brutal act of blinding Samson, uncompromisingly confronting the viewer with the horrific consequence of the betrayal. Second, Delilah, who is looking back, seems to be fascinated rather than horrified by his blinding. Third, Delilah clasps Samson's shaven hair as if it were a trophy, thus highlighting her active and leading role in the plot. Finally, Samson's posture together with the pointed lance directed at him, between his spread legs, evokes both rape and castration, thus unconsciously heightening the appalling effects of her deeds.



Fig. 4. Rembrandt, *The Blinding of Samson* (or *Samson and Delilah*) (1636). Source: Google Images.

The four pictorial representations above illustrate the variety of rhetorical effects that can be associated with portrayals of Delilah, achieved not only through the situation taken from the story that the artist has chosen to depict, but also through the way he handles specific details of that situation. Furthermore, even when we restrict ourselves to one historical period, sometimes to the same school (the Baroque in the case of Rubens and Van Dyck) or even to the same painter (in the case of Van Dyck), we can find interesting variations in terms of the rhetoric of the picture: either highlighting Delilah's maternal, caring, loving and redeeming features, or portraying her as an active, guilty, even sadistic conspirator.

### Musical Representation

In this next section, I focus on two very different musical versions of the theme of Samson and Delilah. The first example is taken from an opera: Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* (1877). I refer to the aria, perhaps the most popular in this opera, sung by Delilah just before she betrays Samson. Following is the text of the first strophe of the aria (libretto by Ferdinand Lemaire), in the original French and in English translation:<sup>9</sup>

Saint-Saëns / Lemaire, "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix"  
 Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix,  
 comme s'ouvrent les fleurs  
 Aux baiser de l'aurore!  
 Mais, ô mon bienaimé,  
 pour mieux sécher mes pleurs,  
 Que ta voix parle encore!  
 Dis-moi qu'à Dalila  
 tu reviens pour jamais,  
 Redis à ma tendresse  
 Les serments d'autrefois,  
 ces serments que j'aimais!  
 Ah! réponds à ma tendresse!  
 Verse-moi, verse-moi l'ivresse!

"My heart opens to your voice"  
 Like the flowers open  
 to the kisses of the dawn!  
 But, oh my beloved,

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<sup>9</sup> The English translation is taken from: [http://www.oberlin.edu/con/bkstage/200305/graves\\_program.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/con/bkstage/200305/graves_program.html).

to better dry my tears,  
 Let your voice speak again!  
 Tell me that you are returning  
 to Delilah forever!  
 Repeat to my tenderness  
 the promises of old times,  
 those promises that I loved!  
 Ah! respond to my tenderness!  
 Fill me with ecstasy!

Links to performances of “*Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix*” by the two accomplished singers Shirley Verrett<sup>10</sup> and Anna Larsson<sup>11</sup> may be retrieved on the web. Text and music alike make us sympathize with Delilah: the aria portrays her as a devoted, loving woman seeking to get the attention of her beloved Samson; and contrasting the biblical text, in which we are told that it was Samson who had fallen in love with Delilah (“And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah” —*Judges* 16.4). In the opera the emphasis is placed on Delilah’s emotions. Hence, her actions (including the betrayal) are no longer the consequence of a calculated woman motivated by greed, but are rather the result of a woman passionately moved by love. Note also the intimate association created between Delilah and the charms of nature (“*Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix, / comme s’ouvrent les fleurs / aux baiser de l’aurore*”) thus endowing her character with an additional enticing, positive dimension.<sup>12</sup> In the second performance, by Anna Larsson, the camera occasionally moves to focus on the audience (including on the famous opera singer Renée Fleming), thus indirectly attesting the positive rhetorical effect of the aria on the listeners: they seem to be not only impressed by the quality of the singing but also touched by the character and her words. It is important to note that the (relatively) positive impression created in this aria does not represent the impression that she creates as the opera moves on. There her dark, treacherous side is revealed and she collaborates with the great priest of the Philistines to subdue Samson to the conquerors’ will and religion. Nonetheless, as far as the aria is concerned, the audience tends to sympathize with her.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPET4RAe6yQ>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K86vZWf9-A8>.

<sup>12</sup> In the overall thematic contrast elaborated in the opera, the God of the Jews is associated with some of the harsher aspects of nature —as opposed to Delilah and the pagan connection to the beauty of nature— like thunder and lightning; see, for example, the end of Act 2.



I move now to a totally different musical version of the story —Tom Jones’s “Delilah” —, whose text reads:

I saw the light on the night that I passed by her window  
I saw the flickering shadows of love on her blind  
She was my woman  
As she deceived me I watched and went out of my mind  
My, my, my, Delilah  
Why, why, why, Delilah  
I could see that girl was no good for me  
But I was lost like a slave that no man could free  
At break of day when that man drove away, I was waiting  
I cross the street to her house and she opened the door  
She stood there laughing  
I felt the knife in my hand and she laughed no more  
My, my, my Delilah  
Why, why, why Delilah  
So before they come to break down the door  
Forgive me Delilah I just couldn’t take any more  
She stood there laughing  
I felt the knife in my hand and she laughed no more  
My, my, my, Delilah  
Why, why, why, Delilah  
So before they come to break down the door  
Forgive me Delilah I just couldn’t take any more  
Forgive me Delilah I just couldn’t take any more

A link to one of Tom Jones’s performances of his song may be accessed through YouTube.<sup>13</sup> This version of Delilah differs in almost every aspect from what we have seen or heard so far. The popular song is not an attempt to present the biblical story “as it really was” but, rather, adapts it to the contemporary, modern world: a jealous man stalks his lover and brutally attacks her when he discovers that she has betrayed him. In other words, if the other versions discussed so far were metonymical elaborations on the biblical story (adding details, portraying it from a certain angle, etc.), Jones’s version is a partial *metaphorical* adaptation of the biblical story.<sup>14</sup> It evokes the name of Delilah as a cultural model, stereotype, symbol or metaphor for a treacherous, betraying woman.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sI5LWwC-cE8>.

<sup>14</sup> The distinction between metonymic and metaphoric literary allusions was suggested by Ben-Porat (1978). I apply her useful distinction here to the field of artistic adaptations.

From a rhetorical point of view, Jones's "Delilah" evokes sympathy with the betrayed man: the song voices his point of view, narrates the sequence of events as he experienced them and highlights his despair and puzzlement in face of her inexplicable behaviour by the repeated question "Why, Why, Why Delilah?." Furthermore, the song emphasizes the demonic nature of the Delilah-like behaviour by means of the speaker telling us twice that when he had confronted Delilah, her reaction had been: "she stood there laughing," thus creating the impression of an indifferent, perhaps even sadistic woman who shows no empathy for the man so deeply hurt by her betrayal. By bringing us only his side of the story and emphasizing her insensitivity, the song seems to vindicate the speaker-protagonist's violent reaction or at least somewhat mitigates an unequivocal condemnation of his conduct.

### The Biblical Story Told in a Novel

Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, the prominent Jewish leader and man of letters of the first half of the twentieth century, wrote his novel *Samson* in 1927. The novel, originally composed in Russian, was almost immediately translated into Hebrew, German and English (the English translation was published under different titles: *Samson, Judge and Fool*, *Samson the Nazarite*, and *Prelude to Delilah*). In his novel, Jabotinsky fleshes out some of the biblical characters and, while retaining the basic events of the biblical story, he retells them from a new perspective, and adds several new characters and incidents. Perhaps his most provocative decision, especially for his contemporary Jewish readers, was to elaborate upon the secular dimension, demonstrating that every event in the biblical story could be given a realistic explanation, based on social, ethnic, psychological and economic factors.

One of the major characters to receive an original treatment in the novel is Delilah herself. Jabotinsky's Delilah is a relatively rounded character, motivated by her envy of Samson's love for Semadar, her older, preferred, aristocratic sister, who will become Samson's first wife, the Timnath woman. Thus Jabotinsky creates a credible and complex love story and assigns the flat character of biblical Delilah psychological depth. To understand the complex relationship of Samson and Delilah in the novel, I focus here on the tragic culmination of the story in the Temple of Dagon. Jabotinsky has Samson and Delilah meet again, this time after the consequences of her betrayal have been revealed: he has been imprisoned and blinded.<sup>15</sup> A swift, emotionally charged exchange of words takes place between the

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<sup>15</sup> Jabotinsky was not the first to devise a meeting between Samson and Delilah *after* the betrayal (something we do not have in the biblical story). In *Samson Agonistes*, Milton has

two. Delilah, whose real name in the novel is Elinoar (she assumes the name Delilah when she becomes a prostitute), still driven by vengeance and the desire to humiliate Samson, taunts him by posing a series of riddles (a practice he himself had been fond of in the past):

“Here is another riddle,” she cried. “From the outcast came a conqueress, and the eyes that once looked on her with contempt will never see again. Do you know the answer to that riddle?” (Jabotinsky 340)

When Samson attempts to ignore her and briefly responds “Elinoar? Who is she? I don’t remember her,” she moves on to her next riddle. This time it is not only verbal: Elinoar/Delilah is holding a baby and makes Samson touch it. Only then, after he has asked her “Whose child is that?” does she triumphantly formulate her final and fatal riddle:

Guess! It will grow brave and strong like its father and I, since my milk has turned to poison, shall teach it to hate its father’s race. And so, out of the judge and protector will come an enemy and destroyer. (Ibid. 341)

Hearing these words and realizing that Elinoar/Delilah intends to raise his child as an enemy of his people, Samson undergoes a frightening transformation:

Then from the giant’s throat came a strange gurgling sound that had little resemblance to a human voice. Stretching out his hands, he stepped forward, but collided with one of the pillars that supported the roof above the figure of Dagon and the sacrificial altar. The woman stood her ground, laughing and pressing to her breast the child, which was now crying plaintively again [...] his excitement subsided, the smile came back to his face, and he said in his former voice, but very loudly and slowly: “Now you can all guess Samson’s last riddle: In his lifetime he slew many, but more still in the hour of his death —who is that?” (Ibid. 341-342)

After the formulation of the last riddle comes the moment when Samson brings down the Temple of Dagon upon himself and all who are present, first and foremost Elinoar/Delilah and his own child. The motivation for his suicidal act is

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Delilah visit Samson in his prison cell in an attempt to obtain forgiveness —but to no avail. As we shall see in the following section, an interesting development of such a reunion can also be found in DeMille’s *Samson and Delilah*. For a discussion of the motivation of adaptors to introduce a reunion scene into the Samson and Delilah story, see Fishelov 2008/2009.

thus presented as an outcome of his fury at hearing that his own son is to be turned against his people.

Delilah is thus motivated by her jealous hatred to her sister and her desire to win the love of Samson, the attractive Danite judge. And while this psychological motivation adds a realistic dimension to the story, Delilah's pursuit of revenge, especially in using Samson's own child as a weapon, adds a demonic aspect to her character, making the reader more judgmental of her character and actions.

### **Demille's Hollywood Production of *Samson and Delilah***

The English translation of Jabotinsky's novel received critical acclaim and Hollywood bought the rights to the novel, using some of its ideas in the script of Cecil B. DeMille's film *Samson and Delilah* (1949).<sup>16</sup> In DeMille's cinematic version Delilah plays an even bigger role than in the novel, as indeed indicated by the title of the film. She is deeply in love with Samson, competing not only with her sister Semadar but also bickering with Miriam (the proposed Hebrew bride) whom she perceives as her rival. Her passion causes her to defy the Saran of Gaza, her benefactor and partner. After Delilah discovers to her horror that Samson has been blinded, she falls into a state of self-torment. Deeply remorseful, she again visits Samson in his prison cell. This time she comes without the Saran and without a guard. She throws herself into his arms asking him to do whatever he pleases with her. During this secret visit to the prison cell she is modestly dressed in a way reminiscent of a nun, lending her a chaste, sincere appearance. All she wants is to escape with him to a place where they can live out their love—a link to the moving encounter between Samson and Delilah in the prison cell may be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iABn7nJlI>. As the final scene in the Temple of Dagon begins<sup>17</sup>, we realise that Samson and Delilah will finally, but all too late, collaborate like a true loving couple.

When the camera zooms in on Delilah she is seated next to the Saran like a queen, wearing a dress with a long peacock-like train. When Samson is brought into the hall—to be tormented, humiliated and eventually to be made to renounce his God and kneel before Dagon—Delilah expresses her desire to take an active part in the proceedings. The Saran rightly suspects that she simply wants to be close to her beloved and he warns her, “if you go to him, you cannot come back to me”—, but Delilah ignores his threat and approaches Samson.

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<sup>16</sup> See in Katz's biography of Jabotinsky (Katz 1053-54).

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvS8KMtsKsc>.

Pretending to participate in the mocking, whipping and tormenting of Samson, she actually helps him reach the two columns that support the temple. At that point, Delilah perhaps suspects Samson's intention even if he does not express it. He only says to her, "Death will come into this temple. The hand of the Lord will strike." Before he starts straining at the two pillars he wants to make sure that Delilah will escape the fate awaiting the crowds of Philistines gathered there. He asks her to leave the place and when he repeats "have you gone?" she, although still present, does not respond, leading the blind Samson to believe that she has left. Instead, she remains, hypnotized by Samson's renewed strength, willing to die, like a true martyr, together with her beloved.

Thus, despite the fact that the film is based on Jabotinsky's novel, DeMille develops Delilah's character in a totally different direction. This new development has a far-reaching rhetorical consequence. As against Jabotinsky's novel, where the reader is highly critical of Delilah, in the film the audience tends to forgive her. The film evokes such forgiveness not only because she truly loves Samson and shows genuine remorse but also because Samson himself, the victim of her treachery, forgives her. In the film, love conquers all and DeMille effectively exonerates Delilah: the melodramatic reunion of the two lovers highlights the theme of Christian absolution and the American ethos, whereby the love of individuals prevails over religious differences and ancient ethnic roots.

### **Concluding Remarks**

After having seen and heard these various representations of "Delilahs" and the different effects they may have on the way we judge her character, I would like to suggest, in conclusion, an important distinction between two levels involved in the adaptation of a literary work to other media, arts and genres. One level is connected to the very choice of a specific art, medium or genre and what this decision implies; the second level is related to the artist's own values, ideology and personal attitude towards the depicted characters and story.

As far as the first level is concerned, the need to give Delilah a specific appearance (height, hair colour, etc.) is directly entailed by the very choice to paint her. By the same token, the decision to let her sing an aria is an outcome of choosing to write an opera based on the biblical story, while the decision to assign

to her a certain degree of ‘roundness’ as a character is a result of writing a realistic novel.<sup>18</sup>

The rhetorical aspect of Delilah’s representation (evoking sympathy or criticism from the audience), however, is not derived from the specific medium, art or genre chosen by an adaptor. To explain the specific rhetorical effects we should, rather, engage with the artist’s personal attitude, ideology and sensibility. In other words, there is no automatic relation between the choice of a specific medium and the rhetorical effect. True, the two levels are not entirely unrelated and it is reasonable to argue that certain media and genres are more amenable to specific rhetorical consequences and effects: when you let Delilah sing an aria in an opera, for example, there is a good chance that you risk sympathizing with her. And when you write a play based on the biblical story, you will probably give certain characters more voice than they originally had in the story, thus increasing the chance that their point of view is expressed and that, consequently, the audience will develop greater sympathy towards them.

Despite such putative correlations, there is nonetheless never an automatic and necessary connection between the chosen medium, art or genre and the specific rhetorical attitude of the artist towards a character. If all we have, for example, is a knowledge of the existence of paintings of Delilah by Rubens, Van Dyck and Rembrandt, without having actually seen them, there is no way we will be able to tell what the specific attitude of the artist towards her may have been.

The more we know about the artist’s background, the period in which the artistic representation was produced and the prevailing ideological, cultural and religious norms of that period, the more we will be able to understand the constraints under which the artist was working, as well as his or her artistic achievement. However, we should never assume that this kind of background knowledge offers a definite key for determining the specific attitude of an artist towards the characters he or she depicts. Furthermore, even when we learn that an artist of a specific time, place and school has created in one work a specific attitude towards a character, there is no guarantee that we will encounter the same attitude in another work of his/hers —as indeed illustrated by the two paintings by Van Dyck. Background information about medium, genre, period and artist is always helpful, but it should never substitute an attentive reading of the rhetoric of a specific work. Artists have, after all, poetic license; and while they are a product of their period and culture, it is also they who shape and reshape the norms of that same period and culture.

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<sup>18</sup> In his discussion of the adaptation of the Ulysses theme, Stanford describes such changes as a result of “the exigencies of the chosen genre” (Stanford 6).

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