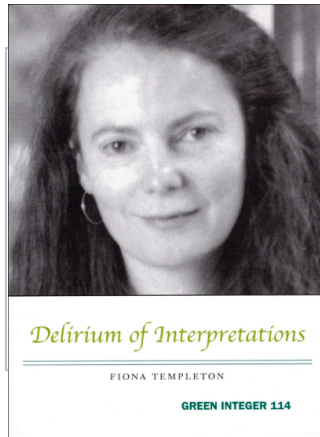


# Delirium of Interpretations - by Fiona Templeton

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Delirium of Interpretations published in 2003 by Green Integer has the subtitle (of the predicament and the phenomenon of Camille Claudel). In Templeton's notes preceding the text she provides a short biography of Claudel, a sculptor who lived from 1864 - 1934. She began sculpting young, was a student and later mistress of Auguste Rodin. She separated from him, continued to make art and after the death of her father was committed to an asylum by her family, including her brother, the playwright Paul Claudel. She died 30 years later in the asylum, much of her work lost or destroyed.

The play is constructed from multiple texts. Actors speak in character, as historical voices, as actors performing actors, and as representatives of various forces in Claudel's life. The majority of the text is assembled from letters, descriptions of Claudel's and Rodin's sculpture, from biographies, from literature from the era, from the myths on which much of their sculpture was based, and Templeton's original writing. The script is presented with a side column where sources are attributed, often line by line.

The play is organized into a prologue, five scenes and an epilogue. Characters are indicated by letters rather than names - possibly to suggest their changing natures. For example, R is Rodin, male artist, and father (physically). Claudel's existence as a sculptor of great talent, the lack of definitive information about her life - sometimes she is portrayed as stalking Rodin - other times he is the one controlling and relentlessly seeking her. The judgment and ultimate imprisonment by her family due to the diagnoses "Delirium of Interpretations" which would now be referred to as paranoia - paranoia that may have been very justified according to some accounts collected here. The jealousy of her talent by the men in her life - Rodin and her brother - and how this led them to control her - as well as the resentment of women, particular Rodin's wife and her own mother. The position of women at that time, particularly women seeking to work, to create, to be valued for their art - at a time when art was an entirely masculine endeavor. All of this is reflected in Templeton's text through the multiple interpreters - a sense of the inability of one objective voice, an undermining of any singular narrative to explain the individual - results from the play's form and methods of construction.

The published version also includes photographs of the sculptures referred to in the play. This adds an additional layer to the experience of reading - as would seeing these in person. There are notes regarding the staging, direction, and the acting of the piece. Templeton explains her vision of the performance style, includes the audience placement and some moments of improvised experience in the forward and afterward. Her explanations ground the sometimes dense and difficult text into the larger aims of the piece as a theatrical experience.

Claudel is the only character granted a subjective voice throughout the piece. It is through her the audience experiences the narrative, which unfolds chronologically through her life. First the impulse to create, then the experience of being in Rodin's workshop, then the conflict with her lover, her work alone, then a scene of interpretations of Claudel's work, a final scene of interpretations of her - the doctor's notes and views of her in the asylum as well as her own accounting of her mental state and experience, and finally an epilogue "Death, Disappearance, and History."

Here's some text to end with - which will speak louder than my attempt at description -

Genius is PR, it's macho, meaning egotistic and exclusive, unable to differentiate from their own viewpoint. It's a reason for a lot of brutality, it's old-fashioned, it's the biography, not the work. It's not useful. Talk instead about foresight, both penetration and encompassment. The work. In the world. Excitement. The greatest talent is to make something of your talent. I expect craft from people I work with. Talk of genius avoids multiple respect for creativity. It suggests the inhuman. (Scene 4, Camille)