

ADRIENNE EBERHARD

The Hand

The hand that holds the pen and writes to you
is a wing – or a sheaf of feathers – too,
a carriage that spirits me away,
wheels turning, faster, faster. I pray
your passage is calm and smooth, the winds true.

I hear the shots and blows, I hear them hew
the statues, bit by bit, too few
remain. Louis is in pieces; they make us pay
with our hearts, and with our hopes they play.
My hand

that writes to you, is the remains of a statue,
broken, shattered, if only I knew
how to read the future in the sun's rays
that shine ineffectually each slow day.
The winds are building, fill your sails, I send you
my hand.

Note: During the Revolution, many statues of the royal family were destroyed. In the Musee Carnavalet in Paris, all that remains of a marble statue of Louis XVI is his hand. In this poem, Marie Antoinette writes to Marie Girardin, a French woman from Versailles who dressed as a man and obtained the job of steward on d'Entrecasteaux's ship on his expedition to find La Perouse (Louis XVI had instigated La Perouse's expedition).