

Dramaturgical Note

Marie Antoinette's life is frequently stretched across four or five hundred pages, with lengthy chapters detailing months-long events or a single evening. By contrast, David Adjmi references a complex scandal in a six-word outburst, sometimes circumventing events entirely. A year may span three scenes, while a decade passes in a blink. As the audience, we accompany Marie as she is swept through time.

This is Marie before she became a figure of history, her life not yet organized in a timeline or detailed in books. Still, we can see the events accumulate, both intimate and historical. Every version of Marie layers across one another: young woman, wife, friend, mother, prisoner, and everything in between. Collectively, they are: *Queen Marie Antoinette*.

From her arrival at Versailles, Marie became a construction of public imagination. Layer upon layer, true and false, beautiful and hideous. In her lifetime, she was a fascinating paradox: a fashion icon, perfectly poised and elegant, and a cruel beast, voracious and sexually perverse. These archetypes held pieces of the real Marie, but those around her and those who followed shaped those pieces to fit their own narratives.

Today, we can see the archetypes, the contexts, the rewritten histories of Marie Antoinette, yet we continue to search for a unifying story to categorize her into a neat dichotomy of *good* or *bad*. Adjmi brings us beyond the biographies and textbooks, the movies and museums. Here, we focus on the Marie in front of us: ever-changing, layered, and entirely human.

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For further reading:

Marie Antoinette by Stefan Zweig (Pushkin Press, 1932; reprint 2017)

Marie Antoinette: The Making of a French Queen by John Hardman (Yale University Press, 2021)

The French Revolution, Napoleon, and The Republic editor Jeremy Klar (Britannica Educational Publishing, 2016)