

ANALYSIS

“L’Envoi” (1930)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

Each vignette in *In Our Time* is like a dispatch from the front of contemporary life. “L’Envoi” is the last dispatch, a synecdoche or summation of modern history. The speaker is implicitly a foreign correspondent like Hemingway was. Greece represents the origin of democracy, which remains unstable “in our time” after more than two thousand years. Greeks now have a king, a reactionary government. The king has been overthrown and is being held captive in his palace by “the revolutionary committee” of Communists. The king is a gentle soul “working in a garden.” Yet he approves of Pastiras, the Greek general, executing Communists. The Reds previously overthrew Kerensky, the first Prime Minister of Russia: “If Kerensky had shot a few men things might have been altogether different.” The king approves of his enemies being shot, but the universal rule of all politicians, kings as well as Communists, “is not to be shot oneself!” Ironically the king seems like a regular guy, he is jolly in jeopardy, and he approves of democracy. “Like all Greeks he wanted to go to America.”

Michael Hollister (2012)