

# The Huntsman and the Castaway

*Gilbert Highet*

IN ONE of his most lively and apparently original speeches (the *Euboean*, no.7) Dio Chrysostom describes an adventure which he says happened to him during his years of exile and penury. Crossing the Aegean from Chios to mainland Greece, he was caught in a storm and cast ashore in the Hollows of Euboea. It was a desolate place. He set out to try to find another ship. After a time he saw a hunted deer, which had leapt off the cliff and was dying on the beach. When the huntsman appeared, Dio showed him the quarry, helped him to skin it and cut it up, and was invited to his home for dinner.

As they walked (slowly enough, carrying half a deer) the man—Dio does not give him a name, but let us call him Demeas—described his life. It was poor: he lived mostly by hunting, dressed in skins (§62), and grew only a little grain (§§11 and 45). It was simple: there were only two families in the settlement (his own and that of his brother-in-law), not big enough to form a village (§42). The land over which he hunted game had formerly been part of a large estate, with horses and cattle; but its owner had been put to death by the emperor because of his wealth, the cattle and horses driven off, the land abandoned, legally, although not actually, reverting to the nearest city-community, Carystus.<sup>1</sup>

The father of Demeas had been one of two freeborn herdsmen on

<sup>1</sup> The brother-in-law of Demeas is fifty years old (§21); the adventure takes place in the last years of Domitian's reign, say about A.D. 95: therefore the brother-in-law was born in 45 or so. Therefore his father was born in 20 or 25: he died an old man in about 94 (§20). The estate was confiscated well before Demeas was married (§20), indeed while he was still a boy (§21): therefore during the sixties. This means that the emperor responsible was not, as some have thought, Domitian, but Nero (with whom the last Flavian was often compared, e.g. by Juvenal 4.38). The occasion will have been Nero's tour of Greece in 66–67, when he swallowed up enormous properties and executed their owners (Dio Cassius 62.11, a report interpreted as "imposing taxation on the rich" by A. Momigliano in the relevant section of *CAH* 10.21.6 and called "exaggeration" by Hohl in *RE Suppl.* 3 [1918] 389). If the proprietor was Tib. Claudius Hipparchus (grandfather of Herodes Atticus), then his execution cannot be attributed to Domitian, as suggested by M. P. Charlesworth in *CAH* 11.1.5, p.29 n.1, and Wilamowitz must be mistaken in commenting "Dies zielt auf das Missregiment Domitians" (*Griechisches Lesebuch*<sup>5</sup> 2.1 [Berlin 1910] p.10). The whole thing happened a generation before Dio visited Euboea and heard the story.

the estate, who had remained after the confiscation as squatters and had taken to hunting in order to live. Each had one son and one daughter. They joined the families by marrying the daughters to the sons; and now, by the time of Dio's visit, the third generation was growing up, one grand-daughter having already married and left home (§68). Demeas' brother-in-law had never visited the city.<sup>2</sup> Demeas had been there twice, once as a boy, and once later on, when the fathers were dead and he represented the little group (§21). He was summoned by a man sent by the magistrates. He was taken into the citizens' assembly. There, says he, recollecting the episode, he is accused of enriching himself by trespassing on public land without a title and without paying rent, and in addition of being a wrecker, luring ships onto the rocky coast by false beacons, like the mythical king Nauplius. A prominent citizen then comes forward to defend Demeas, saying that too much land is derelict, and that anyone willing to work it should be given title, with a small rent to be paid in kind. Bidden to make a statement, Demeas explains how miserably poor he and his people are, and yet conveys the impression that they are content with what they have. Eloquent in his indignation, he denies that he has ever made any profit out of shipwrecks: on the contrary, he has often helped castaways (as in fact he succored Dio).

At this a man rises in the assembly, accompanied by a neighbor, and testifies that two years earlier they were both shipwrecked with heavy loss off Cape Caphereus and cast ashore destitute. Demeas (he declares) took them in, warmed them at a fire, rubbed them with tallow (having no olive-oil), poured hot water over them, clothed them and fed them, and kept them for three days to recover: he saved their lives. Demeas recognizes him, greets him by his name as Sotades, and naively kisses him.

The original defender now proposes that Demeas be honored with a dinner in the prytaneum, given regular clothes, granted the use of the land, and awarded a hundred drachmas. This is passed by acclamation. Demeas accepts the dinner, refuses the money, and goes home, to remain undisturbed thenceforward.

As he ends his story, he and Dio reach his cottage. Dio dines on the venison with Demeas and his wife, served by a daughter and two sons. During the meal Demeas' brother-in-law (for convenience we

<sup>2</sup> The city is not named; but since the huntsmen live on the foothills of Mount Ocha in southern Euboea (§38), it must be Carystus: Chalcis is too far distant to be concerned.

may call him Simon) enters with his son, who brings a gift for his girl cousin. (The young couple might be named Gorgias and Glycera.) Tactfully Dio asks when the girl will be married and to whom. The father answers that the bridegroom is present. Then why the delay? First, says Simon (§70), to choose an auspicious day—at which Gorgias observes that the moon is full and the air clear (§71)—and second, says Demeas, because Simon has to go and purchase a sacrificial victim (§72)—which Gorgias counters by saying that he has got hold of a pig and has been fattening it up (§§73–74). The pig is brought in and approved, the wedding is fixed for the day after the morrow, and Dio is invited to be a guest. He accepts, thinking how much happier and more natural such weddings are than the marriages of the rich, encumbered by the work of matchmakers, by the legal problems of settlements and dowries, and by arguments during the celebration itself (§80).

Now, as Dio himself says (§81), I have not told this story without meaning to make a point. I suggest that these two episodes, the trial in the city and the wedding in the country, may have been inspired by a play, one of the lost works of New Comedy, and that in the play they were connected much more closely as parts of a single intrigue. It is really quite artificial that two kinsmen living in a tiny community should wait for the arrival of a benevolent stranger to make the final arrangements for a wedding between their children. It is also rather artificial to have the huntsman tell a long tale about a legal adventure in the city to a poor barefooted vagabond while they walk home carrying their dinner.

The story narrated by Demeas (§§21–63) has several predecessors in scenes from Attic drama. In each of them a person who has attended a meeting of an assembly describes it on stage to an interested auditor. They are Aristophanes' *Knights* 624–82, Euripides' *Orestes* 852–956, Aristophanes' *Women's Assembly* 395–457, and Menander's *Sicyonian* (ed. R. Kassel, Berlin 1965) 169–271.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Links between some or all of these scenes have been examined by several scholars: notably E. W. Handley, "Notes on the *Sikyonios*," *BICS* 12 (1965) 38–62; R. Kassel, "Menanders *Sikyonier*," *Eranos* 63 (1965) 1–21; H. Lloyd-Jones, "Menander's *Sikyonios*," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 131–57; and G. A. Ricciardelli, "Osservazioni sulla *rhesis* del Sicionio di Menandro," *RivCultCM* 8 (1966) 210–14. Evidently Menander is gently parodying (or, as Lloyd-Jones prefers, lightly alluding to) the speech in *Orestes*, and also in certain details copying both the Aristophanic scenes. Kassel (21 n.43) points out that "der Bravour-stück der Euripidesparodie" was a stylistic triumph for Menander, and was also a fine opportunity for the

In *The Sicyonian* a messenger describes to Smicrines an assembly at which the citizenship of a girl kidnapped in childhood was debated. It was a noisy meeting. The messenger not only gives the speeches and verbal fencing of the debaters in direct speech, but even reports the shouts of the crowd (244–45). The just cause triumphs—with the help of a good man, who is described as ἀνδρικὸς πάνυ (215), as the defender of Orestes was ἀνδρείος ἀνήρ (*Or.* 918).

In the *Euboean Discourse* Demeas describes to Dio an assembly at which his entire livelihood and even his life were endangered, until—thanks to the unexpected intervention of someone apparently a stranger to him—he was vindicated and rewarded by the favor of the citizens.

It is possible that Demeas' tale in Dio is based on a passage in a lost comedy, of the type known to us from *The Sicyonian*.<sup>4</sup> Its central theme is particularly common in New Comedy: an important character is saved from misfortune by the appearance of some person or thing from the past, which leads into a recognition-scene (*Dio* §59). Suppose that in the comedy Demeas was a poor huntsman or farmer, living on the bare subsistence level (like Cnemon in *The Curmudgeon*) and strange to the ways of the city (like the speaker of *Georgos* fr.3); that he was falsely accused of trespassing, and threatened with eviction or worse; and that Sotades appeared out of his past, to justify him, so that the right cause, as it must do in comedy, triumphed.

Can that adventure be connected with the other episode in Dio's narrative, the preparations for the wedding of Demeas' daughter Glycera? This also is a favorite comic theme, e.g. *Curmudgeon* 935–53, *Samian Woman* 325–32. A wedding often occurs at the end of a play, just after some obstacle to it has been removed by an unexpected twist of fortune; and it was just such a happy *peripeteia* that brought about the acquittal of the bride's father Demeas. In Dio's story the two impediments which have held up the marriage—the need to fix an auspicious day and the requirement of procuring a sacrificial animal—are too trivial to have been part of a comic intrigue. In New

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actor, who had to evoke the whole of a noisy debate filled with different types of voice. The opening of the *Orestes* speech was also parodied by the Middle Comedy poet Alcaeus (fr.19 Kock).

<sup>4</sup> Dio admires and praises Menander (18.6–7) and quotes him at least once (32.16= *Plocium* fr.335.6–7). He refers to plots and productions of New Comedy (old by his time) in 15.7, 19.5, 32.94 and 57.11. He also likes paraphrasing Attic drama: e.g. in 52 and 59.

Comedy the commonest external obstacles to a marriage are lack of a dowry and dubiety about the bride's citizenship and status. Suppose that Demeas had been involved in a legal case concerning money or citizenship or both;<sup>5</sup> that this had prevented his daughter's marriage; that Sotades unexpectedly appeared to give the evidence that saved him; and that in recognition of an earlier benefaction (such as his rescue after shipwreck) Sotades had presented him with a sum of money.<sup>6</sup> The wedding could then proceed. The guest of honor would be, not the shipwrecked philosopher Dio, but the former castaway Sotades.

I have failed to find a title which would clearly indicate the existence of such a play, or any group of fragments which might belong to it. No *Kynagos* or *Kynegos* is known.<sup>7</sup> Only one line remains of the *Kynegetai* of Anaxandrides (Middle Comedy) and it tells us nothing.<sup>8</sup> Two titles involve shipwreck. One is *Dis Nauagos* or *Dionysus Nauagos*, falsely attributed to Aristophanes and held to be by his imitator Archippus: this can scarcely be relevant.<sup>9</sup> The other comes from the Middle Comedy, the *Nauagos* of Ehippus;<sup>10</sup> but the only fragment from it is a witty speech mocking the members of Plato's Academy, and it is hard to fit it into such a comedy as we have imagined. Only one word of the *Naukleros* by Eudoxus survives;<sup>11</sup> and the fragments of Menander's *Naukleros* are not encouraging. Menander's *Halieus* may have contained a shipwreck and a rescue (see fr.15); fragment 14 expresses a sentiment rather like that which Dio voices in §§109–26;<sup>12</sup> but the other fragments will not fit into any intrigue such as has been suggested above. The connection between the *Euboean Discourse* and a play of the New Comedy is therefore, at least for the present, purely conjectural. Yet many dramas of which we know virtually nothing

<sup>5</sup> In §49 he tells the assembly with considerable emphasis that his father was legally a citizen.

<sup>6</sup> Dio makes the huntsman refuse the hundred drachmas (§63), but this is part of the general philosophical doctrine expressed in this discourse, that money is evil (§§104–06, 109).

<sup>7</sup> Philetærus of the Middle Comedy wrote a *Kynagis* or *Kynegis* (Kock, *CAF* II pp.231–33, fr.6–9), but the hunting girl was no doubt a harlot, and the play was sexy and sophisticated.

<sup>8</sup> Kock, *CAF* II p.144, fr.24.

<sup>9</sup> Kock, *CAF* I p.459, fr.266; and pp.679–89.

<sup>10</sup> Kock, *CAF* II pp.257–58, fr.14.

<sup>11</sup> Kock, *CAF* III p.332, fr.1.

<sup>12</sup> Similarly the little speech in Menander's *Hydria* (fr.401 Koerte) would go quite well in the mouth of Demeas. So would the speech on farming from Philemon's *Pyrrhus* (Kock, *CAF* II pp.496–97, fr.71).

were familiar to Dio and to scholars of his era: for example, in 32.23 he quotes what appears to be a fragment from a wholly unknown comedy.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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