

## ADAM'S HAWK AND THE GREEK CHORUS

By Manyazewal Endeshaw (2011)

Adam's Hawk in his short stories of "ይወስዳል መንገድ ያደርሳል መንገድ" functions in a similar way a Greek chorus does in their dramas. This comparison by no means implies that Adam borrowed the technique from Greek drama. It just happens that I observed a few similarities, and this would be just one kind of interpretation.

### Differences

The Greek chorus uses a very elevated or poetic language, while the hawk in Adam's stories does not use verbal language except probably twice when ሰናይት in "እንደገና ሊጥ" feels she heard a word "አይዘኝ" although there is no neutral confirmation that it was the hawk which uttered this word of encouragement, and in "በአሕዛብ ማድ ቤት በር ላይ" when ቆስጠንጢኖስ thought he heard "ግባ" to see his wife and her lover sharing a shamefully amorous moment.

On the other hand, Greek chorus involved human actors who make direct and realistic comments on the events in the drama, while in Adam's case, it's a single hawk appearing in different guises and sizes (sometimes even as a crow) in the various stories.

The other difference is that the Greek chorus repeatedly appears to make comments, while Adam's hawk appears just once in a story. I can go on listing the differences, but the above examples are more than enough to make my point.

### Whence originates the Hawk?

From where Adam took the hawk, or is inspired by, invites a whole lot of hypothesis. Mythology, legend, folk-tale etc can be referred as a source. Or it can simply be the traditional wedding song, "አሞራ በሰማይ ሲያይኝ ዋለ..." as an imaginary presence during the festivity to appreciate the beauty of the bride, which might have given Adam the idea of the hawk. But one thing is certain; Adam's hawk is more complex, illusory, and hallucinatory. Even after encountering it in almost all the stories, we the readers still couldn't be sure whether it is hallucination or has an independent existence.

Apart from its role as the voice of a moderator, or the moral voice of the people, the most important functions of the Greek chorus are to;

- Provide a comprehensive and harmonious artistic unit,
- Create a deeper and more meaningful connection between characters and the audience,
- Create complexity that's literary by nature
- Regulate the atmosphere and manipulate the expectations of the audience,
- Prepare the audience for turning points in the story line,
- Highlight certain elements which are more important for the development of the story.

Instead of establishing a correlation between these points with the function of Adam’s hawk, I would just take a few stories as specimen and give a general overview. In Aeschylus’ “Prometheus Bound”, the chorus, taking a direct part in the story, passionately conveys its sympathy for Prometheus, the central character of the play:

“I mourn for thee, Prometheus, diminished and brought low,  
Watering my virgin cheeks with these sad drops, that flow

From sorrow’s rainy fount, to fill soft-lidded eyes

With pure libations (offering) for thy fortune’s obsequies (funeral rites).”

Although not as directly and poetically stated as the Greek chorus (Adam’s is more symbolic, visual and dramatic) we find similar empathetic intervention in three of Adam’s short stories, namely “ሰፊት፣ እንደገና ሊጥ” and “በአሕዛብ ማድ ቤት በር ላይ”. After the shocking incident of a rape attempt on ሳራ a minor in “ሰፊት” she goes into a church in confusion, and as she tries to pray, the hawk throws its shadow on her to protect her from the scorching sunlight. In a similar manner, the hawk soothes ሰናይት in “እንደገና ሊጥ” by apparently uttering the word “አይዘላም” in her time of great distress and confusion. In this way, it lends the support she needed to make the final and vital decision of her life, i.e. a turning point in the story. In “በአሕዛብ ማድ ቤት በር ላይ” the intervention is crafted by guiding ቆስጠንጢኖስ to discover the truth about his wife and her lover, and its timing is impeccable. The moment is so pivotal, his life totally changes, and he is released from his burden-like responsibility as a father and as a husband.

“ፍትፍትና ደጃሰላም” IN RELATION TO “OEDIPUS REX”

“The Greek chorus often acted as audience surrogate ... warning them [the characters involved in a scene] about the consequence of their actions.” In Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex the chorus warns both Oedipus and Teiresias that they should discuss the problem of pestilence in the state in an amicable way to find a solution.

“To us it sounds as if Teiresias  
has spoken in anger, and, Oedipus,  
you have done so, too. That’s not what we need.  
Instead we should be looking into this:  
How can we best carry out the god’s decree?”

If we take “ፍትፍትና ደጃሰላም” the hawk demonstrates (by way of mirroring the dilemma) the difficulty of Nuredine’s attempt to balance his Love for መስከረም and his drinking habit.

“... ምናልባት አምስት ሜትር ስፋት ያላቸው ከንፎች ያሉት አሞራ ሚዛኑን ለመጠበቅ ይጠጣራል። ከንፎቹ እቆምኩበት ድረስ የሚሰማ ንፋስ ያስነሳሉ። አፌን ከፍቼ ቀረሁ። የሚገርመው ወፉ ሚዛኑን ለማስተካከል የሚለፋ ይምሰል እንጂ፣ ተረጋግቶ የሚያየው ወደኔ አቅጣጫ ነበር። ... አሞራው ልክ ሊያናግረኝ እንደሚፈልግ ሁሉ እያተኮረብኝ ከሚንጨዋለልበት ዛፍ ላይ በቆንጥ ተነሳ።”

### The Hawk as Performer

Here the hawk becomes an actor demonstrating a point on a tree (its stage) to make a point for Nuredine (audience). More important, its acting style is not that of Stanislavsky's method that demands "to be" the character, but that of a Brechtian school in that it demonstrates a point without emotionally being involved. The hawk is not actually troubled in keeping its balance, because the way it's gazing at Nuredine, which is comfortable, is not compatible with having strain to keep its balance, and hence its intention to reveal the predicament of creating equilibrium in Nuredine's personal and professional life. In addition, when it flies away, the way it leaves off the branch in a stylish manner (በቁንጥ) is another indication that it's performing for Nuredine's benefit. Does this analysis sound a bit stretched to fit my interpretation of the hawk as an actor? Well, maybe. It must be my background in the theatre that's the culprit.

(In effect, by way of condensing the story, this encounter b/n Nuredine and the hawk encapsulates the essence of the main character; but this is beside our point now.)

### The Hawk as Protector

Unlike the Greek chorus which does not directly involve in the drama, Adam's hawk takes action in "የቢሾፍቱ ልጆች ጥላምት". When a foreigner tries to cut a tree in a forest, the boys shout and scream trying to stop him to no avail. But when the hawk apparently makes a loud noise, the foreigner drops his axe and cowers back. It accomplishes the wish of the boys to stop the foreigner at least for a while, and it becomes a hero of the moment. (We can stretch the analysis by giving it a symbolic meaning of defending the natural resources of the land from neo-colonialists, but that's a whole different idea.)

### The Hawk Representing Crisis

In "የመንግስቱ ነዋይ ጊዜ" ሰናይ being a child, does not understand what goes on around him. The prayers in the church and the long speech of the priest are all beyond his comprehension. It needed the hawk to make him feel the horror of the national crisis on an intuitive level. The fact that its neck emerges and then recedes back into its shoulders symbolically foreshadows the outcome (the failure) of the coup d'état. Here the hawk is referred by the boy first as a crow, then as a hawk, might be the confusion of the boy, but as a crow is a sign of bad omen, Adam must have created the confusion deliberately.

"... አዲሱ የቆርቆሮ ጣሪያ ላይ ግዙፍ ላባው ክርታስ የመሰለ ቁራ አንገቱን ክንፎቹ ውስጥ ቀብሮ ተቀምጧል። አረንጓዴ ካኪ ለብሰው የሚታኮሱት ክብር ዘበኞች ወይም ጦር ሰራዊቶች የላኩት መሰለኝ። አተኩሬ አየሁት። አንገቱን እንደሚያሰግግ ሁሉ መዘዝ አደረገና መልሶ ትከሻው ከተተው። ... ክርታስ ከመሰሉ ቅንድቦቹ ስር ዐይኖቹ በእኔ አቅጣጫ የተቁለጨለጨ መሰለኝ። የአሞራው ዐይኖች ትኩረት ደረቴን ከመሃል ከፍሎ ልቤ ውስጥ እንደገባ ነገር ተሰማኝ። ከቆምኩበት አግዳሚ ወንበር ላይ በፍጥነት ወረድኩና በር አጠገብ የቆመ ኩርሲ ጀርባ ሄጄ በፍርሃት እየራድኩ መሬት ላይ ተቀመጥኩ ..... "

### Hawk Signifying the Human Condition

"In the works of Nietzsche the chorus takes on a completely new and profound philosophical meaning. In a metaphysical framework the chorus is the essence of the play and ... deals with the primal realms of the human condition."

The presentation of the hawk in “ሊሊ/ኩሳንኩሳ” is unique, troubling and surrealistic. The whole setup of the symbolic and fantasy like appearance of the hawk at the top of the Axum Stele in Rome extends beyond the story at hand, and obliges one to delve deeper to find its real significance. I don’t claim to fully understand it, but would try to throw light on the matter for further study.

“ ... አተኩራ ሳይ፣ ከጨለማው የበለጠ የጨለመ ፍጡር መለስ ብሎ ብቅ አለ። ድንግጥ አልኩ። ይህ ፍጡር ያኔውኑ ጀርባውን ወደ እኔ አዞረና ቆመ። ላባውን አረጋገፈና ከእግሮቹ መሃል ሸራ ኳስ የሚያክል ነጭ ነገር ወደ ታች ጣለ። ኩስ መሰለኝ። ከዛ ይህ ነጭ ነገር በፍጥነት ወርዶ ሐውልቱ የቆመበት ትልቅ ንጣፍ ድንጋይ ላይ አረፈ። የሚፈነጣጠር እርጥብ ነገር ጠብቄ ፊቴን ሸፍኜ ወደ ኋላዬ ዘለልኩ። የተፈናጠረ ነገር አልነበረም። የወደቀው ኩስ ነገር ለሁለት ተከፈለና አንድ ጥቁር ወፍ ከውስጡ ወጣ። እንዲህ እያየሁት፣ ራሱን እንደጨርቅ ዘረጋጋና ተነስቶ መብረር ጀመረ። ቀና ብዬ ወደ ሐውልቱ አየሁ። የቀድሞው አሞራ ቦታው አልነበረም። አይኖቹ ፈጠው እያየሁ ከመሬት ላይ ተረጋገረቶ የተነሳው ወፍ ሐውልቱ ጫፍ ላይ ሄዶ ተቀመጠ። አፌን ይገዢ የሚሆነውን ስጡብቅ ከዚህ ከተቀመጠው አሞራ ቁጥ ስር ነጭ ኳስ ዳግመኛ ወደቀ። ይህም ድንጋይ ላይ አርፎ እንደ መጀመሪያው መብረር ሲጀምር፣ በአይኔ ቁጥ ሐውልቱ ጫፍ ላይ የነበረው አሞራ ከጨለማው ጋር ተማስሎ ሲሰወር አየሁት።”

The shape of the Stele, as symbol of human reproduction, relates to the human condition, and it is amplified by the hawk giving “birth” to another one, and that to the next, ad infinitum. The hawks fly off immediately after giving “birth”, creating the impression that one generation after another are doomed to migration. The fact that the eggs fall on the concrete slab of the Stele reinforces the rootlessness of new generations. Migration is, in a more or less magnitude, almost a worldwide problem, and maybe that is the reason why the use of the hawk becomes entirely different and more complex than in all the other stories.

Even though it’s possible to go through all the stories in which the hawk appears, I believe the few samples here would suffice to instigate a discussion.

In a comment made by a member of the Adam Reta open group, it’s suggested that there is no way of knowing what the hawk stands for unless Adam himself tells us. But I think Adam has already done his duty as a writer. Now it’s our turn, his readers, to discover the different layers of meaning in the stories and exchange ideas. That’s the beauty of reading such multidimensional, mysterious, ambiguous, and complicated stories as Adam writes.