



On the “Voter Awareness” in Kafka’s Novels

Jing Wang

School of Humanities and Arts

Shandong University of Finance

Jinan 250014, China

E-mail: wangjing_sc@163.com

Abstract

“The Bible” stressed the Jews are God’s voters. The “voter awareness” infiltrated into the souls of all Jews. Kafka was a Jewish writer. The national consciousness from the deep soul affected his creations. This paper probes into the voter awareness interpreted in Kafka’s novels from three aspects: voters wandering at alien lands, adhering to the promised lands, and keeping watch to the belief temple.

Keywords: Kafka, Voter awareness

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a Jewish writer who wrote novels in German. He was crazy in Jewish culture and writing novels. He expressed his Jewish complex completely in his novels. The images of The Bible were common in his novels.

In Kafka’s novels, the hosts were mostly wandering in alien lands. They frequently thought of their hometowns and retrieved the warmth and happiness in hometowns. But they resisted the desire for coming back to hometowns and insisted in striving on alien lands. These stories were not composed as will but coming from the national complex hidden in the writer’s heart and Kafka’s intensive Jewish consciousness. Similar story frameworks are in accordance with the “voter awareness” in The Bible. By combining together with the voter awareness in The Bible, this paper tries to interpret the deep meanings of stories in Kafka’s novels from three aspects: voters wandering in alien lands, adhering to promised lands, and keeping watch to the belief Temple.

1. Voters wandering in alien lands

What are “voters”? The Bible stressed that Jews are voters of God. The voter awareness infiltrated the souls of Jews. The hosts in Kafka’s novels are representatives of Jews. We can find relevant proofs in his novels.

Hosts in Kafka’s novels have simple names, and even just has a name “K”. It has aroused researchers’ interests ever. Why is a host named as “K”? We can explore the origin from the development history of Jewry.

It is well known that since Rome ruined the Temple in A.D. 1st century, Jewry lost their country. They had to wander around the world, but nowhere was their home. This situation has maintained till on May 15th, 1948. After disappearing more than two thousand years, Israel relives in Palestine. Jews suffered a lot during more than two thousand years. “The act issued in 1872 requires Jews give up their family names and take Germany names. At that time, many Jews picked up the names of animals and birds. The surname ‘Kafka’ was maybe selected by Kafka’s ancestors in late 18th century or given by the state. ‘Don’t be surprised by Jews disliking their names’, said Joseph Ross, ‘for Jews, names mean nothing, because those words are not their names but necessary codes. Their real names were selected according to The Biblical Law on the Sabbath and religious festivals, namely their first Jewish names and the first words of their fathers’ Jewish names.’ (Kafka, p8)”

In the suffering history, Jews have been deprived of rights of names according to their family names and conventions. Names based on rules regulated by others are meaningless. They are nothing but codes. To know this history background will help us understand why the host in the novel is named as an English character.

Here, the symbol K shows its popularity. It is not a code of one people but a representative of whole Jewry. Brod, a bosom friend of Kafka, has said: “Besides writing human tragedy, Kafka is especially good at writing his suffering nationality and the homeless and wandering Jewry. (Franz Kafka: A Bibliography, p132)” Hosts in Kafka’s novels are images combining Jewish culture and Kafka thoughts, and souls of national spirits. They represent that the whole nationality seeks for cultural root and requires for living rights.

Many common characteristics are displayed in these hosts. One is that: they left their hometowns and wander in alien lands.

In Kafka's first novel *Amerika* (Kafka's original title was *The Man who Disappeared*), Karl Rosman, a young boy at nineteen, has been exiled in America by his parents because of committing mistakes. Then, he strived for living in an alien land.

Kafka has never come to America. What he described in the novel were merely his imaginations, which endows America with symbolization in a sense. America directly associates with the voter awareness of The Bible. Maybe that was an important reason for why Kafka put his host in America. "The foundation of America is similar to the experiences of Israel described in The Bible. (The Literal Interpretation of The Bible, p14)" As we know, the early colonists in America were mostly Puritans who suffered from the religion in Europe and British. They have ever compared their transfer to the great move of Moses and Israel from Egypt to the promised lands, guided and protected by the God, where it is the world of voters. The wide and rich lands and the wonderful natural conditions in North America are the blessed lands obliged by the God. Kafka arranged the host, Karl Rosman, of his first novel come to America, where the host suffered a lot and grown up in hardness.

From Karl, all hosts in Kafka's novels were leaving their hometowns without any exception. In *The Trial*, Joseph K is a successful bank manager who struggles in alien lands. Although he has been charged by the court, he dedicated to his causes and refused to come back to hometown and hide himself. He devoted himself to the exploration of the case and sought for the final solution. In Kafka's last novel *The Castle*, K left his hometown either. He came to the village beside the castle and tried hard in order to enter the castle.

These descriptions in novels are in accordance with the voter awareness in The Bible. Jews are voters of God. Every Jews holds this idea in the mind. As you know, in The Bible, Abraham helps his son Isaac to marry a girl. In this story, Abraham thinks that to marry a girl from the hometown to Isaac is not allowable, what may cause such a result that his son will come back to the hometown at last. They should not come back to hometown because Abraham signed a contract with the God. He promised to live in the promised lands one generation after another and the God will especially bless the offspring of Abraham, ensuring their prosperities and strengths. That is the lifelong cause of Abraham and the great undertaking of Israel. To come back to hometown or not is the primary issue concerning whether be loyal to the God or not. If Isaac comes back to hometown after the marriage, Abraham betrays the God. His lifelong cause will fail. Abraham's strong voter awareness and his thought that Israel should leave the hometown and come to promised lands and live there forever are always accompanied with the Israel. "No matter what it is Abraham, Moses, or Christian, to come home means a betrayal to the God." Therefore, The Bible has a theme that emphasizes on leaving the hometown and going for alien lands. "Afterwards, following the God and living in promised lands turn into the promise of Israel, from Abraham, to James, to Moses, to the God, the main contents of a contract with the God, and also the aim of their struggles one generation after another. (The Literal Interpretation of The Bible, p92)" Therefore, no matter what it is Karl Rosman, Joseph K, or K, they were wanderers who left their hometowns. In their minds, there are thoughts or impulses to come back to hometowns, but no actions. They all insist to the promised lands.

2. Adhering to promised lands

To adhere to promised lands means struggles. What they suffered are difficulties and frustrations. Then, what it is supports their perseverance?

"The superior 'voter awareness' of Abraham deeply rooted in The Bible is vital. The Bible extremely emphasizes on nationalism. According to its primary theme, the God picked Abraham and his clan, the Israel as the especially blessed target. Although the God often punished the Israel due to their treasons and crimes, the God promised to help the Israel overcome enemies and be more prosperous than other nations. (The Literal Interpretation of The Bible, p14)" Therefore, in all Jews' minds, no matter what difficulties they have, they will be saved by the God finally. So, no difficulty can beat them. In front of difficulties, they will never give up.

These thoughts are completely showed by images in Kafka's novels. It is also these thoughts that support their actions.

Karl comes to America by himself. He lives a hard life. Sometimes he thinks of his hometown and his parents, but he has never thought of coming back to home. He adheres to live in America. No matter what he does, as an elevator waiter, or depends on others, he tries to survive.

In *The Trial*, although Joseph K is in a troublesome case, he still refuses to accept his uncle's suggestions. He has not seen his mother for a long time and he wants to come home to wish his mother a happy birthday. In his mother's eyes, no matter how serious K suffers, K will never give in. At last, K does not come back to his mother or hide himself in hometown. He bravely takes the responsibility of himself and seeks for the solution.

In *The Castle*, as the host K were pursuing for the way into the castle, he has always thought of his hometown. When he fell in real sexual relationships with Frida, he felt like: "As if he was lost or came to a strange place where nobody has ever reached. At that place, the air seemed to be different with his hometown. People may feel it hard to breath due to the strangeness. However, the strange and ridiculous air made him walk forward. (The Complete Novels of Kafka, p42)" It was a kind of confusion as K came to a foreign place that was far different from the hometown. And it is hard

to survive there. Although the hometown turned into a sweet place, he preferred to stay and to survive.

In *The Castle*, whenever K thought of the hometown, a church appeared. It is also an inspiring and profound phenomenon. In the novel, the first time to mention the hometown is at the time when K himself walked toward the castle. He stared at the castle and walked forward. As he came close to the castle, he felt disappointed and thought of his hometown, which was not inferior to the castle. In his heart, he compared the steeple of the church in his hometown with the steeple at that hill. The steeple in his hometown stands there upright, becoming thinner and thinner gradually from the bottom to the top, red tiles on the roof. It is a man-made building. In contrast, the steeple at that hill is a dull round structure, seemingly drawing by a timid child on the blue sky. It seems like an ill resident who is supposed to be in an obscure room but stand out of the roof and show himself to others. The hometown and the castle respectively refer to the reality and the sky. The meanings are clear. As K left his hometown, although he yearned for the hometown, he was more adhering to his development in alien lands. It was a new world where K persists in for certain purpose.

The second time to mention the hometown is at the time when K walked hard toward the castle again. He walked together with Barnabas, but he could not judge where he arrived or was arriving. His minds were at mess. He frequently thought of the hometown, where there was a church at the center square, around by tombs and high walls. He has ever wanted to climb up the wall. Although he hurt himself, he climbed the wall after all. The sense of being success made him enjoyable all the time. Like walking on the way to the castle, this sense gave him a great power. Therefore, he swore that he never give up no matter how hard the way was.

The hometown, church, and walking toward the castle are images in Kafka's novels. By exploring these images, we can recognize the mind of Kafka and understand the meanings of his novels. That is in accordance with the point that voters adhere to the promised lands in *The Bible*. K, as a spirit of Jewry, stands for the mind, the wisdom, and the behavior of Jews. He is the voter of the God. In his mind, he always thinks of the hometown, and especially the church, where he gets the spiritual support. As he walked toward the castle, what appeared in his mind were the hometown and the church. The hometown means he is the voter of the God and lives in alien lands. The church means he always remembers his promise to the God: no matter what difficulties he was in, he would be loyal to his responsibilities and obligations and struggles at the promised lands. Difficulties are all over the world and beliefs are always accompanied. The castle is the belief temple that supports his faith, where the faith of Jews is there.

3. Keeping watch to the belief temple

Kafka was interested in Jewish history and culture and Hebrew. No matter how he described his identify as a Jew, we can confirm the status of Jewish consciousness in his mind. This Jewish complex has been accumulated more and more and reflected in his works.

Kafka was always longing for Jews' holy land Palestine. At that place, although Jews' Temple has been ruined twice, all Jews were dreamed of building up the third Temple. No matter where they live, they desire for coming back to the "promised lands" blessed by the God. "As they (Jews) build houses, they always leave a corner for later decorations in order to memorize the ruined Jerusalem; as they hold a wedding, they will break a glass in order to remind people of no pleasures before the construction of holy Temple; after the death of a Jew, people try every means to take a parcel of earth from promised lands and bury it in the tomb, what means he or she finally slept in the promised lands; as they pray, they always say: 'wish to come back to Jerusalem next year'. During the long wandering time, they missed the holy land Palestine all the time and dreamed of the holy city Jerusalem, desiring for rebuilding their holy Temple. (A Short History of the Jewish People, p4)"

As Kafka confirms his identity as a Jew, he desires for the holy city more and more. In letters he wrote to his girlfriend Felice, he has mentioned many times that he wanted to go to Palestine for a travel. Kafka has lived in nursing homes for many times during his life. But he has always hoped to live on his own ----- as a gardener, a binder, or a waiter in Palestine. In an interview, Kafka's last girlfriend said that they had dreamed of moving in Palestine and starting a restaurant, where the girlfriend as a waitress and Kafka as a waiter. In real life, Kafka did dream of quitting the job and going for Palestine. He has ever said: "Spiritually, to travel in Palestine seems like a cashier traveling in America by appropriating a great amount of public money Seduction is waving, but an absolute impossibility talks again." "If I want to live, I must do something radical. Then, I hope I can go to Palestine." (Kafka, p272) The stronger and stronger desire for Palestine, the one impossibility after another, and the haunting Jewish complex make the Jewish consciousness occupy the center of Kafka's heart and penetrate into the words of his novels. Kafka's novels are full of his thoughts over the whole Jewry's fate.

In the Amerika, the host Karl came to the promised lands. What in front of him were not Canaan with milk and honey but an alien land with hardships and difficulties. To survive was the primary issue. After experiencing a series of struggles, he joined in the Oklahoma showplace. It was a magic place. It welcomes and takes every job hunter in as if the God accepts every devotee. In this great family, Karl and other members went together toward the aim. No matter how hard the road would be, they were on the way excitedly.

In *The Castle*, K claimed him as a land surveyor. While “in Hebrew, this word is similar to another word ‘Messiah’ in form, it reflects the understanding of Kafka to Messiah doctrine. (A Short History of the Jewish People, p265)” K came to a village. He was confused by the castle and barriers in front of the way into the castle. These conceptions have the characteristics of Kafka fable. Although people explain it in many ways, none of them interprets the meanings of the novel completely. Nicholas Murray in his *Kafka* says: the experiences of K can be taken as Jews’ fate. If so, can not the castle be taken as the holy city or holy temple of Jews? K has never given up though he could not see the real castle. In the novel, the author mentioned the host’s misses of hometowns for many times. Even though, it could not change the will of K. The belief and power of K entering the castle were from the idea from The Bible that the God would always bless the wills of voters and the superior attitude as Abraham “voters”, which were also the source that supported Jews’ continuous struggles. The endeavors of K were rightly in accordance with the “promised lands” idea in Jewish consciousness.

In The Bible, Palestine is the promised lands of Jews blessed by the God. Although Palestine is not the early residence of Jews, as voters of the God, they must be loyal to the God and the promised lands all the time, like their ancestor Abraham. In The Bible, voters have always been blessed by the God after experiencing hardships. However, in real life, after leaving the hometown, K has not been blessed by the God. Still, K adhered to the castle and kept watch to his belief temple.

On May 15th, 1948, after disappearing for more than two thousand years, Israel appeared in Palestine and became the third Temple in Jewish history. However, Kafka who had died on June 3rd, 1924, did not witness the re-foundation of Jewish state. Like the K in his novel, although he tried every means in order to enter the castle, he failed. Therefore, in a sense, the castle means Palestine where Kafka had wanted to go but never could. The castle stands for the holy temple in Jews’ mind. Only because of its holiness, can it deserve a man to pursue and struggle for all the life.

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