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“文本的历史性”与“历史的文本性”： 约瑟夫·海勒《像戈尔德一样好》的新历史主义解读

“Historicity of Texts” and “Textuality of History”:
A New Historicist Study of Joseph Heller’s *Good As Gold*

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Abstract

Joseph Heller (1923-1999), a prominent writer in America since the 1960s, is regarded as the precursor of American postmodernist fiction. *Good as Gold*, which is categorized as Heller's great saga on his Jewish heritage, has mainly explored the landscape of American society in the 1970s, especially the Jewish experience in America with constant presence of historical events and figures. The thesis fills the vacancy that there is little study on Heller as an American Jewish writer by analyzing Heller's *Good as Gold*. As New Historicism, rising in the 1980s and having greatly influenced western intelligentsia and thoughts sphere, reconsiders the complex relationship between history and literary texts, the thesis mainly applies this literary theory to analyze this novel from the following two perspectives—"historicity of texts" and "textuality of history" (put forward by Louise Montrose). The thesis speculates on the historical reality of American Jewish experience and the textuality of the historical reality of American Jewish experience.

The thesis consists of three chapters plus an "Introduction" and a "Conclusion".

Chapter One defines the literary term New Historicism and offers readers a general review of New Historicist consciousness in Heller's writing. Heller shares some important notions with New Historicists concerning the postmodern status of history and the relationship between literary texts and historical reality.

Chapter Two focuses on the "historicity of texts". According to the first meaning of the "historicity of texts" that texts are the products as well as the reflection of historical reality, this chapter firstly presents the historical reality of America and American Jewish experience in the 1970s. Then based on the argument about the function of literary texts which work as an agent in constructing a sense of reality, the thesis explores identity alienation and assimilation as well as the epiphany of American Jews to disclose that this novel works as an agent in constructing American Jewish experience.

Chapter Three discusses the "textuality of history". Heller combines the fantastic

with the historical, blurs the historical and the fictional and makes his own experience and historical figures into “textual traces”. In *Good as Gold*, Heller regards Bruce Gold, the protagonist, as the fictional representation of himself and also makes a self-fashioning of the Jewish historical figure Henry Kissinger. By doing this, Heller makes his historical awareness enter into the novel, which calls into question the factuality of history and subverts the authoritative historical materials. Besides, Heller applies the fictive techniques—black humor and parody—to contrast historical facts with fictional works and to offer readers a vivid and truthful history.

New Historicism broadens our vision on literature and history and it also provides new enlightenment for understanding Joseph Heller. His novels not only present readers a panorama of American society but also work as functional components of historical formations, not only present historical events and figures with obvious subjectivity and fictionality but also apply many fictive techniques to enhance the textuality of the histories.

Key Words: New Historicism; Historicity of texts; Textuality of history; Joseph Heller; *Good as Gold*

摘 要

约瑟夫·海勒（1923-1999）是二十世纪六十年代以来美国知名作家，被认为是后现代派小说的先驱者。《像戈尔德一样好》是海勒描述犹太传统的传奇故事，该部小说多处描写历史人物和历史事件，它主要探究了二十世纪七十年代美国社会尤其是美国犹太人的经历。因此，本文探究《像戈尔德一样好》以弥补对海勒作为美国犹太作家研究的不足。而出现于二十世纪八十年代深刻影响了西方文学界和思想界的新历史主义重新探索了历史与文本之间的复杂关系，所以该论文试图运用此理论，从路易斯·蒙特洛斯提出的“文本的历史性”和“历史的文本性”角度来分析该部小说。

本文由引言、结语和三个章节构成。

第一章介绍了新历史主义的理论和约瑟夫·海勒的新历史主义意识。在关于后现代历史的地位和文学文本与历史现实的关系上，海勒与新历史主义有相似之处。

第二章主要集中于“文本的历史性”。根据“文本的历史性”的第一层意思，即文本是历史现实的产物并反映历史现实，该章首先分析了二十世纪七十年代美国社会政治现实和美国犹太人的经历；其次，根据文本具有塑造文化现实感的媒介功能，该章继续分析了美国犹太人身份的疏离、同化及其顿悟，以揭示此部小说塑造美国犹太经历的动因。

第三章主要分析小说中“历史的文本化”。海勒将虚构与历史结合，模糊了二者的界限，并将自己的经历和历史人物作为“文本线索”。《像戈尔德一样好》的主人公布鲁斯·戈尔德是作者本人的虚构性表征，并且海勒自我塑造了亨利·基辛格这位犹太历史人物。这样，海勒能够将自己的历史意识融入小说创作，以使人们怀疑历史的真实性，颠覆所谓的“权威”历史。此外，海勒运用黑色幽默和戏仿来对比历史现实和小说作品，从而为读者提供了生动真实的历史。

总之，二十世纪七八十年代出现的新历史主义为研究文学与历史的关系开辟了新视野，为研究海勒作为犹太作家提供了新启示。海勒的小说不仅展现了美国社会全貌，而且具有构建历史的功能；不仅以主观性和虚构性展现历史事件和历

史人物，而且运用多种小说技巧来增强历史的文本性。

关键词：新历史主义 文本的历史性 历史的文本性 约瑟夫·海勒 《像戈尔德一样好》

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Introduction

As a prominent postmodernist writer, Joseph Heller's postmodernist techniques and his well-known novel *Catch-22* have been widely discussed. James Nagel, in his *Critical Essays on Joseph Heller* (1984), points out the phenomenon that "formal scholarship on *Good as Gold* thus far has been extremely limited, but what has been written has been informative and engrossing" (17). Indeed, there are exhaustive reviews and critical essays written on Heller's great novel *Catch-22* and Heller as a precursor of postmodernism, but few are written on his other works. James Nagel's *Critical Essays on Joseph Heller* can be classified as a general study on Joseph Heller. Nagel gives a rich reservoir of insights into all Heller's works. In this critical collection, a few critical essays on Heller's *Good as Gold* are included. John W. Aldridge's "The Deceits of Black Humor" explores Joseph Heller's fictive technique black humor in this novel. Jack Beatty in "Review of *Good as Gold*" gives us a general understanding of *Good as Gold* from the angle of the novel as a saga on "the Jewish experience in America". Leonard Michaels in his "Bruce Gold's American Experience" analyzes the protagonist's failure to identify with his people inspiring a joke about failure to identify with himself. Benjamin DeMott's "Heller's Gold and a Silver Sax" also elaborates on the Jewishness and the social status of Jews in the novel. Charles Reilly in his interview "Talking with Joseph Heller" asks Heller many questions about Heller's thoughts on writing *Good as Gold*. Wayne C. Miller in his "Ethnic Identity as Moral Focus: A Reading of Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*" argues that ethnicity is at the heart of the moral vision of the novel and contends that Heller portrays the experiences of several generations of American Jews. Melvin J. Friedman in "Something Jewish Happened: Some Thoughts About Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*" draws on his considerable background as a scholar of Jewish writing in America to place Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold* in that tradition and to explore the ways in which its satire, portrayal of the family, regard for education, and especially

its language relate to the traditions of Jewish literature.

Robert Merrill's *Joseph Heller* (1987) is the first book-length study on Joseph Heller's works. In discussing and analyzing Heller's novels, Robert Merrill elaborates on Heller's principal themes, especially his recurring interest in modern American bureaucracy; he also points out Heller's limitations. In this book, Merrill uses one chapter to discuss Heller's two Jewish novels—*Good as Gold* and *God Knows*. Merrill provides readers with a general study of *Good as Gold* from its Jewish tints.

In *The Fiction of Joseph Heller: Against the Grain* (1989), David Seed also analyzes the Jewishness of Heller's *Good as Gold* in detail. He analyzes the scenes, language and characters to further dig out the Jewishness in it.

Judith Ruderman's *Joseph Heller* (1991) offers more comprehensible understanding on Heller's works, especially on the form and meaning of his works. She goes further by adding recent studies of Heller, concentrating on Heller's notion of art as artifice and placing Heller as a Jewish-American writer. This book offers reader a great deal on understanding Heller's Jewishness. Ruderman writes one critical essay—"The Artist as Sovereign Maker: Fantasy and Reality in *Good as Gold*"—to explore Heller's surrealistic element and its relation with the author himself. In "What to Do with 'A Jew like That?': Defining Joseph Heller as a Jewish-American writer" and "A Flame of Gifted Lunacy: The Works of Joseph Heller in Retrospect", Ruderman systematically summarizes the reasons why Heller can be regarded as a Jewish-American writer.

In *Understanding Joseph Heller* (1991), Sanford Pinsker gives valuable analysis on the themes, structures and the use of language of Heller's works. He uses one chapter to offer readers a brief introduction of Heller's *Good as Gold*.

Apart from these books, there are many critical essays and valuable interviews for readers to understand Joseph Heller and his *Good as Gold*, such as Gelb Barbara's "Catching Joseph Heller", Charles Berryman's "Heller's Gold", Elizabeth Janeway's "Fiction: The Personal Dimension", Fredric Stern's "Heller's Hell: Heller's Later Fiction, Jewishness, and the Liberal Imagination", Richard Sale's "An Interview in New York with Joseph Heller" and Gelb Barbara's interview on Joseph Heller's

Closing Time. Stern's critical essay is specially relevant here. He applies Trilling's "the Liberal Imagination" to explore Heller's later novels and then to analyze Heller's Jewishness.

Since the first translated version of Heller's novels in 1978, there are more than 70 books and reviews on Heller, but only a few of them are significant in the research on Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*. Chen Yongguo's "20th-Century Literature Mater—Heller" offers readers a complete understanding of Heller. Chen Shidan and Meng Zhaofu's critical essay "Postmodernist Techniques in Joseph Heller's Novels" (2002) offers readers a complete analysis of Heller as a postmodernist writer. Heller's *Catch-22* is widely known among Chinese critics and readers; therefore Chinese critical essays concentrate themselves on the study of *Catch-22* and its black humor. There are more than 60 critical essays on this novel, about three quarters of all essays. So far, there is no Chinese version of *Good as Gold* and no particular essay written on this novel. There are just some general comments on this novel.

Here we can see the shortcomings of the previous studies on Joseph Heller among Chinese critics and readers. Most of these essays concentrate on Joseph Heller's postmodernist techniques and mainly on his prominent novel *Catch-22*. I observe the phenomenon that there is more domestic research on other American Jewish writers and their fictions but less into Joseph Heller as an American Jewish writer, more studies on Joseph Heller's postmodernism but less on his Jewishness. Critics and readers pay more attention to the novel *Catch-22* and Heller's postmodernist techniques, but give less concentration on Heller as a Jewish descendent and the Jewishness in his works, so I choose his third novel *Good as Gold* which is about American Jewish experience to speculate on Heller's Jewishness.

Good as Gold is the first text for Joseph Heller to write obviously about the Jews. The publication of the novel prompted negative reviews. Morris Dickstein concluded that "the result is a very funny book but a weak and unconvincing novel" (qtd. in Nagel 15); and another reviewer thinks it is "a rather listless and dispirited piece of work" (Nagel 16). However, *Good as Gold* has received much more favorable comments. Leonard Michaels gives the novel a quite positive reading and thinks the

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