



Andrew's Brain: The historical mind and the American soul: A new historical reading

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Abstract

Andrew's Brain, a novel, by E. L. Doctorow, published as his last novel in 2014, seems to be of quite a different spirit and this is what the reader are to find even early at reading. However, many book reviews and critics have rated this novel not as perfect as Doctorow's previous works. What seems to have caused such comments may then be the structural as well as the thematic ambiguities produced by the psychological realm the novel enters. Precisely, what is done here is an attempt to study in detail *Andrew's Brain* by relying on the approaches used by New Historicists in order to prove that unlike the under-evaluations done in case of this novel, the text of the novel is very rich and it can be said to be a comprehensive record of a so-called cognitive scientist's attempts in search of truth.

Keywords: *andrew's brain*, spirit

Introduction

My Soul, I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul? (p. 242) ^[1]

Andrew's Brain, a recent novel by E.L. Doctorow may appear as a big question mark to a reader accustomed to this novelist's previous works even from the very beginning, as he or she is to deal with many ambiguities on the structural as well as the thematic levels besides the specific narration techniques adopted by the author. The reader is also to witness a cluster of historical, geographical, political and cultural allusions, which is not a far cry from Doctorow's previous works. Yet, what makes the difference is the way the author is manipulating all of them in quite a new light as if to be viewed through the lenses of an American so-called existentialist "Cognitive Scientist", (Doctorow, p. 5) ^[2] named Andrew, with all the scientific approaches he takes in viewing his life, his surroundings, his miseries, his being and the people tied to him. As a matter of fact, this technique which creates a kind of estrangement in the novel first of all matches the psychological realm it enters and secondly it is to serve the thematic significances of the novel in "form of a dialogue in run with an unnamed interlocutor" (Levin) ^[3]. In other words, it can be claimed that the dialogue Doctorow creates acts as a significant discourse in which a different system from his previous novels is at work. Maybe it is because of such a shift that several book reviews written on *Andrew's Brain* up to now, rate it lower than his previous novels and are almost of

the same mind that they had expected something different or a more powerful novel from him.

Yet, it must be taken into consideration that the totality of the system discussed above, the point at which it stands from the extra-text world of culture and history of the American life and the purpose beyond the textual clues and ambiguities created by the novelist's style and purpose must necessarily be analyzed well before such hasty judgments done by the readers and the book reviewers. Perhaps, it is because of such judgments ignoring a careful reading of this novel that Doctorow when asked in an interview by David Wolf about how it must be read, puts much emphasis on the necessity of critical reading and speaks in a tone implying the fact that this novel is very much open to interpretation, even more than his other novels: " It's difficult enough writing these books without interpreting them critically"(Wolf).^[4] What follows in the next session is then an attempt to provide such a kind of interpretation by relying on New Historicism.

Critical Approach

A New Historical analysis of this novel may seem to be a hard task at the beginning. Yet, by relying on the very basic assumptions of this approach at the early steps and by focusing on the text of the novel and how it can be taken as a meaningful social artifice manipulated by Doctorow in negotiation with the cultural context it is attached to, or in other words by focusing on how New Historicism defines the function of literature according to Clifford Greetz's concept of culture and the behavior of a particular author (Lane, p.144), ^[5] one can give direction to his or her study. To be specific, one who is doing a New Historical reading of this novel must focus on the extent to which Doctorow's Andrew or better to say the process of the formation of his story or identity in the novel can be claimed to be in a kind of compromise with the American life and way of conduct (Greenblatt, "Poetics",

p.12).^[6] Doing so, he or she will also be able to have a good understanding of how power relations, politics and ideology are at work in this novel by relying on Foucault's ideas (p.17)^[7], or maybe how Andrew's voice is co-opted at the end based on Greenblatt's theory of subversion and containment (Greenblatt, "Invisible", p.128)^[8], having in mind that the psychological or mental disorder Andrew, "the holy fool" (Doctorow, p.199) suffers from – something that requires an analyst employed by the government to be diagnosed– is the best example of how one's madness or sanity according to Foucault is something relatively defined by the powers at work; that which stands in a complex relation to self-constitution, one's self-made understanding of identity and various social and cultural conventions or institutions at that time (Booker, p. 126)^[9]. Based on these theoretical assumptions, it is not then hard to claim that the text of the novel is very rich and despite the previous hasty readings done up to now lends itself to a thick description which is desired in a New Historical reading.

The novel begins by the voice of someone who is telling the story of his friend Andrew and Andrew is introduced as a cognitive scientist in need of help for keeping his baby daughter Willa, as he is mentally suffering from losing his second wife Briony. The reader then finds that the woman to whom he goes is his ex-wife Martha who has remarried a man named Boris Godunov. And, it is just by the time Martha has accepted to keep the baby that the narrative turns out to take a complex form and to become a mixture of that friend's third point of view and a series of dialogues as if to be in run within Andrew's mind with an imaginary figure or at the real context of consulting sessions with an analyst who is hearing his life story from him. Consequently, there is a series of back and forth and non-linear movements in time and space and Andrew's tendency toward sophistication or philosophizing of things and matters, as though to be checked first of all by his criteria as a cognitive scientist plus his deferring technique, reveals to that imaginary figure or the analyst as well as the reader the whole story not sooner than going through the whole chapters and getting close to the end of the novel.

But what is the purpose beyond that form of narration or the gradual revelation of Andrew's story? Can it then be significant according to New Historicism? To find the answer, those non-linear movements, Andrew's brain's processing – reflected by the bracketed word "thinking" through the novel– and the way he is actively dealing with many questions about his life, his miseries and disasters must be analyzed in depth first of all. Focusing on all these issues, it is not then hard to guess what Andrew is trying to do is in fact an attempt to define and justify the distance between truth and reality or what the brain as a physical agent responsible for production of mind and identity can create by negotiating with what is beyond its realm that is the real world with all its historical facts and controlling forces. To put it another way, Doctorow is working here by analogy and Andrew can be taken as a symbolic figure or a representative: One standing for an American man who is helplessly trying to provide a pathological reading of himself and what has brought about such a fate to him, that is accepting the idea of the limitation of his mind in making sense of the unknown factors that affect his identity formation or better to say in Andrew's own terms

the idea that: "free will is an illusion" (Doctorow, p. 35). To do such a reading and to reassure that such a thing is right, Andrew then has to move toward a critical reading of the American history and culture and the way the American policy is to control the process of identity formation in him as well as in others. So, one has to look for the hidden factors or better to say in Greenblatt's terms the "Invisible Bullets" that pierce the skull and hit the brain whose dream has been understanding the truth. In fact, Doctorow's Andrew and the way he is to analyze the world – even unintentionally – in hope of finding the truth, is the best testimony to the existence of a kind of tendency in modern Americans to go beyond the limitations imposed by the very Americanism they are born with. It is quite interesting that the word Andrew which is from the Greek root *Andros* and stands for man, courageous and warrior, at the same time can be read in relevance to this issue and the irony created as a result of the reflection of the way an American hero starts his life-long battle for grasping truth, and the final failure of such a hero may according to New Historicism represent how the process of subversion is at work and how one is finally contained. The whole chapters of the novel, the gradual revelation of Andrew's life story and his mental obsessions and also the deferrals created so as to reflect the emergence of the unknown factors that may obstruct the way and avoid a smooth or linear movement toward truth, can be good examples and a reflection of that process at work. In the same manner, the way Andrew tries to perform a critical analysis of all aspects of the American life, history, geography, culture and politics by the assistance of the very faculty that has given birth to his subjectivity and finally the subversiveness that seems to be at work between that subjectivity and the controlling forces of the real American world, can be taken as the other proofs testifying the existence of such a process and the way it functions.

Based on what was said above, it can be claimed that what Doctorow's Andrew intends to do in the space of this novel is very close to what Daniel has been trying to do by his PhD thesis in *The Book of Daniel*. Yet, Doctorow deals with the issue in quite a different manner in *Andrew's Brain* and his emphasis on the issue of science according to a critic like Nick Lavery from the University of Roehampton, researching on representations of consciousness in the contemporary novel must be put in center because of much importance. In fact, Lavery believes that science acts as one of the many agents through which the hidden factors to shape one's consciousness are at work and Andrew has been brought up with the idea that science is a defense or a proper tool to build a guard against being affected in his struggles for moving toward truth, without being conscious about the whole matter or having a clear picture of the mechanism at work which is structured to control him indirectly (Lavery)^[10]. Yet, the dialogue in run between Andrew and the analyst through the novel reflects the fact that as Andrew goes on he faces many paradoxes and conflicts and finally finds many things about the nature of science, comes up with the existing conflicts and consequently starts to think about what he must do in order to make himself able to go a step forward in the process of self-identification. Now in what follows what was discussed about Andrew would be traced in the novel.

Discussion

It was said that Andrew goes to his ex-wife Martha and asks her to help him in keeping his baby daughter from his second wife Briony. But what was the reason for Martha getting divorced from him first of all? The reader finds through Andrew's dialogue with the analyst that he was guilty for killing his child with Martha by giving it the wrong pill, just because he was tired from long hours of lab work while working on his thesis. This may seem as an accident in the first instance, but when the reader goes on and finds that during all his life Andrew has been involved in such incidents out of carelessness or because of some inwardness in character – something that has led him to stand in a kind of distance from what happens to him and even what he does – he or she must look at the issue in a different manner. It is in fact, because of being blessed by a "moral nature" as a result of being treated by "a mother's practicality" and a biologist father's manner, enchanted by science and his "sad evasiveness" (Doctorow, p. 40), that such a personality has been built in him. One should not forget that what Andrew has inherited from his parents and the personality shaped in him in consequence, is to justify why he finds science to be a safe guard. In the same way, heredity or better to say the extent to which one is under the control of the collective unconsciousness of his or her nation, may be a sign to reflect how complex the relation between those controlling forces, mentioned above, and Andrew's view of life and the way of conduct as an American can be. As a matter of fact, it is because of such a complex net of relations at work that Andrew always relies on science unconsciously: Something which is vividly portrayed by what he says in meeting the analyst when he tries to reflect on the emergence of the bitter sense of guilt in him for killing the baby accidentally as he relies on neurology and gets close to such a matter with a kind of empirical disinterestedness:

Oh, God, you have no idea, do you, of the obliteration of social reality in the aftermath of something like this. The brain all lit up with the realization that what you did is unchangeable (21).

If based on what was discussed above, Andrew declares so, takes a pure scientific approach toward everything and only tries to justify them with regard to neurology, neurotransmitters, brain cells and their functions or any other brain parts, the reader must be aware that his failure or his awareness of the coming failure and the upcoming fear is artistically foreshadowed by Doctorow through a quotation Andrew remembers from his father about science; what the analyst claims to have belonged to Einstein:

Science was like a searchlight beam growing wider and wider and illuminating more and more of the universe. But as the beam widened so did the circumference of darkness (61).

This quotation is very much important, as it reveals something about Doctorow's purpose. If the reference to Einstein is put in center – having in mind that Doctorow is a master in creating fictionalized characters based on the real world figures and

there are many instances of these kinds of characters in his other novels like *Ragtime*, *The Book of Daniel*, *The March and Loon Lake* – a different interpretation can be given: Like the other fictionalized figures in Doctorow's other novels, this fictionalized Einstein-like father of Andrew has much to say and is open to interpretation in case of the events of the American history. As a matter of fact, it can be taken as the symbol of the twentieth century figures whose love for truth and reaching an ideal is another instance of the American dream never to be disjointed from those people born in this culture and tradition in any period. Yet, the failure of this generation in fulfilling their dream, that was creating a more illuminated world by going beyond the existing limitations, can by analogy speak about Andrew at the present age and the new unknown limiting forces he is going to face. In other words, Andrew who is introduced in the novel as one who knows everything related to the post-war events, the cold war climate in America and its anti-communism as well as what has happened in Europe and the very Americanism he has inherited, is yet to deal with many conflicts and that can be because of one main issue: Andrew believes that he is an Existentialist Cognitive scientist, and somehow beholds everything he analyzes about his world and its facts from the viewpoint of Existentialism. Yet, what he is historically tied to and has in fact inherited from his father and his world view or better to say from the last generation's failure, is nothing more a kind of essentialism and a religious sense of man's total limitation in science as well as any other cognitive matters. To sum up what was said up to now, it can be put this way: Andrew is yet facing a series of internal conflicts and needs to decide on the very nature of science or the knowledge he has inherited. To do so, he then has to analyze the history of that knowledge with the aid of a kind of new self-made epistemology; the only tool that may make him able to take into consideration different fragments of the history of that failure so as to start a critical reading of it. One should be reminded that according to New Historicism such a critical reading can be done when those fragments are rewritten in quite a different manner or in other words, only by the time they have gone through the filters of a subject's mind. In this sense the reader must expect reading about a new history or better to say the way Andrew's mind is to generate his understanding of the truth, in the space of the novel. But how does Andrew start his job of writing that history? And how can his scientific approach help him when revised or empowered by that new knowledge of the truth or his-story? Andrew is only able to start this job when he has fully accepted the idea that mere science is not enough and that the mind empowered by science cannot be equal to consciousness as it is under the influence of many other unknown factors that are able every now and then to affect one's understanding of himself or herself as well as every other things and matters. This is in fact what Andrew confesses by declaring that the brain always pretends not to be itself and also by mentioning to the idea that in recent age it has tried to take the soul's place (108). Yet, somewhere else he puts much emphasis on the importance of science as the only tool man has and condemns those people who ignore science fully and those who their limitation in making sense of consciousness or their own true identity and story holds them from going on as they " abhor

science," ignore the excising conflicts and surrender themselves to the powers at work and "live in the presumptions of the socially constructed life"(183). Thus, it can be inferred that Andrew has finally come to the idea that although one cannot escape the ideological powers at work and the way they would affect one's cognitive tools and one's understanding of the truth and reality, he or she must go on and should not surrender like Heinrich Von Kleist, the German Romantic poet, who committed suicide after getting aware of the existing limitations (36).

Based on what was discussed above, it may be claimed that Andrew can now at least be sure about the emergence of a kind of nonconformity in himself and the fact that in order to move toward truth he must revise the manipulated version of it that has been up to now imposed on him by the very Americanism he has inherited. As a matter of fact, Andrew has finally come to the idea that that such a truth is nothing more than a silent black and white movie; that which puts a great distance between what is real and what the audience can be fed with as reality:

Ah, but when they didn't make a sound, how uncanny they were with the title cards doing the talking, the written-out words blocking our view to make things clearer (Doctorow, pp. 56-57).

The image, the reader is given by this statement of Andrew may remind a critic of how Hollywood or the American movie industry has been in service of controlling people ideologically or even conditioning their identity formation by practicing a kind of self-positioning technique with regard to New Historicism (Tyson, p. 289).^[11] This effect has actually been what many cinema critics have always put in center while discussing the nature of film industry in Hollywood. According to an article by Andrew Ali Ibbi in which he focuses on the global effects of Hollywood industry, Hollywood movies are at work to create a kind of "social realism and to offer a window into American cultural and social history" and subsequently to give an ideal image that is the picture of "American freedom and equality" (p.97)^[12]. This ideal image or picture which according to another critic can be taken as "a byword for the American dream" is the very factor that "extols the virtues of the American way of life, promotes major industrial products and builds and reinforces a positive national image (Bi)^[13]. Based on these quotations it is not then hard to infer why the reader can find in *Andrew's Brain* as well as in Doctorow's other novels many references to Hollywood and the image it intends to provide. As a matter of fact, Doctorow has been successful in dealing with issue in different ways. For example, in *The Book of Daniel* he focuses on "The Disney Land" and how it gives another picture of reality. In the same manner, in his *World's Fair* he gives a full attention to the issue by creating a story revolving around the events of the actual *World's Fair* exhibition held in late 1930s in New York, and the way by its theatricality it conditioned the future reality or the very idea of how a modern American must be in a future stipulated with technique and science.

To go on in discussion, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that this American propagandist ideal image magnified by

Doctorow has existed even before the emergence of Hollywood films and according to Andrew and many instances of references he makes to Mark Twain and some of his novels – like *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* – as well as the way he relates them to that ideal picture, it can be inferred that there must be something in deeper levels which demands more analysis. As a matter of fact, these kind of novels which exemplify Bildungsroman or adventure novels in form of voyages and cover a vast strata of American geography, can be interpreted in this way: Like the ideology that exists behind the production of each Hollywood film in America, each written text, whether literary or not, can be said to be in service of the portrayal the American dream as well as the reflection of a kind of enthusiasm for questing the unknown or better to say a kind of expansionism. If Mark Twain is taken as one of the pioneers of the American Literary Realism, it must be reminded that he is not an exception in this sense. Thus Andrew's recurrent references to him in the space of the novel seem to imply that he is busily dealing with the issue of the American ideal image imposed on the American subjects through different channels and the extent to which it may shadow the boundary between truth and reality. After all, what does Andrew finally decide to do in order escape such a shadow world in which the Hollywoodian techniques are used to control people and what they must perceive as truth? How can he then go beyond those hallucinations and create a new world for himself that is wiped out of the shadows? The technique Andrew intends to use in creating that world is making a computer that possess an artificial intelligence; what enables it to go beyond the boundaries of time so as to revive all the dead consciousnesses or the repressed voices and discourses – like those found in those silent movies – as they do not disappear and continue their life in form of "voiceless sounds" (Doctorow, p., 9), only to be caught and decoded by that computer. As a matter of fact, this computer is that which in Andrew's mind must function as an agent for breaking the existing monophony in the context of the American politics and history. Focusing on Andrew's computer and its functions two issues at the same time may strike one's mind: First of all what he longs to do is very much close to what Houdini tried to do in *Ragtime*, in order to speak with his dead mother. Secondly, the idea of Andrew's computer may be said to very related to Bakhtin's idea of "polyphony", or dialogized heteroglossia", described by him in case of the different voices that may be heard in a work of literature (Bressler, p.,45).^[14] As a matter of fact, Doctorow's reference to the same issue in his different novels in a different manner can again be read in line with New Historicism and how it puts emphasis on the idea that the interplay of different discourses or voices in a novel or a work can be a sign reflecting the idea that unlike what a Marxist reading may provide, there is always reaction to the act of interpolation practiced from the side of the dominant ideology. In this sense, what Andrew – or Houdini – intends to do is very important and can be interpreted as how a subject may try to express his voice or to create his own version of history as fully discussed earlier.

But, to what extent is Andrew successful? Or, according to New Historicism, what are the techniques Doctorow make use of in this novel to introduce Andrew as a subject who is

finally contained? To speak about the novelist's techniques, a critic must focus on two major stories or better to say two *fabulas* that have been structured by Doctorow within the total narrative system of the novel and the way they are chained to each other by the turning point of the novel: The first story focuses on Andrew's marital successes and failures, and subsequently how the events happening in that context affect or would be affected by his project. The second one is the story of what happens after his second wife's death to his project, and the turning point is the fictionalized version of what takes place on 11th September of 2001. What follows then is the analysis of these three stages and the way they are in service of the reflection of Doctorow's purpose:

As it was put forth earlier, it is Andrew's much obsession with science and his carelessness about matters that may be said to be the cause of killing the baby by mistake and consequently what brought about Martha's divorce. Yet, what must be analyzed in case of the first *fabula* is another thing and according to what Doctorow has done there in the novel it can be claimed to be how a shift in Andrew's worldview is created and how in his life with Briony he is to undergo a change; something which is much significant according to New Historicism and exemplifies a kind of negotiation or compromise at work. Actually, it is quite ironical that Briony as the only person whom Andrew finds comfort in being with is the one who can be the best representation of the very Americanism studied above; what would become clearer only when she is compared to Andrew and his life before getting to know her. In fact, she is different from Martha who is a pianist and works for opera that is "the art of unconstraint emotions" in Andrew's terms (Doctorow, p., 18). Additionally, it is only by performing a comparison between Briony, Martha and his second husband Boris Godunov, who is an opera singer and from a Russian descendant, that Doctorow, in the same manner as his other novels, can provide some references to east and communism in general. For sure, these characters are good devices in hands of Doctorow and make him able, through wearing Andrew's guise, to comment on how the Communist ideology can create a "holy fool", out of people: Like those who act on an opera or theatre scene the people in a communist society enjoy the role given to them and they do not know that it is the role of a fool, as there exists a complex and hidden net of power relations at work and the morale prepared for them has gone through the filter of the dominant ideology. In other words, what Andrew asserts by the statement that a Russian Fool is very much holy, is this idea that the subjects in a communist society are so fooled by the interpolated ideology that they even find it a holy or sacred thing to play their role or take part as members of the social scene. So, based on these elements, it can be inferred that Doctorow's purpose beyond crafting such opposite characters is to highlight the process of Andrew's meditations on eastern communist ideology, the way he fears it unconsciously and how he is moving to embrace Americanism as a safeguard even without knowing: Something which the love for Briony represents and was discussed earlier in case of his meditations on science and how he may get rid of the existing shadows.

But how does Briony symbolize such a shift and how can she be said to be the core of the first story or *fabula* crafted by Doctorow and also something important to be analyzed with

regard to New Historicism? To answer this question, it must be put this way that are many textual evidences and the way Andrew describes her gives this impression to the reader that she is a typical American subject. For example, she is a college student in mathematics, who like any other middle class American depends on a financial support or getting a loan in order to study and she enjoys the gymnastic club as an extra-curricular activity scheduled by the college as well as the optional course in neurology that Andrew is the lecturer of. The campus and the city in which it is located are also important and Andrew's description of them accompanied by his story of Briony's love gives much more clues about Briony's character to the reader. But the most important clues in dealing with the character of Briony comes from what the reader finds about her father and mother whom Andrew meets in the trip to Los Angeles: Bill and Bett are two midgets from Czechoslovakia and Ireland who once came to America as members of "Leo Singers's Lilliputian" (85), which was a show group. They then settled down in America and were successful in starting a new life by going to Hollywood and playing in some movies. The way Andrew speaks about their success in becoming American citizens and his assertion that he felt comfortable in having Briony their daughter, one who has been brought up "in the great American tradition"(89), is very significant. To be precise, Andrew's new love for Briony will help him to start a new life and also to forget all his internal conflicts as she lives according to "American fashion" (127) and can help him to live as a "normal functioning citizen of the world" (115) – albeit for a short while. This is in fact to reflect the process of subversion and containment at work and that even Andrew the cognitive scientist with all those critical thoughts about the power of communist ideology and his dreams for making a computer to revive the lost voices so as to escape the existing hegemony or monophony is at some levels prey to the Americanism.

But how is Briony's death important when it is chained to the events of the 11th of September 2001 by the novelist? And, what does Doctorow intend to do by that? As a matter of fact, Doctorow has tried to create a kind of parallelism by cementing two turning points to each other and by building a new structure full of meanings in order to portray another stage of Andrew's meditations: Briony's death is the most catastrophic event that could happen for a person like Andrew and what happened in the 11th of September were also the most catastrophic events in the contemporary history of America. In other words, what took place in the 11th of September was soon interpreted as a war by terrorists on America as well as the American tradition and consequently caused "horror" and "disbelief" about what was going on in this country according to many newspapers and journals (Wall Street Journal Editorial) ^[15]. It can be claimed that by analogy the same feeling of horror and disbelief must have emerged in Andrew. Thus, Doctorow's fictional version of the events of the day in the novel – the same technique used by him in recording the events of the grand march of the final days of the Civil War in his novel *The March* so as to focus on each individual's story or version of the events – can be claimed to have much to say according to New Historicism. In fact, Briony, Andrew's emblem of love and happiness which is born in the context of The American tradition is scarified in

the World Trade Center quite symbolically as a sign of how fragile the ideal American Dream might be; and this event can be claimed to have given Andrew much more hints about the nature of the American politics as it gives birth to another disaster in which the American international policy is guilty this time, not him. This is in fact what gives subsequently a new strength to his idea of the necessity of working on that super-computer project; what can even help him to revive the voices of his lost beloved, Briony who seems to be singing through the trembling in his voice (Doctorow, p., 145).

Now it is the time to focus on the second story that is the story of what happens after Briony's death for Andrew's project. In fact, the core of this story is another fictionalized version of reality structured by Doctorow that is meeting President Bush who has come for a visit to the public high school in which Andrew works at Washington D.C after Briony's death and leaving New York. To the readers' supervise it will soon be revealed that the president was once his college friend at Yale and that he offers Andrew a new job at the White House as "the Director of the Whitehouse Office of Neurological Research" (154); an office to be established by Andrew. This may seem quite comic or improbable at the first glance for a reader who is not aware of the exact context of production and the extent to which Doctorow is able to blur the boundary between fact and fiction. In fact, the story which he crafts is quite familiar to the American people in recent years and refers to the investment that has been done in case of brain research. Here is a quotation in this case from *New York Times*:

The Obama administration is planning a decade-long scientific effort to examine the workings of the human brain and build a comprehensive map of its activity, seeking to do for the brain what the Human Genome Project did for genetics. The project, which the administration has been looking to unveil as early as March, will include federal agencies, private foundations and teams of neuroscientists and nano-scientists in a concerted effort to advance the knowledge of the brain's billions of neurons and gain greater insights into perception, actions and, ultimately, consciousness (Markoff) ^[16].

As a matter of fact, Doctorow's reference to the present-day concern of the government and transplanting it to Andrew's story, his concerns about neurology, his intended project and the incidents happening to him after the 11th of September is very significant and it may be another proof to the fact that how in different periods scientific developments are important to politicians and their political aims.

After all, what does Andrew do and what is his reaction to that offering of the president after getting to know all those realities about the world of politics, the way it affects every aspects of life and its utilitarian view of science as well as other things? The Answer lies in his dialogue with the analyst and the way he speaks about the matter and explains his purpose: In his dialogue with the analyst Andrew declares that he is a citizen sensitive to his country's history and that he knows everything about the president and the quality of the people around him. He also announces that he is aware of the negative consequences of invading the wrong country and the

fact that because of doing so the President is under much pressure (Doctorow, p., 158). Yet, he adds that such an offering was tempting enough as it would provide him a chance to work on his project; what would give him the ability to step into history and also to act (159), for the first time. That is why he finally accepted the offering; the offering for a job that only lasted for three weeks.

As a matter of fact, what happens to Andrew in those three weeks in the White House is the most important element in the second story and what brings the final disillusionment to him as he finds in practice what he had always speculated about: He finds that he cannot do anything and that he is only a puppet in hands of the president; a tool used for gathering popularity and part of the advertisements done for the next election as he is anonymous for the media and much propaganda about the new scientific project in run in the White House would be formed. Actually, what Andrew does there is only giving some report to the president about a project never really in progress, just to fascinate his friends Chaingang and Rumbun with whom he competes. That is why, at the end Andrew finds not only that his dreams for inventing that computer is totally ruined but also the bitter fact that he is given a new identity by the President as he calls him Android and not Andrew (184). To his surprise, Andrew then comes to know that he can by no means be that hero or warrior discussed at the beginning of this study and has turned into a real android: Something like a robot with human appearance in science fictions or an open source operating system on smart phones or tablets; what can be the best example of what the desired end would be for the political power in controlling even a subject's mind and his operating manner; or the best representative of how the act of brain washing first introduced in 1950s can be claimed to be at work as something standing beyond all the social and political structures in creating a new identity for one (Taylor, p., xi) ^[17]. In other words, what Andrew experiences in the White House is his final meditations on the nature of science and the way it could be in service of brain washing. What he comes to finally is then the fact that the American ideology is also able to create a holy fool out of him. That is why he embraces his role and symbolically at the end of his last lecture on the project plays the role of a fool in an upside down gesture in the oval office, after declaring the fact that the president and the people around him are the "prime examples of human insufficiency" and people "imperial in self hood", and "corporate culturalists running a government"(197). Doing so, Andrew is labeled by them as a mad man who has threatened the life of the president (199); one who must be taken out by the officers and must be sent to somewhere unknown in a cabin: The cabin where he is to meet his analyst from time to time.

Conclusion

Andrew's final statements are important according to New Historicism and a proof to the validity of applying such an approach to *Andrew's Brain*, because they reflect how a subject is at least able to express his voice, to negotiate with the powers at work and to show some levels of opposition. To put it another way, if he is not successful in grasping an important scientific achievement – that is making a real mega-computer capable of reviving the repressed historical voices

and generating a communal consciousness so as to reveal the truth – and is contained at the end by being introduced as a mad person who is not even capable of fathering her daughter, he gains something else in return: All his meditations on the very nature of brain, guilt, culture, consciousness, history, truth, politics and power finally lead him to a revolt and it is a sign that he has been at least successful in generating his own story or better to say his own version of the historical truth by the aid of his own mind. In this sense, it is Andrew's brain that has acted as a mega-computer capable of processing the historical American mind, because the processed data has gone through the filters of his identity and has consequently made him able to record at least subjectively how the American soul or consciousness has been generated. But, can he ever wholly get rid of the darkness that always interposes or better to say those hidden factors that have once affected the way those filters are made and are ready again to modify them whenever needed? In other words, can he ever be able to "distinguish darkness from the soul"?

Finding an answer to the above-mentioned question seems to be very hard, however such a hard task and its complexity can help a critic to infer that a novel or such a well-made discourse constructed artistically to draw the readers' attention to this final question is at least of much literary and interpretative significance. Thus, at the end, it shall be concluded that Doctorow's last novel, *Andrew's Brain*, is of a multi-layered nature and a good sample of how a novelist can rely on the blurred boundary between fact and fiction as well as story and history to depict a subjects' cognitive attempts in the way of grasping a valid account of the truth and reality.

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