

Chapter I

Introduction

Reconstruction of American History

This research focuses on E. L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime*. It attempts to analyze Doctorow's interest in the reconstruction of textbook American history by imposing the spirit of civil right movements of 1960s on the ragtime era of the early twentieth century. Setting of the novel *Ragtime* is early twentieth century, pre-WWI America. It was the ragtime era □time of poverty, inequality and injustice. Doctorow's characters, which are from the early twentieth century, have been contextualized around the civil right movements of 1960s. Doctorow has reconstructed the early twentieth century American textbook history by challenging the typicality associated to the period. Doctorow's interest in history is different from traditional historians.

In this context one can use the concept of history as proposed by writer like Michael Foucault. Foucauldian concept of history problematizes history as chronologically systematic and linear. His is an attempt to see not the events in its chronology but to see the gaps in it and to see it in its zigzagged course. Each officially documented history, he holds, is influenced by the perspectives of the powerful persons and its writing is controlled by the power relations of the time it was written. Thus, it suppresses other relations which do not enjoy the power. If viewed from the perspective of those suppressed and marginalized in course of writing a history, Foucault seems to be suggesting that the history loses its singularity and appears to be histories in history. In this context, in the reading of the novel *Ragtime* that imposes the spirit of the Civil Right Movements giving space to the hitherto marginalized races like Jews, Blacks and women, one can see how the fiction *Ragtime* is an effort to re-write history.

His attempt to rewrite the history begins with a denial of the linearity and objectivity of history. And in course of his rewriting of the history he emerges a genealogist as discussed by Michel Foucault. For that he draws the attention of the reader toward the objectivity of the world itself: "It was evident to him that the world composed and recomposed itself constantly in an endless process of dissatisfaction" (118). Such preoccupation persists throughout the novel.

In the novel, Coalhouse Walker, a black gentle pianist who belongs to a marginalized group, rides Ford Model T in ragtime era. He, later, forms a group of gorillas and forms Provisional American Government under his own presidency. A black man of early twentieth century America, empowered so much, clarifies the intention of the author to reconstruct the history by challenging its linearity. Tateh, a Jew, immigrant and socialist, struggling for economic justice in pre-WWI America gives up his socialist conviction and succeeds. Tateh, a representative of marginalized people, is portrayed as successful filmmaker and equivalent to white American who replaces Father in Mother's bed.

Historical and real characters like Teddy Roosevelt, Sigmund Freud, and Jung and others are mixed up with fictional characters. These historical and real characters are reported in fictional world and situations. The history itself is challenged. Doctorow believes history is a narrative as fiction so it's the mere construction of historians. It's therefore subjective and a chaos to be ordered as one likes. The Truth and authenticity of history is traditional concept that is like a dictator who suppresses the marginalized. Emma Goldman defines the male –female relation in new way on terms of equal beings, which is radical and a challenge to the linearity of the history. Mother, a submissive woman, a marginalized character of the society, takes the charge of the family and business by replacing her husband Father. Doctorow has

enlivened his characters of early twentieth century by immensely imposing the spirit of civil right movements of 1960s to reconstruct American history. Parks, a renowned critic, writes about the trend of Doctorow "... idiosyncratic blending of fact and fiction [...] to challenge the privileged status of historical discourse"(Parks 458).

Ragtime is a unique adaptation of the historical narrative genre where there are three main elements in powerful and impressive ways; the life pattern of an upper-middle class family consisting of Father, Mother, and Mother's Younger Brother, Grandfather and a young boy. They make up a white American family who lives in New Rochelle, New York, supported by the manufacture of American flags, bunting, fireworks and various trappings of patriotism. "The best part of the Father's income was derived from the manufacture of flags and buntings and other accoutrements of patriotism, including fire works"(Doctorow 3).

The next important element in the novel is the wretched condition of an immigrant Jewish family by poverty, which is composed, of Tateh, Mameh and the little girl who struggles for economic justice. Tateh is a strong advocate of radical left who, later, gives up his conviction and merge himself in the mainstream of American life. The third and most important element in the novel the tragedy of third family composed of Coalhouse Walker, a black ragtime musician, Sarah his beloved and their child who is supported by the Mother from the New Rochelle family. The tragedy of Coalhouse Walker family is gives the picture of early twentieth century America. Coalhouse Walker, a black of early twentieth century owns a Ford Model T. This causes resentment to some racist whites, seeing a black owning the middle-class status (an automobile), symbol of equality, makes Coalhouse Walker the target of the hostility out of prejudice and brutality rooted in racism. The members of the local fire department vandalize Model T. Sarah gets killed by the police who mistakes her

hysterical attempt to petition for justice as a threat. After failing by peaceful means to get justice, Coalhouse Walker turns to violence, declaring he will not stop until his Model T is repaired. Coalhouse Walker is also shot dead when he surrenders. His retaliation, which involves bombing, murder and the seizure of J. P. Morgan's immense library, is electrifying.

Finally the surviving members of the three family get intertwined in a most believable way as the historical personages as Houdini, Evelyn Nesbit, the Marilyn Monroe of her time; the anarchist Emma Goldman, Peary, the explorer; Henry Ford and Harry K Thaw who murdered Stanford White, repeatedly appears in the narrative interacting with characters and tying many details together.

The fiction can be understood more in the context of the historical narrative as provided by traditional historians. Civil Right Movement of 1960s is a political phenomenon in American history for the end of the evil of racism and to reconstruct the American society of which the culture was based on racism. Though, after the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the blacks were recognized as equal to whites, the dominant community in America, they were denied access to the participatory democracy and dehumanized on the basis of color. Politically and theoretically, the civil war ended the long history of slavery and racial discrimination but the time of practical implantation had not yet come. Blacks were suffering the same fate as second-class citizen in America with the burgeoning dissatisfaction for the existing discriminatory norms and values of American society; Civil Right Movement was born with the slogan to end the evils of racism, education reform and anti-imperialism.

After the Emancipation Proclamation blacks anticipated equality and justice but their anticipation and efforts to improve their lives were often met with strong

resistance from the racist whites who didn't want to deal with them on the equal basis. Laws were passed legalizing racial discrimination and making the justice practically impossible for the blacks:

In 1896, in the *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision, the Supreme Court had declared the racially segregated schools were constitutional; provided that all black schools were 'separate but equal' to white schools. In practical terms, however, the separate-but-equal standard created and perpetuated gross inequalities in the educational access of African-Americans. (Marable 33)

After the WW II, America emerged as a great power block. Its archrival was USSR. America was the advocate of democracy, whereas the USSR was the advocate of communism. America had tough time in and out:

The history of America in the half-decade after WWII was dominated by two great struggles: the battle against communism abroad and the fight against racism at home. Both, in varying ways, were contests for 'hearts and minds'. For America's Cold Warriors, the battle against communism was also a battle for the souls of people on every continent. On the one hand was godless, dictatorial, oppressive communism; on the other hand was god-fearing, freedom-loving, law-abiding democracy. Convincing the people of the world, particularly, those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, that the United States stood for latter was not always easy task. For at home, America's civil right activists were waging their own campaign, trying to win the hearts and minds of their fellow citizens to support equality for African – Americans. (Krenn 503)

America's advocacy for justice, freedom, equality and the rule of law awakened the African-Americans in America, who were the victims of segregation and discrimination. They raised the voice for equality granted to them in the Declaration of Independence, which is American creed "... all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness." (Jefferson 13) In American context the "all men" only referred to whites. The civil right activists reinterpreted the definition of "all men" (13) as both blacks and whites. So, the civil right activists demanded equal status for blacks.

Prior to 1960s there was segregation in many sectors, which deprived blacks form equal opportunities. There was school segregation, transportation segregation, segregation public facilities and accommodation. During 1950s, school segregation was widely accepted throughout the nation. Blacks were separated from whites by the segregating laws. Blacks were reminded their place by separating them from white schools and from the other facilities. School segregation was discrimination so the blacks were demanding the end of school segregation. In 1952, Supreme Court heard a number of school segregation cases, including *Brown v. Board of Education*. Supreme Court chief justice Earl Warren considered the matter and gave his verdict in 1954 in the favor of blacks:

In his decision, declared: Does segregation of children public schools solely on the basis of race, even though physical facilities and other tangible factors may be equal, deprive children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe it does [...] we conclude, unanimously, that in the field of publication education, the

doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. (Marable 34)

That decision overthrew 1896 *Plessey v. Ferguson* decision ruling that had set the separate but equal precedent. "The Brown decision of 1954 set the legal framework for the emergence of what would become a mass Black Freedom Movement to overturn legal racial segregation in all public accommodation and institutions" (Marable 34).

There was transportation segregation. Blacks couldn't travel and share the seat in the same bus with the whites. It was legalized that blacks had to leave their seats for white because they were black. In 1955, Rosa Parks, a 43-year-old black lady was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat in the bus to a white man. The black leaders discussed the matter and organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott under the leadership of a young minister Martin Luther king Jr, which would deprive the 65% of its income, and cost King \$500 fine or 386 days in Jail. He paid the fine, and eight months later, the Supreme Court decided, based on the school segregation cases, that bus segregation violated the constitution. Despite that, the transportation segregation was carried on in practice. Local segregation laws were frequently used to perpetuate the transportation segregation. In 1961 "the Freedom Rides... carried the struggle for racial equality across state lines" (Auerbach 9). Their action was met with violence at many stops along the way, though the freedom riders were non-violent.

There was segregation in public facilities and accommodation too. Blacks were excluded from hotel and restaurant service. They were not served at hotels' lunch counters. In 1960, after having been refused service at lunch counter of a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina, the black students sat at the counter until

they were served. They were not served. The students continued their sit-in protest each day. *New York Times* drew attention to the student's protest, more students, both blacks and whites joined the sit-ins and the students across the country were inspired to launch the similar protest. "Even as the protesters encountered the violent fury of hostile racists, they never relented in their commitment" (Auerbach 9). They remained non-violent.

The civil right movements got the real momentum from 1960. Martin Luther King, the leader of the movement, was greatly influenced by Gandhi's legacy of non-violence, civil disobedience, non-cooperation and faith in god to fight against the oppressor by the oppressed. The civil right campaigners and the students at colleges launched different non-violent movement in protests for the end of segregation

The movement was going on in one hand; on the other hand resistance from the racist whites was also carried on. In May 1963, Martin Luther King and Rev. Shuttlesworth led a protest march in Birmingham. The protesters were non-violent. Despite that the protesters were met with policemen and dogs. The ministers were arrested. Martin Luther king was held in solitary confinement for three days; during those days he wrote a letter from Birmingham jail profoundly moving justification for the moral necessity of the non-violent resistance to unjust laws. Then on 28th August 1963, King led a non-violent protest march of 200,000 civil right lovers. He addressed the crowd and delivered his famous speech *I Have a Dream*. His speech was the reflection of the wishes and needs of African-American people.

Despite the immense pressure through civil disobedience and non-violence movement there was no significant and radical achievement till 1964. So, one of the civil right campaigners Malcolm X posed in his speech "the ballot or the bullet". He explained "we want freedom now, but we're not going to get it saying 'we shall

overcome. We've got to fight until we overcome..." (Auerbach 9). The movement forced the American government to reconsider its law and values. In 1964, the president Johnson signed the Civil Right Act. The heart of the Act was about the public accommodation, that no longer African-Americans could be excluded from restaurants, hotels and other public facilities. Still, the voting right for the blacks was denied. The civil right campaigner kept on the movement and got the voting right granted through the Voting Right Acts 1965.

In 1968-69, the student protest was endlessly repeated with local variations. At Columbia and Cornell, two major battlegrounds, animating issues remained race and Vietnam War. At Columbia, protest quickly evolved from civil disobedience to 'barricade resistance' to university authority condemning the university exploitation of the community and her support for the government imperialist policies.

The civil right movement in American history brought significant achievements in the area of desegregation, education reforms and anti-imperialism in American society. The movement helped the blacks to equate themselves to the whites and made the whites to accept the American creed "all men are created equal" (13). The same spirit enlivened by the civil right movements is imposed in *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow to reconstruct the American textbook history.

This present work has been divided in to four chapters. The first chapter presents a brief outline of *Ragtime*. It gives the bird's eye view of the entire work. The second chapter tries to explain briefly the theoretical modality that will be applied in this research. It discusses briefly genealogy, new historicism and historiography to reconstruct the textbook American history. The third chapter will analyze the text at a considerable length, on the basis of theoretical modality. It will take out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study □ E. L. Doctorow

reconstructs the textbook American history by imposing the spirit of the civil right movements of the 1960s on the ragtime era. This part serves as the core of this work. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research on the basis of textual analysis in chapter three. It will conclude the explanations and arguments put forward in the preceding chapter and show how E. L. Doctorow reconstructs the textbook American history by implementing Foucauldian genealogy.

Chapter II

Genealogy, New Historicism and Reconstruction of History

Genealogy is a philosophical critical approach that undertakes to expose the inextricable connection between knowledge and power, and subsequently the connection between all claims to absolute truth and different forms of power. This philosophical project is indebted to German philosopher Nietzsche whose concept of will to power, which he borrowed from Schopenhauer's idea of will to live, paved the footsteps for its development. For Nietzsche reality, truth, the world, is construction, projections of human needs and interests, through the medium of human senses, human faculties, and human language. For him every human endeavor is guided by his will to power. In his *Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche talks that coward people to defend them from the strong construct morality and concept of good and bad are also not the exceptions.

Nietzsche is of the opinion that morality is different, if we look at the history of human evolution, than what we accept now. He says what we call good may not be some absolute rule of behavior, but rather what a series of haphazard developments in our society has led us to approve of. From this perspective, morality no longer seems too sacred: it is something that we can question and critique. It makes sense to question the value of morality if we no longer have any divine guarantee that what we call good is in fact good for us. Nietzsche finds morality; good and bad all are human construction for their utility.

Nietzsche's genealogical philosophical project is manifested in his work *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* also wherein he has opposed the history, which sees itself as tracing the development to culminate, implicitly outside the time, and based on the belief of an eternal truth, a standpoint from which all can be measured. He questions the hitherto existing belief about history as unquestionably and

absolutely true. He has defined history as a human construction that evolves from interpretation, from theorizing inferences and from data and records and subjectivity biases of individuals who make it up on the basis of utility. Nietzsche argues:

We need it (history) for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action or to excuse a selfish life and a cowardly or base action. We would serve history only so far as it serves life; but to value its study beyond a certain point mutilates and degrades life." (21)

For Nietzsche, history is valued on the basis of its utility for human beings. So far produced histories are valued on the base of how much it (history) has made our life comfortable. But, Nietzsche urges that we need history for life and action. For him action comes from the impulses of man, which leads him to be superhuman. But the history has been used for its utility by the cowards for their safety from the strong, which has degenerated the life.

Before Nietzsche, Hegelian notion of history was in full bloom. Hegel's idea was that human beings are moving towards a point of perfection, which he calls the teleological point. Hegel and other idealist philosophers of the time thought that every movement is a new movement and every experience is a new experience. Nietzsche's idea of historiography radically opposed such idea and conception about the time and history. He charges Hegelian idea to be abstract and says there is no such superimposed idea that humanity in general is heading towards. He sees the idealists' negation of impulse not more than a fallacy and says human creature is instinctively animalistic and lives basically in impulses. In fact, despite the suppression of the natural instincts, the reality is that human beings make the best possible progress

when all their potentials, the neglected aspects of things, which are supposed to be evil, immoral, and irrational and so on, are utilized.

The contemporary supposition of history as the representation of the truth no longer existed for Nietzsche because he says life can never be understood in terms of truths. For Nietzsche history is as he posits:

History is necessary above all to the man of action and power fights a great fight and needs examples, teachers, and contemporaries [. . .]

Polybius is thinking of the active man when he calls political history the true preparation for governing it is the great teacher that shows us how to bear steadfastly the reverses of fortune reminding us of what others have suffered. (29)

He thinks that the proper creative use of history is the only use of it; otherwise it kills or destroys humanity in long run. Suffering all the time reveals reality. He prefers the metaphoric language of poetry, which is the outcome of imagination, which does not claim to be objective as history claims to be. But, for him, History is the construction of human wills and wishes so it can't be objective. It's colored by the wills and wishes of its writer.

Nietzsche says, opposing the traditional history and divides the history in three ways on the basis of its use, is useful to human beings as monumental, antiquarian and critical. They are needed for man for, "his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance"(29). Nietzsche negates monumental history. He says "sometimes there is no possible distinction between a 'monumental' past and mythical romance, as the same motives for action can be gathered from the one world to another"(31). So, "the monumental history will never be able to have complete truth; it will bring together things that are incompatible and

generalize them to compatibility, will always weaken the difference of motive and occasion". His antiquarian history is another which is, "necessary to the man of conservative and reverent nature who looks back to the origin of his existence with love and trust through if he gives thanks for life" and "preserves what survives from ancient days" make him feel "the history of his town [...] the history of himself; he looks on the walls, the turreted gate [...] and sees himself in it all—his strength, industry, desire, reason, faults, and follies"(33). He feels home. He identifies himself with the spirit of ancient objects. Nietzsche negates this antiquarian use of history too. He posits:

Antiquarian spirit of reverence lies in the simple emotions of pleasure and content that it lends to the drab, rough, even painful circumstances of a nation's or individual's life; Neibuhr confesses that he could live happily on a moor among free peasants with a history and would never feel the want of art. How could history serve life better than by anchoring the less gifted races and people to homes and customs of their ancestors, and keeping them from ranging far field in search of better, to find only struggle and competition? (34)

Nietzsche opposes the antiquarian for its implicit politics by making the present engulfed by the past. The antiquarian use of history perpetuates the politics of use by engaging the people totally to their culture, heritage, and ancestors related objects which stop people from their instinct and struggles to live a better present.

Nietzsche talks that the history should be used in critical way. He says we must use history in critical way for the service of man. He says, "Man must have the strength to break up the past, and apply it, too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it"(36).

Nietzsche asks the historians and the readers of the history to question the past for "... we are merely the resultant of the previous generations, [...] the resultant of their errors, passions, and crimes; it is impossible to shake off this chain"(36).

Nietzsche urges man to take the history critically. He says, "Every man and nation needs certain knowledge of the past, whether it is through monumental, antiquarian, or critical history, according to his objects, powers, and necessities"(37). Nietzsche is of the opinion that history is the construction of man depended on his needs.

French philosopher Michel Foucault, greatly influenced from the ideas of Nietzsche, inherits some ideas from him and invents some of his own. He has borrowed the term and even the idea of genealogy from Nietzsche and goes beyond the tradition to limit the history as the events taken place in the past. Nietzsche's idea is that human behavior is motivated by the concept of will to power. For Foucault, the traditional values had lost their power over society and discourse formation is central tendency of human behavior, are the shaping guideline for his ideas. Foucault's thought explored the shifting patterns of power within a society and the ways in which power relates to the self. He investigates the changing rules governing the assumptions about what is true or false at different epochs of history.

Foucault has been always interested in the mechanism of human thought and particularly the character of the subconscious underlying all human actions, which is power. Foucault's interest in history is different from traditional notions of history. He has been fascinated by the fact that even ideas, concepts, experiences as well as problems all have histories. He has become aware of how his seemingly divergent interests intersected each other at the issue of power, knowledge, the idea of truth and pleasure within the self. He critically analyzes and interprets the histories of changing attitudes throughout a given period.

Foucault, in his *The Archeology of Knowledge* rejects the traditional historian's tendency to read straightforward narrative of progress in the historical records. "For many years now", he writes "historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible progress, the constant readjustments, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events"(Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* 3). He argues that one should seek to reconstitute not large "periods" or "centuries" but "phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" (4). The problem, he argues, "is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits" (5). Instead of presenting a monolithic version of a given period of history, Foucault argues that we must reveal how any given period reveals "several pasts, several networks of determination, several teleologies, for one and the same science, as its present undergoes change: thus historical descriptions are necessarily ordered by the present state of knowledge, they increase with every transformation and never cease, in turn, to break with themselves" (5). Foucault, in relation to history, has developed his own ideas about genealogy in relation to Nietzsche's ideas of history. In his famous essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" Foucault reflects the connection of historical epochs because his idea of genealogy conceives history as a process of discontinuity.

For Foucault, genealogy is a critical approach which analyses the incidents and gives detail analysis of society in general. It tries to explore into race, body and desire. In genealogical history individual's sufferings and emotions are analyzed and

it is the effective one. Unlike the traditional one, genealogical history is the history of oppressed people, not about rulers but about the ruled ones. It attacks the coherence of the subject. Foucault departs from the concept of traditional histories and historians and redefines the role of historians. Genealogy, for him, is a Nietzschean effort to undermine all absolute grounds and to demonstrate the origins of things only in relation to and in context with other things. So, genealogy turns towards the problems of power and practice. In this regard Foucault states, “the search for descent is not the erecting of foundation: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was imagined consistent with itself.” (87)

Philosophers like Hegel and Kant believed history as a continuous progression of human life that is based on certain rules and guidelines. They tried to present objective truth without giving their own opinions and pretended themselves to be disinterested. They also tried to create a coherent identity and the synthesis is the most important thing, for them, to create certain identity. For Kant, knowledge is gained, in a real sense, with synthesis of *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Idealists like Kant and Hegel believed that the history is moving towards a teleological point, a point of perfection.

A genealogist's view is totally different from the idealists'. For Foucault, every epoch of history is not connected with each other; rather it's a kind of fragmented series of events, a chain of unrelated events. For the genealogists even the insignificant and minor events are significant because they do not believe in the point of perfection. They do not believe in the possibility of teleology and the concept of origin. History, for them, is not linear and cyclic. Critics see Foucauldian terms like archeology and genealogy as tools for studying the history. Arun Gupto, in his *Healing Thoughts on Tender Theory* writes:

For Foucault, archeology and genealogy are complementary rather than being two different approaches. If archeology studies the statements, genealogy studies statements but in the relation to power. These statements are in continuous process even today. For Foucault, they are not a thing of historical slot: for instance, Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* is not merely an object of archeological research of a time frame, but an idea that holds significance in the present context though differently in this time frame and in the time to come. (116-17)

Foucauldian genealogical concept opposes the notion of origin in history, which assumes the origin lofty. He believes that lofty origin is no more than “a metaphysical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth”, he further adds, “we wished to awaken the feeling of man's sovereignty by showing his divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance” (84). The concept of origin, hence, is a chimera. Origin is associated with truth, which Foucault denies. For Foucault truth is constructed by discourses, which are the products of power relations to the institutions, which produced them. He posits: “the origin lies at a place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponded to a truthful discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost” (84). The historians approach to search for the origin or truth in history is vain. So, he asks the historians to give up the search for origin. Foucault clarifies what genealogy is and says, “Genealogy does not pretend to go back in the time to restore as unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things” (86). He says genealogy is:

[O]n the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersions; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations- or conversely, the completely reversal- the errors, the false appraisals, the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but exteriority of accidents. (87)

Genealogy is the search into the events and accidents, which have formed history. So, search into those events is to see the historical events as emergences, which have their own histories and histories' histories. So, Foucault urges to look into historical events as well as history as emergence. Genealogy focuses to see on those events as "the hazardous play of dominations" (89), which have been put in coherent order.

Foucault's genealogy, which apparently seems as the reinterpretation and reevaluation of the historical events in the relation to power structure relations, is to reconstruct the history. He finds history as emergence. Genealogy sees "the history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts, the history of concepts of the liberty or the ascetic life; as they stand for the emergence of different interpretations, they must be made to reappear as events on the stage of historical process" (91-92).

In this regard, Foucault's genealogical concept is to reconstruct the history by subverting the linear history by seeing into the histories of events. Genealogy sees the history from marginalized and dominated perspective, means it reconstructs the history from a different perspective than the historical ones and creates a new history which is not the final one but the emergence of a history which may have many more histories within it and related to it.

The central concern in this research is Foucauldian ideas of genealogy for the reconstruction of the history. His genealogical concept of history is the history of discontinuity, emergence and so on. For him, “[G]enealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (81).

Genealogists should look the history from the point of view of marginalized and insignificant, so that they can see the histories within a history. Despite the genealogist’s approach to see the history (historical discourses) as fragmentations, discontinuities and incoherent, the historical discourses are presented in a linear way as if in a linear and continuous development. Foucault believes discourses are the product of power. So, the power structure has been creating the linear mode of history by dominating and obliterating the weak.

While talking about the reconstruction of history, the contributions of historians who came up with the new thought of historiography cannot be overlooked. One of the most influential is postmodern historian Hayden White. Before discussing the White's influence it's better to talk what historiography is. Historiography literally means the art of writing history. Historiography tells the successive stages of evolution or development of historical writings. It has come to include the evolution of the ideas and techniques associated with the writing of history, and changing attitudes toward the nature of history itself. Ultimately it comprises the study of man's sense for the past. Historiography posits the notion that history and the historical thought is the reconstruction of past by the historians—is not only the theory or practice of history.

We get the knowledge of the past events or history from the realm of narrative. Hayden White says "reluctance to consider historical narratives as what

they most manifestly are—verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in sciences"(White 42). Through equating historical narration with story-telling White's critique has for many practicing historians amounted to a denial of the very possibility, or at least the point of historical research. In addition, the proposition that historical narratives are merely fictional seems like a call for out-and-out relativism and hence also a defense of the kinds of historical interpretations that have generally been considered morally unacceptable. Peter Brooks says "we live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed"(qtd. in Hutcheon 48). For Brooks, narrative representation—storytelling is a historical and political phenomenon. The past is mediated and manipulated by the text. Literary text, in this sense, works as a means for the representation of history. It reveals the process and tension by which knowing the past becomes a question of representing—constructing and interpreting—not of objective recordings.

Recent critiques of historical methodology have inaugurated a radically revised understanding of art, culture and society. History as a literary artifact is the recent notion developed by Hayden White. White, raising the question about the nature of narratives, in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* writes:

. . . [It] is to invite reflection on the very nature of cultural and, possibly, even on the very nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report

the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a cultural in which it was absent- or, as in some domains of contemporary western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused. (1709)

White is of the opinion that the past is an absent presence through narratives; the equivalent for a community of what one's ancestors, or, indeed one's own childhood, is for an individual person. He is of the thought that the dead can be studied scientifically but science cannot tell us what we desired to know about the dead. Or, those aspects of the past can be studied scientifically do not yield the kinds of information or knowledge that derives us to study the past in first place.

White, the postmodernist philosopher and a historian has consistently favored a structuralist approach emphasizing the primacy of secondary signification in historicity. White's epistemological relativism collapses philosophy of history and historiography. They only differ in that the former highlights the underlying principles, which determines the generation of text, whereas the latter displays them in implicit structure on the realistic narratives. Similarly, White converges fiction and historiography. Historiographic and fictitious events are rendered meaningful through the same represental strategies that insert the single event into an overacting narrative structure. Hence, White strives to see any "link between the realities of the past events with the historiographical text" (*Metahistory* 427).

Historiography claims to deal with the real, its method of representation legitimate a specific standard for the conceptualization of reality, past and present alike. Postmodernist theory doesn't look upon historical sources as having a fixed and unalterable meaning. Postmodernist historical theory maintains that no objective

knowledge of the past is possible because all knowledge is relative, all theories are equally valid and that a text is but an infinite play of significations. White would add that the only reason we have for preferring one interpretation to another would be moral or aesthetic.

Postmodernism has made a great impact on the field of historiography. It has developed its own way of historical writing by denouncing the conventional history. It rejects the master narrative as hegemonic stories told by those in power. The dominant class, through hegemony—domination by consent—creates an imperative upon the consciousness or the whole way of social life, value system, norms, beliefs, practices and attitudes. By doing so, it gets the consensus to formulate, values as general, common and indispensable social values that are constructed by power holder's discursive ethos and incentives.

The ruling class exercise power upon the ruled class not through force and fraud but through shaping the common sense into consensus that is hegemony. E. Sreedharan in his book *A Text Book of Historiography* writes about hegemony:

The essence of the concept of the hegemony is the appropriation of the culture by dominant class for the sake of social control not the identification of culture with sheer class power. The concept relied on the pervasive erosion of old beliefs by overcoming the sources of hegemonic power such as individual will, intellectuals, political parties, churches, schools and media. (279)

The concept of hegemony works not vertically but by the consent of both the oppressor and the oppressed. So, the narrative of history is the product of hegemony like Foucauldian power-discourse-truth relations.

Foucault develops a theory of discourse in relation to power structures operating in society. His main thesis is that discourse is involved in power: “It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (*History of Sexuality* 100). Foucault influenced from the Nietzsche’s idea of will to power takes discourse as a central human activity but not as a universal, general text, a vast sea of signification. According to Foucault, people speak of the ideas they want, they deliver speeches, they propound different theories, write books and newspapers, deliver messages that they wish. Foucault calls this process: discourse formation and whatever is produced the discourse. For Foucault, the production of any information that provides knowledge is a discourse. Once the discourse is produced, knowledge about some aspect of life is provided. This knowledge helps create the truth. Discourse gives information about the thing that its producer wishes to impart and whose wishes are also not free from the play of power circuit. People get the knowledge about that thing and the truth is constructed, Foucault believes knowledge is power. The power is generalized and dispersed in society by producing the discourses and by constructing the truths. Foucault’s notion of power is different from the traditional notion power. Power, for Foucault, is not the domination by one to others. He believes:

Power must not be thought as negative, as repression, domination, or prohibition. On the contrary, it must always be seen as ‘a making possible’, as an opening up of fields in which certain kinds of action and production are brought about. As power disperses itself, it opens up specific fields of possibility; it constitutes entire domains of action, knowledge, and social being by shaping the institutions and disciplines in which, for the most part, we largely make ourselves. In these domains we become the individuals, the subjects that they make us.

This phrasing, of course, makes things sound more determined in advance: the subject comes to be whatever or whoever he or she is only within this set of discursive and non-discursive fields. (Bove 58)

Foucault's main concern is power, which stabilizes the discourse, and its effects in the society shouldn't be taken negative. It is not a direct repression rather it diffuses itself within the social institutions to work in a systematic way. Foucault is of the opinion that power is only behind the institutionalization of discourse. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable from the power because discourse is the ordering force that governs the institutions. This enables institutions to exercise power. Those who possess the authority to define the discourse exclude other who are not in power. Discourse informs us the state of affairs, so it's information or miss-information. Discourse also tells us about the propriety or impropriety, rightness or wrongness, of something that consequently influence our attitudes, opinions and behavior. The exclusive function of discourse is to serve as a transparent representation of things and ideas standing outside it. Therefore, it's directive too. M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* writes:

Discourse has become the focal term among the critics who oppose the deconstructive concept of a 'general text' that function independently of particular historical condition. Instead they conceive of discourse as social parlances or language-in-use and consider it to be both the product and the manifestation not of a timeless linguistic system, but of particular social condition, class structure, and power relationship that alter in course of history. (262)

The written discourses or texts are meant to be addressed to the readers. So, they are not meaningful until they are actualized and made present by the readers or critics.

Texts being emanated, from the author, are meant to be verbal messages, which need to be deciphered, by the reader or critic. This helps to formulate an opinion that to engage in an interpretation of a text is to take part in a dialogue with the author.

Discourse, according to Foucault, is produced in which concepts of madness, criminality, sexual abnormality, and so on is defined in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. Such discursive formation massively determines and constrains the forms of knowledge, the type of normality and the nature of subjectivity, which prevails in a particular period. Foucault argues that the rules and procedures, which determine what is considered normal, or rational, have the power to silence what they exclude. His main point, here, is that meaning of any discourse depends on those who control it. For instance Galileo's claim that earth revolves round the sun was denied and he was made to recant his claim by the authority. Truth was proved wrong by the power. People recognize particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as true, only if it fits the description of truth laid down by the socio-political institutions of the day or the existing ideology of knowledge. Thus, discursive practices, however, have no universal validity but are historically dominant ways of dominant ways of controlling and preserving social relations of exploitations. Foucault's interest is in historical dimension of discursive change. Systems of knowledge establish rules and procedures governing the particular epoch by exclusion and regularities. Foucault regards the nature of discourse as an event in time since it is not only that which represents struggles or systems of domination but the object through which and with which we struggle, to power we seek to possess. For him, as Nietzsche, any attempt to produce and control discourse is will to power. Every instance of discourse embodies power struggle, as Foucault argues, "discourse is a violence that we do to things" (qtd. in Selden 60). Truth itself becomes not an unchanging universal essence but a

perpetual object of appropriation and domination. This implies that a discourse is always in a process of formulation, correlation and transformation, which takes after a certain epoch.

Foucault sees every action and every historical event as an exercise of power. He sees the exchange of power in very active term: “isn’t power simply a form of war like domination?” it is difficult to sort out just who is fighting war, since Foucault seems to lean towards the war of all against all notions. Power flows simultaneously in different directions and different volumes according to the various terms of power relation in the network of power exchange. Regarding the relation of power and truth Foucault says, “Now I believe that the problem doesn’t consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientific truth and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truths are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (qtd. in Adams 1139).

Foucault is clear that there is no objective truth or false. They are the mere construction of discourses that are neither true nor false within them. They are the only vehicles for carrying the institutionalized power through their information to the consumers.

According to Foucault, every discourse is meant to obtain power. In other words, every discourse is involved in power. He views that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operates through discourse. Discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. Hence, discourse is inseparable from power. Discourse is a means of achieving power. The social, moral and religious disciplines always control human behavior directly by means of discourse. So, people can’t do whatever they feel like doing. The discursive formation

has enabled institutions to wield power and domination by defining and excluding the other. Such discursive formations determine and constrain the forms of knowledge and types of normality of particular period. These discursive practices have also the power. Truth is being told, facts to back it up, but a teller constructs that truth and chooses those facts. Facts do not speak for themselves in either form of narrative history or literature; “the tellers speak for them making these fragments of the past in to a discursive whole” (qtd. in Hutcheon 56). As per him, truth is not outside power, or lacking in power. It is rather a thing of this world, which is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints in a society. So, each society has its own truth. Power diffuses itself in the system of authority and the effects of the truth are produced within discourses, which are neither true nor false in their own. Foucault argues, “Truth is linked in a circular relation with system of power which it induces and which extend it” (qtd in Adams 1145). Thus Foucault sees truth as a product of relation of power and it changes as the system (power structure) changes. Literature and history, for Foucault, are narratives and are in the form of discourses, so they are entangled in the power relations to their period of time. In short, all the texts either history or literature is simply a discourse which seek the power of ruling class—the power to govern and control. Hence, the dichotomy between history and literature is blurred; intertext is produced.

These ideas were seminal in the development of the dominant theoretical perspective of this era – New historicism- in the analysis of the history of humanity. The key ideas of New historicism revolve around some of the central notions of Foucault will be the conceptual framework to delineate the proposition of the reconstruction of history.

New historicism, developed in the 1980s, is a literary approach to literary criticism and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place, and circumstances of its composition rather than an isolated creation. The history of New Historicism dates back to the use of the term by Stephen Greenblatt in an issue of the journal *Genre* devoted to the Renaissance. Both Greenblatt and other subsequent critics associated with it; reject it to call a theory or a specific doctrine. Rather it is inclusive of various concerns and approaches like the dismissal of formalist notion of aesthetic autonomy and of the text's situatedness in a broader cultural background.

New historicists simultaneously aim to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature, which documents the new discipline of the history of ideas. New historicists believe that there is an inseparable relationship between literature and history and proceeds with a presumption that there is no hierarchy between literary discourse and non-literary discourse, that is, between literature and history. New historicists take the history as a narrative like the work of literature on the one hand; and the literature as history on the other. In this regard, new historicism owes something to Marxism or the Marxist analysis of history. But whereas the Marxist analysis tends to see literature as a part of structure in which economic base, where power is consumed and practiced in a hierarchical order, manifests it, new historicist thinkers tend to take a more nuanced view of power, seeing it exclusively as class-related but extending and dispersed throughout society.

Traditional historicists believe the literature as the product of historical events. The study of history, for them, would be sufficient to understand the work of literature. For them history is objective. But the new historicists take the history as a

narrative like fiction. It dismisses the objectivity of the history. So, the new historicism is a different literary theory and criticism from the traditional historicism and 'vacuum' literary criticisms. In this respect M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* writes:

New historicism, since the early 1980s, has been widely accepted [...] literary study that [...] attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings its effects, and also of its later critical interpretation and evaluation.[...] the new historicists differ markedly from [...] former scholars who had averted to social and intellectual history as 'background' against which to set a work of literature as an independent entity, or had viewed literature as a 'reflection' of the world view characteristic of a period. Instead, new historicists conceive of a literary text as 'situated' within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and the place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes. (182-83)

New historicism neither takes the literary work as out of historical context nor as solely the reflection of historical consciousness. It takes literary work and history interacting to each other. New historicists are of the opinion that an interpretation of a work of literature is influenced by both the historicity of production and interpretation.

New historicists have erased the dividing line between historical and literary materials. They take history as narrative of the past events. Literary work also narrates the events. When the events are narrated the perspectives play role. There can't be a

narration to be known in its objectivity, absolute and predestined by some sort of divine power. Instead of dealing history as a set of fixed, objective and stable thing; new historicists deal the text with a diversity of dissonant voices. Abrams again emphasizes:

History is not a homogenous and stable pattern of facts and events which can be used as the 'background' to the literature of an era, or which literature can be said simply to reflect, or which can be adverted to (as in early Marxist Criticism) as the 'material' conditions that, in a unilateral way, determine the particularities of literary text. In contrast to such views, a literary text is said by new historicists to be 'embedded' in its context, and in a constant interaction and interchange with the other components inside the network of institutions, belief, and cultural power-relations, practices and products that, in their ensemble, constitute what we call history. (184-85)

New historicism does not take history as a stable or fixed pattern of events. Neither, they take the history solely as a reflection of production of economic conditions as Marxists believe. For new historicists, history is the production of continuous interaction with the components inside the social, political, cultural power-relations. For new historicists, history does not mean objective history. For them the history is relative product of social institution as well as power structures of then and now.

New historicism, the mode of literary approach and criticism is greatly influenced by the thoughts of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault sees history as an emergence rather than evolution. He has refused the continuous development of history from past to present in linear and straight way. He has neither viewed history as an abstraction of idea or ideal, as something that has begun in the

beginning. No historical event to Foucault, has single cause, rather each event is tied into vast web of social and political factors. For Foucault, history is not a set of fixed, objective facts but, like the literature with which it interacts, that a text, whether it is literary or social discourse which reflects an external reality. Foucault's new historicist injection of politics in poetics gives us a methodology for producing our own history and politics, a history which is simultaneously a politics, which works on the institution of literary criticism and the reception of literary texts with possible meanings that may be produced during the course of history and with the knowledge inscribed in both dominant and radical discourse. Its importance seems together with literature, history and politics in crucial ways. Foucault has greatly influenced the new historical movement. His notion of history is genealogical which has created the base for the new historicists to reject the traditional notion of history. His notion of genealogy is the base for new historicist for the reconstruction of history. He urges to see the history as political phenomena ever in flux. So the concept of stable of linear history is myth.

Foucault urges historians to be aware that they themselves are historically situated making it difficult to see present cultural practices critically and extremely difficult to enter bygone ages. For Foucault, discourse is central human activity. He is interested how discursive practices change overtime. In this connection, Raman Selden writes, "history is ... disconnected range of discursive practices. Each practice is a set of rules and procedures governing writing and thinking in a particular field" (Selden 101).

Louis Montrose has described new historicism as a "reciprocal concern with the historicity of and textuality of history" (Abrams 183). The historicity of texts basically refers to the cultural specificity, the social embodiment, of all modes of

writing whether it is social, political, and economical or religious-- not only the texts that critics study but also texts in which we study them. The textuality of history is related with past. But the relation between the past and the present is not coherent but exhibits discontinuities breaks: by this, they hope to distance the earlier text and so sharpen their ability to detect its difference from their present ideological assumptions.

Foucault sees history in terms of power. He has viewed power not simply as repressive force or tool of conspiracy but rather as complex of forces that produces what happens: "Foucault's influence in literary theory has been strong among revisionist literary historians known as new historicists who study the circulation of power through society and the literary texts that are part of it" (Adams 1133).

Foucault, however, has been the major influence. He has encouraged the readers to reject the traditional romantic model of literary changes as continuous development. Writing about Foucault's concept of discourse, Raman Selden sees that "Foucault also emphasizes that discourses are always rooted in social institutions. He shows that social and political power works through discourse" (Selden 106).

New historicists employ the notion of discourses in order to detect in culture of specific historical moment and certain patterns, which are repeated throughout it in varying forms ranging from political, ideological and social practices to particular works of art and literature. The meaning of the text is seen to be embedded in a web of discursive formations which gives its meaning. Thus, the text confirms the ideologies and dynamics of the culture at the same time as it reproduces them. In any given historical period, we can write, speak or think about a given social object or practice only in certain specific ways and not others. A discourse would, then, be whatever constrains but also enables writing, speaking, talking and thinking within

such specific historical limits. So, contextualism cannot be conclusive; context to the text is an insurmountable problem and context of any text is infinite. Contextual explanation depends upon a certain model of historical process. The new historicists commonly regard the boundaries, which discriminate between literary and non-literary texts. They present their readings of texts written in the past, as negotiation between past and present is not coherent. So, the foundations of the new historicists are negotiation, exchange, transaction, and circulation.

More or less new historicists make an impression of resemblance with Marxists, but they are different. Marxists take social reality as a background for the development of literature whereas new historicists take texts as a set of historical and social context whose meaning goes on changing with the change of power-relation in society.

Chapter III

Reconstruction of Textbook American History Reading *Ragtime*

Ragtime: History and Fiction

E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* reconstructs the textbook American history by presenting it from the different angles to the official history. *Ragtime* presents its characters from marginalized groups to subvert the official history of American Progressive era (i.e. ragtime era) of the early twentieth century. *Ragtime* (1975) is Doctorow's novel where the characters are fueled by the spirit of 1960s civil right movements in the setting of the early twentieth century American society. Doctorow, influenced from the notion of historiography, believes that history and fiction are alike. For him history is also a narrative like fiction. His *Ragtime*, a fiction, is also the history of the ragtime era. Doctorow has challenged the official history by presenting the insignificant and dominated events, backgrounded by the official history, on the foreground. He has challenged the undebated official history by presenting another version of history which reconstructs the official history.

Traditionally history has been viewed as fact/objective truth and singly existed in text has been put under question by E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*. The traditionally written history of ragtime era has been challenged by the novel making the consumers of history to re-look, re-think, reassess and reconsider the past; reconstructs the American textbook history of early twentieth century ragtime era.

It's a new concept that history/past is available to us through the texts. Texts are human contributions which can not avoid the human fabrication. The historians interpret the past and make them available to the readers. Therefore, history is always subjective and guided by ideology. The supposition of historians as the neutrality of the language and absence of domineering, ideologized narrating voice are contested

by new historians, which takes the present process and limitation of writing of the past into account. New historicists stress on the impossibility of an all-embracing and totalizing account of the past. The history can not represent the pure form of events, for it always is contaminated/ remains relative to the narrator's prejudices and preoccupations. So, the proclamation of universal truth in history can no longer sustain. Anything about the past available to us in the form of history are different versions and perspectives of interpretation of history.

Official historical discourses have been viewed as an absolute, authentic, undebated and final version of history which has been deconstructed / reconstructed in his novel *Ragtime*. Doctorow wants his readers to reconsider the so-called official history. For him, writing history is a political phenomenon. So, the history, ever written is guided by the ideology. That's the reason; history is subjective, like fiction, where human sentiments play a great deal. The subjective involvement in history gives loopholes to create many more versions of history as: "George Lukacs, in his work *The Historical Novel* writes: "a collection and reproduction of interpreting facts about the past" or "a chaos to be ordered as one likes"(qtd. in Parks 454). Doctorow dismisses the opinion of one absolute truth, in terms of history with multiple truths and obliterates the claim of official historical discourses to be undebated, pure and valid. For him, official history functions as a kind of writing affected by the ideology of the era.

Doctorow perceives the historical texts as the products of individualized perception of the time and trend. History is the record of the events they occurred. Evidences and proofs create grounds for belief that they actually happened. Historians can not bring the past on the one hand and on the other they can not escape their own stance. So, they fabricate the facts with their theories and perceptions which leave the historians to re-construct the history time and again.

History is discourse situated within a network of cultural discourses--religious, political, economic, and aesthetic -- which both shape it and, in their t urn shaped by it. History, therefore, is a text, an interpretation where there can not be single version of story. History can not be science so there is always a chance of omission and addition. Doctorow, in the novel *Ragtime*, has written about the past/early twentieth century America, uses facts and fictions to reconstruct America's past. Matthew A. Henry in his *Problematized Narratives: History as Fiction in E. L. Doctorow's Billy Bathgate* writes:

E. L. Doctorow has made a career out of historical fiction, and he is renowned for both examining and rewriting America's past, most notably in the novel *Ragtime*. Such writings of history are possible because for Doctorow there is no fact or fiction, only narrative. . . . As a historical novelist, Doctorow is concerned foremost with the cultural myths of immediate past and their role in contemporary American culture [...] and takes a postmodern approach to history—is in the intentional confusion he sets up between documented historical events (facts) and invented ones (fictions), thereby problematizing the process of historical writing. . . . Doctorow admirably

exploits the dark areas of history, offering interpretations of the past which, although not denied by the historical records jar our assumption and undercut our trust in the official record. (32)

Doctorow has viewed the history and the fiction as equal genres of narratives. History in its true nature is the narrative of a historian who writes it with the presence of his subjectivity as in the fiction, which can not avoid the human perspectives. Therefore, for him writing about the past is to explore the dark sides of the past which has been neglected by the mainstream narratives or history where his ethos for the reconstruction of the past echoes.

History and Reconstruction of History:

E. L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime* opens with the historical reference of early twentieth century period "in 1902 Father built a house at the crest of Broadview Avenue hill in New Rochelle, New York"(3). Doctorow's intention of mixing the facts and fictions to subvert the official history by reconstructing or recomposing it in another way is explicit from the very beginning in the novel. He mentions the social trends of early 1900s in the very beginning of the novel to mix them with the fictitious events to subvert the official history. He mentions "Teddy Roosevelt was the president."(3) American official history of the pre-WWI America has been depicted as a progressive, peaceful and just time; the time of luxury, equality and democracy regardless of sex, race and creed. In the beginning of the novel claims social phenomena of the era look peaceful, prosperous, and harmonious and stable which fit the official history of America. But the official history of any nation is constructed on the basis of need for that country. Doctorow, talking about the early 1900s writes in the novel, "There were no Negroes. There were no immigrants"(4). Negroes and immigrants in the ragtime era of American society were very insignificant; they were not viewed despite their huge presence.

Doctorow's *Ragtime* reconstructs the ragtime era history of America which officially claimed to be progressive, peaceful and just. There were crime, there were turmoil and injustices. Females were dominated. There was no gender equality. "Runaway woman died in the rigors of ecstasy. Stories were hushed up and the reporters paid off by rich families"(4). This shows how the women were viewed then. This mocks the so-called gender equality claimed by the official history about ragtime era. "[...] shooting of the famous architect Stanford White by Harry K. Thaw"(4) shows the condition of peace and security of life in the early twentieth century America.

Where there is injustice there erupts revolution and rebellion sooner or later. Those who challenge the so-called convention, tradition or the rulers are straightforward labeled as anarchists, in implicit sense the terrorists. Emma Goldman a female revolutionary, who advocates equality and freedom, has been often stopped from speaking and putting her thought in front of the public. She is arrested time and again for advocating the freedom. A prosperous, harmonious and democratic society doesn't need gaol and prison. A society is prosperous, harmonious and democratic when the people living there are satisfied and content. Only then the society can be in peace otherwise the peace to be imposed. That is a mockery to the so-called democracy of the era. Doctorow, in the novel has tried to foreground the marginalized voices which are obliterated by the official American history.

The myth of justice is mockery and the progress of the era was nothing other than the exploitation. Tateh, a socialist and his wife Mameh who lived on their toil were tormented by the exploitation. Poverty and exploitation ruins their family. Poverty compelled Mameh to sell her body to her employer: "One day with two weeks rent due she let the man have his way on the cutting table. He kissed her face and tasted the salt of her tears"(16).

The novel covers a great deal of areas in discussion: politics, issue of capitalism, exploitation, freedom, racism, migration, history and so on. Basically the novel can be divided into three parts: the story of an upper-middle class family composed of Father, Mother, Mother's Younger Brother, Little Boy and Grandfather; an economically ruined family of Jewish migrants Tateh, Mameh and their daughter; and the tragic family of Coalhouse Walker, a gentle, black pianist, his wife Sarah and their child.

The novel dismisses the idea of single truth, single history. Peary the explorer reaches the so-called North Pole but finds it impossible to locate exactly the Pole. "He couldn't find the exact place to say this spot, here, is North Pole"(80). History for Doctorow is like imposing a spot on the base of power to accept as a single story. His notion about the past is as "on this watery planet the sliding sea refused to be fixed"(80).

The first half of the novel entertains its readers with simple story and with the bits and pieces of the historical events which undercut the distinction between history and fiction. Mother's Younger Brother a solemn young man, the admirer of Evelyn Nesbit, follows her after the murder of Stanford White and the imprisonment of her husband Harry K. Thaw. He follows her everywhere. Once, while following her, he sees her naked body from his hiding in a closet. He couldn't stop his sexual desire and

masturbates hosing his semen all over Nesbit's body. This incident is very important in the novel. Nesbit is a historical character and Younger Brother is a fictional character. After that incident the relationship between Younger Brother and Nesbit develops. The development of relation between them or the closeness between the fictional character and the historical character is the evidence of closeness of the fiction and history. Then, "They made loves slowly and sinuously, humping each other into supple states of orgasm that they found very little to talk the rest of the time they were together"(83). This is the intercourse between history and fiction. In intercourse give and take between the participants occurs. Doctorow, making the fictional and historical characters to intercourse, has made clear that there is no clear distinction between history and fiction for they interacts and intersects each other. This intersection and interaction produces the intertext which is the reconstruction version of history.

Doctorow, throughout the novel, has made his fictional characters to interact with the historical characters and historical characters in fictional situations. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung "took a boat together through the Tunnel of Love"(38). Tateh, a fictional character invites the historical character Emma Goldman in one of the meeting presided by him "one day Tateh invited her to a meeting of which the Socialist Artists' Alliance of the Lower East Side was a part sponsor, along with several organization"(57). The interaction between and among the historical and the fictional characters in the novel is abundant which undercuts the objectivity of history by mocking that history is too a fiction interpreted by a historian how s/he likes. Doctorow's intention of reconstruction of the text book American history by imposing the spirit of civil right movements of 1960s becomes stronger and stronger as the story in the novel proceeds further.

Father goes to exploration of North Pole with Peary expedition team, leaving his wife, Mother to look after the business in one of the peak seasons. A submissive, dominated house wife is asked by the situation to prove herself in the situation with out the help of men. She succeeds. In Father's absence, she finds a brown, newly born, a deserted child at her kitchen garden and decides to give shelter to the baby and the black woman, mother of the child who abandoned the child. It's a bold decision made by a woman of early twentieth century. Mother says "I will take the responsibility"(70) when the police wants to send the baby to charity house and the mother who deserted the child to prison to stand a charge of "attempted murder"(70). It gives the glimpse of the 1960s movement that would lead to the liberation of female. In the novel, the dissertation of the child by the blackwoman and

the police alertness to spot out the mother is shown which apparently shows the presence of government quick and instant but why the black mother abandoned the child is unanswered. It's Doctorow's cleverness. To mock the prosperity of the time, without mentioning the cause of abandonment, which is nothing other than the poverty and ghettoisation of the colored people Doctorow has subverted the official history of the ragtime era.

Emma Goldman, an anarchist (i.e. terrorist) in American context is no real threat at all to the society but she has been behaved as a threat by the authority. Time and again she has been arrested. Her thoughts were the thoughts of the marginalized and the suppressed people. Her thoughts could uproot the capitalist hegemony of the white American culture. She opined: "There is only one struggle throughout the world; there is only the flame of freedom trying to light the hideous darkness of life on earth"(168). She was often associated with the cases that were out of the law in that time period, "There was a national obsession of law enforcement officers to connect her to every case just a matter of principle whether they believed she was guilty or not"(276).

Tateh, a socialist, suffers a great deal of the economic injustice in America—during the, progressive era. He abandons his wife. He migrates from one place to another in search of economic justice in the era of progressivism and in prosperity. The problem of the unemployment of the time cried loudly as expressed in this way: "This same winter found Tateh and his daughter in the mill town of Lawrence, Massachusetts. They had come there the previous autumn, having heard there were jobs"(120). This shows the scarcity of opportunities for the people in the land of vast prosperity and opportunities. This particular event challenges the myth of prosperous and affluent America of the ragtime era. There was extreme exploitation of the workers. They were paid very little. They were not paid on the basis of their productivity rather on the will of the factory owners as, "One day the biggest of the mills, American Woolen Company, gave out envelopes with short pay"(121). This brings the strike of the workers through out the nation in opposition to the cut down of their wages. The strike of the workers started to win the sentiments of the other American people too, that was a great threat to the capitalist factory owners which might lead them to address the strike of the workers. So, the factory owners deployed the government police and militia to break the strike. The myth of democracy and equality of the era was just an imposition. There was no democracy for the poor and workers. People from the different cities offered to help the workers in the strike. Without work and wages it was hard for the workers to carry on their strike. They had to look after their family and the children. Factory

owners knew that the workers couldn't carry their strike for long with empty stomachs. But the strike of the workers started to win the sentiments of the other people also which was a threat to the factory owners. The people watching the strike with interest offered to give shelter to the children of the workers so that they could carry on their strike. The children of the workers from the Lawrence started to go out to the other places of the country as religious crusade. That gave moral strength to the workers and helped them to carry on their fight against the mill owners for their increment of the salary. The mill owners knowing the menace of the children crusade deployed the state militia to stop the children crusade out of the city. Tateh, one of the participants in the strike, wanted to send his daughter away so that he could continue the protest arrived at the train station from where the children were going out of the city. Before he could sense the threat there:

[H]e heard a scream; police appeared everywhere and suddenly the crowd was in turmoil. [...] police started to separate the mothers from their children [...] dragging the mothers kicking and screaming to the trucks at the end of platform." Tateh was confused and aghast. "The police cracked him on his shoulder and the head with his stick He stumbled away from the crowd and was still beaten. Finally he fell.

(127)

In this way the strikes of the mills all over the country was responded by the American government of progressive era. The government tried hook or crook method to perpetuate the hegemony of capitalism. They wanted to preserve their culture of capitalism with out any challenge. For that they deployed the power. The prosperity and peace of the era was police and militia muting the people with their batons and sticks.

In the later half of the novel a black pianist comes in to existence to radicalize Doctorow's reconstructive intention of American ragtime era. He is a ragtime musician, well dressed and polite black man. He comes to Father's and Mother's house where the black child and the black woman were residing. He wanted to meet the black woman named Sarah but the woman refuses. He impresses Mother and Younger Brother with his manner. Father remains skeptical and odd to him due to implicit latent racism.

Coalhouse Walker becomes the victim of some white racists which leads him to violence and the end of his own life. Coalhouse Walker, the lover of Sarah the black woman residing at Father's and Mother's house is a man of dignity. He plays 'ragtime' music the people in the house of Father and

Mother. When Father tries to associate rag music with coon songs, Coalhouse Walker clarifies the difference by saying "coon songs are made for minstrel shows . . . White men sing them in black face"(160). This shows that Coalhouse is sensitive towards his identity and his position in the eyes of white people as a ragtime musician.

His moderate way of behavior sometimes makes father think "that Coalhouse Walker Jr. didn't know that he was a Negro. The more he thought about this the more true it seemed. Walker didn't act or talked like a colored man. He seemed to be able to transform the customary difference practiced by his race" (162). Coalhouse Walker didn't fit to Father's white American eye as a Negro. Father, though a liberal white man, is also not completely free from the latent thought of whit superiority over black. Father feels "certain dangers in the man" and says, "Perhaps we shouldn't encourage his suit [...] there is something reckless about him. Even Mathew Henson knew his place"(162). Father feels that way about the Coalhouse Walker because Coalhouse Walker was no different than the white people in manner and behavior except his skin was black. He had owned a Model T-Ford, an expensive automobile which was the symbol of equality to white in material prosperity of a black man which provoked some white racists to stop him literally as well as symbolically. "Coalhouse Walker drove off [...] in his ford to New York. His route took him along Fire House Lane, past the station house of Emerald Isle Engine, a company of volunteers. . . . He was not unaware that in his dress and as the owner of a car he was a provocation to many white people" (174) while passing the route his road was blocked abruptly by the volunteers of the fire house "as the negro came along a team of three matching gray engine horses cantered out of the fire house into the road pulling behind them the big steam pumper. . . . They were immediately reined, causing Coalhouse Walker to brake his car abruptly" (175). The fire house volunteers asked Coalhouse to pay \$25 to pass the road or to produce a proof that he was a resident of that town. They told him it was a private toll. Coalhouse had traveled many times through that road and was aware that there was no any private toll. He refused to pay. The volunteers informed their chief. Coalhouse wanted to run away by reversing his car but before he thought that his way was blocked from both the sides with the tools for the fire fighting. Chief of the Fire Company arrived. "The chief of the company was distinguished by a white military cap he wore at a cocky angle. . . . He was courteous to Coalhouse and explained that while the toll had never before been collected from him it was nevertheless in force and that if Coalhouse did not pay he would not pass" (176). The Fire Company chief and his volunteers imposed a segregating behavior upon Coalhouse Walker. They

demanded him either to pay or to prove that he was the resident of that town. He was asked to pay \$25 as if he had trespassed other's land in his own country America in the time of prosperity, peace, harmony and democracy. Coalhouse Walker "calmly considered the course of action available to him", a thought of running away, too, came to his mind but "it didn't occur to him to ingratiate himself in the fashion of his race" (176). He didn't run away like a guilty person as the other Negroes would have done despite their innocence.

He decided to resist the Fire House Chief, so he asked two colored boys playing near the pond to look after his car and went to the police station for a complaint. Police ignored his complaint, for he was a black man and his complaint was against a white man and his company. Instead of working on his complaint he heard from the police, "Those boys don't mean no harm [...] I know them all. Go on back now; they're probably tired of the sport" (177). This was the maximum support a black man could get from the police and state in the ragtime era, the era of justice and equality.

Coalhouse Walker returned to the site of blockade and found his car "off the road in the field" and found "it was spattered with mud. There was a six-inch tear in the custom pantasote top. And deposited in back seat was a mound of fresh human excrement" (176). It was the extreme point of inhuman act by the white racists. Despite that Coalhouse Walker remained calm and tries to handle the situation legally and lawfully. He went to the Fire House chief and pleaded, "The Police Department advises me there is no toll road anywhere in this city." The chief of the Fire House replied Coalhouse Walker, "That's right. . . . Anyone is free to come and go on this road anytime he thinks he has to." Coalhouse Walker, if so, hopeful and calm to settle the matter peacefully demanded his car to be "cleaned" and "the damage paid for" (177), because his car was detained illegally. The Fire House chief and his volunteers responded him with the roar of laughter.

Amid the legal demand of Coalhouse Walker and the laughter of Will Conklin and company, the police arrived. The police asked the Fire House chief if he and his man had detained the black man's car illegally. The Fire House chief, a white man was heard by the police. He said to the police, "The nigger parked his damn car in the middle of the road right in front of the fire house. We had to move it. It's a serious business blocking a fire station, ain't that so, boys?"(178) His false story is taken literally by the police for the story teller was a white man. After, listening the Fire House chief Conklin, a police took Coalhouse Walker aside and said "we'll push your tin lizzie back on the road and you be on your way. There's no real damage. Scrape off the shit and forget the whole thing"(178). It

was the maximum justice a Negro could get in the ragtime era. The police didn't think of the dignity of the man. They thought that black man was inferior to them. Coalhouse Walker didn't agree the police and repeated his demand again, "I want the car cleaned and the damage paid for" (178). The police got annoyed and irritated with Coalhouse Walker and threaten him to charge of "driving off the road, drunkenness, and making an unsightly nuisance"(178) Coalhouse Walker replied promptly "I don't drink. I did not drive my car off the road nor slash the roof off nor defecate in it .I want the damage paid for and I want as apology"(179). This was enough for the racist police. They arrested Coalhouse Walker and put into the police custody. After, his bail Coalhouse Walker seeked those two black boys whom he had asked to look after his car before he went to police station to make complaint. He found out the parents of those "boys only to [...] refusing to [...] involved in the matter"(179). They knew the terror of standing against the white people being black.

Coalhouse Walker is a character, Doctorow has enlivened by imposing the spirit of civil right movements of 1960s to reconstruct the American text book history. So, Coalhouse Walker was determined to sue a case against the Fire House chief Will Conklin. He searched for some black lawyers but there was none. He tried all and every peaceful way to bring the Fire House chief in front of the justice, "He went to see three different attorneys recommended by Father. In all cases they refused to represent him. He was advised to recover his automobile before it was totally wrecked and forget the matter"(183). Coalhouse Walker's desire for justice through legal means became impossible when the three attorneys, the justice providers, suggested him to forget the matter as if nothing has happened. Coalhouse Walker wanted to sue the case at Harlem court but the attorney of the Harlem didn't want to proceed the case for he knew, "Will Conklin, was stepbrother of the Judge of the city court and nephew of a Country Alderman in White Plains"(184). The Harlem attorney indicated that there would be no justice for blacks. The requirement for justice was not the abiding of laws but the wrapping of the body with white skin.

Coalhouse Walker kept the faith that through legal means he could get justice. He didn't give up his hope. He made "preliminary attempt to see the matter through as his own council"(185). He oscillated between and among the offices opened to grant the justice to the citizens of the nation. He was ignored everywhere. Finally, with no way out, Coalhouse Walker opted violence to make the deaf American society of the ragtime era to hear what he was seeking through peaceful manner earlier. Before, Coalhouse Walker started murder, arson and bombing; took oath and said to his fiancée Sarah,

"He could not marry until he had been satisfied by the return of the Model T in exactly the same condition as when the fire horses had been driven across his path"(186). Coalhouse Walker was the man of principle. So, he was different from the mainstream and hegemonized blacks of the era. Father, one of the well wishers of Coalhouse Walker commented on his stubbornness as his extra pride and told his fiancée that "her fiancé would have done better after all drive away his car when he could and forget the matter"(186). It is Doctorow's intention to show that despite the hegemony of white cultural thought, there were different voices which are obliterated by the official history. Coalhouse Walker is the focal point to foreground the Doctorow's intention. Younger Brother, sympathetic to Coalhouse Walker from the very beginning, tormented by the betrayal of Evelyn Nesbit, inspired and influenced from Emma Goldman spoke in for Coalhouse Walker's defense of his dignity. He comments to Father as "a man who has never been tested in his principles"(186) as his response to Father's comment on Coalhouse Walker.

The discussion about the Coalhouse Walker becomes the dominant subject matter in the house of Father, Mother and Younger Brother. For, these people Coalhouse Walker and his demand for the justice was just a 'case' to be heard or read or speculated but for Sarah, it meant more. Sarah knew that Coalhouse Walker was the man of principle who wouldn't give up his decision. So, she decided to take "on a course of her own"(189). There was election in America that year and "a candidate on the national Republican ticket, Mr. Taft's Vice-President, James Sherman, was to be in New Rochelle"(189). Sarah decided to appeal for justice with him to secure her family from the upcoming tragedy. For her the most important task was to stop Coalhouse Walker from the tragedy he was heading to. So, "Knowing little of government, nor appreciating the degree of national importance of her Coalhouse trails Sarah conceived the idea of petitioning the United States on his behalf"(189). She was a poor black woman. She was bare feet. When James Sherman arrived at the destined place, Sarah broke from the crowd and ran behind him calling in her confusion, President, President. "Her arm was extended and her black hand reached toward him [...] it seemed [...] that Sahara's black hand as a weapon.... A militiaman stepped forward and, with a deadly officiousness of armed man [...], brought the butt of his Springfield against Sarah's chest as hard as he could. She fell"(191). Sahara who went to plea for the justice got the mortal blow. Her extended hand was seen as weapon by the white eyes. She was arrested and taken to the police custody. She was interrogated there but she was terrified and could not speak a single word. She was charged of attempted assassination and alter reduced to disturbing the

peace. The blows she got at her chest leads her to death and "toward the end of the week Sarah died"(193). This incident tormented Coalhouse Walker more and raised weapons and exploded bombs to make the deaf American society hear the petition of marginalized and dominated people. Coalhouse Walker first attacked the same fire house from where the story of his tragedy started. He wanted to kill the fire house chief to square the harm but the fire chief was lucky enough to be out of the station at the time of attack. The incident claimed four lives and property. The myth of the era as peaceful and secured came in to turmoil from that attack. "Nevertheless an editorial described the disaster as the work of a lone crazed killer. Citizens were called to lock their doors and maintain their vigilance, but to remain calm"(209).

Father sensed it was Coalhouse Walker behind the attack of firehouse. Father proposed to inform the police on the moral ground of a citizen saying that "Nothing under the heaven can excuse the killing of men and the destruction of property in this manner"(211) as a reaction to the fire house incident. Younger Brother, sympathetic towards Coalhouse Walker criticizes Father for his double standard of morality, "I did not hear such a eulogy at Sarah's funeral I did not hear you say then that death and the destruction of property was inexcusable"(211). Time and again these incidents undercut the myth of peace and prosperity, justice and equality of the era which ultimately reconstructs the history of the time with the broader view by comprising all the events of the time period.

Coalhouse Walker within an hour of the explosion left, identical letters at the offices of two local newspapers. But the police didn't allow the papers to publish those letters. Coalhouse Walker in his letter had demanded the Chief of Fire House Will Conklin to his justice and his car to be repaired otherwise he would go on killing the fire men and burning the fire houses and would destroy the whole city if needed. The letter was not printed because it would give an importance to the demand of a black man which could cause the insurrection of the dominated groups. The authority considered and came to the conclusion "An isolated crazed killer was one problem. An insurrection was another"(212).

Coalhouse Walker as a killer was not a great problem but the genuine reason behind his violence could insurrect the whole suppressed, marginalized and all ill-treated people that would bring turmoil in the American society and the peace and prosperity of the time would be exposed. So, the authority of the time tried to hide the story of story behind the attack.

It is an irony that the case of Coalhouse Walker was taken seriously by the authority and the police and the militias were deployed all over the city. The Fire House chief Willie Conklin sheltered at

the police station after the fire house tragedy. Willie Conklin, instead of realizing his own fault expressed his racist feelings as a solution of the problem, "He wanted to go to the black neighborhood and clean all the niggers out once and for all"(218). This expression of Willie Conklin reflects the racist sentiments of the era which underscores the harmony and the equality of the ragtime era. The authority did not hear Coalhouse Walker's demand rather deployed forces than probing into the problems. To pressurize the authority to hear his demands Coalhouse Walker, second time, attacked the "Municipal Fire Company No. 2."(220) and the "cries of outrage were directed against the city administration and against Willie Conklin"(221) because the letters left by Coalhouse Walker just after his attack at the fire station were finally printed by the *World* and the *Sun*. Even after the second attack, the authority kept on its stubbornness by interpreting the Coalhouse Walker's strength and the group as "a gang of colored men all armed and all presumably motivated by hard cash"(236). They did not realize the injustice to the whole race that was the common moral ground for their unity to fight together against the unjust they had been facing but not the money. After the second attack "there were several instances of the abuse of Negroes who were seen out of their neighborhoods"(236).

This second attack attracted almost all the people's attention in New Rochelle. The demands, Coalhouse Walker, slowly and gradually started to win the consent of people over the city. People knew the real cause behind the attack and they sent letters to Willie Conklin, anonymously suggesting him to leave New Rochelle "if he did not pack up and leave New Rochelle they, the writers, would do Coalhouse Walker's job for him"(238) and "felt martyred by what he called the nigger lovers"(239).

The man of solemn and reserve character Younger Brother, the representative of the revolutionaries of the era joined the Coalhouse Walker group. He was a black man but a justice lover so joined the marginalized, suppressed and ill-treated people by the main stream of the society. He represents the true political sentiments of that era which often is obliterated by the mainstream official history or veiled by the myth of peace, progress, prosperity and stability.

Finally, the Coalhouse group seized the immense library of Pierpont Morgan, a capitalist, obsessed by the notion of reincarnation. The seizure of the library is symbolic. This immense library consists of history which always obliterated the marginalized and preserved and stabilized the mainstream history; the history of power and dominance never included the marginalized groups, always working as the product and the producer of the power to perpetuate the mainstream culture and history; the history and the culture of hegemony and domination. The seizure of this library clarifies the

Doctorow's intention of the reconstruction of history by recomposing it from the other perspective (i.e. marginal).

After the dialogue and negotiation with Coalhouse Walker by the authority they come to the conclusion that his Model T would be repaired by Willie Conklin in front of the public, his men would be allowed to flee away and Coalhouse would surrender. Coalhouse surrendered but on the way to the police from the library he was shot several bullets and his physical existence was finished off. This was an act of injustice to kill the man surrendering. The good governance and the ethos of the progressive era was just a construction of the main stream history because the capitalists of the time were more wealthy than the government "more than any mayor or governor he (Morgan) represent in Coalhouse's mind the power of the white's world. For years he had been portrayed in cartoons and caricatures, with his cigar and his top hat, as the incarnation of power"(269).

There was poverty, injustice and exploitation. Where there would be exploitation there would be revolution and opposition to the exploitation. Emma Goldman was an example of the revolutionaries of the time who advocated for the end of exploitation and was associated to every negative movements or incidents that happened in the country. She expressed the thought that Coalhouse Walker was a rebel because he suffered in the scorching injustice of racism and inequalities.

Before the surrender of Coalhouse Walker different approaches to defend the Morgan's library were applied. The most famous Negro of the country "Booker T Washington was called to convince Coalhouse to surrender. Booker T was "an orator and his voice was strong" his voice touched the blacks because he was black and his voice was strong in another sense that he had accepted the white dominance in one or the other way. While trying to convince Coalhouse, he spoke "for my entire life I have worked in patience and hope for a Christian brotherhood. I have had to persuade the white man that he need not fear us or murder us, because we wanted only to improve ourselves and peacefully join him in enjoyment of the fruit of American Democracy"(281). This submissive type of thought made him the most famous black man in white dominated America because he was the product of American hegemony. Those who supported the American hegemony of the culture were famous and those who tried to seek their dignity and opposed the hegemonic culture were infamous. Booker T was in that ground famous and Coalhouse vice versa which reconstructs the American text book history by reinterpreting the past.

After the Father's death mother remarries Baron, the earlier Tateh who assimilated himself into the mainstream American trend and attained economic success and takes the charge of three children: her own son, Sarah's son and the Tateh's daughter. By then there was no legal provision for marriage between a Jew and Christian but mother did it and compelled the consumer of the history to re-look and reconsider the history which needs reconstruction as Doctorow has done in *Ragtime*. Finally Baron wants to make a movie of the three children each from a white, black and Jew community which draws the past era and tells the story of the presence of them not only the whites in ragtime era of America.

Interrelationship among Power, Discourse, History and Historiography:

Any literary text is situated within the institutions, social practices, and discourse that constitute the overall culture of particular time and place, with which the literary texts interacts as a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes. It is not possible to deal with a text in isolation from its historical context, therefore, we have to attend the historical, cultural, social and political condition of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations.

The discourse of an era, instead of reflecting preexisting entities and order, brings into being the concepts, opposition and hierarchies of which it speaks: these elements are both products and propagators of power, or social forces; and that as a result, the particular discursive formation of an era determine what is at the time accounted as knowledge and truth, as well as what is considered to be humanly normal as against what is considered to be abnormal, or insane. Coalhouse Walker, the focal character of the novel is portrayed as criminal by the white society and white dominated authority. This history can exist only in discourse; the discourse rooted in power. The white racist society and authority imposed their ideology against Coalhouse Walker and imposed their power over him when he sought justice through the peaceful means.

Racism is the use of economic, social and political policies based on race/color to maintain or extend control over the jurisdictions and people that lie outside the race exercising such power. In this novel *Ragtime*, whites, capitalists, and so-called privileged class people use all power which leads to the trapping of the hi/story of the novel in the social institutions as a product and a producer of power. Prosperity of the ragtime era is a politics of power. The official history of America mentions that the time period of ragtime era as a progressive period to hide the dark side of the capitalism of the period.

The exploitation and the miserable life condition and the untimely death of the workers in that time period was common but those incidents didn't get place in the official history. The workers would crush in the working place to maintain the ethos of progressivism as "the faces of the dead were [...] in to the streams of water that poured over them like the irrepressible mechanism of death of their own tears"(15). So, Doctorow writing about those events of the history in his novel, a narrative reconstitutes or reconstructs the American history.

Doctorow's intention of writing *Ragtime* is to rewrite the past of American early twentieth century by liberating the era from then power structure to reconstruct the history. But it doesn't mean that Doctorow's *Ragtime* is objective to the period; it's only relative to the events that occurred in that period.

Power and hegemony plays dominant role in constructing truth/history. The traces of poverty and scarcity would harm the ethos of progressivism of the era of ragtime which excluded or obliterated or overlooked the poverty of the period which in the novel Doctorow has mentioned that there was poverty and scarcity "... the need of housing for the poor. They lived too many to a room. Children died of mild colds or slight rashes. Children died on beds made from two kitchen chairs pushed together. They died on floor"(17). The prosperity and the progress of the era were the notion of power or political policies of the era which didn't include these minor incidents which would be against the hegemony of then capitalist culture.

Historiography, an art of writing history, takes history and fiction alike because both of them share the essence of each other. The traditional notion of writing history as the search objective truth has been dismissed by the historiographic writer Doctorow in the novel *Ragtime*. For Doctorow the search of the objective truth is like mirage. The search for objective truth is like the search of origin as Foucault says which is always beyond our capture because history isn't a linear development of process rather crisscross, disjointed, fragmented and discontinuity of events. So, the objective truth is ungettable as Doctorow has written in the novel about a historical character Theodore Dreiser that:

Raising his weight from the chair, he lifted it with two hands and turned in to the right, and aligned it properly. For a moment he thought that the chair was aligned, but then he decided it was not. He moved it another torn to the right. He tried setting on the chair now but it still felt peculiar. He turned it again. Eventually he made a complete circle and still he could not find the proper alignment for the chair. The

light faded on the dirty window of furnished room. Through the night Dreiser turned his chair in circles seeking the proper alignment. (27)

It is natural that the objectivity of the history is ungettable but still there is so-called objectivity in the history claimed by the historians and history writers which is the construction of power and hegemony. To perpetuate the designs and desires or interests of the power holders the discourses of the histories were produced that preserved and proliferated their hegemony which made them to talk about the objectivity of the history.

Exploitation was extreme in the ragtime era but the official history overlooks those aspects of the period. The progress, rapid economic development of the era is sung but the melancholy behind those songs of the progress is never heard or never mentioned. *Ragtime*, the reconstruction of the American past about the early twentieth century writes from the different power stance which brings the overlooked events of the history on foreground, "On the tobacco farms Negroes stripped tobacco leaves thirteen hours a day and earned six cents an hour, man, woman or child. Children suffered no discriminatory treatment.... They were more agile than the adults"(39-40). Women were exploited equally. The way of exploitation was different. The social practice or the institution of capitalism forced a woman to succumb herself into the institutions of power which exploited her. Emma Goldman knew it and opposed it:

[...] a woman forced by -- capitalist society to find her genius in the exercise of her sexual attraction -- and she has done that, [...] to an extent that a Pierpont Morgan and John D. Rockefeller could envy. Yet her name is scandal and their names are intoned with reverence and respect by toadying legislators of this society. (54)

It was the systematic subjugation of the women by the capitalist society to perpetuate its hegemony. To keep alive the difference of sexes and to exploit the weak sex by imposing the hegemony of the culture through institutions the capitalist society of the era produced the needed discourses which would strengthen their motifs. The voices that supported their ethos were included and the voices that opposed their interest were excluded by the history. So while rewriting the past Doctorow has brought those incidents and events, too, in light.

The development works in the ragtime era had occurred. "There were long distance locomotive railroads and interurban electric railroads and the street railways and elevated railroads, all laying their steel stripes on the land, crisscrossing the texture of indefatigable civilization"(96). The

railroads around the country were laid out which the official history of America sings but the relative truth of the development is obliterated.

As a historiographer, writing and interpreting the past Doctorow puts a point: "The real-world act was what got into the history books"(99). So, Doctorow rewriting the past reconstructs the textbook American history by including the events which the so-called official history excluded. History is the story of winners. The winner is power deeply rooted into the social institutions formed by discourses as products and producers. During the strike of mills at Lawrence "a worker woman was shot dead in the street. The only ones with guns were the police and the militia, but the two strike leaders, Ettor and Giovanetti, were arrested for complicity in the shooting"(122). The history of the incident was deeply based on the power of police and the state authority; the social institutions of the era. Power created the truth.

There are many truths that are ignored by the main stream history. They concealed the real history and the truth because it is written by the people in power and for the people in power and it is for their benefit. This novel helps to unravel these parts of history which are neglected or concealed in official version of history. The politicians try to homogenize history. So they take alternative versions to the official history as threat for they may contradict with their versions of truths. The novel *Ragtime* tries to disclose the concealed events of history and resists the hegemonic history by standing in resistance as a reconstructed version of textbook American history of early twentieth century.

Doctorow rewrites about the ragtime era, and gives new approach to the period. He believes, present and past, fictive and factual: the boundaries frequently blurred. Historian can not be aloof from the society and the circumstances in which it is written. So the historian who wrote about ragtime era is also guided by the will to power and the discourse which they created can not be free from the atmosphere and their bias. So, no history can be factual as science and there is no fact at all. They hide the fact and represent the distorted fact. Hence, the history is the product of writer's and historian's imaginations. So, *Ragtime*, the novel is the reconstruction of the history of the era ragtime.

The title of the novel itself is symbolic one. *Ragtime*, which takes its title from the music ragtime, the time period when the ragtime music was in full bloom and the same time period, is called by the official history as progressive period which has another symbolic meaning too, rag-time the time period of poverty and scarcity. by providing such symbolic title Doctorow undermines the tendency of the readers to study the history as objective truth. As Doctorow writes the novel from revisionist or

new historicist perspective and believes that there is no objectivity in history writing, no one can present the exact truth and further believes it as mere interpretation of writer.

Giving voice to the marginalized people from the marginalized groups such as Blacks, Jews, and, immigrants and other insignificant persons, from the perspective of official history, Doctorow reconstructs the history by presenting the personal histories of those group people in the ragtime era which reconstructs the history of the ragtime era.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* reconstructs the textbook American history of the early twentieth century ragtime era by imposing the spirit of civil right movements of 1960s on the ragtime era. History is a human construct which can not avoid the prejudices and preoccupations of its writer. So, the histories ever written are partial. They are not objective and inclusive. *Ragtime* emphasizes the fact that history is always edited in the interest of its producer and for whom it is produced. So, history always remains relative to the historicity of historian. Historians are the ones who make history coherent and intelligible through the use of point of views and interpretations that are always partial, provisional and, in the final analysis, as subjective as any other artistic genre, namely fiction. Doctorow knows the fact that history is also a narrative like fiction. Like in fiction, there is always human sentiment involved in historical production which adds or subtracts the events of the history on his/her judgment. Doctorow writes *Ragtime* with the personal histories of the characters from the marginalized groups such as Blacks, Jews, immigrants and woman that subverts the notion of objectivity of history and presents different versions of the history of the ragtime period which are the reconstructed versions of the history. *Ragtime*, thus, reconstructs the textbook American history.

The characters from the marginalized groups are empowered very much by giving them the spirit of the civil right movements of 1960s. The personal histories of the characters from marginalized groups, who were neglected by the mainstream history, are unearthed in the novel. The linearity and the typicality associated to the ragtime has been dismissed by presenting the history of personal characters in the novel and the details of the era from different perspectives than in the official history guided by the notion of history as the written art of historians which adds and omits the details due to his ideology and social hegemony.

Doctorow, in his novel *Ragtime*, has mixed up the real historical characters with fictional characters and has made them interact, which reconstructs the American history of the ragtime era by rewriting and reinterpreting from their perspectives. The main character, Coalhouse Walker, a fictional character, fights for racial equality in a very radical way in the real early twentieth century scenario. He seizes the library of a historical personality, Morgan whose library preserves the linear and typical history, which symbolizes the necessity of the reconstruction of the history of the progressive era. Evelyn Nesbit, a historical character, makes love with Younger Brother, a fictional character which

strengthens the claim of historiographers that history and the fiction are alike for they interact with each other and share the spirit of narrativism. Tateh, a fictional character and the advocate of socialism chairs a program addressed by Emma Goldman, a historical character. Booker T Washington, a historical character, tries to convince Coalhouse Walker when he seizes Morgan's library. These interaction and crisscross of historical characters with fictional characters make a new version of history which is the reconstructed version. In this way, *Ragtime* interacts among and between historical and fictional characters for reconstructing the ragtime era of American history.

The personal histories of the fictional characters and their involvement in historical situations and the different versions of the events rather than described in the official history of America about the ragtime era as progressive, democratic, peaceful and just has been put under eraser by the novelist, historiographer of *Ragtime*, E. L. Doctorow.

In nut shell, Doctorow by making the historical and fictional characters interact and by presenting the detail events of the ragtime era different than that the official history describes and presents the new version of history of the ragtime era convincingly. Writing about the past is the interpretation of the past by the interpreter who can not be free from his human nature: prejudices and preoccupations. So, the history can not be free from the human fabrication like fiction. Doctorow's *Ragtime* relativises facts and fiction that results into the reconstruction of the textbook American history of the ragtime era.

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