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Furtive Role-playing and Vulnerability in "Wakefield:" Nathanial Hawthorne and E. L. Doctorow

By Jamal Assadi

Abstract- In most of his novels Doctorow confirmed, "that the past is very much alive, but that it's not easily accessed," writes Jay Parini. "We tell and retell stories, and these stories illuminate our daily lives. He showed us again and again that our past is our present" (2015). Indeed, when Doctorow rewrote "Wakefield" in 2008, he proposed to fill in gaps unbridged by Hawthorne's "Wakefield" (1835).Doctorow gives his first-person narrator and protagonist the power to tell the story free from the load of Hawthorne's first person witness narrator who keeps the protagonist under his direct and strict observation. Through his protagonist, however, Doctorow lets us learn the psychological reasons why Wakefield decides to leave his home. Besides, Doctorow presents the events that happened to Wakefield during his absence in a more probable manner by creating a plot, with causative connections between the events. In so doing, Doctorow seeks to reconnect the past with the present in order to illuminate our present.

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Like Hawthorne, Doctorow constructs the condition of play within play within play. In both stories the protagonists and the narrators direct covert theatrical stages while unconsciously playing the spectators of other stages. Each stage presents the enclosed one in susceptible conditions and undergoes what it knowingly makes others unconsciously experience. Vulnerability and acting prompt the protagonists, the narrators and the readers to raise very important questions concerning man's place or misplace in the world. I will also attempt to examine how the treatment of these two concepts is reflected in the two authors' handling of the narrative point of view. My point is to argue that both Hawthorne's and Doctorow's concept of vulnerability and theatrical watching offer newly constructed observations regarding critical theory.

Keywords: american literature; short fiction; theatrical imagery; vulnerability; narrative point of view and critical theory.

Introduction

In the two versions of "Wakefield," both Hawthorne and Doctorow present much evidence to indicate that their protagonists experience high degrees of vulnerability and that vulnerability provokes them to employ theatrical roles. To be more specific, both versions of "Wakefield" tell the story of a man, named Howard Wakefield, who leaves his home, covertly lives near it for a certain period, and then unexpectedly returns to it. Interestingly, each step is cued by vulnerability.

Away from home, both men produce plays where they are mainly invisible actors and playwrights, and unrecognized spectators of their homes, the theatrical stages where they are supposed to be major actors. In so doing, they present new multifaceted concepts of the conventions of actors, audience, play and stage. As a matter of fact, they problematize the concept of actors traditionally aware of their audience or spectators to whom the actors present their roles aspiring to obtain the spectators' satisfaction. Moreover, they watch alternative plays caused by their own absenteeism. In a way, they observe their own absence and its effect on other characters. Ironically, they are actors-audiences in another play watched by furtive audiences, i. e. the readers. Put differently, they undergo what they consciously make others unconsciously live through. Above all, vulnerability and acting prompt the two Wakefields to raise questions concerning the man's place or lack of place in the world, man's social ties and moral responsibility for his own family as well as for himself.

In my paper, I will examine the different theatrical "stages" in their writing to explore what Hawthorne and Doctorow try to discover through vulnerability and theatrical watching. The two Wakefields, their wives and the narrators along with the readers populate these stages. I will also attempt to examine how the treatment of these two concepts are reflected in the two authors' handling of the narrative point of view. My point is to argue that Hawthorne's and Doctorow's concept of vulnerability and theatrical watching offers newly constructed observations.

The two Wakefields, who represents the first theatrical stage, absent themselves from their homes for a certain period of time during which they watch their absence, and then impetuously return home. Yet the reasons for the departure of each, the length of the period each spends in watching his home, the experiences they have undergone during their absence, and the lessons they learn are radically different.

Both are presented as men who perform their responsibilities and social duties as husbands and members in society in the best way possible. Their situation, as follows, is not far removed from the context of our daily social interaction compared by Erving Goffman to the traditional view of acting (1959, 79-80). Both do their utmost to preserve dramaturgical restraint with the intention of coping with or avoiding

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discomfiture, disguise spuriousness of the performance, and maintain the harmony and eloquence of the family act and enter "into collusive intimacies and back-stage relaxation," to quote Goffman (206).

However, the profits they accomplish because of their conformation to family life prove costly. The condition of Hawthorne's Wakefield is particularly bad. His various skills are blemished. His intellect, thoughts, novelty and imagination are frozen while his behavior is taciturn (Hawthorne, 1837 9). Still, both offera classical paradigm of Goffman's idea of "non-person," a character who is present during the show, but his role is typically so recognizable that he is treated as not present by the performers and the audience (132). Coincidently, Goffman's concept of the "non-person" matches Philip Wander's insight of the "Third Persona," people who, as Wander remarks, are regarded as "not present;" or worse, they are "rejected or negated" throughout "the speech and/or the speaking situation" (1984 208–209).This opinion relates to the "First Persona" (the speaker and his intent) or the "I" in speech, and the "Second Persona," that is, the "you" in discourse, both of whom profit from open passages of communication and unobstructed opportunities of associations and expressions. The "Third Persona," however, "the 'it' that is not present, is diminished in a way that 'you' and 'I' are not" (209).Accordingly, both Wakefields are in a position of severe weakness. Actually, both suffer a dangerous case of vulnerability associated with ontological concepts of "insecurity and powerlessness," to quote Kate Brown (2014, 373). Dominated by this belief, the two Wakefields start a new role to shield themselves against inexorable hazard before harm becomes irreversible. According to Erinn Gilson, vulnerability "is most commonly considered a precondition to hazard and harm" (2014 16). Her suggestion is that being vulnerable is not identical to being harmed and vulnerability propels weak people to guard themselves against damage. It is in vulnerable people's type to restrain extent of vulnerability they experience and seek ways to isolate themselves from it (2014 15).

Indeed, in the outline Hawthorne provides to his story it is clear that the decision to leave home has been intentional and compliant with the freewill of someone who is supposedly not a silenced persona. He acts as if he were a first person a who can enact a well-planned scheme analogous to a script. But it is very likely that he commits himself to self-exile where he desires to protect himself against potential vulnerability. There neither his wife nor friends can hear about him. We are told, "The man, under pretense of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years" (Hawthorne, 6). The word "pretense" keeps the theatrical image vibrant before our eyes. By trying to avoid his wife and friends and be away from his house, Wakefield seems to deem them accountable for his non-presence, negation and weakness in their social drama. This explains why he dismisses himself from their play with the view of perplexing "his good lady by a whole week's absence" (10).

In Doctorow's story, however, the protagonist says, "I had no thought of deserting her. It was a series of odd circumstances that put me in the garage attic with all the junk furniture and the raccoon droppings which is how I began to leave her, all knowing, of course whereas I could have walked in the door as I had done every evening…" (Doctorow, 2008 60). Despite the protagonist's attempts to deny the element of intentionality, his choice to remain outside the home affirms it and indicates that he is perhaps running away to shield himself.

Once the two Wakefields settle in their new lodgings, they realize their schemes need examination, planning and purpose. Hence, they start upgrading them as they progress. Like playwright-actors, they write and interpret their own scripts as they go, devising the roles they conceive of, adding on to them, trying them on and eventually becoming them. Interestingly, their style is reminiscent of improvisation in theater, a method of live theatre in which the dramatic scenes are invented spontaneously. While it is used extensively in theatrical programs to coach actors, the technique is also used in other contexts as a tool to cultivate communication competences, stimulate creative problem solving, and promote supportive teamwork abilities, achieve perception into a person's views, states of mind, and interactions. The endorsement of this technique entails spontaneity, creativity, and skills of flexibility and intuition (Dusya Vera and Mary Crossan 2004 733, 734). Undeniably, these benefits are well noticed in the two Wakefields' conducts. Hawthorne's Wakefield declares that the purpose of his project is to know "how his exemplary wife will endure her widowhood, of a week; and, briefly, how the little sphere of creatures and circumstances, in which he was a central object, will be affected by his removal" (13). His allegedly renovated goal is meant to reaffirm his perception that he is a first persona whose presence at home is so central that his unexpected "removal" will shake the foundations of the lives of his wife, the maid servant and "the dirty little foot-boy" (14). What Wakefield proposes is very far-reaching. Primarily, his launched script emphasizes his lack of self-consciousness. He does not realize that he is not a first persona. The words "object," and "removal" signpost that he has been treated as a non-person, an alienated audience, and a third persona who cannot be engaged in discourse, cannot be heard in public or cannot voice disapproval. In consistence with his plan, he should abandon his role as a central actor and become an absented one. He, otherwise stated, wants to become mainly a covert audience watching his own

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absence and the progress of the act of his teammates during the nonattendance of one major character.

Conversely, the purpose of Doctorow's Wakefield in watching his absence is completely different. He knows that his presence at home makes him less than a non-person. He keeps fighting with his wife, accuses her that she flirts with somebody and feels that she has married "the wrong man." To his daughters, he is "an embarrassment..., an oddity who knew nothing about their music." He thinks of Diana, his wife and his daughters as a "home team," and of himself as "the opposing team." He concludes "that for now I would rather not go through the scenes I had just imagined" (63.) The acting imagery overwhelms Wakefield's terminology. It seems he knows that he and his family should constitute "a performance team" whose members are committed to saving their own show (Goffman 1959, 79). Each performer is demanded to follow the role assigned to him by the playwright, observe the limits set to his masquerades, keep the confines imposed on him. Instead of cooperating to end public disagreements and maintain the impression of serenity, beauty and agreement in order to proceed with the performance smoothly, Wakefield does exactly the opposite. He admits his absence will not influence the course of his family life. In watching his absence, he studies his wife from a distance examining his mistakes in addition to realizing his "talent for dereliction" (63) and struggling with the pain of being discarded.

Notably, the scripts that the two Wakefields enact detach them two removes from the stage of the real world. First, they, as already indicated, segregate themselves from their family life, the play where they play a role, albeit negligible, that is acknowledged by teammates and the social milieu, i. e. the audience. Second, they endorse alternative scripts where they are concealed audiences, whose existence is accredited by no one. Interestingly, their scripts challenge the traditional relationship between actors and audiences. Conventionally, there are two types of acting that characterize the relationship between audience and actors. One is the "presentational acting" and the other is the "representational acting." In the former, an actor adopts an attitude that recognizes the audience. He either directly addresses them, or resorts to situations signifying that the character or actor is aware of the audience's presence. That can be done through a particular use of language, through a general display of viewpoint or through special employment of looks, gestures or other signs (Keir Elam, 1980 90-91). With "representational acting," on the other hand, the audience is thoughtfully unnoticed and considered as voyeurs (Colin Counsell, 1996 16-23). This does not connote that the actor is unmindful of the audience's presence. In both forms, there is an effervescent relationship between the audience and actors. As part of this vigorous liaison, the audience is the recipient of the stimulating movements, gestures, and utterances of the actors. Subsequently, the audience sends energy and reactions to the actors. A sympathetic audience can advance the acting of those on stage. The success of the latter is keenly dependent on the responsive audience.

Instead of fostering their relationships with their teammates or adopting the role of an alert audience, the two Wakefields promote their secret plays where their starring roles are to be invisible audiences of others' plays thus degrading their situations. Like an actor, Hawthorne's Wakefield changes his appearance, "buying a new wig, of reddish hair, and selecting sundry garments, in a fashion unlike his customary suit of brown" (15) for disguise and hides in the abundant throng of Londoners. Similarly, Doctorow's Wakefield settles in the attic above his garage. He stays there for a year or so, scavenging food from garbage cans, taking refuge in a neighbor's basement with the group of Dr. Sondervan's mental defectives.

Now both become obscure actor-audiences who are reduced to less than null actors. They are treated worse than non-persons who endeavor to let their voices be heard. They think of themselves as non-characters who voluntarily act towards themselves as voiceless victims. As such they become pure cases of the negated third personas who are so disempowered that they do not even demand the recognition of being the marginalized other. They are the very audiences that deny their own humanity and adopt negative representations of the third persona. The threat to a third persona, for that reason, does not always lie in the act of being negated or objectified by certain individuals or groups. Third personas are liable to endanger themselves by submitting to or promoting the first personas' attempts to victimize them or by endorsing a certain mode of conduct that causes and preserves their self-victimization.

Another deficiency of watching is discerned in the fact that the two Wakefields turn it into a permanent status or medium that serves no aspirations save the desire to find blemishes in their or others' performances. While Hawthorne's Wakefield expresses an anticipated pleasure in spotting the suffering of his wife and friends in the wake of his departure, Doctorow's studies their past relationships, enjoys the beauty of his wife, admits his bad conduct, and finds relief in his deterioration. Undoubtedly, the plan of Hawthorne's Wakefield reflects a narcissistic tendency that comes close to meanness and malice as he actually wishes to disturb his wife. Failing to see the cruelty and wickedness inherent in his plan, he blatantly insists on his growing determination to remain away from home until his wife is "frightened half to death" (16). On numerous occasions, he walks by his house, seeing her become paler and paler. One day while observing his own house, he sees a doctor going into his house and gets excited to see if his wife will die.

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Wakefield does not even really feel appropriately guilty, remorseful or repentant. He never adequately concedes his wife's agony or drama, not even when he abruptly appears to her after twenty years of absence. Unlike Doctorow's Wakefield, who grows to admire his wife and sees his deficiencies, Hawthorne's Wakefield is placed within a context of a third persona associated with plain blackness, obscurity and evil and, in this way, his storage of moral attitudes is wanting. And in spite of his somehow positive attitudes, Doctorow's Wakefield suffers the loss of ethical attitudes. The shortage of their morality springs from rendering their wives and other subjects vulnerable by turning their wives into their actors without their wives' knowledge or by depriving their wives of the power to give their prior consent to the theatrical adventures of the two Wakefields. Accordingly, both pose a classical example of what troubles Thomas Couser morally. In the preface to his fascinating Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing, Couser is primarily concerned "with the ethics of representing vulnerable subjects," without their prior approval. These vulnerable people are "persons who are liable to exposure by someone with whom they are involved in an intimate or trust-based relationship, unable to represent themselves in writing, or unable to offer meaningful consent to their representation by someone else"(xii, 2004). The two Wakefields, the negated third personas, not only objectify themselves but also make people with whom they have close relationships vulnerable. They should have practiced stricter "ethical scrutiny," to borrow Couser's terminology.

It is very likely that the two Wakefields are victims of vulnerability who victimize others in an endeavor to rid themselves of the sense of victimization. In harmony with this phenomenon, the victim plays the role of the victimizer to hide his own weaknesses (Shmuel Klitsner, 2013 41). The switch in roles reflects the complexity of the player's vulnerability. So, the attempts of the two Wakefields to play the role of a first persona endorsing determination, power, and initiative have always been a mask to hide their weakness or vulnerability. By putting on a mask, they trust they can obscure the nudity of their un-socialized existence, to use Goffman's terminology (1959, 207), and so they can save their show. To be more specific, the narrator of Hawthorne's "Wakefield," who takes upon himself the task of watching Wakefield, notices that after Wakefield steps outside his home, he is subject to fearful feelings and thoughts. Still living the role that he is a significant character, Wakefield believes he is followed and called and that his secret scheme is discovered. Once he is in the "back stage," however, Wakefield's mask is taken off and he is seen in the nakedness and vulnerability of the un-socialized existence, to use Goffman's terms (112-114). Wakefield is seen coping with his weakness, fragility and helplessness. He is to be pitied.

> Almost repenting of his frolic, or whatever it may be termed, Wakefield lies down betimes, and starting from his first nap, spreads forth his arms into the wide and solitary waste of the unaccustomed bed. "No," – thinks he, gathering the bedclothes about him, – "I will not sleep alone another night." (12-13)

The quote implies that Wakefield is too weak to resume his declared role as a first persona in quest of a new play. At home, he is a member of an acting team, even if marginal, but currently outside this team, he has no role. This explains why he views his new bed as strange and unwanted. Knowing this fact about him, the narrator, unheard by Wakefield, warns him that if he does not return home, he will permanently lose his original role.

Likewise, when Doctorow's Wakefield is in the "back stage," his disguise falls and he is exposed in the blatancy and helplessness of the un-socialized existence. He toughens up, sleeps in the open, scavenges in garbage cans at night, fights with other scavengers and wild animals and befriends two teenagers with Down syndrome living in the basement of the house next door. They adopt Wakefield as they would a pet, bringing him sandwiches and water. His weakness reaches its nadir when he falls ill. He is taken care by the two teenagers who save him from certain death.

Despite their deterioration that seriously endangers their lives, the two Wakefields remain caught in their new roles. Although Hawthorne's Wakefield seems to have determined to return home, he remains trapped in a maze of procrastination. He becomes more vulnerable and fragile and is on the verge of losing his individuality. The narrator is sure Wakefield has "lost the perception of singularity in his conduct" (17), and that his chances to regain his previous life are unlikely to happen. Doctorow's Wakefield, however, finds relief in his new role away from home. He even asserts, "I would not surrender to my former self. Whatever I did I would do as I had done" (71).

One of the most prominent scenes, which bares the vulnerability of Hawthorne's Wakefield in its weakest condition and gives an impetus to the sense of acting, is perhaps his inadvertent meeting with his wife.

> Now for a scene! Amid the throng of a London street we distinguish a man, now waxing elderly, with few characteristics to attract careless observers, yet bearing, in his whole aspect, the handwriting of no common fate, for such as have the skill to read it. He is meagre; his low and narrow forehead is deeply wrinkled; his eyes, small and lusterless, sometimes wander apprehensively about him, but oftener seem to look inward. He bends his head, and moves with an indescribable obliquity of gait, as if unwilling to display his full front to the world. Watch him long enough to see what we have described, and you will allow that circumstances –

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> which often produce remarkable men from nature's ordinary handiwork – have produced one such here. Next, leaving him to sidle along the foot walk, cast your eyes in the opposite direction, where a portly female, considerably in the wane of life, with a prayer-book in her hand, is proceeding to yonder church. She has the placid mien of settled widowhood. Her regrets have either died away, or have become so essential to her heart, that they would be poorly exchanged for joy. Just as the lean man and well-conditioned woman are passing, a slight obstruction occurs, and brings these two figures directly in contact. Their hands touch; the pressure of the crowd forces her bosom against his shoulder; they stand, face to face, staring into each other's eyes. After a ten years 'separation, thus Wakefield meets his wife! (18-19)

The scene is extremely theatrical: the stage is a London street; the audiences are the crowds of London, the narrator and the readers; the actors are Wakefield and his wife, now two elderly people and the playwright is fate. The scene itself and the actors are insignificant and hardly attract the crowds. What makes it highly dramatic is that although the meeting of two people is coincidental, fate has schemed it so artistically that it can produce the most intense dramatic response. While the wife continues walking into church, after a short pause, Wakefield rushes to his apartment, where he recognizes that he is not part of the universe any longer despite the fact that he is in it. He has given up his rights and privileges as a living man before dying. Stated differently, Wakefield realizes that his role as a permanent audience has isolated him from life altogether. In order to influence the world and be alive, he has to upgrade his role within the play of the world, i.e. together with his family and in presence of a real audience. Without prior notice, he returns to the original role and script and resumes lifein the same sudden manner of the protagonist of The *Vicar of Wakefield*: *A Tale, Supposed to be Written by Himself*, a novel by Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith published in 1766.

Conversely, in Doctorow's "Wakefield," the protagonist says that

> A moment later, I was standing behind him with a big grin; I was this tall, long-haired homeless soul with a gray beard down to his chest, who, for all Diana knew, was the old Italian's assistant. I wanted to look into her eyes, I wanted to see if there was any recognition there. I didn't know what I would do if she recognized me; I did not even know if I wanted her to recognize me. She didn't. The knives were handed over, the door closed, and the old Italian, after frowning at me and muttering something in his own language, went back to his van. (73)

Clearly, Doctorow has dispossessed the parallel scene in Hawthorne's "Wakefield" of all its universal and theatrical elements and the entailed consequences and restricted it to a very marginal and personal scene with hardly any importance. The scene is faintly theatrical: the stage is the front of the Wakefields' residence; the actors are Diana, an old Italian man who has a knife-and-tool-sharpening business and Wakefield in natural disguise. Playing the role of an insignificant clown, Wakefield does not experience the fear of being revealed, though his absence from home is sharply shorter than Hawthorne's Wakefield. His clowning does not attract the attention of Diana or the old Italian, both of whom do not question his identity or his sudden appearance, shedding doubts on the plausibility of the scene. Furthermore, the scene lacking audiences is not followed by serious realizations. Unlike Hawthorne's Wakefield, Doctorow's Wakefield has no concerns regarding the possibility of his identity having been discovered, or any conclusions concerning his role as a permanent spectator or man's place in the world. He simply goes back to his atelier and thinks quietly "of green-eyed- glance" of Diana and "the intelligence it took in, the judgement it registered, all in that instant of non recognition." (73)

The two wives, the agents of the second layer of stage, are supposed to be the ultimately vulnerable, non-existent persons, owing to the harsh treatment they get from their husbands and somehow from the narrators. In both stories, the husbands abandon their wives for a long period without giving a damn to their wives' feelings when they leave, during their long absence or when they decide unexpectedly to reenter the door. Paradoxically, in both stories the wives emerge as the only actual players around whom the stages of the two Wakefields, the narrators and the readers revolve. Strangely, there is no verbal communications between the two sides and the audiences are made to watch silently removed and hushed actresses. In Hawthorne's "Wakefield," the narrator tries to help Mrs. Wakefield out of her vulnerability and objectification through condemning Wakefield's harshness and through giving her the opportunity to disclose her theater, though dimly. Upon Wakefield's return to his house, the narrator is shocked at Wakefield's offensive treatment of his wife. He cannot understand how cruelly Wakefield has "quizzed the poor woman!" (22). Doctorow follows a different strategy in his attempt to help the wife out of her vulnerability. He, the husband, also the narrator, devotes a great deal of time revealing his positive attitude towards his wife and condemning his bad conduct, manifested in stealing her from his best friend and his false accusations that she conducts love affairs.

Yet, their major vulnerability stems from being considered silenced housewives subject to abuse and harm. Both Hawthorne and Doctorow do not give their protagonists' wives the chance to speak up and meet the readers. From behind the curtains, the two

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Wakefields, the narrators and the readers commit themselves to watching the two wives. In other words, the two writers depict the two women as helpless characters who are obviously unconscious that the two Wakefields are watching them and are robbed of any opportunity or competence where they can relate, consent or reject being watched or misrepresented by their husbands.

The two women are placed at two or three removes from the readers. In Hawthorne's tale Mrs. Wakefield is exposed to the readers through the narrator who sees her through the lens of Wakefield, the subjective husband. In Doctorow's tale, Diana Wakefield is watched through the narrator, the biased husband, who recounts his tale in the past tense. Still, the readers do have a real chance to learn about their characters, skills and attitudes. More important, the readers find out that while the two Wakefields are preoccupied with watching their wives, the two wives conduct plays full of actions. Both continue to conduct their family theaters that are innocent, agreeable and loaded with courteous feelings, ethical suffering and dignity. In a way, the wives display personalities capable of contradictions. Even with their husbands' absence, and their suffering, misfortunes and difficulty, they obstinately fight to support themselves and silently lead a normal life as if their husbands were present. Judged against their husbands' theatricality constricted to inspection, absence of action and lack of moral attitudes, theirs is associated with doing and ethical conduct. Both are true examples of what Michel Leiris calls the "*théâtre vécu*" (theater lived). There, unlike *théâtre joué* (theater played), the actors' utterances and external behaviors are an "acting out" of inner feelings, i.e. characters are transparent, the words faithfully correspond with the feelings, the outward expression with the inward consciousness and consequently people are real and authentic (1958, 94-95; quoted in Green blatt in Davis ed. 1989, 434). This explains the ease with which the two wives receive their absent husbands, a response that is totally downplayed by the two narrators, and, hence, authors. Perhaps here the messages of the narrators are placed. It is true that the two women do not speak aloud nor express themselves clearly, but the readers can see them and accredit their actions. In watching them in company with the readers, the narrators strive to recognize the undervalued social voice, to give a stage for the objectified and vulnerable third personas to be emancipated and to achieve their "human potential," to quote Wander's words (1984, 205). If the two women represent theater, then theater suggests the advent of truth and authenticity, tolerance and forgiveness, responsibility and dignity.

The major factor that causes the chief differences between the two short stories lies in each writer's exploitation of the narrative aspect: the third stages. Hawthorne has used the first person witness, who is not the protagonist of the story. This technique allows the nameless first person narrator to make Wakefield's character more mysterious than he could ever be and keep the readers' sense of wonder more aroused. Additionally, Wakefield does not personally change or grow over the progression of the story. He does not seem to understand the significance of his own deeds and their effect on others. Wakefield's incongruities are such that it's hard to exhibit them from his point of view without his coming across as problematic for readers to relate to, compared with the other characters. So, Hawthorne's first-person peripheral narrator manages to provide the readers with a clearer perspective on Wakefield. He is within the story probing into Wakefield's perceptions, offering viewpoints on Wakefield or events that Wakefield himself does not have and sifting the given information and the narrated events. At the same time, he is equipped with an amazing power that helps him create the effect of immediacy and presence of events and to establish bonds of friendships and trust with the readers. Hawthorne's narrator perceives and dispatches things in a very stern, ingenuous manner. Still, he states obvious facts about his protagonist's life and the life of those in the narrative without embellishing upon his stance, or prettying things up.

Unlike Hawthorne, Doctorow has adopted the first-person narrator to emphasize his interest in the psychological and private life of the protagonist, making him less an enigma than in Hawthorne's tale. In so doing, Doctorow makes for a friendly and efficient narrative voice and allows his Wakefield to make his story personal by giving significant thoughts on his experiences. His Wakefield sees things in a much more positive and optimistic light. He still respects his relationships, especially with his wife, fears embarrassments and anger from others, and steps in as a supporter for those he has deserted.

Despite the difference in the narrative point of view between Hawthorne and Doctorow, both writers' narrators are almost speaking directly to the reader, and manage to forge an intimate and private relationship with the readers. Besides, both instill their content with telling authority and ownership of material. Both authors allow the readers to go through the two Wakefields' experiences as active participants rather than as discoverers of some ancient text. The sense of presence and ownership aid to strengthen the sense of authenticity and to build trust with their readers. Nonetheless, it seems Hawthorne endorses the first-person witness narrator to be more able to cope with the question of one's place in the larger society, while Doctorow adopts the first person narrator to have more power in dealing with immediate and personal questions.

The difference in these two types of first-person narration employed by Hawthorne and Doctorow has a

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strong impact not only on the presented events but also on the narrators' characters, their reliability, morality, and their relationships with the readers. Both narrators entail the presence of embedded listeners or readers, functioning as the audiences for their tales. While Hawthorne's narrator is fully conscious of telling the story to deeply engaged audiences, at a set place and time, for a particular reason, Doctorow's narrator tells the events he has undergone in the story to implied audiences after they happen.

It is not strange, therefore, that Hawthorne's narrator is more complex and theatrical. In fact, Hawthorne's narrator is the most theatrical character in the story. He concurrently plays a contradicted and multiple net of roles, and embraces various opposed attitudes and judgments and, consequently, poses a challenge to the usual concept of acting, audience and vulnerability. Notably, he functions as the concealed but engaged "audience" of Wakefield's plays: the play Wakefield is leaving and the play he has written and is trying to produce. Since in the latter play Wakefield's key role is to watch the influence of his absence in the former play secretly, the narrator is an invisible audience of this play enacted to watch Mrs. Wakefield. Simply put, the narrator is not an actual character who has actual ties with other story characters. He has followed and observed Wakefield like his shadow since the latter bade adieu to his wife until his return after twenty years. He has been Wakefield's furtive, doubled audience complicating and intensifying the sense of acting in the spirit of a play-within-the-play-within–the–play. Absurdly, the hierarchy in which the narrator is Wakefield's audience might be reversed. In the process of watching Wakefield's acting, the narrator grows into a good Fishian reader who develops responses with regard to the words or sentences as they supersede each other. Wakefield is the determiner of what reality is for the narrator. And so, when the narrator receives clues that Wakefield is changing his plans and is appalled by his own foolish behavior, the narrator changes his role, i.e. readjusts his performance by giving a proper response. This implies that the narrator's behavior is dictated by Wakefield and is as a result an actor in Wakefield's script of which the latter is not aware. However, both Wakefield and the narrator readjust their responses only on the surface. Both are glued to their major role of playwriting and acting, focused on watching and twisted towards their own conceptions.

Doctorow's strategy to combine the first person narrator and the protagonist helps him detach his story from the complex structure and philosophical atmosphere inherent in Hawthorne's story. Using the first person point of view enables Doctorow to introduce a simple plot with true suspense and factual plot development. The narrator plays his role while sending an open invitation to the readers/audience to form a profoundly personal connection with the protagonist's viewpoint. His role connotes truth, closeness, genuineness, and an emotional appeal and thus a command that is distinctively personal. In some cases it is confessional, because Wakefield speaks to his audience/readers clearly and directly reflecting the way real people speak to compete for their attention and to reinforce clarity and comprehension. This bond is built around the concept of what Wander calls the "first Persona," that is, the "I" in discourse, where both sides, i. e. Wakefield and the readers, are almost the same character. They enjoy open routes of communiqué and unhindered prospects of links and expressions. The narrator's motives embedded in his role move the story along tempting the audience/readers to ask the same questions as the narrator/actor, thus creating a strong tie of trust and empathy between the two parties in such a way that the more detached third person would never quite attain.

The two Wakefields have been covertly watching their own wives, persons with whom they are involved in intimate relationships. Yet, who gives the narrators, at two removes from the first play, the right to observe clandestinely and illegally other vulnerable people with whom they have no bonds at all? If the Wakefields' enacted plays are meant to check their own acting, does the narrators' viewing not entail the invasion of others' intimate lives and privacy without their awareness? Who grants them the permission to expose the lives of these vulnerable people to others/readers/spectators? And do the narrators not treat them as non-persons, or vulnerable subjects?

The role of Hawthorne's narrator is much more controversial. When this narrator associates the Wakefield's theaters with irrationality that causes Wakefield to descend the stage of the real life, the narrator is guilty of two wrongdoings. He is treating Wakefield as a null character and casts himself as a secreted audience. Worse, his own condition becomes of a poorer quality. He has been watching this idiocy steered by this unrecognized character and spectator for twenty years, too. Doctorow, however, manages to alleviate the moral dilemma of watching others without their knowledge and, in consequence, evades the potential accusation that he treats others as non-present. He coalesces the narrator and the protagonist into one character, who tells the story from the first person perspective. His tone is pregnant with confessional, intimate, and authentic standpoints, providing him with the power to establish a personal connection with the readers/audience. Furthermore, the protagonist's/narrator's absence is shorter, his lodging and daily activities are more convincing and less inexplicable. Be that as it may, does this imply that the world of acting represented by the two Wakefields and the narrators mark the triumph of character dissolution and evaporation, the durability of vulnerability, the conquest of inaction and procrastination, the defeat of

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responsibility, insignificance of time and the initiation of wicked conduct?

The answers to these questions lie in the narrators' theatrical skills and appeal. In Hawthorne's "Wakefield," the narrator, unlike Wakefield, understands the risks of being an undercover audience in isolation from the stage. To avoid ending in the same fate of vanishing and nonexistence as Wakefield, Hawthorne chooses an unusual form of narration that allows the narrator to resort to theatrical maneuvers and techniques. The narrator contrives the story in such a way that he is a spectator so deep inside the story with the company of the readers witnessing the events in the spirit of "here and now" intensively manifested in the theater but so detached that he and the readers can maintain their objective judgments. Simultaneously, since he is the narrator, he produces to the readers his own interpretation of the Wakefields' acting. Thanks to his interpretation of the newspaper outline, to use Fish's description of the reader's experience, the narrator holds in his mind certain expectations, obtained by a continuous process of reading, or watching adjustments, which assist him to engineer the story that leads to Wakefield's self-banishment. This constitutes a big improvement in the narrator's process of growth into his role as actor and narrator. That is perhaps what Wolf gangIser means by his concept of "gaps." By filling these "gaps," the reader makes the text his own experience, i.e. takes it into his "consciousness," by which Iser refers to "the point at which the author and reader converge" (Iser 1974, in Davis ed., 1986, 389).

Doctorow too resorts to theatrical tactics, but his readers are not direct spectators of the events of the story. Nor are they endowed with the power to establish their objective attitudes. He tells the story from the angle of the first person narrator, which qualifies the narrator and hence Doctorow, to develop a friendly camaraderie with the readers and make them go through his own experiences of bafflement and disclosure. Doctorow makes his story confessional, attracting the readers' emotions more intensively towards him. In addition, he distances his narrative from sadistic elements and tries to portray his wife, children and other underprivileged people with positive tones. Nevertheless, the narrator restricts his readers to his own viewpoint and compels them to see his own experiences posthumously, thus robbing them of any likelihood to be found objective.

The narrator of Hawthorne's "Wakefield" not only encourages the readers' judgmental abilities but also casts them in tasks that are more creative. At the outset of the story, the narrator, for example, invites the readers to join his chore of closely watching the Wakefields. This means the narrator does not assign the readers in the role of silent, collaborative companions or mere null, vulnerable co-spectators. Nor are they obliged to see the events of the story through a layer of plays conditioned by the narrator's viewpoint and, as a consequence, are stripped of any prospect of having direct access to the events, to learn about the characters or to draw their own conclusions. On the contrary, the narrator (portrayed as a first persona) and the readers (portrayed as second personas, that is, the "you" in discourse) are blessed with unrestricted networks of communication and unhampered routes of links and expressions. The readers are the narrator's co-spectators who undergo the same experience from start to finish. Their watching, albeit theatrical, is reminiscent of a cinematic technique known as the "point of view shot" represented through the camera that exhibits what a character is viewing. According to Joseph V. Mascelli,

> A point-of-view shot is as close as an objective shot can approach a subjective shot and still remain objective. The camera is positioned at the side of a subjective player whose viewpoint is being depicted so that the audience is given the impression they are standing cheek-to-cheek with the off-screen player. The viewer does not see the event through the player's eyes, as in a subjective shot in which the camera trades places with the screen player. He sees the event from the player's viewpoint, as if standing alongside him. Thus, the camera angle remains objective, since it is an unseen observer not involved in the action. (2005, 3-14)

Among the usual merits that the use of the first person connotes one can list the sense of truth, intimacy, authentic perspective, and power that helps forge a personal connection with the readers. Yet these privileges do not send the readers or the narrator into fields where they lose their personal independence and ruling. As the above-mentioned extract emphasizes, the first-person-narrator technique affirms two elements attained with this cinematic technique: co-participation and objectivity.

As a spectator of Wakefield, the narrator attempts to establish a certain relationship with him by way of giving him advice and warnings. So, perhaps the narrator does not intend to render him as much vulnerable and objectified as he endeavors to give him company, advice and help in the face of Wakefield's unawareness of his existence. His role in inspecting Wakefield, sustained by his special technique of narration, helps him display his own skill as an actor playing to the readers. As an actor playing to the crowds of readers and as their co-spectator, the narrator creates a condition whereby the readers endorse his viewpoint and *ergo* feel they are party to a momentous experience. As the story proceeds and the truths become known, the narrator gives various comments and asks many questions. At times, he sympathizes with Wakefield, warning him or giving him advice. When Wakefield, for example, hesitates in his decision to return home, the narrator remarks, "Poor man!" (17). During Mrs. Wakefield's illness following her husband's

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strange departure, he ironically comments, "Dear woman! Will she die?" (16). The result is that the readers are continuously aware of the narrator's manifestation in the story and of his judgments and beliefs. And, the narrator's various moralizing sentences scattered throughout the story shed light on his high moral standards and as a result affect the readers'. *In the beginning, he avows that the rare episodes such as Wakefield's story are based on a "moral." Afterwards, he permeates the story with ethical expressions and rulings and concludes with a clear moral message.*

By so doing, the narrator strives to produce a play where he (a first persona) and the readers (second personas) are both moralizing spectators, smart critics, experienced interpreters, veteran preachers and wise people witnessing a queer episode that owing to their sharp analysis would otherwise have remained inaccessible and have resisted clarification. This denotes that the narrator and his readers are playing to ever-growing circles of readers thus producing nonstop theaters within theaters. Hawthorne's choice of the title of his tale, his intended moral lesson, and employment of the narrative aspect to create swelling spheres of readers and plays allude to Wakefield plays, also called Towneley plays. These biblical plays or mystery playswere performed during the summertime religious festival of Corpus Christi at Wakefield, the north of England in the Middle Ages (Janette Dillon, 2006).

It is very natural to assume that both Hawthorne and Doctorow have employed a narrative technique that reflects their awareness of the central role of the readers. Furthermore, both engage the readers in the moral dilemmas with which the protagonist in the two stories must cope. In Hawthorne's "Wakefield," the relationship between the narrator and the readers and their engagement in moral matters are much more compound. Whenever each stratum of readers or audiences falls, the new created layers of readers accept the narrator's invitation to "ramble with" him "throughout the twenty years of Wakefield's vagary" (6). This phenomenon indicates their active involvement in the story and, hence, raise questions concerning their function as active co-participants in the immoral act of the narrator who stealthily watches people's intimate lives without first obtaining their approval.

One might say that watching others without their knowledge is always unethical. The narrator, and behind him Hawthorne, seems to argue there are a number of considerations that determine the ethical nature of watching. Although the narrator and the readers have been only one-step away from Wakefield, they have not ventured to expose his intimate life and kept distance between them and Mrs. Wakefield. Nor have they put a threat to their sense of autonomy, privacy and ability to behave and move freely.

In addition, unquestionably Hawthorne does not mean to hail the idea of the Panopticon, which Jeremy Bentham described as a power mechanism where all inmates of an institution are observed by one security guard with total disregard to the inmates' being able to tell whether or not they are being viewed (1843, 39). He does not either aim at establishing a community like George Orwell's *1984* in which the idea of the Panopticon was extended to incorporate the whole of society (Orwell 2004). On the contrary, like Michel Foucault (1995, 216), Hawthorne is aware that inspecting people, even if the intention is to reform and discipline them, is likely to deprive them of their freedom. Nevertheless, one justification that Hawthorne appears to adopt is what Kevin Macnish calls "the consequentialist appeal to the greater good," (2011). It is an act that will yield a noble result or after-effect. Hawthorne's purpose has not been to watch the Wakefields and expose their intimate life and delicacies to the wider public. He does not offer to endorse the reasoning of the deontologists, which implies "the rights of the few may be overridden by the interests of the many" (Macnish, 2011). Far from that, there have been a few morals that all readers can benefit from. In inviting the readers to share his experience, the narrator along with readers presents himself to public scrutiny and therefore terminates the possibility where he can violate ethical codes without himself being seen or judged by readers. Long before the device of "selfies," a kind of first-person photography (Alexandra Georgakopoulou, 2016; 2: 300) was invented, the narrator has exploited it. Through it, he can turn the lens back on his as well as the readers' experiences and integrate their own presence and response into the experience of the instant. He can also place himself and the readers under the surveillance of ever widening groups of readers/public/audiences. Alternatively expressed, he has designed a device where the watchers are being watched.

On top, he intends to convey the lesson that he has caused no harm to the Wakefields and has not limited their autonomy, privacy, their interaction with the world or the manner they wished to present themselves. Each character, including the readers, is given the freedom to shape situations and attitudes and aspire to attain their goals. Each character is encouraged to be a first persona, a playwright-spectator who is engaged in reading, interpreting and judging others' script and, as a result, has the freedom to confirm, admire or reject the other's theatrical scripts. This indicates that Hawthorne's characters/playwrights (the readers included) are not inert in the act of perception. This contest of playwrights challenges the predominance of the text-oriented theories. The readers/actors can always contribute to and learn from the meaning of the text/performance. More important, they are challenged to produce their own interpretation of the story/ performance and propose it to other audience/readers. There is no better evidence than E. L. Doctorow, who accepted

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Hawthorne's challenge and wrote his own version of Hawthorne's story.

So, these readers/audiences watch the players and act like a jury. The members of this group of jury, in Donald N. McCloskey's words, want to act on "not what persuades a majority of a badly chosen jury but what persuades well educated participants in the conversations of our civilization and of our field" (McCloskey 1985, 46). In this perspective, "well educated" also means the attainment of moral principles that are obtained from others as well as personally acquired. McCloskey's notion of "the well-educated participants" suggests ideas similar to Fish's "interpretive communities." Fish maintains that the members of these "communities" belong to different groups of well-educated readers who adopt particular kinds of reading (1980, 404-408) - including the agreements and disagreements. Both Fish and McCloskey allude to well-educated readers and audiences of people capable of using specific defined procedures to judge others' interpretations, performances and deeds. The jury members are perhaps a different type of persona. Instead of demonstrating superiority of behavior and position, they take upon themselves the task of watching privileged people and of magnifying the voices of underprivileged ones. This is perhaps Hawthorne's point and here the achievement of his short story is positioned.

Readers of Doctorow's tale, as already indicated, are given a sense of closeness to the first person narrator and protagonist, but they are restricted to his experiences and mindfulness of the true state of affairs. The narrative is presented through the standpoint of one particular character and the readers or audience become aware of the events and characters of the story through the narrator's opinions and understanding. As a participant in the events, Doctorow's conscious narrator is a flawed observer by definition, not necessarily unbiased in his internal judgments or wholly disclosing them. Furthermore, he may be chasing some veiled agenda, which entails giving, or suppressing information grounded on his own experience. This is a worthy option for a tale that is primarily character-driven, and where the writer seeks to connect between past and present events to show the individual's personal state of mind and development.

In conclusion, the two versions of "Wakefield," give many indications to suggest that the protagonists are critically vulnerable and that vulnerability incites them to resort to theatricality. The different theatrical roles played by the characters in each tale provoke the two protagonists, the narrators and the readers to ask serious questions concerning man's position in the world, man's collective bonds and ethical accountability. The examination of acting and vulnerability is well demonstrated in the two authors' treatment of the narrative aspect. My purpose has been to maintain that the notions of vulnerability and theatrical viewing as scrutinized by Hawthorne and Doctorow have posed innovative observations in the fields of writing, criticism and moral behavior.

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