**Second-person Address and the Failure of Reading:**

**A Feminist Reading of *How Do You Do, Dolores* by Yoel Hoffmann**

Perhaps Dolores this chromosome carries

Our sins. Perhaps this terrible

loneliness is some kind of a cross.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Abstract**: This paper explores the poetics of Israeli author Yoel Hoffmann (b. 1937) and his perception of language by examining his unique use of the second-person address in his book *How do you do, Dolores* (1995). Hoffmann views language as a constant failure, a guaranteed miscommunication, and employs a double interpellation throughout the book in order to get his readers to experience language as such. The first interpellation encourages the reader to identify with the heroine’s recipients, who she addresses in the second-person (her imagined friend Dolores and her son Michael). The second, which occurs at the end of the book and is facilitated by a dramatic shift in the plot, has been largely ignored by critics, who focus mainly on the sense of wonder produced by the text and therefore read each of the text’s fragments separately. This change shifts the reader’s perception not only of the heroine, but also of themselves and their reading process. The reader comes to realize that their initial reading position was immoral as a result of an empathic failure, that they projected their gendered expectations upon the heroine, thus duplicating the same gaze that caused her suffering in the first place.

**1**

In 1999, Israeli author Yoel Hoffman was awarded the Newman Hebrew Literature Prize. The Prize Committee explained their decision by referring, in detail, to Hoffman’s short story “Katschen”:

The child-like, but never childish, language of the hero of this story creates a new taxonomy of the world, in the limited sense in which Hoffmann’s world can be seen as sorting and organizing, a world in which every rational taxonomic principle is perceived as violating the sanctity of initial mental reception and pure thought. This view of the primacy of language, even in its everyday use, is based on a deep belief in the power of words, not as having lexical meaning, but as creating meaning by their musicality and their emotional baggage, that is, their expression of despair in failing to reach reality. The word signifies the boundaries of knowledge rather than its content.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In this brief passage, the committee provided an apt and precise account of Hoffmann’s perception of language and literature. The religious terms they used, such as “sanctity” and “belief,” reflect the author’s view of the use of language as a kind of sin. Throughout his writings, Hoffmann describes the various ways in which language transgresses experience itself and disrupts the individual’s ability to perceive their self as an inseparable part of the world. Language, in Hoffman’s view, separates people, places, and experiences, rather than connecting them.

Hoffmann’s view of verbal communication as a constant failure is consistent with his interest in Zen Buddhism. In the introduction to his translation of *Radical Zen* by Zen Master Joshu, Hoffman writes: “Joshu detests abstract concepts such as ‘the Way,’ ‘the Truth,’ or ‘Buddha.’ While still a young monk, he asks his master Nansen for ‘the Way.’ Nansen replies that ‘The moment you aim at anything, you have already missed it.’”[[3]](#footnote-3) Abstract ideas, as suggested in this statement, are based on words and explanations, and therefore can never be fully comprehended. The inherent failure of the signifying chain disrupts the speaker’s intent and leads to loss of meaning. From reading Joshu’s statements, it is clear that most of his students’ questions are answered by Zen teachers through physical gestures (laughter, slapping, pointing at an object, etc.) while avoiding verbal explanations. When the answers are verbal, the miscommunication between the speaker and recipient is emphasized. For example: “A monk asked what is the point of ‘Our founder came from the West’? Joshu said, ‘It is the leg of the chair.’ The monk said, ‘That is what it is, isn’t it?’ Joshu said, ‘If that is what it is, you may remove it and take it with you.’”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Hoffmann’s relationship with his readers is informed by this miscommunication. In his writing, he takes into account the inherent failure of language, which invariably disrupts the author’s communication with their readers. It is this awareness that leads Hoffman to address his readers in the second-person, thereby interpellating them into a specific reading position.[[5]](#footnote-5) By so doing, he constructs them as a new type of reader, one who is aware of the inherent failure of every linguistic act. At the same time, however, it is precisely this appeal that invariably misses them, and for the exact same reason: readers cannot be constructed by verbal means, which always fail to fulfill their purpose. This failure is one explanation for the esoteric nature of Hoffman’s work and his limited readership (mostly comprised of writers, literary scholars, and academics). I would like to demonstrate this failed communication between author and reader in Hoffman’s writing by way of an in-depth reading of his novel, *How Do You Do, Dolores* (1995), in which he underscores the potential for failure and misreading inherent in any reading process. Hoffmann’s use of the second-person to address his reader raises questions regarding their role while exposing them to alternative readings. As a result, his reader is encouraged to free themselves from familiar reading conventions in order to respond more effectively to the interpellations in the text.

In *How Do You Do, Dolores*, Hoffman employs the second-person address to create a feminist narrative. It facilitates a reading process in which the reader becomes a “sinner” due to their prejudiced conceptions of femininity. By modifying both the text’s narratee [[6]](#footnote-6) and the ontological status of its ideal recipients, Hoffmann exposes the stereotypes that the reader employs while reading and presents them as a moral sin. This sin, however, can be rectified through a more attentive reading process. The reader is interpellated to read from a position of what Heinz Kohut calls “empathic failure,” that is, the misinterpretation of the character’s needs, which in turn, may lead the reader to experience guilt.[[7]](#footnote-7) On the other hand, when exposed as the author’s deliberate disruption of communication with the reader, the interpellation may evoke in the reader a sense of exploitation and anger.

**2**

*How Do You Do, Dolores* describes a day in a woman’s life, from seven in the morning until three in the afternoon, as she goes about doing her various chores. The first part of the novel takes place inside her house, while the second and third parts take place on the streets of Tel Aviv. In all three, the heroine describes her mundane actions: getting dressed, setting a breakfast table, walking to the bank and kindergarten, etc. The book is written entirely in the second-person: the first and second parts are addressed to a female recipient—the heroine’s imaginary friend, Dolores:[[8]](#footnote-8) “I cry [an inner cry] Dolores/ Dolores as if I have a friend with a name like this,”[[9]](#footnote-9) while in the third and final part, the heroine addresses her son Michael: “It is very hard to know and I am talking to you the/time that has not yet been created coming to you on my heels/one step because these are your mother’s/naked feet…”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Hoffmann’s first novel, *Katschen*. *The Book of Joseph* (1988), prompted extensive research, and critics had no doubts as to the genre in which it was written: prose fiction with short stories.[[11]](#footnote-11) However, since the publication of Hoffmann’s second book, *Bernhard* (1989), critics have struggled to determine the genres of his works. Many of them have claimed that his writing straddles the line between poetry and prose given his use of short lines, fragmented form, and associative links between the fragments.[[12]](#footnote-12)

It is possible that the difficulty involved in reading a novel written in such a fragmented style is cause for the critics’ lack of attention to the dramatic turning point in the plot of *How Do* *You Do, Dolores*. As Lilach Naishtat Bornstein argues, the difficulty in reading fragments is manifested on three levels: understanding each individual fragment, understanding the connections between fragments, and comprehending the relationship between each individual fragment and the compilation of fragments as a whole.[[13]](#footnote-13) The fragmented style of *How Do You Do, Dolores*—its short lines and resemblance to poetry, has caused critics to ignore its plot as a whole and to analyze each fragment separately. In dozens of articles, the book is described as a story about a woman’s undramatic mundane actions.[[14]](#footnote-14) Not only do critics seem to take for granted the fact that in the book’s first two parts the heroine speaks to her imaginary friend Dolores, but they also read her address to her absent child as the plausible speech of a mother who misses her son. Thus, readings of the book so far have overseen the fact that the heroine’s children, as indicated at the end of the text, are also imagined: “I know. I dreamed these children/ and now the dreams are returning to their place/ and the place is returning to its dream, each mirror/ to the one inside it.”[[15]](#footnote-15) By overlooking this significant passage, critics fail to experience the disturbing affect this book has on its readers. The reason for this oversight may stem from the aesthetic properties of each fragment, which in turn, prevent critics from reading the text as a continuous plot.

I would like to suggest further that such a fragmented reading may also be the result of a sense of wonderment, which many scholars have described as the dominant feeling they experience while reading Hoffman’s works. For example, Ariana Melamed claimed that Hoffmann’s writing “waits very patiently for readers to discover the wonder.”[[16]](#footnote-16) The common portrayal of Hoffmann as an artist of “defamiliarization” (first noted by Hannah Herzig, 1998) is inseparably linked to the feeling of wonder that his writing technique evokes.

One effect of this sense of wonder is a change in the perception of time: it focuses attention on the present moment. Wonder is associated with ecstatic experiences of encountering the sublime, of awakening,[[17]](#footnote-17) and with the ability to experience the present (as in Zen Buddhism).[[18]](#footnote-18) Thus, this feeling of wonder plays a role in the fragmented experience of reading Hoffmann’s books. Emotions that shift attention to the present deliberately undermine the reader’s ability to construct the text as a continuous and causal narrative, thereby leading them to a more fragmented reading that highlights the present moment of each individual fragment.

However, a narrative reading of *How Do You Do, Dolores* raises the possibility that the other characters exist only in the heroine’s consciousness. This is evident at the beginning of the text, which deals with her split consciousness: “Sometimes I think: I’m flying. And why/ am I flying? Because of the dress. Flesh, I/ think, duplicates itself. Here are the children,/ I think, walking away from me and coming towards me. If all is one, I think, why/ this split?”[[19]](#footnote-19) The heroine wonders how the flesh splits and “duplicates itself” in the process of conception and birth, and why such a split occurs. In the next paragraph, the split shifts from the body to the mind: “The body of my thought is also made/ of a womb two-wombs. That who is born,/ gives birth to its own body [in this sense, you may call me a procreator].”[[20]](#footnote-20) Procreation becomes metaphorical and duplication occurs in the imagination. The possibility of procreation through art is also emphasized in the fifth fragment: “I get up as in the miracle made by/ The Maharal to a block of clay and turn on/ the stove.”[[21]](#footnote-21) The written work is presented as having a life of its own through the implied analogy with the story of the Golem according to which the Maharal of Prague brought the Golem to life by means of combining letters.[[22]](#footnote-22) Thus, these opening fragments indicate that the question of the split of consciousness and its effects on language and creation will be at the center of the text.

Following the opening, the heroine is described as performing stereotypically feminine actions: she cares for the children, she applies nail polish (“I spread one hundred fingers to the/ wind and the wind dries the polish.”)[[23]](#footnote-23) The number “one hundred” implies the multiplicity of women who do the same. She also sets a breakfast table and dances while arranging the dishes. Later she puts on a dress. These stereotypical actions suggest that the heroine is a woman who reflects other women, as both Neta Stahl and Rachel Albeck-Gidron have suggested,[[24]](#footnote-24) a hypothesis further confirmed by the heroine’s multiple names (Flora, Rosamunde, Betty).

As demonstrated by both Stahl and Albeck-Gidron, the inherent multiplicity in the figure of the heroine is expressed in visual terms by way of textual references to Ernest Joseph Block’s fourteen photographic portraits of women in a New Orleans brothel. These photographic images present themselves to the reader as owners of the speaking voice. By presenting the heroine as a woman who is, in fact, many women (echoing Luce Irigaray’s claim), Hoffman undermines the concept of the unified subject.[[25]](#footnote-25) In this vein, Albeck-Gidron assumes that the reader should identify with the heroine (or heroines, as suggested by the photographs), as she indicates in the question that concludes her reading of the book: “Can Hoffmann’s reader summon enough identities in order to be able to read the work?”[[26]](#footnote-26) In contrast, I would like to emphasize the interpellative aspects of the text, which invite readers to identify with two other subject positions: Dolores and the child Michael, the heroine’s addressees. In other words, I argue that other than the heroine, *How Do You Do, Dolores* offers its readers more options for identification, and that the identification with her addressees is encouraged, in particular, by the text’s grammatical structure .

**3**

By employing the second-person to address the narrative’s addressees, Hoffman invites his readers to identify with them. This results in a double effect: the second-person invariably addresses both the characters within the fictional world and actual readers outside it.[[27]](#footnote-27) For example, when the heroine asks “can you imagine anything and nothing?”[[28]](#footnote-28) the reader is called upon to answer this paradoxical question. However, this duality also entails multiple hindrances. First, it reinforces the voyeuristic aspect of reading. The reader is simultaneously a participant in the intimate situation described and an onlooker from a distance. The second-person address creates a sense of intimacy, thereby making the reader feel like they are listening to a private conversation. As a result, the voyeuristic desire inherent in the act of reading is emphasized. The use of the second-person is revealed as a narrative technique that tempts the reader to participate in the situation because it blurs the boundaries between what is internal and what is external to the text. The reader cannot discern whether they are reading from an external point of view, which is voyeuristic and guilt-provoking, or from within the situation, in which case reading constitutes a guiltless act. Thus, the reader is invited to read from an innocent, yet voyeuristic, perspective. While this device enables the reader to pursue their desire while releasing them from the burden of taking responsibility for it, [[29]](#footnote-29) at the end of the novel they discover that their reading position had thus far not been as innocent as they thought.

Second, other than placing the reader in an unstable reading position, the use of the second-person invites them to identify with the addressee Dolores. The reader receives contradictory clues regarding the possibility of filling Dolores’s place. On the one hand, when the heroine says, “I cry [an inner cry] Dolores/ Dolores as if I have a friend with this name,”[[30]](#footnote-30) the reader may attempt to assume Dolores’s position in light of the heroine’s evident distress, which encourages such an empathetic reading. The lack of Dolores’s response—as she is not an actual character but rather the heroine’s imaginary friend—opens up a space that may be interpreted by the reader as a call for help directly addressed to them.[[31]](#footnote-31) As is the case in many texts, here too the character’s silence may be interpreted as an address, which in turn, encourages the reader to fill the role of the imaginary friend Dolores. Later in the text, when the heroine says: “Come Dolores, let’s put an organ between us. We’ll play four-handed canons on it,”[[32]](#footnote-32) we witness an attempt to insert the reader trying to fill Dolores’s role into the plot.[[33]](#footnote-33) Indeed, in the first two parts of the book, the reader who attempts to assume Dolores’s role is required to become the lonely heroine’s companion and follow her around the house and streets of Tel Aviv. The use of the word “we” further illustrates this point: “The whole world Dolores is Mr. Montilio./ We walk through the streets of Montilio to the houses of the cemetery Montilio.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

On the other hand, sentences addressed to Dolores, which sometimes include her name—“See Dolores,” “I am telling you Dolores,” “Oh Dolores”—undermine the possibility of filling her role (her gender may also be a problem for some readers). Finally, while nostalgic memories shared by the heroine and Dolores—“Do you remember the sound of the canes, like giant seashells?”[[35]](#footnote-35)—may be a disrupting factor, they may also suggest, paradoxically, a kind of shared history for the heroine and the reader.

These contradictory reading directives deny the reader the possibility of a “comfortable” reading position; they are conflicting interpellations that undermine the reader’s ability to construct themselves as subjects and force them to navigate between different reading positions—sometimes identifying with the heroine, sometimes with her addressee, and sometimes with neither. The second-person address causes shifts between internal and external subject positions—within and outside the narrative situation—and deprives the reader of a “safe haven” from which they can read “calmly.” The desire to be included in the narrative situation and to respond to the heroine’s needs (to “be” Dolores) is repeatedly undercut by detailed descriptions of Dolores that “push” the reader out of the narrative situation. This frustrating exclusion sabotages the reader’s ability to answer the question, which, according to Slavoj Žižek, motivates any interpellation regarding the desire of the Other and in this case the author’s desire, “am I supposed to read as if I were Dolores?”[[36]](#footnote-36)

In the last fragment of the second part, the heroine says, “Do not say you did not know you would die,”[[37]](#footnote-37) and thus Dolores’s imaginary “life” ends. For the reader who attempted to read as if they were Dolores, this sudden death is also the sudden “death” of their intimate reading position. The addressee in the next part of the book is the heroine’s child Michael, whose character constitutes an alternative reading position.

**4**

Michael first appears at the beginning of the third part. He comes down the stairs in his pajamas, like an angel, to eat his breakfast:

At seven and twenty minutes, as in the ladder of angels/ painted by Raphael. The boy comes down the wooden/ stairs. His toes are saddened/ exactly according to the image of divine grief./ Each toe and its mirror reflection/ on the other foot./ The forest creatures on the pajamas open/ their mouths as in the vision the ancestor/ father saw when they spread out the striped/ coat and said: an evil beast hath devoured him.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Given the conventional portrayal of children as angels, this description is not particularly surprising. In contrast, the comparison of the child to Joseph, whose father was told that his son was devoured by a wild beast, raises the reader’s suspicions as to a sinister element associated with Michael’s angelic figure. However, the reader’s perception of the boy’s physical existence is not yet affected, as it is reinforced by the heroine’s description of his birth: “When the boy turned over inside of me and stood in the placenta/ fluid with his head to the ground, we were both/ the complete reverse figure [...] The unnatural was when the head **emerged**. Why/ did he pierce the crust that covered him and poured out the water?”[[39]](#footnote-39) In the first reading of the text, the portrayal of the emergence of the head as “unnatural” does not undermine the fact of his birth, but rather frames it, as a perplexing wonder.

Now the reader can ostensibly withdraw from their assumed role as the imaginary friend given that there exists an addressee with whom they can identify within the represented world. Although it appears that the open space is filled by a “real” human character, it becomes apparent that this addressee is also imagined. Thus, the reader comes to realize that in fact they were the only recipients of the text, and thereby enabled all of the heroine’s actions. Therefore, they are forced to change their understanding of the entire text. In the context of this second reading, it becomes apparent that all of the heroine’s mundane activities—preparing the breakfast table for her children, taking them to and from kindergarten, etc.—are performative actions, a performance of a mother’s life despite the fact that she has no children and that her actions lack recipients.

This lack of “real” addressees is implied throughout the text, and facilitates, as Albeck-Gidron claims, its fantastic atmosphere.[[40]](#footnote-40) This is reinforced by the heroine’s perception of the way in which her children came into the world as “dictated” rather than born: “Believe me, Dolores, I can give birth/ even without conceiving./ I dictate to myself children with the power of/ symmetry. I doubled my eyes, Didn’t I? I doubled my hands, didn’t I?”[[41]](#footnote-41) In addition, the children’s actions and locations are also inconsistent throughout the book. While Michael is described as eating cereal for breakfast, the girl D. is blatantly absent throughout the plot: she sleeps in her room, and goes to school holding an atlas. It is only at the end of the text that she suddenly appears alongside the heroine: “The girl D. is standing behind me because she too/ came to take you home. You can never be precise enough about these things.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Michael’s location is also unclear. It is only in one short moment (in two fragments) that the encounter between the mother and her son is described:

See how easily I am going toward you/ and you are coming to me as if this movement was/ possible./ I waited so long for this hour because you/ know I missed you like this duck/ who misses and gaggles all the time./ I can hug you now and I/ see you are a little boy./ You have no idea how worried I was because there were some/ things I forgot on the way. You can/ give me your hand and we will go home.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In this case, however, the heroine expresses doubt that the meeting had indeed occurred: “you are coming to me as if this movement was/ possible,” while later, she seems to question her son’s presence once again: “If you will come out of the kindergarten you will understand the feature of time/ embedded in things.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

It is only at the end of the text, in a fragment written entirely in English, that the reader becomes aware of what motivated the heroine to imagine her children: “It was sometime after Passover, Your father was still alive and we were sitting, sun and all, somewhere north of Tel-Aviv.”[[45]](#footnote-45) The text implies that by performing actions involved in raising children, the heroine preserves the memory of her beloved. The only clue attesting to her husband’s death is the recollection of the period in which he was still alive, and this is communicated in a “foreign” language that invades the text in the form of a single glimpse at a parallel world.

As long as the reader is led to believe that the heroine had children, her actions seem “natural” to them. However, when it becomes clear that she has no children, her actions are perceived as manifestations of a kind of “madness,” a delusion rooted in trauma. Thus, at the end of the book, the reader realizes that they unknowingly took part in this “madness.” They joined the heroine as she walked around Tel Aviv, listened to her stories, and “shared” her life. Even the heroine implies that she is mad: “Maybe I need to be hospitalized./ I have to lie down at least for a while on/ white sheets with the words Ministry of/ Health written on them.”[[46]](#footnote-46) The delayed information regarding the non-existence of the children plays a crucial role. The reader comes to realize that the entire reading process was based on a mistake, a misunderstanding, and that they were subject to a manipulation that violates the conventional contract between narrator and readers.[[47]](#footnote-47) Although the narrator’s credibility is questionable from the start, it is only at the end of the text that it proves completely incredible, and while anticipated to a certain degree, the narrator’s unreliability proves far more acute than expected. In Tamar Yakobi’s terms, the clues in the text, which are designed to lead the reader to an understanding of the situation of communication in which they are participating, are insufficient and therefore violate the narrative contract.[[48]](#footnote-48) Instead of interpreting the relationship between the author and heroine from an empathetic perspective, the reader should have assumed a more objective interpretative position that considers the gap between the heroine’s perception of the world and the world as represented by the implied author. Given that the clues in the text are insufficient, the reader may feel “deceived” by the implicit author. This emphasizes the miscommunication underlying the reading process. The seductive use of the second-person address, which blurs the boundaries between interior and exterior, allows the implicit author to exploit the reader’s voyeuristic desire for his own purposes. Solitude, which is revealed as characterizing the reality of the heroine’s life, is transferred to the reader, who may feel deceived and used.

The heroine’s madness is a result of internalizing her social role as a mother and housewife. Her only “sin” is that she has no real children for whom to perform her duties. Her motherhood, which throughout the book is depicted as “normal,” is presented as a pathology, which we as readers, share.[[49]](#footnote-49) This can be seen as a serious accusation against Israeli society’s sanctification of motherhood.[[50]](#footnote-50) Despite the sense of exploitation, the reader may also experience a sense of guilt. They discover that they were reading through an “empathic failure”—in order to respond to the heroine’s cry for help, they tried to fill the role of the internal friend, thereby partaking in a delusional and flawed understanding of reality. This discovery may make the reader feel guilty for projecting their stereotypical perceptions of femininity onto the heroine as part of their reading process.

Hence, the miscommunication between author and reader leads the reader to occupy an immoral subject position. With this realization, they must face its implications in terms of their self-esteem and self-perception. The guilt-free voyeuristic journey that was enabled by the second-person address, changes completely when the true nature of the scene they observed is revealed. It thus becomes apparent that their desire to read from a close, empathetic position was exploited, and that the “moral” reading position that the text encourages is in fact an external reading position.

The gendered expectations that motivate the reader’s reading process, become apparent only upon receiving the missing information at the end of the book. The coercive power that the reader exerted on the heroine, of which they were unaware, is revealed as destructive. The reader takes part in the heroine’s crucifixion, and in fact, is responsible for her “Via Dolorosa,” as the name of the book suggests. As Neta Stahl has demonstrated, the heroine is portrayed throughout the book as crucified, and the plastic duck she carries may be read as analogous to the cross Jesus bears. This is reinforced by her bleeding hands and feet:[[51]](#footnote-51) “And the blood is rinsed from my hands and my/ feet into the sewers and the holes of the nails/ are clean now and I forgive everyone for/ that deed.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Thus, she is presented as the savior who pays for the reader’s sin—the sin of reading from the perspective of their oppressive gendered expectations.

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A feminist reading of Hoffman’s text exposes the reader’s sin of projecting their stereotypical gaze on fictional characters, and implicitly, on human beings in general. As Etienne Balibar claims, from the position of disidentification generated through art, the audience can begin to criticize the political nature of their society and see themselves as its product.[[53]](#footnote-53) While the first interpellation of the text encourages readers to identify, although not continuously, with the narratees, the second interpellation forces them to un-identify and become aware of the fact that reading from a more distant perspective can be a moral and more respectful reading position. This perspective enables the reader to become cognizant not only of their gendered ways of reading, but also of the ethical consequences of literary identifications.

1. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores* (Jerusalem, Keter, 1995), fragment 58. The book was not translated to English so all the following quotes were translated by me. The Hebrew quotes will appear in the footnotes.

   ״אולי הכרומוזום הזה דולורס נושא/ את חטאינו. אולי הבדידות/ הנוראה הזאת היא מין צלב״ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A. Lipsker, ״יואל הופמן חתן פרס ניומן לשנת תשנ״ט״(Yoel Hoffmann won the Newman Prize for 1999) *Hazafon 6*, 2000, pp. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Y. Hoffmann, “introduction,” *Radical Zen* (Cambridge: Autumn Press, 1978) pp. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Joshu, “212,” *Radical Zen* (Cambridge: Autumn Press, 1978) pp 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In order to describe the connection between mental structures and social mechanisms, Althusser conceptualized “interpellation” in 1969 by combining Marxist ideology with Lacanian psychoanalytic notions of identification mechanisms. Interpellation is a call that recruits individuals and transforms them into subjects by identification with an address from an “Other.” According to Althusser, the most basic type of interpellation is the call “Hey, you,” made in the second-person by a policeman. In response to the call, the individual turns towards the addresser. With this turn of 180 degrees, he becomes a subject. In the vast majority of cases, the call may make the individual believe that it is addressing him exactly and expressing his individuality, but in rare cases it may also miss him completely. In any case, the call always constructs the individual as a subject, because even the lack of response gives him a certain subject position – the refusing subject, the one who does not obey the call. See: L. Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (trans. and ed. G.M. Goshgarian, London: Verso, 2014). As Etienne Balibar points out, from the position of disidentification produced by art, the audience can begin to criticize the political character of their society and see themselves as its product. See E. Balibar, “Althusser’s Dramaturgy and the Critique of Ideology”, *Differences* 26 (5), 2015, pp. 1-22. See also J. Butler, “Theatrical Machines”, *Differences* 26 (5), 2015, pp. 23-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gerald Prince argues that each narrative includes not only a narrator but also an ideal recipient who can be a reader or a listener. He distinguishes between the actual writer addressing an actual reader, the implicit author addressing the implicit reader and the narratee addressed by the narrator. See G. Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee", in: *Reader-Response Criticism* (ed. Jane P. Tompkins, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) pp. 7-25; G. Prince, "The Narratee Revisited", *Style,* 19 (3), 1985, pp. 299-303. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The term "empathic failure" refers to events in which the parent does not respond in a way that is adapted to the needs of the child. In Kohut's writing it is also used to describe therapeutic failures. The therapist, attentive and caring as she may be, will miss the patient's needs or react to them in an occasional unfavorable manner. See H. Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Neta Stahl perceives the use of the second-person in this book as an internal dialogue of the heroine Dolores with herself, that attest to her struggle of feminine existence between specificity and multiplicity. See N. Stahl, *Drawings Of the Heart: The Poetics of Yoel Hoffmann* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2017) pp. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores*, fragment 34. "אני צועקת [צעקה פנימית] דולורס/ דולורס כאילו יש לי חברה ששמה כמו/ זה" [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores*, fragment 227. "קשה מאוד לדעת ואני מדברת אליך את/ הזמן שעוד לא נברא בא בעקבי אליך/ צעד אחד מפני שאלו הן רגליה/ העירומות של אמך" [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See H. Herzig, *The voice saying I: Trends in Israeli Prose fiction of the 1980’s* (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1998) pp. 311; S. Sheffer, ״בתנועות הרבה למעלה ולמטה״ )In the many movements up and down) *Iton 77* 98-99, 1988, pp. 7; S. Zur, “״לחזור לשדה הכרוב – מן הכתיבה אל ההשראה וההתפעלות: עיון אחר ביצירתו של יואל הופמן (Rreturning to the cabbage field – from writing to inspiration and admiration: a different reading of Yoel Hoffman's works) *Aley Siach* 42, 1999, pp. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See R. Albek-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option: A Critical Study of Yoel Hoffmann’s Works* (Tel Aviv & Beer Sheva: Dvir & Heksherim Institute, 2016) pp. 44; D. Avitzur, ״מלאכת מחשבת: ׳ברנהרט׳ ליואל הופמן במבט מקרוב ומרחוק״ (A Master Piece: Yoel Hoffman’s Bernhard from Close and from a distance) *Mikan* 10, 2010, pp. 52; G. Hazan-Rokem, ״הוא שט ומבשל. אז מה?״(He sails and cook’s, so what?) *Efes Shtayim* 3, 1995, pp. 104; A. Holtzman, ״איפה את אאורידיקה״ (Where are you Eurydice( *Road-Map: Hebrew Narrative Fiction Today* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2005) pp. 229-231; A. Ruach, ״ההארה שבין צל לזיכרון״ (The illumination between shadow and memory), *Iton 77* 262, 2001, pp. 11; N. Stahl, *Drawings Of the Heart*, pp. 126; A. Zehavi, ״מסע קטוע מילדות לבגרות״ ("A fragmented journey from childhood to adulthood) *Iton 77* 135-136, 1991, pp. 17; B. Zimmermen, ״לא אריסטו ולא יחזקאל״ (Neither Aristotle nor Ezekiel) *Maariv*, “Musaf Shabbat – Sifrut ve Sfarim,” March 16, 2007, pp. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A fragmented novel is a large-scale narrative work composed of a chain of stories (in prose or poetry) that lacks a final element of closure. The fragments are usually arranged arbitrarily. This form deviates from a complete chronological pattern in favor of an open, infinite one. In the 20th century, fragmented writing became dominant in both the artistic and the theoretical spheres. The concept of the fragment, derived from the word “frangere”, is defined by the violent breakage that characterizes this form. Reading fragments in an infinite sequence disrupts a hierarchical or logical structure that helps to construct meaning. The fragment is an extreme case of the application of literary techniques, in which the reader's principles of connection and causation are stretched to their very edge. See L. Naishtat-Bornstein, *Reading Christabel: Interpretation of a Fragment in a Group* (Ph.D. in Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, Tel Aviv University, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See R. Albeck-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option*, pp. 29; T. Frenkel Alroy, ״היפר-טרופיה: גידולים לשוניים ביצירתו של יואל הופמן״, (Hyper-Tropes: Linguistic Tumors in Yoel Hoffmann's Works) in: *Ma’aseh Sippur: Studies in Jewish Narrative*, Volume II (eds. A. Lipsker & R. Kushelevsky, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2009) pp. 454; pp. 168; L. Yudkin, “Fill That Gap: the Space Sage, Yoel Hoffmann”, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 3 (1), 2000, pp. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 330. "אני יודעת. חלמתי את הילדים האלה/ ועכשיו החלומות חוזרים למקומם/ והמקום חוזר אל חלומו מראה מראה/ אל זו שבתוכה" [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. I. Melamed, ״מיומנו של אנרכיסט״ (From a Diary of an Anarchist), *Ynet*, January 17, 2010: <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3833320,00.html>. See also D. Burstein ״׳אין זה משנה איפה חותכים׳: מבוא לקריאה זן-בודהיסטית בכתבי יואל הופמן״, ('It does not matter where you cut': an introduction to a Zen-Buddhist reading in Yoel Hoffmann's writings) in: *Beyond Halacha: Secularism, Traditionalism and ‘New Age’ Culture in Israel* (eds. Y. Yadgar, G. Katz & S. Ratzabi, Sdeh Boker & Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion Institute & Ben Gurion University, 2014) pp. 618; I. Vardi ״לפעמים אתה רואה מזלג ומבקש את נפשך למות״ (Sometimes you see a fork and want to die), Haarez, “Sfarim”, June 7, 2007; A. Hasson, ״ההופמני משתהה״ (The Hoffmannic pauses) *Makor Rishon*, March 26, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. D. Keltner & J. Haidt, “Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion”, *Cognition and Emotion* 17 (2), 2003, pp. 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dror Burstein claims that Hoffmann's work is intended to create awakening: "If at any moment, in every moment, and in response to something as trivial as peach blossoming, there may be an awakening or enlightenment, a worthy literary text, that awakening is its main theme, will attempt to touch on such moments and create them in every sentence and every paragraph. Every moment is a historical moment, especially in the sense that there is no 'history' except that which occurs at this very moment". See D. Burstein, ״׳אין זה משנה איפה חותכים׳: מבוא לקריאה זן-בודהיסטית בכתבי יואל הופמן״, , pp. 617. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 1. "לפעמים אני חושבת: אני עפה. ולמה/ אני עפה? מפני השמלה. הבשר, אני/ חושבת, כופל את עצמו. הנה הילדים,/ אני חושבת, הולכים ממני ובאים אלי. אם הכל אחד, אני חושבת, למה/ ההתפצלות הזאת?" [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 2. "גוף המחשבה שלי עשוי גם הוא/ מרחם-רחמתיים. מה שהוא יולד,/ יולד גוף משלו [במובן הזה אפשר/ לקרוא לי ולדנית]". The biblical phrase רחם-רחמתיים that is used to describe the way the women that were captured in war were divided between the soldiers, was translated to English as “A damsel, two damsels to every man” (Judges 5: 30), but its literal meaning in Hebrew refers to a womb. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores*, fragment 5*.* "אני קמה כבמעשה הנס שעשה/ המהר"ל לגוש חמר ומדליקה את/ התנור" [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Ali Yassif’s introduction to Yehudah Yudel Rosenberg’s book *The Golem of Prague and other wonderful Stories* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1991) pp. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores*, fragment 4. "אני פורשת מאה אצבעות אל מול/ הרוח והרוח מיבשת את הלק". [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See N. Stahl, *Drawings Of the Heart,* pp. 143-177; R. Albeck-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option*, pp. 131-144. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. L. Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One (trans. [Catherine Porter](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/?GCOI=80140100343840&fa=author&Person_ID=838) & [Carolyn Burke](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/?GCOI=80140100343840&fa=author&Person_ID=2385), Ithaka: [Cornell University Press](http://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/publishers/?fa=publisher&NameP=Cornell%20University%20Press), 1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. R. Albeck-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option*, p. 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. M. Fludernik, "Introduction: Second-person Narrative and Related Issues", *Style*, 28 (3), 1994, pp. 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 65. "אם את יכולה לצייר בנפשך דבר ולא דבר?". [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Louise Barnett claims that from the outset, the sense of guilt in literary voyeurism is reduced by the mediation of language and because the content is perceived to be the responsibility of the narrator and not that of the reader. Laura Mulvey argues that in the movie theater, the shame of the voyeur is hidden by darkness. In contrast, literature invites voyeurism because it is usually read alone, without anyone looking at the reader while knowing what she is reading. See L. K. Barnett, "Voyeurism in Swift's Poetry", *Studies in Literary Imagination*, 17 (1), 1984, pp. 17-26; L. Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (eds. L. Braudy & M. Cohen, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 833-844. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The duality of the address, both to the narratee and to the actual reader, is more evident when the identity of the narratee is unknown or when he does not respond. A good example for this is the genre of the confessional novel or story. Hannah Naveh argues that the confession is characterized by an internal pattern of dialogue in which the recipient is missing. When a recipient is present in the text, he is usually quiet and does not challenge the main character’s speech. See H. Naveh, *The Confession: A Study of Genre* (Tel Aviv: Papirus, 1988). In these cases, in which the fictitious recipient does not respond, his silence opens up a space that allows the reader to take his place, thus, to be interpellated in to the role of the "you" that is being addressed. In other words, what enables the reader to take over the role of the fictitious recipient is the silence of the latter. This technique is typical in the epistolary novel (especially when we only read letters of one side of the correspondence, as happens in Marguerite Yourcenar's “Alexei”, or Stefan Zweig's "Letter from an Unknown Woman") and in confessional novels and stories such as *Lolita* by Nabokov, *The Kreutzer Sonata* by Tolstoy, “The Doctor and His Ex-Wife" by Agnon and *The Catcher in the Rye* by Salinger. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 53."בואי דולורס. נציב עוגב בינינו./ ננגן עליו קאנונים בארבע ידיים". [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Monika Fludernik claims that direct addresses to readers involve them in the plot and can turn them into "physical companions” of the hero in his journey. See M. Fludernik, "Introduction: Second-person Narrative and Related Issues", pp. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 137. "כל העולם דולורס הוא אדון מונטיליו./ אנחנו הולכות ברחובות מונטיליו אל/ בתי מונטיליו העלמין" [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 85. ."את זוכרת את קני השמע, כמו קונכיות/ ענקיות?" [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Slavoj Žižek claims that interpellation never comes without a certain leftover. There always remains a certain gap, an opening which is rendered by the famous question “eke vuoi?” – “You're telling me that, but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at?”, What do you desire? Through this question, the individual's answer to the question "Who am I?" Is formulated. See S. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 222. "אל תגידי שלא ידעת כי תמותי". [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. # Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 15. "בשבע ועשרים. כמו בסולם המלאכים/ שצייר רפאל. הילד יורד במדרגות/ העץ. אצבעות הרגליים שלו נעצבות/ בדיוק על פי תמונת היגון האלוהית./ אצבע אצבע והשתקפות הראי שלה/ ברגל השניה./ יצירי היער שעל בד הפיג'מה פוערים/ פיות כמו בחזיון-פתאום שראה האב/ הקדמון כשפרשו לפניו כותונת-/ הפסים ואמרו: טרוף טורף".

    # The phrase טרוף טורף is located at the end of the sentence describing this scene in the bible. The ending in the English translation does not imply it was done by a beast as the Hebrew version does. For this reason in my translation I used the phrase used in the bible earlier: “And he knew it, and said: 'It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces.'” Genesis 37: 33.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragments 18-19, emphasis in the original. ״כשהילד התהפך בי ועמד בתוך נוזל/ השליה וראשו אל האדמה, היינו שנינו/ הדמות ההפוכה השלמה. [...] הלא טבעי היה ב**יציאת** הראש. למה/ בתק את הקרום שעטף אותו והגיר את/ המים?". [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. R. Albek-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option*, pp. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 82. ״תאמיני לי דולורס אני יכולה ללדת גם/ בלי להתעבר./ אני מכתיבה לעצמי ילדים בכוחה של/ הסימטריה./ הכפלתי את עיני. לא?/ הכפלתי את ידי, לא?". [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 327. "הילדה די עומדת מאחורי מפני שגם/ היא באה לקחת אותך. אי אפשר/ לדייק בדברים האלה" [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragments 299-300. "ראה באיזו פשטות אני הולכת אליך/ ואתה בא כאילו התנועה הזאת/ אפשרית./ חיכיתי כל כך לשעה הזאת מפני שאתה/ יודע התגעגעתי אליך כמו הברווז הזה/ שמתגעגע ומגעגע כל הזמן./ אני יכולה לחבק אותך עכשיו ואני/ רואה שאתה ילד קטן./ אין לך מושג כמה דאגתי מפני שהיו/ דברים ששכחתי בדרך. אתה יכול/ לתת לי יד ונלך הביתה" [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 311. "אם תצא מן הגן תבין את תכונת הזמן/ שבדברים" [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 107. "יכול להיות שצריך לאשפז אותי./ אני צריכה לפחות לזמן מה לשכב על/ סדינים לבנים שבשוליהם כתוב משרד/ הבריאות" [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. This phenomenon differs from what Menakhem Perry calls "retrospective re-patterning" since the conversion of frames occurs here at once. Usually the reader discovers that the added details raise the possibility of a new hypothesis, but postpones the decision and examines each of the options until she decides to change it. Thus, part of the text is read simultaneously between two frameworks. In the case of "retrospective re-patterning", it is impossible to point a particular segment in the text in which the change occurs, since it is a process rather than a single moment. See M. Perry, “Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings [With an Analysis of Faulkner's ‘A Rose for Emily’],” *Poetics Today* 1 (1/2), 1979, pp. 35-64, 311-361. The violation of the usual narrative contract stems from the fact that the new information does not only change the reader's interpretation of the text, but rather the reader's perception of herself. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Yacobi describes the relationship between the author and the reader as an act of communication mediated by the speaker, whose reliability may be questioned. The reliability question complicates the indirect communication between them in various forms and degrees. See T. Yakobi, "הקורא והנורמות של המהימנות בתקשורת הספרותית" (The reader and the literary norms of reliability) *Hasifrut* 2 (34), 1985, pp. 5-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. On the pathologies inherent to the concept of motherhood, see S. Shiffman, *Committed: The Mother Figure in Hebrew Fiction at the turn of the Millennium* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The heroine's total identification with the role of the mother is similar to that of Dolly in *Dolly City* (1992) By Orly Castel-Bloom, who also over-identifies with this role to a point of madness. Dolly can be seen as the spiritual mother of the heroine of *How Do You Do, Dolores*. See O. Castel-Bloom, *Dolly City* (trans. D. Bilu, Champaign & London: Dalkey Archive Pres, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. N. Stahl, *Tzelem,* pp. 168. Stahl claims that in *How Do You Do, Dolores* Hoffman uses Christian motifs associated with the agony of Jesus and gives them feminine context. He is thus continuing a long tradition that began at the end of the 11th century according to which the agonies of the mother are similar to those of Christ. See N. Stahl, *Tzelem*, pp. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Y. Hoffmann, *How Do You Do, Dolores,* fragment 153. "והדם נשטף מכפות ידי ומכפות/ רגלי אל פתחי הביוב וחורי המסמרים/ נקיים עכשיו ואני סולחת לכולם על/ המעשה ההוא". [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. E. Balibar, “Althusser’s Dramaturgy and the Critique of Ideology”, pp. 1-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)