

Convergence and Divergence of Epistolary Narrative Voice in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Message on Longing and Passion*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes894>

Khalid J. Oudah Alogaili and Ali Gatea Khalaf
University of Kufa, Iraq

Received: 2.9.2024

Accepted: 16.5.2025

Published: 2.1.2026

Abstract: This study examines the convergence and divergence of narrative voices in the epistolary novels; *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë and *Message on Longing and Passion* "رسالة في الصبابة و الوجد" by Gamal Al-Ghitani. Through a comparative qualitative analysis; narrative, thematic, and close reading, the paper explores how each novel utilizes the epistolary form to convey the complex character's perspectives with all intimate human feelings and diverse ideas they express. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Brontë employs a dual narrative structure, where the voices of Helen and Gilbert intertwine, reflecting their distinct yet overlapping experiences and viewpoints. In *Message on Longing and Passion* narrative voices are employed to create a complex and emotionally rich tapestry, readers are engaged to experience the characters' ebb and flow of desire and passion, and to gather the different perspectives to create a holistic understanding of the emotional environment. By comparing these two works, the study points out the ways in which the epistolary form can both unify and fragment narrative voice, ultimately shaping the reader's engagement with the text. The aim of the paper is to contribute to a profound understanding of the narrative dynamics in epistolary novels in different cultures and the role of conveying complex emotional and psychological landscapes.

Keywords: epistolary novel, narrative memories, narrative voice, *narrator* and *narrate*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

1. Introduction

Epistolary novels are distinguished by their narrative style which depends on letters, diaries, and other intimate materials. They present a distinctive narrative format that facilitates the review of various viewpoints and voices. Examining the convergence and divergence of the narrative voices, this study explores the complex narrative structures of two well-known epistolary novels: *Message on Longing and Passion* by Al-Ghitani¹ and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë.

In this study, narrative voice² as a literary theory is employed to focus on the structure of narratives, narrative voice, narrative time, and the relationships between the narrator, characters, and readers. In lens of this theory, the paper examines how the blending of narrative voices in these novels contributes to the

overall storytelling, how they create implied meaning, and how they influence reader engagement.

By comparing the narrative techniques in these works, the paper tries to reveal how the convergence of voices can create a unified narrative perspective, while divergence may introduce tension, ambiguity, or multiple layers of meaning. In addition, to provide an insight into the narrative dynamics of epistolary literature, the study sheds light on the narrative dynamics of the epistolary novel. Then it contributes to a broader understanding of how narrative voice functions as a tool for a character development, thematic expression, and reader engagement in literary works.

2. Narrative memories

The primary distinction between Western and Arabic epistolary novels is the predominance of one voice in Arabic, the voice of the narrator. This gives rise to a number of structural problems, the most significant of which is that time frequently overlaps in Western novels, but is characterized by a certain stability in Arabic due to the length of the artistic Arabic message. However, the difference lies in the fact that Bronte's novel (1848) was written during the period when this kind of novel was most popular in the West, whereas Al-Ghitani's novel (1986) was discovered in an environment that was foreign to it in two ways: first, Arab readers are unfamiliar with this genre of novels; second, the letter art that Al-Ghitani attempted to incorporate in his novel was unfamiliar because it is a remnant of ancient Arabic literature and is no longer used by anyone.

The structure of "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" with its shifting back and forth between memories ³ and characters' histories, presents a narrative experiment in depicting memory. From Aristotle's time onward, scholars studying memory have understood it to be flexible and imprecise for conveying experiences. According to Taher (2020: 138), "memory is shaped by past experiences and new interpretations of these experiences, which might be different from the first time people encountered them". The novel's frame narrative highlights the fallibility of memory and the challenges of attempting to preserve it in a written record, such as Gilbert's letters. Gilbert exerts a degree of control over the narrative as the primary voice that initiates and concludes the novel. It features two narrators who compete for authority over the narrative and its preservation.

While I stood with folded arms abstractedly gazing on the undulating swell of the corn, not yet disturbed by the reapers, something gently pulled my skirts, and a small voice, no longer welcome to my ears, aroused me with the startling words, — "Mr. Markham, mamma wants you (Bronte 1848-2021: 76).

This quote depicts a reflective moment cut short by reality. A child's voice suddenly draws the narrator back from his or her observations of the undisturbed cornfield, highlighting the sharp contrast between social duty and solitude. The phrase "no longer welcome to my ears" suggests tension or hesitation, which is indicative of a

change in the narrator's emotional state. A tactile aspect is added by the child pulling the skirts, which emphasizes how abrupt the interruption was. This scene foreshadows the story's unsolved tensions by reflecting internal struggle.

Although Gilbert attempts to assert control and dominance over the external layer of the story, the novel's intricate and multi-layered structure ultimately undermines his authority by dispersing and decentralizing this control. This results in a narrative dynamic where Helen's retelling of events and Gilbert's perspective engage in a negotiated exchange rather than a unilateral bid for complete archival dominance. She writes her past experiences in her letters, including her decision to divorce Arthur Huntingdon and her marriage to him. Alogaili (2024) has said, "the characters' memories are intricately linked to their present psychological situations and go beyond simple recalls of past occurrences" (20). With retelling past memories, a nonlinear narrative structure is made feasible, where the tale is revealed progressively through the recollections of the characters.

Hamdan (2023: 66) argued that "memory becomes the way of recalling the past as a complementary method to history and a counterforce to the present". The structure of "The Tenant" permits readers to view the work as an experiment in narrative memory representation. Helen's diary serves as a second source of narration, with Gilbert serving as the primary narrator (Thormählen 2001). Given that none of the Brontë sisters were able to experience life from a man's perspective. Some critics contend that the novel is made weaker by having a male narrator. However, this is debatable because the compelling narrative captures our interest. The nested narrative structure that Brontë employs "nests" the story of Helen, contained in Gilbert's, has been widely interpreted as a symbol of women's subjugation and of Brontë's silence surrounding the feminine voice (Phillips 2021: 4-6).

Moreover, Gamal Al-Ghitani's *Message on Longing and Passion* takes the form of a single letter rather than a collection of letters, as indicated by its title. The novel draws its form from the art of letters in Arabic literature, specifically inspired by the letters of the (Brethren of Purity) 4. This is evident through clear references to these writers, using the terms "Brethren" and "letters." The incorporation of some of their opinions regarding time also leaves no room for doubt about the relation between the two works. It seems that the novelist intentionally aimed to refer to them, stating:

I was divided between what I am and what I will become, lost and present, lost between two moments, present in both together! Know, my brother, that our brethren from a distant time said in their letters, "Time is divided into years, a past year, and a year yet to come, and the year is divided into months, a past month, and a month that has not yet come (Al-Ghitani 1986: 54).

The novel consists of fourteen chapters, each with a title indicating its content. All chapters serve as detailed elaborations on what the narrator or

addressed person has previously initiated. The first section, functioning as an introduction to the letter, discusses the reasons that prompted the narrator to write. It also references the subject of the letter and the recipient's significance. The narrator concludes by asking the recipient to be patient and tolerant, especially in case of prolonged discourse, saying, "Bear with me, my brother, if I prolong, and do not burden me if it becomes heavy. Do not turn away if I elaborate. By the ancient bond of friendship, find an excuse for me in the intensity of my passion." (Al-Ghitani: 8).

This study contributes to a broader understanding of how the epistolary form can be used to explore complex emotional and psychological landscapes, making it a powerful tool for both storytelling and thematic expression. Ultimately, the analysis of these two novels shows that the ways in which narrative voices in epistolary fiction overlap and diverge contribute not only to the development of characters but revealing their deep psychological and social levels that are difficult to express otherwise.

2.1 Narrator and narratee

The relationship between the narrator and the narratee plays a crucial role in shaping the structure of the narrative. The narrator often poses questions in the voice of the narratee and then answers them. This questioning serves as a catalyst, propelling the narrator to provide more details about the subject of his 'message'. According to Maziarczyk "the narratee, that is the addressee to whom the narrator is directing his/her narrative, is frequently assumed to occupy a somewhat marginal position in relation to the central storyline of a given narrative" (2006:199).

The narrator of *A Message on Longing and Passion* commences with the customary 'Bismillah' (In the name of Allah) followed by the supplication 'Lord, complete with goodness'. Then comes the traditional expression "Amma ba'd," which distinguishes the art of letters in Arabic literature. He appears as the main character, discussing a personal emotional experience. Guinery (2009) argued, "In cases of obsessive volubility, not only the speaker or narrator is involved, but also the addressee—the reader or implied reader—as the loquacious need to be stimulated by the conviction that they are listened to" (p. 4). Therefore, the narrator's perspective will be external, meaning he cannot access the inner thoughts of the characters, which should strictly adhere to. Altman (1982: 88) argued that "the letter writer simultaneously seeks to affect his reader and is affected by him". There are no noticeable shifts to an internal perspective. For instance, in his discussion about the woman he loves and the creation of this letter for her, he cannot know the essence of her thoughts except through what is apparent in her voice or facial expressions:

She blocked my path, pointed towards me, her features took on seriousness. She spoke in a tone imitating formal discourse: (I command you to stay...) She followed that with a smile, and I did not miss the distant meaning in the rhythm of her voice, truly, I command you to stay, and I noticed the fondness (Al-Ghitani:

100).

If the narrator had not clarified the true meaning intended by that woman's words "I command you to stay", the narratee would have been far from reaching its reality—something that the narratee cannot access on their own. This is because the tone and intonation that the narrator refers to cannot be fully conveyed through words as they actually occurred, which plays a significant role in delivering the speaker's intended meaning to the listener. In her speech, tone and meaning interact and her formal language and serious manner convey authority at first, but her smile and voice rhythm later convey a more intimate, loving intention. By highlighting the subtleties of interpersonal relationships and implicit communication, the narrator's understanding of this change highlights how tone can express emotions beyond the use of explicit words.

In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Gilbert openly acknowledges the inherent distrust in memory that readers may attempt to bolster his narrative with additional sources. He writes, "I have not my memory alone—tenacious as it is—to depend upon; in order that your credulity may not be too severely taxed in following me through the minute details of my narrative" (Bronte: 41-42). This emphasizes the permeable nature of the framed structure within the novel, as Gilbert is already supporting his story with external sources, despite his assertion that he draws from other trustworthy sources for his narrative. Gilbert's framing essentially serves as a firsthand account of the events that he told Halford about, with his recollection acting as a witness. On the other hand, his testimony is supported by Helen's journal, which serves as the archive's documentation (Fullmer 2016).

Our intimacy was rather a mutual predilection than a deep and solid friendship, such as has since arisen between myself and you, Halford, whom, in spite of your occasional crustiness, I can liken to nothing so well as an old coat, unimpeachable in texture, but easy and loose—that has conformed itself to the shape of the wearer, and which he may use as he pleases, without being bothered with the fear of spoiling it;—whereas Mr. Lawrence was like a new garment, all very neat and trim to look at, but so tight in the elbows that you would fear to split the seams by the unrestricted motion of your arms, and so smooth and fine in surface that you scruple to expose it to a single drop of rain (Bronte: 64).

Gilbert is fully engaged in recounting his narrative; however, his present self, reflecting on events from twenty years prior, intervenes to assure the reader of his genuine love, so that Halford won't see another man as a threat. Additionally, Gilbert compares Halford to "an old coat" yet this comparison is equally applicable to Gilbert himself: he remains acutely conscious of his connection to the reader, adapting himself "to the shape of the wearer" much like an old coat. Although this interaction might initially seem unrelated to Helen, it underscores Gilbert's intimate 'relationship' with the narrative and his conscientious approach to engaging the

reader throughout the storytelling process. The framed narrative of the novel is significantly more intricate since it shows a flexible form of narrative negotiation rather than a rigid one due to its layered structure. One way to look at Tenant is as it comes from Helen; what we know about her life before she moved into Wildfell Hall comes from her efforts to preserve her memories. Conversely, Gilbert retains some degree of influence over the dissemination of Helen's recollections. Thus, 'Helen's journal and Gilbert's frame' serve as mutually reliant archives (Fullmer: 18-23).

2.2 Convergence and divergence of narrative voice

G rard Genette introduced the concept of narrative voice in his work "Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method". In this work, he distinguished between different types of narrators and the relationships between the narrative voice and the way in which the story is told, that has an influence on how narrative voice is understood and analyzed in literary studies. He made a significant contribution to narrative theory when he distinguished between "who sees?" and "who speaks?" saying, "a confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator? – or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?" (1980:186). This distinction highlights the significance of keeping narrative voice—the entity that tells the story—separated from focalization, which is the standpoint from which the story is experienced. Thus, this distinction makes the construction of narratives clearer and guarantees that analysis appropriately tackles the source of the narrative as well as the lens through which events are filtered.

The voices of the narrators in both novels are almost identical in that they both invite the narratee to return with them to the past. These artistic forms have multiple voices that heard through the dialogues that the narrator conveys to us. Al-Ghitani's novel is nothing but a long message with one voice, and all the other characters' voices reach us only through this narrator. In "*A Message on Longing and Passion*", Al-Ghitani begins his narrative in the "Introduction of Appearance" from the moment the narrator encounters the woman who will share events in the novel or, as the title suggests, from her appearance in his life. The narrator says:

Know, my brother, firstly the reason for my coming to her lands and dwelling in her country. I say - may God grant you your desire and fulfill your request - that I have only come for a limited period during the conference days. The people invited me to participate, discuss, and debate the best ways to preserve the ancient buildings (Al-Ghitani: 6).

Then the narrator elaborates on his invitation to the conference for almost an entire page, after which he turns to the narratee addressing him, saying, "You will ask, when did the novel begin? When did my perspective of it materialize and take shape?" (ibid: 10). This assumed question from the narratee serves as a stimulus for the narrator to proceed in completing his narrative. While, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* begins with these words:

You must go back with me to the autumn of 1827. My father, as you know, was a sort of gentleman farmer in —shire; and I, by

his express desire, succeeded him in the same quiet occupation, not very willingly, for ambition urged me to higher aims, and self-conceit assured me that, in disregarding its voice, I was burying my talent in the earth, and hiding my light under a bushel (Bronte: 7).

This quote establishes the tone for the narrator's introspective and hesitant reflection on his history. "You must go back with me" swiftly draws the reader into an intimate, nearly confessional story. However, based on the narrator's reliance on the narratee's desire to know his story, he writes his letters to him based on the friendship that binds them, and his longing to know the news of his old friend. It can be said that there are letters exchanged between them, confirmed by the narrator's knowledge of the psychological state that his friend (the narratee) is going through. Additionally, the novel begins with the voice of the narrator as he talks about himself and introduces himself, the facts and events related to him, no matter how simple they are, but they are necessary to understand the upcoming events of the novel. Thus, a quick reference to a specific time that the narrator refers to as the date of the beginning of his story, on October 24, 1827, when he was twenty-four years old. It is a story that appears to be emotional, not far from *A Message on Longing and Passion* narrated by its hero. The two novels are similar in this aspect. It is very convincing to find that such novels in which the emotional aspect dominates are narrated in the voice of the hero in love. In this sense, these voices are close to the recipient to reveal their suffering of love feelings. Then the narrator continues to narrate the events and how he met the woman he loved in detail that does not differ much from that we find in *A Message on Longing and Passion*. It is a detail that everyone who cares about the affairs of others stands on, and the first people of this category are lovers, as it is important to them, no matter how little it is,

Give me the child!, she said, in a voice scarce louder than a whisper, but with a tone of startling vehemence, and, seizing the boy, she snatched him from me, as if some dire contamination were in my touch, and then stood with one hand firmly clasping his, the other on his shoulder, fixing upon me her large, luminous dark eyes—pale, breathless, quivering with agitation (Bronte: 11).

It is worth mentioning that what distinguishes Bronte's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is that we hear most of the voices in it, including the child's voice. Thus, no voice is stifled in Brontë's novel, not even the voice of Arthur, whom we hear clearly expressing his opinion in the manner of children his age. The aforementioned statement highlights the overarching themes of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which revolve on the ideas of power, control, and resistance. Brontë demonstrates the tremendous power of a mother resisting the influences endangering her child's well-being by capturing this raw feeling and protective instinct in her writing. In addition, the first chapter begins with Gilbert's letters that he sends to his brother-in-law. As well as his own account of the private life of Mrs. Graham in her own voice herself after he got her own daily diary and he got it

from her in an objective way based on the development of the event and reflected very accurately and creatively on the structure of the narrative.

Gordon (1984) argued that the novel's meaning is shaped by the relative distribution of alternative narratives between Markham and Helen, not by the individual subjects' characters or the details of Markham's story. The fact that we find here the reflection of the relationship between the artistic and the objective in this novel and not imposing any technique on the novel from outside conditions for the development of events, for example, we hear the voice of Miss Millward, "Oh, Mr. Markham!" said she, with a shocked expression and voice subdued almost to a whisper, "what do you think of these shocking reports about Mrs. Graham?—can you encourage us to disbelieve them?" (Brontë: 45). She is trying to suggest to Gilbert that there is a relationship between Helen and Lawrence after she felt that Helen began to take her place from Gilbert's heart, so her jealousy led her to this cunning trick in the presence of rumors, and she did not say anything of them because they do not exist in fact. Readers can experience the scene from Mr. Markham's perspective due to the third-person limited perspective, which offers a focused and nuanced knowledge of the social relationships in the novel. Also, they can observe how other characters engage with Mr. Markham and react to the social tensions surrounding Mrs. Graham. He included a long transcription from Helen's diary in which she narrated her prior experiences in her own voice. The outcome is remarkable as Helen seizes control of the story, recounting her early adulthood, courtship, and marriage to the reprobate (Brontë 2009: 17).

In *A Message on Longing and Passion*, in the chapter titled "The Course of the Series," the narrator continues to trace the impact of the woman's appearance in his life. He states, "Because the appearance is complete, I continue the follow-up." However, he digresses once again, stating, "Know, my companion, that the day on which her manifestation was complete in that Asian city was associated with an event. It began detached, yet it is connected when our journey commenced" (Al-Ghitani: 25). The return of the narrator to earlier times in the narrative, preceding the main event in the novel, is not a futile digression but serves to illustrate the depth of the impact caused by the appearance of Valeria in his life. It aims to highlight the radical change that swept through his emotional life after the harsh circumstances he experienced, whether on a societal level or on a personal level. He expresses that, stating:

I fell victim to deception, weariness overwhelmed me, I distanced myself from friends, times of companionship became rare, and love faded away. All of these are signs of an era in which conditions have turned, making my life difficult. I thought my market was sluggish, my possessions corrupted, my path obstructed, the majority dwindled, and only a few remained. My situation became challenging, my circumstances harsh, and the matter persisted in its severity until this dawn, until the break of day in those distant Asian lands. With this painful heritage, I faced her radiant and youthful presence, perhaps for better or worse! (Al-Ghitani: 35).

This quote effectively conveys the intricacy of the human condition, as periods of hopelessness and seclusion coexist with the fleeting prospect of restoration or transformation. The statement of a "radiant and youthful presence" seen in "distant Asian lands" marks a turning point in the story. In contrast to the speaker's past experiences, this new presence offers a glimmer of hope or change, however it's unclear if this change will be for the better or worse. The speaker's "painful heritage" suggests that unpleasant memories from the past have left long-lasting wounds, yet the light of dawn and breaking day allude to the prospect of rejuvenation or a fresh start. As Bray argued, "the epistolary novel in particular plays with this 'separation' and 'discrepancy' between subject and object 'in the experience of remembering' (2003: 16). The speaker's meeting with Valeria exemplifies the erratic character of life, where new experiences can arise even in the most difficult circumstances, carrying the risk of additional suffering along with the possibility of healing.

It is worth mentioning that the chapter titled "Back to What Was Cut Off" clearly indicates the improvisational nature upon which the novel is based. Preceding this chapter are two sections: "Details" and "Indicative Tale." In these sections, the narrator interrupts his narration of events with Valeria to delve into detailing some of his personal experiences in his last years and the changes that occurred in his society before he met Valeria (ibid: 30).

I was sure that the color of blood changes in my veins and the tributaries as well as pulse and senses follow a new path. Here, I find no escape from the pause, until I inform you about some of what I desired and wished to elaborate for you. Many aspects of my life remain unknown, after time and circumstances created distance between us (Al-Ghitani: 8).

Here, it is apparent that the narrator frequently digresses in Al-Ghitani's novels to narrate the changes happened in his society since 1970s. He talks about the impact of these changes on his life and his psyche. The sentence "no escape from the pause" creates a sense of being imprisoned or kept in suspense, maybe implying unresolved feelings or hidden speech. The desperation to express what the speaker has wanted to elaborate on contrasts with this feeling of being stalled. In addition to highlighting the gap between the speaker and the person he is addressing, "time and circumstances" also generate distance.

Oh, my brother, may God ignite the longing of those who love you towards you, bring you closer to those you desire, strengthen your faith, and assist you in your endeavors. Know that a sweet, pure nectar has begun to flow within me, and you are well aware of my old condition. I have the desire to tell you about it, but I postpone that. Because the appearance has completed for me, the continuation is upon me. Know, my companion, that the day on

which her revelation was fully witnessed in that Asian city is associated with an event. Although it seemed separate, it is connected (Al-Ghitani: 25).

The voice has a profound emotional and spiritual quality. The speaker's tone is both solemn and reflective, expressing a profound feeling of self-realization and a sincere desire for the brother's well. Words that evoke strong feelings and spiritual importance are "sweet, pure nectar" and "ignite the longing." The speaker's inner world and relationship with recipient are revealed by the voice, which uses direct address and symbolic language to express a message of longing and transformation. Regarding the speaker's experience, the narrative voice alludes to a significant but unrevealed incident. By doing so, the reader is drawn in and encouraged to consider the relevance and connections between the described events.

3. Results and discussion

The frame of Gilbert's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is established as functioning under a certain type of narrative authority. Gilbert's control over the story is evident in this setting and is organized in accordance with conventional dominant ideas. He diminishes the significance of the ordinary by emphasizing his own goal because he takes control of Helen's story. Markham appears to be acting in Helen's best interests, yet acquires control over the text in a subtle manner (Hand 2015). Whereas, Helen's narrative, in comparison, is less firmly rooted than Gilbert's, displaying a less conventionally canonical authority. But Helen's account acknowledges the discursive influences that mold her storytelling while also subverting Gilbert's assertion of dominant narrative authority.

Hervouet (2023), describing Gilbert's narration, has said "Gilbert's narrative apparently takes shape from a dominant male perspective. He clearly remains a patriarch to the end, and a father of sons". Like Gilbert, Helen gets her power from her bodily relationship with her journal. She can express her viewpoint and question Gilbert's established narrative dynamics by physically engaging with her story, which acts as a source of authority. The novel's structure and topic investigation are ultimately made more complex and nuanced by the interaction between Gilbert and Helen's narrative authorities. The narrator's dislocation helps Brontë overcome her position as the female author of a work that was primarily meant to teach males about appropriate masculinity. Gilbert is chosen by her to be her narrator, and she presents the story as a letter exchange between two men. Helen's horrifying tale is probably modified and approved by the letter's male author, which is why it's written in a journal rather than shared ken person (Hallenbeck 2005).

One could find the difference in the voices of the heroine and the narrator, as they both suffer from the passion of love, but because of the nature of Helen's social status, we find her suffering from feelings of longing in silence, this means we do not hear her voice, so she does not express her feelings and thoughts except for what reaches us from the hero's conclusions in his meetings with her, that is we hear her voice only through the narrator, while the voice of the narrator rises to express the truth of his feelings and the intensity of his infatuation, just like the

narrator in *A Message on Longing and Passion*, who accepts any condition imposed by his beloved because what is important to him is that she does not deprive him of seeing her and that he remains close to her.

The letter-like format of *A Message on Longing and Passion* fosters a personal and reflective narrative that delves deeply into the narrator's emotions. This enables Al-Ghitani to delve into the narrator's inner world, which is filled with passion and longing, because of the letter format. Because of this structure, the reader and writer feel immediately and directly connected, and the emotions conveyed feel real and unfiltered. The narrator's thoughts on love cover a wide range of topics, including memory loss, time passing, and romantic commitment. "When I approached, I extended my hand and she came forward to me., I did not touch the wool of her shirt, but rather I began to smell the outskirts of her sensual presence" (Al-Ghitani: 36). In this quote, the narrator's experience is more about sensation than direct touch. Al-Ghitani combines the particular with the universal, examining the intricacies of the human heart through the lens of the narrator's desire. The novel explores how love can bring about both intense happiness and intense suffering, as well as how a person's whole life can be shaped by their desire for a loved one. Al-Ghitani deftly incorporates the larger social and philosophical ramifications of love in the Arab world while also engaging with the cultural and historical background of the narrator's experiences. This turns the tale into a study on the nature of love and its role in human life rather than merely a personal letter. The story profoundly captures love, desires and emotions. It makes a significant contribution to contemporary Arabic literature by providing a thorough analysis of the emotional landscape of the human heart through its intimate narrative style and rich language.

Thus, both novels agree in the technique used in the narration, i.e., letters, despite the different nature of the subject of the two novels and the art. The art of Arab letters clearly differs from letters in their Western form, but it can be said that the two novels are based on the same kind of narrator, who is responsible for narrating everything. He is the one who presents to the recipient the characters and events, their time and place, and every detail that can have an impact on the process of development of events and the construction of the novel as an integrated whole. As Allot (1962) described the epistolary narration, "it conveys the feelings of the moment as the writer experienced them at that moment. It allows for an enjoyable variety in style. It makes the entire work dramatic because all the characters speak in their own unique voices"(258). What reaches us as readers from the voices of other characters, the extent of their expression of themselves, and their different and diverse attitudes towards the events and characters. It is what this narrator allows, and it is not possible to verify the veracity of the information provided to us or confirm whether this is what the other characters spoke or whether it was manipulated to suit the narrator's point of view.

A sense of closeness and immediateness is created in both novels by the use of first-person narrative and the inclusion of personal comments through letters or diary entries, which engrosses readers in the inner lives of the characters. Furthermore, both novels' nonlinear narrative structures deepen the storytelling by allowing readers to piece together the motivations and pasts of the individuals. In

general, the deep characterization and subject development found in both novels are enhanced by these narrative styles.

4. Conclusions

This study has examined the ways in which the narrative voices in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and Al-Ghitani's *Message on Longing and Passion* coincide and diverge, emphasizing the intricate relationship between theme development and narrative form. It has been argued via a narratological analysis that these novels' distinctive use of the epistolary form permits a rich exploration of the inner lives, societal dynamics, and personal identities of the characters.

The overlapping voices of Gilbert Markham and Helen Huntingdon in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* produce a multi-layered story that supports the novel's indictment of Victorian gender norms and social expectations. Gilbert, from time to time, hastens his narration of events, or rather his letters to point out that he may have burdened the reader with the length of the message and that he sometimes works to abbreviate by omitting what is not important to mention, as he naturally believes, or as he writes in his letter. Readers can gain a deeper understanding of the characters' problems and motivations due to the alternate perspectives, which also help to paint a more complex picture of the themes of social justice, morality, and independence. On the other hand, the narrative voice in *Message on Longing and Passion* is more fragmented, reflecting the characters' psychological complexity and emotional dissonance through the multiple points of view. The disjointed narrative framework of the novel is indicative of its emphasis on the erratic nature of desire and the difficulties of comprehending oneself when confronted with social influences.

Overall, the analysis reveals that the convergence and divergence of narrative voices in epistolary literature serve not only to develop character and plot but also to engage readers in a deeper, more immersive experience. By allowing for multiple viewpoints and temporal shifts, these novels challenge traditional narrative forms, offering new insights into the relationship between narrative structure and meaning.

Endnotes

¹ Gamal Al-Ghitani, an eminent Egyptian novelist and journalist who lived from 1945 to 2015, is most recognized for his inventive contributions to contemporary Arabic writing. His writings, which have a strong basis in Egyptian history and culture, frequently combine magical realism with historical fiction. Books by Al-Ghitani that tackle themes of memory, identity, and power include “The Book of Epiphanies and Zayni Barakat”. These books frequently draw inspiration from Egypt's rich Islamic past. As the original editor of *Akhbar Al-Adab*, a literary magazine, Al-Ghitani had a big influence on the development of modern Arabic literature. His work has received recognition for its deep engagement with Egyptian society's past and present as well as for its artistic complexity.

² Narrative voice theory focuses and aims at systematically examining the ways in which the narrative voice shapes a story. It looks at how perspective, tone, and dependability—as well as how these components interact to convey meaning—all play a part in the narrative voice. Although the theory's foundations are in the larger field of narrative structure research, it places particular emphasis on the narrator's ability to influence how the audience perceives and comprehends the story. With regard to narrative discourse, Genette's work, especially “Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method” (1972). The ideas of narrative voice have benefited greatly from his theories regarding narrative levels and the differentiation of narrators. For most narratological discussions of the term "voice," Genette's concept in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* serves as the foundation. The assessment of narrative voice in terms of the query "who speaks?" has significant limitations, despite the fact that few people today would contest the significance of this distinction between voice and perspective (Aczel 1998).

³ Memories have a crucial role in the narrative structure; they give depth to characters' motivations and background. A multi-layered narrative is created in "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," adding depth to the plot through the characters' recollections and past experiences shifting back and forth. These jumbled memories not only highlight significant details of the characters' pasts but also have an impact on their interactions and behaviors in the present. This technique shows how the characters' past experiences continue to influence and affect their present lives, giving readers a deeper knowledge of the characters' psychological and emotional states.

⁴ See Al-Bustani, B. (ed.). (1975). “Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Loyal Friends”. Beirut: Dar Sader, and Al-Fārūq?, I. R. (1960), "On the Ethics of the Brethren of Purity", ‘The Muslim World’, 50: 109–121. ‘Brethren of Purity’ were a secret society of Muslim philosophers in Basra, Iraq. They flourished in the tenth century under the Abbasid Caliphate, especially in Basra. Their encyclopedic work, the “Epistles of the Brethren of Purity” (*Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’*), is their most well-

known contribution to science. It consists of 52 letters covering a wide range of topics, including logic, theology, astronomy, music, mathematics, and philosophy.

Khalid J. Oudah Alogaili – Corresponding Author
Assistant Professor of English Literature
University of Kufa, Iraq
ORCID Number: 0009-0008-9304-1130
Email: khalid.alogaili@uokufa.edu.iq

Ali Gatea Khalaf
Professor of Arabic Language and Literature
Has a bachelor's degree in English
University of Kufa, Iraq
ORCID Number: 0000-0002-1193-5085
Email: alig.khalaf@uokufa.edu.iq

References

- Aczel, Richard.** (1998). 'Hearing voices in narrative texts'. *New Literary History*, 29(3): 467-500. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nlh.1998.0023>.
- Al-Bustani, Peter (ed.).** (1975). *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Loyal Friends*. Beirut: Dar Sader.
- Al-Ghitani, Gamal.** (1986). *A Message on Longing and Passion*. Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal.
- Allott, Miriam F.** (1962). *The Novelists on the Novel*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Alogaili, Khalid J. O.** (2024). 'Shattered memories and a sense of identity in beloved by Toni Morrison'. *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*,7(5): 16-23. <https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2024.0779>.
- Altman, Janet G.** (1982). *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- Beebee, Thomas O.** (1999). *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bray, Joe.** (2003). *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Brontë, Anne.** (1848/2021). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. London: Global Grey.
- Brontë, Anne.** (2009). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. London: Broadview Press.
- Fullmer, Alyson J.** (2016). The archon (s) of Wildfell Hall: Memory and the frame narrative in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Brigham Young University, USA.
- Genette, Gérard (Trans.).** (1980). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. New York: Cornell University Press. (Original work published 1972).
- Gordon, John.** (1984). 'Gossip, diary, letter, text: Anne Brontë's Narrative Tenant and the problematic of the Gothic Sequel'. *English Literary History*, 51(4): 719-745. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2872781>
- Guignery, Vanessa (ed.).** (2009). *Voices and Silence in the Contemporary Novel in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hallenbeck, Sarah.** (2005). 'How to be a gentleman without really trying: Gilbert Markham in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'. *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 1: 1-8. <http://ww.w.ncgsjournal.com/issue1/PDFs/New%20PDFs/NCGS%20Journal%20Issue%201%20->
- Hamdan, Yousef and Duaa Salameh.** (2023). 'Beyond trauma: The interplay between memory, history, and contemporaneity in Sinan Antoon's Ya Maryam'. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 23(1): 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.23.1.4>.

- Hand, Amanda.** (2015). Privately deviant, publicly disciplined: The violent seizure of female narratives in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *The Woman in White*, and *Lady Audley's Secret*. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.
<https://scholar.utc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1315&context=theses>.
- Hervouet, Isabelle.** (2023). 'Gothic fault-lines in Anne Brontë's social fiction: The case of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). *Cahiers V et Edouardiens*, 92: 1-12 <https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.13205>.
- Kazianka, Lisa.** (2018). 'Isolation, participation, and communication in young adult unidirectional epistolary fiction'. In Maria Löschnigg and Rebekka Schuh(eds.), *The Epistolary Renaissance*, 143-158. Berlin: De Gruyter
- Maziarczyk, Grzegorz.** (2006). 'The narratee as protagonist'. *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 54(5): 199-214.
<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=39478>.
- Phillips, Brianna.** (2021). Noisy transgressions: Gendered noise, female voices, and noisy narration in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Georgia's Public Liberal Arts University, USA.
- Taher Muhi M.** (2020). 'The deeper wounds: Living in the trauma zone in Jawad Al-Assadi's *Baghdadi Bath* and Mithal Ghazi's *A Feminine Solo*'. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 20(2): 133–148.
<https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.20.2.7>
- Thormählen, Marianne.** (2001). 'Aspects of love in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'. In Julie Nash and Barbara A. Suess (eds.), *New Approaches to the Literary Art of Anne Brontë*, 153-171. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.