

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE SHORT STORY “IBLIS YANTASHIRU” BY TAUFIQ AL-HAKIM: A.J. GREIMAS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the narrative structure of Taufiq al-Hakim’s short story “Iblis Yantashiru” by identifying both its surface and deep structures through the lens of Algirdas Julien Greimas’s narrative semiotics. The analysis of the story’s narrative structure is crucial, as it significantly influences the comprehension of the overall meaning of the text. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing written data derived directly from the literary work. Data collection techniques include close reading, note-taking, and library research. The data were analyzed through several stages: identification, interpretation, analysis, and conclusion drawing. The structural analysis was conducted based on Greimas’s narrative semiotic framework, which encompasses the actantial structure, functional structure, main actant, surface structure and deep structure. The findings reveal that the short story’s structure is divided into four segments: the first segment presents the theme of “Nasik’s victory,” the second highlights “Nasik’s sincerity,” the third explores “the pact between Iblis and Nasik,” and the fourth emphasizes “self-interest.” Furthermore, the study identifies the main actant based on the actants found in these four segments: the principal sender is Nasik’s faith, while the main receiver as well as the subject is Nasik himself, who pursues the object of “upholding the truth.” In this pursuit, he is obstructed by the opposant, namely “Iblis,” and supported by the helpers, namely faith and an axe. Through the above structure, it can be concluded that the narrative of Taufiq al-Hakim’s short story “Iblis Yantashiru” contains unique narrative elements and a structural pattern consistent with A.J. Greimas’s narrative semiotics.

Keywords: Narrative Structure; Narrative Semiotics; A.J. Greimas; Iblis Yantashiru; Taufiq al-Hakim

INTRODUCTION

Literary works as a structure can be understood as a construction composed of various interrelated elements that form a unified whole. Literature serves as a medium that accommodates fragments of stories in the form of texts or narratives that are integrated into a single composition (Halimah et al., 2020). In her writing, Kumalasari (2023) cites Smith, who explained that the Russian Formalists of the 1920s had identified basic units that function as primary devices in the construction of stories. This approach emphasizes the importance of analyzing structural elements, which are abstract in nature, prior to entering the domain of narrative meaning interpretation.

Narrative structure is a sequence of events consisting of main elements that are interconnected (Kumalasari & Surur, 2023). It refers to how a story is organized in terms of the order of events and storytelling techniques. Identifying the variables of narrative structure enables researchers to analyze how an author constructs a story to produce certain effects and convey intended messages (Alaki, 2023)⁽¹⁹⁹⁴⁾.

The examination of narrative structure can be conducted through an approach that studies the system of signs forming the narrative within a story, namely narrative semiotics (Yulianeta & Tami, 2021). Narrative semiotics is a branch of semiotics which holds that a text cannot be separated from the structures within it, and that these structures generate new and dynamic signs (HS & Parninsih, 2021). Narrative semiotics is defined as an attempt to recount or reread two or more logically connected situations, either in terms of time, place, or transformations within the narrative, including the disclosure of hidden meanings (Qozwaeni, 2020).

Narrative semiotics is part of the

development of semiotic theory introduced by Greimas (Dhayapari Perumal et al., 2021). He developed a structural-based semiology by integrating narratological theory, thereby shaping the concept of structural semantics (Bhakti & Setijowati, 2023). Greimas emphasized that scholars must understand the structures that constitute a text. These structures enable the text to “speak” and generate new meanings, such that Greimas’ narrative semiotics rests on networks that give rise to meaning. In other words, Greimas sought to study the formation of meaning in discourse, viewing meaning as a process of signification (Qozwaeni, 2020).

Greimas analogized narrative as a semantic structure, in which each sentence is composed of a series of words occupying their respective positions and functions as subject, object, predicate, and so on. Each word also relates to the others to form a coherent and meaningful whole (Eriyanto, 2015). In this sense, Greimas’ approach resembles that of Vladimir Propp, who employed narrative functions whereby characters within a story occupy specific roles and perform specific functions in the narrative. However, Greimas further developed this concept to establish a sharper and more general framework, namely a universal grammar of narrative (Siswanto & Sukatman, 2022).

In the authors’ perspective, Greimas attempted to systematically and scientifically explain the organization of an author’s imagination by uncovering meaning in narrative through the relationships among signs. Short stories provide an appropriate object for analyzing narrative structures. Their advantage lies in their compact yet complex storytelling, where despite limited space, each element is usually arranged more effectively and with greater focus (Amelia Amanda et al., 2024). The narra-

tive structure in a short story is considered an important aspect to be understood, as it allows readers to more easily grasp the patterns of storytelling constructed by the author. For instance, in Taufiq al-Hakim's short story *Iblis Yantashiru*, the narrative events are not merely understood as conversations or actions between characters but also as patterns involving changes in character traits, perspectives, and decisions. In this regard, understanding narrative structure facilitates the identification of the constituent elements of a story, such as plotting (plot) and the narrative techniques employed by the author (Azam Muttaqin et al., 2024).

There are several previous studies have examined Taufiq al-Hakim's short story "Iblis Yantashiru" as a research object. Arifin (2018) analyzed this short story through Lucien Goldmann's sociology of literature approach. His study revealed that the story contains seven intrinsic elements: (1) a theme centered on the spirit of upholding virtue, (2) a progressive plot, (3) detailed settings of time and place, (4) characterization featuring three main figures—the devout worshipper as the protagonist, Iblis as the antagonist, and society as the tritagonist, (5) a moral message emphasizing the importance of maintaining moral ideals, (6) a narrative point of view focused on the devout worshipper, and (7) a language style that is clear, accessible, and wise. From an extrinsic perspective, the short story is influenced by the author's biographical background and social context, reflecting several underlying value systems. These include spiritual values concerning the obligation of da'wah (preaching), moral values encouraging self-correction and moral integrity, and social values emphasizing self-sacrifice for the greater good of the community. This holistic analysis highlights how "Iblis Yantashiru" integrates et-

hical, social, and spiritual dimensions within its narrative structure, demonstrating al-Hakim's ability to merge literary artistry with profound moral reflection. Sholehah (2019) employed a structural approach and identified both intrinsic and extrinsic elements in the short story, including the theme, characters and characterization, plot, setting, moral message, language style, and point of view. Meanwhile, Nurhidayatun (2021) focused on the external and internal structures of the short story using Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism approach. Her analysis revealed that the narrative reflects interconnected social conditions, conflicts between truth (haq) and falsehood (bathil), as well as several embedded moral messages. The aforementioned studies differ in their focus and theoretical frameworks, employing approaches such as the sociology of literature, structural analysis, and structuralism. In contrast to these prior works, the present researcher identifies a narrative aspect that has not yet been examined in relation to this short story, applying A.J. Greimas's narrative semiotic perspective. The researcher aims to demonstrate that the short story "Iblis Yantashiru" contains unique narrative elements and a structural pattern consistent with Greimas's narrative semiotics.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the narrative structure of Taufiq Al-Hakim's short story *Iblis Yantashiru* using Greimas' narrative semiotics. This study offers novelty by examining the deepest elements that form the meaning of the story of *Iblis Yantashiru* based on the relationship between signs (elements) that have not been discussed in depth in previous studies. Unlike previous studies that focused more on the general structure of *Iblis Yantashiru*, this study discusses the elements that form the meaning of the text in depth and comprehensively. The short

story depicts Iblis' triumph after deceiving Nasik, who initially intended to cut down a tree worshipped by the villagers. Iblis succeeded in defeating Nasik because the latter pursued his struggle for personal interest rather than for God. At a deeper level, Taufiq al-Hakim presents a religious narrative that aligns with social realities (Zulhelmi et al., 2023). The character of Nasik represents religious leaders who can still be found today, including in Indonesia—many of whom fail to achieve sincerity in life and worship, and instead exploit religion for personal gain. Thus, the symbolism and meaning contained in *Iblis Yantashiru* can be discerned (Widyastuti, 2022).

Given the complex plot of this short story, it is necessary to analyze it through Greimas' actantial model, which clearly illustrates the relationships among actants that form the unity of the story. The strength of the actantial model lies in its scope, which extends not only to human figures but also to animals, objects, and abstract concepts (Thera & Utami, 2022). Actantial analysis is therefore valuable in helping readers better understand the structure of a story. In the context of this research, it also opens possibilities for further studies in semiotics, particularly in exploring the structural narrative embedded in the short story through Algirdas Julien Greimas' narrative semiotics model (Laili & Sulistyorini, 2024).

This study is based on two assumptions: first, that the short story *Iblis Yantashiru* reveals a structural narrative embedded within the text; and second, that this narrative structure encompasses both the surface structure (through actantial and functional structures) and the deep structure (through Greimas' semiotic square).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method (Hardiany & Pratama, 2025) by exploring and describing the text structurally in accordance with Greimas' theory of narrative semiotics (Schleifer, 2016), namely the surface structure and deep structure, to reveal the structural narrative contained in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru*. The data sources examined in this research include dialogues, paragraphs, sentences, and words found in Taufiq al-Hakim's short story "*Iblis Yantashiru*."

The data for this study were collected through library research, utilizing various online and offline sources (Wigati et al., 2025). The researcher conducted reading, selection, and note-taking of data that function as actants within each segment of the story (Noriska & Chalis, 2025). The researcher also employed close reading to capture the meanings of both the surface and deep structures, and manual coding to mark and classify narrative units within the text.

The data analysis process was carried out through several stages identifying the data, interpreting the finding, and analyzing the narrative patterns according to Greimas' framework. The analysis focused on both the surface structure—which includes the actantial and functional structures—and the deep structure, which reveals the symbolic and ideological meanings underlying the narrative. Afterward, data were classified and synthesized to draw conclusions that address the research objectives. The accuracy of data collection and interpretation was maintained to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Taufiq al-Hakim and the short story *Iblis Yantashiru*

Taufiq al-Hakim was a modern Arab writer of Arab-Turkish descent, widely recognized as the father of modern Egyptian drama and a prominent figure in Arabic literature (Jannah & Tasnimah, 2023). He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1898, to an Arab-Egyptian father and a Turkish mother. After completing his primary education in Damanhur and secondary education in Cairo, he pursued higher studies at the Faculty of Law. His passion for art and literature developed early, and he joined a circle of young artists, including Mahmud Taimur. After graduating, he went to Paris to study law but instead immersed himself in literature, theater, and Western music. Upon returning to Egypt in 1928, he worked in the fields of education and social affairs before retiring in 1943 to dedicate himself entirely to the arts and passed away in 1987 (Achmad, 2019).

The short story *Iblis Yantashiru* (translated into Indonesian as “Kemenangan Iblis” or “The Victory of Iblis”) is part of Taufiq al-Hakim’s anthology *Lailatuzza-faf*. This story is widely included in Arabic literature studies due to its profound moral and philosophical messages. The narrative centers on a devout worshipper who becomes disturbed by the villagers’ practice of worshipping a large tree. Feeling a strong religious duty to uphold the truth and eliminate falsehood, he takes an axe and sets out to cut down the tree. As he approaches, Iblis appears before him, attempting to stop his mission. A dialogue ensues between the worshipper, Nasik, and Iblis, leading to a fierce struggle in which Nasik ultimately emerges victorious. However, drained of strength after defeating Iblis, he fails to cut down the tree and decides to return home. The following day,

Nasik returns to the same spot, determined to fulfill his mission. Once again, Iblis confronts him and tries to prevent him from felling the tree worshipped by the villagers. Another battle ensues, but because Nasik’s intention is sincere—to affirm the oneness of God—he again triumphs over Iblis. Exhausted, he returns home to rest. As time passes, the worshipper sets out once more to destroy the tree. This time, Iblis, realizing he cannot win through force, devises a more cunning plan. He offers Nasik two gold coins that will miraculously appear under his pillow every morning if he promises to abandon his mission. Tempted by this offer and burdened by poverty, Nasik accepts the agreement. For several months, Iblis keeps his promise, and Nasik finds two gold coins beneath his pillow each morning. Eventually, Iblis ceases to deliver the gold. Enraged and feeling deceived, Nasik takes his axe again and sets out to cut down the tree. However, in this final confrontation, Iblis easily defeats him. When questioned about his defeat, Iblis explains that in their first encounters, Nasik acted purely for the sake of Allah, and thus Iblis had no power over him. But once his intentions were tainted by worldly desire and self-interest, the victory inevitably belonged to Iblis.

Actantial structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru*

The actantial structure serves as a framework that guides the progression of the narrative. In this short story, the plot is classified within a conceptual framework known as the actant, which represents the abstract roles performed by the characters or entities within the story (Schleifer, 2016). The concrete realization of an actant is referred to as an actor. According to Algirdas Julien Greimas, the actantial model consists of six key elements (Heikkinen

et al., 2024): the sender (destinator), who initiates the action or mission; the receiver, who benefits from the result of the action; the subject, who undertakes the main pursuit or quest; the object, which represents the goal or purpose being sought; the helper (adjuvant), who supports or assists the subject in achieving the objective; and the opposant, who hinders or obstructs the subject's progress. Through this structural model, the narrative can be analyzed systematically to uncover the dynamic relationships among these actants, thereby revealing the underlying meaning and coherence of the story (Sani, 2023). In the short story Iblis Yantashiru, there are four actantial schemes distributed across four narrative segments, as presented in the following table:

Actant 1 (first segment)

The first actantial scheme in Iblis Yantashiru appears in the initial part of the story, where Nasik witnesses the villagers' deviation from true worship, with the central theme of the narrative being Nasik's Victory.

Table 1. actant 1 in the first segment

Type of Actant	Narrative Element
Destinator/ Sender	Faith in Allah SWT
Receiver	Nasik
Subject	Nasik
Object	Cutting down the tree
Helper/Adjuvant	Axe
Opposant	Iblis

The **sender** serves as the driving force of the narrative, generating the rules, values, and ideology embedded within the text (Schleifer, 2016). In the first segment, the sender takes the form of Nasik's faith, as he possesses a deep belief in Allah SWT. This conviction compels him to cut down

the tree that the villagers worship. It is this very belief that forms the ideological foundation and value system of the first segment, motivating Nasik to act against idolatry. This can be observed in the following excerpt from the short story:

الخذ قوم شجرة، صاروا يعبدونها فسمع بذلك ناسك مؤمن بالله، فعزل فلماً وانهب إلى الشجرة ليقتلها... فلم يك
 يقرب منها، حتى ظهر له إبليس حلالاً بينه وبين الشجرة،
 وهو يصيح به مكثراً أي الرجل... لا تريد لعلها! أيها الرجل! وما شأنك بهم أتعلم في طاعتها كيف أتعلم
 ومن (أخي أن نعبد) (Al-Hakim, 2023)

[A group of people had taken a tree as their object of worship and began to venerate it. When a devout worshipper who believed in Allah heard about this, he took his axe and went to cut down the tree. As he approached, Iblis appeared, standing between him and the tree, shouting, “Stop right there, man! Why do you want to cut it down?” Nasik replied, “Because it misleads people.” Iblis said, “What concern is that of yours? Let them remain in their misguidance!” Nasik answered, “How can I let them be? It is my duty to guide them to the right path.”]

Based on the text above, it can be understood that Nasik could not allow the villagers to worship a large tree. He took his axe and set out to cut it down. He felt it was his duty to guide the villagers to the path of truth and free them from listening to the whispers of Iblis. Nasik's desire for the villagers to return to the teachings of Allah SWT stemmed from his own faith in Allah SWT. As for the receiver in this short story, it is Nasik himself, because he is the one who possesses faith in Allah SWT. According to Greimas, the receiver is the bearer of values originating from the sender, or in other words, the vessel in which the sender places the values and ideology of the text (Schleifer, 2016). In this case, it is Nasik, whose faith in Allah SWT drives him to cut down the tree. The subject, whose role is to pursue the objective in this

segment, is also Nasik, as reflected in the following excerpt:(Schleifer, 2016)

(Al-Hakim, 2023). *فحمل فأسا وذهب إلى الشجرة ليقطعها.*

[Then he took his axe and went to the tree to cut it down.....]

In the excerpt above, Nasik holds the primary role in the narrative of the first segment. His actions indicate that he is the main actor pursuing a specific goal—this goal is referred to as the object. According to Greimas, the object is the actant pursued by the subject (Schleifer, 2016). In this segment, the object is cutting down the tree, as narrated in the quoted passage. In reaching his goal, the subject receives support from what is called the helper. This actant plays a role in aiding the subject in their quest to attain the object(Schleifer, 2016). From the passage, the axe is understood to be the helper, serving as the tool Nasik uses to cut down the tree.

As for the opposant, according to Greimas, it refers to the actant that hinders or obstructs the subject in achieving their goal (Schleifer, 2016). In this case, it is Iblis who stands in Nasik’s way. Thus, Iblis serves as the obstacle in this segment, as shown in the following excerpt:

*من أذنت لقطع هذه الشجرة فلا بد لي من أن أقطعها
فأست إبلس بخنق الشاك... وإبليس الشاك على قرن الشيطان... وتصارعا طويلا... إلى أن أذنت العرابة عن
التصارع الشاك... فقد طرح الشيطان على الأرض، وجلس على صدره وقال له: «هل رأيت قوتي؟» (Al-Hakim, 2023)*

[– I will not let you cut down this tree. I must cut it down. Iblis grabbed Nasik by the throat, and Nasik seized Iblis by the horn... They wrestled for a long time... Until the battle ended with Nasik’s victory. He slammed Iblis to the ground, sat on his chest, and said to him: ‘Do you see my strength now?]

This excerpt illustrates that Iblis’ actions as the opposant begin with verbal confrontation. When that fails, Iblis launches a physical attack against Nasik, resulting in a fierce battle between the two. In the end, Nasik emerges victorious. However, the segment concludes with Nasik failing to cut down the tree, as he is too exhausted from the fight and chooses to return home. This is seen in the following quote:

*فقال إبليس للهِرَم بصوت مغتوفا: ما كنت أحميك بهذه القوة...
دعني وأفعل ما شئت... ففعل الشاك سبيل الشيطان...
وكان الجهد الذي بذلته في المعركة قد نال منه... فوجه إلى مسومته واستراح ليلته (Al-Hakim, 2023)*

[Iblis, now defeated, spoke in a choked voice: ‘I didn’t expect you to be so strong... Let me go and do what you wish...’Nasik released Iblis... The effort he had expended in the battle had drained him... He returned to his dwelling and rested for the night.]

Actant 2 (second segment)

The second actantial scheme in *Iblis Yantashiru* falls under the narrative theme of Nasik’s sincerity. Before delving into the details of this theme, the following are the actants involved in this segment:

Tabel 2. actant 2 in the second segment

Type of Actant	Narrative Element
Destinator / Sender	The obligation to cut the tree
Receiver	Nasik
Subject	Nasik
Object	Upholding the truth
Helper/Adjuvant	Axe and Faith
Opposant	Iblis

In this segment, it is clear from the narrative that the sender is the obligation to cut down the tree, carried out by the subject

and receiver, namely Nasik. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

لَمَّا كَانَ الْيَوْمَ الثَّلَاثِ حَمَلُ الْأَسَدِ، وَنَهَبَ يَرِدُ لِقَاعِ الشَّجَرَةِ وَإِنَّا الْإِبْلِيسُ يَخْرُجُ لَهُ مِنْ خَلْفِهِ صَاعِقًا: أَعَدْتَ الْيَوْمَ لَيْحًا لِقَطْعِيهَا؟ أَلَيْسَ لَا يَدْرِي مَنْ أَنْ قَطَعَهَا تَوَلَّيْتُكَ فَارَا عَلَى أَنْ تَعْلِيهَا الْيَوْمَ لَيْحًا؟ سَأُفَلِّقُكَ حَتَّى أَتِي بِكَلِمَةِ الْعَلَى! أَرَبِي
 (Al-Hakim, 2023) ابن خلدون

[On the following day, he picked up his axe and went to cut the tree. But Iblis came out from behind it and shouted: ‘You’ve returned again to cut it down?! I told you, I must cut it down. Do you think you can defeat me again today? I will keep fighting you until I uphold the truth! Then show me your strength!’]

This excerpt shows Nasik’s persistence in wanting to cut the sacred tree despite failing the previous day due to exhaustion from his fight with Iblis. There’s a shift in Nasik’s motivation—his sense of duty becomes the driving force. Thus, Nasik serves as the receiver who carries the values transmitted by the sender. The object, explicitly stated in the dialogue above, is to uphold the truth by eliminating falsehood. The helpers in this segment are Nasik’s axe and his faith. However, Iblis once again becomes the opposant, standing in Nasik’s way and challenging him to a second battle, as illustrated here:

وَأَسَيْتُ بِعِزَّتِهِ فَاسْتَكْبَرَ النَّاسِكُ بِقُوَّةِ وَثَقَالَةِ وَتَعَارُفًا إِلَى أَنْ أَسْقَرْتُ الْوَلُوعَةَ مِنْ مَقْبُوطِ الشَّيْطَانِ تَعَثَّ قَدَمِي
 النَّاسِكُ تَعَثَّ عَلَى صَدْرِهِ، وَقَالَ لَهُ مَا قَوْلُكَ الْآنَ يَا قَوْلِي؟ أَحَقًّا - إِنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لَعَجِيبَةٌ - دَعَوِي وَالْعَمَلُ مَا تَرْتَدُّ
 لِقَطْعِيهَا وَإِنَّا أَجْعَلُكَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَبِطَارِينِ اسْتَعِينُ بِمَا عَلَى تَلْفِئَتِكَ وَالْعَيْشُ فِي أَمْرٍ وَمُتَأَنِّبَةٌ وَسَلَامَةٌ (Al-Hakim,
 2023) واليهود (Al-Hakim, 2023)

[“He grabbed Nasik’s throat... Nasik grabbed his horn... they fought and wrestled... until Iblis fell under Nasik’s feet. Nasik sat on his chest and said: What do you say about my strength now? Indeed... your strength is amazing... Let me go and do what you wish.”

Iblis said this in a hoarse, choked voice. Nasik let him go... and returned to his place, exha-

sted and weary.”]

Based on the passage above, the conclusion of this segment can be summarized as follows: although Nasik once again achieved victory, he still failed to cut down the tree. He decided to wrap up his axe and return home, weary from his second battle with Iblis.

Actant 3 (third segment)

This actantial scheme corresponds to the narrative theme: the pact between Iblis and Nasik. The actants involved are as follows:

Tabel 3. Actant 3 in the Third Segment

Type of Actant	Narrative Element
Destinator / Sender	Iblis’ deception
Receiver	Iblis
Subject	Iblis
Object	Nasik
Helper/Adjuvant	Money
Opposant	Nasik’s doubt

In this segment, Iblis, having run out of ways to overcome Nasik’s sincere resistance, resorts to deception. He pretends to be kind and speaks sweetly to Nasik, as in the following excerpt:

تَلَفَّظَ الْإِبْلِيسُ، وَقَالَ لَهُ بِبُحْبُوحَةِ النَّاصِحِ التَّلَفُّظِ الْكَرِيمِ لَمَّا أَمَارَيْتُكَ فِي قَطْعِ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ؟ - إِي مَا أَعْرَضَ إِلَّا حَشِيئَةً
 عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَةً بِكَ - فَإِنَّكَ بِقَطْعِهَا سَتَعْرِضُ تَلَفُّظَ الْمَغْضُوطِ النَّاسِكِ مِنْ عِبَادَةِ مَا لَيْسَ بِهِ الْقَادِرُ لِقَطْعِهَا عَلَى تَلَفُّظِكَ؟
 تَرَكْتُ لِقَطْعِهَا وَإِنَّا أَجْعَلُكَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَبِطَارِينِ اسْتَعِينُ بِمَا عَلَى تَلَفُّظِكَ وَالْعَيْشُ فِي أَمْرٍ وَمُتَأَنِّبَةٌ وَسَلَامَةٌ (Al-Hakim,
 2023)

[“Iblis softened his tone and spoke in the manner of a sympathetic advisor:

‘Do you know why I oppose you cutting down this tree?

I only oppose it out of concern and mercy for you...

If you cut it down, you will anger its worshippers and bring trouble upon yourself.

Leave it, and I will give you two gold dinars every day, so you can live in peace and security]

This deception acts as the sender in the narrative, motivating Iblis to carry out his plan. Iblis himself becomes both the receiver and the subject. His goal or object is to influence Nasik. Money symbolized by the two daily dinars is the helper that facilitates his mission. Nasik eventually agrees, but not without hesitation:

ترك قطعا وأنا أجعل لك في كل يوم دينارين تسعين يوما على نفسك والعيش في أمن وسكينة وسلاما
 -هل يظنون؟
 -نعم، في كل يوم تعدهما تحت وسادتك الفخرفى السماءك مليا بغير ثم ربح رأسه وقال إبلis ومن بعد من في القبات
 بالشرط
 -ألماعدك على ذلك. وستعرف صدق عهدي.
 -سأجربك. (Al-Hakim, 2023)

[“Leave the tree, and I will give you two gold dinars every day.”

– “Two dinars?”

– “Yes, every day... you will find them under your pillow.”

Nasik thought deeply, then said:

– “And who guarantees you will fulfill your promise?”

– “I swear I will. You will see that I am truthful.”

– “I will test you.”]

Nasik’s skepticism indicates internal doubt, making his hesitation the opponent to Iblis’ mission. Iblis, knowing Nasik’s financial hardship, uses that vulnerability as leverage. Once tempted, Nasik accepts the pact and begins to act indifferently toward his original mission. His former sincerity is replaced by neutrality and material comfort.

Based on the author’s narrative above, Iblis makes an offer by giving two dinars every day and Nasik agrees to Iblis’s offer, although at first Nasik had a moment to

reflect and ask again to ensure the offer was implemented. Researchers see Nasik’s actions asking about the guarantee of the offer can be caused by doubts in Nasik. Because in the previous segment, the Devil became a barrier for Nasik, which means that Iblis disagreed or did not agree with Nasik before. Therefore, the act that becomes a barrier for Iblis is Nasik’s doubt. The helper can be seen through the form of the offer in the form of two dinars which makes Nasik agree to Iblis’s agreement.

Through Nasik’s actions, on the other hand, there is a contradiction between faith and uniqueness that is seen in Nasik, making him also neutral in this segment where Nasik has allied with Iblis, Nasik’s belief in the first and second acts to cut down the tree finally crumbled with the offer of money from the Devil. In this case, the Iblis knows that Nasik has a financial weakness to support himself every day, so Iblis offers two dinars to Nasik every day so that Nasik can give up his intention to cut down trees. The Devil’s offer of two dinars has made Nasik neutral in his attitude, namely indifferent to what he previously believed about the tree that misled the community. Nasik’s indifference to his main purpose is contradictory after receiving an offer from Iblis. When Nasik is aware of the Devil’s trickery and wants to fight back, Nasik is again helpless and chooses to be neutral as illustrated in the fourth act in the following fourth segment.

Actant 4 (fourth segment)

The fourth actantial structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru* appears in the final segment, which centers around the narrative theme of “Self-Interest.” The actants identified in this segment are presented as follows:

Tabel 4. actant 4 in the fourth segment

Type of Actant	Narrative Element
Destinator/Sender	Iblis’s Betrayal
Receiver	Nasik
Subject	Nasik
Object	Cutting down the tree
Helper/Adjuvant	Axe
Opposant	Iblis and Nasik’s Anger

In this final segment, the author narratively constructs the sender as Iblis’s betrayal, which serves as the driving force that propels the events of this section. When Nasik realizes that Iblis has deceived him by breaking his promise, his sense of betrayal becomes the catalyst that reignites his determination to cut down the sacred tree guarded by Iblis. This is evident in the following excerpt:

لما فتح إبليس صدره فخرج الذهب . فغضب الشاك ورمى فأسه وأخذ إلى قطع الشجرة فالتفت إليه إبليس في الطريق .
 وماح أفعه مكثراً . إلى أن أرى الشجرة . قطعها (Al-Hakim, 2023)

[Iblis had cut off the flow of gold. The ascetic grew angry, rose, took his axe, and set out to cut down the tree. Iblis intercepted him on the road and shouted, “Stop! Where are you going? to the tree—to cut it down!]

In the excerpt above, it is explained that Nasik realizes Iblis has deceived him, and this realization serves as the sender, which subsequently triggers anger within Nasik. This indicates that Nasik experiences the effects of Iblis’s actions, making him the receiver. The subject is also represented by Nasik, as he is the main character who demonstrates the desire to achieve the object, namely cutting down the tree—the central goal in this narrative theme. In pur-

suing this goal, the subject receives assistance from the helper, represented by the axe, which serves as a tool to facilitate the act of cutting down the tree. Alongside the helper, there also exists an opposant, namely Iblis, as illustrated in the text above when Iblis intercepts Nasik on his way.

Upon further examination, the researcher identified a second opposant, namely Nasik’s anger, which is explicitly reflected in the following excerpt:

والغضب الشاك على إبليس وفتح على فأسه وتصارفاً الحطة
 وما العربة تعالي عن مخلوط الشاك تحت حمار إبليس فقد انتمر وفتح على صدر الشاك مرمواً مخطلاً يقول له:
 أين قوتك الآن يا الرجل الكفاح من صدر الشاك المثير صوت الأجرحة .
 يقول أتعالي كيف تعليت يا الشيطان .
 فقال له إبليس: ما تعليت لله قلبي، وما تعليت لنفسك قلبك، ما قاتلت لعليتك صرعتي، وما قاتلت لنفسك
 صرعتك (Al-Hakim, 2023)

[Nasik lunged at Iblis and grabbed him by the horn... they wrestled for a moment until the battle ended with Nasik falling beneath the hoof of Iblis. Iblis triumphed and sat proudly upon Nasik’s chest, saying arrogantly, “Where is your strength now, man?” From the chest of the defeated Nasik came a faint, rasping voice that said, “Tell me, how did you manage to defeat me, O Satan?” Iblis replied, “When you fought for the sake of Allah, you overcame me; but when you fought for yourself, I overcame you. When you battled for your faith, you struck me down; but when you battled for your own desire, I struck you down.”]

Through the above excerpt, it is evident that Iblis easily defeats Nasik. Nasik’s bewilderment is clarified by Iblis’s explanation—that this time, Nasik’s intention to cut down the tree stemmed from his personal anger rather than sincere devotion to God. In other words, Nasik’s emotions clouded his purity of intention, rendering his struggle impure and self-centered. Thus, Nasik’s anger serves as an opposant, or an internal obstacle, hindering his own success in this segment. Consequently, the

narrative concludes with Iblis’s triumph and Nasik’s ultimate defeat.

Functional structure in the short story Iblis Yantashiru

Greimas’s functional structure focuses on the sequence of events that shape the narrative framework of a story. The narrative model maintains the plot as the central element of the narrative. (Schleifer, 2016) Each action or event in the story is referred to as a function, hence the term functional structure. Greimas divides this model into three main parts: the initial situation, transformation, and final situation. (Syahrir et al., 2024) The functional model of this story can be illustrated in the following table:

Table 5. functional structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru*

Initial Situation	Transformation		Final Situation
	Stage of Competence Test	Stage of Main Test	

The functional structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru* can be described as follows:

Initial Situation: The character Nasik

witnesses a group of people worshipping a tree, which motivates him to uphold the truth and eradicate falsehood.

Transformation Period:

Stage of Competence Test: At this stage, Nasik sets out with his axe intending to cut down the sacred tree, and it is here that he first encounters Iblis.

Stage of Main Test: Nasik engages in debate and physical combat with Iblis, ultimately emerging victorious in their confrontation.

Stage of Glorification Test: Nasik succumbs to Iblis’s temptation and accepts his offer, causing him to forget his duty to uphold the truth.

Final Situation: When Iblis fails to keep his promise, Nasik once again resolves to cut down the tree. However, this time, Iblis easily defeats him. In the end, Nasik fails to achieve his goal, marking Iblis’s ultimate triumph.

The Main Actant

A comprehensive presentation of all actants is required to analyze the interrelationship among the four actant structures in order to determine the **main actant** of the story (Schleifer, 2016). The following table summarizes the four actants and pre-

Tabel 6. the main actant in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru*

Type of Actant	Actant 1	Actant 2	Actant 3	Actant 4	Main Actant
Sender	Faith in Allah SWT	The obligation to cut the tree	Iblis’ deception	Iblis’s Betrayal	Faith
Receiver	Nasik	Nasik	Iblis	Nasik	Nasik
Subject	Nasik	Nasik	Iblis	Nasik	Nasik
Object	Cutting down the tree	Upholding the truth	Nasik	Cutting down the tree	Upholding the truth
Helper	Axe	Axe and Faith	Money	Axe	Axe and Faith
Opposant	Iblis	Iblis	Nasik’s doubt	Iblis and Nasik’s Anger	Iblis

sents the findings that lead to the identification of the main actant:

Surface structure in the short story Iblis Yantashiru

Through the above analysis, the surface structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru* narrates the character of Nasik, who possesses strong faith in Allah SWT. This faith inspires the sincerity of his intention to uphold the truth, supported by helpers such as the axe used to cut down the sacred tree and his unwavering belief that drives his spirit. However, in the end, he fails to achieve his goal of upholding the truth, as he falls into the deceit of Iblis, who serves as the primary obstacle in his spiritual struggle.

Deep structure in the short story Iblis Yantashiru

The deep structure in Greimas’s narrative semiotics often referred to as the Greimas Semiotic Square or quadratic opposition is used to analyze the moral and value systems embedded within a narrative (Irani & Shadigu, 2025). This structure enables researchers to uncover the fundamental ethical framework underlying a text, including its norms, values, and attitudes, which holistically reflect broader social and moral system (Houshang & Hojjati, 2022). The deep structure in the short story *Iblis Yantashiru* can be found in the following excerpt:

فقال له إبليس: ما غضبت الله غلبي وما غضبت لنفسك غلبي.

(Al-Hakim, 2023) لما قاتلت العقيدتك صرعتني، ولما قاتلت لنفسك صرعتك!

[Iblis said to him: When you were angry for the sake of Allah, you defeated me; but when you were angry for yourself, I defeated you. When you fought for your faith, you overpowered me; but when you fought for your own self, I overpowered

you]

Through the excerpt above, based on **Greimas’s Semiotic Square (Nöth, 1990)**, a duality of attitudes is revealed **sincerity** versus **egoism** which serves as the core of the narrative. The application and interpretation of this duality can be explained using **Greimas’s semiotic square framework** as follows:

Table 7. deep structure in the short story Iblis Yantashiru

Type of Relation	Elements of Relation	Nasik’s Attitude	Result
Opposition (complex)	S1 + S2	Fighting for Allah + fighting for oneself	Inconsistent
Opposition (neutral)	-S1 + -S2	Not fighting for oneself + not fighting for Allah	Indifferent
Contradiction	S1 + -S1	For Allah + not for oneself	Sincere, devoted
Contradiction	S2 + -S2	For oneself + not for Allah	Selfish
Implication	S1 + -S2	For Allah + not for Allah	Doubtful
Implication	S2 + -S1	For oneself + not for oneself	Failure

Based on the analysis of the subject’s attitudes using Greimas’ semiotic square, it can be understood that this model helps reveal the complexity of human attitudes reflected in the narrative of “*Iblis Yantashiru*.” From this analysis, it can be concluded that human beings often struggle to maintain their faith and are easily tempted by worldly desires. On one hand, the author conveys a moral message that humans frequently prioritize their egos—even when

they understand the essence of sincerity. Humanity and ego, therefore, are two inseparable aspects of life.

According to the researcher, the storyline of this short story essentially represents al-Hakim's interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) hadith: "*Verily, actions are judged by intentions, and every person will be rewarded according to what they intended.*" This aligns with Iblis's explanation at the end of the story that Nasik's victory stemmed from his sincere intention to fight for Allah, whereas his defeat occurred when his struggle was driven by personal motives.

CONCLUSION

Through the application of A.J. Greimas's narrative semiotics in Taufiq al-Hakim's short story *Iblis Yantashiru*, the fundamental elements that construct the narrative are successfully revealed, as evidenced by the identification of the surface structure through the analysis of the actantial and functional structures, and the deep structure through Greimas's semiotic square formula. The surface structure reveals that the protagonist, Nasik, embodies strong monotheistic values—his unwavering faith in Allah SWT drives his sincere intention to uphold the truth. His tools of devotion, symbolized by the axe and his faith, serve as aids in his pursuit to cut down the tree worshipped by the villagers. However, he ultimately fails to achieve this goal due to his entrapment in the deceit of Iblis, who functions as the primary opponent within the narrative. Meanwhile, the analysis employing Greimas' semiotic square reveals the deep structure of the story, represented by the moral opposition: fighting for Allah : fighting for oneself : not for Allah : not for oneself. In simpler terms, this framework exposes the complexity of human character as narrated through the

protagonist's shifting intentions. The study uncovers a central duality between sincerity and egoism, which forms the moral and philosophical core of the story. Furthermore, the researcher notes that through this narrative, Taufiq al-Hakim seeks to impart a didactic lesson to his readers—urging them to purify their intentions before taking action, as true victory lies in sincerity of purpose rather than personal gain.

This study is expected to expand the application of Greimas's narrative semiotic theory within the realm of Arabic literature, providing opportunities for future research to interpret Arabic literary works through a more in-depth structural semiotic approach.

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