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Devil, humanity and evil: A comparative study of *Al-Syahid* and *Tikungan Iblis*

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Abstract: *This study examines the existence and function of the figure of Iblis in al-Syahid by Taufik al-Hakim and Tikungan Iblis by Emha Ainun Nadjib. Employing a comparative literary approach and in-depth textual analysis, the study investigates how characterization, dialogue, irony, and religious symbolism shape distinct understandings of Iblis within Arab and Indonesian cultural contexts. The analysis is grounded in the concept of theodicy and the philosophical notion of "necessary evil"—the idea that the presence of evil enables moral choice, spiritual testing, and the recognition of goodness. In al-Syahid, Iblis's desire to repent gives rise to a theological paradox: religious authorities reject his repentance because the absence of temptation would destabilize established concepts of sin, virtue, punishment, and salvation. Thus, Iblis emerges as a necessary component of the religious moral order. In Tikungan Iblis, however, evil is not solely inherent in a supernatural figure; it operates through human desire, political power, materialism, intellectual arrogance, and religious hypocrisy. The study argues that both works transform Iblis into a critical mirror for humanity. While al-Hakim questions institutional religion's reliance on the binary opposition between good and evil, Nadjib demonstrates how human beings internalize and reproduce evil in their daily social lives.*

Keywords: *devil, comparative literature, religion, play, human agency*

INTRODUCTION

Literature speaks not only about the beauty of language but also provides a space in which fundamental questions of human existence can be examined. Themes such as good and evil, life and death, freedom and power, and the relationship between humanity and God recur across literary traditions. Through narrative, characterization, symbolism, and figurative language, literary works transform abstract philosophical and religious questions into concrete human experiences (Eagleton, 2008). One figure frequently employed to articulate the opposition—and sometimes the ambiguous boundary—between good and evil is Iblis or Satan (Awn, 1983; Russell, 1984).

In Islamic religious traditions, Iblis generally symbolizes disobedience to God. The Quranic account associates Iblis's fall with his refusal to obey God's command to bow before Adam and with his subsequent determination to lead human beings astray (Nasr et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2018). Nevertheless, Islamic intellectual and mystical traditions have produced more complicated interpretations of Iblis, including portrayals of him as a tragic rebel, a failed monotheist, an instrument of moral testing, and a figure through whom human freedom and responsibility become intelligible (Awn, 1983; Schimmel, 1975). Consequently, interpreting Iblis in literature requires attention not only to theological doctrine but also to the social, cultural, political, and psychological contexts underlying a literary work (Neiman, 2002; Russell, 1984).

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The concept of Iblis as humanity's adversary provides a productive basis for comparing Tawfiq al-Hakim's "Al-Syahid" and Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Tikungan Iblis*. Tawfiq al-Hakim is widely recognized as a major figure in modern Egyptian and Arabic literature whose writings explore questions of humanity, religion, philosophy, social reality, and the relationship between intellectual ideas and everyday experience (Badawi, 1987; Hutchins, 2003; Starkey, 2006). Emha Ainun Nadjib, meanwhile, is an Indonesian writer, dramatist, poet, and cultural figure whose works frequently combine Islamic spirituality, social criticism, cultural reflection, and concern for human dignity (Salam, 2004; Woodward, 2011).

In the short story "Al-Syahid," included in the collection *Arinī Allāh*, al-Hakim presents Iblis as a being who wishes to repent and abandon his traditional role as the tempter of humanity. However, his intention produces a theological paradox: the representatives of institutional religion cannot easily accept his repentance because the disappearance of Iblis would destabilize established understandings of temptation, sin, virtue, punishment, and salvation (Al-Hakim, 2007). The story consequently transforms Iblis from a conventional personification of evil into a philosophical figure through whom al-Hakim questions religious authority, moral opposition, and the apparent necessity of evil within the human moral order (Awn, 1983; Hutchins, 2003).

In *Tikungan Iblis*, the figure of Iblis similarly creates a space for reflection on humanity and the multiple forms of evil manifested in social, cultural, religious, and political life. Nadjib's drama resists the tendency of human beings to make Iblis solely responsible for their moral failures. Instead, it suggests that evil is also reproduced through human arrogance, greed, violence, the pursuit of power, materialism, and the manipulation of religious language (Nadjib, 2022). Iblis therefore operates both as a supernatural character and as a metaphor for destructive tendencies within human beings and the social structures they create. This representation shifts moral responsibility from an external tempter toward human agency and ethical choice, demonstrating that individuals cannot escape responsibility merely by attributing their wrongdoing to Iblis (Plantinga, 1974; Svendsen, 2010).

The two works originate from distinct cultural and literary settings. "Al-Syahid" emerged within the development of modern Arab-Egyptian literature, whereas *Tikungan Iblis* arose from an Indonesian sociocultural environment shaped by Islamic spirituality, Javanese cultural expression, political criticism, and traditions of public performance (Badawi, 1987; Daniels, 2009; Woodward, 2011; Rahayu, et al., 2025). Nevertheless, both works focus on the human condition when confronted with evil, religious authority, worldly desire, and the temptation to avoid moral responsibility. Al-Hakim emphasizes the theological and institutional paradox created by Iblis's proposed repentance, while Nadjib directs attention to the human internalization and social reproduction of evil. In both texts, Iblis serves as a critical mirror through which humanity is compelled to confront its own contradictions.

A comparative-literature approach makes it possible to examine these thematic correspondences without neglecting the different historical, religious, and cultural circumstances in which the two texts were produced. Comparative literature is not limited to identifying textual similarities and differences; it also investigates how literary themes, symbols, forms, and ideas acquire distinct meanings when articulated within

different cultural systems (Bassnett, 1993; Damrosch, 2003; Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1998). Comparing "Al-Syahid" and *Tikungan Iblis* can therefore demonstrate how a shared Islamic figure is reinterpreted in response to different theological questions, literary conventions, and sociopolitical conditions.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this article addresses three main questions: first, how are Iblis and evil represented in "Al-Syahid" and *Tikungan Iblis*? Second, how do the two works position human beings in relation to temptation, evil, and moral responsibility? Third, how can the similarities and differences between the works be understood through the perspective of comparative literature?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies of Iblis in Islamic theology demonstrate that this figure cannot be reduced to a straightforward embodiment of evil. In the Qur'anic narrative, Iblis refuses God's command to bow before Adam because he considers his creation from fire superior to Adam's creation from clay. His disobedience is therefore connected to arrogance, rebellion, and the rejection of divine authority; subsequently, he becomes the tempter who attempts to divert humanity from the righteous path (Nasr et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2018). Nevertheless, Sufi interpretations provide a more complex understanding of his position. Awn (1983) explains that certain Sufi thinkers represent Iblis as a tragic figure whose refusal emerges from an absolute, although misguided, commitment to worshipping God alone. Schimmel (1975) similarly observes that Sufi literature frequently transforms religious figures into symbols through which questions of love, obedience, pride, and spiritual knowledge are explored.

Theodicy generally examines how the existence of evil can be reconciled with belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God. Hick (2010) proposes that a world containing difficulty, temptation, and suffering can function as an environment for "soul-making," in which human beings develop moral and spiritual maturity. Plantinga (1974), through his free-will defense, argues that meaningful moral goodness requires creatures capable of choosing between good and evil; consequently, the possibility of wrongdoing is inseparable from genuine moral freedom. These ideas help explain why the disappearance of Iblis in "Al-Syahid" would produce a crisis in the established religious order: without temptation, the meanings of moral struggle, virtue, sin, and spiritual testing become unstable. It employs the concept of the "necessary devil" to describe the structural function assigned to Iblis within a moral system founded on the distinction between obedience and transgression. Neiman (2002) and Svendsen (2010) further shift the discussion from metaphysical evil to humanly produced evil, emphasizing that violence and wrongdoing frequently emerge from ordinary decisions, institutional arrangements, and political structures.

Existing scholarship on Tawfiq al-Hakim places his work within the intellectual development of modern Arabic literature. Al-Hakim is recognized for bringing philosophical, religious, and social problems into modern Arabic narrative and drama, often using allegory, irony, fantasy, and dialogic confrontation rather than direct realistic representation (Badawi, 1987; Hutchins, 2003; Starkey, 2006). His works frequently place abstract ideas into conversations between symbolically significant characters, allowing religious and philosophical assumptions to be questioned. In "Al-Syahid," Iblis's

intention to repent becomes an ironic device through which al-Hakim exposes religious institutions' dependence on a stable opposition between good and evil (Al-Hakim, 2007). Scholarship on Emha Ainun Nadjib similarly emphasizes the combination of Islamic spirituality, social criticism, and cultural reflection in his intellectual and literary production (Salam, 2004; Woodward, 2011). In *Tikungan Iblis*, religious symbolism is connected to the Indonesian social and political environment: Iblis is simultaneously a dramatic character, a psychological disposition, and a metaphor for destructive practices reproduced by human beings and institutions (Nadjib, 2022). Although studies have separately discussed al-Hakim's religious-philosophical thought and Nadjib's Islamic-cultural criticism, limited attention has been given to a comparative examination of how the two writers reconstruct Iblis to interrogate human agency and the social production of evil.

Comparative literature provides the principal methodological and interpretive framework for bringing these texts into dialogue. Comparative literature can be defined as the study of texts across linguistic, national, and cultural boundaries, with attention to the relationships between literature and broader intellectual traditions (Bassnett, 1993; Rahayu et.al, 2023). Damrosch (2003) adds that literary ideas acquire new meanings when they circulate across cultural environments; thus, a shared symbol such as Iblis may perform different functions in Egyptian-Arabic and Indonesian literature. Accordingly, this study combines thematic comparison with contextual interpretation. The research addresses a gap in previous scholarship by demonstrating that the two works do more than reproduce a conventional opposition between divine goodness and satanic evil. "Al-Syahid" reveals the theological and institutional function of Iblis within a moral order, whereas *Tikungan Iblis* shows how human beings internalize and reproduce evil through personal conduct and sociopolitical structures. Their comparison therefore illuminates two related but distinct conceptions of the devil: Iblis as a necessary antagonist in the religious imagination and Iblis as a critical mirror of human responsibility.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method within the framework of comparative literature. Qualitative research is appropriate because the study seeks to interpret meanings, symbols, ideological assumptions, and cultural values embedded in literary texts rather than quantify textual features or test statistical relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis uses close reading and qualitative textual analysis to examine how meaning is constructed through characterization, dialogue, narrative or dramatic conflict, irony, metaphor, and religious symbolism. Textual analysis treats a literary work not as a transparent reflection of reality but as a structured production of meaning shaped by language, literary conventions, and sociocultural contexts (Belsey, 2013). Accordingly, the representations of Iblis, evil, and human responsibility are interpreted through their relationships with the formal structures and cultural environments of the two works.

The primary sources, or material objects, are Tawfiq al-Hakim's short story "Al-Syahid," published in the collection *Arinī Allāh*, and Emha Ainun Nadjib's dramatic text *Tikungan Iblis* (Al-Hakim, 2007; Nadjib, 2022). The formal objects are the representation

and symbolic function of Iblis, the construction of evil, human responses to temptation, and the attribution of moral responsibility. The textual data consist of words, phrases, dialogues, narrative descriptions, conflicts, character actions, and symbolic passages relevant to these categories. Secondary data are drawn from scholarly books and journal articles concerning Iblis in Islamic and Sufi traditions, the philosophical problem of evil, free will, modern Arabic literature, Indonesian Islamic culture, and comparative-literature theory. These secondary sources are used to establish the conceptual framework and contextualize the findings rather than replace close engagement with the primary texts.

The analysis is conducted in four stages. First, the two works are read repeatedly to identify and record textual passages concerning Iblis, temptation, evil, religious authority, worldly desire, human agency, and moral accountability. The passages are then coded thematically and grouped into analytical categories, including the characterization of Iblis, the sources and forms of evil, human responses to temptation, and the consequences of moral decisions. The coding process follows the principles of qualitative textual categorization: identifying meaningful units, organizing them into interpretive categories, and examining the relationships among categories within each text (Schreier, 2012). Second, the selected passages are examined through close reading to determine how literary devices—including dialogue, irony, symbolism, conflict, narrative perspective, and characterization—produce particular meanings (Rahayu, M. and Arrifah, Z., 2025). Third, the findings from the two texts are placed in a comparative matrix to identify thematic convergences, differences, and structural correspondences. Fourth, these similarities and differences are interpreted in relation to the Egyptian-Arabic and Indonesian sociocultural contexts in which the texts were produced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Iblis as a Symbol of Evil

Within Islamic theology, Iblis is principally associated with disobedience, arrogance, and the temptation of humanity. His refusal to obey God's command to bow before Adam establishes him as an adversarial figure who attempts to divert human beings from the divine path (Nasr et al., 2015; Reynolds, 2018). Nevertheless, the meanings attached to Iblis are not uniform. Islamic mystical and literary traditions have occasionally portrayed him as an ambiguous or tragic figure whose rebellion raises questions about obedience, divine will, pride, and moral responsibility (Awn, 1983; Schimmel, 1975).

Literature expand this ambiguity because it is not limited to reproducing theological doctrine. Through characterization, dialogue, irony, and symbolism, the literary figure of Iblis may operate on at least three levels: as a metaphysical character within the fictional world, as a moral symbol of destructive tendencies within the individual, and as a social metaphor for systems of greed, violence, domination, and abuse of power. As Ricoeur (1967) argues, symbols of evil provide a language through which human beings interpret experiences of guilt, transgression, and moral failure that cannot be explained adequately through literal discourse alone.

These three dimensions are particularly apparent in Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Tikungan Iblis*. On the metaphysical level, Iblis enters the dramatic world as an identifiable character represented principally through Smarabhumi. However, Smarabhumi should not be understood merely as a supernatural monster who causes human wrongdoing from outside the individual. He appears as an articulate and authoritative figure capable of reasoning about humanity and explaining the roles played by human beings, devils, and other forces on the stage of earthly life (Nadjib, 2022). The characterization reverses conventional expectations: rather than simply deceiving the other characters, Smarabhumi exposes their tendency to blame Iblis for actions produced by their own desires and decisions. His discourse reveals that human deviation does not originate exclusively in an external demonic power. It also grows from arrogance, greed, hatred, material desire, and the human pursuit of domination. This representation corresponds to Svendsen's (2010) argument that evil cannot always be attributed to an extraordinary or supernatural agent because it is often embedded in ordinary human motivations and choices.

On the moral level, therefore, Iblis functions as a mirror in which human beings encounter their own weaknesses. *Tikungan Iblis* questions the practice of making the Devil a scapegoat for personal and collective wrongdoing. Although temptation may come from outside, human beings retain the capacity to accept, reject, or reproduce it. This distinction is important because moral responsibility presupposes a degree of freedom: individuals can only be held accountable when their actions involve choice rather than absolute external determination (Plantinga, 1974). Nadjib's drama consequently relocates the centre of evil from Iblis to the human subject. Human beings may imitate and even exceed the destructive conduct conventionally attributed to the Devil. Iblis becomes less the sole cause of moral corruption than a dramatic device that reveals humanity's attempts to deny responsibility for violence, injustice, and ethical failure.

The title *Tikungan Iblis* reinforces this interpretation. A *tikungan*, or bend in a road, marks a change of direction and a point at which the road ahead cannot be seen completely. Symbolically, it represents a critical moment of uncertainty and decision. The "Devil's bend" can therefore be understood as the moral space in which human beings confront competing possibilities: they may preserve their ethical integrity or follow desires that lead toward destruction. The drama thus develops a conception of evil grounded in the interaction between external temptation and internal human disposition.

Iblis performs a different symbolic function in al-Hakim's "Al-Syahid." Contrary to what its title might initially suggest, the story is not primarily concerned with martyrdom, death, or physical sacrifice. Its central conflict arises from Iblis's desire to repent and be released from his established role as the enemy and tempter of humanity. He approaches representatives of different religious traditions, but they reject his request because their scriptures and institutional teachings have already designated him as the permanent adversary of humankind (Al-Hakim, 2007). This reversal creates the story's central irony: Iblis expresses a desire to enter the path of goodness, while the religious authorities effectively deny him that possibility. The story consequently

complicates the opposition between good religious figures and an evil Devil. Those who formally represent goodness become the agents who preserve Iblis's identity as evil.

The religious authorities' rejection of Iblis reveals that his existence performs a structural function within their moral systems. Awn's (1983) examination of Iblis in Sufi psychology helps explain this ambiguity, particularly the idea that Iblis may function simultaneously as a condemned rebel and as an actor within a larger divine order. From this perspective, "Al-Syahid" turns Iblis into a means of questioning whether religious institutions can recognize moral transformation when it challenges their established categories.

The two works therefore move in related but distinct directions. In "Al-Syahid," Iblis is a paradoxical figure whose proposed repentance exposes institutional religion's dependence on a permanent embodiment of evil. In *Tikungan Iblis*, by contrast, Iblis functions more strongly as a psychological and sociopolitical metaphor. Smarabhumi exposes the evil that human beings generate through their own desires, decisions, and systems of power. Al-Hakim destabilizes the boundary between good and evil by presenting religious authorities who prevent Iblis from becoming good, while Nadjib destabilizes it by presenting human beings who reproduce the characteristics attributed to Iblis. In both texts, therefore, the Devil is not simply the opposite of humanity. He is a critical mirror through which human beings and religious institutions are compelled to recognize their own contradictions.

The External and Internal Iblis

A significant point of comparison between "Al-Syahid" and *Tikungan Iblis* is the representation of Iblis in two interconnected dimensions: external and internal. External Iblis refers to a metaphysical being who exists outside the human self and attempts to lead humanity away from the divine path. In the Qur'anic account, Iblis openly declares his intention to tempt Adam's descendants and make wrongful actions appear attractive to them (Nasr et al., 2015). Nevertheless, Islamic teachings do not locate the source of wrongdoing exclusively outside humanity. The concepts of *nafs*, or the desiring self, and *waswasah*, or evil suggestion, indicate that temptation becomes morally effective through its interaction with human desires and dispositions (Izutsu, 2002; Nasr et al., 2015). External temptation may encourage wrongdoing, but it does not remove human freedom or responsibility.

The internal Iblis does not refer to a literal supernatural creature residing within the individual. Rather, it describes destructive human tendencies such as arrogance, envy, hatred, greed, narcissism, and the desire to dominate others. From this perspective, Iblis functions as a symbolic language for identifying the impulses through which human beings betray their moral values. Ricoeur (1967) argues that symbols of evil make it possible to articulate experiences of guilt and transgression that cannot be reduced to a simple account of an external cause. The symbol of Iblis therefore allows literature to dramatize the relationship between external temptation and the psychological conditions that make individuals receptive to it.

In "Al-Syahid," this internal dimension is ironically revealed through the conduct of the religious authorities. The figures formally associated with goodness refuse to support Iblis's desire to repent because they remain committed to the established

position of Iblis as humanity's permanent enemy (Al-Hakim, 2007). Their decision does not make them equivalent to Iblis, nor should it be reduced to personal selfishness. Nevertheless, it exposes how institutional interests and doctrinal certainty can limit compassion and moral imagination. They seek to protect the existing structure of goodness, but doing so requires them to prevent a condemned figure from entering that structure. The irony suggests that those who claim to defend goodness may reproduce exclusion when they become more concerned with preserving authority and fixed categories than with recognizing the possibility of transformation.

This symbolic dimension is even more explicit in *Tikungan Iblis*. Smarabhumi serves as a mirror that exposes the "internal Devil" manifested in human conduct. The character's presence challenges humans to recognize that their cruelty, greed, political ambition, and abuse of power cannot be attributed entirely to supernatural interference (Nadjib, 2022). Iblis may offer temptation, but it is humanity that translates temptation into decisions, institutions, and oppressive practices. The drama thus shifts the moral question from "What has Iblis done to humanity?" to "What have humans chosen to do with the destructive possibilities within themselves?" In both works, Iblis ultimately becomes a device for revealing that evil must be confronted not only as an external adversary but also as a potential direction of human choice.

The Paradox of Martyrdom and Sacrifice in "Al-Syahid"

The title "Al-Syahid" requires careful interpretation because the Arabic word *shahīd* can denote a witness as well as a martyr. In Islamic tradition, martyrdom is commonly associated with death in the path of God, but its linguistic and religious meanings also involve testimony, fidelity, and bearing witness to truth (Nasr et al., 2015). Al-Hakim's story does not present a conventional human martyr who physically dies for a religious cause. Instead, it applies the language of martyrdom paradoxically to Iblis, whose desire for repentance conflicts with the function that theological tradition has assigned to him.

Iblis's proposed repentance would allow him to escape condemnation, but it would also remove the figure traditionally associated with temptation and moral testing. When the religious representatives reject his appeal, Iblis is compelled to confront the possibility that his continued condemnation serves a larger function within the human moral order (Al-Hakim, 2007). His sacrifice consists not in physical death but in the continuation of an identity that prevents his personal redemption. He remains the adversary so that human beings can continue to encounter temptation, exercise moral choice, and distinguish obedience from transgression. In this ironic sense, Iblis becomes a "martyr": he bears the burden of permanent condemnation within a system that requires an embodiment of evil.

The conflict in "Al-Syahid" therefore does not take the form of a conventional battle between a virtuous human protagonist and a demonic antagonist. It emerges from the tension among repentance, doctrinal authority, personal salvation, and collective moral order. The story complicates the boundary between good and evil: religious representatives defend goodness by refusing Iblis's transformation, while Iblis appears willing to abandon evil but is required to remain within his established role. Martyrdom

in the story should consequently be understood as ironic and symbolic—the sacrifice of the possibility of personal redemption for the preservation of a theological system.

The "Bend" as a Metaphor for Human Choice

Unlike "Al-Syahid," *Tikungan Iblis* presents a central spatial metaphor that explicitly combines a "bend" with Iblis. A bend marks a change of direction and restricts the traveller's ability to see what lies ahead. It may therefore symbolize uncertainty, interruption, and a critical moment of decision. Within Nadjib's drama, the bend can be interpreted as a moral threshold at which human beings must decide whether to maintain their ethical direction or follow desires that lead them away from their humanity (Nadjib, 2022).

At such a threshold, individuals confront alternatives between humanity and self-interest, honesty and manipulation, compassion and hatred, justice and arbitrariness, or devotion and greed. Iblis represents the temptation to select the destructive direction, but he does not make the final decision on humanity's behalf. This distinction preserves human moral agency. As Plantinga (1974) argues, moral responsibility presupposes freedom: an action can possess moral significance only when the individual is capable of choosing otherwise. The bend therefore signifies both vulnerability and agency. Human beings may not control every temptation or circumstance they encounter, but they remain responsible for the direction they take.

The metaphor also carries a social dimension. A moral bend may be faced not only by individuals but also by institutions, religious communities, and political systems. A society reaches such a bend when it must choose between public welfare and elite interests, justice and domination, or truth and political manipulation. If destructive decisions are repeatedly normalized, the chosen path may develop into structural evil that causes suffering beyond the original decision-maker (Neiman, 2002; Svendsen, 2010). The "Devil's bend" thus represents the moment at which external temptation, internal desire, and social power converge.

Discussion

A Comparative Literature Perspective

From the perspective of comparative literature, the thematic similarities between "Al-Syahid" and *Tikungan Iblis* do not necessarily demonstrate direct contact or literary influence between Tawfiq al-Hakim and Emha Ainun Nadjib. No claim of influence should be made without historical evidence demonstrating that one author read, adapted, or consciously responded to the other. Instead, comparison allows the two texts to be placed in an interpretive dialogue based on their shared engagement with Iblis, evil, repentance, moral choice, and human responsibility. Comparative literature examines not only relationships of influence but also thematic correspondences and the different meanings that similar symbols acquire across linguistic and cultural traditions (Bassnett, 1993; Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1998).

Iblis provides a particularly productive basis for this form of comparison because he belongs to the religious imagination shared by Arab and Indonesian Muslim societies. Nevertheless, a shared religious figure does not automatically produce an identical literary interpretation. Literary symbols are reshaped by genre, historical

circumstances, intellectual traditions, and the sociopolitical concerns of their authors. Damrosch (2003) argues that literary works and ideas acquire new dimensions when they move between, or are examined across, different cultural contexts. In the present comparison, Iblis functions as a common point of reference, while the Egyptian-Arabic and Indonesian settings generate different formulations of his relationship with humanity and evil.

Al-Hakim wrote within the context of modern Egyptian and Arabic intellectual culture, in which literary experimentation became a means of examining tensions among religion, modernity, rationality, and institutional authority (Badawi, 1987; Hutchins, 2003; Starkey, 2006). In "Al-Syahid," the encounter between Iblis and the representatives of religious traditions is constructed primarily as a theological and philosophical paradox. Iblis wishes to repent, but his repentance is rejected because it threatens the established moral system in which he must remain the permanent adversary of humanity (Al-Hakim, 2007). Al-Hakim therefore uses irony and philosophical dialogue to question the rigidity of religious classifications and the institutional need to preserve an absolute embodiment of evil.

Nadjib's *Tikungan Iblis*, by contrast, emerges from an Indonesian context shaped by Islamic spirituality, Javanese cultural expression, political contestation, and traditions of socially engaged performance. The drama employs Iblis not only to discuss a metaphysical conflict between good and evil but also to criticize human arrogance, materialism, political domination, and the tendency to attribute human misconduct to supernatural forces (Nadjib, 2022). Smarabhumi functions as a mirror that exposes the "Iblis" produced within human desires and sociopolitical systems. Whereas al-Hakim concentrates on the institutional preservation of Iblis as the theological Other, Nadjib foregrounds the internalization and social reproduction of evil by human beings.

The comparison consequently reveals the interrelationship between universality and cultural particularity. The universal dimension lies in the ethical questions shared by the texts: how human beings respond to temptation, whether evil originates outside or inside humanity, whether a condemned being can change, and who bears responsibility for wrongdoing. The particular dimension can be seen in the authors' different literary strategies and cultural emphases. Al-Hakim constructs an ironic narrative centred on repentance and doctrinal authority, while Nadjib uses dramatic dialogue, political symbolism, and performative confrontation to investigate human hypocrisy and structural evil. The works are therefore comparable not because they communicate an identical message, but because they formulate different answers to related moral and theological questions.

Smarabhumi's declaration in *Tikungan Iblis* produces a related but different form of existential awareness: "*Ana akhofullah, ana akhofullah*"—"I fear Allah, I fear Allah" (Nadjib, 2022). If the wording is reproduced exactly from the published script, its original spelling should be retained in quotation marks; in standardized Arabic transliteration, the expression may be rendered as *anā akhāfu Allāh*. The statement disrupts the conventional assumption that Iblis exists entirely outside religious consciousness. Smarabhumi's fear of God suggests that awareness of divine power is not identical to moral goodness. A being may acknowledge and fear God while remaining associated with temptation and evil. The declaration also contrasts Iblis's continuing

awareness of God with human beings' tendency to behave as though their power, desires, and actions have no divine or moral limits.

The comparison ultimately demonstrates that the deepest similarity between the two works lies not merely in their inclusion of Iblis but in their reversal of the conventional moral gaze. Rather than allowing humans to judge Iblis from a secure position of righteousness, both works use Iblis to judge humanity. "Al-Syahid" exposes the rigidity of authorities who deny the possibility of transformation, while *Tikungan Iblis* exposes humans who blame the Devil for evils generated through their own choices and systems of power. Comparative literature makes this reversal visible while preserving the cultural and aesthetic distinctiveness of each work. Iblis consequently emerges as a transnational literary symbol through which Arab-Egyptian and Indonesian literature formulate different but interconnected critiques of moral certainty, religious authority, and human responsibility.

CONCLUSION

A comparative reading of Tawfiq al-Hakim's "Al-Syahid" and Emha Ainun Nadjib's *Tikungan Iblis* demonstrates that Iblis, evil, temptation, and human responsibility are literary concerns that cross geographical and cultural boundaries. Although the works emerge from different Arab-Egyptian and Indonesian contexts, both reinterpret Iblis beyond his conventional role as a supernatural embodiment of absolute evil. He becomes a philosophical and critical figure through whom the authors question moral certainty, religious authority, human freedom, and the origins of wrongdoing.

The two works nevertheless develop these concerns differently. "Al-Syahid" constructs a theological paradox around Iblis's unsuccessful attempt to repent. The religious representatives reject his transformation because their doctrinal order requires him to remain humanity's permanent adversary. His final declaration, "I am the martyr," consequently conveys an ironic form of sacrifice: Iblis must surrender the possibility of redemption to continue performing his assigned function within the moral order. *Tikungan Iblis*, by contrast, employs Smarabhumi and the metaphor of the "bend" to represent a critical point of moral decision. The bend signifies the moment when individuals and institutions must choose between humanity and self-interest, justice and domination, or responsibility and moral evasion.

The comparison also reveals the relationship between external and internal evil. Iblis may operate as an external tempter, but temptation only becomes socially consequential through human desires, decisions, and structures of power. In "Al-Syahid," the internal dimension of evil appears in the rigidity of religious authorities who deny the possibility of transformation. In *Tikungan Iblis*, it emerges through arrogance, greed, political ambition, manipulation, and the tendency to make the Devil a scapegoat for human wrongdoing. Evil is therefore neither entirely supernatural nor wholly individual; it is produced through the interaction of temptation, human agency, institutional authority, and sociopolitical conditions.

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