

Contents

Acknowledgments — VII

Note on transliteration — XIII

Bibliographic reference for the novels — XV

Introduction — 1

1	A laughable tradition — 8
1.1	Literary humour — 8
1.1.1	Definitions — 8
1.1.2	Terminology — 12
1.2	Humour theories — 14
1.2.1	Philosophical aesthetic theories: an integrated model — 14
1.2.2	Linguistic theories and narrative humour — 17
1.3	Arab humorous tradition — 24
1.3.1	Jocular anecdotes — 25
1.3.2	<i>Maqāmāt</i> — 27
1.3.3	Stock characters — 29
1.3.4	<i>Arabian Nights</i> — 33
1.3.5	Shadow theatre and Ottoman <i>karagöz</i> — 35
1.3.6	Satirical press — 36
1.3.7	Contemporary literature — 38
1.4	Egyptian political jokes — 39
1.5	Literary and popular references — 43
2	Masters of humour — 45
2.1	Re-designing the canon — 45
2.2	A canon of humour — 48
2.3	Analytical framework — 52
2.4	Authors in their context — 55
2.4.1	Origins — 55
2.4.2	Career and recognition — 57
2.4.3	Literary influences — 60
2.4.4	From the margins — 62

3	Reversed epics. Nu‘mān, the village antihero — 68
3.1	Suspended form and unreliable narrator — 70
3.1.1	Village novel — 70
3.1.2	Scholarly writing — 76
3.1.3	Discursive strategies — 80
3.2	The puppet — 82
3.2.1	A folk antihero — 82
3.2.2	Interrupted rituals — 86
3.3	Social satire: the village — 92
3.3.1	Ignorance and superstition — 92
3.3.2	Entertainment for the elite — 93
3.4	Conclusion: a tale of incongruities — 96
4	Ibn Shalabī, a (pre-)modern trickster — 98
4.1	Reviving the past — 100
4.1.1	Travelogue — 100
4.1.2	<i>Maqāmāt</i> across time — 104
4.1.3	Historiography — 106
4.2	The trickster — 109
4.2.1	Ibn Shalabī and his doubles — 109
4.2.2	Out of time — 113
4.2.3	Out of place — 118
4.3	Humour in the urban world — 119
4.3.1	Verbal and situational humour — 120
4.3.2	Egyptian idiosyncrasies — 121
4.3.3	Comic subversion — 123
4.4	Conclusion: a very Egyptian story — 127
5	Laughing together at the hash den — 129
5.1	Social biography of the coterie — 131
5.1.1	The hash den — 131
5.1.2	The narrator as a guide — 134
5.1.3	Aspiring intellectuals — 136
5.2	Şāliḥ, the wise fool — 138
5.2.1	Appearance — 138
5.2.2	Philosophy — 140
5.2.3	Intoxication and collective creativity — 142
5.2.4	Language and identity — 147
5.3	What is <i>hēṣā</i> ? — 150

5.3.1	From pure fun to political satire — 150
5.3.2	From comedy theatre to farce — 153
5.4	Conclusion: hashish as a metaphor — 155
6	Laughing together at migration — 157
6.1	The labourers — 160
6.1.1	Constructing identity — 160
6.1.2	The city: working sites and accommodation — 162
6.1.3	Tales of labour migration — 164
6.2	Negotiating Bedouin identity — 170
6.2.1	The village: a historical reconstruction — 170
6.2.2	Tales of Bedouin migration — 172
6.3	Which community? — 176
6.4	Conclusion: new forms of nomadism — 179
7	A comparative look — 181
7.1	Narratological aspects — 181
7.1.1	Narrators — 181
7.1.2	Space and time — 184
7.1.3	Characters — 187
7.2	Intertextuality — 190
7.2.1	Literary heritage — 190
7.2.2	Historiography — 192
7.2.3	Across genres — 194
7.3	Themes and style — 195
Conclusions — 198	
Bibliography — 205	
Websites and videos — 227	
Index — 229	