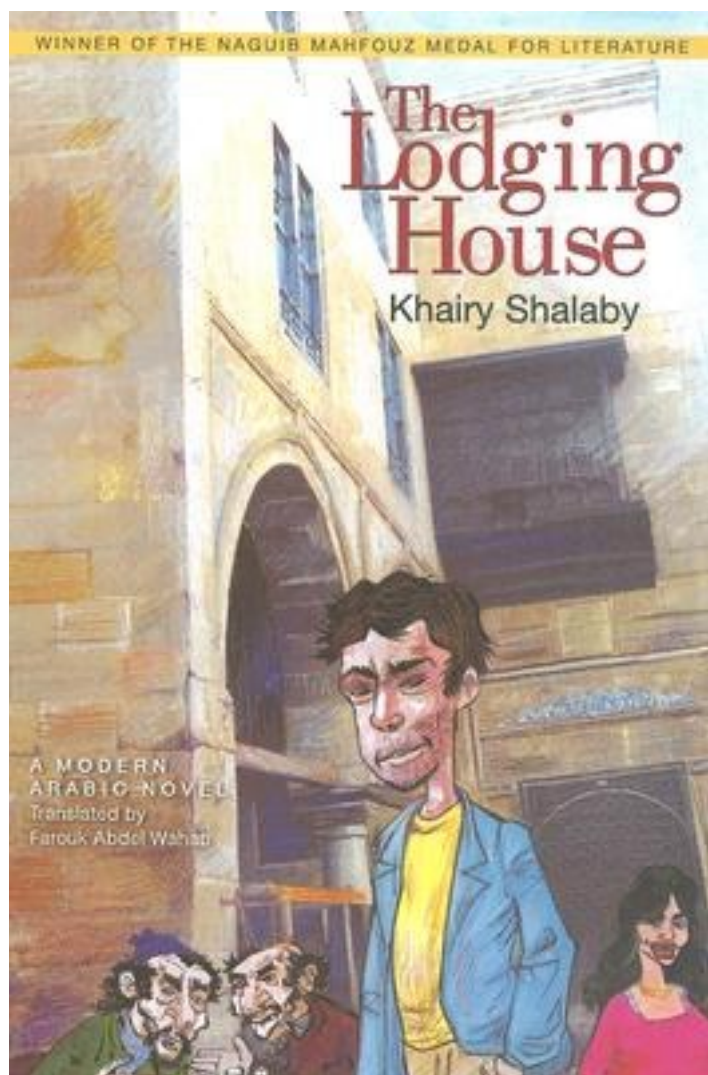


The Lodging House



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著者:Shalaby, Khairy

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A young man's dreams for a better future as a student in the Teachers' Institute are shattered after he assaults one of his instructors for discriminating against him. From then on, he begins his descent into the underworld. Penniless, he seeks refuge in Wikalat 'Atiya, a historic but now completely run-down caravanserai that has become the home of the town's marginal and underprivileged characters. The novel takes on epic dimensions as the narrator escorts us on a journey to this underworld, portraying-as he sinks further into its intricate relationships-the many characters that inhabit it. Through a labyrinth of tales, reminiscent of the popular Arab tradition of storytelling, we are introduced to these denizens, whose lives oscillate between the real and the fantastic, the contemporary and the timeless. And while the narrator starts out as a spectator of these characters' lives, he soon becomes an integral part of the lodging house's community of rogues.

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