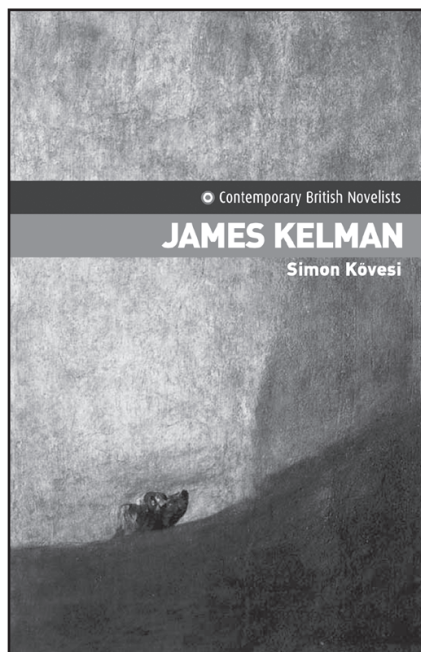


James Kelman

Simon Kövesi



Contemporary British Novelists

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James Kelman is Scotland's most influential contemporary prose artist. This is the first book-length study of his groundbreaking novels, and it analyses and contextualises each in detail. It argues that while Kelman offers a coherent and consistent vision of the world, each novel should be read as a distinct literary response to particular aspects of contemporary working-class language and culture. Richly historicised through diverse contexts such as Scottish socialism, public transport, emigration, 'Booker Prize' culture and Glasgow's controversial 'City of Culture' status in 1990, Simon Kövesi offers readings of Kelman's style, characterization and linguistic innovations.

This study resists the prevalent condemnations of Kelman as a miserable realist, and produces evidence that he is acutely aware of an unorthodox, politicised literary tradition which transgresses definitions of what literature can or should do. Kelman is cautious about the power relationship between the working-class worlds he represents in his fiction, and the latent preconceptions embedded in the language of academic and critical commentary. In response, this study is boldly self-critical, and questions the validity and values of its own methods. Kelman is shown to be deftly humorous, assiduously ethical, philosophically alert and politically necessary.

Contents:

Series editor's foreword
Acknowledgements
Abbreviations
1. Introduction
2. The Busconductor Hines (1984)
3. A Chancer (1985)
4. A Disaffection (1989)
5. How late it was, how late (1994)
6. Translated Accounts (2001) and You Have To Be Careful in the Land of the Free (2004)
Select bibliography
Index

Simon Kövesi is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Studies at Oxford Brookes University

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