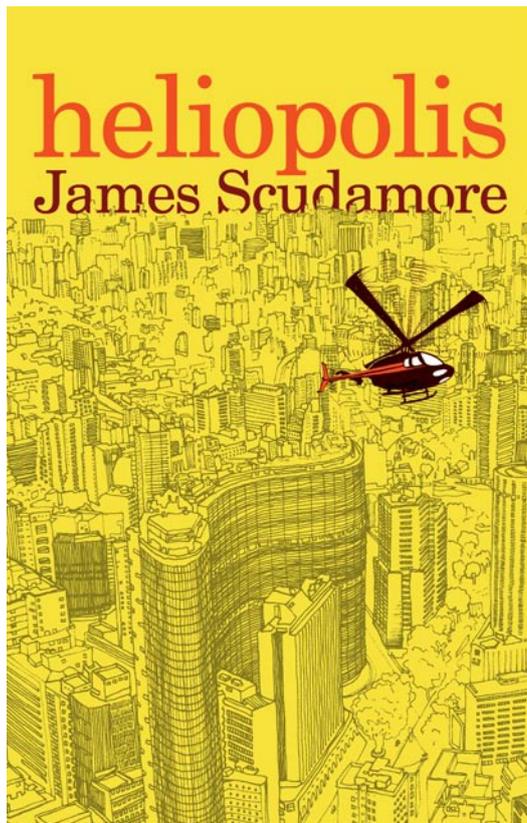


Reader's Guide



Other books by James Scudamore
The Amnesia Clinic (2006)

Heliopolis

James Scudamore

Published by Harvill Secker
Price £12.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

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About the author

James Scudamore was born in 1976 and grew up in Japan, Brazil and the UK. His first novel, *The Amnesia Clinic*, won the 2007 Somerset Maugham Award and was shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. He lives in London.

Heliopolis

Born in a São Paulo shantytown, Ludo undergoes a remarkable transformation. Directed by forces beyond his control, he first leaves, then returns to the vast city of his birth - but on the opposite side of its social divide.

Now twenty-seven, he works for a vacuous 'communications company', marketing unwanted, unaffordable products aimed at the very underclass into which he was born. He has developed an obsessive, adulterous love for his adoptive sister, whose husband is his only friend. And he has an appetite that can never be satisfied.

Welcome to the world of *Heliopolis*. By turns comic, violent and poignant, it is a rags-to-riches tale like no other - the story of a man whose destiny moves him around like a chess piece, and risks taking him to the brink of madness and brutality.

Discussion points

Heliopolis switches between Ludo's current life and memories of his upbringing, how does this straggling of narrative strands impact on the reader?

Do you agree with the reviewer who felt that '*The juxtaposition of the sordid, mundane existence of those on the street with the bizarre, almost mythic lives of the super-rich, largely spent in their helicopters high above the urban sprawl, makes for vivid, uncomfortable reading*'?

Throughout the novel there are vivid descriptions of carefully prepared dishes and every chapter is named after something edible, to what extent and in what ways do you think that food is used as a metaphoric device?

How convincing did you find the connections made in the novel both in terms of place (the favelas of the poor and gated communities of the wealthy) and the characters (Ludo's relationships with: Melissa; Melissa's husband; and the street child who is shot)?

By the end of the novel do you think that Ludo reconciles the poverty of his origins with his wealthy Brazilian lifestyle?

Themed reading

Under the Volcano Malcolm Lowry
The Dancer Upstairs Nicolas Shakespeare
Money Martin Amis

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