In the 1960s, as the underpinnings of society weakened, the traditional novel form seemed less suited to describe American reality. Theorists groped towards non-mimetic fiction as the tools that had sustained the novel since its birth—coherent characterization, linear plot, symbolism—became tools of New Journalism. The New American Novel of Manners explores the virtual reinvention of the novel of manners in America out of the same subjectivity that charged the works of New Journalism. In place of the rigid social structures that never seemed to depict America, novelists such as Richard Yates, Dan Wakefield, and Thomas McGuane located America's modern-day manners in its semiotics, in the system of signs that envelops us—the blue jeans people wear, the fast food they eat, the décor of the bars they drink in and the rock-and-roll lyrics that play through memories. The new generation of mannerists describe lifestyles that are determined by words and images, by actions that are dictated by what has been read and seen, and patterns of behavior in which life is edited and fictionalized. Klinkowitz reveals a fiction that is once again capable of reflecting the way people live. -- Provided by publisher