

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Value of the Novel

Peter Boxall's *The Value of the Novel* offers a reappraisal of the ethical, political and literary value of the novel as a form at a turning point in the history both of literature and of criticism. As the dominant critical concerns of the twentieth century faded and new cultural and technological environments emerged, Boxall argues that we lost our collective sense of the purpose of the novel. This book responds to this predicament by demonstrating why and how the novel matters to us today. Ranging from Daniel Defoe to Zadie Smith, Boxall shows how the formal properties of the novel allow us to imagine the worlds in which we live. This is a vibrant, compelling and richly informed critical perspective that asks us to see anew how central fiction is to our idea of the world, and how richly the novel informs our attempts to understand our present and our future.

Peter Boxall is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. His books include *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction*, *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism* and *Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). He has also edited and coedited a number of collections, including *Thinking Poetry* and *1001 Books*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Value of the Novel

Peter Boxall
University of Sussex

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107637245

© Peter Boxall 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-05749-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-63724-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

For Rachael, Susie, William and Georgina

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The novel lies, in saying something happened, that did not. It must, therefore, contain uncontradictable truth to warrant the original lie.

Elizabeth Bowen, 'Notes on Writing a Novel'

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction: The Value of the Novel	I
PART I: ART	17
1 The Novel Voice	19
2 Is This Really Realism?	39
PART II: MATTER	69
3 The Novel Body	71
4 Making Time Matter	93
5 The Novel, Justice and the Law	116
Conclusion: The Thing Which Is Not	138
<i>Notes</i>	145
<i>Index</i>	153

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-05749-4 - The Value of the Novel
Peter Boxall
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

All books are works of collaboration, but this one is perhaps particularly so. There are many people who have been almost as instrumental in the writing of what follows as I have been. My first debt of gratitude is to Ray Ryan, who had the idea for this series, and whose enthusiasm for the novel has been a constant source of inspiration. Without his invitation, I would not have written this book, and so never have learnt the lessons about the value of fiction that writing it has taught me. But many others too have shaped what follows. More than any other book I have written, this one owes a debt to the students I have worked with over the years I have been teaching at the University of Sussex. There is no better way to learn about the novel than to talk about it in a seminar room, and every sentence of this book has its origin, in part, in that most utopian of spaces. Friends and colleagues, too numerous to name here, have had a hand, too, in every line. But my warmest thanks go to my family. My partner Hannah is the reader I have in my head, and her opinion, real or imagined, colours everything I write. My children are their own bildungsroman, kunstlerroman, comedy, science fiction and avant-garde. This book is dedicated to my brother and sisters. We grew up together reading novels, for which we all still have a passion. Perhaps living in a busy house meant that we turned to fiction for solitude. But one of the values of the novel is that it allows us to be alone and in company at the same time. Reading fiction for me, even now, evokes this mixture of solitude and company, and always carries an echo of my shared childhood with them.