

This dissertation is based on the claim that the study of the novel has not capitalized on the designation of the novel's unique properties by thinkers early in the twentieth century. My specific determination of the puzzle novel is in a sense merely one example of the kind of study that I see as necessary to further our understanding of both the novel and narrative. I see the effort of narratology in the twentieth century as a necessary project, but ultimately a failure at its own goals. Theory of the novel, meanwhile, seemed better poised to produce useful criticism in the 1930s, but since then has not had the influence on scholarship that it should have had. To deal with this lack, various philosophical works are discussed and used in the dissertation, especially those from Gilles Deleuze and Maurice Blanchot.

Three novels are studied in detail as puzzle novels, and although the novels are chosen purposefully, they do not constitute a complete set: *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce, which I call the first puzzle novel in the terms of this study; Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), the premier postmodern novel, and also an extreme puzzle novel; and *Prisoner's Dilemma* (1988) by Richard Powers, a puzzle novel that shows the true possibilities of the novel form. This study does not seek to make absolute conclusions about the novels it focuses on or the genre it supposedly defines. Rather, the motivation of this study is to attempt to point a way towards the kind of criticism that respects the special qualities of the novel form.