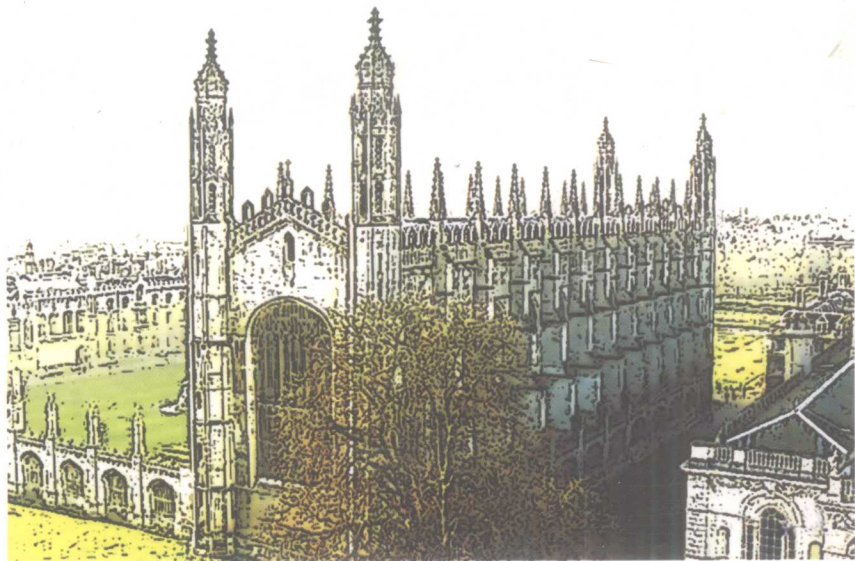




培文书系·人文科学系列

The Cambridge
Introduction to Narrative
剑桥叙事学导论



[美] H·伯特·阿波特 (H. Porter Abbott) 著



北京大学出版社
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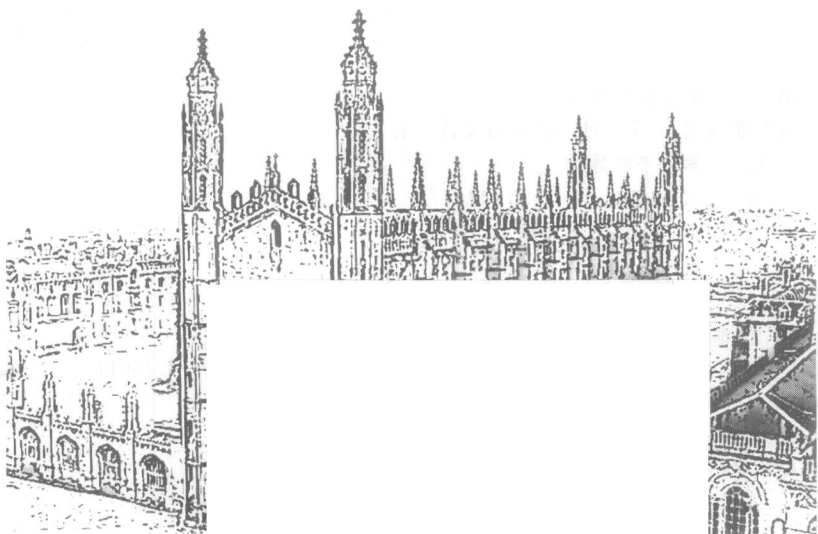
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2007年1月

For Jason and Byram

The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative

The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative is designed to help readers understand what narrative is, how it is constructed, how it acts upon us, how we act upon it, how it is transmitted, and how it changes when the medium or the cultural context change. Porter Abbott emphasizes that narrative is found not just in the arts but everywhere in the ordinary course of people's lives. Abbott grounds his treatment of narrative by introducing it as a human phenomenon that is not restricted to literature, film, and theatre, but is found in all activities that involve the representation of events in time. At the same time, he honors the fact that out of this common capability have come rich and meaningful narratives that we come back to and reflect on repeatedly in our lives. An indispensable tool for students and teachers alike, this book will guide readers through the fundamental aspects of narrative.

H. Porter Abbott is Professor in the Department of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *The Fiction of Samuel Beckett: Form and Effect*, *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action*, *Beckett Writing Beckett: the Author in the Autograph*, and editor of *On the Origin of Fictions: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, a special issue of the journal *SubStance*.

Preface

The purpose of this book is to help readers understand what narrative is, how it is constructed, how it acts upon us, how we act upon it, how it is transmitted, how it changes when the medium or the cultural context changes, and how it is found not just in the arts but everywhere in the ordinary course of people's lives, many times a day. This last point is especially important. We are all narrators, though we may rarely be aware of it. A statement as simple as "I took the car to work" qualifies as narrative. As we seek to communicate more detail about events in time, we become involved in increasingly complex acts of narration. We are also the constant recipients of narrative: from newspapers and television, from books and films, and from friends and relatives telling us, among other things, that they took the car to work. Therefore, though much of this book is devoted to narrative in literature, film, and drama, it grounds its treatment of narrative by introducing it as a human phenomenon that is not restricted to literature, film, and theater, but is found in all activities that involve the representation of events in time. In its early chapters, the book moves back and forth between the arts and the everyday. At the same time, the book honors the fact that out of this common capability have come rich and meaningful narratives that we come back to and reflect on repeatedly in our lives.

This book is descriptive rather than prescriptive; it seeks to describe what happens when we encounter narrative, rather than to prescribe what should happen. All along the way questions arise that are very much alive in current work on narrative. These are often tough issues, and, with a few important exceptions (as for example the definition of narrative that I employ), I try to keep these issues open. In organization, the book introduces the subject of narrative by moving outward from simplicity to complexity, from the component parts of narrative in Chapters Two and Three to its numerous effects, including its extraordinary rhetorical power and the importance of the concept of "closure," in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Six deals with narration and the key role of the narrator.

Chapters Seven and Eight, in taking up issues connected with the interpretation of narrative, shift the focus from the power of narrative to the power of readers and audiences. In this sense, narrative is always a two-way

street. Without our collaboration, there is no narrative to begin with. And if it is true that we allow ourselves to be manipulated by narrative, it is also true that we do manipulating of our own. These chapters take up this interplay of audiences and narratives in the process of interpretation and culminate in Chapter Eight's treatment of three fundamentally different ways of reading that we all engage in: intentional, symptomatic, and adaptive. The differences between them are important and bring in their wake different understandings of what we mean by meaning in narrative.

Chapter Nine turns to the differences that different media make in narrative and to what happens when you move a story from one medium to narrate it in another. Chapter Ten opens out the subject of character, both as a function of narrative and as intimately connected with what we loosely call "the self" in autobiography. In the final two chapters, we return to the broad subject of narrative's role in culture and society. Much of politics and the law is a contest of narratives. Chapter Eleven looks at the ways in which these conflicts of narrative play out, particularly in the law. And in Chapter Twelve, I look at the ways in which narrative can also be an instrument by which storytellers and readers seek to negotiate the claims of competing and often intractable conflicts. Stories, for example, that are told over and over again (cultural masterplots) are often efforts to settle conflicts which are deeply embedded in a culture.

In this book, I have endeavored to avoid writing another anatomy of narrative, of which there are fine examples available in print (Genette, 1980; Prince, 1987). Instead, I have sought at all times to restrict focus to the most useful concepts and terminology. The field of narratology has produced a great arsenal of distinctions and terms. I have kept my selection of these to a minimum, using only those that are indispensable. These key terms will be found throughout the book and are featured in boldface in the Glossary. As such, this is a foundational book. The tools and distinctions it supplies can be employed across the whole range of nameable interpretive approaches.

Nonetheless, by selecting the terms I do and by treating them the way I do, I have written a study that is bound to be controversial. The simple reason for this is that all studies of narrative are controversial. Despite a burst of energetic and highly intelligent research over the last thirty years and the genuine progress that has been made, there is not yet a consensus on any of the key issues in the study of narrative. If, like language, narrative is an inevitable human capability that we deploy every day without conscious effort, it is also, like language, a complex and fascinating field that often seems to defy our best analytical efforts at exactitude. Therefore, and above all else, I have aimed at clarity in this introduction to narrative. I have also been highly selective in recommending, at the ends of Chapters Two through Twelve, secondary texts that seem at this date to have

stood the test of time (though for some areas, like hypertext narrative, the works have only barely been tested). At the same time, it is important to acknowledge here the assistance I have received from the work on narrative by many brilliant scholars, among them: M. M. Bakhtin, Mieke Bal, Ann Banfield, Roland Barthes, Emile Benveniste, Wayne Booth, David Bordwell, Edward Branigan, Claude Bremond, Peter Brooks, Ross Chambers, Seymour Chatman, Dorrit Cohn, Jonathan Culler, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Monika Fludernik, Gérard Genette, A. J. Greimas, David Herman, Paul Hernadi, Wolfgang Iser, Roman Jakobson, Fredric Jameson, Robert Kellogg, Frank Kermode, George P. Landow, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Wallace Martin, Scott McCloud, J. Hillis Miller, Bill Nichols, Roy Pascal, Gerald Prince, Vladimir Propp, Peter J. Rabinowitz, Eric Rabkin, David Richter, Paul Ricoeur, Brian Richardson, Robert Scholes, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Marie-Laure Ryan, Saint Augustine, Victor Shklovsky, Franz Stanzel, Tzvetan Todorov, Boris Tomashevsky, Hayden White, and Trevor Whittock.

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