

... mind the gap ...

... narrative is a perceptual activity that organizes data into a special pattern which represents and explains experience.

E. Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*,  
1992: 3

# time

- explicit markers: 1632, later, the next day/month, after twenty years...
- thematic: references to sun/moon/seasons/cycles as repetition or development
- structural markers: chapters, acts/scenes, diary entries (date)
- reader: identify markers, spot breaks/gaps/ruptures

# time

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but, by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called - nay we call ourselves and write our name - Crusoe; and so my companions always called me.

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

# time

Call me Ishmael.

Some years ago - never mind how long precisely -  
having little or no money in my purse, and nothing  
particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would  
sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (1851)

# time

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967)

# time

Algernon: Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane: I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. A trivial comedy for serious people (1895)

# time

Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital; my keeper is watching me, he never lets me out of his sight; there's a peephole in the door, and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me.

Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (1959)

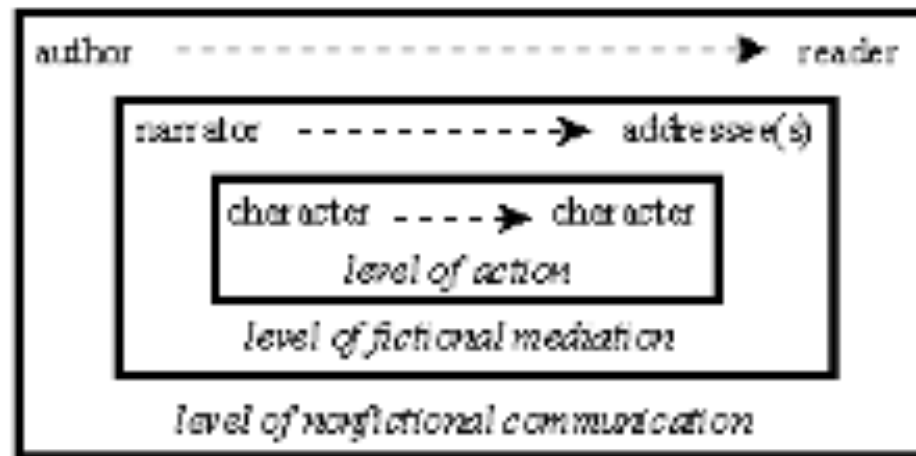
# time

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.

“It’s not like I’m using,” Case heard someone say, as he shouldered his way through the crowd around the door of the Chat. “It’s like my body’s developed this massive drug deficiency.” It was a Sprawl voice and a Sprawl joke.

William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)

# narrative communication



Jahn, Manfred. 2005. Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative

# discourse time - story time

- discourse time: time it takes to tell the story
- story time: time of action
  - summary
  - ellipsis/omission (film = cut)
  - dialogue
  - association/reflection

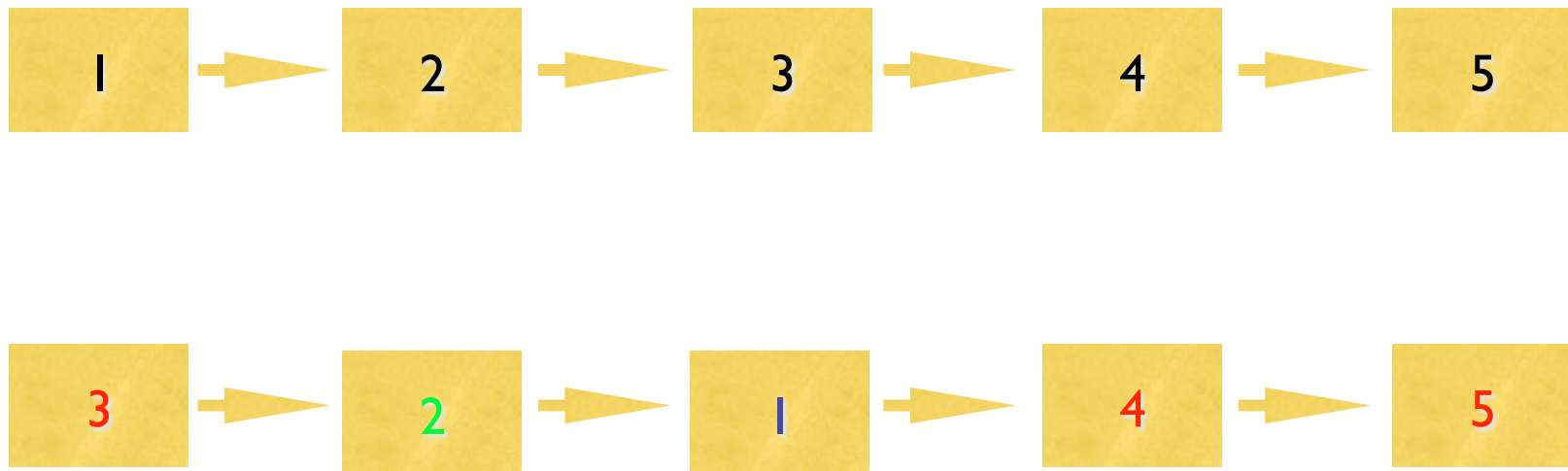
# time

- retrospective narration (everything happened in the past)
- concurrent narration (diary)
- prospective narration (prophetic narration)
- showing (mimesis) vs telling (diegesis)

# order – duration – frequency

- textual units
- sequence
- selection/order in time
- episodes in chronological order
- mental alignment key competence
- re-writing history (any text & memory)

# linearity



# Émile Zola, *Nana*

At ten o'clock the next morning Nana was still asleep. She occupied the second floor of a large new house in the Boulevard Haussmann, the landlord of which let flats to single ladies in order by their means to dry the paint. A rich merchant from Moscow, who had come to pass a winter in Paris, had installed her there after paying six months' rent in advance. The rooms were too big for her and had never been completely furnished. The vulgar sumptuousness of gilded consoles and gilded chairs formed a crude contrast therein to the bric-a-brac of a secondhand furniture shop—to mahogany round tables, that is to say, and zinc candelabras, which sought to imitate Florentine bronze. All of which smacked of *the courtesan too early deserted by her first serious protector and fallen back on shabby lovers*, of a precarious first appearance of a bad start, handicapped by refusals of credit and threats of eviction.

Nana was sleeping on her face, hugging in her bare arms a pillow ...

# time

- linearity, sequentiality in fiction (all genres: drama, prose, poetry)
- fiction of linear sequence of events  
episode 1 2 3 4a/4b 5 6 7
- textual arrangement: episode 2 3 1 4a 4b 5
- literary convention: audience/reader  
"re-orders", re-constructs order  
(2 3 1 ... = 1 2 3 ...)
- parallel action: narrated/presented in sequence  
4a 4b; mental concept: parallel 4a/4b

# time

- anachrony:
  - prolepsis – flashforward (anticipation)
  - analepsis – flashback (retrospection)
- foreshadowing (narrator)
  - ... little did he know ...
  - ... that promise sealed her fate ...

# structure

- “points of departure”: when to deviate from literal reading
- explicit temporal/structural markers
- ambiguity of text
- independence of reader
- “world knowledge”

# Émile Zola, *Nana*

At nine o'clock in the evening the body of the house at the Theatres des Varietes was still all but empty. A few individuals, it is true, were sitting quietly waiting in the balcony and stalls, but these were lost, as it were, among the ranges of seats whose coverings of cardinal velvet loomed in the subdued light of the dimly burning luster. A shadow enveloped the great red splash of the curtain, and not a sound came from the stage, the unlit footlights, the scattered desks of the orchestra. It was only high overhead in the third gallery, round the domed ceiling where **nude females and children flew** in heavens which had turned green in the gaslight, that calls and laughter were audible above a continuous hubbub of voices, and heads in women's and workmen's caps were ranged, row above row, under the wide-vaulted bays with their gilt-surrounding adornments.

# gap

- Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007, reader-response theory)
- gap (Leerstelle)
  - hypothesis of combination
  - contextualize
  - realization of combination

# gap

- asymmetric relationship:
  - text governs the reading process
  - author - narrator - text – reader
  - cf. telling & showing
  - limits to “telling”
- contextual gaps vs structural gaps