Stroupe

WRIT 4250

**Narrative and Database**

**(from Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media*)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

[A] literary or cinematic narrative…and a database each present a different model of what a world is like. It is in this sense [that a]…database…[is] a cultural form…. [W]e may even call database a new symbolic form of the computer age…. Indeed, if after the death of God (Nietzsche), the end of grand Narratives of Enlightenment (Lyotard), and the arrival of the Web (Tim Berners-Lee) the world appears to us as an endless and unstructured collection of images, texts, and other data records, it is only appropriate that we will be moved to model it as a database….

As a cultural form, the database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies. Competing for the same territory of human culture, each claims an exclusive right to make meaning out of the world…

Rather than trying to correlate database and narrative forms with [particular] modern media…, I prefer to think of them as two competing imaginations, two basic creative impulses, two essential responses to the world. Both have existed long before modern media…. Modern media is the new battle field for the competition between database and narrative[, and i]n general, creating a work in new media can be understood as the construction of an interface to a database. (Manovich *Language* 219, 225, 233, 234, 226)

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002. Print.