GOING VIRAL

Zombies, Viruses, and the End of the World

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WEEK 3: OUTBREAKS AND GLOBALIZATION, PART 1

Discussion Questions, *Going Viral* Chapter 1

1. Describe the difference between film genres and film cycles.

2. In what ways have technological and industrial conditions led Hollywood to re-think medium specificity (aka, movies and television aren't seen as such separate categories)?

3. Why is it especially appropriate the outbreak narratives have become so popular on TV shows rather than movies?

4. What are the six key thematic tropes that shape depictions of infectious disease?

5. What are the key visual tropes?

6. Explain what it means that, in the outbreak narrative, security no longer means protection but containment, keeping the infected away from the uninfected.

7. Why is the necessary accident such an essential part of the outbreak narrative?

8. In what ways is modernization offered as an antidote to disease?

9. In what ways is modernization (and/or globalization) depicted as the cause of viral outbreaks?

10.   Why are conspiracy theories so prevalent? What purpose do they serve?

"How the world is framed may be as important as what is contained within that frame."
—Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*

Spongebob Squarepants, "Once Bitten"
(Nickelodeon, Sept. 29, 2006)
[video clip]

Binary: U.S. versus U.S.S.R.

Geo-politics became more nuanced and confusing, opening the door for new superpowers to emerge.

<u>The worlds of finance and commerce had almost completely globalised as a result of</u>:

- The end of the Cold War in 1989
- The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991
- The creation of the European Union in 1993 and the launch of the euro in 1999
- The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994
- A steady erosion of trade barriers throughout the eighties and nineties
- Faster, cheaper transportation by car and by plane
- The proliferation of electronic communications, including cell phones and the Internet

Traditional understandings of the nation-state grew increasingly outdated as globalization grew in power and relevance—as illustrated by:

- transnational labor
- the global outsourcing of production
- the growing distribution of products worldwide (cultural and otherwise)
- the reliance on networked machines by military and law enforcement personnel
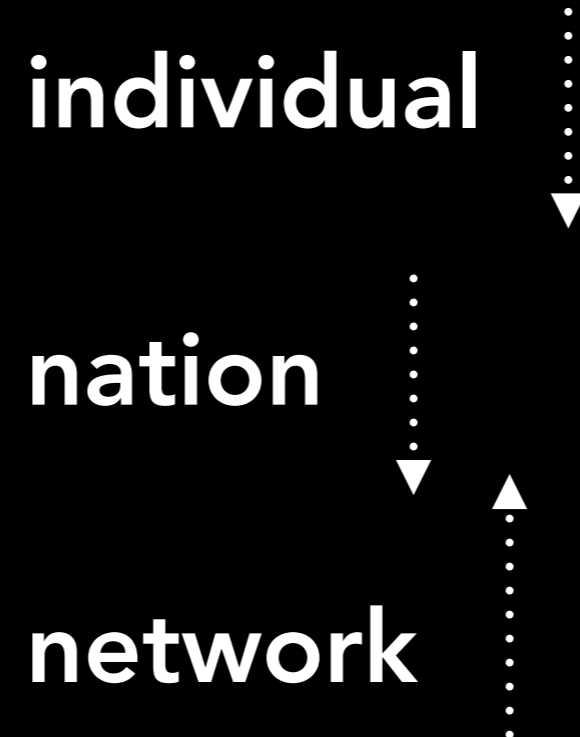
As individual governments and nations saw their power erode, multinational corporations saw their power increase.

vertical and hierarchical ➡ horizontal and networked

Labels within figure: Link, Station, CENTRALIZED (A), DECENTRALIZED (B)
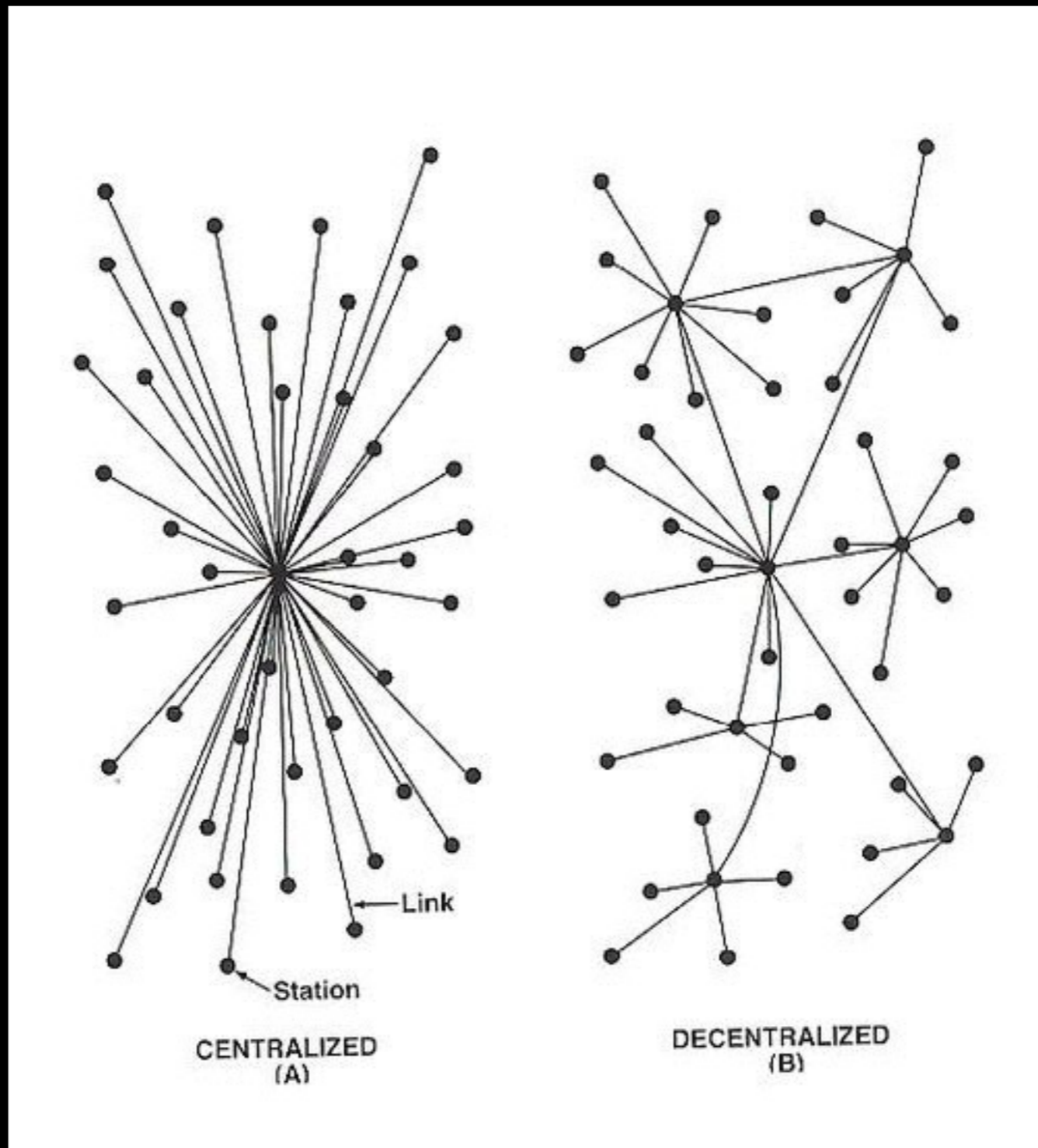
De-centralized networks would be the most common diagram of the modern era.

individual

nation

network

I. When the World Wide Web was first invented in 1991, it formed the basis of <u>a new type of networked communication</u>:
a variety of generic services that you could join or utilise but would not automatically connect you to others.

II. With the advent of Web 2.0, shortly after the turn of the millennium, <u>online services shifted</u> from offering channels for networked communication to becoming <u>interactive</u>, two-way vehicles for <u>networked</u> society.

In 1996, Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells described the contemporary world as based on networks and paths of flow(s).
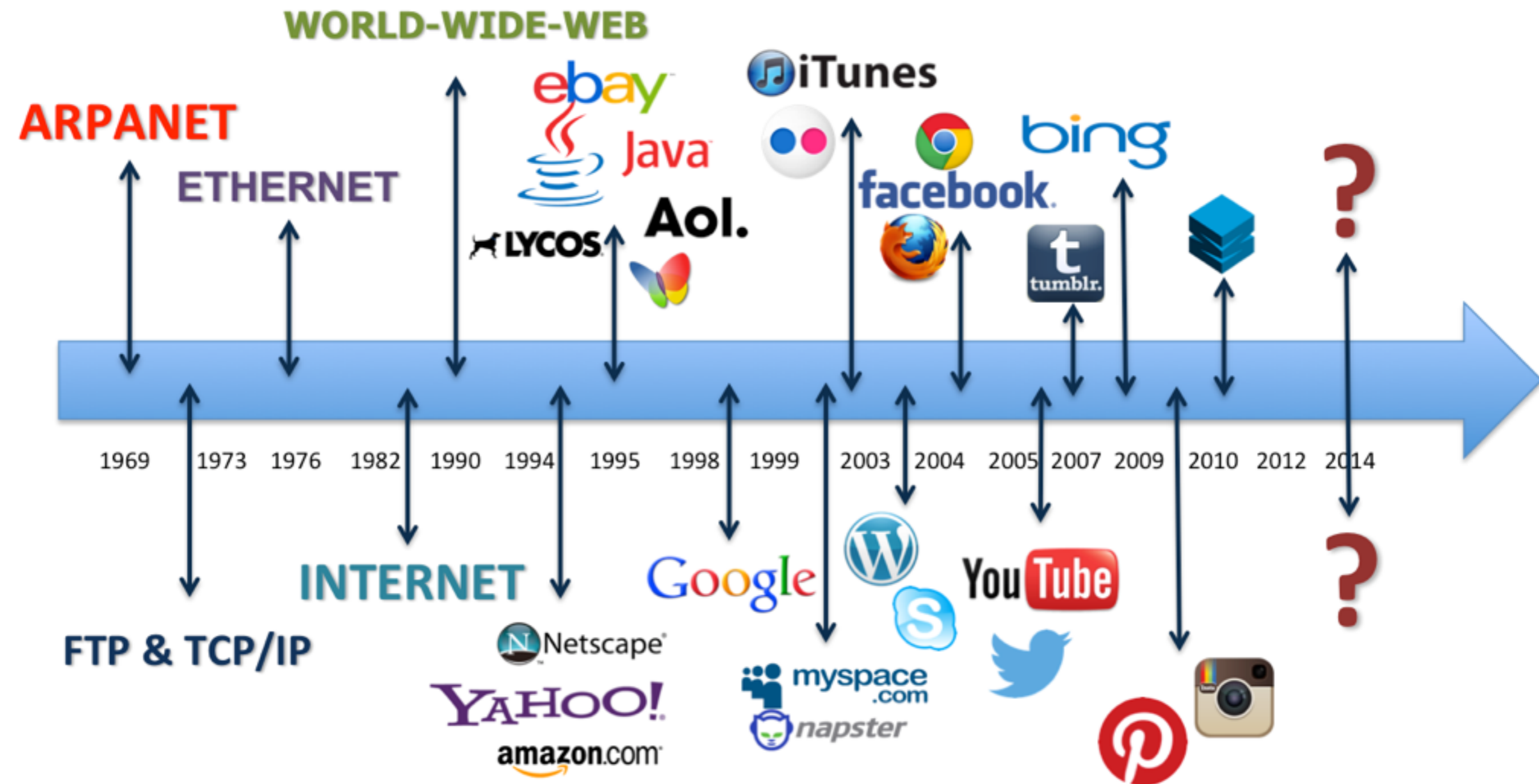
Sites like Blogger (1999), MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), and YouTube (2005) created online connections and communities, networks that had little to do with nation-state boundaries or geographic location.

"Peer-to-peer file-sharing networks, wireless community networks, terrorist networks, contagion networks of biowarfare agents, political swarming and mass demonstration, economic and finance networks, online-role playing games, personal area networks, mobile phones, 'generation Txt,' and on and on" have become integral to every aspect of our lives.

—Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker

Different Eras of Globalization

MODERN
- Clear villains
- Clear heroes
- Clear resolution
- Clear geographical locations
- Families, unity
- *Outbreak* (1995)

POSTMODERN
- Elusive heroes
- Unclear othering
- Partial resolution
- Fluid geographical locations
- Increased isolation
- *Contagion* (2011)

<u>Two possible responses to the increasingly rhizomatic
modes of contemporary life</u>:

1. one iconic character that has the fate of the world on his
or her shoulder, a response to the shift from hierarchical
social ordering to the horizontal and networked sprawl
common to the twenty-first century (*Outbreak*)

2. the single hero is often missing, replaced by the
prevalence of networks or by a woman (*Contagion*)

pay attention to:
1. the idea of the necessary accident
2. the othering which creates the "them" in the first place
3. establishing and policing security where these others pose a threat
4. how contagious diseases bring us together
5. a constant emphasis on making the invisible visible, using maps, charts, or microscopes
6. a fear of progress

<u>pay attention to</u>:
1. the construction of the hero(es)
2. the construction of the villain(s)
3. the construction of geographical space & boundaries
4. the "solution" to the outbreak
5. gender roles

Both Warner Bros. and Fox raced to release their outbreak movie first. Fox stuck close to the Richard Preston original—even naming the movie *Crisis in the Hot Zone*—with Ridley Scott at the helm.

In contrast, Warner Bros. went for a more fictionalized take with *Outbreak,* directed by Wolfgang Petersen. Initially courted by the producers of both films—even receiving the two scripts on the same day—Petersen told *Entertainment Weekly* that he decided to do *Outbreak* because "Sometimes you can tell a better story with fiction."

How so?