Open Questions - Class 6 (compiled by Rebecca Chenoweth)

Questions From Practices
1) For humanists, what counts as an edge on a social network chart? What counts as a node?
- Networks began as a tool for social scientists, where more "objective" data exists
- Can we avoid influencing our graphs based on preconceptions of a novel's form (stream of csns, omniscience, etc.)
- Can there be a node for the narrator? For the reader? (Consider variables with unreliable --> omniscient narrators)
2) Is there a continuum between results that we find meaningful, or are there discontinuous jumps?
- Can we accept any state of Gephi as meaningful?
3) Will it be possible to automate analysis of these artifacts?
- Sociologists and ethnographers are trained in standards of observation/questionnaires/analysis
- Can we standardize close reading? Should we simplify data as harshly as Moretti to get meaningful results?
4) Can you find or represent absence on a social network?
- Think about meaningfully absent interactions (characters who never meet)
5) What is a subject in a social world? What is the agency of objects in a social world?
- Compare to Latour's idea of actor network
- When should we treat an object as a node? When should we treat it as a medium for a link?
- How would a non-Western network differ (in terms of time, history, objects, generations)?
6) In terms of the problem of the human, are social networks reductive, or expanding?

Questions From Reading
1) What did "network" mean before, and what does it mean now?
- Compare Victorian wallpaper, 19th c. American quilts, and contemporary internet visualizations to see ideas of that time/place about networks
- Then compare these to actual network structure
2) How does the medium of interaction influence a structure/network?
- Graphs of internet emphasize the amount of nodes and edges rather than pattern (quantity rather than form)
3) How many kinds of networks are there? How many network topologies?
4) How many ways are there for networks to grow, and to decline? ("Forest fire" growth, infectious growth)
5) What is the relationship between physical and social networks?
- Keep in mind that Gephi is based on physics, not social/sociology (nodes want to expand, and edges want to tighten)