

RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY  
AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

VICTOR ARROYO



# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

The trajectory from exposure to action is not seamless.

As we all know, media, in our already crowded media landscape, is not a transparent delivery system for testimony.

A constellation of factors contributes to the efficacy of a testimony. Representation and iconographic strategies should make us reflect as much about the testimonial encounter as the testimony itself.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

an economy based on the utopia of profit without exploitation

the reification of all aspects of life by consumption,  
including the commercialisation of experience through the leisure industry,  
results in a desperate search to achieve a non-mediated life,  
to obtain 'authentic' and 'real' experiences.

RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY  
AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

an economy based on the utopia of profit without exploitation



paul hansen

RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY  
AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

an economy based on the utopia of profit without exploitation



nathan weber

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

## Ravished Armenia (Oscar Apfel, 1919)

this silent feature length film adapted the survivor testimony of Aurora Mardiganian (née Arshalus Mardignian).

In a bid to authenticity, Aurora played herself in the film. She brought the impression of a first-person testimony through the re-enactment of her experience.

The film fundraised \$30million US. Exhibitions were designed to enhance experience & awareness. Screenings were held in conjunction with guest speakers. These speakers corroborated the truth of the depiction and further animating it with their own testimony and presence.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

## Ravished Armenia (Oscar Apfel, 1919)

What is noteworthy are the ways in which real-life events are shaped according to the circuits along which they travel and according to the audiences for whom they are performed.

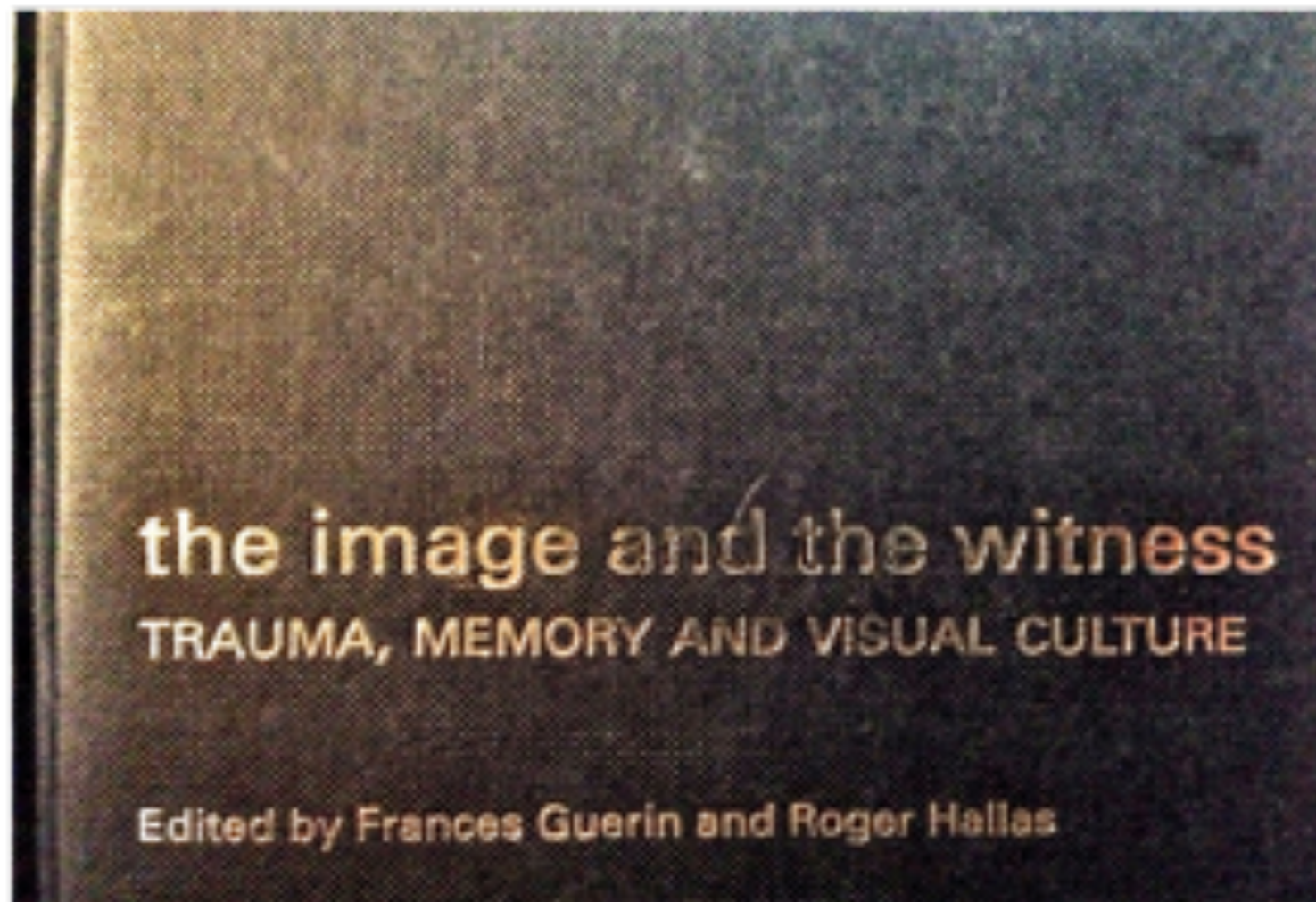
Perhaps also as important is that this story reveals the longstanding intersection of popular entertainment culture and advocacy



RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY  
AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

Media determine our situation.  
Friedrich Kittler in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*





# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

Media can no longer be dismissed as neutral or transparent, subordinate or supplemental to the information they convey.

media form the infrastructural basis, the quasi-transcendental condition, for experience and understanding.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

media names an ontological condition of humanization  
—the constitutive operation of exteriorization and invention—.

Rather than a language of cause and effect,  
I propose a language of contingent conditions,  
a language that makes the invisible film frame visible:  
a political gesture,  
a response to the confusion of the world with its spectacle.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

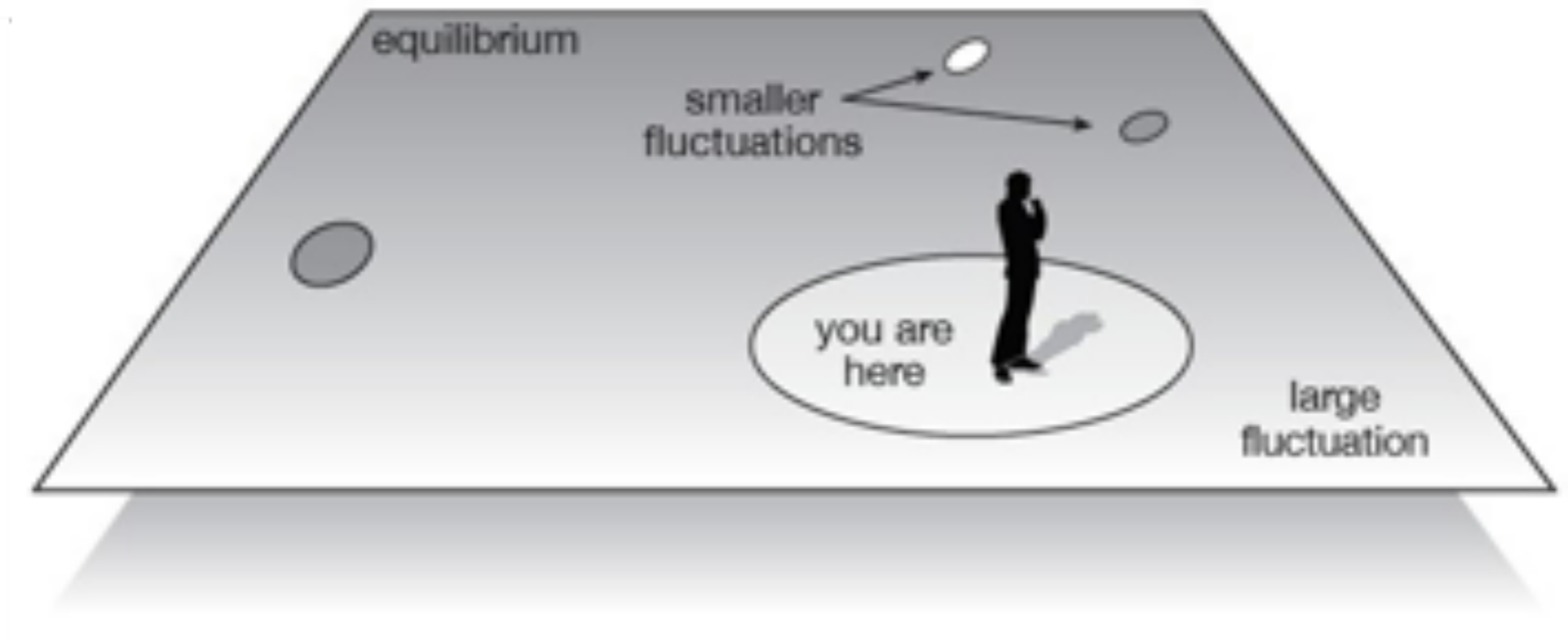
As Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom has said,  
"all observations require the existence of an appropriately positioned  
observer."

Indeed, our data is not only filtered by the limitations  
of our instruments, "but also by the precondition that somebody has to  
be there to 'have' the data yielded by the instruments  
(and to build the instruments in the first place)."

The biases that occur due to these preconditions are what's referred  
to as observation selection effects.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

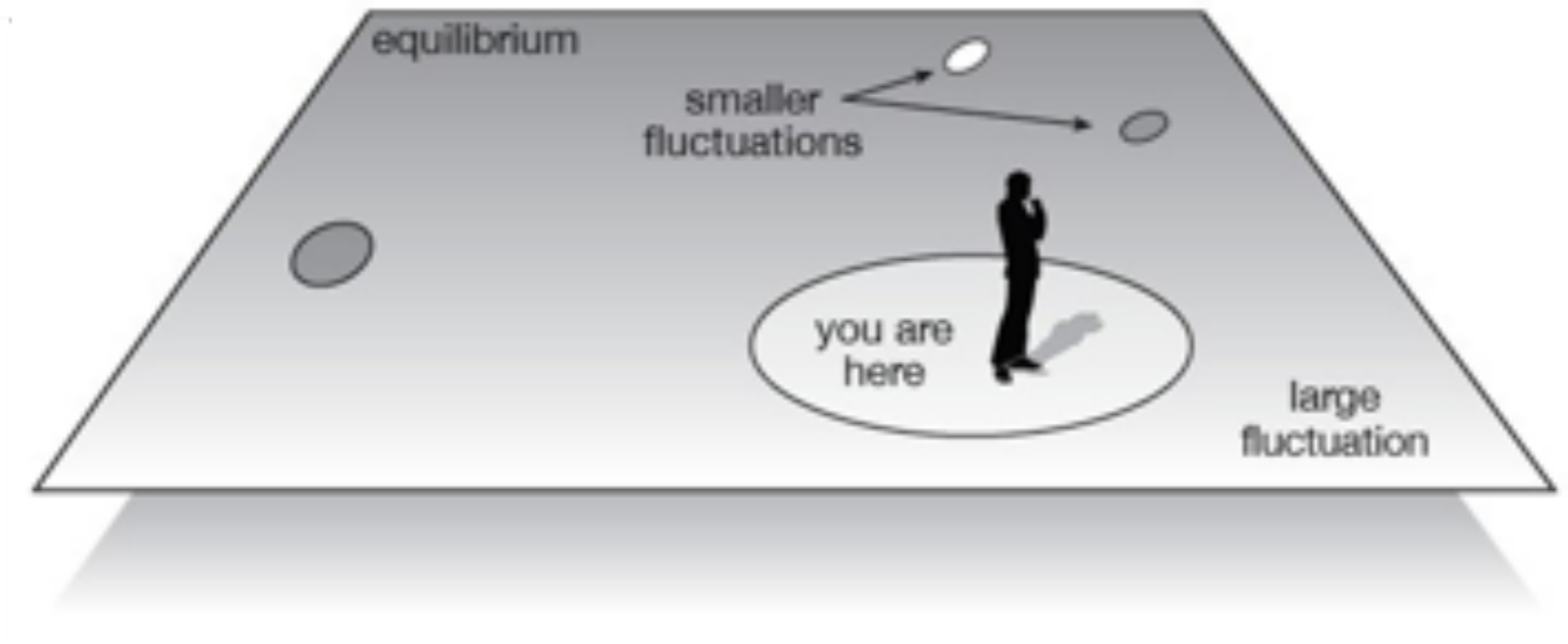
---



It essentially states that we will only find ourselves in a universe that's capable of giving rise to us.  
Put another way, observations of the universe must be compatible with the conscious life that observes it.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---



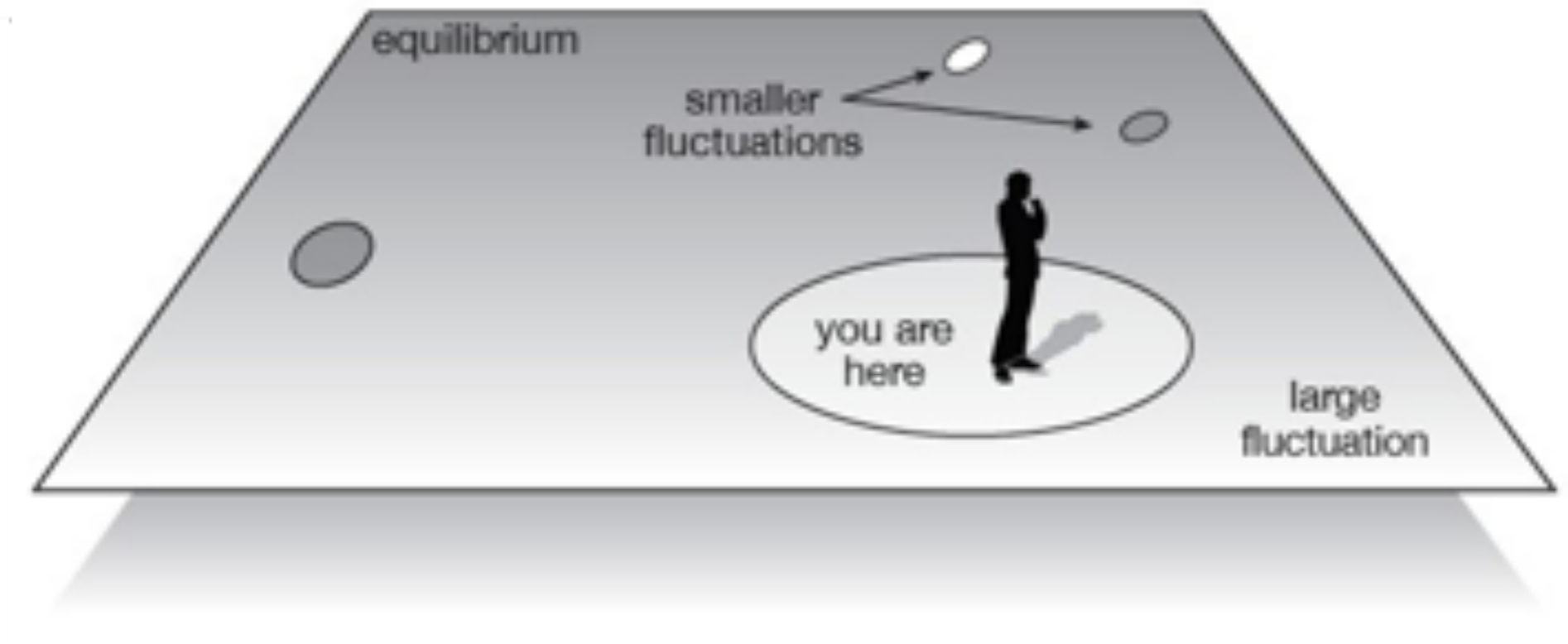
The universe (and hence the fundamental parameters on which it depends) must be such as to admit the creation of observers within it at some stage.

Oppression (and hence the fundamental parameters on which it depends) must be such as to admit the creation of activists within it at some stage.



# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---



Survivorship bias  
Social resistance  
Media

the medium for producing cultural continuities,  
tradition, myth, and collective identity.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---

Resistance is an activity connected to the process of coming into subjectivity. It can manifest in fleeting acts of rebellion or in uprisings that subside as spontaneously as they emerge.  
These resistances are spaces of possibility.

Revolutionary resistances are born from these acts of rebellion but are marked by critical awakenings that demand the recognition of the subject, new ways of being in the world, and creative social change.

”The Politics of Radical Black Subjectivity,” (15), Hooks.

# RHIZOMATIC NARRATIVES: SOCIAL ACTIVISM, MEDIA ECOLOGY AND CULTURES OF RESISTANCE

---



The rhizome as an extensive network of diversified productivity, connecting arenas of resistance to language, to arts, to activism, to everyday practices.

The structure is permanently unstable and constantly mutating, adapting quickly to the rapid changing conditions of the oppressive forces it opposes.