

Unmade, Unseen, Unreleased Film and Television
Sheffield Hallam University, 23rd and 24th May 2022

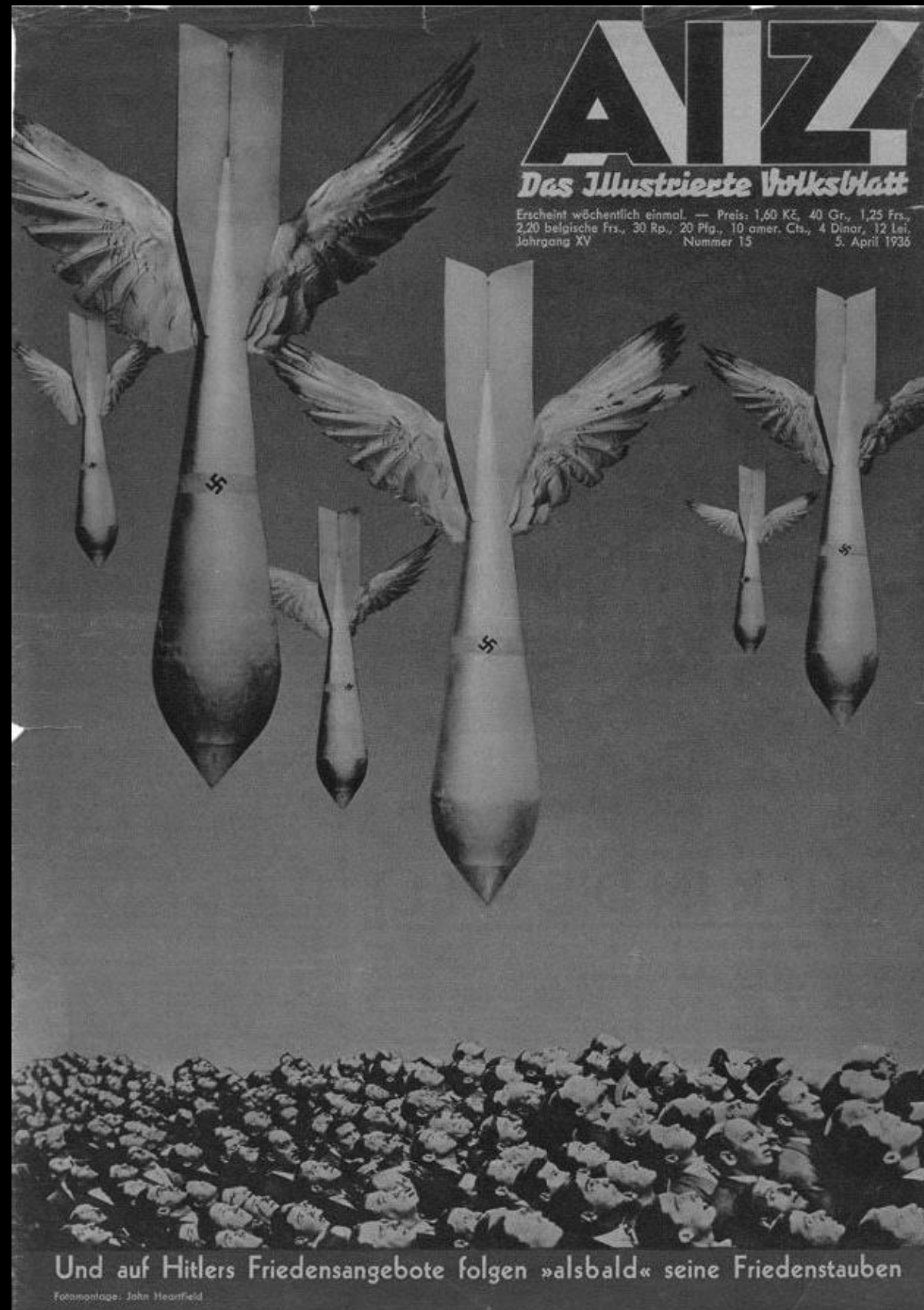
Picking up the Pieces: Archive Film and the Contested Past

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Photomontage, Archive Film, Animated Documentary, VFX



John Heartfield, 1936



Bill Morrison, 2010, *The Miner's Hymns*



Keith Maitland, 2016, *Tower*



Joss Whedon, 2012, *The Avengers*



LGCC NLW

The National
Screen and
Sound Archive
of Wales



- Archive Film
- Critical Realism
- Evidence, Mediation and Montage
- Visual Effects and Spatial Montage
- Regional Identity and Politics

Archive Film



Bill Morrison, 2010, *The Miner's Hymns*



Martin Wallace, 2013, *The Big Melt*



Paul Wright 2017, *Arcadia*

Archive Film

...exploit the instability of archival footage in order to open gaps, create ambiguities, challenge conventional readings of visual records of the past and undercut the usual narratives constructed to keep the meaning of archival footage in check (Wees, 2000)

...its significance cannot be enclosed within the borders of the work itself (Wees, 1993)

‘Intentional disparity’: our perception of a previous intention ascribed to and (seemingly) inscribed within the archival document (Baron, 2014)

‘Archiveology’: returning to the images of the past (...) and reviewing them for new ways of making history come alive in new forms (Russel, 2018)

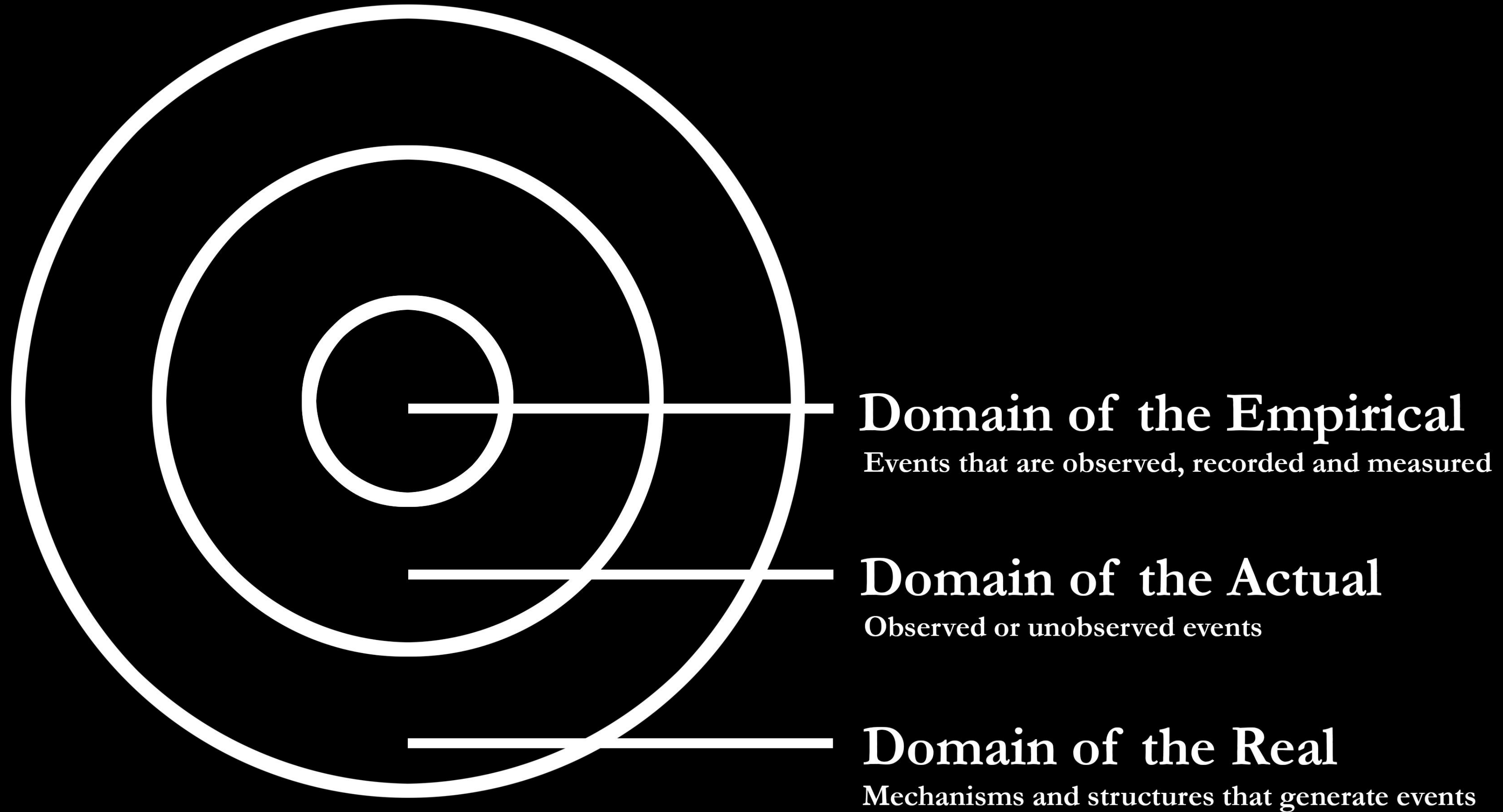
Archive Film

If archive film points outwards, what exactly is it pointing to?

And if history comes to life, what is being revealed that was previously hidden or unseen?

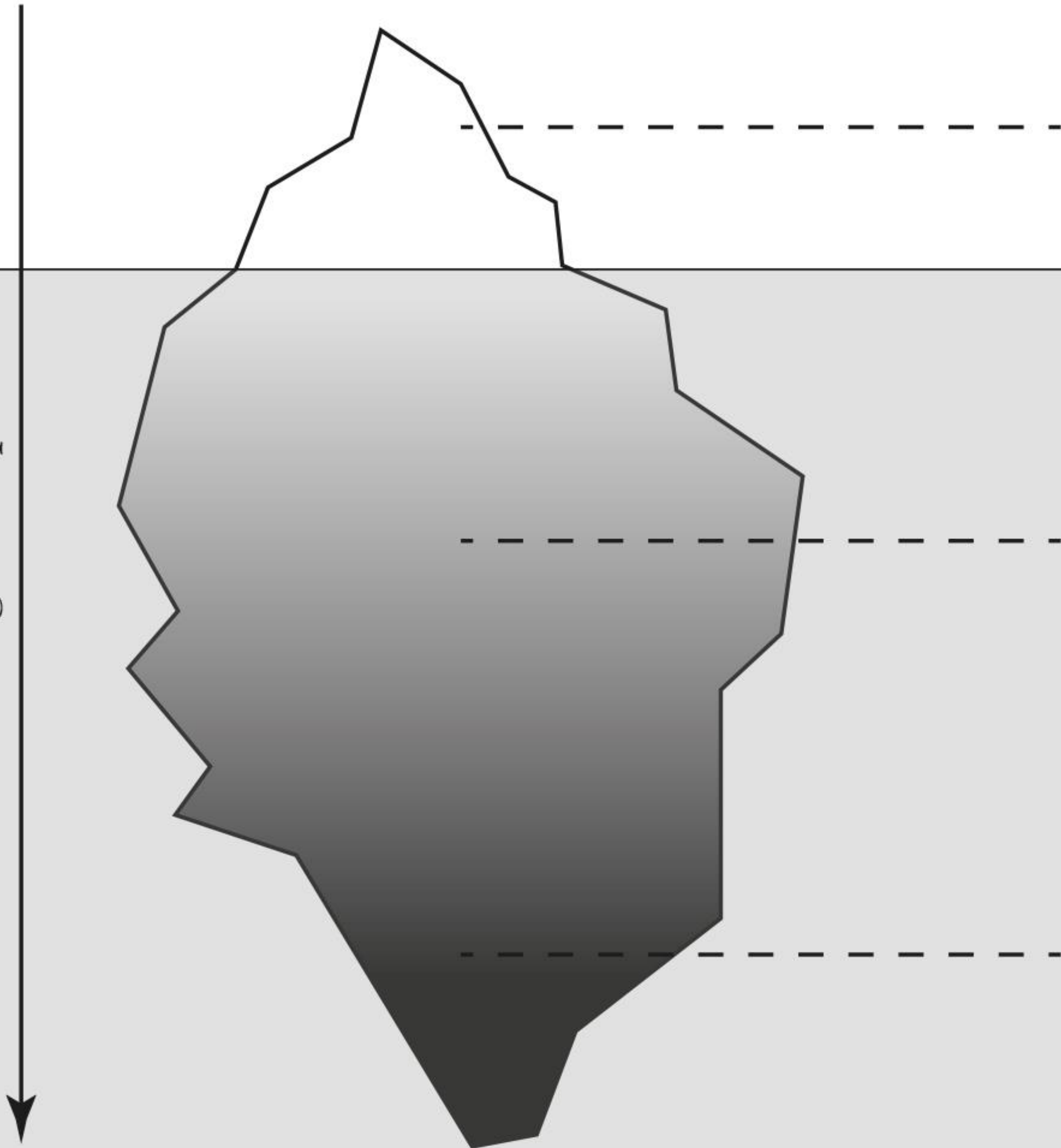
And how is this being done?

Critical Realism



(Bhaskar, 1975)

Ontological Depth



Empirical Level

- Experienced and observed events
- Events understood through human interpretation

Actual Level

- Events occur observed or unobserved

Real or 'Deep' Level

- Transfactual causal mechanisms within objects or structures cause events to occur

The Objectivism/Subjectivism Split

Empiricism/Facts



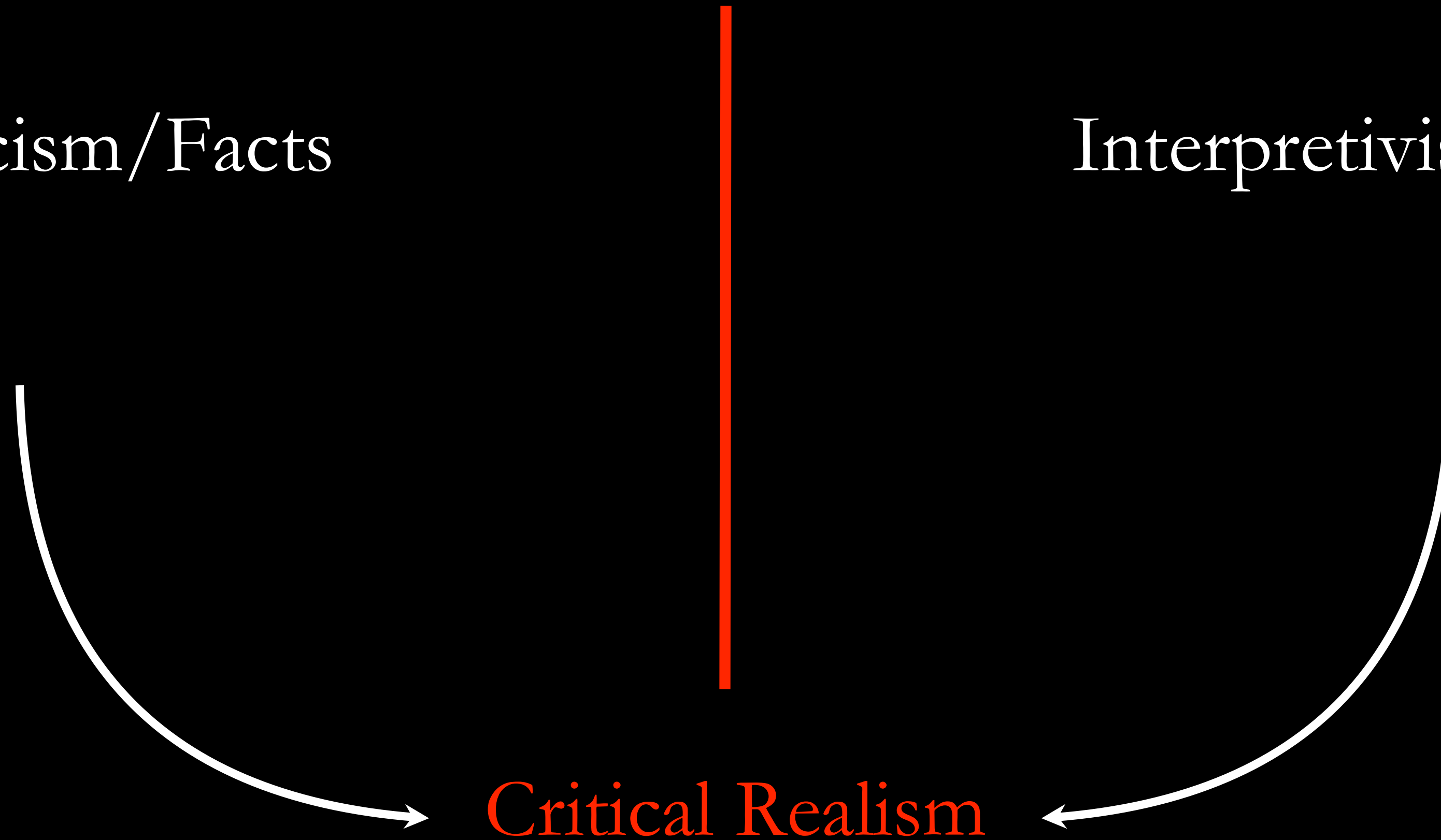
Interpretivism/Theory



The Objectivism/Subjectivism Split

Empiricism/Facts

Interpretivism/Theory



Critical Realism

Judgemental Rationality

Truth is not 'in' our representations, reality is the 'truth maker' (Porpora, 2015)

Evidence, Mediation and Montage



Esfir Shub, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, 1927

Evidence, Mediation and Montage



Ken Loach, 11'09"01 September 11, 2002

Montage and Causal Inference

Shot 1



Shot 2



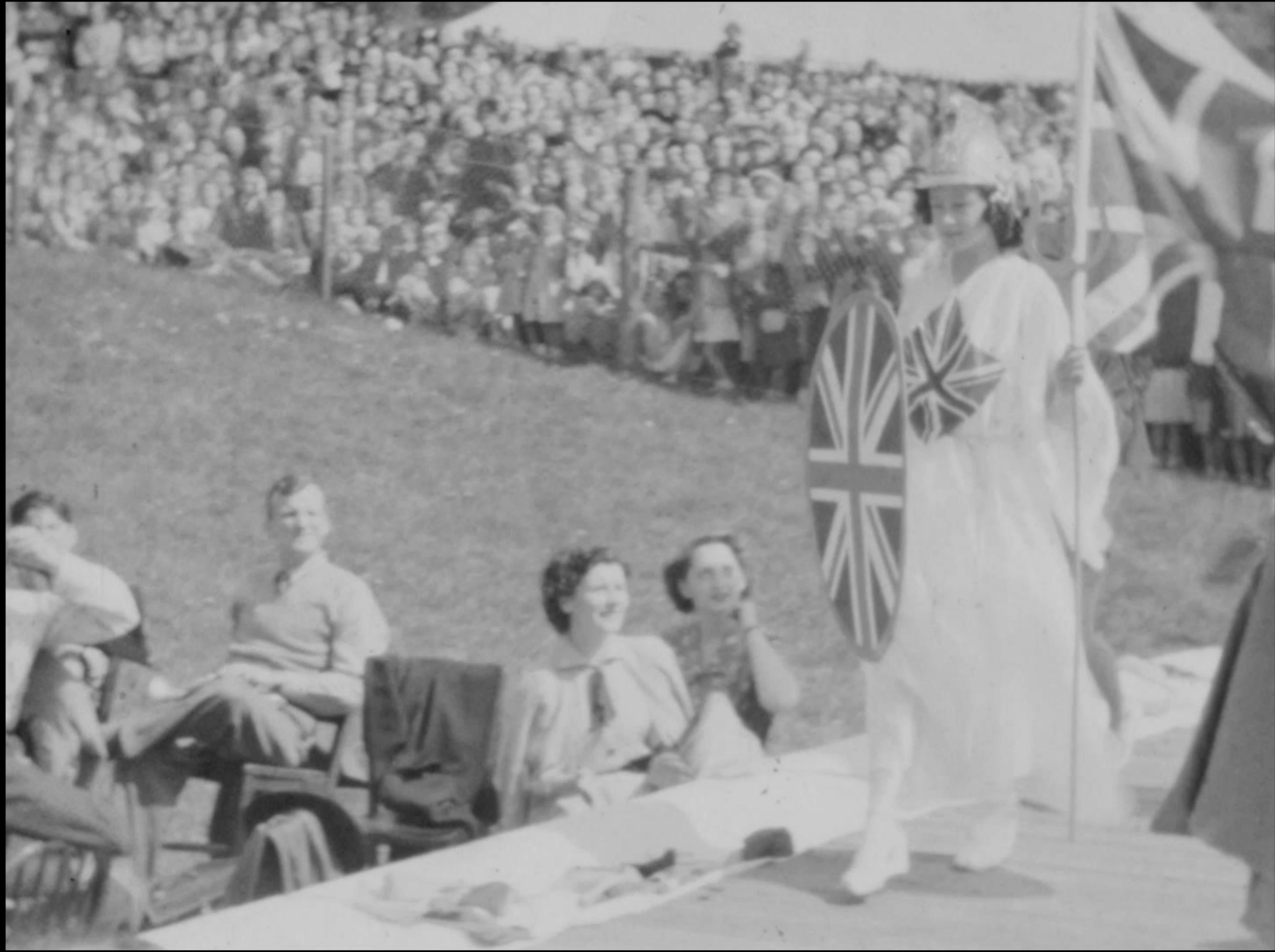
The Cut

Ontological Depth

Montage and Causal Inference

The opposition between objective and subjective is false. The photographic image (...) is both index and icon at the same time: an automatic rendering of the scene and a pictorial resemblance full of associations and connotations (Chanan, 2007)









Spatial Montage



Visual Effects



Visual Effects

Once the aesthetics of representation are no longer perceived as aesthetics, they become transparent because the representation is read as if it were reality itself. This has important political outcomes since once representation is no longer seen as such, what is represented can be viewed as 'real' rather than cultural and constructed, thus making it 'invisible' and complicit with existing ideology (Ehrlich, 2021)

...what was once a revolutionary technique is now the staple of advertising and greeting cards (Perloff, 1998)

Spatial Montage

Although digital compositing is usually used to create a seamless virtual space, this does not have to be its only goal. Borders between different worlds do not have to be erased; different spaces do not have to be matched in perspective, scale, and lighting; individual layers can retain their separate identities rather than being merged into a single space, different worlds can clash (Manovich, 2001)

Then (das Gewesene) and the Now (das Jetzt) come together in a constellation like a flash of lightning (...) the relation to the Then and Now is dialectical: *not temporal* in nature but *imagistic* (Benjamin, 1999c[1927–1939], my emphasis)

Collage and **Dark Fringes**

Collage (...) is very much about these dark fringes, these absences, as well as about the positive presence of positively apprehended fragments. The informal fringe and the formal assertion of substance exist side by side in the collage, subtly mingling to generate its energy (Kuspit, 1989)



Can Films Think?



Regional Identity and Politics

...when we dig further into the component parts of an identity we often find that while they may be held together within the force field of a broader framework, there may be considerable tensions or even contradictions between the component parts (Wayne, 2018)

Regional Identity and Politics



Skint, Channel 4, 2013



The Valleys, MTV, 2012



Valley Cops, BBC, 2017



Young, Welsh and Pretty Skint, BBC, 2015

Regional Identity and Politics

...necessary access to things that are indeed our common life but which are not accessible by means of direct observation and experience. (...) *which cannot be observed*, which has to be consciously discovered. New characteristic social relations which have, in a sense, to be discovered, *not only by factual enquiry* but by *very complex interpretation*, discovering all kinds of new systems and modes
(Williams R, 2003, my emphasis)

