

# ‘BEAUTIFUL, ISN’T IT?’: SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM ACROSS FILM AND MEDIA

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# SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM OR CAPITALISM EVOLVED

- “Surveillance capitalism unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioural data. Although some of these data are applied to service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioural surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as ‘machine intelligence’, and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon, and later. Finally, these prediction products are traded in a new kind of marketplace that I call behavioural futures markets. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are willing to lay bets on our future behaviour.”

-Susan Zuboff

- Zuboff “points out that while most of us think that we are dealing merely with algorithmic inscrutability, in fact what confronts us is the latest phase in capitalism’s long evolution.”

-John Naughton

- My talk will bring this evolution to light.

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## GOALS FOR TODAY

- Detail Surveillance Capitalism in Film & Media.
- Show Surveillance Capitalism's forgotten origins in corporate (esp. Big Data) connections to the Holocaust.
- Deploy *Inglourious Basterds* to frame “the bureaucratic process of destruction” and connect to consumer. To be data is to be marked for death.
- Touch on how Batman shows the attraction of surveillance capitalism for private companies and ways to resist.

“KNOWING IS GOOD, KNOWING EVERYTHING IS BETTER!”  
*THE CIRCLE* DIR. JAMES PONSOLDT (2017)

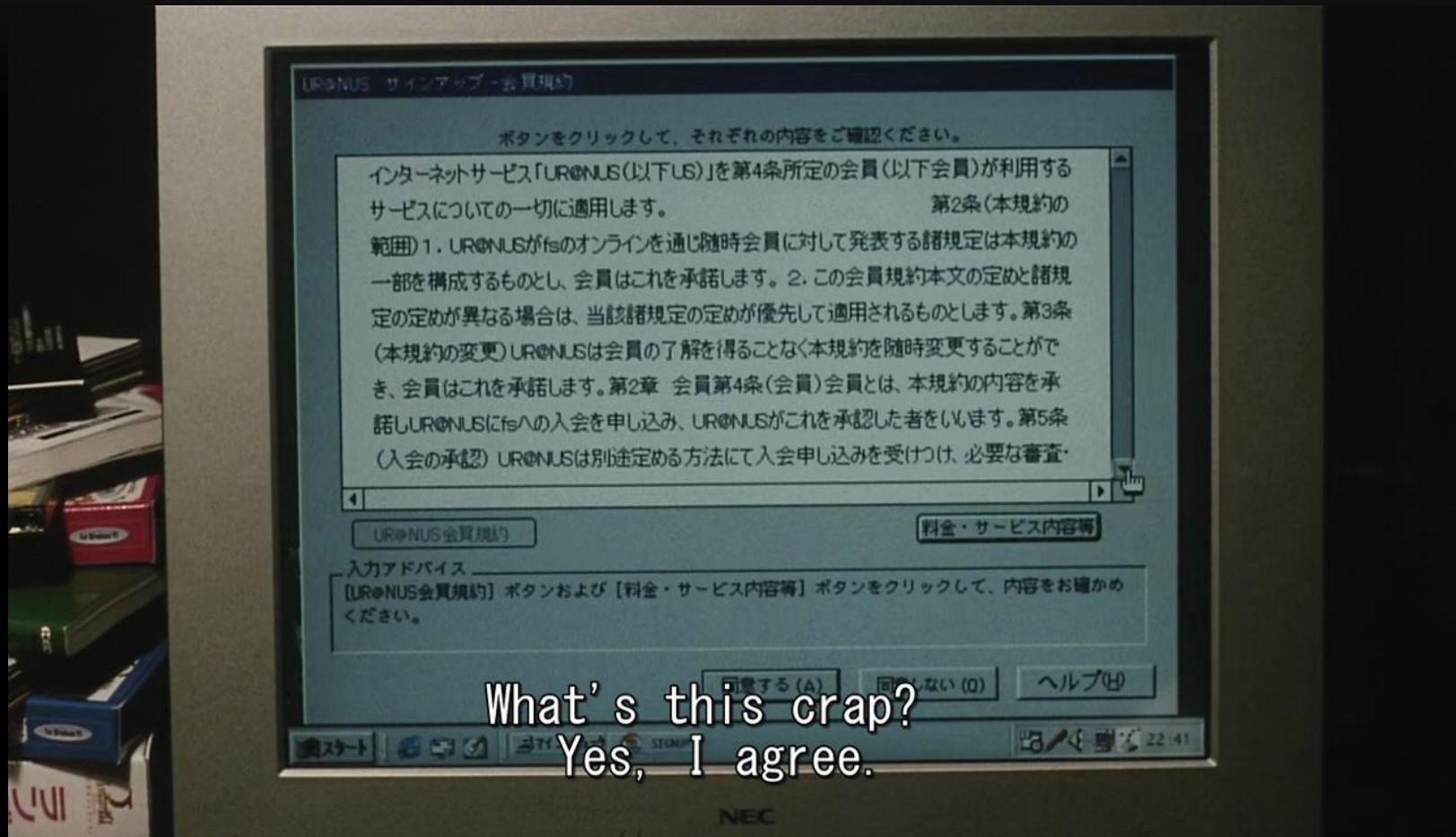


- 12:22 - 18:03

# ZUBOFF'S HISTORICAL CONNECTION: SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM AND COLONIALISM

- “I am fascinated by the structure of colonial conquest, especially the first Spaniards who stumbled into the Caribbean islands. Historians call it the “conquest pattern”, which unfolds in three phases: legalistic measures to provide the invasion with a gloss of justification, a declaration of territorial claims, and the founding of a town to legitimate the declaration. ... The first surveillance capitalists also conquered by declaration. They simply declared our private experience to be theirs for the taking, for translation into data for their private ownership and their proprietary knowledge. They relied on misdirection and rhetorical camouflage, with secret declarations that we could neither understand nor contest.
- Google began by unilaterally declaring that the world wide web was its to take for its search engine. Surveillance capitalism originated in a second declaration that claimed our private experience for its revenues that flow from telling and selling our fortunes to other businesses. **In both cases, it took without asking.”**

# THE IGNORANT CONSUMER IN *PULSE* DIR. KIYOSHI KUROSAWA (2001)



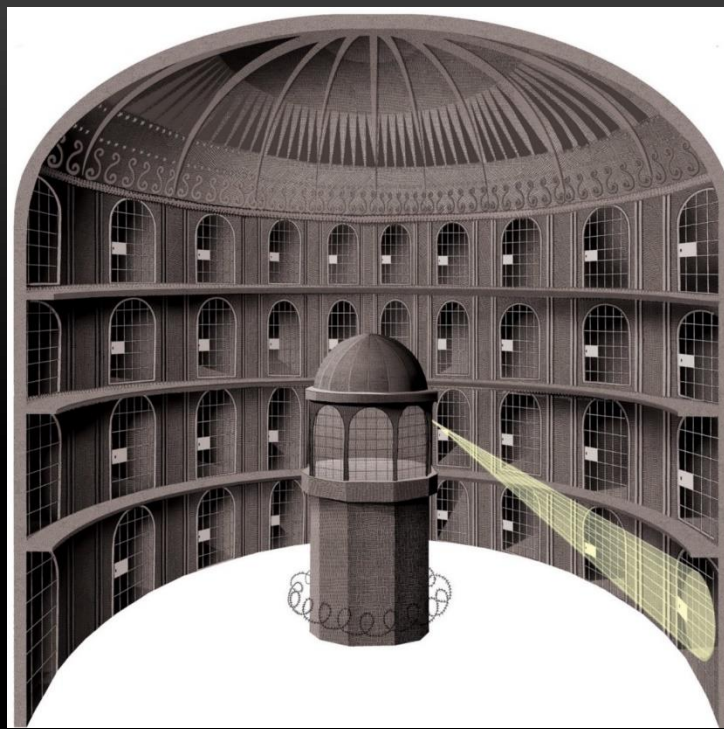
- 13:55 – 18:14

# IBM AND THE HOLOCAUST: *THE CORPORATION* DIRS. ACHBAR & ABBOTT (2004)



控制的IBM打卡系統  
在存儲的信息中





“Visibility is a trap.”

-MICHEL FOUCAULT



## DANGERS OF SURVEILLANCE: BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS OF DESTRUCTION

- The destruction of the Jews may have the appearance of an... impenetrable event. Upon closer observation it is revealed to be a process of sequential steps that were taken at the initiative of countless decision makers in a far-flung bureaucratic machine.”

-Hilberg (53)

# BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS OF DESTRUCTION

- The three steps:
    1. DEFINITION
    2. CONCENTRATION
    3. ANNIHILATION
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CLIP:

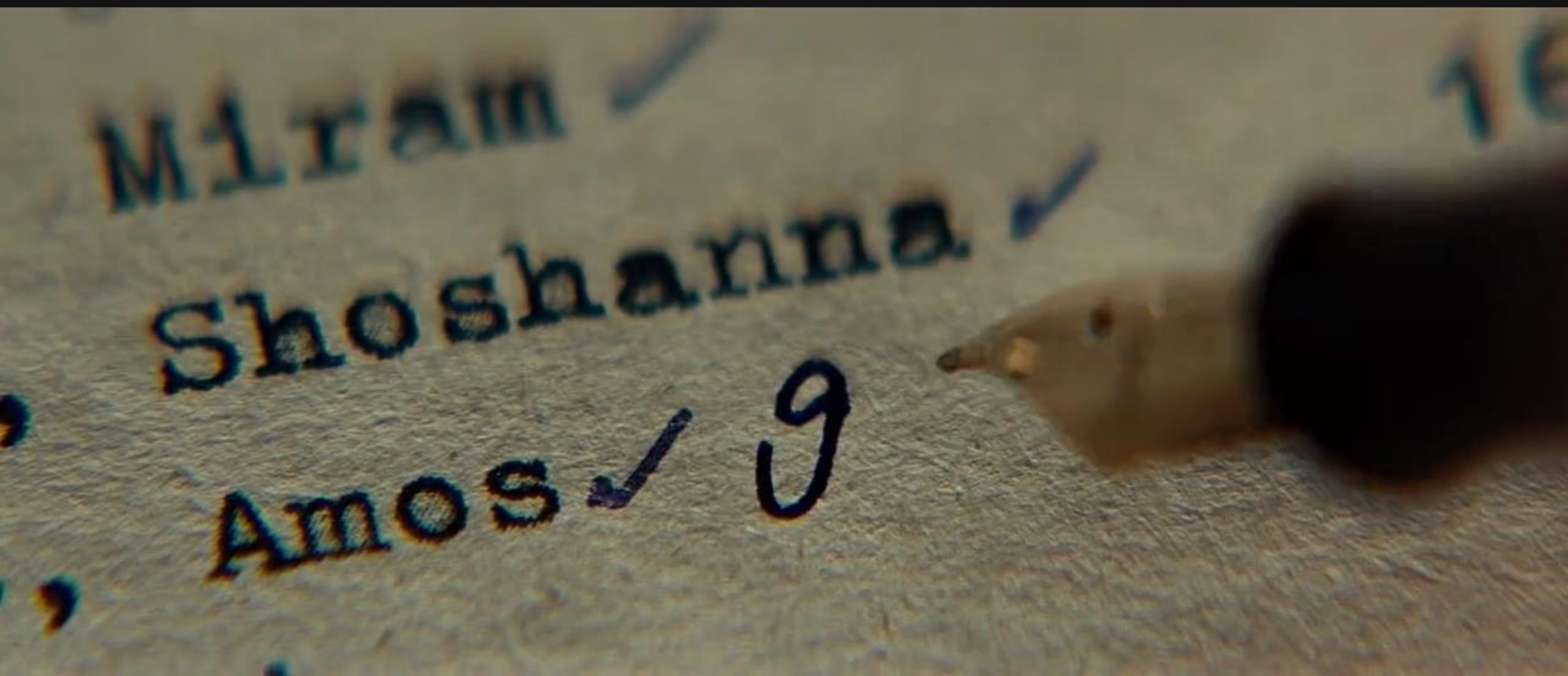
*INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS* DIR. TARANTINO (2009)



事实は誤った予断を与えるが

- 7:39 – 20:27

STEP 1:  
IDENTIFICATION



## STEP 2: CONCENTRATION



## STEP 3: ANNIHILATION





“I’M GOING TO SWITCH BACK TO FRENCH NOW –  
FOLLOW MY MASQUERADE”



我要再口法文, 跟我演下去



- "We were caught off guard by surveillance capitalism because there was no way that we could have imagined its action, any more than the early peoples of the Caribbean could have foreseen the rivers of blood that would flow from their hospitality toward the sailors who appeared out of thin air waving the banner of the Spanish monarchs. Like the Caribbean people, we faced something truly unprecedented."

-Zuboff

# THE ALLURE OF SURVEILLANCE: *THE DARK KNIGHT* DIR. NOLAN (2008)



- “Beautiful, isn't it?” 1:55:45 – 1:56:15

# REVOLUTION THROUGH A MASK: PAUL POPE'S *BATMAN: YEAR 100*

- "I used the state apparatus as the villain. It seems to me that the state uses technology to control and direct. In a police state, there's no room for a masked man fighting crime outside the law."
- "I tried to toss out all that earlier Batman legend and just look at the idea of a surveillance state dealing with a masked man. My Batman is essentially an accidental home-grown terrorist against the state... the state apparatus requires a rational, knowable and categorizable antagonist. My Batman is a mystical or irrational figure"

-Paul Pope

# SHOWING SURVEYORS THE FEAR THEY CAUSE: *BATMAN: YEAR 100*



## CONCLUSIONS

- “Visibility is a trap” extends from moments of historical trauma to today.
- Surveillance apparatuses need to be questioned and resisted.

THANK YOU!