

EVERYTHING THAT RISES: AN AFTERWORD

But it seemed fun to take it one step further.
—john carpenter

In 1967 Harlan Ellison said there must be some way a writer can write a book that has all the visual and sensory impact of a movie, and he used exclamation marks. That same year John Barth said somebody ought to make a novel with scenes that pop up, like the old children's books, and then said that was just something people say. Six years later Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. wrote and drew *Breakfast of Champions*. People called it juvenile. In 1981 Alan Moore wrote *The Watchmen*, and Dave Gibbons drew it. It was a comic book for grown-ups. In 1992 Neal Stephenson published *Snow Crash*, which had started out as a graphic novel. In the late eighties, Ronald Shushett adapted Philip K. Dick's short story "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" into a screenplay, which Paul Verhoeven turned into the movie *Total Recall*, which Piers Anthony then adapted back into a book, *Total Recall*. Though fake books are a real thing, this wasn't one. A year or two after that, in the version of *Scream 2* that leaked to the internet, Kevin Williamson says "Wes does some scary shit here." He used brackets. Mark Z. Danielewski had been writing *House of Leaves* for about three years, then. It would be published four years after David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, which itself came five years after Coupland's *Generation X*, some thirty-four years after Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, and the same year as VH1's *Pop-Up Video*. In Cervantes' day and for a long time after, the preface and the prologue had been the legitimate way to layer meaning, to introduce 'play.' Now it was the footnote. And not just in books. The 1976 film version of Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven Percent Solution* has footnotes in the opening credits. That year *Eaters of the Dead* hit the shelves. It was the same *Beowulf* story John Gardner had rewritten five years earlier. In the "Factual Notes" following the main body of "ibn Fadlan's" narration, Crichton says "I also added commentary and some extremely pedantic footnotes." None of those footnotes mention William Goldman's "S. Morgenstern." In 1971, Stanislaw Lem's *A Perfect Vacuum* came out. Instead of footnotes, which Noël Coward would be quoted thirty years later as saying were like "having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love," *Perfect Vacuum* had the subtitle "Perfect Reviews of Nonexistent Books." Two years later, Peter Shaffer wrote *Equus*. He used neither footnotes nor subtitles nor prologues nor postscripts nor marginalia, but stage directions, much as James Dickey would use a horse, in his poem "A Birth," or as John Vanderslice would use liner notes for his 2001 LP, *Time Travel is Lonely*. In 1981, Calvino wrote *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, ten distinct novels in one. As Borges said in 1967, "still we can imagine, over time, the distortions correcting themselves, and returning to the truth through a circle like a stroller and his dog." Calvino walks that dog dizzy. In the opening of *Book of Shadows: Blair Witch 2*, Roger Ebert is excerpted saying of the first *Blair Witch Project* that "it starts out light-hearted." He's talking about more than just one text there. In *Stroheim*, a 1968 book from the series *Movie Paperbacks*, Joel W. Finler says that *Poto-Poto* and *Paprika* were novels written by Stroheim during the early thirties, adapted from film projects he was never given a chance to put into production. In 1999 Joan Tewkesbury said movies are to watch, to feel, to be involved with, but not to read. This when I was reading the screenplay for *Closely Watched Trains*, a movie which reads better than it plays. The year before, screenwriter Richard Whiteside said if you absolutely want to control everything, write a novel. In the version of *The Cider House Rules* screenplay John Irving published, he said when he feels like being a director, he writes a novel. Since 1976, more than twenty-five of Stephen King's novels have been adapted into movies. In the sixteenth episode of the first season of *Hunter*, a naïve character says she was promised a role in a movie that was "one of those slasher pics, with a classier script." The comma is important there. In 1951, the novelist Raymond Chandler said that a preoccupation with words for their own sake was fatal to good film-making. This three years after a character in Hitchcock's *Rope* said "You often pick words for sound rather than meaning," fifty-two years before David Lynch said in the liner notes for *The Straight Story* that it was his "opinion that a film is not like a book." In the commentary to the screenplay version of *Jacob's Ladder*, Bruce Joel Rubin says he realized the film he was

writing was flawed if it couldn't communicate in strictly visual terms. In an episode of the *X-Files*, Jose Chung says "I don't know what was more disturbing, his description of the inner core's reincarnated soul sex orgy, or the fact that the whole thing was written in screenplay format." In 2005, Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean published *Mirrormask*. It claims to be an "Illustrated Filmscript." And maybe it is. In 1937, Delmore Schwarz wrote a story where a young man finds himself in a theater, watching an impossible movie of his parents' life. The story is called "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities." In it an old woman says that "all of this is only a movie, young man, only a movie." It's unclear, however, if she's talking about the theatre, the images on-screen, or the story itself. In 1999, Walter Dean Myers wrote the children's novel *Monster* as if it were a screenplay. In it, the narrator Steve Harmon says "Sometimes I feel I have walked into the middle of a movie. It is a strange movie . . ." Thirty-two years before, John Barth had said someone ought to write a novel with scenes that pop up. The essay he says that in was originally called "Prologue," later "The Literature of Exhaustion." We're far from exhausted, though. Later prints of James Cameron's *Terminator* have Harlan Ellison in the closing credits. The exclamation marks are implied. *Total Recall 2* was supposed to have been released in 2001. Clarke's year, Kubrick's year. It thrills me to imagine what it might have been based on, if anything.

—stephengrahamjones, 12/31/05