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Cavell famously asks in the final sentence of *The Claim of Reason*, 'can philosophy become literature and still know itself?' Perhaps equally at issue is whether philosophy can recognize itself, or some other like itself, in film. It is fruitful that Cavell's writing keeps these questions as questions – there is no resolution. *Cities of Words* prompts the reflection that Cavell's writing in general might be understood as criticism - of life, of philosophy, of literature, of film. Criticism would seem the mode for writing a new philosophy that is in a sense anti-philosophy. With its surrender to what is before it, and at the same time its standing at a distance and taking thought, criticism is in a position like that of film, as Cavell accounts for film, where the world is at once present and beside itself, inviting reflection.