

A Dialectical Digression

by stephen hastings-king

She walks around a farm that charges admission and operates a store that sells miniatures of itself plus donuts which has thereby transformed itself from a farm into "a farm," a copy of itself in which all implements and spatial arrangements are copies of themselves and all animals are in quotation marks, a place where a cow standing in a field becomes "a cow standing in a field," an exemplary cow standing in an exemplary way in an exemplary field that clarifies what is meant by cowness, standing-in-ness and fieldness. "The farm" is a theory of language interaction with which enables the act of observing to become "the act of observing," a duplication that opens onto "experience" that is onto experience and the dynamics that condition it, that is onto the intricate play of shifting visual data, spatial relations and conceptual prototypes in the continuous fashioning of everyday realities and onto the ways in which each of those realities is always specific (the cow) and general ("the cow") at once.

Her journey through the space of rural forms happens on a blustery metallic autumn afternoon. She wears a long scarf like an aviator. She positions herself before a series of white rail fence frames. Separated thus from the picture world she is unconditioned, a pure observer flying in a slow silent airplane over the shifting terrains of time. Disembodied and floating, she gazes at the unfolding of the phenomena "pigs." She contemplates their porcine ideality. She comprehends the ways that "pigs," taken as bundles of attributes, interact with the landscape that is their horizon and the ways in which the "landscape" in turn becomes itself through its interactions with the ideal pigs and the ways that "landscape" and its "framing" allow the porcinity of the porcine to shine forth.

She moves seamlessly through the levels of retail phenomenology until she feels a tugging on her scarf that tightens it around her

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throat. One of the very large ideal pigs has started to eat it. The ensuing struggle performs the dialectic that intertwines real and ideal through her mounting concern about being choked to death then eaten by a very large pig. But mostly she wants her scarf back. "This my favorite scarf you goddamn pig. Give it back."

