

Stephanie Strickland

## History Of Knowledge

### *At the Tree*

Never again seen garden of animals  
unenclosed  
except by ice  
ibex  
mammoth  
salmon  
trout

Raid                    a ridicule  
buffalo reindeer in herds in hordes in motion in fullness

### *Stay away from the tree*

not divided into fields  
divided by rivers

lest you plant it  
by mistake  
and call it your own

It is not a tree

It is not a garden  
It is forest and  
moor it is cloud scraping ridges  
and    piercing  
   valley caverns

It is long lone desolate somber moor and causeway

It is little horses  
It is leaping lamprey  
It is hazel trees springing from a cave roof

It is deeper in the caves  
It is looking up  
It is the maelstrom pool of stars  
slipping  
slipping slipping away

It is bell  
it is escapement  
cerise  
apricot  
hazelnuts

It is at peace  
it is in motion

It is tilted this much it is leaning outward

It is body in a fountain  
it is her body reflection and shadow  
conformed in water

It is off-center  
It is adrift  
It is unwinding  
It is remarked  
barque  
kayak  
coracle  
☞ the trees are smiling

The trees are smiling

the lovers are loving with great  
with extreme courtesie  
with *speech*

## History Of Knowledge

### *In the Cave*

The Cave                   receptacle of images not shadows  
The Cave                   contains           a shaft a pit  
  a slower bison

The Bison                   is cut  
The Bison                   is spilling           burst from its side a rope of gut  
The Bison                   is attacking a stick a stick on its back a stick  
  with a beak with the head of a bird—a man  
  a tiny a too tiny beak a mask of a bird

The Man                   has fallen on his back  
The Man                   has fallen  
The Man                   is wearing a mask or the man has the head of a bird  
The Man                   has fallen at the bottom of the shaft  
The Man                   on his back before the bison bleeding gut

The Bison                   is huge and coming at  
The Bison                   is bleeding black red ochre gut not a shadow not  
  a shadow no light penetrates  
  the Cave much less the shaft

The Bison                   is coming right at

The Man                   the figure of the man

No not here this Cave is not a half-cave flooded by light  
No the Cave is not a pool a cave plunging only down  
No the Cave is not a womb a smooth a tight Boolean enclosure hard  
to fall  
  far enough from

No the Cave is not Palomar either—nor the Bijou's purring  
engines of image and light

The Cave

It is dark            It is so dark so damp so riverrun  
It is so white the lime sparkle of the ceiling and walls their cream  
above the golden

wainscot rock

It is so only        part seeable by lamp

It is so

*lampless*

so mined            by the river mined by the pools  
in the river bed    so high and so open so rotunda right here  
so tight low cunningly canaled

Falling in a shaft running off in arcades in outcrop in crypt  
holes in the Cave now hold a scaffold    a reed    a rush  
on the open ledge a cup a cupped spoon stone

flickering on the open ledge        a flame fed        with fat

or

drenched with oil            crushed

sesame    or flax

## History Of Knowledge

### *Blackboard-Based*

trace the Tamil characters in rice  
seeds of creation drift on water in a pot  
a sacred pot. every rational-number **R**'s personal friend

false starts. time. if you fail ( *enough* ) you get enough time  
connection found between what seems unconnected  
could not afford paper. hand to elbow to slate

$\pi$  marks the ratio 3.14159 . . . . .  $\pi$  to 39 places can calculate  
to within the radius of a hydrogen atom  
the circumference / diameter ratio of the whole universe

the ( *known* ) universe. **R**'s intuition steered him clear  
of many obstacles his paltry education had failed to warn  
him of. but not all. producing

correct or incorrect with the same aplomb. the same naïve confidence  
not really grasping what  
was meant by proof. *listen to my questions. answer my questions*

mostly he was right. insight rarer ( *by far* ) than even formidable  
mastery. it generates theories. rigor ( *Littlewood said* ) not of first-  
rate importance beyond undergraduate. can be supplied by any

competent professional. Wranglers pondered . . . thus what must be  
taught him without ( *causing shame or* ) breaking the spell  
of his inspiration. judging it impossible

to allow him to go through life supposing  
all the Zeta Function zeroes were real. certain complex solution-  
zeroes on a line parallel to the imaginary

axis half a unit to its right. Hardy ( *listen to my questions* ) had proved  
an infinite number of them lie on that line  
**Ramanujan** had found it on his own. something like Riemann's

Zeta Function yet fatally flawed. as if complex-zeroes did not  
exist. implying a theorem ( *a prime number theorem* ) that was simply wrong  
**Ramanujan** offered it abundantly. the trove

what he knew. scribbling beautiful identities. yet left so much  
in his garden. notebooks. for other  
people to discover. to dig up. as they keep on ongoingly doing

Knowledge : Its Foot ( *note* )

Wranglers † Littlewood † G.H. Hardy † **Ramanujan**

A Wrangler is one who has taken first-class honors in a  
mathematics exam at Cambridge. Throughout the United Kingdom  
and the British Empire, university mathematics professors are  
often chosen from among the top three. G.H. Hardy, an eminent  
mathematician and professor, came in fourth. His longtime  
collaborator, John Littlewood, *was* senior wrangler, that is, he came  
in first. Hardy considered his "discovery" of Ramanujan his  
greatest achievement. To be clear, Ramanujan introduced himself  
to Hardy by letter.