

Blog entry: anthology update

Contributed by Sean Miller
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It's been a while since I've made an entry in this blog. My attentions have been diverted elsewhere. I just submitted a draft of the third chapter of the thesis, provisionally entitled, 'Romancing Strings in Technical Discourse'. I meet with my supervisor, Professor Andrew Gibson, in a couple weeks to discuss. The chapter explores how the image of the string arose in the first technical articles to make mention of it, a paper by Leonard Susskind called 'Dual-Symmetric Theory of Hadrons', and another by Yoichiro Nambu called 'Quark Model and the Factorization of the Veneziano Amplitude'. Both appeared in journal form in 1970.

The basic argument of this chapter is that the choice of the image of the string is neither obvious nor arbitrary. The image occupies a central position within a textual structure that is, from a cultural and narratological perspective, romantic. I mean here romantic in the archaic sense, as in, a quest performed by a hero that involves an encounter in a figurative wilderness. In these two technical articles, the image of the string serves metonymically for nature. Each narrative works to domesticate the string, to purify it. But the image unavoidably bears with it a great deal of etymological baggage, and thus familiar feelings and associations. I'm considering posting the chapter draft here later--once my supervisor has had a chance to pick it apart!

Meanwhile, progress on the anthology continues in solid fashion. I'm very pleased to announce that Sheldon Glashow, Michio Kaku, and Peter Woit have all agreed in principle to contribute essays. The accomplished science fiction author Adam Roberts (who happens to be my thesis advisor) has also submitted a short story. We've received around 200 other submissions so far--with a little under two months left before the submission deadline. This includes two string theory themed plays that have been produced in New York: Carole Buggé's Strings, and Susanna Speier's Calabi Yau. Shveta and I are both optimistic about receiving a slew of submissions in the lead-up to the deadline. I intend to send out a reminder to MFA program heads in the next week or so. For all of you still debating with yourself on whether or not to submit a piece, I really encourage you to give it a go.

Recently, I came across a contemporary classical group called String Theory. Here's a song from one of their albums called Chaos Nebula. Click the little play button to listen.