A Stellar System (Literally)

Whether one believes that the universe began with an utterance of, “Let there be light”, or a gargantuan “bang” of science, it can not be denied that our sun is somewhat important. It rests in the center of our Solar system as Sol, the giver of all life in the cold abyss of space. Eight planets drift around this giant (nine, if you still believe), many with their own moons. The setup of this system calls forth concepts found in several literary theories, engaging the Structuralist, the Deconstructionist, and the Psychoanalyst. From a Structuralist standpoint, planets could provide the *units* while physics govern the *rules* that they obey. Sol might strike a Deconstructionist as an obvious Center, simultaneously occupying the system and not bending to its rules. In this sense, the emergence of a black hole could be considered a cosmic *episteme*, a heavenly shift in the structure as the center changes, literally deconstructing itself. A Psychoanalytic perspective might postulate that this system exhibits a spectrum of masculinity and femininity as one moves further away from the center, with orbits becoming less influenced by gravity and planets becoming colder as they grow in distance from Sol. Spinning in a state of infinite flux between order and chaos, allowing life and denying it, the universe has displayed a cycling between the realms of Structuralism and Deconstruction since its genesis.

The very fact that it is known as a Solar “system” is something of a dead ringer for Structuralism. Structuralism examines the relationship between units, which provide the skeleton of the system, and the rules that dictate their function. Heavenly bodies make up these units (not including the sun/black hole center, which escape this), each with their own mass and presence. Physics then comes along and tells these planets what to do, specifically, the ultimate rule of gravity that drags all of them all inward, giving them orbit. Such an orbit not only provides the concept of a year, but is also a key factor in life existing on Earth. Without this movement, this structure, our planet would become utterly uninhabitable, with half the globe being incinerated by Sol and the other half left to the stare into cold, dark space. Interestingly enough, most of the planets themselves have moons, small satellites that get caught in their own orbit around these planets. Even the entire Solar system exists as a mere *piece* of the Milky Way Galaxy, a structure within a structure, with structures of its own.

Derrida’s Deconstructive theory of the Center can therefore be represented by Sol, which literally gives “order” (trajectory, orbit) to it’s elements depending on their proximity to it. A center is supposed to exist *within* and *beyond* the system at the same time, a “contradictorily coherent” event. While Sol may easily escape categorization as a planet, it still exists as a tangible part of the system, a definite center in a geographic sense. Because of this, a black hole serves as an *even better* example of a center, as the concept of a black hole is about as “contradictorily coherent” as our universe comes. Black holes technically do not exist - as a collapsed star, it’s gravitational pull becomes too much for it’s own mass. Doomed to an eternity of non-existence as a void, a black hole slowly sucks the rest of the universe toward it, completely undoing the structure it had imposed as a Sol. This metamorphosis from life-giver to life-eater could be seen as an *episteme*, an event in which the center of a structure is replaced, changing the structure itself. Provided a black hole runs its course and devours an entire system, a few possibilities arise. It can continue dragging matter into it, growing in size and power. Alternatively, scientists have theorized that the big bang might have occurred after the entire contents of the universe had been dragged into a supermassive black hole, beginning anew after being torn down entirely. This calls forth the idea of the bricoleur and the engineer, who desire extreme play and re-structuring of a system respectively.

The visual component of this project is meant to relay two things: the sense of order and simplicity that permeates Structuralism, and the Psychoanalytical concept of masculinity and femininity in relation to the center. My first piece of “art” represents the rigidity and simplicity that Structuralism embrace, an extremely simple yet total view of all of the important elements within a system. The colors in this drawing are used to represent warmth, advancing along the color spectrum as they move further away from Sol. In this sense, the warm planets are more masculine, literally more prone to Sol’s radiation than the further planets. Even the perspective of this drawing, directly within the system, exudes this masculinity; It’s more of a chart than a piece of “art”. The second piece was drawn from the most feminine perspective possible, far beyond the reaches of our own Milky Way. No warm colors can be seen - only the cool blues and purples that represent near-total play. Even the style of the drawing was meant to be more abstract or modern, as the spiral arms of the universe are not nearly as organized or structured as the “chart art”. Nothing is even labeled - there can be little to no certainty as to what is happening in this part of the spacetime continuum. Using a method known as a Paralax Shift, astronomers and physicists have been able to *fairly* accurately determine the position of heavenly bodies. However, beyond one hundred light years, the Paralax Shift begins to lose its precision. Truly, from a masculine-Earthling position, it is impossible to know the exactness of what is occurring in the “playful” reaches of space.

Since the beginning of time, the many different layers of our universe have transformed from chaos into life-giving ordered systems, eventually collapsing back upon themselves and reverting to anarchy. Stars provide structure, which provides life, and eventually return to take it away after metamorphosing into a black hole. Perhapsother strange literary/cosmic phenomenon *could* be occurring within the dark reaches of space, (Perhaps a nebula being indicative of the Postmodern rhizome) but it is impossible to know from Earth due to the “play” that clouds our perspective.