

Traveling Through the Iris: Re-producing

Whiteness in *Stargate SG-1*

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Introduction Opening the Iris: U.S. Science Fiction and Representation	1
Structure of the Thesis	
Scope and Limitations	
Chapter 1 Review of the Literature	11
Approaching the Study of Whiteness	
Viewing and Seeing Whiteness	
Science Fiction Television and Whiteness	
The Colonial Gaze within Science Fiction Television	
Conclusion	
Chapter 2 Presenting Whiteness in “Children of the Gods” & “The Enemy Within”	32
The Invisibility and Normality of Whiteness	
Imperial Discourses in <i>Stargate SG-1</i>	
Colonizing the Landscape	
Manifest Destiny Travels into Space	
Fictions of the White Self & the White Hero as Saviour	
Colonel Jack O’Neill	
Dr. Daniel Jackson	
Conclusion	
Chapter 3 Whiteness as Superiority and Terror in “Enigma”	58
Technology as a Measure of Superiority	
The Fallacy of Cultural Superiority	

The Natural World & the Negation of Culture	
Representations of Whiteness as Symbolic Terror	
Physical Violence and White Authority	
Re-asserting SG-1's Dominant Position	
Conclusion	
Chapter 4 the Dark Side of the White Self in "The Tok'ra" I & II	81
We Prefer that You Do Not Call us Goa'uld	
The Darkness of Slavery & the Emancipation of Whiteness	
Stigmatizing the Other: Blending and Branding	
Losing the Self in the Other – Tales of Contamination & Possession	
Conclusion	
Conclusion: Closing the Iris.....	99
White Hegemonic Discourses	
Re-Telling and Historical Denial	
United States Imperialism & Paternalistic Whiteness	
Reflecting United States Anxieties	
Closing Comments	
Works Cited	106

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Cast of <i>Stargate SG-1</i>	3
Figure 2. The Face of Evil	4
Figure 3. The Monks of Chulak	49

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Abstract

This study analyses how *Stargate SG-1* perpetuates dominant representations of whiteness, and how whiteness is used as a marker of racial identity in American popular culture. The popular science fiction television show *Stargate SG-1* continually uses the nonwhite alien to juxtapose the seeming superiority of the white human, with white Americans acting as trusted gatekeepers for the entire planet. Whiteness becomes almost invisible and normative as the alien “other” requires assistance or containment enacted through SG-1’s adventures “off-world”. I also examine the representation of superior white aliens as an extension of these dominant white discourses.

It is through the study of the constructed nature of “race” that whiteness is made visible. As represented in *Stargate SG-1* whiteness discourses contribute to and reflect “common sense” constructions of race within U.S. society. This examination of *Stargate SG-1* illuminates how negotiations of whiteness are constructed within United States dominant cultural discourses as a means to exclude the “other”.

Introduction

Opening the Iris: U.S. Science Fiction and Representation

Science fiction tells tales of wondrous new worlds, technological advancements, utopian and dystopian civilizations, as well as, tales of the threat to humanity by hostile alien take-overs and technological disasters. Through these stories science fiction can be seen as reinterpreting historical anxieties and framing contemporary concerns. It is often through engagement with aliens and alien technology that these anxieties and concerns are illustrated. In mainstream science fiction, aliens tend to be either benevolent, superior beings or menacing threats bent on the destruction of humankind. From *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *Lost in Space* to the recent *Avatar* and *Stargate Universe*, American science fiction narratives continue to mirror many socio-political concerns.

During the 1990s, a plethora of science fiction television series invaded American television screens. Series like *Star Trek The Next Generation*, *Star Trek Voyager* and *Earth: Final Conflict* sought to engage audiences with their rich and inventive narratives. Amongst these shows was the U.S.-Canadian co-production, *Stargate SG-1*. The television series *Stargate SG-1*, created by Jonathan Glassner and Brad Wright for Showtime and the Sci Fi Channel, was broadcast between 1997 and 2006 and spawned the sequels *Stargate Atlantis* and *Stargate Universe* as well as two feature films *Stargate: The Arc of Truth* and *Stargate: Continuum*.¹ Placed alongside the futuristic *Star Trek* franchise, *Stargate SG-1* carved out a niche by placing the action of the series within the contemporary United States. The exotic alien is not some future threat but is out there “now” on distant worlds. The series is

¹ *Stargate SG-1* builds upon, but is distinct from, Roland Emmerich’s 1994 film *Stargate* starring Kurt Russell and James Spader. In this film the Stargate is used to transport Colonel O’Neil and his team to Abydos, where they battle the System Lord Ra, the original Goa’uld threat to humanity.

situated within the contemporary U.S. socio-political discourses of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. However, like many American science fiction television narratives of aliens and alien encounters, *Stargate SG-1* recalls historical dialogues and images of U.S. colonial and imperialist encounters with the other.

Building upon the success of the *Stargate* movie, *Stargate SG-1* centres around a team of four who make up SG-1: Colonel Jack O'Neill, a white U.S. Air Force officer; Captain Samantha Carter, a white female Air Force scientist; Dr. Daniel Jackson, a white civilian archaeologist; and Teal'c, a black rebel Jaffa, the only nonhuman on the team (Figure 1). This team is formed in response to an unprovoked attack on Earth by aliens who seek to enslave or destroy humanity. In addition to protecting Earth from invasion, SG-1 is commissioned to make contact with other alien civilizations and collect information and technology as they travel through the Stargate. The Stargate operation is controlled by Stargate Command, a United States Air Force operation housed within the bowels of Cheyenne Mountain and under the command of General George Hammond. The Stargate programme is a military operation dominated by white, male authority that regularly tries to impose its hegemonic principles upon alien civilizations.

The Stargate device is an alien technology created and left behind on Earth by a group of highly advanced aliens called the Ancients. The Stargate itself operates through the input of gate addresses or cartouches. These addresses are dialled into the Gate system and a controlled "wormhole" is opened. It is through these wormholes that people are transported to other planets which also have Stargates. The Ancients inhabited the fabled city of Atlantis and are referred to as the "Gate Builders". When the Ancients fled Earth, the Goa'uld stole the Stargate technology and used the Stargates built through the galaxy to extend their empire.

The Goa'uld are a parasitic race that commandeer humanoid life forms in order for their symbiote or larval life form to survive. The Goa'uld take over the host both physically and psychologically. The Goa'uld arrived on Earth in early Egyptian times and enslaved humanity. They scattered groups of humans out into the galaxy in order to produce a permanent supply of slaves and hosts². They are intent on the destruction of Earth and the Tau'ri – defined as those humans who have remained on Earth after the Ancients left.



Fig.1. The core cast of *Stargate SG-1*: Amanda Tapping as Captain Samantha Carter; Richard Dean Anderson as Colonel Jack O'Neill; Michael Shanks as Dr. Daniel Jackson; Christopher Judge as Teal'c and Don S. Davis as General George Hammond.

Several civilizations of Goa'uld live throughout the galaxy. These civilizations represent the various Earth historical periods in which individual Goa'uld asserted their reign over humanity.³ Their organization is dominated by feudal System Lords

² In "Children of the Gods," Dr. Daniel Jackson states that the Goa'uld posed as Earth's ancient gods, like those of early Egypt.

³ As well as Goa'uld civilizations based around ancient Egyptian and Grecian cultures with gods like Ra and Apophis, there are also Goa'uld rulers who pose as gods from other ancient Earth civilisations. For example, the Norse gods are also represented within the Goa'uld System Lords and their civilisations are formed around ancient Viking cultures. There is also a Goa'uld System Lord who poses as an ancient Chinese Emperor.

who rule over numerous planets that provide slaves and resources. Like medieval barons constantly battling each other for supremacy, the System Lords are involved in a continuous arms race. In the 1994 film *Stargate*, Ra is defeated on Abydos by Colonel O'Neil.⁴ The television series, *Stargate SG-1* begins with Apophis, the brother of Ra, taking over supreme power of the System Lords (Figure 2). Apophis' aim is to destroy or enslave Earth and to extend his control throughout the Goa'uld Empire. On Abydos, he takes captive Dr. Jackson's wife and young brother-in-law and makes them hosts for his own wife and son. The first two seasons of *Stargate SG-1* focus on Dr Jackson and the rest of SG-1 searching for Daniels' missing family, and seeking technology and allies to defeat the Goa'uld.



Fig.2. The face of evil: the System Lord, Apophis.

Along with enslaving hosts, the Goa'uld use elite warriors called Jaffa. The Jaffa are genetically engineered to carry the larval form of the Goa'uld until maturity when it then seeks a new more permanent host.⁵ Each System Lord has his own

⁴ In the film O'Neil is spelt with only one "l", in contrast to the series which uses two.

⁵ The Jaffa have no immune system of their own and after puberty if they do not receive a Goa'uld they will die. This is mentioned in the episode "Birthright".

army of Jaffa who are controlled by a high ranking warrior referred to as the First Prime. All Jaffa are branded by the symbol of the System Lord they serve. These brands are applied after puberty when the Jaffa receive their first larval Goa'uld. Unlike the final host of the adult Goa'uld, the Jaffa do not communicate with their symbiote. While the infant Goa'uld remains dormant, the adult Goa'uld is capable of fully supplanting the host's free will. The despotic nature of the Goa'uld and their threat to humanity places them in direct opposition to SG-1.

The team SG-1 explore worlds that echo the ancient and primitive civilizations of Earth, helping these more simplistic civilizations. They also encounter more advanced civilizations and aliens like the Nox, the Tollan and the Tok'ra, which significantly for this thesis, are all represented as white. The Nox and the Tollan refuse to share their technology with other races on the basis that their technology could be used aggressively. They both view SG-1 as child-like and ill-equipped to deal with technological and scientific advancements. Both of these alien groups equate SG-1 with inferiority and violence. The dealings of SG-1 and the Tok'ra are, however, more complex. As a resistant branch of the Goa'uld, the Tok'ra are in fact the "good" Goa'uld. The Tok'ra are a truly symbiotic entity that preserves the consciousness of two individual beings with both living in harmony in one body. SG-1 however find it difficult to separate the Tok'ra from the despotic Goa'uld who are violent and intent on conquering and enslaving Earth. SG-1's inability to see this vital difference between the Goa'uld and the Tok'ra becomes important in their later relationship with the Tok'ra.

Alien encounters and SG-1's response to these encounters are fundamental to the narrative of *Stargate SG-1*. I argue that a significant feature of *Stargate SG-1* is the conflict operating between whiteness and nonwhiteness. Whiteness is represented as

linked to the superior white human and white alien, while the nonwhite human and nonwhite alien are linked with inferiority. As my thesis demonstrates, *Stargate SG-1* narratives also associate whiteness and humanity, with liberty, democracy and superiority. These associations are set in opposition to those of darkness and alienness, which are linked with tyranny, inferiority and savagery. Such simplistic severances are used to reinforce classic stereotypes of the other.

Unlike *Star Trek* with its aim to present a multi-cultural image through having a diverse cast, the early seasons of *Stargate SG-1* do not represent a multi-cultural format⁶. In fact, the only substantial role given to a nonwhite actor who is part of Stargate Command in the early episodes is that of the alien, Teal'c. Other nonwhite actors appear occasionally but function mostly as background to the central narrative. When nonwhiteness is made visible it is done so in terms of alien representation. Hostile aliens in the series are predominantly nonwhite, and often black.⁷

* * *

Building upon the critical works of writers such as Daniel Bernardi and Richard Dyer, my analysis of whiteness in *Stargate SG-1* takes a textual approach and examines both the images and narratives of whiteness. My study aims to provide an

⁶ In *Star Trek*, in particular the latter series, the multi-cultural make up of the ship's crew is emphasised. The show's theme of liberal-humanism is demonstrated in its attempts at presenting a future that is colour-blind. Daniel Bernardi's analysis of *Star Trek* discusses the issue of race in space in detail. A move towards a more diverse casting was implemented in the sequel to *Stargate SG-1*, *Stargate Atlantis*, yet they continue to reproduce the invisibility of whiteness.

⁷ "Black" or "Blackness" often correlates to African American experiences and in the U.S. to people of African American descent. In more broad terms the definition of "black" relates to dark skinned peoples from various countries of origin (Hunt). In *Stargate SG-1*, "blackness" is presented as a homogenous representation of otherness. In the episodes I have discussed there are only two reoccurring "black" characters. Both Teal'c played by African American actor Christopher Judge and Peter Williams the Jamaican actor who plays Apophis are placed firmly into the realm of the alien.

insight into how whiteness is constructed as the normative and privileged position by focusing on one particular show, *Stargate SG-1*. I argue that the show's narratives depict a clear division between whiteness and blackness by rendering whiteness as invisible, superior and normal, and blackness as visible, inferior and alien.

Highlighted in *Stargate SG-1*, is the propensity of mainstream American science fiction to depict whiteness as a central tenet to mark differences between the human and the alien. In addition, the show reproduces discourses of white privilege and superiority in the representation of white technologically advanced aliens. I contend that the white alien draws attention to the nature of whiteness as constituting superiority and a system of terror.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided up into five chapters. Chapter one provides a theoretical perspective on the current literature and arguments within the field of whiteness studies, focusing on how whiteness can be studied through an analysis of American science fiction television. In addition, I examine how these theoretical perspectives provide a framework for my analysis of whiteness in *Stargate SG-1*. Chapter two, entitled "Representing Whiteness in 'Children of the Gods' and 'The Enemy Within,'" discusses the invisibility and normality of whiteness within the narratives of the first two episodes of *Stargate SG-1*. In addition, the importance of white colonial and imperialist scenarios within the story lines of these two episodes is demonstrated. The final section of this chapter addresses the characteristics of the white American hero and how this figure acts to cement ideal fictions of whiteness. Throughout this chapter I argue that imperialist discourses and fantasies of whiteness are rearticulated and ingrained within the narratives of *Stargate SG-1*, and

that, images of nineteenth-century racial others are translated and inscribed upon the alien other.

Chapter three offers a discussion of how whiteness as superiority and terror is represented within the episode “Enigma”. The Tollan are all white, and represented as technologically superior. Stargate Command acknowledges and is threatened by the Tollan’s superiority. SG-1’s dominant position is maintained, however, because the Tollan are rendered powerless to save themselves without their assistance. In this episode, superiority is depicted and disputed through references to technological advancement and the power to name and define the other.

Chapter four explores the distinction between the System Lords and the Tok’ra. In my analysis of “The Tok’ra” I & II, I argue that images of slavery and nineteenth-century racial stereotypes are rearticulated within *Stargate SG-1* through the characterization of the alien. The Tok’ra represents the “good” Goa’uld, one that is presented as predominantly white (as opposed to the mostly nonwhite System Lords) and one that has turned its back on despotism and slavery. Within Chapters three and four, I argue that the white alien often undermines SG-1’s authority but not, however, the overall depiction of whiteness as superior.

The conclusion provides a discussion of the key issues raised in the previous chapters. I argue that narratives within *Stargate SG-1* provide an important arena for the examination of power relationships between whites and nonwhites, citizens and refugees and between human and aliens.

Scope and Limitations of the Thesis

My study focuses on the first two seasons of *Stargate SG-1*. An overall analysis of the show that spans seven years is beyond the scope of this thesis. The early

episodes demonstrate a clear distinction between black and white, dark and light, and good and evil. Through detailed viewing of selected episodes on DVD and a close reading of transcripts, I will demonstrate that *Stargate SG-1* not only reproduces contemporary American constructions of race but also represents a whitening of humanity. This whitening occurs in the myriad examples of white American superiority and heroism, as well as, the depiction of technologically and culturally advanced white aliens. In *Stargate SG-1*, white civilization interpreted in the form of United States, stands at the forefront, dominating and reaffirming white cultural and political fantasies and stereotypes of the other.

Further research is needed into how representations of gender are shaped by whiteness discourses and would add another dimension to how whiteness shapes the overall narrative of the show. Representations of female characters, like Captain Samantha Carter, would offer a complementary perspective on white hegemonic discourses and answer the question of whether such dominant discourses are transferred from the masculine to the feminine. Also worth future exploration would be how the later seasons of the show have developed whiteness as death and terror in the form of the Ori. In *Stargate SG-1*, the Ori are represented as despotic hyper-white aliens, seeking ascendance to a higher plane of existence through religious fundamentalism. Their aim is to destroy all who do not accept their faith. Such studies would offer another fascinating perspective on the white hegemonic discourses operating within *Stargate SG-1*, but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

* * *

My research concentrates on how whiteness is depicted, formatted and shaped within *Stargate SG-1* and how these depictions and formats in turn affect the

representation of nonwhites, both friend and foe. In the following chapters, I look at the ways in which discourses of the white superiority and the benevolent role of U.S. militaristic intervention, as well as archetypes of the white American hero play a role in strengthening ideologies which advocate and inform the naturalization and normalization of whiteness. These conventions of representation are filtered through and strengthened by rearticulates of U.S. imperialist discourses in the form of human-alien encounters.

Chapter One

Review of the Literature

Approaching the Study of Whiteness

Whiteness studies emerged from critical race theory and grew in credence during the 1980s (Essed & Goldberg; Delgado & Stefancic). Most theorists agree that whiteness is a difficult and challenging concept to define. Part of the problem is in its historical nature. In the United States, whiteness has been regarded as normative and yet it is paradoxical – marked and unmarked, visible and invisible. As normative it is used as the historical foundation against which all other racial categories are weighed and measured. The challenge presented when studying whiteness is to highlight these contradictions in ways that address the dominance and power of white systems of knowledge in fabricating racial formation. One of the key aspects of whiteness is that it “involves power relations” and is unlike “any other racialized identity” (Garner 9).

In formulating the central argument of my thesis, Steve Garner’s introduction to whiteness was crucial to my understanding of the concept and the application of whiteness studies to social, cultural and political issues. His work on whiteness as terror and supremacy, as visible and invisible was particularly useful in analyzing the role of whiteness within the realm of science fiction narratives. Although Garner’s text does not touch on whiteness in science fiction specifically, he gives a good overview of the development and socio-political role of whiteness studies. Garner identifies five themes of whiteness which operate within society: invisibility, privilege, supremacy, terror and hegemony. I examine the ways these themes act to produce a culturally dominant format based on white control. By applying and extending Garner’s themes of whiteness to science fiction television, I aim to

demonstrate how characters and story lines are developed and constructed within narratives of whiteness, as both the normative identity and a source of power and terror. In addition, Garner suggests whiteness “exists only so far as other racialized identities, such as blackness” exist (17). His work is thus useful for analyzing the constructed nature of whiteness, through the presence and/or absence of nonwhite identity, and specifically in science fiction – the constructed nature of humans and aliens. As a consequence, my research endeavours to answer the question of how whiteness enacts power relationships with the nonwhite other, through cultural practices and norms and values, as depicted in television texts.

Scholarly interest in whiteness and whiteness studies has been both highly critical and highly supportive of whiteness. On the critical side, researchers into whiteness have argued that focusing on whiteness as a key issue ratifies an already over bloated and over emphasized minority. While illuminating this minority, whiteness studies have also been critiqued for negating the voice of the nonwhite majority (Lewis; Bennefield; Hurtado & Stewart; Talbot; Bonnett; Lipsitz; Omi & Winant; Bonnett).

On the other side of this debate, researchers have sought to identify and challenge the position that whiteness has held for so long, a position of dominance, comparative invisibility and normality. Such researchers, and I place myself among them aim to highlight the role of whiteness in the construction of racial identities. By focusing on whiteness and making it visible, my project contributes to the effort to identify, query and challenge the cultural hegemonic power of whiteness and white privilege. The study of whiteness as an unfixed, socio-cultural and political construct, marked by its dominant power relationship to other, nonwhite racial identities can, therefore, address the dominance of white systems of knowledge in

the fabrication of racial formation (Hartmann, Gerteis & Croll; Bernardi 2008; Garner; McDermott & Samson; Doane & Bonilla-Silva; Bernardi; Dyer 1997; Fine et al.; Frankenberg).

A large portion of academic literature on whiteness argues that the main factor in the power of whiteness is its inherent invisibility (Dyer 1997; Carter; Fine; Frankenberg; Wildman & Adrienne; Bernardi 1998; Bonnett 2008). Robert Carter's "Is White a Race? Expressions of White Racial Identity," discusses how whites are often unaware of themselves as raced and like many articles written around this period highlights the invisibility of whiteness. He argues that "when whites' racial identity is discovered it is done in terms of their potential views or in terms of how they view people in other racial groups" (199). As a consequence, discussions about race have traditionally been applied to others, to "people of colour," rather than challenging the fabrication of whiteness as an identity in itself. Whiteness, therefore, as a "colour" is either ignored or accepted as normal.

Research into the nature of whiteness, can and should, question why normalizations of whiteness exist. Ruth Frankenberg attempts to answer this challenge. In her study of locating whiteness within systems of white privilege Frankenberg describes whiteness as a 'process, rather than a thing,' and as plural in nature. Frankenberg provides a critical basis for questioning and marking whiteness as visible. She also stresses the linkage of race and whiteness to national identity. For example, Frankenberg notes that in the United States, during the late 1990s, whiteness was closely linked to Americanness. The linking of whiteness with national identity and with concepts of Americanness is also central to my study of *Stargate SG-1*.

In his review of contemporary texts on whiteness, Alastair Bonnett in “White Studies Revisited” provides a useful synopsis on the relationship between whiteness, race, class and gender. His article stresses, like the authors discussed above, that whiteness has historically been seen as an invisible but potent component of racial fabrication. Advocating a ‘time and space’ specific element to whiteness, Bonnett argues that the construction of whiteness is always changing, re-shaping and being shaped by shifting social forces. In addition, Bonnett stresses the importance of understanding the altered role and status of whiteness globally and, not merely focusing on the United States. Applying Bonnett’s theoretical orientation transformations in American popular science fiction texts can be shown to reflect the way in which whiteness is displayed, shaped and narrated over time. However, while representations of whiteness in the narratives of American science fiction in the 1960s are significantly different from those of the twenty-first century, the one constant that remains through the decades is that whiteness continues in its power to dominate. It is this prevailing dominance that my study of whiteness in American science fiction television seeks to document and explain.

In recent years, however, there has been a move towards acknowledging that whiteness is no longer simply invisible. Several authors document through empirical research that whiteness is at times highly visible. In moving away from whiteness as inherently invisible, Hartmann, Gerteis and Croll’s empirical study of whiteness argues that whiteness in America is a “social phenomena” and one that needs further empirical evidence before claims of its nature can be made. Working from a sociological perspective these authors stress the need to develop a strong empirical basis for whiteness studies, in order to determine how widespread current assumptions on whiteness are. These authors move towards the idea that whiteness

as an identity is no longer invisible even for many whites, yet remains largely unacknowledged by most whites as a system of privilege and power. However, the centre of their argument remains that whites' are less aware than nonwhites of their racial position within society. Even with the increased study and recognition of whiteness in academic writing and the fact that theoretically whiteness is now much more visible, Hartmann et al. still suggest that the link of whiteness to systems of privilege remains unacknowledged.

I argue that within mainstream American popular culture, whiteness still remains unseen and unacknowledged. For example, mainstream movies and television renders the predominance and normality of whiteness invisible by its sheer overwhelming and naturalized presence. In contrast, the depiction of nonwhite characters remains that of a token presence or as a foil for white narratives.

Sociologists Monica McDermott and Frank Samson argue that with increasing cultural, ethnic and racial diversity in the United States, the need to consider the social, economic, and ethnic variables of whiteness present within popular cultural texts has become more pressing. Like these authors, I believe there is a need to examine how whiteness functions in popular cultural texts. I aim to bring whiteness into the forefront of my analysis of science fiction narratives by acknowledging its dominance and apparent invisibility. I intend to examine how such representations act to control, filter and maintain representations of whites and nonwhites.

Alongside whiteness as a dominant system of representation is the fact that such dominance supports and maintains white privilege. A number of writers support the idea of whiteness as a privilege making entity (Lipsitz; Fine et al; Mahoney; Wildman & Davies; McIntosh; McLaren; Clark & O'Donnell). Michelle Fine's

“Witnessing Whiteness” addresses white attitudes towards race and racism in the U.S. education system. She highlights the need to focus on the “unseen” privileges inherent in being white and describes the “‘merit’ that accumulates within the hue of whiteness” as a guaranteed set of advantages only available to its members (57).

Like many academics engaged in whiteness studies Michelle Fine acknowledges the importance of bringing into focus the state of whiteness as a set of privileges and how these privileges affect both whites and nonwhites. In addition, she is also concerned with the concept that “whites needed blacks in order to become privileged”. Her work addresses the idea of whiteness as being “camouflaged” for most white people within everyday life. Peggy McIntosh develops this concept further in her study of the hidden value of whiteness. Her critical point is that whiteness offers its members crucial privileges that remain hidden. These key features of whiteness – whiteness as camouflaged, inherently privileged and invisible to many whites, further normalize and naturalize whiteness. In American science fiction television, whiteness is privileged in its representation as normative and natural, but also as merited with advancement and achievement. In *Stargate SG-1*, whiteness is continually positioned as privileged in comparison to nonwhite representations.

In addition, the link between whiteness and privilege is interpreted by some whites as relating to individual merit rather than to racial position. Martha Mahoney contends that group identity is often associated with people of colour, while whites remain individuated. Similarly, Wildman and Davies’s “Making Systems of Privilege Visible” notes that for the majority of whites in the United States privileges are seen as having nothing to do with race or the fact that they are white but, rather, to individual achievements. In *Stargate SG-1*, individual achievement is

directly linked to whiteness and is often juxtaposed against the collective nature of the other. For example, individual white members of SG-1 are placed in a superior role alongside the undifferentiated other. Also, SG-1's white discourse is held up as superior to that of nonwhite civilizations met off world. In this sense, whiteness is hegemonic.⁸ Hegemonic discourse, in the form of political and cultural organizations and dialogues, reproduces and reinforces the white norms of a society, such as individuation, privilege and superiority. These discourses act to formalize racial constructions. Hegemonic representations of race are therefore performed and perpetuated within the dominant culture. Even within the multi-cultural framework of twenty-first century society, the dominant hegemonic discourse within the United States remains predominantly white.

Viewing and Seeing Whiteness

Popular culture is saturated with images and ideologies of whiteness and television is an important contributor to maintaining hegemonic fictions of whiteness: of whiteness as intelligence, superiority, normality and beauty (Bernardi; Dyer; Foster; Hunt). By its very nature television provides a global network of images and information, filtered through dominant and mainstream discourses. In the West these discourses remain predominantly white. Two texts central to my theoretical perspective on whiteness and visual imagery, are Richard Dyer's seminal work, *White*, on racial images in television and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's engaging work *Performing Whiteness*. Both authors approach whiteness from the perspective of the body and, sexuality and gender play an important role in their

⁸ I am using Foucault's concept of the term hegemony in which it relates to power and knowledge, as discussed in Stuart Hall's text on representation. In this sense hegemony is not permanent and uses "ideology to win the consent of other groups and achieve a kind of ascendancy in both thought and practice over them" (48).

works. While I acknowledge the link between dominant white discourses and masculinity in American television narratives and in science fiction specifically, my current research does not focus on gender or sexuality.

I also acknowledge that whiteness is not limited to colour or hue but, rather, consists of a range of institutional and social practices and silences. However, in the highly visual medium of television in which my study of whiteness is situated, whiteness as hue, colour and lightness is a major component of how whiteness is represented. Whiteness is exaggerated through make-up, lighting, clothing and other stylistic choices which affect a whiter-than-white presence on the screen. These choices work in conjunction with story lines and characterizations which strengthen and rationalize whiteness, so that it remains a normative and invisible construct within the overall framework of the text. Only by explicitly drawing attention to these images can the privileged position which whiteness holds – as normative, natural and loaded with meaning – be critically acknowledged.

Television texts tend to reproduce a fictional “reality” that reflects present ideologies. Victoria O’Donnell describes television as “literally meaning ‘seeing at a distance’” (xv). What is seen depends on the viewers own social dimensions and how meanings are inscribed within the text. It is therefore, important to work within and acknowledge the cultural frame of the show – where and when it was produced. For example, co-produced by the United States and Canada, *Stargate SG-1* is a product of the late 1990s and offers a unique take on contemporary U.S. socio-political issues.

It must be remembered that television texts are not static but are interpreted by individual viewing experiences, experiences which are socio-culturally determined

(Fiske in Vande Berg, Wenner & Granbeck 81). Television texts are consequently “actively negotiated” by “socially situated readers” (28). These “socially situated readers” find different meanings within television images that are dependent on their own cultural experiences (O’Donnell 151). In a similar fashion to Vande Berg, et al, Dyer states that “we are all restricted by both the viewing and the reading codes to which we have access (by virtue of where we are situated in the world and social order) and by what representations there are for us to view and read” (2). In American science fiction television, the texts available for viewing and reading represent whiteness as normal and superior to the darkness of the alien, re-producing the dominant “status quo”. Both O’Donnell and Vande Berg et al, demonstrate that television reflects hegemonic structures within a given society. These hegemonic discourses are reinforced through representations of what Victoria O’Donnell describes as “social codes”. “Social codes” include appearance, language and setting. These codes are often similar amongst television texts because the producers of mainstream television tend to come from similar socio-economic backgrounds. As far as mainstream American science fiction television is concerned, including *Stargate SG-1*, these “social codes” are embedded in white, male, middle-class ideologies.

Social codes are represented on screen through the use of “archetypes”. These archetypes are sets of recognizable images, traits and patterns that continually recur. One such archetype, which my study examines is the heroic white figure. Archetypes are also used to present the other, often alongside those of the white hero. As such, characteristics, behaviours, and racial codes operate within television texts to represent the other in a way that highlights the dominant white narrative. The other comes to symbolize “a group that people fear, dislike, or feel superior to,

resulting in a ‘them and us’ attitude” (170). The distinction between “them and us” acts to further strengthen the foregrounding of whiteness as a group that is superior to and often in conflict with the other. O’Donnell’s “them and us” binary is thus crucial for American science fiction narratives in which the white hero sets out to save Earth and/or humanity (us) from invading aliens (them).

What I am suggesting is that ideologies operate within these discourses – social codes, archetypes, story – to validate and reinforce dominant white “paradigmatic structures” (Fiske, in Vande Berg et al 81). Television texts therefore, present social and cultural constructions of representations of race, gender, and class that is readily and easily communicated and understood visually.

Richard Dyer’s *White* traces the history of images of white people within American photography, television and cinema. For Dyer, whiteness is a paradoxical entity, sought after yet unattainable. Examining the visual imagery of whiteness from the Crusades and early Christianity, through to contemporary cinema, he argues that whiteness is shown as virtuous, clean and beautiful. Dyer suggests that “white people create dominant images of the world” (Dyer 5). These dominant images place whiteness as the pinnacle of humanity. Power is thus created through white images and discourses creating a dominant position within the hierarchy of humans.

These key points – that whiteness is depicted as the “human condition” and humanity is composed of hierarchies – are central to Dyer’s theory and are particularly important for my research focus. In the majority of American science fiction television and *Stargate SG-1* is no exception, whiteness forms an image of humanity. Alienness is generally set apart from whiteness, from humanness, through

representation of the alien other as nonwhite or as an animal. As in the myth of the colonial other, the alien is to be feared, conquered and assimilated by whiteness (Dyer; Bernardi). The white hero in American science fiction is epitomized as typically male and heterosexual.

Dyer's link of whiteness, enterprise and imperialism also informs my research. By extending Dyer's linkage of whiteness and imperialism to American concepts of white identity, I aim to establish connections between American science fiction narratives and narratives of white imperialism, including manifest destiny. Furthermore, Dyer's brief analysis of the genre of the Western depicting the white conquest of the North American "frontier," is suggestive of many of the explorative and exploitative themes of American science fiction colonial discourses (33).

Gwendolyn Audrey Foster writes from a postmodern and feminist position. Foster ties her argument closely with representations of gender building on Dyer's image of the white body. Foster develops and complicates Dyer's concept further by examining the "visual supremacy of whiteness" and juxtapositioning the "good white body" with the "bad white body" (xiii). According to Foster, whiteness is a performed construct and can be staged as either good or bad. The "good white body" perpetuates fantasies of whiteness as pure, heterosexual, intelligent, free and saintly. Legendary actors Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish, represent ideals of cinematic good whiteness. By contrast, the "bad white body," such as Scott Carey in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) and Bela Lugosi in *White Zombie* (1932), builds on representations of whiteness that mirror traditional stereotypes of blackness in the media. However, it also calls attention to the "bad white body" as a threat, seeking to control others. Quoting Thomas Cripps, Foster notes that "blackness in cinema is often associated with bad conduct, hyper-

sexuality, monstrous behavior, and the threat of otherness” (68). The grotesque white body acts to transform whiteness into the other. Both the “good” and “bad” white body are found in American science fiction.

In the majority of American science fiction television, the white hero inhabits the “good white body,” while those who deviate from this perfection of normalized whiteness are classified alongside the other. In *Stargate SG-1*, whites outside of the dominant American discourse or those who deviate from the white hero’s ideals are placed within Foster’s category of the “bad white body.”⁹ In opposition to the “good white body” they are demonized in similar ways to the alien. I agree with Foster’s assertion that “cinema [and television] itself is largely a white space and often the figure of the other is only used in service of what constitutes an other to whiteness” (93). Like Dyer before her, Foster successfully demonstrates the link between images of whiteness within popular culture and the maintenance of white power.

Science Fiction Television and Whiteness

Aliens in popular science fiction have long been associated with darkness, abnormality and otherness. In addition, aliens and alien worlds are used to foreground racial conflict and racism (Johnson-Smith; Bernardi). In turn, whiteness is associated with humanity, normality, privilege and, in the case of future utopians, racial harmony. There are a growing number of writers who focus on blackness and ‘black spaces’ in relation to whiteness on television. Darnell Hunt and Adilifu Nama

⁹ I have used the word “hero” rather than both hero/heroine because in *Stargate SG-1*, the main heroic characters are masculine. Although Captain Samantha Carter is part of SG-1, in the early episodes of the series her character acts as a foil for the male characters and a source of sexual tension for Colonel O’Neill. This sidelining of female characters in science fiction is common, for example, Counsellor Deanna Troi in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* acts more often in providing emotional support, sexual interest or empathic insight and rarely acts in an active or heroic role. However, in *Star Trek Voyager*, this model is broken with the development of several strong female characters such as Captain Janeway, Seven of Nine and Lieutenant Torres (Roberts).

argue that television remains a white dominated media, producing and re-producing a “white reality” (Hunt 19). Studying blackness in popular television, Hunt suggests that the black-white binary is still fundamental to life in the United States.

Furthermore, Hunt describes the seemingly positive changes in television’s racial imagery as “enlightened racism” (20). While there appears to be a growing representation of blackness in mainstream American television, this representation operates within the same dominant discourse of whiteness of previous decades (Hunt; Hughey). According to Hunt, “enlightened racism” operates against a background of narrative texts reproducing the “racial status quo” (20). Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis expand on this theory of “enlightened racism” in their analysis of racial imagery and messages within *The Cosby Show*. Jhally and Lewis argue that such shows move towards narratives of “colour-blindness,” a representation of a space “where race no longer matters” (86). Rather than heralding a new representation of blackness on television, Jhally and Lewis suggest that *The Cosby Show* presents black culture filtered through a shroud of whiteness. The Huxtables narrative position situates them as middle class white people.

As this example demonstrates, blackness and “black spaces” continue to be defined and negotiated through white narratives. Black images highlight whiteness and this is especially explicit in science fiction in the “black-white binary” of human and alien encounters. However, this is not to say that United States racial representations or relations are exclusively black and white, rather, they are about all “groups designated by whites as ‘racially other’” (Lipsitz). This binary operates in *Stargate SG-1* to reinforce whiteness and to limit blackness, by representing blackness and “black spaces” as alien.

In *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*, Adilifu Nama addresses how whiteness acts in opposition to blackness within science fiction cinema and why this is important in identifying racial issues within contemporary culture. Nama's text gives an historical overview of race within the genre, moving onto specific categories of blackness within major science fiction films. He provides an analysis of the issues surrounding the "black body" and its representation in conjunction with whiteness. In his chapter on "White Narratives, Black Allegories," Nama states that, "SF film has played a significant part in affirming a myriad of myths and constructing historical relationships that are, at the best, uncritical and, at worst, revisionist falsehoods" (123). One such 'myth' is the equation of blackness and darkness with alienness and evil. Nama focuses on how racial insecurities have been hidden within the genre by taking the emphasis away from colour and onto alienness. His perspective raises relevant points for looking at these issues in *Stargate SG-1*. Hostile aliens are depicted as nonwhite, inhabiting dark alien worlds echoing the landscapes of early colonial encounters, allowing historical insecurities about darkness and the other to be transferred onto the alien. Nama's text highlights the use of "white space" within science fiction, and complements Hunt's analysis of "black spaces" within television. I use a combination of these writers' perspectives, because they offer a way of seeing how whiteness, white heroes and white characters dominate and objectify blackness within the genre.

Christine Cornea's work on race in science fiction, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality*, considers the idea of how white has become the model against which other races are based and judged. Her work raises questions about how blackness and other nonwhite identities are used to highlight and engage with alienness. Cornea raises the question of the use of the white hero to foreground

racial issues through interactions with nonwhite aliens (e.g. romance, friendships or hostility), placing whiteness in the foreground. In addition, issues of violence linked to nonwhite identity and alienness raises questions of how this linkage acts to position whiteness as morally superior within the genre.

One of the main contributors to the study of whiteness within American cinema and television including science fiction is Daniel Bernardi. Bernardi's significant text *Star Trek and History: Racing Towards a White Future*, has given rise to many compelling ideas to explore in *Stargate SG-1*. For example, Bernardi notes that while on the surface *Star Trek*, in particular the later series, appears multi-cultural under the guise of liberal humanism, it still relies on dominant discourses of whiteness. Non-humans such as the Klingons and Romulans are depicted as nonwhite, in contrast to all the central white heroes. The typical American hero, depicted as white in *Star Trek*, is a feature that is common to many science fiction narratives. While race is at the centre of *Star Trek*, in that the show's message of liberal humanism suggests a racial utopia, it is at the same time hidden by the shows overwhelming white discourse. Bernardi demonstrates that science fiction narratives, like *Star Trek*, do in fact act as a mirror for social issues, including race. Yet for all its liberalism, *Star Trek* falls short of embracing otherness (68). The following quote encapsulates Bernardi's perspective:

The paradox of *Star Trek* is that, despite or because of its liberal humanism, it supports a universe where whites are morally, politically, and innately superior, and both colored humans and colored aliens are either servants, threats or objects of exotic desire. (68)

This issue of whiteness as depicting the moral centre of the universe within American science fiction television is something which is clearly demonstrated in

Stargate SG-1. Using Bernardi's central thesis, that science fiction 'whitewashes' space, I contend that the majority of narratives in *Stargate SG-1* actively reinforce the dominance and prevalence of whiteness. Bernardi stresses that the study of television "involves deconstructing, or de-familiarizing, the textual and narratological properties of whiteness and plotting how those qualities change with modes, styles, genres and periods" (xxii). Bernardi's work on *Star Trek's* colour-blind ideology of future time space, leads me to question whether this tendency to view whiteness as the epitome of humanity is shared in the contemporary setting of *Stargate SG-1*.

The Imperial Gaze within Science Fiction Television

Manifest destiny in nineteenth-century America stressed the United States' ideological providence to expand its borders through conquest and exploration, while simultaneously restricting American citizenship exclusively to whites. Created within this paradigm of expansionism and exclusion is the superiority of whiteness and white civilization. Reginald Horsman's *Race and Manifest Destiny* provides a summary of American Anglo-Saxon racial theory (63). Horsman suggests that a central axiom of racial theory in this period is the belief in a "superior American Anglo-Saxon race" (6). The nonwhite as representing darkness, bestiality, savagery and inferiority emerged in nineteenth-century racial discourses and was contrasted with whiteness, the juxtaposition creating an image of a superior white race. According to Horsman, the Puritan ideas of a "chosen people" laid the foundations for the late nineteenth-century's "rampant racism" and this "rampant racism" justified the ejection and/or extermination of large numbers of nonwhites that stood in the way of white American advancement (1/3).

Similarly, Anders Stephanson's text on manifest destiny and American

expansionism argues that a belief in the ‘Anglo-Saxon spirit’ lead to both ‘separatism and interventionism’ (xii). Separatism advocated an exclusive white’s only membership in U.S. citizenship. Whiteness as the focal point to citizenship fed into interventionism. In turn, American interventionism justified conquest on the grounds that nonwhite races were inferior and doomed to extinction. Stephanson takes his examination of manifest destiny’s influence on American nationalism into the 1980s. Clothed in democratic language, expansionism justified an aggressive march westward and outward to gain land and resources. Stephanson suggests that during the Reagan years the United States reasserted a rhetoric of a special calling to spread democracy. While Manifest destiny is no longer a definitive marker of U.S. identity, its rhetoric of destiny still lies behind contemporary issues of U.S. nationalism. For example, United States military action in the Middle East is rationalized by calls to protect Western democratic principles (Horsman; Stephanson; Weinberg; Huntington; Benshoff & Griffin).

Samuel P. Huntington’s work on issues of U.S. national identity argues that American nationalism “flourished” after the Civil War but declined in “salience” after the Cold War (xv). Huntington’s point is that American national identity is strongly connected to aspects of risk. That is to say, perceived risks like communism and increasing immigration help to strengthen American nationalism. As Huntington suggests, U.S. identity evolved around issues of “race, ethnicity, culture and ideology” (12).

These key concepts of manifest destiny that reinforced historical constructions of racial hierarchies are rearticulated in American science fiction narratives. The fear of invasion or assimilation by hostile aliens is a recurring trope within American science fiction. Human identity within science fiction is constructed around

remnants of these “key components” of U.S. identity. The alien other, constructed as stereotypes/archetypes of racial, ethnic and cultural others is “demonized, [and] transmogrified into the enemy” (Huntington 26). Threats to democracy and freedom play an important component to story lines in *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and *Stargate SG-1*. In *Star Wars* the threat posed by the Empire reflects the ideological battle between communism and U.S. democracy during the Cold War. *Star Trek*’s manifesto is to carry the ideals of Starfleet, formed as the model of democratic government, out into the far reaches of space. And in *Stargate SG-1*, the age old battle between “good” and “evil,” is re-told through the confrontation of SG-1 and the Goa’uld. In addition, SG-1, as gate-keepers, police the borders controlling who comes in and out of the Stargate. Each of these narratives shares the fundamental premise of whiteness pitted against the dark alien other. In addition to the dark alien, American science fiction television scenarios depict familiar images of colonialism and imperialism. Space is the “new frontier” and alien races represent otherness and risk.

Similar to the Western, science fiction television narratives feature colonial and imperial discourses. Framed within historical references these imperialist discourses identify the mission of the United States, as upholding and maintaining democracy and freedom. Whiteness is reflected and transcribed upon the dark other. Fear is relocated onto the strangeness of alien encounters and the white imagination plays upon blackness as a foil for whiteness (Morrison). In a similar fashion, George Fredrickson argues that white images of slavery in the United States only strengthen colonial and imperialist stereotypes of the other, while at the same time strengthening images of superior whiteness.

John Rieder’s *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* offers a specific look at the correlation between colonial rhetoric and the development of science

fiction narratives. His work traces the discourse of colonialism and imperialism throughout the development of popular science fiction. Rieder advocates a link between “imperialist projects” and the emergence of science fiction (2). For example, Rieder connects H.G. Wells’s *The War of the World’s* Martian invasion with colonial genocide carried out by white colonization of places like Tasmania (5). Allegories of colonialism are transcribed onto human and alien encounters. The invading Martians are a symbol of the ruthless march of imperialism across the planet. Fundamental to science fiction is the tendency to see whiteness through its relationship with the alien other. Just as the colonial gaze shaped the way early Americans viewed themselves in relation to the Native American and the Mexican, whiteness is re-shaped in relation to the alien. In addition, as Rieder suggests, science fiction can also turn the tables on whiteness, depicting whiteness as inherently destructive and violent when faced with the alien other.

Within science fiction television, the mythologies and ideologies of American imperialism are often constructed or displayed within the characteristics of the white hero. Whether the hero is an adventurer/soldier/scientist/astronaut, these story lines feature white men and women venturing forth into the unknown, exploring new worlds and encountering “natives” and aliens. Leslie Roman’s “Denying (White) Racial Privilege” (in Fine et al.) proves useful in understanding the ways in which the white hero is used to perpetuate images of white superiority and reinforce the values of a white society. In addition, images of nonwhites act to bring whiteness into the foreground. In the majority of narratives the white hero acts as the redemptive saviour of a primitive or doomed race of aliens, or as the saviour of humankind from alien invaders. For example, in *Stargate SG-1* the Jaffa are unable to obtain liberation from the Goa’uld without the help and military support of

Stargate Command and SG-1. However, what also becomes apparent when viewing these narratives is that the white hero needs the dark other in order to appear heroic. The struggles of the Jaffa are framed within how the white heroes respond rather than in the discourse of the Jaffa. The presence of the other, therefore, brings white identity into focus while negating the struggles of the other.

Conclusion

This review of the literature on whiteness highlighted several significant points. First, that whiteness is inherently invisible to most whites. Even though there is increasing acknowledgement that whiteness is not as invisible a construct as it used to be, it is still largely an unseen phenomena for the majority of whites. Second, constructs of whiteness are not fixed or stable over time or place. Constructions of whiteness in the United States depend upon unique historical factors that shape and define whiteness. Third, the privileges intrinsic to whiteness are enforced through hegemonic structures that represent themselves as normative and common sense. In *Stargate SG-1*, dominant white narratives and white spaces act to strengthen the view of whiteness as normal, superior and above all American.

My study advocates a need to see whiteness within American science fiction television as a dominant narrative that reinforces white hegemonic norms and values. A critical component of representations of whiteness in relation to American science fiction television is how the “white body” is constructed, contrasted and displayed alongside the “black body”. In science fiction narratives, the homogenous of blackness and alienness is set alongside the heterogeneity of whiteness.

In addition, the white all-American hero in science fiction television strengthens white mythologies that advocate and inform a naturalization and normalization of whiteness. These archetypes are often filtered through and strengthened by historical

ideologies such as colonialism, imperialism and manifest destiny. What this thesis will show is how *Stargate SG-1* reproduces these hegemonic discourses of whiteness, contributing to its normalization and naturalization within American popular culture. In moving away from having a multi-cultural cast, *Stargate SG-1* produces an extreme representation of white dominance. In this regard, *Stargate SG-1* represents a step back from *Star Trek* that at least attempts to encompass a multi-cultural ethic. In addition, I aim to demonstrate that narratives within *Stargate SG-1* depict a clear dichotomy between whiteness and blackness, by rendering whiteness as invisible and superior, and blackness as visible, inferior and alien.

Chapter Two

Presenting Whiteness in

“Children of the Gods” and “The Enemy Within”

Stargate SG-1's first and second television episodes “Children of the Gods” (1997) and “The Enemy Within” (1997) introduce the members of SG-1 and the Stargate Program. “Children of the Gods” begins light heartedly, with five members of the U.S. Air Force playing cards in front of the disused and covered Stargate. All five personnel are white. This is important to note in regards to future representations within the show and for what happens next. Suddenly, the Stargate rumbles into action and aliens enter through the Gate. The Goa’uld and Jaffa are distinguished by their heavy armour – gold for Apophis and black for the Jaffa – and by the casting of black actors in the roles of both. One of the Jaffa is Apophis’s First Prime called Teal’c, who is in charge of Apophis’ Serpent Guards. The Goa’uld kill the four white male soldiers and abduct the white female officer.¹⁰ The brutality of the Goa’uld attack is contrasted to the defensive actions of the white U.S. soldiers. This attack is the catalyst for what follows, namely the reactivation of the Stargate and the forming of nine Stargate teams.

The first team is called SG-1. Colonel Jack O’Neill leads SG-1 back to Abydos, the planet on which the action of the first movie occurred. There, SG-1 is reunited with Dr. Daniel Jackson, an archaeologist, who has been living with the locals, studying their culture and the ruins of the Goa’uld civilization. He has married one of the local women, Sha’ri. Significantly, Abydos is a montage of Middle Eastern and Egyptian imagery – including clothing, casting, and setting. While SG-1 is on

¹⁰ This female officer is taken to Chulak, where she is held captive awaiting selection as a possible host for the Goa’uld queen. Visually desired by Apophis as a host, she is rejected by the Goa’uld queen and executed.

reconnaissance at one of the Goa'uld temples, Abydos is attacked by Apophis and, Sha'ri and one of the native boys are taken prisoner. Attempting to rescue Sha'ri and the boy, Skarra, SG-1 hunt Apophis to Chulak, but are captured and ordered to be executed. It is here, on Chulak, that SG-1 first meet and ultimately convert Apophis' First Prime Teal'c.

The second episode "The Enemy Within" explores the controversies surrounding Teal'c's decision to join SG-1. He is an alien and carries the Goa'uld symbiote. One of SG-2, Major Kawalsky, is taken by a symbiote and under its control he kills and betrays his fellow soldiers. The threat to humanity is made clear. The symbiote can inhabit a host without the host's knowledge. What also becomes apparent in this episode is that there are different military discourses at play. Clear oppositions are found between Stargate Command, SG-1 and military intelligence, the latter represented by Colonel Kennedy and Colonel Maybourne. These two episodes provide the framework for the underlying premise of the show, that the predominately white Stargate Command needs to conquer and dominate the hostile, dark aliens. This premise is the foundation of the hegemonic discourses which operate within *Stargate SG-1*, and which act to reinforce whiteness as superior, natural and normative.

The Invisibility and Normality of Whiteness

The *Stargate SG-1* storylines suggest humans originated on Earth and were taken through the Stargate in ancient times by the Goa'uld. "Seeded" throughout the galaxy, humans provided hosts and slaves for the Goa'uld. It is in a conversation with Colonel Kennedy that Teal'c becomes aware that Earth is the home of the first human hosts, the fabled home of the Tau'ri:

TEAL'C: There is a tale of a primitive world, the Goa'uld discovered a
 Millennia ago – the Tau'ri – the first world where forms of this type first
 evolved. It is said, that the Goa'uld, harvested among the primitives.
 Some became Goa'uld hosts, others became Jaffa. The rest were taken as
 slaves and seeded among the stars to serve them. But that world has been
 lost for centuries.

KENNEDY: Teal'c, beings of this form evolved here on Earth.

TEAL'C: Then you are their greatest hope and mine. (“The Enemy
 Within”)

This scene introduces the Tau'ri's role as the “hope” of all humanity and Earth as the “first world”. It establishes the fact that the Goa'uld categorize humans as primitive specimens and thus viable hosts. This scene also suggests that the Tau'ri have become powerful enough to challenge the Goa'uld and, as Teal'c puts it to, give hope to the enslaved. This places the burden of the salvation of those enslaved by the Goa'uld upon the shoulders of SG-1. In addition, the seeding of humans throughout the galaxy acts to frame hierarchies of whiteness within the “race” of humans. In *Stargate SG-1*, not all whites are created equal. As the story progresses, the distinction between branches of humanity, those who have been “transplanted” by the Goa'uld and the Tau'ri, is further reinforced by casting, location and other stylistic choices.

One of the mainstays of mainstream American science fiction television texts is the distinction between human and alien. Humanness is also used to foreground and define whiteness. This creates an important conflation of humanness and whiteness and of alienness and darkness. This conflation is notable in *Stargate SG-1*.

Whiteness in *Stargate SG-1* is constructed as the normative and natural representation of the human race and creates systems of power, privilege and supremacy (Bonnett). This representative white experience is demonstrated in both “Children of the Gods” and “The Enemy Within”. From the white military personnel to the white SG-1 members, to violent immoral despotic black aliens and to Teal’c as the one lone converted alien, these episodes present humanity as white and American, juxtaposing a paradigm of white supremacy against the backdrop of the dark alien other (Hurtado & Stewart; Huntington). Whiteness in *Stargate SG-1* is universalized and normalized as both the human experience and as the American experience in need of defending.

But what happens to these normative representations of whiteness and their ideological assumptions when the human is also part and parcel of the alien? How is the alien otherness maintained? While essentially human in form and physiology, the human/Goa’uld hybrid is depicted as more animal in nature and appetite than those who are fully human. The intelligent snake parasite they carry takes over from any humanity that once existed. Therefore, the Goa’uld and others blended with the parasite, including Teal’c, are no longer seen as human but as alien. When Stargate Command medics, O’Neill and General Hammond examine a dead Serpent Guard, the first Jaffa encountered after the attack on the Base, they are confronted with the incision that allows the infant Goa’uld to enter the host:

HAMMOND: Anyone you know, Colonel?

DR WARNER: They're not human.

O’NEILL: Ya think?

DR WARNER: Best we can tell, these slits are actually a pouch similar to that found in a marsupial.

SAMUALS: Like a kangaroo. (“Children of the Gods”)

The Doctor uses animal imagery to describe the dead guard. The slit resembles a “pouch” like that of a “marsupial” instead of a surgical incision or some other scientific explanation. Although he looks human, in order to distinguish the guard or Jaffa as other, as alien, the pouch becomes that of a “kangaroo”.¹¹ The idea of the Jaffa as no longer being part of the human race, having become bestial and othered, is also reinforced during the exodus from Chulak. Fleeing from Apophis, Teal’c explains to SG-1 that the escaped slaves will “be hunted down and killed” and that “anyone who does not exist to serve the gods is their enemy”. In addition, he explains the nature and purpose of the Jaffa. He is, “bred to serve so that they may live”. When Daniel Jackson and the others do not understand what he means, Teal’c pulls back a section of his armour to reveal an X-shaped incision and a symbiote emerges from his stomach:

O’NEILL: What the hell is that?

TEAL’C: It is an infant Goa’uld, the larval form of the gods. I have carried one since I was a child, as all Jaffa carry one.

O’NEILL: Well, get it out of there.

TEAL’C: In exchange for carrying the infant Goa’uld into maturity, a Jaffa receives perfect health and long life. If I were to remove it, I would eventually die.

O’NEILL: Hell, if I were you, I’d take my chances. (“Children of the Gods”)

¹¹ In addition, the Jaffa are rendered “feminine” in that, they carry within them the “embryo” of the adult Goa’uld. The Jaffa’s role as an incubator to the infant Goa’uld, acts to further separate them from the shows dominant discourse of masculine whiteness. Further analysis of the gendered relationships within *Stargate SG-1* is beyond the scope of this thesis.

These conversations illustrate a number of significant points in relation to representations of both the Goa'uld and Jaffa. Firstly, the Goa'uld are tyrannical and oppressive because they destroy anyone who "does not exist to serve the gods". This image of despotism sets the Goa'uld in opposition to the democratic principles that SG-1 represent and justifies the need to defend those principles. Secondly, the Goa'uld hunt down those who are in opposition to them, or of little to them value as slaves. The Goa'uld choose only perfect specimens to act as vessels for the symbiote. The Goa'uld are depicted as predatory in nature, further establishing the link between the alien and the animal or beast. Thirdly, this sequence highlights Colonel O'Neill's total rejection of the idea of the Jaffa. O'Neill would rather die than become a host. Rather than act as incubator to the larval Goa'uld, O'Neill believes Teal'c would be better off 'taking his chances'. This is a rejection by the white self of the supposed animalistic nature of the other. A visually striking scene, the serpentine larvae wriggles and threatens as it protrudes from Teal'c's incision, producing an unsettling image of the other embodied in the animal. This is further reinforced by the fear and revulsion on the faces of the escaping slaves and SG-1.

The Goa'uld and, by extension the Jaffa, represent a dramatic construction of alienness or otherness. The human and animal are merged into the Goa'uld/human hybrid. Like early nineteenth century western stereotypes of nonwhite others, the Goa'uld, as represented by Apophis, are depicted as savage, bestial, untrustworthy and cruel.¹² Teal'c is depicted as savage and bestial. He contains the animalistic parasite of the Goa'uld and has aided Apophis in the destruction and enslavement of worlds. These racial stereotypes act as a foil against which white humanity, as

¹² Several authors have provided comprehensive overviews of western theories and stereotypes that emerged in early nineteenth century racial discourses. The following authors provided evidence of the nature of such theories and stereotypes in creating negative images of the non-white "other": Du Bois, W.E.B; Harris, Michael; Kidd, Colin; McCarthy, Thomas; and Nwankwo, Ifeoma Kiddoe.

exemplified by SG-1, is reassuringly held up as morally superior. In addition, such stereotypes act to create within the other a demonic opponent that is “transmogrified into the enemy” (Huntington 26). Animal references, in conjunction with images of darkness and blackness, are used to distinguish the Jaffa and the Goa’uld from the whiteness of SG-1. In addition, the Jaffa as slaves to the Goa’uld are forced to fight and enslave others. This removes them from the ideologies that surround the ideal construction of humanity and whiteness (Bernardi 2001; Foster). They are in essence, de-humanized. Teal’c uses the phrase that the Jaffa are “bred to serve” not “born to serve.” They are “bred” to serve their masters. Like the degrading images and rhetoric justifying the use of the African as slaves in the Americas, the Jaffa are something less than human, linked to the animal world in opposition to the world of white humanity.

When Teal’c seeks asylum and is brought back through the Gate, General Hammond is the first of many to question O’Neill’s reasoning and the morality of the decision to bring him to Earth. O’Neill stands firm, acknowledging how Teal’c saved their lives and left his entire world behind on Chulak:

HAMMOND: (pointing at Teal’c) What’s “he” doing here?

O’NEILL: General Hammond. This is Teal’c. He helped us.

HAMMOND: Do you know what he is?

O’NEILL: Yes, sir. I do. He’s the man who saved our lives. (“Children of the Gods”)

Teal’c here becomes a “what,” a representative of the alien other. What develops in the series is a conflation of the nonwhite and the nonhuman and alien. While the

Goa'uld represent manifestations of evil “coded to enhance certain properties of the white self,” whiteness is used to create the norms of both Stargate Command and SG-1 distancing them from the other (Vera & Gordon 264). Teal'c, as not human and not white, becomes the monolithic alien other set firmly outside and in opposition to humanity and whiteness (Garner).

Imperial Discourses in Stargate SG-1

SG-1's exploration of the unknown, the new frontier on the other side of the Gate, reveals an epic narrative inherent in the nineteenth-century. Similar to wagon trains in the Western, and the Starship as symbol of science fiction's colonial expansion, the wormhole of the Stargate leads the team into unknown worlds which offer new resources, new peoples and civilizations. These new worlds always seem to need the SG teams to defend the weak and to spread democracy. Indeed, it is the discovery and interpretation of the ancient map of Stargates by Dr. Jackson that leads to the exploration of the galaxy:

JACKSON: All of the symbols are on the Stargate in the Abydos chamber. I've also managed to chart some of them in the Abydos sky. Jack, I think this is a map of a vast network of Stargates, Stargates that are all over the galaxy. (“Children of the Gods”)

The link between colonial expansion and the stars is an important one for understanding the frontier motif within *Stargate SG-1*. The frontier was a place to be mapped and ‘charted’. The map of the “vast network of Stargates” on Abydos is the “archaeological find of the century,” the key to exploring the galaxy.

After their mission to Abydos, SG-1 travel back to Stargate Command. Here, they are briefed on the purpose of the newly formed SG teams, as well as, the boundaries

of their mission. General George Hammond outlines the role of the nine teams as set out by the President of the United States:

HAMMOND: [the President] has ordered the formation of nine teams. Whose duties will be to perform reconnaissance, determine threats and, if possible, to make peaceful contact with the peoples of these worlds. Now, these teams will operate on a covert, top-secret basis. No one will know of their existence, except the President and the Joint Chiefs. (“Children of the Gods”)

Several points in this conversation are significant. The operation is firstly a military one and secondly, one to “make peaceful contact”. In addition, only the high offices of the United States government are aware of the Stargate operation. The Stargate remains a United States operation. General Hammond’s speech is important because it presents key features found in the discourses of manifest destiny. These key features are to obtain territory, people and resources while at the same time protecting U.S. borders (Stephanson; Huntington). In *Stargate SG-1*, the motives for going through the Gate are to “perform reconnaissance” and “determine threats”. Threats come from the undesirable other, in this case, the hostile Goa’uld.

When Daniel Jackson locates the map of Gate addresses it is made clear that the inhabitants of Abydos, while having been exposed to both the symbols on the temple and Goa’uld magic for centuries, are not able to decipher or use this knowledge. In contrast, after one year, Dr. Daniel Jackson, a representative of modern western science, deciphers the symbols and understands their importance. In a paternalistic move, SG-1 decide the Gate should be sealed after they leave. The knowledge of the Gate is not to be shared with the local people. SG-1 makes the assumption that the

people of Abydos cannot understand or utilize such knowledge. In science fiction, this unwillingness to share or explain technology is seen as a benevolent act, not wanting to interfere with a culture's "natural" progress but it is also a way of maintaining superiority. For example, the Tau'ri do not apply the same rules in their own quest for alien technology. Consequently, SG-1 as representatives of the dominant white discourse determine who is worthy of technology and advancement. This presumption becomes important when SG-1 is later faced with superior white aliens.

Colonizing the Landscape

What is depicted within "Children of the Gods" and "The Enemy Within," is a representation of both Abydos and Chulak, as civilizations shrouded in darkness and lacking a means of escape from their enslavement without the help and guidance of the United States. These worlds are represented as backward, superstitious and in need of moral, spiritual and military guidance from the white members of Stargate Command. Like colonial explorers before them, the U.S. military and SG-1 become the "machine of whiteness" that determines and shapes the fate of the colonized other (Lopez 16). SG-1 bring with them all the trappings of their own civilization, one that is depicted as superior and upheld as a model of the civilized world.

In these two episodes, SG-1 is shown as the model of civilization set against the backdrop of the primitiveness of Abydos and Chulak. Culturally stagnant, the people of Abydos and Chulak remain fixed in a state of historical suspension, based on the period in which the Goa'uld removed them from Earth. In *Stargate SG-1*, the distinction between civilization and primitiveness is further emphasized through the use of landscape. The spaces in which the various groups of humans and aliens exist

are used to dramatise either their superiority or inferiority. For example, SG-1's mission briefing prior to going to Abydos is formal and structured. Dress uniforms and large U.S. flags provide the dominant images for this scene. The landscape of Stargate Command located within the bowels of the Cheyenne Mountain Complex is represented through technological, scientific and militaristic icons. Stargate Command's order and discipline are in stark contrast to the shabby, chaotic and dusty world of Abydos and the woodland wilderness of Chulak.

In *Stargate SG-1*, images of the Middle East are used "as a means to dramatize" the conflict between the Goa'uld and humanity, humanity of course represented by white Americans (Vera & Gordon 264; Khatib). The desert is linked to otherness, providing a clear demarcation between otherness and whiteness. These images are contrasted to how the SG-1 team emerge from the brightness of the open Gate, entering the darkness of the Abydos pyramid where Daniel Jackson controls the armed natives who guard the Gate. Sand storms rage outside while inside the people eat and drink and speak in broken English. The scene is relaxed and chaotic compared to Stargate Command. Abydos, a desert wasteland, is based on ancient Egypt, a Middle Eastern setting complete with pyramids and obelisks. "In *Children of the Gods*," the first glimpse of the surface of Abydos is when SG-1 emerge from the pyramid containing the Abydos Gate. SG-1 move out, dressed in full combat desert camouflage, and the camera pulls back to reveal a landscape dominated by sand, an empty and hostile environment. The distinction between the ordered, modern landscape of SG-1 and the chaotic, historical setting on Abydos, acts to situate SG-1 and Stargate Command firmly in the superior position. Whiteness is equated with order and juxtaposed alongside nonwhiteness as chaotic and inferior. Aerial shots of Abydos, showing miles of unbroken sand, act to highlight the

vastness and emptiness of the desert, demonstrating a “classic example of the opposition between nature and science, between wilderness and civilization,” as found in the representation of the Middle East in American popular culture (Khatib). The dark spaces of the temple interior represent alienness and inferiority, in which nature rather than technology is prevalent and the natural world is pitted against its human inhabitants.

Chulak, the place where Sha’ri and Skarra are taken by Apophis, is depicted as a forbidding, cold planet shrouded in dark, forested areas. The place is both primitive and hostile to white humanity. Reminiscent of the dark images of the jungle in colonial narratives, the forested areas on Chulak represent a threat to “white” humanity. Black and white spaces are clearly defined in the contrast between Stargate Command and the alien worlds. The white spaces of superior white aliens and SG-1 are shown as technologically advanced. For example, in “Children of the Gods” the interior of Stargate Command is well lit and highly specialized computers dominate many of the scenes. In comparison, the interior of Apophis’ compound on Chulak where O’Neill and the others are imprisoned is dark, dreary and poorly lit. On Chulak emphasis is placed on darkness and threat, both in the dungeon, which is reminiscent of the middle ages, and in the closeness of the forest. The mise-en-scene of both Abydos and Chulak is firmly centred on darkness and decay, while the ordered white spaces of Stargate Command are linked to technology and advancement (Nama; Hunt).

Manifest Destiny Travels into Space

What science fiction colonial narratives demonstrate is that whiteness is made visible through engagement with the other. Stargate Command’s response and

relationship to the alien other provides an opportunity to investigate white American national identity and the privileges bestowed on its white citizens. American expansion was initially justified in the early nineteenth-century as a need to go beyond existing U.S. borders in search of new resources. It was also a response to a perceived threat to American borders from other imperial powers and the American way of life by a “fictional” other.¹³ In other words, American expansionism was the result of a threat to whiteness and a perceived need to carry whiteness out into the wilderness. Significantly, *SG-1*’s expedition through the gate is authorized because of the threat posed by the other, the need to go beyond U.S. borders, and the need for new resources to protect their home world.

The same principles that shaped and informed the theory of manifest destiny are rearticulated within the fantasy of science fiction.¹⁴ Frequently, the new frontiers in *Stargate SG-1* represent places in which the human spirit has been displaced or enslaved by hostile aliens. In “Children of the Gods,” the human inhabitants of Abydos and Chulak are enslaved by the Goa’uld and their civilizations left stagnant under Goa’uld despotism. The “final frontier” is dark, savage and inhospitable to those white humans who venture there (Dyer 34). Equated within colonialism, imperialism and expansionism, this frontier depicts images of savagery and

¹³ By “fictional” other, I am referring to the creation and development by early Anglo-American settlers of imagery which depicted the other as savage, hostile and threatening. These images or myths of the other were also used within imperial discourses which sought to separate the white settler from both natives and nonwhite immigrants. Such fictions emerging out of the ideas evolved in Social Darwinism were readily accessible through scientific and lay publications in the nineteenth-century.

¹⁴ Colonial narratives of manifest destiny appear in the story lines of a number of science fiction television narratives. For example, Daniel Bernardi (1997) discusses the continuing theme of the white hero pitted against the dark horde in his analysis of *Star Trek*. Other authors who have examined the emergence of these themes within science fiction narratives are Christine Cornea; and John Rieder. Anders Stephanson’s work on manifest destiny in the 1990s while not specifically focusing on science fiction, gives insight into how the principles of manifest destiny are rearticulated within modern narratives.

darkness, set in contrast to the purity of “civilized” whiteness and western progress (Jacobson).

Discursive myths of America’s manifest destiny with its mission as both a ‘passive example and active agent’ continue to be reproduced within American science fiction television and *Stargate SG-1* (Coles). Passive example relates to the presentation of the American model as exemplary and an example to be copied or emulated by other nations and peoples. In contrast, active agency refers to the more aggressive agency of direct interference, usually through conflict, by the U.S. in the affairs of other nations. The ‘passive example’ motif, presents itself in science fiction through the upholding of United States as the democratic model that spreads its ideology among alien civilizations. For example, in *Star Trek*, the Federation represents democratic perfection in contrast to alien nations such as the Romulan Empire. In *Stargate SG-1*, this link between democratic and oppressive regimes is portrayed through the United States and set in contrast to the despotism of the System Lords. The ‘active agent’ aspect of manifest destiny is portrayed when battles are justified and fought between “good” and “evil,” “right” and “wrong”. In *Stargate SG-1*, “good” and “right” are of course representatives of Stargate Command who are presented as upholding and fighting for democratic freedom. Indeed, in *Stargate SG-1*, the myth of ‘passive example’ is transformed into ‘active agency’ through violent military actions against aggressors or deviants.

While theorists suggest that contemporary American identity in the 1990s has moved away from the central elements of manifest destiny and, has moved towards “multiculturalism and diversity,” many of the discourses of manifest destiny are still fundamental to story lines in *Stargate SG-1* (Huntington 18). Specifically, expansionism and exclusion, the twin pillars of manifest destiny are constantly

rearticulated. SG-1 seek to counter the threat posed by the Goa'uld and to restrict entry into the U.S. from off-world. SG-1 act as gate keepers of national security, going through the Gate to battle evil and keeping the Gate closed to outsiders. They even close the Gate for the “primitives” who in SG-1’s opinion are unable to understand and benefit from the technology.

In *Stargate SG-1*, even those aliens who are granted access to white spaces are still held under suspicion. This is demonstrated in how Teal’c is treated by some of Stargate Command and by military intelligence. He is placed in an inferior position. He is not only seen as a perceived threat, but also in need of guidance and support from O’Neill in order to fit into the world of SG-1. He remains othered, by the juvenile Goa’uld he carries, by his religious beliefs and by his past role as First Prime of Apophis. He is perceived initially as an enemy of the United States and denied a place within SG-1. He becomes a subject and an object of study by U.S intelligence:

HAMMOND: There'll be more questions, possible tests. After all he's carrying the larval form of a hostile, a very formidable enemy, inside his body.

O’NEILL: What kind of tests are we talking about?

HAMMOND: Maybe you haven't noticed Colonel. But he's the first alien species we've actually run into. You don't think that qualifies your friend as a subject of scientific interest?

O’NEILL: Subject?

HAMMOND: He is what he is Colonel. (“The Enemy Within”)

Teal'c, because he is not human and because he carries the "larval form of a hostile, a very formidable enemy, inside his body," is in essence denied the liberty, freedom and individual rights that the United States upholds. As the primitive other Teal'c is not granted full access to the community. He becomes the alien larvae he carries and is denied any individuality or sense of self. According to General Hammond, "he is what he is." However, Colonel O'Neill is willing to look past Teal'c's alienness and offers him friendship. It is O'Neill who develops the strongest bond with Teal'c. The character of Teal'c appears as a foil to the characterization and representation of the Colonel O'Neill, the central white hero.

Fictions of the White Self and the White Hero as Saviour

A popular formula operating within American science fiction television narratives is the heroic adventure. Aliens are, for the most part, reassuringly defeated or saved, by the identifiable central white hero – Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* (1977), Captain James T. Kirk in *Star Trek* (1966), Captain Katherine Janeway in *Star Trek Voyager* (2000) and Colonel Jack O'Neill and Dr. Daniel Jackson in *Stargate SG-1* (1997). What many of these heroes have in common is that they represent and uphold white middle class American values and virtues.

American science fiction television promotes the image of the white, usually male, American hero out to save humanity from the alien and to redeem the weak. Alongside manifest destiny and American expansionism are narratives of what Charles Berg has described as "manifest myth-making," the purpose of which, "was to rationalize – and – sanitize – the history of the USA's North American imperialism and transform it into an entertaining guilt-free narrative that conformed to core American beliefs (liberty, democracy, freedom, equality) and values (truth,

honesty, fair play)” (3). These “core American beliefs” are encapsulated in American science fiction television through the persona of the white hero. According to Roberts, “we often use the term ‘hero’ as if it denoted a universally recognized character type” and these heroes “appear to possess personal traits and/or perform actions that exemplify our conception of our ideal self” (1). In addition, these archetypes of the heroic white self, act to “cover cracks in the basic structure of its culture, so that an ideal image of itself can be projected as if it were actual” (2). Narratives of the white hero act to reinforce hegemonic discourses.

In American science fiction television, the messianic white hero battles for the liberty, dignity and survival of oppressed alien civilizations and humanity itself. It is possible to see this redeeming ideology at work in “Children of the Gods,” by focusing on how Colonel Jack O’Neill and Dr. Daniel Jackson are perceived by the aliens they encounter often as messiah-like figures. When SG-1 and SG-2 arrive on Chulak, they notice the religious significance that the position of the Gate holds, surrounded by a circle of stones reminiscent of Stonehenge. As the three members of SG-1 scout the area they encounter a group of monks on their way to the Gate. When Jackson goes out to meet them, instead of remaining hidden as ordered, he mentions that they have come through the Stargate or Chaapa’ai, resulting in the Monks kneeling down before him in worship (figure 3).



Fig.3. The Monks of Chulak: SG-1 is mistaken for gods in their first meeting with the aliens of Chulak (in the episode “The Children of the Gods”).

This motif of “the white outsider ... instantly worshipped by the natives, treated like visiting royalty or a god,” becomes a frequent occurrence for SG-1 (Lawrence & Jewett 231). This worshipping of the three white members of SG-1 (Jackson, O’Neill & Carter), continues when they reach the city of Chulak and are welcomed by the servants of the Goa’uld and asked to join the banquet in progress:

CARTER: Why are they treating us like this?

JACKSON: They think we're gods.

O’NEILL: Ok. We're gods. Now what?

JACKSON: I have no idea. (“Children of the Gods”)

At this point, SG-1 do not try to explain to those on Chulak that they are not in fact gods. Although Daniel has previously indicated that they should not kneel before them, he does not actually explain to them why not, leading to them still being perceived as superior individuals.

Colonel Jack O'Neill

Conforming to the heroic stereotype of the classic white American hero, Colonel Jack O'Neill is white middle class, with no obvious family ties, his son having been killed by accidentally shooting himself with O'Neill's gun. Reminiscent of *Star Trek's* Captain James T. Kirk, O'Neill is a loner by nature, often defusing tense situations with his unique brand of humour. He is not scientific in his methods, preferring a down to earth approach to problem solving. For example, in "Children of the Gods," O'Neill devises a simple plan to contact Dr. Daniel Jackson by sending a Kleenex box through the Gate, a message only Daniel will understand because of his allergies.

O'Neill represents the all-American outdoors man, preferring solitary pursuits like fishing. He also enjoys barbequing and beer. His home, as viewed in "Children of the Gods," displays both his love of the outdoors and his long military career, with medals and awards and an American flag adorning his fireplace. Again, there are similarities with other archetypes of the heroic formula, such as *Star Trek's* Captain James T. Kirk. In the film *Star Trek Generations*, the audience is shown Kirk's Ohio home created within the Nexus. Rustic, the house is based on American colonial influences, and is very much like that of O'Neill's.

In their analysis of the myth of the white American hero, Jewett & Lawrence argue that the white hero "is usually pictured as respecting lawful authority ... he

rejects the requirements of law only when – as in the American monomyth – the impotent and incompetent community is threatened” (224). In “Children of the Gods,” it is revealed that Colonel O’Neill refused to accurately report the situation in an earlier mission to Abydos. He failed to report that there were people still on Abydos and that Dr. Jackson was “alive and living with the people”. Throughout the series, O’Neill’s readiness to discount his orders is often in order to protect the lives of innocent others. In other situations, he is shown as reliable, able to carry out his orders to protect humanity and a willing participant in the salvation of weaker worlds, such as demonstrated on Abydos and Chulak. This ideal of the white hero who is willing to reject “lawful authority” only when it aids the “impotent and incompetent,” is part of the mythscape of the white American hero and is found in *Stargate SG-1*.

Colonel O’Neill operates within the heroic moral code that depicts loyalty and trust amongst his team as paramount and often applies his own unique interpretation of the military chain of command. He is viewed as a larger-than-life figure, often seeming to make the impossible happen. And, when O’Neill takes a chance by asking Teal’c for help in saving the prisoners from the Serpent Guard in “Children of the Gods,” this image of an almost superhuman ability to help the weak and oppressed is reaffirmed in Teal’c’s response that only O’Neill can offer these people hope and salvation from the Goa’uld:

O’NEILL: I can save these people! Help me! Help me.

TEAL’C: Many have said that! But you are the first I believe can do it!

(“Children of the God”)

O'Neill's leadership role and his ability to save the day are, therefore, highlighted through his encounters and relationships with alien civilizations and especially in his early relationship with Teal'c. In "Children of the Gods," Skarra views O'Neill not just as a father figure, but also as "a great warrior," a liberator who had previously saved them from Ra. O'Neill's role as a leader is emphasized when Teal'c makes the decision to trust O'Neill and turn on his fellow Serpent Guards. After the battle, Teal'c is left uncertain and unsure of his fate on Chulak. Although brief, this is one of the central scenes in this episode, because it establishes the loyal relationship between the two characters. Teal'c's "instinctive" trust in O'Neill highlights O'Neill's role of white saviour and redeemer. As the prisoners flee from the dungeon on Chulak, the camera focuses on Teal'c who tosses a piece of his armour aside and stares at the wreckage of the battle looking at the dead bodies of the Serpent Guards he once commanded and has now betrayed. As the prisoners and SG-1 flee, Teal'c remains unsure of what to do next:

O'NEILL: Hey, come on!

TEAL'C: I have nowhere to go.

O'NEILL: For this you can stay at my place. Let's go! ("Children of the Gods")

It is O'Neill that offers Teal'c an alternative to being killed as a traitor by Apophis and offers him a place to stay by suggesting he return to Earth with the team.

Similarly, when the freed captives, SG-1 and SG-2 arrive at the Gate in time to see Apophis and the other Goa'uld flee through it there is a moment when again the camera focuses on Teal'c, a moment when he is shown to be uncertain of what will happen next. Having served Apophis since childhood and viewing him as a god, Teal'c's expression seems to suggest that he and SG-1 are trapped on Chulak,

because only the gods' magic could activate the Gate. He therefore looks to O'Neill for reassurance. Although, Teal'c is a warrior in his own right and a leader among the guards he once served, he is made impotent by his removal from Apophis and his willingness to take O'Neill's lead. The role of the white hero is part of the mythscape in which the other is rescued by "powerful white men" at the expense of the self determination and dignity of those who are rescued and othered (Lawrence & Jewett).

The representation of the other as helpless and, to some extent, clueless is further illustrated when Teal'c is questioned by Colonel Kennedy on what he knows about the Goa'uld. He is shown to know very little about those he once served believing that the Goa'uld use magic to control the Gate and it is left to O'Neill to correct him:

KENNEDY: What can you tell us about the power source the Goa'uld use to power their weapons, ships?

TEAL'C: Nothing.

KENNEDY: I see. Do you yourself have an understanding of the physics behind the Stargate?

TEAL'C: No.

KENNEDY: I see.

TEAL'C: Knowledge of Goa'uld magic is forbidden.

O'NEILL: It's not magic Teal'c. They just want you to think that.

("The Enemy Within")

Teal'c's knowledge of the Goa'uld is shown to be based on primitive superstition. Having served under Apophis since a child, he cannot see through the deception that O'Neill and the other members of SG-1 perceive. Therefore, it is up to the heroic

figure of O'Neill and the other members of Stargate Command, to help save the Jaffa from enslavement and to enlighten them.

Dr. Daniel Jackson

Like Colonel O'Neill, Dr. Daniel Jackson fits the typical stereotype of the white hero – he is somewhat of a misfit, has no close family and often defies authority in order to protect those in need. While O'Neill is frequently depicted as the white action hero, freeing those enslaved by the Goa'uld through the use of military might and violence, Jackson is presented as having the idealized qualities of the fictional white hero. Jackson also has the scientific and cultural knowledge that the team comes to rely on in their explorations of other worlds. He represents the cultured white adventurer and is usually juxtaposed to O'Neill's more militaristic point of view. While Colonel O'Neill is a natural born leader and a down to earth military man, Dr. Daniel Jackson is scientific and spiritual in nature. Jackson's non-militaristic nature and his willingness to see the alien other as a potential friend or ally rather than as a threat, is underscored in his attitude to first encounters: "Unless we want to give ourselves a bad reputation, I think we should avoid shooting the first people we meet on a new planet".

Daniel Jackson's role as an archaeologist and an expert in foreign languages and ancient cultures frequently comes in handy. His interest in ancient civilizations is one of the reasons he stayed behind on Abydos, where he married Sha'ri, who, the audience is told in "The Enemy Within," was a gift from the people of Abydos for saving them from Ra. Jackson is the moral compass of the team, though his advice is often ignored. He explains the risks and problems associated with encountering other civilizations, especially less advanced ones, from a more socio-cultural perspective.

Daniel Jackson appears more frequently in the role of an advisor, ready to educate and reform, portrayed as an almost religious figure. On Abydos, after the attack by Apophis, Daniel acts an advisor and compassionate leader telling the people of Abydos to reseal the Gate to prevent further attacks and reassuring them that he will find Sha'ri and Skarra:

JACKSON: After we go through the Chaapa'ai, you have to bury it like we did before and then leave this place.

BOY: You come back?

JACKSON: No. I can't. Nobody can, that's what I'm telling you. Not for a long time. Now as soon as we're gone, I want you to close it. Bury it. Put a big heavy cover stone over it. Nothing good could ever come through this Gate, do you understand me?

BOY: You came through, Daniel.

JACKSON: Do you remember the story I told you? How the ancient Egyptians on Earth cut themselves off from Ra? Well, that is exactly what you have to do. Then in one year from this day you take the cover stone away. I will try to bring Sha'ri home with me on that day, but if I don't make it back, if I don't return, then you must bury the Gate again forever. Cho'qua? ("Children of the Gods")

It is a moving scene, in which the people of Abydos gather around Jackson and touch the top of his head, symbolic not only of a deep friendship but also of worship. And, it is after they return through the Gate, that Jackson tells O'Neill that when they liberated those on Abydos from Ra he was treated "like a saviour". It is

Jackson, who usually makes first contact with alien civilizations, like those on Abydos and Chulak. As previously discussed, it is also Jackson who encounters the Monks on Chulak and receives their adulation. He is also quick to offer more peaceful solutions to the obstacles the team face on other worlds.

Both Daniel Jackson and Jack O'Neill conform "to an American formula of the standard ... heroic character," usually white middle class (male), misunderstood, a misfit, a loner, brave, moralistic, loyal and willingly to sacrifice themselves or their happiness to save others and to defend the American way of life (Lawrence & Jewett 5). Together, they depict an idealized concept of the superior white self, portrayed as unselfishly protecting the weak and helpless, both alien and human, from the merciless other, simultaneously highlighting both their supremacy and magnanimous orientations. While the dark enemy is despotic, the white hero represents all that is perceived "good" and "perfect" within the fiction of the white self. The heroic formula demands that the hero not only conforms to these ideals but that he or she should excel at these ideals (Vera & Gordon 268).

These two heroic white figures, Colonel O'Neill and Dr. Jackson, form a military and scientific iconic representation of the American ideal of whiteness. The white hero's role is to support and reinforce the ideological assumptions of America's white national self image. Dr Daniel Jackson and Colonel Jack O'Neill represent fictions of the white heroic self, setting up whiteness as "good" and "right," using their violence and science for "altruistic" purposes. It is also a privileged, superior identity. In *Stargate SG-1*, these redemptive fantasies or fictions are therefore reinforced through the myth of the great white American hero.

Conclusion

The power of whiteness, as constructed in *Stargate SG-1*, is filtered through and defined within the parameters of the white cultural myths of whiteness as normative, invisible and epic. In “Children of the Gods” and “The Enemy Within,” the dichotomy between the dark alien Goa’uld as aggressors and the United States as protectors of humanity is immediately highlighted. What appears in *Stargate SG-1* and is first introduced in “Children of the Gods,” is that, discourses of superiority act to formulate a U.S. model of stewardship towards the human other. But these discourses also act as a rationale for exclusion. The exclusion of the other from white hegemonic discourses is constructed around myths of white superiority which in *Stargate SG-1* is used to define U.S. national identity.

The oppositions between good and evil, dark and light, black and white, are firmly articulated. These oppositions are strengthened through recurring archetypes of white imperialism, manifest destiny and colonialism. In addition, archetypes of the white all-American hero play a role in strengthening the white mythologies which advocate and inform a naturalization and normalization of whiteness. The colonialism of the West, spurred on by ideologies of white superiority, are rearticulated within *Stargate SG-1*, by what *Star Trek* famously coined, the “new frontier,” the outer reaches of the darkness of the galaxy and the exploration of new planets. The twin pillars of historical American identity, that of expansion and exclusion, are carried through the Stargate with the white members of SG-1 to new and unknown worlds.

Chapter Three

Whiteness as Superiority and Terror in “Enigma”

In the episode “Enigma” (1997) SG-1 travel to the planet Tollan on a routine reconnaissance mission. Finding the planet in the throes of a cataclysmic volcanic eruption SG-1 locates several bodies lying near the Gate, some of whom are still alive. SG-1 assumes that the survivors will perish if left on the planet and decide to evacuate the surviving Tollan through the Gate to Stargate Command. Back at Stargate Command, the predominantly white Tollan are found to be human, but not Tau’ri, and to possess superior technology to the Tau’ri.¹⁵ The complex struggle over superiority and authority that ensues between these two groups emerges from the Tollan’s sense of displacement on their arrival on Earth and their attempt to find a new planet, while at the same time not wishing to share their advanced knowledge with the Tau’ri. Held captive by Stargate Command, named as refugees and later threatened with life imprisonment by U.S. Military intelligence, the Tollan must learn to trust SG-1 if they are to find a safe haven and escape imprisonment. With the eventual help of Dr Daniel Jackson, the Tollan are introduced to the Nox, a superior peaceful “race” of white aliens, who offer the Tollan a refuge away from Earth.

The title “Enigma” has several distinct meanings that relate to the episode’s discourse. Firstly, an enigma can represent the unknown. The Tollan present an enigmatic presence for Stargate Command. Although they have knowledge that can help the Tau’ri defend themselves against hostile aliens they are unwillingly to share

¹⁵ Although classified by Stargate Command as biologically/genetically human, the Tollan are not endemic to Earth, therefore, the Tollan are placed in the category of “alien”.

this knowledge. Stargate Command takes for granted that the Tollan as superior, non-hostile white aliens will share their knowledge to help defeat the despotic Goa'uld. Secondly, enigma refers to the puzzle surrounding the evolution of two convergent yet different complex human civilizations. How did the Tollan as humans developed a more complex civilization than the Tau'ri? And finally, the enigma is represented in how SG-1 find themselves in the bewildering position of being both despot and saviour.

The white alien within *Stargate SG-1* offers a vehicle in which two key elements of whiteness – supremacy and terror – are highlighted, reinforced and challenged. According to Garner supremacy is the “power of naming, defining and decision making” and terror is represented through both “symbolic and physical violence” (15, 34). In “Enigma,” whiteness asserts itself through acts of both symbolic and physical violence. In addition, issues of white supremacy are depicted and contested through interactions between the Tollan and Stargate Command.

Technology as a Measure of Superiority

When the Tollan are first brought to Earth they possess several advanced gadgets or instruments which SG-1 cannot decipher. These high-tech gadgets lead SG-1 to question whether the Tollan present a parallel human culture, similar to themselves, or a more advanced civilization. In past encounters with aliens, SG-1 is positioned in the superior role. With the arrival of the Tollan, this position is reversed. The presence of the Tollan as both a superior and a white alien challenges the previous conflation of whiteness and Americanness. Since all of Stargate Command's past encounters with aliens had confirmed white SG-1 superiority, this new combination of alien, superior and white, challenges the stability and immutability of these

definitions. In other words, the presence of the Tollan leads to SG-1 to suffer an identity crisis.

The position of SG-1 as the dominant group is simultaneously both challenged and reaffirmed. The Tollan continually assert their dominance and authority and yet at the same time, they need SG-1's help to locate the Nox and flee Earth. The paradoxical situation SG-1 finds themselves in – that of both despot and savior – is underscored in their relationships with individual members of the Tollan. Only two of the Tollan, Omoc and Narim interact directly with SG-1. Omoc the leader and spokesperson for the Tollan is very protective of his team and their scientific and technological knowledge. He acts as a counterpart to Colonel O'Neill and these two individuals frequently find themselves in conflict with one another, especially over Omoc's continuing reference to SG-1 as primitive. In contrast, Narim is very much like Dr. Daniel Jackson – a scientist and willing to explore the new culture he finds himself in. However, Narim is very aware of the potential danger in trusting the Tau'ri with the Tollan's advanced knowledge. It is their advanced and superior knowledge that places the Tollan at variance with Stargate Command and SG-1. It also situates the Tollan as a threat by displacing and destabilizing SG-1's position as the dominant power.

The Tollan as the white other presents a mirror image of SG-1, reflecting back the naturalized features of whiteness. Their power structures and sense of assumed privilege is illuminated and held up in contrast to the now threatened white majority of Stargate Command and SG-1. The Tollan's power structures and privilege also act to question and de-stabilize Stargate Command's privileged whiteness by placing it within the characterization of the alien other. The disestablishment and de-stabilizing of SG-1's authority by the Tollan is something that Colonel O'Neill finds

both incredulous and insulting. Consequently, as the central white hero, Colonel O'Neill never fully surrenders his dominant position, leading to several clashes with Omoc. O'Neill and Omoc's continuing battle over authority begins with their first meeting. After Omoc has recovered from his injuries he immediately insults his rescuers:

OMOC: I find it unbelievable that anyone so primitive could
have deciphered the Gate System.

O'NEILL: Did you say primitive? ("Enigma")

When confronted by Omoc with being too primitive to "have deciphered the Gate System," O'Neill becomes increasingly defensive, demonstrating his discomfort with Omoc's assumptions. Up until this point, Colonel O'Neill has been used to having the upper hand in regards to alien encounters. The majority of aliens encountered by O'Neill, including Teal'c, find the Tau'ri to be superior or at least equal. They are usually grateful, sometimes excessively so, and lavish a great deal of gratitude upon O'Neill and his team. The Tollan's indifference to SG-1 strays from what is expected of the alien.

In "Enigma," the struggle for dominance is within and between shades of whiteness, allowing a re-focusing on the discourses and power relations that are used to obtain and maintain dominance. The destabilizing of SG-1's identity is based on power relations with the superior alien, leading SG-1 to be "confused and anxiety-ridden" over their ability or inability to maintain dominance (Omi & Winant 41). The Tollan's sense of superiority and the fact that Omoc is neither grateful for his rescue (in fact he is openly hostile) and that he finds it incredible that SG-1 "could have deciphered the gate system" leaves SG-1 shocked and confused by Omoc's

behavior and ingratitude. SG-1's identity as saviours is "displaced and refigured" to one of inferior meddlers (Omi & Winant, 41).

Omoc is openly reluctant to discuss his culture with such an inferior race. O'Neill's annoyance at being marginalized and refigured as primitive is conveyed by his incredulous "Did you say primitive?" In the defence of his new allies, Teal'c declares that the Tau'ri are worthy friends and allies because they 'value life'. However, Omoc confronts Teal'c's previous life as a murderous guard to Apophis saying, "quite a statement for a Jaffa". Omoc dismisses Teal'c's defence of the Taur'i, while also dismissing SG-1, linking both the Jaffa and SG-1 as primitive and uncivilized. Indeed, it is Omoc's belief in the primitive nature of the Tau'ri, re-enforced by their alliance with a Jaffa that, leads Omoc to refuse to discuss his culture and knowledge any further with SG-1. This reluctance of the superior alien to share technology with the Tau'ri is a theme which runs throughout *Stargate SG-1*. The Asgard and the Nox all refuse to share technology with the Tau'ri, assuming that the Tau'ri are not ready to handle such knowledge.¹⁶ The Tau'ri are typed as archaic, erratic and un-evolved. This earth civilization is just too primitive and unstable to use such knowledge wisely and with restraint. As depicted in "Enigma," the features more commonly used to foreground the primitive alien other within many science fiction narratives are effectively turned back upon SG-1.

The Fallacy of Cultural Superiority

The Tollan's superiority is explained by Daniel Jackson as a possible result of a period of Earth's history when science was "heresy" and superstition was prevalent.

Dr. Jackson argues that the Tau'ri would "be colonizing space right now if it hadn't

¹⁶ The Asgard are a superior race of non-humanoid aliens who have adopted the persona of the gods of Norse mythology in their dealings with humans.

been for the Dark Ages. There was a period of over eight hundred years where science was heresy and anathema. Maybe they didn't have that set back". According to Jackson, during the "Dark Ages" progressive scientific and intellectual thought was shrouded in darkness. Drawing on a long established historical metaphor, he equates superstition and ignorance with darkness, and knowledge, reason and science with lightness or whiteness.¹⁷

The linking of darkness and superstition with primitiveness is further demonstrated in Narim's conversations with Captain Samantha Carter. Knowing that Narim has developed an attraction for Carter, General Hammond encourages her to take Narim to the surface above Stargate Command on the pretence that he may like to "look around". Hammond uses Narim's natural curiosity about Earth and his attraction to Captain Carter in an effort to draw him out and to discuss his planet and their technology. Narim does in fact begin to trust Carter enough to tell her something about the Tollan. He describes a period in his people's history in which the Tollan believed in 'old superstitions':

NARIM: There was a time before reason and science when
 my ancestors believed in all manner of nonsense. Like the
 Sher'mau. The story goes that if a Sher'mau appears at the
 moment of death, she would take you to her dwelling in the
 stars.

CARTER: Ah! We call them angels.

NARIM: Then you still believe in them?

CARTER: Some of us do. ("Enigma")

¹⁷ The historical myths associated with the linking of whiteness and reason, are examined in Bruce Baum's *The Rise and fall of the Caucasian Race*.

When Narim first saw Captain Carter, he thought she was an angel or “Sher’mau” thereby linking her with the supernatural. On Tollan, as was the case on Chulak, a member of SG-1 is mistaken for a divine being. Yet unlike the monks on Chulak who continue to see SG-1 as divine beings, Narim understands that his vision of Carter was a fallacy and due to his semi-conscious state. Narim’s conversation with Carter also suggests that the Tollan had a similar ‘Dark Age’ and yet evolved a culture that is superior to the Tau’ri. Narim’s comment: “you still believe in them?” suggests that he thinks the Tau’ri have yet to move beyond superstition, beyond “darkness” and believing in “all manner of nonsense”. While for Narim, SG-1 represent primitiveness and superstition still locked “in a time before reason and science,” the Tollan represent science, rationality and reason (Kincholoe et al. 6).

In addition to their rejection of superstition, the Tollan are shown defying the Tau’ri’s “laws” of nature and physics. When the Tollan escape Stargate Command, they do so by passing through the walls of their room and through several layers of solid rock to reach the surface of the mountain. Unable to determine how the Tollan could just “vanish,” SG-1 are at a loss to explain how the Tollan escaped. Even when shown the proof through video surveillance of the Tollan passing through solid objects, Daniel Jackson illustrates his disbelief asserting that it is “totally impossible”. The Tau’ri’s fundamental scientific premises are not just disrupted but are shown to be erroneous by the Tollan’s superior knowledge. In a conversation between Captain Carter and Narim, the Tau’ri’s most advanced knowledge is dismissed:

CARTER: We call it quantum physics. You know the theory?

NARIM: I’ve studied it among other misconceptions of elementary

science. (“Enigma”)

Not only are the Tau’ri depicted as primitive in relation to the Tollan, but the Tau’ri’s science is shown to be ‘elemental’ based on “misconceptions,” placing Captain Carter, the highly respected theoretical astrophysicist and a master of “quantum physics” in the inferior position. Carter’s subordinated position to Narim is reiterated when she admits that the Tollan’s ability to pass through walls is not impossible, but only incomprehensible “from the perspective of our limited science”.

Previously in *Stargate SG-1*, superstition and a lack of understanding of scientific principles has been linked exclusively to the nonwhite other and less advanced civilizations. Advanced scientific knowledge was always displayed by Stargate Command. The superiority of SG-1 is disrupted when they come into contact with the Tollan’s superior understanding of physics. The Tollan reject SG-1’s normalized and naturalized sense of superiority by associating them with superstition and lack of scientific understanding.

The Natural World and the Negation of Culture

In science fiction narratives, less advanced alien civilizations are often depicted as inhabiting worlds that are hostile or shrouded in wilderness. The dark alien other is frequently depicted as being close to the natural world, in direct comparison to the relatively technological, urban or futuristic settings of Earth. In *Stargate SG-1*, many of the alien civilizations encountered by SG-1 are found on primitive desolate planets (Abydos) or planets that are overrun with vegetation and dark forests (Chulak). In contrast, the Tollan are completely divorced from nature, having had no animals on their planet for centuries. This post-natural state is highlighted when

Narim, going to the surface of Stargate Command with Captain Carter to learn more about Earth, sees a bird flying over head and is completely astonished and delighted:

NARIM: A flying animal!

CARTER: We call them birds.

NARIM: Are there other animals?

CARTER: Oh Yeah, millions of them.

NARIM: There have been none on Tollan for generations. (“Enigma”)

The fact that the Tau’ri inhabit a world filled with animals and natural wonders links them to the natural world. While Narim’s wonder and unfamiliarity with the natural world, being amazed at something as common place as “a flying animal,” could be viewed in itself as a form of primitiveness or naivety, it in fact results from his society’s development of and dependence on advanced technology.

The reason for Narim’s planet having no animals “for generations,” is explained as the result of the destruction Surita – the planet closet to Tollan. Surita was destroyed because the Tollan shared their technology with its people believing them to be “sufficiently advanced”:

NARIM: The nearest planet to our solar system was called Surita.

When we began to explore space, we learned she was inhabited.

CARTER: Did you make contact?

NARIM: Yes, when we thought they were sufficiently advanced.

They were on a level very similar to yours.

CARTER: So what happened?

NARIM: We offered them a device to produce unlimited productive energy. And they used it to make war ... in one rotation of

our planet, they had destroyed theirs. (“Enigma”)

The resulting destruction of Surita made Narim’s “world unstable” and uninhabitable. It also explains why Omoc is so protective of the Tollan’s technology and the threat it poses to primitive cultures. The Tau’ri’s inferior position is matched with the people of Surita who could only use advanced technology for war and destruction.

Narim links the Tau’ri and the Surita as destructive, irrational and erratic, while the Tollan are “a more evolved type of human being”. These hierarchies have been commonly associated by whiteness with nonwhite civilizations. One of the fictions of nineteenth-century racial discourses was that whiteness denoted civilization and higher evolutionary development and blackness denoted barbarity, irrationality and savagery (McCarthy). Ideas of hierarchical stages of development found in early theories on human evolution were linked with the stages of civilization. Western civilizations like the United States were seen as more “evolved” culturally and therefore seen as justified in their disruption of and involvement in so-called “primitive” societies. In “Enigma,” the irrationality and destructive tendency of the Tau’ri is continually emphasized as the Tollan compare their advanced knowledge with that of Stargate Command and the United States government.

Representations of Whiteness as Symbolic Terror

The superiority and dominance of whiteness is maintained through the use of terror. Whiteness as terror manifests itself in two distinct ways, as either symbolic or physical violence (Garner). Physical violence seeks to control the other on the basis of threat and physical harm. Symbolic violence defines the borders of whiteness and at the same time acts to “invent and change the rules and transgress them with

impunity” (Garner 14). Naming is part of the power that the dominant white community imposes on the other.

The power to define, control and categorize is often used as a weapon by the dominant white authority to limit and confine the nonwhite minority. For example, when General Hammond refers to or defines the Tollan as refugees, he not only re-asserts Stargate Command’s authority but also places the Tollan in a vulnerable position. SG-1 gains the authority to determine where and when the Tollan are to be re-located and the Tollan are placed in the inferior position as refugees. The distinction between citizen and refugee confers a loss of power and control on behalf of those named as refugees (Limbu). Citizenship infers the right of self-determination and the protection of the state, while refugee status implies a loss of citizenship (from the country of origin) and reliance upon the goodwill of state agencies. The refugee is placed in a vulnerable position and lacking the power to control their own destiny. For the Tollan these rights include the ability to determine their own fate. This distinction is not lost on Omoc, when he is told that his planet is uninhabitable and that he and his people are to be re-located to another planet. He confronts General Hammond on whether he and his people will have any say in their re-location:

OMOC: Are we to have some say in the matter?

JACKSON: Oh, yes. Self-determination is a concept that's very important to us.

HAMMOND: We'll do our best. In the meantime, we'll make you as comfortable as possible, but I want you to understand, you're restricted to the immediate premises.

OMOC: Are we prisoners?

JACKSON: No. No, absolutely not.

HAMMOND: But you are from an alien environment. It's as much for your safety as for ours. ("Enigma")

Omoc's concern is both over whether they will "have any say in the matter," and also whether he and the other Tollan "are prisoners". Omoc's concerns are not allayed by Daniel Jackson's assurance that the Tollan are not prisoners and that "self-determination" is a concept important to SG-1. As a civilian, Jackson naively believes that the Tollan's rights and freedom will naturally be preserved while on Earth. However, Omoc is more appreciative of his people's position and understands the potential danger he and his people are in. Omoc's apprehension is justified by what General Hammond says next. The Tollan are to be "restricted to the immediate premises," on the basis that "it's as much for your safety as for ours". Hammond as a representative of the military cannot guarantee the Tollan's autonomy and tries unsuccessfully to allay Omoc's concerns about Stargate Command's motives in detaining the Tollan. The Tollan's confinement is justified on the basis that it is in their best interests, contradictorily denying the Tollan the very "self-determination" which Jackson states is important to Stargate Command and the United States. Significantly, self-determination is frequently demonstrated in *Stargate SG-1* to be denied the alien other.

The Tollan's self-determination is further eroded with the arrival of Colonel Maybourne. Maybourne represents the conservative military interests of the United States government. His purpose is to obtain, by any means necessary, the technology and weapons to defend the United States and Earth against enemy attack. For Maybourne, the Tollan's rights can be ignored or negated in the interest of his nation

and his planet. Maybourne is set up as a contrast to SG-1, who show a distinct dislike to the man and question his military paranoia:

MAYBOURNE: That's an order releasing the Tollans to our section.

JACKSON: Excuse me? These are people we're talking about.

O'NEILL: These people do have rights, you know?

MAYBOURNE: Do they? Under what nation's jurisdiction?

JACKSON: How about basic human rights? ("Enigma")

The Tollan, defined as alien by Maybourne, are not under the protection of any of Earth's nations and therefore they lack "basic human rights". For Colonel Maybourne, rights of the individual are effectively equated with national identity. As head of National Intelligence Department, Maybourne is identified with the paranoia of Cold War politics and "support for a strong military to defend America's borders" (Christine Mains in Beeler & Dickson 79). In addition, Maybourne highlights the ease of which the Tollan initially categorized or labelled as human, can be placed in the category of alien or other when national security interests take precedence. Human or other rights can be negated.

Indeed in "Enigma," the boundary between "conditions for inclusion and exclusion" are constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated (Levine-Rasky 1). The Tollan are both included and excluded within the human community. Initially identified as human, the Tollan are later excluded from the rights that being human entails. This ability to define and redefine at will, confirms Garner's definition of symbolic terror. This terror takes the form of Colonel Maybourne stripping the Tollan of any rights they may have claimed, framing them within the parameters of alien or other. Therefore, the definitions of both human and alien identities in

Stargate SG-1 are shown to be constructions that are malleable and flexible, applied and changed on the will of those in power. These assumptions of human agency, such as freedom of movement and self-determination, are denied the Tollan and suggested as applicable to the Tau'ri only.

Within *Stargate SG-1*, whiteness is firmly linked to humanness or humanity, which is in turn equated with belonging to a nation-state. This triangulation results in the exclusion of the Tollan who have a claim to being human and white, but not citizens of a nation-state. The Tollan are alienated not because they are dark, threatening and animalistic, features which are equated with the dark alien (see "Children of the Gods" & "The Enemy Within"), but because of their origins. The Tollan have no claim to any national identity that Colonel Maybourne feels bound to recognise. By framing whiteness alongside citizenship, Maybourne excludes white humanoid aliens from the dominant discourse. With the arrival of Colonel Maybourne, the qualities defined by *SG-1* as important in defining the world of the Tau'ri – freedom, citizenship and individual human rights – are replaced by a conservative distinction between citizens and alien others (Balibar in Essed & Goldberg).

When Colonel O'Neill becomes frustrated with Omoc's lack of co-operation and his continuing reluctance to accept *SG-1*'s help, he attacks Omoc's leadership directly. Having gained Narim's trust, *SG-1* use him to undermine Omoc's position and try to turn Omoc's concern for his people into a question of individual rights. *SG-1* appeals directly to Narim, offering him "asylum," offering him citizenship within the U.S:

O'NEILL: Look, Omoc if you're so advanced, why don't you let your

people decide for themselves?

CARTER: Narim, this is a free country. Every year we take in thousands of refugees fleeing repression. If you request asylum, you can stay here no matter what Omoc wants.

OMOC: You don't care anything about Narim's rights. You only want our technology, nothing more. ("Enigma")

This stand-off between Colonel O'Neill, Captain Carter and Omoc is based on assumptions that SG-1 have formed about Tollan society. By attempting to frame Omoc in the role of the tyrant, SG-1 tries to disrupt his dominant position. And when Carter goes as far as to offer Narim "asylum" within the United States, she does so by emphasizing that "this is a free country" creating a link between the Tollan as "oppressed" and the SG-1 as "free". Historically, "Americans identified their enemies with tyranny, monarchy, aristocracy, the suppression of liberty and individual rights," with an increasing identification of American identity with the ideals of freedom, liberty and democracy (Huntington 48). The contrast between tyranny and democracy is continually replayed throughout *Stargate SG-1*. The ideals of liberty, freedom and democracy, are strongly identified with the Tau'ri, while aliens are frequently identified with tyranny, and the suppression of freedom and autonomy.

However, the conflict between SG-1 and Omoc represents a re-visioning of this traditional opposition. Self-determination, freedom from oppression, held up in *Stargate SG-1* as "highly valued" in the United States, is contrasted to Stargate Command's treatment of the Tollan. These seemingly fundamental elements of American identity break down when the Tollan are confronted with U. S. national

security. The arrival of Colonel Maybourne sees the Tollan forcibly detained in an effort to gain access to their technology.

Physical Violence and White Authority

SG-1's preoccupation with defending Earth from Goa'uld attack, often leads them to believe others share their views. When Omoc is first brought to Earth, he is questioned by General Hammond about his people's knowledge of the Goa'uld:

HAMMOND: And what do you know of the Goa'uld and Jaffa?

OMOC: We're aware of them, we don't interact with them.

HAMMOND: Well then, we share a common enemy. ("Enigma")

General Hammond assumes they "share a common enemy" in the Goa'uld. He is hopeful that since the Tollan possess superior technology they will assist in defending Earth. Since the Tollan do not "interact" with the Goa'uld, he assumes they too view them as an enemy. However, it is demonstrated that the Tollan do not share the same convictions as the Tau'ri. Omoc pointedly makes the distinction between not interacting with someone and viewing someone as an enemy:

OMOC: Did I mention an enemy?

HAMMOND: I only meant it might benefit everyone if your people
and ours could be friends.

OMOC: I demand you return everything that you have taken from us and
allow us to go home. ("Enigma")

General Hammond misguidedly believes the Tau'ri and the Tollan "could be friends" because he erroneously assumes that they "share a common enemy". But Omoc refuses to entertain the idea of friendship or alliance with Earth. Hammond's simple binary categories, friend or enemy and his quickness to assume that the

Goa'uld are the enemy of the Tollan, makes Omoc suspicious of the Tau'ri. The Goa'uld do not represent the same negative values for the Tollan, nor do they have a need to search for an enemy.

Omoc's suspicions of SG-1 are confirmed when the Tollan are treated as a threat. The Tollan escape to the surface above Stargate Command to ascertain their astral location and are tracked down by SG-1, accompanied by armed soldiers and dogs. This confrontational behavior by SG-1 convinces Omoc that the Tau'ri are untrustworthy and prone to violence. The Tollan's escape was therefore also a test, a test to see how SG-1 would react if the Tollan sought to leave Earth on their own terms:

OMOC: Our escape was a test. You did exactly what I knew you would do. You used threat and force to solve your problem.

CARTER: You didn't give us any other choice.

OMOC: You could have come for us unarmed. ("Enigma")

SG-1 have wrongly assumed that the Tollan would react violently to being re-captured. The actions of SG-1 only reinforces Omoc's initial view of the Tau'ri as primitive: "you did exactly what I knew you would do. You used threat and force to solve your problems". SG-1's actions have only confirmed Omoc's decision not to trust the Tau'ri with his people or their technology. Stargate Command's use of force provides further rationale for Omoc's insistence that his people should not interact with the Tau'ri. It confirms his belief that the Tau'ri would use the Tollan's knowledge for hostile ends.

For both the Tollan and SG-1, the other is the embodiment of threat. This mutual interpretation of the other, places Colonel O'Neill and Omoc in similar positions –

both are trying to protect their teams. However, it is only O'Neill who reacts violently:

O'NEILL: Hey! You haven't exactly behaved like someone I want to trust. I'm not going to put my team at risk.

OMOC: And I will not risk my people in your care. ("Enigma")

Issues of "trust" occur on both sides as neither leader is willing to "risk" trusting the other. Each side views the other as a threat. Garner argues that the "project of seeing otherness ... [as] ... entail[ing] the projection of anxieties" is common when the "other" is confronted (41). Both O'Neill and Omoc, "project" their individual and collective anxieties onto each other, neither wanting to "put my team at risk" and "risk my people". The Tollan's anxiety is framed around the Tau'ri's supposedly violent and primitive nature, and their potential use of Tollan technology for war, with long term repercussions for the Tollan. Stargate Command and military intelligence's anxieties focus on the alien and freedom – the unfettered, unknown entity that the alien other, even the white alien other represents. Both civilizations' fears are based on projecting their anxieties onto the other.

SG-1's reaction to the Tollan's escape also highlights the representation of SG-1 for the Tollan as large, threatening and uncontrollable. Such qualities are more often associated with the dark other, but in "Enigma" these stereotypes are frequently associated with the members of SG-1 and Stargate Command. SG-1's high minded ideals of freedom, equality, justice, and individual rights are undermined by Stargate Command's actual behavior towards the aliens. Disguised behind expressions of concern and compassion for the alien's safety, is the underlying threat of "life imprisonment" and "forced intellectual labour".

Colonel Maybourne wants to remove the Tollan from under SG-1's protection and re-locate them to a secure facility, where they will be forced to share their technology. Their forced segregation, imprisonment and knowledge extraction is justified by Maybourne as for the Tollan's protection, but it is also linked to the interests of the nation. O'Neill, Jackson and Carter challenge Maybourne's rationale:

O'NEILL: Nice little community with high walls, guards, maybe a little barbed wire.

MAYBOURNE: They're a valuable asset. They need to be protected.

JACKSON: Nice, forced intellectual labour.

CARTER: And life imprisonment.

MAYBOURNE: These aliens will live a better life than most Americans. They'll have a great view, the best food, every convenience, everything they need.

O'NEILL: Everything except a life.

JACKSON: You know... the Pentagon, intelligence that I can understand. But the President? I voted for him! ("Enigma")

By re-constructing the Tollan as a "valuable asset," as objects that "need to be protected," Maybourne effectively strips the Tollan of the right to decide for themselves. What Maybourne does is to remove the Tollan from the human community by categorizing and excluding them from participation in any nation state. Colonel Maybourne's segregation of the alien is representative of how nonwhites have been continually redefined in opposition to whiteness. Colonel Maybourne's actions epitomize what Garner suggests are "mechanisms for restricting the movement of non-white people" by "white decision makers" (17). In

the case of the Tollan, the mechanism comes in the form of reducing their status to that of political refugees, and with Colonel Maybourne, the ‘white decision maker’ acting on behalf of the Pentagon.

Maybourne’s decision to remove the Tollan to “a secure community,” is not accepted by SG-1. While previously at odds with the Tollan, SG-1 cannot support the extreme measures that the National Intelligence Department purpose. The distinction between the views of SG-1 and their government is highlighted by Daniel Jackson’s shock at the President sanctioning the Tollan’s relocation. The fact that the President supports Maybourne highlights how easily the other can be restricted from participation through the military discourses presented in *Stargate SG-1*.

While the Tollan have been denied any participation or entry into the human community, SG-1 have the option of opting out, at least temporarily, of their “national discourse” by refusing to surrender the Tollan to Maybourne and by facilitating their escape. SG-1, in their denial of the Pentagon’s views of exclusion of the other from the national discourse, in their helping the Tollan flee Earth, represents a move away from the extreme militaristic and nationalist discourse of Colonel Maybourne. By distancing themselves from Maybourne’s attempts to imprison the Tollan, SG-1 are able to move beyond Maybourne’s narrow constructions of the national discourse. It is a move away from a discourse based on exclusion of the other to one of inclusion, depicting a more multicultural dynamic (Gerstle).

Re-asserting SG-1’s Dominant Position

Throughout the episode, SG-1 constantly re-negotiate their relationship with the Tollan, initially placing themselves on an even footing with the Tollan, reaching out

as friends and seeking out an alliance. Then when this strategy fails and the Tollan continue to resist, SG-1 try to put themselves in a position of moral superiority, by questioning the Tollan's democratic process and freedom of choice. Eventually, by facilitating the Tollan's escape from Colonel Maybourne, SG-1 are partly restored to their former position of superiority in relation to the alien other. SG-1 assume the superior position in relation to the Tollan because it is only through the help and intervention of members of SG-1 that the Tollan are able to leave Earth and avoid life imprisonment in the United States.

In the closing scenes of the episode, after finally gaining Omoc's trust, Daniel Jackson helps the Tollan contact the Nox. The Nox are a group of aliens who live in harmony with the natural world while also possessing extraordinary technology. Like the Tollan, they too refused to share their knowledge with SG-1. Daniel Jackson tells Omoc, that the Nox "felt about us (the Tau'ri) kind of like you do. They called us very young, which I suppose is a hair more polite than calling us primitive". The last scene of "Enigma" acts to re-affirm SG-1's superiority, as Lya, the representative of the Nox, tells Jackson that although "your race has learned nothing ... you have". In other words, SG-1 and in particular Daniel Jackson, have "advanced" in their ability to work with and understand highly developed cultures. Even Omoc admits that Narim's insights into SG-1 were correct: "Narim was right about you. Perhaps in time we'll meet again". Ultimately, SG-1's superior position is maintained. SG-1 play the role of saviour to even highly advanced aliens.

Conclusion

The episode "Enigma" accentuates the nature of whiteness as one that deems to control and impose its own ideologies on those placed or forced outside its

boundaries. This episode demonstrates the power of whiteness by focusing on the ability to name and define those with whom it comes into contact. The dominant position previously associated exclusively with SG-1 is now transferred onto the Tollan. In their relationship with superior white aliens, SG-1 is othered in similar ways to the primitive inhabitants of Chulak and Abydos. The Tollan's view of the Tau'ri and SG-1, invokes racial stereotypes more commonly used to define the dark other – that of inferiority, superstitious beliefs, lack of reason and rational thought and closeness to the natural world. The very qualities that are used to present whiteness as superior are reflected back upon SG-1 by contact with these white aliens. The displacement of SG-1 from the pinnacle of power, to the role of other, acts to de-stabilize dominant discourses on whiteness. Whiteness is represented as multifarious. It is shown to be “domination *and* cooperation, as stability *and* instability, as hegemony *and* subordination, and as appropriation *and* co-optation” (Dyson 117). The superiority of whiteness is thus re-framed. The presence of the white alien in possession of superior technology, questions and threatens the stability of the Tau'ri and their “dominant, normalized location,” their power to enforce their own principles and ideologies upon the other and to make these concepts appear natural (Garner 6).

SG-1's identity as the dominant authority is challenged in “Enigma” by the arrival of the Tollan. Yet whiteness as a superior discourse continues to run throughout the series and, is reaffirmed by means of the characterization of white aliens within the role of technological and intellectual superiors to the Tau'ri. The Tollan are represented as superior to the Tau'ri in several ways. Firstly, they are depicted as having evolved a technologically advanced civilization. Secondly, the Tollan are shown to be elitist, willing to risk death or imprisonment rather than share

their advanced technology or culture. Thirdly, the Tollan are depicted as being divorced from the natural world and having no animals left on their planet for generations, favouring scientific reason and rationality. These features – cultural and technological advancement, exclusivity and the elevation of science over nature – are also features which have historically been used to define white civilizations as superior to nonwhite civilizations.

The white-on-white power struggle brings to the forefront the very structures that create and maintain white power. It also draws attention to the problematic nature of maintaining identity based on unstable categories such as supremacy and superiority. This instability of white identity based on supremacy, inclusion and exclusion, produces an often hostile reaction when individuals are faced with challenges to its foundations. The subjugation of those outside of this dominant power structure is often an attempt to forcibly preserve fictional concepts of supremacy and belonging.

In “Enigma,” the supposedly benign expression of white privilege of, first deciding the Tollan’s fate, secondly of imprisoning them, and thirdly of categorizing them as refugees, is held up as a mirror which reflects and confronts the issues of how the dominant white majority is able to impose its ideology and maintain its position relative to the other. “Enigma,” effectively unveils the issue surrounding the power to control the other, as it reasserts the ultimate role of the white saviour. “Enigma,” questions and yet finally re-affirms the superiority and supremacy of SG-1.

Chapter Four

The Dark Side of the White Self in “The Tok’ra” I & II

The next group of superior white aliens that the Tau’ri encounter represent a greater challenge for SG-1. In the two part episode “The Tok’ra”, SG-1 are faced with a dilemma in trying to form an alliance with a branch of the Goa’uld nation. SG-1’s distrust of the Goa’uld, built up by many previous violent encounters with Apophis, is not easily set aside when confronted with the need to seek assistance from the Tok’ra. These two episodes present a different aspect of Goa’uld society, but also portrays the conflict between SG-1 and another superior white alien species which threaten SG-1’s dominant position.

In “The Tok’ra” I (1998), Stargate Command is intent upon finding the fabled Goa’uld resistance, called the Tok’ra, translated as “against Ra.” SG-1 travel to their last known location, arriving on a planet that appears deserted. Suddenly, the Tok’ra emerge from under the sand and surround SG-1. It is in the first few minutes of this meeting that Cordesh, the leader of the Tok’ra, vehemently protests at SG-1 calling them Goa’uld. The Tok’ra’s aversion to being labelled as Goa’uld is a persistent theme throughout both episodes. As the story develops an uneasy tension develops between SG-1 and the Tok’ra as they negotiate forming a possible alliance. SG-1 find it difficult to reconcile the presence of the parasitic Goa’uld symbiote within the Tok’ra. The presence of the symbiote leads O’Neill, in particular, to view the Tok’ra as more of a threat than an ally. Further problems arise when the Tok’ra believe that SG-1’s offer of an alliance, refers to their willingness to offer themselves as hosts. This misunderstanding leads SG-1 to fear that the Tok’ra maybe more Goa’uld-like than they had expected. Seemingly confirming O’Neill’s suspicions about the

Tok'ra's intentions, the episode ends with SG-1 being held captive by the Tok'ra, obstinately for their own protection.

In "The Tok'ra" II (1998), news arrives that will change the dynamics of the Tok'ra and SG-1 relationship. Captain Carter receives word that her father, Jacob Carter is dying, having lost his battle with cancer. She is allowed to return to Earth in order to offer her father the opportunity to be cured by blending with Selmak, a high ranking Tok'ra who is also dying. By receiving the symbiote that can cure Jacob's cancer, both he and the Tok'ra Selmak can be saved. This union between Selmak and Jacob Carter acts as a catalyst for the uneasy alliance that is forged between the Tok'ra and Stargate Command at the end of the episode.

We Prefer That You Do Not Call Us Goa'uld

These two episodes establish the Tok'ra as a faction split from the Goa'uld Empire.¹⁸ The Tok'ra consider themselves a separate "race" from the Goa'uld System Lords. As enemies of the System Lords, the Tok'ra are seen by Stargate Command as possible allies in their battle against Apophis. However, as Goa'uld/human hybrids the Tok'ra as allies are problematic, because they are genetically Goa'uld. The name Goa'uld refers to the parasitic snake-like entity or symbiote that inhabits the host body. While the host may be human or humanoid, the Goa'uld entity is not. Like the Goa'uld, the Tok'ra need hosts to survive. While the Tok'ra constantly insist that they are not Goa'uld, they do in fact possess a Goa'uld within them.

¹⁸ The series uses both titles, Goa'uld and System Lords interchangeably, to refer to the despotic branches of this species. But it is more accurate to use the term System Lords to refer to those Goa'uld, like Apophis, who are tyrannical and bent on domination. The Tok'ra, on the other hand, refers only to those who reject and subvert the rule of the System Lords.

The first members of the Tok'ra that SG-1 meet, Cordesh, Martouf and later Garshaw of the Tok'ra High Council, are white. In contrast, the first enemy Goa'uld encountered in "Children of the Gods" are nonwhite. This representation of the Tok'ra as white suggests that the Tok'ra are somehow different from those Goa'uld previously encountered. In line with how whiteness and nonwhiteness is depicted within the series, the white Tok'ra represent a superior form of Goa'uld.

Essentially the same species as the hostile Goa'uld previously encountered by SG-1, the Tok'ra see themselves as morally and culturally superior to the System Lords. The Tok'ra uphold this distinction from mainstream Goa'uld in several ways. First, the Tok'ra do not obtain their hosts through force. Their hosts are not enslaved but maintain their individuality and self-determination alongside the Goa'uld symbiote. The Tok'ra believe in a symbiotic relationship with their hosts, that both parties should and can, benefit from the blending. In the Tok'ra's dealings with SG-1 it is made apparent that the Goa'uld symbiote and the human host have very distinct personalities. When Garshaw, the Goa'uld symbiote, speaks to SG-1 her tone is authoritative with a hint of arrogance. Her superior tone and body language is dismissive of SG-1 at their first meeting, and throughout her dealings with the Tau'ri, she retains this air of superiority. In contrast, when her human host Yosuf speaks, she is timid, soft spoken and obliging to SG-1. While this contrast demonstrates that the host does indeed have a distinct personality that is retained after blending, it also shows the very Goa'uld-like temperament of the Tok'ra. Second, in contrast to the System Lords, the Tok'ra resolve not to physically mark or brand their hosts in anyway. Third, they do not keep Jaffa or other servants. The Tok'ra refuse to enslave inferior worlds or portray themselves as god-like figures to be worshipped.

The Darkness of Slavery and the Emancipation of Whiteness

“The Tok’ra” I & II contain dialogue and imagery that reflects nineteenth-century racialization. The portrayal and re-production of historical issues within science fiction television is not unique to *Stargate SG-1*. Past conflicts are examined through the placement of aliens in the role of the enemy. In *Star Trek Voyager*, the episode “The Killing Game” (1998) places the Hirogen, an animalistic race of hunters, in the role of Nazi’s. And *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) presents a twist on depictions of slavery, as apes are shown as the tyrannical owners of humans. In *Stargate SG-1*, the ideological war between the Tok’ra and the System Lords is represented through the Tok’ra’s resistance to slavery and despotism.

When SG-1 first encounters the Tok’ra, they find it difficult to grasp the difference between the two factions of Goa’uld. When O’Neill asks Grand Council Garshaw and Martouf to explain why SG-1 should trust the Tok’ra given that they take hosts to survive, they fervently maintain their differences from other Goa’uld:

GARSHAW: Goa’uld take hosts. Tok’ra do not. Ours wish to be so.

MARTOUF: We have a truly symbiotic relationship. (“The Tok’ra” I)

The “truly symbiotic relationship” is the key point. The Tok’ra see the relationship as one of equality and choice. The Tok’ra, as a subset of the Goa’uld, are depicted as opposing the mainstream Goa’uld by their political views. First, the Tok’ra claim that they have turned their back on the enslavement of their hosts. And secondly, as Teal’c explains to SG-1, the Tok’ra seek to break down or overthrow the government of the System Lords:

TEAL’C: According to Jaffa legend, the Tok’ra are the Goa’uld resistance.

Their stated goal is the destruction of the System Lords and a

change in the ways of the Empire. They are hunted and despised
by the Goa'uld. ("The Tok'ra" I)

The Tok'ra pursue "a change in the ways of the Empire," an empire that is based on the subjugation of millions. Slavery is at the core of Goa'uld society, providing 'hosts' and the material wealth and resources that maintains the power of the System Lords. Goa'uld society is based on tyranny and bondage, with powerful overlords like Apophis enslaving millions of individuals, on hundreds of worlds. Using advanced technology stolen from superior alien civilizations, the System Lords maintain their dominance over enslaved worlds. They do so with violence and intimidation. These tactics are similar to the historical accounts of slavery in the United States during the nineteenth-century. Slaves in the United States, "whose grade on the social scale was even lower than that of common whites, were commonly mistreated, whipped, branded, tortured and killed in the most inhuman way" (Halpren & Dal Lago 36). The images that Halpren and Dal Lago use to describe the fate of slaves in the New World are likewise used in *Stargate SG-1* as a means to highlight the Goa'uld's treatment of their slaves ("Children of the Gods"). For example, the physical branding of Teal'c and other Jaffa is a mark of ownership and inferiority and those who "serve" the Goa'uld are treated inhumanly by the System Lords.

The Tok'ra denounce these traditions of oppression. They distinguish themselves from the System Lords through their belief in equality with their host and the abandonment of forced slavery. The premise of the episodes, "The Tok'ra" I & II, is the struggle of the Tok'ra for emancipation from the majority of the Goa'uld. There is also a sense within these episodes, that the Tok'ra are seeking redemption for past sins committed by their Goa'uld symbiote.

These episodes present a reinterpretation of the slave narrative. The Goa'uld System Lords, the proponents of slavery are represented as predominantly nonwhite. In contrast, the Tok'ra who represent the enlightened Goa'uld and refuse to condone the darkness of slavery, rejecting the forcible 'taking of hosts,' are white. In *Stargate SG-1*, the black body, the Goa'uld host and Jaffa, remains enslaved, oppressed and a source of evil, while the white body, the Tok'ra host, stands as a free agent able to rebel against their natural instincts. By equating the Tok'ra with agency and freedom, in that the white host remains free after blending, the superiority of whiteness is maintained.

However, it is difficult to separate the Tok'ra completely from the charge of slavery, since they, like all Goa'uld, must have a host in order to survive. Although, the Tok'ra claim their motives are different and benign, the fact remains that they too are dependent on other beings for their existence, no matter how well those other beings are treated.¹⁹ Throughout these episodes, there is an underlying question of just how un-Goa'uld-like these Tok'ra are. This is highlighted in the "The Tok'ra" I, by the way in which O'Neill seems to have an underlying distrust of all Goa'uld even the Tok'ra. To some extent O'Neill never really lets go of his past negative encounters with the System Lords.

¹⁹ "In the Line of Duty" (1998) the second episode of Season Two of *Stargate SG-1*, Captain Carter is taken as a host by Jolinar against her will. This possession is explained away as an act of desperation and un-Tok'ra like. Martouf states, "Be assured that we have never forced a human to become a host, it goes against all that we believe in". Yet, if enslaving a host was so abhorrent to the Tok'ra, then it seems Jolinar would have sacrificed herself before taking a new host against their will. Apparently when 'push comes to shove', as in the case of Jolinar, the Tok'ra appear willing to obtain a host forcibly to complete their mission.

Stigmatizing the Other: Blending and Branding

Stargate SG-1 draws heavily on images of slavery and subjugation, equating these acts more often to alien civilizations than to the Tau'ri. Although not set in a utopian future that seeks to deny humanity's past sins, or at least reconstruct them into a bygone past, *Stargate SG-1* still places the atrocities of humanity within the realm of the alien. For example, the conflict between the Tok'ra and the System Lords confronts the issue of the branding of slaves. In "The Tok'ra" II, SG-1 arriving back on the Tok'ra planet with a dying Jacob Carter, learn more about the process of blending host and symbiote. The Tok'ra reject the way the System Lords enter their host. The System Lords violate their hosts through the back of the neck, while the Tok'ra enter through the mouth, preferring to face their hosts. Martouf explains the difference to Captain Carter:

MARTOUF: We do not enter our hosts through the back of the neck.

This just leaves a scar that many of us find unsettling.

CARTER: So why don't the Goa'uld do it this way too?

MARTOUF: They don't wish to remember the horror of their host's face whenever they see their own reflection in the mirror. ("The Tok'ra" II)

The Tok'ra's willingness to "remember the horror of their host's face" acknowledges their readiness to face their demons. This recognition of the host's horror is contrasted to the unwillingness of the System Lords to acknowledge their acts of violence and the effects of that violence which leaves both a physical and psychological scar upon their hosts. The horror of assimilation for the Goa'uld's host, seen in the violent and sexualized depiction of the Goa'uld queen entering Sha'ri in "Children of the Gods," is removed in the blending of the Tok'ra Selmak

and Jacob Carter. Selmak and Jacob's blending is an almost tender moment, as the symbiote passes from one to the other through a kiss. These two depictions of blending, one violent and forced, the other calm and compliant, highlights the comparison between the malevolent nature of the System Lords and the "civilized" behavior of the Tok'ra.

Another aspect related to the 'scarring' of the host during blending with the symbiote, is the physical branding of the Jaffa who serve the System Lords. The branding of slaves in nineteenth-century America was a way of both 'claiming' and controlling the other. In addition, branding placed the human alongside livestock, as an object to be owned (Du Bois qtd in Sundquist). The branding of slaves by the System Lords is similar in these respects as it represents a mark of ownership, control and degradation. For example, Teal'c is branded on the forehead with the mark of the serpent, the symbol of Apophis, the Goa'uld he once served. This branding marks him out as other, as a (former) slave to Apophis for the rest of his life. It is through this brand that Martouf is able to recognize Teal'c when SG-1 first meet with the Tok'ra:

MARTOUF: This one is a Jaffa. Apophis sect.

TEAL'C: I am no longer in the service of Apophis.

MARTOUF: Who then are you in service to?

TEAL'C: I am allied with these, the Tau'ri, in battle against Apophis.

("The Tok'ra" I)

It is noticeable that Martouf asks Teal'c "who then are you in service to?" rather than 'who are you with?' or 'allied to' a distinction Teal'c is quick to make. He is no longer a slave, no longer serving any master, but has made the choice freely to ally

himself to the Tau'ri. The Tok'ra do not have Jaffa or apparently any other servants and, they do not brand their people either through marks of subordination or when blending.

In stark contrast to the black body of the Jaffa and the dark Goa'uld host, the white body of the Tok'ra remains un-enslaved, unmarked, un-stigmatized. However, it can be argued that the Tok'ra retain the shadow of slavery through their choice of language. As demonstrated in Martouf's initial attitude to Teal'c, the Tok'ra often use the term "service" in reference to non-Tok'ra and Tok'ra interactions. This denotes servitude rather than equality. When Martouf asks if one of SG-1 will act as a host to Selmak, he does so by asking if "one of you wishes to volunteer to serve as a host" when he could have asked if they would like "to be" a host or "provide" a host. These underlying references to servitude, hint at slavery deeply embedded in the core principles and ideologies of Goa'uld society, a cultural discourse so entrenched that even the Tok'ra, who disavow enslavement, cannot totally eradicate. This ingrained language of slavery is illuminated when Garshaw decides that SG-1 offers no benefit to an alliance: "I do not believe you could be of service to us. You are neither strong enough, nor advanced enough". Although the Tok'ra appear obliging and the "good guys," the Goa'uld symbiote retains an undercurrent of superiority and arrogance that comes across in the Tok'ra's tone of voice, choice of language, gestures and the manner in which they relate to SG-1.

Losing the Self in the Other – Tales of Contamination and Possession

That the 'dark body' within *Stargate SG-1* is frequently marked out as other, demonstrates that *Stargate SG-1* is situated within the prevailing racial discourses of mainstream American science fiction narratives. "The Tok'ra" I & II continually

reproduce images of blackness as inferior, highly visible and subjugated, acting as a foil alongside whiteness. The battle between the Tok'ra as ally or enemy, as self and other, as whiteness and darkness runs throughout these episodes. When SG-1 ask for an alliance with the Tok'ra, the Tok'ra believe that alliance means SG-1 wish to offer themselves as hosts. The Tok'ra equate an alliance with the blending of human and Tok'ra. Stunned by this assumption, SG-1 quickly make it apparent that this is not their interpretation. SG-1 wish an alliance based on shared knowledge and technology in order to fight the Goa'uld. SG-1 does not interpret alliance based on a shared consciousness.

The fact that SG-1 will not consider being hosts and find the whole idea unsettling becomes an initial source of tension between SG-1 and the Tok'ra. For SG-1, the Tok'ra's blended consciousness embodies the fear and threat of contamination, both symbolically and physically, by the alien other. Indeed, the Tok'ra represent the fear of the dark other within the white self, the contamination of whiteness by blackness. At one point, Garshaw even goes so far as to place SG-1 within the category of Tok'ra:

GARSHAW: I assume you are from the first world, the Tau'ri. Is that correct? Were you among those who rid the galaxy of the Supreme System Lord Ra? Then in a sense you are Tok'ra.

JACKSON: Of course! Tok'ra. Tok Ra, against Ra! ("The Tok'ra" I)

Initially, the Tok'ra include SG-1 within the category of "against Ra," as also Tok'ra. Garshaw's inclusiveness thwarts SG-1's attempts to situate Garshaw and her people within the alien or other category. The power to name the other and to define the parameters of humanity and superiority is linked to the power and privilege of

whiteness, and in this episode this power is linked to the Tok'ra. White domination exists in part because it is the dominant discourse that has the "power to attempt to define and subjugate the other" (Mahoney 305). SG-1's attempt to "define and subjugate" the Tok'ra, to define them in terms of their symbiote/alien/Goa'uld, rather than their human host, instead find themselves named, subjugated and integrated.

Throughout these two episodes the relationship between the Tok'ra and SG-1 is an uneasy and unstable one. There is an undercurrent of fear displayed by SG-1 which is not resolved until the end. Colonel O'Neill, in particular, is uneasy with the developing alliance. Like his relationship with the Tollan, O'Neill finds it difficult to be placed in the subjugated position by a subset of the Goa'uld. O'Neill's unease is focused on the contradiction that these possible allies present, that of having the Goa'uld symbiote within them. When pushed, O'Neill and Jackson show both their distrust and underlying hatred for the Goa'uld:

O'NEILL: Why do you talk like that? And what's with the glowing eyes? Might it have something to do with a little reptilian activity in your heads?

GARSHAW: We have symbiotic creatures within us, yes.

JACKSON: Well then, you can see how we might think you would be a danger to humans. You take humans as hosts. ("The Tok'ra" I)

O'Neill reacts poorly to the presence of the "reptilian activity in their heads". He has seen the dangers that the Goa'uld symbiote presents ("Children of the Gods" & "The Enemy Within"). Even Daniel Jackson, normally less cautious in his dealings with aliens, recognizes the Goa'uld symbiote as a danger to humanity. In addition, O'Neill's continued emphasis on the bestial nature of the Tok'ra, 'the reptile in the

head,' is an attempt to place them alongside the Goa'uld and to maintain the distinction of the Tok'ra as animalistic, as other. O'Neill's attempt to eliminate the distinctions between Goa'uld and Tok'ra, demonstrates the hierarchical lens with which SG-1 view the Tok'ra. Yet SG-1 are not successful in their attempts to represent the Tok'ra as merely reptilian.

Unlike the Goa'uld encountered in "Children of the Gods" and "The Enemy Within," the Tok'ra show no sensual excesses nor do they appear to reflect the openly hostile behavior readily attached to the System Lords. By contrast, the Tok'ra are represented as "civilized" and orderly. They openly refute O'Neill's attempts to claim that, as blended individuals, they have lost their freedom of expression and individuality, their soul. Erica Fudge notes that, historically, concepts of what it is to be human were linked to the presence of a soul, the soul in turn being linked to "self-knowledge" and autonomy (27). Fudges concepts of the presence of a soul being linked with humanity can be seen in Yosuf trying to reassure O'Neill that her reasons for blending with Garshaw were beneficial for both parties. Yosuf gained long life and all of Garshaw's superior knowledge, in exchange for sharing her physical body. Yet O'Neill remains unconvinced:

O'NEILL: So you've kind of got a little Faustian deal going here,
selling your soul for immortality.

YOSUF: What you understand as soul remains intact. ("The Tok'ra" 1)

O'Neill criticizes Yosuf's choice claiming that she has made a pact with the devil. He equates the symbiote with evil and with the loss of the soul and self. In referring to the German legend of Faust, O'Neill hints that the Goa'uld is demonic and that the price of gaining the Goa'uld's knowledge is too high. Previous encounters with

the System Lords taking over a host resulted in a total loss or subjugation of the human soul. Since the soul represents the embodiment of the self, any threat of possession meant a subjugation or negation of the individual. But Yosuf stresses that the “soul remains intact,” emphasizing the maintenance of the distinct separation of consciousness. Therefore, the Tok’ra challenges SG-1’s stereotypes of the other as bestial and lacking a soul. Through disavowing the claim of subjugation of the souls they have blended with, the Tok’ra resist SG-1’s attempt to deny them a place within humanity.

O’Neill’s insistence on seeing the blending of human and Goa’uld/Tok’ra as abhorrent points to the fear of losing one’s very essence or what it means to be human. Throughout “The Tok’ra” I & II, SG-1 questions the leakages and linkages of the physical boundaries between the self and the other when host and symbiote blend. SG-1 find the merging of the self and the other, and the possible loss of the autonomous self disturbing. The fear of assimilation or possession, of the contamination of the white body and the white soul by the Goa’uld symbiote (the dark side), is a continuing theme within the narrative. The strong images of slavery and possession suggest the loss of the autonomous self. Historical fictions of contamination presented the blending or interbreeding of different races as degrading the “purity” and souls of whites.²⁰ During the nineteenth-century, racial theorists argued for “the importance of racial purity” (Horsman 34). This fallacy of racial integrity advocated that if “the superior race was not kept pure, then it would

²⁰ Immanuel Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* discusses the supposed inherent differences between the races, linking such differences to be due to qualities in the blood. The idea of white blood being contaminated through inter-marriage or inter-breeding with non-whites became a popular discourse of racial theory and racial purity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries (McCarthy). This contamination of white blood was feared because it was seen to result in the loss of white superiority and a loss or degradation of the white civilized soul. The animalistic nature of nonwhites viewed by many whites during this period to be inherent in the nonwhite soul could be passed to the white self through such contamination or blending (Smedley & Smedley).

not maintain the necessary talents to rule and control lesser races” (Horsman 51). Thus, the dialogue between Yosuf and O’Neill, underscores the power that white ideologies of race and racial constructions have had for centuries. The threat of alien possession in science fiction is a re-articulation of the fear of the loss of the boundaries between the self and the other, between despotism and civilization, and between purity and corruption. It is also the fear of the marginalization of the white self.

The Tok’ra manage to marginalize SG-1 in several ways. Firstly, they refuse to form an alliance with the Tau’ri because the Tau’ri are seen as having nothing of value to offer. Secondly, like the Tollan imprisoned by Stargate Command in “Enigma,” SG-1 find themselves prisoners on the Tok’ra home-world “for their own good”. When O’Neill demands to know if they are prisoners, Garshaw ironically tells him that it is for their own protection:

O’NEILL: So we are prisoners. You've looking like Goa'uld to me.

GARSHAW: We are doing this for your protection as well as ours.

Knowledge of our whereabouts makes you and your world a priority target for the Goa'uld System Lords. (“The Tok’ra” II)

For O’Neill, that the Tok’ra’s desire to keep SG-1 confined only confirms what he knows about the Goa’uld. However, Garshaw’s decision to keep them confined is not solely based on viewing the Tau’ri as a threat. She also notices their reluctance to become a host for Selmak:

GARSHAW: None of you have volunteered to be a host to one of

us who is dying! Now if you're so disgusted with the very thought of

blending, how can we be associated with one another? I mean it is

obvious that you have distaste for our very being.

JACKSON: No, it is simply a lack of understanding. We have no hatred for you at all. (“The Tok’ra” II)

Arising out of this exchange is the fact that Garshaw is painfully aware of how SG-1 view the blending. Her concern is that the potential death of one of her members has not motivated any member of SG-1 to come forward as a host. While Daniel Jackson tries to rationalize their decision as “simply a lack of understanding,” the Tok’ra have been quite explicit in their discussions regarding their culture. When pressed on the matter, Jackson still refuses to offer himself to be a host for Selmak. The refusal of any member of SG-1 to save Selmak through blending elucidates SG-1’s priorities and their negative assumptions surrounding the symbiote relationship.

Perhaps the most illuminating scene in regards to the Tau’ri’s ingrained reluctance to merge with the other is when Jacob Carter comes face to face with becoming a host. When Captain Carter discusses with her father the options of hosting, explaining that “Martouf is actually two different souls sharing the same body,” he reacts with “that’s what you what me to become. You gotta be kidding me”. Jacob’s initial reaction is one of distaste for the process and he is then physically sick, although this is attributed to his chemotherapy and Gate travel. Yet Jacob realizes that blending constitutes his only hope of survival and reluctantly agrees. Significantly, the Tau’ri assume superiority even at the point of blending with the symbiote. Jacob believes he has the upper hand because Selmak is also on the verge of death. Jacob assumes that only his acquiescence is needed. However, Selmak wishes to interview Jacob to make sure he is a suitable candidate to co-exist with her:

SELMAK: Tell me, Sir, are you a good man?

JACOB: You're kidding, right?

SELMAK: No, we'll be spending the rest of our lives together.

(“The Tok’ra” II)

Selmak wants to be sure that Jacob is “a good man” before the blending will go ahead. Selmak wants to make sure that Jacob will not offer an unsuitable vehicle for her by allowing the negative traits of the Goa’uld to resurface. This indicates that the dark side of the self, either human or alien, is never far beneath the surface and that this mixing of the self and other threatens the materialization of this darker side. But, for Jacob, the choice is simple: “Good man, bad man, what difference does it make? We don’t have a choice”. However, Selmak understands the risk for the Tok’ra in the host retaining agency and self-determination. A corrupt host could use the knowledge and power contained within the symbiote for malevolent ends. In the end, the blending occurs. For Jacob, the fear of losing the self and the fear of the alien within is outweighed and negated by the greater fear of death.

Conclusion

The episodes discussed in this chapter, raise issues relating to the nature of what it means to be human, that is, the nature of humanity and its historical relationship to slavery, self-awareness and the possession of a soul. Charges of slavery brought against the Tok’ra by SG-1 highlight the historical justifications which prior to 1865, the United States used to condone the enslavement of the nonwhite other. Enslavement includes the branding of slaves, a permanent marker of ownership that further subjugates and stigmatizes them as other. As I have argued, these episodes

illuminate how this branding marked the other out as inferior, and as an instrument to be used and disposed of at will.

The displacement of the human soul or spirit is fore-grounded within the narrative of slavery by emphasizing the different ideologies between the System Lords and the Tok'ra. As SG-1 and the Tok'ra clash over concepts of the subjugation of the human soul, SG-1 try to place the Tok'ra alongside the System Lords, emphasizing the fact that they too need a host to survive. However, the Tok'ra stipulate that their hosts offer themselves willingly and retain their free-will and self-determination. The Tok'ra do not view themselves as displaced or subjugated.

In regards to enslavement, I have argued that "The Tok'ra" I & II, offers an opportunity to focus on how science fiction displaces narratives of historical atrocities onto the alien. America's past is evoked through images of the Goa'uld as malevolent and as slave owners and through the symbolism of Goa'uld/Tok'ra hostility. Not only do these episodes place slavery firmly into the realm of the alien but, by having the predominantly white Tok'ra reject the abject slavery of the System Lords, the horror of slavery is placed onto the dark alien. This white wash effectively redeems the white Tok'ra of the charges of subjugation and genocide that have been previously situated within the discourse of the System Lords. The charge of slavery is reinterpreted and placed within the frame of blackness. In these episodes whiteness is left unmarked and detached from charges of slavery.

The mutual distrust that forms in the early relationship between SG-1 and the Tok'ra demonstrates the power struggle between these two white groups. The Tok'ra in their refusal to be named or to be othered, bring into focus the power that

whiteness routinely tries to impose. Stargate Command and members of SG-1 use animal imagery in their attempts to other the Tok'ra. By focusing on the dark parasite inside the white body of the Tok'ra, O'Neill specifically, tries to destabilize the Tok'ra's position of superiority. Because the white superior alien resists attempts to be confined within the category of other, the artificial and arbitrary boundaries that are created between the white majority, the white minority and the nonwhite other is brought into focus. The relationship between whiteness as power and whiteness as oppression is collapsed by focusing on how the white alien is perceived by, and in turn perceives SG-1. But the representation of these white aliens also reinforces the power and privilege of whiteness. The Tok'ra, shown as predominantly white, conflates with their supposed superiority to both the System Lords and SG-1. What the white alien achieves is both a disruption and a reinforcement of whiteness.

Conclusion

Closing the Iris

According to Edward Said “American attitudes to American ‘greatness,’ to hierarchies of race, to the perils of *other* revolutions ... have remained constant, have dictated, have obscured, the realities of empire, while apologists for overseas American interests have insisted on American innocence, doing good, fighting for freedom” (7). In *Stargate SG-1*, both the appeal to “greatness” and to interventionism by the U.S. is based upon calls for democracy and “freedom”. Indeed, SG-1’s stated objectives for travelling through the Stargate is to fight the despotic Goa’uld, free those under Goa’uld tyranny, gain allies and new technologies, and to further strengthen Earth’s defences against alien attack. While the Goa’uld’s imperialism is shown to be deplorable, that of Stargate Command is depicted as justified. Stargate Command’s imperialistic and paternalistic role in and attitude towards alien civilizations is rationalized through a conflict/confrontation with evil. Stargate Command is only brought into action through the confrontation with the Goa’uld, an evil force who subjugate those they encounter.

Stargate SG-1, portrays the “human race” on Earth as white and American. In addition, this whiteness sets the standard for all of humanity and aliens. Significantly, whiteness as power is fluid and in *Stargate SG-1* this power is contested between SG-1 and white aliens. The episodes examined here thus address questions about power; the power to name, to define, to detain and to exclude the other. In *Stargate SG-1*, each of these power processes act to maintain white privilege. Indeed, whiteness is the overwhelming and invasive presence. Through this overwhelming presence whiteness fades as outstanding, while at the same time is visibly dominant. As a result, whiteness becomes the normative position and the

dominant or central value system. The dominance of whiteness, however, is created through and depends upon the subordination of the other. *Stargate SG-1*'s minority representation of nonwhite characters represents a white hegemonic discourse that situates otherness alongside alienness, while also acting to reinforce the "invisibility" of whiteness.

In populating Stargate Command with predominantly white characters *Stargate SG-1* presents a "white washing" of humanity (Bernardi). While the majority of aliens in the early episodes are depicted as nonwhite, in "Enigma" and "The Tok'ra," the technologically superior alien is linked to whiteness. The white alien retains a freedom and agency that is lost in the representation of the nonwhite alien. Indeed, *Stargate SG-1*'s portrayal of nonwhite aliens equates nonwhiteness with fear, threat and the need to protect white interests (humanity) against the other. Teal'c and Apophis are represented as threatening, as alien, by coding them as nonwhite, as black. A consequence of locating blackness in alienness as both a threat and a state of primitiveness is that it marks out and reinforces whiteness as normative and superior. Blackness becomes a site of threat and a challenge to the discourses of whiteness. As the only nonwhite member of the core cast, Teal'c stands out, while the white members of the team blend into the overall whiteness of the show. Teal'c is made visible as an alien through the choice of an African-American to play the part and by the physical mark or brand of the Serpent God to whom the character has been enslaved. Teal'c's primary role in the first two seasons is a warrior, a fighter and as a foil for the white members of SG-1. In the episodes discussed within my study, Teal'c is shown as athletic and possessing superior physical strength but having a limited knowledge of technology. As the only alien member of Stargate Command, Teal'c rarely takes the initiative. Even when

confronted with the Goa'uld, with whom Teal'c has lived and served his entire life, he follows O'Neill's lead. In *Stargate SG-1*, racial stereotypes are reconfigured onto the alien.

Stargate SG-1, like many mainstream American science fiction narratives looks backwards to the dehumanizing depictions of the other in colonial and imperial narratives and uses these to symbolize the alien. Imperialist discourses structure the episodes' portrayal of and encounters with the alien other. The imagining of the alien other is based on discourses of whiteness and otherness that emerged out of western colonialism and imperialism and which viewed the other as threatening, inferior and/or hostile. According to Jacobson "that the 'savage' resides at the borders of our imagined national community has textured American political life from the Indian Wars to the Gulf War" (204). It is within the ideological framework of the alien as the threatening dark other in science fiction that dialogues of imperialism and paternalism emerge.

As argued in Chapter two, SG-1 act paternalistically towards the nonwhite aliens on Abydos and Chulak. This paternalism manifests itself in SG-1's protection of the non-Goa'uld inhabitants of Abydos and Chulak, SG-1's reluctance to share advanced technology with these people, and in their closing of the Stargate on Abydos. However, this paternalism is also reflected back upon SG-1 through their encounters with white aliens. For example, the Tollan will not share advanced technology with SG-1 and the Tok'ra initially view SG-1 as not advanced enough to be effective allies. The deflection of whiteness away from SG-1 and onto the white alien enables the exploration of how discourses of imperialism and paternalism are used to control and maintain white privilege. Through an analysis of how the white alien views SG-1 and the Tau'ri the hegemonic power of white discourses are

highlighted. The superior white alien's relationship with SG-1 reproduces Stargate Command's attitudes towards the inferior other. As I have argued in my analysis of "Children of the Gods," inferior civilizations are viewed by SG-1 and Stargate Command as childlike, needing the paternalistic guidance of the U.S. This same stance is mirrored in how the Tollan and the Tok'ra relate to and interact with SG-1. In "Enigma" and "The Tok'ra" I & II, the struggle for the dominant position between opposing dialogues of whiteness, demonstrates that whiteness like other identities is mutable. It also reveals that white privilege depends on the ability to assert and maintain one's superior position in relation to the other. Significantly, what is never questioned is that whiteness is superior, entitled and privileged.

Although SG-1 resists the paranoia shown by representatives of the National Intelligence Department (N.I.D) ("Enigma"), their treatise is not removed from the show's "common sense" discourse that views and situates both whiteness and Americanness as superior. This situated position has been demonstrated in my analysis of the conflict between Stargate Command and the Tollan. The N.I.D view the Tollan not only as a risk to national security, but also as an opportunity to obtain technological knowledge that will give the United States an advantage against the Goa'uld. As examined in Chapter three, Maybourne views the detainment of the Tollan as necessary to protect U.S interests and national security. In this respect, Maybourne's actions are not unlike that of the System Lords, who are willing to obtain technology at any cost. The rights and lives of individuals are swept aside for the good of the empire or nation. However, the series does not develop the ideological similarity between the System Lords, the Tollan and Stargate Command, and surprisingly, upholds the hegemonic power of Stargate Command. In *Stargate SG-1*, white U.S. military discourses dominate. The actions of SG-1 present an

image of the white U.S. military command, for the most part, as heroic and redemptive. Although *Stargate Command*'s agenda is one of militaristic expansion into unknown worlds and the extermination of the System Lords, the United States is represented as the protector of the weak against evil, rather than as the aggressor.

The episodes analyzed here, which were filmed during the 1990s, reflect the United States' foreign and domestic concerns of the period. The 1990s were a period in U.S. history that saw the United States emerge from the Cold War as the only super power (Reynolds). Potential threats in its status and access to resources outside its borders came from different quarters, from countries developing nuclear weapons and political instability in the Middle East.²¹ However, in the late 1990s new anxieties were also emerging regarding terrorism not just abroad but at home.²² For example, the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 1993 saw tensions in U.S. national security running high. As Wald argues the United States was continuing to develop an increasing military and policing presence throughout the globe (Wald). In fact, according to Wald, it was during this period that the United States increasingly portrayed itself as the world's policemen.²³ In *Stargate SG-1*, these anxieties are re-worked fictionally in the conflict between the Goa'uld and SG-1.

Significantly, within *Stargate SG-1*, some aspects of U.S. society and foreign policies are directly addressed, while others are ignored or rearticulated onto the alien. For example, there are allusions to the Gulf War in "Children of the Gods,"

²¹ China and countries in the Middle East were continuing to develop their nuclear capabilities.

²² This fear of terrorism within the borders of the United States would reach fever pitch after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

²³ The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1991 saw a response by the United States in the form of the Gulf War (1991) and in 1996 U.S. troops were deployed to Bosnia. This decade also saw the involvement of the U.S. military in Somalia in 1993 (Reynolds).

when Captain Carter states that she logged in time over enemy air space during the Gulf War and in the framing of the conflict on Abydos within a desert terrain setting reminiscent of Desert Storm. The participation of Captain Carter in the Gulf War, rather than critiquing the war, is used to add credence to Carter's place on the team, determining that she is worthy of respect because of her participation in the Gulf. The reference to the Gulf War also signals the similarity between the goals of SG-1 and a similar fight for democratic freedom from tyrannical invaders of defenceless nations. Meanwhile, "The Enemy Within" looks back to the Cold War and the paranoia which accompanied the tensions between the U.S. and communist powers, especially in the reluctance of many officers at Stargate Command to accept Teal'c and, in the acts of sabotage and betrayal by O'Neill's close friend and fellow soldier, Major Kawalsky. This story line also mirrors the social conflicts happening internally within the U.S. during the 1990s, such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing by U.S. army veteran Timothy McVeigh. This bombing was a shocking revelation to U.S. military investigators that those responsible were not foreign terrorists but rather "one of their own".

In contrast to the overt references to the United State's involvement in the Gulf War, references to slavery are projected firmly onto the alien. Significantly, for my analysis, slavery is projected onto the black alien disassociating it completely from whiteness. This role reversal sees blackness enslaving whiteness. Therefore, in *Stargate SG-1*, the black body as alien is appropriated by whiteness to display and critique the issues of slavery. Favourable aspects of U.S. history are mentioned within the narrative as part of the discourse of the Tau'ri, while those historical moments which reflect poorly on U.S. images of nationhood are diverted onto the

alien.²⁴ As a consequence, white interests and actions are upheld as “good” and “right”. In contrast, the Goa’uld represent the quintessential threat of the other. Signalled as other through representation, actions, and contrasts to SG-1, the Goa’uld presents the archetypical villain against whom the United States constructs its identity.

Through an analysis of *Stargate SG-1*, I have sought to demonstrate the significance of popular American science fiction television as a medium for understanding how dominant white discourses can create and reinforce popular (mis)understandings of racial formations including whiteness. In *Stargate SG-1*, whiteness and white privilege are reinforced through hegemonic discourses. In addition, narratives in *Stargate SG-1* reinforce and engage with historical and contemporary United States constructions of whiteness. As I have demonstrated, the alien inhabits worlds that are primitive, dark and reminiscent of images of colonial and imperial writings. In the episodes discussed the alien other is depicted in terms of their contrast to and relationship with whiteness. This study also determined that whiteness is an identity that invokes privilege and superiority. Within *Stargate SG-1*, whiteness is determined as an identity conceived alongside and through blackness/nonwhiteness/alienness. As a gateway to the stars and multiple universes, *Stargate SG-1* merely reproduces the invisibility of whiteness and ultimately contributes to white privilege here on Earth.

²⁴ The historical forgetfulness associated with unfavourable moments in U.S. history has been discussed in depth by Ali Behdad in *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States*. For example, Behdad describes the historical tour and museum on Ellis Island as one that depicts only the positive side to its role in early U.S. immigration.

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