



Gender and Parenting in the Worlds of *Alien* and *Blade Runner*

A Feminist Analysis

Amanda DiGioia

EMERALD STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE AND GENDER

GENDER AND PARENTING IN THE
WORLDS OF *ALIEN* AND *BLADE
RUNNER*

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AMANDA DIGIOIA

*University College London School of Slavonic and
East European Studies, UK*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

This book is dedicated to my grandmothers, Lorraine Nancy Nuzzo DiGioia and Winifred Bridget Gallagher Cresman, for their unconditional love; to Dr Aura Zaban, who ordered the scan that saved my life; and to the women who are my friends. Thank you for supporting me.

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PREFACE

I sat, numb, in the oncologist's office. I had just been told there were several masses in my chest and that the medical team was not quite sure what they were. The masses, apparently, were very weird. My mind immediately went to pop culture. 'Are you sure it isn't a xenomorph?' I asked. 'No', the doctor replied. 'This is not *Prometheus III*'. That was the moment at which the idea for this volume hatched in my mind.

This book is a comparative, gendered analysis study of Ridley Scott's contributions to the genre of science fiction cinema. This book will also tie into my previous research (and previous Emerald publication) *Childbirth and Parenting in Horror Texts: The Marginalized and the Monstrous*. This previous book focussed on motherhood, an issue that impacts all women who live under patriarchy. Many of the texts that I am studying are new, so this book will add to the literature on Scott, sci-fi and feminism. My fields of women's studies and gender studies have established that, for women, and other marginalised groups, the personal is political: personal experiences are the result of social structures or inequality (Hanisch, 2006), allowing me to use personal accounts outside a solely autoethnographic context, specifically a short chapter reflecting on my cancer treatment and the many parallels between the disease, the treatment and the body shock horror texts examined in this volume.

The book will focus on imagined communities, the objectification of women (both real and 'androids' or holograms) and the depictions of birth, motherhood and fatherhood in recent Ridley Scott science fiction/horror texts, building upon the previous monograph mentioned above. I am fortunate enough to be friends with a special effects artist who worked on *Prometheus*, who has given me permission to publish their insights anonymously. I will include conversations with this artist in this book, as many of the aliens in *Prometheus* have been crafted to resemble variations on the vagina dentata, a topic of academic research to which I dedicated an entire chapter of *Childbirth and Parenting in Horror Text*. In lieu of a strictly psychoanalytic approach (as anything based on Freud is built on quicksand), I instead argue that the vagina dentata is an evolutionary fear that has been learned, due to the

prevalence of the notion of the vagina dentata in societies around the globe (Rees, 2015).

The first chapter, ‘Gender, Childbirth, and Parenting in Science Fiction Films and Gender in Horror Films’, provides the necessary theoretical framework and background for the book. I define the *Blade Runner* films as science fiction works with elements of horror (from the corporeal to the existential) and the *Alien* universe as a collection of horror texts. This is because, at their core, the films, video games, novels and various other ephemera that make up the *Alien* universe all feature discovery, confirmation, confrontation and a supernatural dread of the unknown. While science fiction elements are certainly present within this universe, horror is not limited to the supernatural: it can also be biological, as the alien is in this universe. ‘Science fiction’ as a term is, like some science fiction characters themselves, nebulous, but can generally be used to describe fiction that features extrapolated science or fictitious use of scientific possibilities (Sobchack, 2001), all of which feature in the *Blade Runner* universe. This chapter will describe previous work on gender, childbirth and parenting in horror and in science fiction (Clark, 2011; Corea, 2007; Creed, 1993; Ewing & Decker, 2017; Freeland, 2018; George, 2013; Grant, 2015; Noonan, 2015; Picart, 2004), which I will then link to *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant* in later chapters.

The second chapter, ‘More Human Than Human: *Blade Runner 2049*’, focusses on feminist analysis of gender and sex in *Blade Runner 2049*. I argue that gender, like humanity in *Blade Runner 2049*, is nothing but a social construct. Additionally, I suggest that *Blade Runner 2049* is one in a long succession of science fiction films that reinforce patriarchal myths about gender and power (Hobby, 2000). *Blade Runner* arguably bleeds over into the cyberpunk realm as well (Holland, 1995; Landsberg, 1995). Because so many female replicants in both the original *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049* are male playthings of various sorts, I will also use feminist research on the current use, and future production, of female sex robots to frame my argument (Mackenzie, 2018; Richardson, 2015). Finally, I make use of theories about feminism and tech, beginning with Haraway (1991a) before moving on to more contemporary sources (Berg, 2019; Harari, 2016).

The third chapter, “‘We were so wrong’”: the perversion of male creation. Motherhood, fatherhood and birth in *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant*’ focusses on *Alien*, *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant*. I show how the female hero in each of these texts has shifted from a place of (near) gender equality (such as in *Alien*) to one where women lack agency and are dismembered or slaughtered nude, solely to satisfy the male gaze. This chapter will include a visual effect creator’s insight into why the extraterrestrial life forms discovered

by the crew in *Prometheus* often look vaginal, drawing upon my previous work on the vagina dentata and why men fear them, and the work of feminist scholars of horror (Creed, 1993; Freeland, 2018). This chapter also updates Jordanova's (1989) theory of mad scientist 'bad dads'.

The fourth chapter, "'You've never seen a miracle": Birth in *Blade Runner 2049*' focusses on birth in *Blade Runner 2049*, which revolves around events stemming from a synthetic replicant giving birth. This birth is viewed as either monstrous ('She was a replicant. Pregnant. This breaks the world, K. Do you know what that means?' (Villeneuve, 2017)) or miraculous ('You newer models are happy scraping the shit... because you've never seen a miracle' (Villeneuve, 2017)) in the film universe. Those involved with law and order in this future society view the birth of a human from a replicant as an abomination that needs to be concealed, whereas those who are on the fringes of society, or subjugated by those in power, view it as miraculous. Notably, the individual with the most power and privilege within *Blade Runner 2049*, Niander Wallace, is a 'bad dad' mad scientist, who perversely uses birth as a means to attain his own goals, which are (1) to prove his supremacy over Tyrell (as Tyrell's replicants reproduce naturally, and Wallace's cannot); (2) to use reproduction in replicants to support interstellar colonisation¹ and (3) profit. This chapter will briefly touch upon scientific research into artificial wombs (Bulletti, 2011; Gelfand & Shook, 2006; Simonstein, 2006), before utilising academic work on roboethics (Siciliano & Khatib, 2016; Veruggio, Operto, & Bekey, 2016) and on robots bearing and raising children (Andries et al., 2018; Batliner et al., 2004; Beran et al., 2011; Robins et al., 2005). The final chapter reflects upon how, in Scott's future, the outlook for women is bleak. I will then ruminate on how this reflects our current patriarchal society.

The fifth and final chapter, 'I can't lie to you about your chances, but... you have my sympathies', is an autoethnography used to explore my own experiences of cancer, infertility and gender-based medical treatment. Here, I connect my real-world experiences with the fictional world of *Alien*. I found reading the experiences of other individuals who had undergone cancer treatment to be extremely beneficial. I hope that this chapter assists others, as reading the testaments of Lorde (1980) and Miller (2014) eased my own burdens and pain.

During the writing of this volume, COVID-19 spread across the world. Because I am extremely clinically vulnerable and COVID shielded due to my

¹'That barren pasture. Empty, and salted. The dead space between the stars. Right here. And this is the seed that we must change for Heaven. I cannot breed them. So help me, I have tried. We need more Replicants than can ever be assembled. Millions, so we can be trillions more. We could storm Eden and retake her' (Villeneuve, 2017).

recent blood cancer diagnoses and chronic cardiac issues from chemotherapy treatment, I have been isolated from society at large. I could not fly home for my grandmother's funeral. The government where I live (the United Kingdom) and a government where I hold citizenship (the United States) proved time and time again that capital was more important than human life. While I am postulating theories as to what happens in these futuristic fictional worlds, in some ways, we are already living in them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda DiGioia is a PhD student at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London. Amanda's first monograph, *Childbirth and Parenting in Horror Texts: The Marginalized and the Monstrous*, was published in 2017 by Emerald Publishing. Amanda's second monograph, *Duelling, the Russian Cultural Imagination, and Masculinity in Crisis*, was published in 2020 by Routledge.

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One can [di]verge from the standard form, but one must always retain their humanity, or be lost to the Men of Iron and their ways. *Text of the Oiled Cog, v.12*

Kasedo Games, 2018, *Warhammer 40,000: Mechanicus*.



GENDER, CHILDBIRTH AND PARENTING IN SCIENCE FICTION FILMS AND GENDER IN HORROR FILMS

Ridley Scott's science fiction classics *Blade Runner* and *Alien* are each set in the near future or the immediate past (*Blade Runner* is set in November 2019), in which space travel and off-earth colonies are commonplace. Each of these works also features a future world in which patriarchal and gendered expectations regarding women run rampant. I argue that in the case of the *Alien* franchise, Scott has shifted from focusing on the future, and what humanity may be able to obtain from it, to a focus on facing mortality: what occurs after death and the futility of human existence (themes touched upon in his earlier work, but which occur more frequently and more evidently in the latest incarnations of the *Alien* universe, perhaps in part because Scott is now 81 years old). I argue that Scott has applied antiquated (sometimes Biblical) gender roles to his work. A very basic analysis of *Blade Runner 2049* would be that the future as presented is still dominated by patriarchy and technology. I suggest something more complex: instead of showing us a world that has collapsed under the weight of patriarchy and late capitalism, *Blade Runner 2049* is an example of evolutionary horror, a genre that pushes Darwin's theory of an ever-changing natural world to terrifying extremes by utilising images of women's bodies to 'map the fragmentation and reconfiguration of dominant knowledge and identity paradigms' (Dumas, 2018, p. 24). As Dumas notes:

Many works in this vein position the maternal body [...] as a site of metamorphic power and reproductive anxiety, invoking female

biological processes¹ such as menstruation, gestation, and birth to connote the possibility that the fixed and familiar might at any point give way to fluidity and forgiveness.

(Dumas, 2018, p. 24)

A fine example of this occurs in *Blade Runner 2049*: the possibility that a female replicant has ‘evolved’ sufficiently to give birth shakes societal foundations to their core, causing the Los Angeles Police Department to focus all of their energy on covering up what they deem to be an abomination by eliminating the now-adult child. We return to this idea (i.e. the suggestion that women who can give birth are more evolved or ‘better’ than women who can’t) in Chapter 5. Others in the replicant population band together to protect what they call a ‘miracle’ (Villeneuve, 2017).

The future for human women and replicants gendered as women is bleak in the world of *Blade Runner*. Many of the female androids are created (and used solely) for the amusement of men: Rachael by her creator to see if an android can be ‘tricked’ into becoming human; Pris for sexual fulfilment (she is ‘your basic pleasure model’ with a lower level of intelligence); and Zhora for exotic dancing. In *Blade Runner*, female androids and machines are either disempowered sex workers or mindless objects onto which men can more easily project their desires. *Blade Runner 2049* does not improve matters: while other options are explored in *Blade Runner* for women or replicants gendered as women (e.g. Joi and Mariette), *Blade Runner 2049* shows women categorised into a series of clichés recognisable in our own time: villainous, cold and uncharismatic protagonists; xenophobic workaholics murdered at their desks (Lt. Joshi); replicant mothers who die from complications related to giving birth (Rachael); or finally objects, validated by their ability (or lack thereof) to reproduce or otherwise please men. As Gibson notes, all of the replicant women in *Blade Runner 2049* are, in one way or another, akin to slaves (Gibson, 2020). This book will build upon feminist critiques (Doyle, 2019; Levy, 2009; Richardson, 2015) to explore gendered aspects of sexuality and reproduction as expressed in *Blade Runner*.

While *Alien*, and *Aliens* (and to some extension, *Alien 3* and *Alien: Resurrection*) showed women as competent space travellers who could be their own heroes (Reardon, 2019), in *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant*, women are once again relegated to the status of objects that (android) men can torture,

1 The author would like to note that some women do not have ovaries, vaginas or uteruses, and that some women have penises. Biology is not destiny, and the various sex organs absolutely do not determine whether someone is a woman or not.

and whose suffering is displayed for audiences to gawk at. Thus, it can be argued that Scott has undermined his previous work and its considerable impact on depictions of gender in the science fiction genre. *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant* also rely on tropes surrounding motherhood and its importance to women in patriarchal society: women are fulfilled only by being mothers, and becoming a mother is depicted as the ultimate goal of women, even in the year 2089.

As I argued in my monograph on Russian duelling and toxic masculinity (2020, p. 170), science fiction texts often come loaded with gendered expectations.

For instance, science fiction traditionally caters to a male potential audience/reader (Scodari, 2003, p. 118) and tends to preserve heteronormative hegemony. This is something of a paradox, as science fiction prides itself on being a 'literature of cognitive estrangement'. Regardless of the efforts of feminist writers and creators to 're-think the problematics of the gender' (particularly gender's impact on the lives of women), 'heterosexuality as an institutionalized nexus of human activity remains stubbornly resistant to defamiliarization' (Hollinger, 1999, p. 24). While some scholars point to the positives that the science fiction genre brings to both society and scholarship, such as 'new ways of talking [about] gender' (Attebury, 2002, p. 16), others claim that the participation of women within the science fiction genre as creators, characters, and fans, 'has become a feminist issue. The mere fact of their presence created a tradition that other women could then become a part of' (Larbalestier, 2002, pp. 2–3). That said, there is evidence that even science fiction authors who identify as women often repeat generic conventions regarding sex and gender, although they may repeat these conventions differently (Donawerth, 1996). While some texts challenge gender norms (Lizard Radio (Schmatz, 2015), Walk to the End of the World (Charnas, 1974) and The Left Hand of Darkness (Le Guin, 2012) are some examples) on the whole, the genre does not often champion modification and transformation in futuristic worlds.

Rather, many science fiction texts accept gender roles and divides without question, thus supporting and reproducing the familiar heteronormativity and patriarchy of our current reality onto fictional, futuristic worlds. Why? It might be a conscious choice, in that the familiarity of those tropes is recognisable to audiences and thus helps them to identify with the characters

(Csicsery-Ronay, 2012; Majsova, 2021); or it might be a form of ally-ship, with the writers and film-makers attempting to reproduce patriarchy as a way of showing that they understand how powerful and destructive it is (Wolmark, 1995); or it might be entirely unconscious, flowing naturally from the inherent patriarchal world in which these films are conceived and watched.

The term 'patriarchy' is frequently used in this book, derived from Greek and meaning the 'rule of the father' (Strauss, 2012, p. 16). In the context of gender studies, 'patriarchy' refers to the global social system that upholds power held by predominately white, cis-men. While patriarchy is everywhere (Millet, 1970), it is also complex and densely layered, and hence the same applies to the various forms of subjugation that it leads to. Thus, as the notion of intersectionality makes clear, a woman of colour experiences patriarchy differently than a white woman (Crenshaw, 1989); a trans-woman experiences patriarchy differently than a cis-woman. Reflecting the ethnicity of the characters presented in Scott's films, I will be speaking mainly of the experiences of white Western cis-women under patriarchy.

The terms 'mother' and 'father' need to be defined. Patriarchal societal norms indicate that a mother is an individual who physically carries and gives birth to a child, and then takes the lead in nurturing and providing corporeal comfort to that child. This process begins with gestation and/or childbirth, and refers to a role traditionally assigned to a woman. The father is then the secondary, 'supporting' parent, and is a man. Of course, these norms do not recognise the fact that many fathers and mothers have no biological connection to their children; not every child has two parents; not every family exists on the gender binary; not every family consists of heterosexual parents; parental roles can be filled by various household members; and all parents provide some nurturing and support. For the sake of brevity, I will plug into heteronormativity and use the terms 'mother' and 'father' to refer to the roles typically filled by a woman and a man, but this should not be interpreted as a judgement on values. The terms 'mother' and 'father' will also refer to spiritual or social mothers and fathers, as opposed to strictly biological relationships.

Additionally, including fathers as described in this book (many of whom, but not all, identify as men) needs justification. Antifeminist and antifemale backlash, in the guise of sympathy for men or boys, sometimes arises from masculinist studies of fatherhood (Dragiewicz, 2008, p. 121). Understanding that, fathers remain understudied compared to mothers (which in turn is a reflection on the societal norm that mothers care for their children, while fathers do not (Dowd, 2010, p. 22)). While research on fathers has demonstrated their ability to care and their important role in the nurturing of

children, the construction of masculinity hurts and undermines fathers' parenting (Levant & Richmond, 2016, p. 23). In fact, the true horror of these films lies in the 'concerns about masculinity, its powers, expectations, and limitations, all of which are heightened by the experience of fatherhood' (Freeland, 2018, p. 239). As I mention in my first book (DiGioia, 2017), in general, fathers are painted with more sympathy than mothers in horror texts and they are often represented as having the best intentions before they pave the road to hell. This can be said about *Prometheus*, *Alien: Covenant*, *Blade Runner*, and *Alien: Isolation*: every father featured here had a noble intention, whether it was the masculine-presenting Engineer (to create worlds), Peter Weyland (to defeat death) or David/Tyrell (to create the perfect life form). This stands in opposition to the mothers featured in *Prometheus*, *Alien: Covenant*, *Blade Runner 2049*, and *Alien: Isolation*: they are either extra-terrestrial killing machines (e.g. the alien protomorphs and neomorphs, the two stages of the Alien prior to the well-known xenomorph)² or vassals to be tortured and experimented on by men, before their prayers for fertility are perversely, and lethally, answered (as in the case of Dr Elizabeth Shaw).

In stark contrast to fatherhood, motherhood and reproduction have been at the centre of feminist discourse about women's rights ever since its inception (Kawash, 2011, p. 93). Men throughout history, from Aristotle to Freud to Mike Pence, have contended that women are 'freakish creatures capable of immense destruction' (Doyle, 2019). Discourse on reproduction and motherhood has varied. For the first and second waves of feminist movements, such discourse focused on the right to abortion as well as the public recognition of motherhood as important and exhausting labour (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 163). In the last few decades of the twentieth century, assisted reproductive technologies started new conversations and new feminist dialogues surrounding motherhood (Goodwin, 2005, p. 1). However, although assisted reproductive technologies have helped many women (with the necessary means and youth) to achieve parenthood, discourses around childbirth have remained relatively static, and are connected with prevailing beliefs surrounding women's inherent, 'natural' characteristics. In fact, even today, 'cultural femininity and biological reproduction are curiously synonymous in the proclamations of medical science about women' (Oakley, 1981, p. 50). Essentially, the feminist contribution to the understanding of motherhood as a structuring category has been its insistence on a distinction between biological

2 Protomorphs, neomorphs and xenomorphs are different, but similar, deadly versions of endoparasitoid extra-terrestrial. Protomorphs and neomorphs are considered to be primordial variants of the xenomorph.

and social motherhood (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165). I will address both in the context of the Scott film universe.

Motherhood is sacred to patriarchal Western female identity. Simone de Beauvoir once claimed that many women 'are made to see motherhood as the essence of their life and the fulfilment of their destiny' (de Beauvoir, 1953, p. 484), which marginalises women as little more than wombs, and men as little more than breadwinners. Motherhood continues to define adult femininity in one way or another in the West, and those who remain childless are often relegated to the derogatory category of 'spinsters', stereotyped as lonely, shrivelled women with empty lives, or, conversely, 'career woman' (Eckes, 2002, p. 99), viewed as non-nurturing or cold (Chick, Heilman-Houser, & Hunter, 2002, p. 149). The pervasive notion that childbearing is a natural and essential aspect of the female existence pressurises couples consisting of men and women,³ and studies have consistently shown that women feel more stress about infertility than men,⁴ mainly because in most cultures, infertility is regarded as a woman failing to fulfil her prescribed gender role (Luk & Yuen Loke, 2014, p. 610).

For example, women undergoing cancer treatment, or women who are cancer survivors in the US report reproductive potential as 'essential to quality of life', and concerns about fertility may impact women's treatment decisions (Deshpande, Braun, & Meye, 2015, p. 3938). Studies have demonstrated that up to 75% of women aged 18–45 years with a recent cancer diagnosis are interested in whether their treatment will impact their ability to bear children (Deshpande et al., 2015, p. 3938). In another mixed-gender survey of young German cancer survivors, more than half stated that having a child was 'most important' in their life and 62% were 'most concerned' with the impact the cancer treatment would have on their fertility (Geue et al., 2014). Variance analysis indicates that female cancer survivors had greater psychological distress associated with infertility than male cancer survivors (Seitz et al., 2010). Other female cancer patients and survivors reported that the potential loss of fertility may be almost as painful, if not more so, than confronting the malignant, life-threatening disease itself (Trèves, Grynberg, Parco, & Finet, 2014). This pain lingers even if the patient has gone into remission: even a decade after treatment, female cancer survivors whose wish for children

3 I do not say 'heterosexual', as sexuality is fluid, and couple that appears to be heterosexual may in fact not be: the man or woman within the coupling may identify as bisexual or queer, for example.

4 Of course, other genders can be infertile as well, but many infertility studies focus on genders within the dominant gender binary of men and women.

remains unfulfilled reported distress about cancer-related infertility (Canada & Schover, 2012). These data also indicate that the psychological distress of these women may have actually increased over time, particularly if they have had failed fertility treatments (Geue et al., 2014). Thus, women in the West undergoing very difficult treatment for a life-changing illness are still preoccupied with their fertility. While I do not have space to unpack this here in its totality (I will certainly do so later in the book), some of these women might genuinely desire a family for their own reasons, social pressures notwithstanding; however, those who only really worry about their fertility because of social pressures are not at fault, but rather are the victims of societal norms. It may be that some of these women focus on the loss of their fertility because it represents a smaller, easier loss to bear and confront than their own mortality.

Defining adult femininity via motherhood (or lack of it) is also done elsewhere in the world: for example, research on women in countries outside the West or Global North (Donkor & Sandall, 2007, p. 1683; Remennick, 2000, p. 821) indicates that infertile women are also stigmatised here. These studies emphasise that, to many women, motherhood has been presented as the ultimate source of status, and failing to fulfil that societal obligation undermines all other accomplishments. Demonisation is therefore correlated to the revulsion caused by anyone (but particularly women) 'going against nature'.⁵ Other notable categories might be older mothers (e.g. those conceiving via IVF), single mothers, mothers with children who have multiple fathers, and mothers whose physical appearance differs from that of their adopted children. Furthermore, women (or replicants made to be women) in the new incarnations of *Alien* and *Blade Runner* are also contemporary examples of the use of motherhood as a site of evolutionary horror. This is shown in the *Alien* universe through Dr Elizabeth Shaw, the main character of *Prometheus* (2012) and a plot point in *Alien: Covenant* (2016), who gives birth to an entirely new alien race both via her womb and her DNA. The same could be said of replicant Rachael in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), who births something that society previously thought was impossible: a living child. The trope of the child in horror is well known, and is nearly as prominent as motherhood

5 It should be noted that not all motherhood is valued in Western patriarchal society: mothers who are also people of colour, or mothers who are also working class, are demonised by those with privilege. See Gilliam (1999) and Ladd-Taylor (2004). Additionally, teenage or single mothers are often assumed to be feckless and stupid, when in fact many studies show they do a perfectly good job of raising their children (Duncan, 2007). Although the teenage mothers often mention societal stigma leaves them feeling shame and embarrassment (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong, & McMichael, 2015), teenage fathers do not (Khatun et al., 2017).

tropes within the genre: I spoke about hideous progeny briefly in my previous Emerald monograph (DiGioia, 2017), but will expand on it later in this book. Furthermore, every Scott text mentioned so far has the additional unifying theme of the horror and perversion of male creation. Androids in both the *Alien* and *Blade Runner* universes are despised objects that human characters respond to with revulsion, horror and fear.

Obviously, any discussion of gender, motherhood and so forth has a Freudian element to it, but I propose to mention Freud in my book only for the purposes of demonstrating that I agree with Crews, as his theories have been widely debunked. Freud once wrote that ‘Women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own’ (Freud, 1925, pp. 243–258). While Freud postulated various ideas about what women truly wanted (Mothersill, 1973), it is evident that he had already made up his mind that they want to be wives and mothers (Lehmann, 2001). Freud believed that only men could acquire morality, whereas women were immoral, deceitful and manipulative without the presence of a male figure (a father or a husband) to guide them (Coffey, 2015). This led Freud into further errors, such as the notion that lesbians are fundamentally untrustworthy and unstable (Coffey, 2015). Crews argues that ‘there is literally nothing to be said, scientifically or therapeutically, to the advantage of the entire Freudian system or any of its component dogmas’ (1996, p. 67). Freud did none of his work via the scientific method (the standard for research in both psychology and psychiatry). Hall elaborates:

He never tested his ideas with experiments that might have falsified his beliefs, and he ignored facts that contradicted his beliefs. Many of his supposed original ideas came from other authors. How did he ‘discover’ the Oedipus complex when none of his patients ever suggested they had such a problem? The answer is in a letter he wrote to a friend saying, ‘I found in myself a constant love for my mother, and jealousy of my father. I now consider this to be a universal event in early childhood’. Talk about projection and confirmation bias! When tested, psychoanalysis was shown to be less effective than placebo. Its theories have been disproven, and no reasonable scientist or practitioner takes it seriously today. Yet it persists in popular opinion as one of the primary canons of practicing psychology.

(Hall, 2015, n.p.)

Academics have consistently ‘whitewashed’ Freud’s errors (Dufrense, 2014), or studied him as a writer (in departments of language or literature), as