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Hamilton the Musical and Its Historical Accuracy

**Čestné prohlášení:**

Čestně prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze za využití zdrojů zmíněných v závěru práce.

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## Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to evaluate the historical accuracy of the musical *Hamilton* based on its aspects most criticized by historians. The main argument is that the musical is mostly historically accurate regarding historical events and mostly inaccurate regarding historical figures. *Hamilton* treats its characters according to the Founders Chic phenomenon, which portrays the Founding Fathers in an exclusively positive light and exaggerates their importance. The historical figures portrayed as heroes in the musical have their positive traits highlighted and their negative traits deemphasized and the villains vice versa.

## Introduction

Music and English, my hobbies and fields of study, prompted me to look for a thesis topic that would include both. My fondness for these fields manifests in my love for musical theater. Therefore, writing a thesis about *Hamilton* came quite naturally.

The musical takes place during the United States Revolution. It focuses on the life story of the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, told by his life-long adversary and eventual killer, Aaron Burr. *Hamilton* features hip-hop, rap, jazz, blues, R&B and Broadway, a mix of styles which had not been used in any musical before. *Hamilton* created a stir even before its premiere on Broadway. It was praised by former President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama and other celebrities. Tickets for the Broadway opening sold out long in advance, and even after that they were hard to come by.

When I first heard *Hamilton* on YouTube, it was not love at first sound. The opening song, “Alexander Hamilton,” did not win me over instantly. It was unlike any musical I had heard thus far, and it featured rap, of which I had not been a fan. It was only when I listened to more of the songs that I began to like the musical, mainly because of its witty language and engaging sound. Then, the more I listened to the soundtrack, the more swept up I became and soon I knew the songs by heart and even started appreciating the mix of musical genres.

Then, in 2020, owing to the release of an official live stage recording of *Hamilton*, I got to see the production with its original cast as performed on Broadway. Until then, I had not heard the second of the two acts. It was after I first saw the entire production that a question about its historical accuracy came to my mind. After sobering up from the emotional aftermath of the story, I began to question whether the story presented to the audience is true. This coincided with the time to choose a topic for my bachelor thesis, and thus began my research of *Hamilton* and its historical accuracy.

The main objective of this thesis is to determine whether *Hamilton* is historically accurate enough to be considered a reliable account of the lives of the historical figures it portrays. Another objective was to evaluate the potential impact of the narrative the musical presents to its audience.

In the process of writing this thesis, I encountered the issue of the importance of historical accuracy in works of historical fiction, which is dealt with in chapter two. The following chapters deal with individual issues through which I evaluated *Hamilton*'s historical accuracy. These were chosen according to aspects most criticized by historians. They are the issues of immigration/immigrants, Founders Chic, slavery and racism.

# 1 Hamilton and Its Author

This chapter introduces Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of the musical *Hamilton*. It explores his influence on and innovative approach to musical theater. Furthermore, the musical is introduced and it is explained why it became so popular.

## 1.1 Lin-Manuel Miranda

Lin-Manuel Miranda is a well-known name in the theater industry. The composer, lyricist and actor was born on January 16, 1980, in New York to Puerto Rican parents who immigrated to the United States. It is his Puerto Rican roots that often influence Miranda's works. The two Broadway musicals Miranda has created so far both explore the foreigner experience. It is the central topic of *In the Heights* (2008) and a secondary aspect of *Hamilton* (2015).

Miranda also engages in many humanitarian projects focused on Puerto Rico. After Hurricane Maria, which devastated the Caribbean Islands in 2017, he took the *Hamilton* show to Puerto Rico where he raised money to help rebuild the country and founded the Flamboyant Arts Fund to help preserve the local art scene. He also wrote a song "Almost Like Praying" whose proceeds were donated to UNIDOS Disaster Relief Fund. (Murray, 2022)

Miranda started writing his first musical *In the Heights* in 1999, in his sophomore year in college. The show premiered on Broadway in 2008 after Miranda's partnering with theater director Thomas Kail and writer Quiara Alegria Hudes. In an interview (SiriusXM, 2021), Miranda listed the reasons which prompted him to write *In the Heights*. Firstly, when he was directing *The West Side Story* in high school, it seemed to him like that was all the representation that Latinos could see of themselves in musical theater. Secondly, the musical *Rent* awoke in him the desire to write his own musical. Lastly, after seeing the musical *The Capeman*, he got frustrated that Latinos were portrayed as gang members again, just like in *The West Side Story* nearly forty years before. These reasons combined with his Puerto Rican heritage prompted him to write "...what was missing and [writing] what I didn't see represented on stage" (ibid., 1:28-1:34). Given Miranda's Puerto Rican heritage, his involvement in humanitarian projects connected with his

Puerto Rican roots, and the topic of *In the Heights* and *Hamilton*, it is evident that representation of minorities is one of the main objectives of Miranda's work.

The success of *In the Heights* was indubitable, as the musical won four Tony Awards, including the category for Best Musical, and one Grammy Award. As Grady (2021) mentions, the relative novelty of incorporating hip-hop into a musical and blending it with Latino music brought innovation and new sound to musical theater. Prior to *In the Heights*, there existed a few musicals that implemented hip-hop but not to this extent. *In the Heights* transformed American musical theater and heralded a new era for this art form. (ibid.) The positive reception of *In the Heights* signaled the success of Miranda's next smash hit – *Hamilton*.

## **1.2 Hamilton's Innovativeness**

Miranda followed the success of *In the Heights* and wrote his next groundbreaking musical, *Hamilton*. Although, this time, he did not draw from his personal experience but turned to history for inspiration. That hit unexpectedly when Miranda was looking for a book to read on a flight to a vacation in Mexico, and Ron Chernow's biography *Alexander Hamilton* caught his attention at the airport. As soon as he had finished the first chapter, he became obsessed with the idea of creating a hip-hop musical about the Founding Father. Miranda's idea came out to be well-received, as *Hamilton* won 11 Tony Awards, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and a Grammy Award among many others (Ketchum, 2016).

After having read his book, Miranda contacted Chernow who agreed to his request to supervise the creation of the musical to ensure its historical accuracy. Anything Miranda was not sure about, he consulted with Chernow. However, some details Miranda needed to know could not be answered even by historians so Chernow told him to make them up. (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 32)

*Hamilton* tells the life story of its eponymous hero, using an unconventional blend of hip-hop, jazz, blues, rap, R&B and Broadway – simply, Miranda's unique musical language. This amalgamation of styles is very lively and lends to the show a witty, quick-paced and playful, but, where needed, also a serious tone.

Stephen Sondheim (in Rosen, 2015), Miranda's "inspiration and mentor" called the musical a "breakthrough". He said that it did not introduce a new era of Broadway but

according to him, no piece does so. Sondheim stated that rather than new eras, there are innovators who prompt other creators to think differently by using new forms. (ibid.)

*Hamilton* is praised for being innovative for two main reasons – hip-hop and an almost entirely non-white cast (Klotz, 2017). As previously stated, Miranda brought hip-hop onto the stage. *Hamilton* is by no means the first musical to have used hip-hop but it is the first one to have done so well, which is, according to Sondheim (in Rosen, 2015), mainly because it combines it with traditional Broadway sound.

Aside from Miranda's *In the Heights*, another hip-hop musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me* (2014) opened on Broadway just a year before *Hamilton* but closed after only 17 previews and 38 performances (Isherwood, 2014). Among the reasons for its failure were the lack of good promotion, no previous tryout in a regional theater, and an unoriginal cliché plot. (ibid.) Other reasons for a failure with the public may have been the lack of scenery on stage and songs too packed with lyrics leading to unintelligibility. (amNewYork, 2014) *Hamilton* did not face such problems. Its marketing started way before the musical was completed. As Jurberg (2020) says, in 2009, Miranda introduced a song from *Hamilton* at the White House Poetry Jam – an event held by Barack Obama and Michelle Obama dedicated to poetry, music and spoken word. A video of his performance went viral, planting the seeds for *Hamilton*'s success. In 2012, a mixtape with seven songs from the future musical was released which was well-received and helped spread the enthusiasm for the music. By the year of its opening (2015) on Broadway, the show had already become significantly popular. (Jurberg, 2020) As Dominick (2015) writes, celebrities such as Paul McCartney, Jimmy Fallon and Michelle Obama came to see an off-Broadway production of *Hamilton*. Michelle Obama stated that *Hamilton* was “the best piece of art in any form that [she] has ever seen” (The Obama White House, 2016, 4:51-4:58). Therefore, when it was announced that the show would be opening on Broadway, the tickets were quickly sold out in advance. Before its opening night on July 13, 2015, the show had made \$27.6 million on pre-sale tickets, one of the biggest pre-opening sums in history. (Dominick, 2015)

Secondly, *Hamilton*'s cast is mostly made up of people of color (POC). The diverse cast has mostly been a source of resonance with its audience (Krajnyak, 2020). According to Miranda, casting POC in the roles of white Founders “makes the story more immediate

and more accessible to a contemporary audience” (Miranda in DiGiacomo, 2015). However, critics have labeled the production both color-blind and color-conscious. This is due to the creators’ careful statements about the issue and their unwillingness to discuss it (Kohn, 2020). This issue will be addressed in a later chapter.

### **Summary**

In Miranda’s works, the foreigner experience plays an important role. His works are also popular due to featuring hip-hop. However, Miranda does not solely rely on modern musical styles. Instead, he fuses traditional with new, creating a distinct sound liked by many across age groups. *Hamilton*’s popularity was confirmed by the many awards that the musical received. *Hamilton* is also praised for its racial inclusivity; however, this is also a reason for its criticism by some.



## 2 Artistic License and Historical Accuracy in Historical Fiction

Creators of historical films, plays and musicals have long been familiar with trying to find balance between the polar opposites of artistic license and historical accuracy. When finding the right formula, their endeavor is awarded with critical acclaim but many works based on history have been dragged through the historians' walk of shame. This chapter will look at the role of artistic license and historical accuracy in the works of historical fiction, specifically in the works of historical theater.

With a musical like Pulitzer Prize-winning *Hamilton*, based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, a discussion about its historical accuracy is inevitable. Initially, *Hamilton* received an exclusively positive response, enjoying the spotlight of praiseful headlines and reviews. It was not until the initial excitement tapered off that some historians began to criticize the production for its historical inaccuracies and liberal artistic license. Criticisms of *Hamilton*'s omission of slavery, casting POC in the roles of white Founders or its Founders-Chic tendencies were some of the hot topics among scholars. However, there was also a number of historians who stated that *Hamilton* does as good of a job as it can when it comes to adhering to history. This posits a question: How important is historical accuracy in historical fiction and how is it affected by artistic license?

*Hamilton* is one of the handful of history musicals – a subgenre of Broadway musical that eludes precise definition. Harbert (2018, p. 413) provides the following definition:

*“The defining features of a history musical are that it is promoted and received as telling a more or less true story and that it emphasizes some degree of historical accuracy.”*

Note the wording “more or less” and “some degree” which are exactly at the center of discussion not just among historians. Questions are often raised about the morality and correctness of shaping history to an artist's liking and what degree of artistic license is permissible.

According to Harbert (ibid.), “history musicals dramatize real people and events of the past with the goal of both entertaining and educating the audience.” Stempel (in Harbert, p. 413) goes on to say that entertainment is a prerequisite to success for Broadway musicals. Thus, dramatization and entertainment are the main pillars of history musicals with education as an additional one – after all, entertainment has a crucial role on

Broadway. However, here is where a clash happens. The role of a playwright of a historical drama is to entertain people while also providing them with some education. However, to educate means to stay truthful to historical facts that are not always dramatic enough to be entertaining. Thus, playwrights of historical plays or musicals take artistic license to keep their shows fit for theater. That often means leaving out historical events, changing their chronology or in some cases, changing facts altogether.

Deeks (in Hudson, 2011) mentions that “All historical fiction has a primary duty to engage the audience with a compelling narrative whilst not distorting historical truth,” while Pope (2021, p. 3) adds that dramatic narrative requires real events to be modified and simplified. Therefore, based on the statements of Harbert, Deeks and Pope, it is considered permissible and to some degree even necessary to modify historical facts in dramatic works.

As history lecturer Rex (in Stewart, 2015) states, there is no legal or moral duty for historical fiction to be solely historically factual. In fact, drama critic A. B. Walkley (in Hudson, 2011) remarked that it seems “wholly irrelevant” to criticize inaccuracies in historical drama. However, as November (in Hudson, 2011) assents, creators should not “willfully misinform” their audiences. He further elaborates that “to misrepresent the known truth is a different thing than to adjust detail or to embellish, or to provide what's missing, what's unknown” (ibid.). Borman (in Leatherdale, 2016) adds that embellishments are inevitable since there are many gaps in history but that they should always be justifiable. Therefore, creators of historical dramas should stay true to a given historical outline and are allowed to adjust details or add research-based guesses where facts are missing.

To summarize the points made, there are two main instances when it is considered acceptable for an artist to stray from historical facts. First, to make a character or story more dramatic, therefore fit for theater and second, to fill in historical gaps. Both provided that they are treated sensibly, with respect to history and do not change the basic historical outline.

What should definitely be avoided is portraying historical figures only in a positive light, which is unrealistic since nobody is flawless (McLean in Hudson, 2011). This corresponds to the first of the three illegitimate forms of abuse of artistic license according

to Pope (2021). In his paper, Pope (2021, p. 11) discusses the responsible ways in which artistic liberties should be taken in biopics or historical dramas. He lists three unjustifiable and irresponsible reasons for taking artistic liberties:

- “1. For the purpose of altering public opinion about a person/group.
2. For the purpose of pushing a political narrative.
3. For the purpose of presenting outright fantasy as history.”

(*ibid.*)

It ought to be pointed out that historians and artists have different roles. Historians educate while artists' responsibility is not as much to educate as to popularize history. Still, as previously mentioned, artists should only take artistic liberties when necessary, otherwise, they should heed history and primarily try not to misinform – a “*primum, non nocere*” rule, if you will, for historical drama makers.

Whatever an author changes about history, must be a justified decision (Borman in Leatherdale, 2016). As Borman (*ibid.*) mentions, unjustified change made for no reason is “irritating”. Therefore, a playwright of a historical drama has a great deal of pressure put on them. Creating a historical drama always carries with itself the repercussions in the form of criticism by historians, which authors should account for.

Finally, as Bartel (2012) points out, the criticism of historical fiction is a “puzzle” like the subject itself. Merely the term “historical fiction” is contradictory. The two words seem to be in a tug-of-war with each other with history pulling in the direction of the real world, and fiction in one of imaginary realms (*ibid.*, p. 217); and yet, this strange co-existence remains widely popular. Still, this genre undergoes criticism based on history – only one of its parts (2012, p. 221). Per Bartel's (*ibid.*) suggestion, looking through the lens of fiction, people are readily willing to wave off any historical inaccuracies but switching the viewpoint to history, they are just as ready to criticize those. Bartel (*ibid.*) does not offer a solution but insists "There must be some justification of historical criticism."

Undoubtedly, there are faults and consequences to ill-treating history in works of fiction, even though Bartel (*ibid.*) suggests such treatment cannot be criticized by a unifying set of rules, but rather individually.

### 3 Alexander Hamilton and Immigration

Immigration is an integral part of American history and identity. It has always been a topic of intense debate since the founding of the United States. The country is often referred to as a “country of immigrants”. This chapter will explore the accuracy of the portrayal of Hamilton as an immigrant and his stance toward immigrants.

#### 3.1 Alexander Hamilton as an Immigrant

The musical *Hamilton* is considerably praiseful in the depiction of its main character (Magness, 2017, p. 497). Miranda emphasizes Hamilton’s immigrant status and his political success in the face of his poor origins. The plot highlights Hamilton as an immigrant and an illegitimate child to put him in contrast with his elite political contemporaries and their advantageous backgrounds. It is primarily Hamilton’s low-birth that propels him and results in his success. Magness (ibid., pp. 497-498) asserts that this way, Miranda creates “adversity” which Hamilton overcomes independently, making him appear far less privileged than his antagonists. Hamilton’s character is mainly praised based on his status as a “bastard immigrant”. (ibid.)

Magness (2017, p. 498) points out that the portrayal of Hamilton as an immigrant is “shockingly rose-colored” and ignores some uglier aspects of Hamilton’s stance on nationality and birth status. Hamilton’s views grew progressively nationalistic and xenophobic, especially by the end of his life (ibid, p. 500) which will be explored in a later subchapter. The liberal immigration views which Hamilton holds in the musical contradict with several of his turns against stated views in real life where Hamilton repeatedly attacked foreign-born politicians with nativist remarks. Moreover, Hamilton’s later years saw him among the main supporters of immigration restrictions. (ibid., pp. 497-498)

As Magness (2017, p. 498) implies, Miranda takes artistic liberties to paint a more admirable picture of Hamilton, using his immigrant identity to do so. Deeming the immigrant theme an important part of the story, Magness characterizes the musical’s inconsistencies as “deeply problematic” for Hamilton’s historical image which future experts will likely have to correct (ibid.).

Born on the Caribbean island of Nevis, Hamilton was not an immigrant as such, seeing as he merely moved within the British Empire (ibid., p. 499). Despite this, his image as a self-made immigrant is persistently highlighted and lauded throughout the musical and serves to differentiate him from his political rivals (ibid., p. 497). Hamilton's immigrant identity and his humble background are instilled into the audience's minds right at the beginning, where his main antagonist Aaron Burr introduces him:

“BURR: The ship is in the harbor now

See if you can spot him.

MEN: Just you wait.

BURR: Another immigrant

Comin' up from the bottom.

COMPANY: Just you wait.

BURR: His enemies destroyed his rep

America forgot him.”

(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 17)

In the seven-volume biography on Hamilton written by his fourth son John Church Hamilton, the word “immigrant” or its derivations are not mentioned once, neither in connection with Hamilton, nor outside of it. As for “foreign birth”, he ascribes it to Hamilton on a single occasion, and what is more, it is to highlight it as an advantage exempting him from “local prejudices” (J. C. Hamilton, 1841, p. 16). This perspective is the complete opposite of that adopted by Chernow and consequently by Miranda who portrays Hamilton's immigrant status as an obstacle.

On the other hand, in Chernow's biography of Hamilton, the author makes sure to highlight Hamilton's immigrant status right at the beginning of the book (Chernow, 2005, p. 4). The word “immigrant” in connection with Hamilton is used ad nauseam throughout Chernow's book. It is presented as a misfortune that Hamilton heroically overcomes, a method which Miranda adopts in his musical. Therefore, it is safe to say that the musical steers toward hagiographic tendencies regarding this topic.

Still, there are as many opinions on Hamilton being an immigrant as this statement seems ambiguous. Some agree, some do not. According to William Hogeland (2018, p. 25), the problem lies in the perspective from which Chernow views immigration, that is, a later

historical perspective. The truth is that Hamilton did not come as an immigrant to an established country. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, he was not a foreigner and the United States of America was not yet established as a country. Yet, the musical prompts us to look at Hamilton as we would look at a present-day Frenchman moving to China.

There are several books on Hamilton but it seems like Miranda chose Chernow's biography because it portrays Hamilton as a modern-day immigrant who overcame all obstacles and managed to fulfill his American Dream. In the end, it is easier for the audience to sympathize with a character who shares their dreams and struggles.

As Hogeland (2018, p. 26) says, Chernow makes it look like Hamilton was the only politician coming from nothing, working from an early age and being born outside of the U.S. soil. Chernow contrasts him to other Founding Fathers whose origins he describes as more fortunate. This was not the case. As Hogeland (*ibid.*) points out, Hamilton did not come from complete poverty. His mother had her own small business and had he not been born out of wedlock, he could have had a decent inheritance (*ibid.*).

All the criticism of Hamilton's class and illegitimate origin present in the musical shows to be overemphasized with his real-life circumstances taken into consideration. As Waldstreicher and Pasley illustrate (2018, p. 150), firstly, Hamilton was legally not an immigrant. Secondly, he was of the merchant class. Finally, regarding Hamilton's illegitimacy, it may have been the subject of mockery a few times, but this was not at all uncommon for other high-class individuals of doubtful parentage (*ibid.*, p. 30).

Miranda could have chosen anyone else from the Founding Fathers as a protagonist of his story as each had their virtues and vices that can be emphasized or pushed into the background. In conclusion, the idea that Hamilton's origin was his greatest obstacle is misleading at best.

### **3.2 Hamilton's Stance Towards Immigrants**

In the musical, Miranda portrays the hero of the story as a representative and staunch supporter of immigrants. Apart from several references to Hamilton as an immigrant, there is one line in particular which became a popular motto quoted by many on the internet and in protests in the streets – "Immigrants: We get the job done". This famous

line, which rarely failed to cause exhilarated cheering among the audience (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 121), comes from the song *Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)* where it is exclaimed by Hamilton and Marquis de Lafayette. The line had such impact on the theatre-goers, that Miranda decided to add two bars of silence after it so that the next line would not be drowned in cheering. Then, he lengthened it to four bars but people kept cheering on because they were prompted by the silence, so Miranda resorted to two bars of silence again, saying: "...it is what it is. Why does it get such a delighted response? Because it's true." (ibid.) However, as moving and impactful as the line is, it does not reveal the whole truth about Hamilton's stance on immigration and immigrants which was much darker.

According to Magness (2017, p. 501), Hamilton truly was a supporter of population inflow as is apparent from his Report on Manufacturers from 1791. As Chernow (2005, p. 376) asserts, this was mainly because he firmly believed in manufacturing as a way to economic growth of the country. The manufacturing industry would require more workers which were lacking in the US (A. Hamilton, 1791), therefore immigration was welcome, even needed in Hamilton's plan. Besides, as Chernow (2005, p. 376) points out, more workers would help to lower wages. However, Hamilton's idea also carried a darker aspect with itself – child labor – which Hamilton supported. He suggested that women and children are "more useful" when working in the manufacturing industry. (ibid.) Chernow (ibid., pp. 376-377) and Isenberg (2017, p. 300) have slightly different opinions on this issue. While Chernow (2005, pp. 376-377) admits that even though today, Hamilton's support of child labor can be viewed as vicious, his real intention was to provide the poor with a profitable opportunity, not to "exploit" them, thus condoning Hamilton's opinions on the basis of the morals of his time. On the other hand, Isenberg (2017, p. 300), who compares the real Hamilton with the musical, writes that it is unacceptable to judge Hamilton today according to the morals of his time. Isenberg's theory seems more logical and morally right because child labor was not much different than slavery, which is deemed indisputably immoral today.

Hamilton's views on immigration seem to have begun changing in light of the Whiskey Rebellion of 1791 – an infamous event that is, despite its importance, merely hinted at in the musical (Magness 2017, p. 501). The reference follows:

“JEFFERSON: Stand with me in the land of the free  
And pray to God we never see Hamilton’s candidacy  
Look, when Britain taxed our tea, we got frisky  
Imagine what gon’ happen when you try to tax our whisky”

(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 161)

To pay off debts from the revolutionary wars, Hamilton as Treasury secretary imposed an excise tax on distilled spirits. This triggered a wave of outrage, namely among farmers on the western frontier who relied on whiskey as their main source of income. Paired with the dissatisfaction with the government not doing enough to sort out Native American attacks at the frontier, the excise tax added to the already present indignation. (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, 2022c) As farmers revolted against the tax, Hamilton indicted about sixty distilleries for tax evasion and forced them to travel to a federal court in far Philadelphia. In an attempt to abate the situation, Pennsylvania congressman William Findley passed a bill to move the cases to local courtrooms. However, Hamilton still insisted on issuing the writs in Pennsylvania. Historians are unsure whether Hamilton’s reason for this was to provoke an armed confrontation to show the government’s capability to keep order. (Magness, 2017, p. 501) However, a statement he later made in a letter to James McHenry points out to a possible verity of the assumption: “Whenever the Government appears in arms it ought to appear like a Hercules, and inspire respect by the display of strength.” (A. Hamilton, 1799)

Nevertheless, an armed revolt ensued and George Washington sent an army of thirteen thousand troops to suppress it. When the militia arrived, they did not meet much resistance, as most of the rebellion had already backed away. The few rebels convicted of treason were eventually pardoned. (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, 2022c)

The different position that Irish William Findley took in the Whiskey Rebellion seems to have been the trigger of Hamilton’s animosity toward him. According to Findley’s account, after he and Swiss-born Albert Gallatin were elected to Congress, Hamilton bitterly remarked that because they are foreigners, Gallatin and Findley should not be trusted (Chernow, 2005, p. 243). This utterance marks Hamilton’s souring views on immigrants.



Hamilton's conviction that foreigners pose a threat to the United States was further strengthened by the Citizen Genêt Affair. In the 1790s, during the French revolution, the United States remained neutral for fear of invasion and economic disaster. As Waldstreicher and Pasley (2018, p. 142) point out, the Federalist party which Hamilton was a part of, was "fearful of the French Revolution's sympathizers" (ibid.). Hamilton was worried about a disturbance in the US business connections with anti-revolutionary Great Britain (Office of the Historian, n.d.).

Genêt was a French minister who was sent to the United States to "promote French interests to the United States government" (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2022c). His actions lead to a serious encroachment of the U.S. neutrality and thus added to Hamilton's distrust of immigrants (Office of the Historian, n. d.). He criticized Genêt: "Genêt came to this country with the affectation of not desiring to embark us in the war and yet he did all in his power by indirect means to drag us into it." (Hamilton in Chernow, 2005, p. 438).

What the musical entirely leaves out, are the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, yet Hamilton's support of these is another clear example of his growing opposition toward immigration. The series of laws was enacted to keep peace with France (Chernow, 2005, p. 571). These laws, among other things, lengthened the naturalization period to fourteen years – the longest waiting period for naturalization to this day. They also enabled the president to deport any foreigners who posed a potential threat to USA or those coming from a country with whom USA was at war.

Before their enactment, Hamilton had several recommendations for the adjustment of the acts but overall was not against them as some historians say (J. Smith, 1954, pp. 308-309). As J. Smith (ibid., p. 306) writes, Hamilton thought that immigrants should "leave the country". As soon as the laws were passed, Hamilton became their main supporter. (ibid., p. 309) In Hamilton's eyes, being a foreigner equaled to being a threat to the country's security.

None of Hamilton's animosity toward foreigners appears in the musical for several reasons. Miranda takes artistic liberties with Hamilton's immigrant identity and his opinions regarding immigrants to improve his image and conceal the "immigrant's" paradoxically anti-immigrant opinions. The reason he does this, as Magness (2017)

claims, is to contrast Hamilton with his rivals and to impose upon him a certain hardship that he overcomes. Moreover, considering Miranda's foreign origin, his activism, and the topic and motivations behind *In the Heights*, another reason can be found. It is to bring Hamilton closer to the present-day audience by depicting him as an immigrant – a topic of contemporary importance. Judging by the implementation and subsequent acclaim of the line “Immigrants: we get the job done!”, the aforementioned motivation behind this artistic license is clear.

## 4 Founders Chic

This chapter explores the Founders Chic phenomenon. It defines its characteristics and discusses its issues. The subchapters introduce specific examples of Founders Chic in Hamilton.

Founders Chic is a trend related to the Founding Fathers. According to Bernstein and Lepore (in Paul, 2014, pp. 199-200) it was Warren G. Harding who first used the term *Founding Fathers* in 1916 and later in 1921 in his public speeches. It is not clearly defined who belongs to the group of these Founders. However, there is a general consensus that it refers to the men who directly contributed to the founding of the US around the time of its revolution. As Paul (ibid., p. 198-199) puts it, they were:

*“...the delegates of the Thirteen Colonies who signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and later the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.”*

This period, lasting approximately from 1706 to 1836, is marked by “Benjamin Franklin’s birth and James Madison’s death.” (ibid., pp. 197-198)

According to Paul (2014, p. 233) and Waldstreicher and Pasley (2018, p. 140), the originator of the term Founders Chic is journalist Evan Thomas with his 2001 article titled *The Founders Chic: Live From Philadelphia*. In this article, Thomas (2001) reacts to the positive portrayal of the Founding Fathers in recent years. As Waldstreicher and Pasley (2018, p. 137) write, the Founders Chic genre fully crystallized with the books *Founding Brothers* (2000) by Joseph Ellis and *John Adams* (2001) by David McCullough tailored to the common reader.

Waldstreicher and Pasley (2018, pp. 141-143) ascribe four common characteristics to the Founders Chic genre. Firstly, it celebrates the Founding Fathers as leaders and creators to whom the nation owes all its virtues and greatness. Furthermore, by making the Founders attractive by means of flattery, it prompts an unlikely demographic of common readers to celebrate these men. Secondly, it puts emphasis on character and equals the Founders’ personalities with the nation and its history. Thirdly, by focusing on figures with nationalist interests, Founders Chic is “establishmentarian” rather than a people’s history. Finally, Founders Chic makes the Founding Fathers cool, relatable and humane

for the present-day reader. It portrays them as someone holding modern-day values, thus making them easy to agree with. (ibid.)

In her book, Paul (ibid., p. 198) explores several controversial aspects of the Founding Era which she describes as “the myth of the Founding Fathers”. In this chapter, she mentions the illusion of an unbreakable unity that Founders Chic creates. She points out that the Founders’ disputes and differing interests are played down in favor of a picture of their unity (ibid.).

As a result of myths like the ones listed above, the Founding Fathers are perceived as near-celebrities. For example, a vast number of cookbooks with recipes from the Founding Era was published (Paul, 2014, p. 236). Paul (ibid., p. 235) introduces Dave DeWitt’s cookbook titled *The Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* which she characterizes as “mostly anecdotal” and accuses it of bringing back the idea of a mostly white nation (ibid., pp. 236-237).

The most severe problem of Founders Chic is its inability to confront slavery and racism (Waldstreicher and Pasley, 2018, p. 143). Instead of confronting this problem directly, Founders Chic focuses on the aspect of abolitionism among the Founding Fathers and singles out those inclined towards it, which provides a convenient reason and justification for their contemporary veneration (ibid.). Paul (2014, pp. 238-239) adds that these cookbooks legitimize the constitution of slavery. An explanation of Paul’s statement can be given with the title of one such cookbook – *Thomas Jefferson’s Crème Brûlée: How a Founding Father and His Slave James Hemings Introduced French Cuisine to America* – which disregards the moral question of slavery and puts slaves on the same level as their masters, which they were not. Even if their masters treated them humanely, they were still unpaid laborers, therefore, this is no topic for cookbooks and shows reckless treatment of history.

In a similar vein as cookbooks, visiting historic sites like Mount Rushmore National Memorial, supports “nationalist consumerism” and due to its sacrilegious location and nature disrespects Native American history (ibid., p. 231). The memorial with the heads of four American presidents was built at a place which belonged to the native Lakota Sioux people who consider it sacred. In this case, Founders Chic strengthens patriotism built on the backs of the oppressed.

Similarly, confederate monuments have been taken down, a growing trend which increased in the wake of George Floyd's murder (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022, p. 8). The monuments were erected following the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras with the purpose of spreading white supremacy (ibid., p. 8). George Floyd's murder restarted a discussion about the morality of the monuments of Confederate figures and the Founding Fathers (Gowen, 2020). Protesters have started vandalizing and demanding the removal of the slaveholding Founders' statues. So far, a couple of Thomas Jefferson's and George Washington's statues have been taken down. (ibid.) In conclusion, monuments of racist and slaveholding icons of the past support hate and white supremacy and venerating these is one the issues with Founders Chic.

## **Summary**

As stated above, Founders Chic celebrates the Founding Fathers as the core creators of the United States, thus exaggerating their importance. It disregards the contribution of others, namely Native Americans and POC which promotes the idea of a mostly white nation. The Founders are portrayed as a group of men with unified opinions and little to no disputes. Founders Chic also fails to properly address slavery, as in the case of cookbooks, in which slaves are put on the same level as the Founders, or in cases where the focus is on the men who supported abolitionism, overlooking the fact that they were slaveholders. It is guilty of blind veneration and a lack of critical evaluation of the Founding Fathers. The Founders Chic genre merely scratches the surface of what are complex issues or worse still, avoids them altogether. Thus, it does not bring the much-needed progress in the understanding and tackling of these.

### **4.1 Founders Chic – Alexander Hamilton**

In this subchapter, specific examples of Founders Chic in *Hamilton* will be introduced. These will also be assessed from the point of historical accuracy.

One example of Founders Chic in the musical is its emphasis on character over politics. Owen (2016) labels it "the cult of personality". He further explains that *Hamilton* does admit to Hamilton's less-than-desirable traits and his mistakes but all of these pertain to his personality, never his political failings (ibid.). As Freeman writes, Hamilton's prime role as a politician does not get enough attention in the musical (Freeman, 2018, p. 42).

There are glimpses of Hamilton's political career but these suggest that his political opinions were progressive and present day-like (ibid.) which is not the case. This is due to the artistic license Miranda takes and the superficiality of the discussion of Hamilton's political life, both of which are characteristics of Founders Chic. In an interview, Miranda said that what he wanted to explore in the musical was Hamilton's "relentlessness" and the "immigrant narrative" of his story (in Kail, 2020, 11:34-11:50) which corresponds to the preference of personality over politics.

In the musical, rather than a politician, Hamilton gets introduced as an immigrant. Then, as Washington's "right-hand man" in the army. Next, as an abolitionist and Secretary of the Treasury. (ibid.) After that, Hamilton's most serious failure is shown, unsurprisingly pertaining to his personality – the sex scandal with Maria Reynolds. This event really happened in real life which provided Miranda with a convenient plot twist. It was "the first major sex scandal in American history" as described by Chernow (2005, p. 2). Even though it did not transpire in the exact same way, the core of the event is true.

In reality, in 1791, Hamilton cheated on his wife Elizabeth (called Eliza in the musical) as he was seduced by Maria Reynolds who asked for his financial help. Maria's husband James then demanded financial compensation for ruining their marriage. Because of James, a rumor spread about Hamilton's alleged illegal use of government funds. Eight years later, in 1797, three men – Frederick Muhlenberg, James Monroe and Abraham B. Venable – approached Hamilton to confront him with the allegations. Hamilton told them their allegations were untrue and, to prove his innocence, he admitted to the adulterous relationship with Maria Reynolds by giving the men the correspondence with her. Pressured by the subsequent scathing articles speculating both, his alleged financial fraud and the sex scandal, Hamilton decided to write an essay titled *Reynolds Pamphlet* in which he refuted the financial fraud and admitted to adultery. By doing so, he was hoping to clear his political name even at the cost of bringing shame upon himself and his family.

The sequence of events as presented in the musical was true in real life. However, there are two instances in which Miranda takes artistic license. The first one being the people who confronted Hamilton with their allegations in the musical – James Madison, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr unlike the three men stated above. The second and frankly negligible case being that instead of admitting to his extramarital affair instantly like in

the musical, Hamilton arranged an evening meeting with the three men the same day where he did so. In the book describing the process of creating the musical, Miranda and McCarter (2016, p. 225) state that this license helps the audience to better understand the fact that “Hamilton made a conscious decision to write something that blew up his own life.” Truthfully, the story would be just as easy to understand without the previously mentioned changes. However, it is apparent that the real reason for the changes was the time limitation of the genre, which Miranda mentions in an interview (in Kail, 2020, 11:25-11:31) and the limitation for the number of characters to keep the plot clear. As Miranda and McCarter write (2016, p. 225), Miranda’s retelling of the story is a “compact version” of the real one. Therefore, in this case, it is only a minor digression from historical facts.

A much more problematic digression from historical facts is that *Hamilton* portrays Hamilton’s adulterous affair as a source of condemnation and a significant wound to his career. As Chernow writes (2005, p. 536) the sex scandal hardly ruined Hamilton’s political career. Freeman further states (Freeman, 2018, p. 44) that in reality it was Hamilton’s controversial and extreme political views which enraged many people and ensured him a fair share of adversaries even before the scandal.

Miranda also portrays the Reynolds scandal as the sole reason for Hamilton’s ruined chances at presidency. Thomas Jefferson mockingly sings in the song *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, reacting to Hamilton’s scandalous letters:

“JEFFERSON: Well, he’s never gon’ be president now.”  
(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 234)

However, the truth is that Hamilton simply was not the type of person suitable for presidency, and his personal affair was only one of a number of reasons why he was not suitable for the role of a nation’s leader. According to historians, Hamilton was not the public’s favorite. Chernow (*ibid.*, pp. 508-509) states that Hamilton was “much too elitist” and did not have people’s interests at heart. He adds that Hamilton did not enjoy making compromises and reuniting a divided public – qualities that a president should have. Rather than that, as Freeman writes (2018, p. 44), he was divisive. In the musical, Hamilton admits:

“HAMILTON: Burr, I’d rather be divisive than indecisive. Drop the niceties.” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 49)

Here, Miranda does point out Hamilton’s political divisiveness but does not explore this narrative further. As Freeman (2018, p. 43) discloses, Miranda turned to her for advice and his main goal was to explore Hamilton’s motivations and personality, which he eventually did in the musical. Freeman (ibid., pp. 42-43) admits *Hamilton* lacks politics and excuses this by stating that *Hamilton* is a musical, and as such, it does an admirable job. She further highlights Miranda’s verbatim citations of a number of original letters (ibid., p. 43).

Still, Hamilton’s political divisiveness remains concealed by the veil of his personal life in the musical. If Miranda were to explore Hamilton’s political side, he would have to admit that as a politician Hamilton was so divisive that at one point people shouted and threw rocks at him while he was giving a public speech (Chernow, 2005, pp. 489-490). Hamilton the politician was simply inconvenient for Miranda.

Another issue is *Hamilton*’s portrayal of Hamilton and his fellows as today’s Democrats (Isenberg, 2017, p. 295). This is most apparent from lines like “Immigrants: we get the job done!” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 121), “Now for a strong central democracy” (ibid., 138) and Hamilton’s cosmopolitan views of a centralized government in contrast with agrarian Jefferson, portrayed in the play as their dispute over the assumption of state debts. Miranda himself is a Democrat and with the musical coming before Trump’s election in 2017, the play was later used as a protest against Trump’s anti-immigrant and public-divisive agenda. Shortly after Trump’s election, Vice President Mike Pence went to see the production and one of the actors addressed a statement to Pence, appealing to him for protecting all people in the country (Framke, 2016), thus labeling *Hamilton* as pro-Democrat. This fact prompts the audience to connect the real Hamilton to the current Democratic party which did not even exist in Hamilton’s time.

This is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Hogeland writes (2018, p. 31), the Founders were far from democratic. They were elitist – they supported the idea of only free rich white men being eligible to vote and run for office. They did not have common people’s interests at heart. What they cared about was hoarding money, and movements that called for “fixing prices, issuing paper currencies and taxing wealth” were seen by



them as radical and restrictive. (ibid.) The musical purports that Hamilton worked to decrease the revolutionary debt. Hogeland (2018, pp. 32-33) asserts that instead of trying to reduce the debt like the musical depicts, Hamilton intentionally worked on increasing it for the benefit of himself and a few cunning investors who funded the debt via taxation, thus getting returns on their investment. Secondly, Hamilton had significant right-leaning tendencies and as a Federalist (Waldstreicher and Pasley, 2018, p. 142) was more conservative than the musical depicts him (Hogeland, 2018, pp. 22-23). Moreover, Federalists and Democratic-Republicans respectively cannot be equated to today's Democrats or Republicans because the political agenda of the historical parties was different than that of the current ones. Next, Hamilton's views on monarchy were extremist even in his time (Freeman, 2018, p. 49). As Chernow (2005, p. 232) writes, Hamilton was obsessed with the idea of a powerful government with monarchical aspects and senators elected for life. Furthermore, as Freeman (2018, p. 46) writes, he once infamously proclaimed "our real disease...is democracy." (A. Hamilton, 1804) Thus, the idea of Hamilton as a liberal democrat is historically inaccurate.

*Hamilton* conveys a message that coming from humble beginnings and working himself up, Hamilton strove to provide the same chance to everyone in the new nation. However, this was not true. As Freeman writes (Freeman, 2018, p 46), Hamilton had a proclivity to solve problems in a military fashion to prove the government's power. One such example is his exaggerated reaction to the previously mentioned Whiskey Rebellion which he set to resolve in a disproportionate manner. Another contradiction to the message is Hamilton's distrust of democracy and his dislike of immigrants.

## **4.2 Founders Chic – Aaron Burr**

The character of Founding Father Aaron Burr receives as much contempt in the play as Hamilton's character receives praise. If Hamilton is an example of Founders Chic in the musical, Burr's character is the near antithesis of it. Burr is not celebrated as a revolutionary hero, however, there is a focus on his personality, too – a feature of Founders Chic. Burr functions as an omniscient narrator in the story and reveals right at the beginning: "And me? I'm the *damn fool* that shot him," (Miranda and McCarter, 2019, p. 18) in reference to Hamilton, establishing his role as a villain right away.

In the musical, Burr is portrayed as a man who is indecisive, too careful, who stalls and does not fight for what he believes in:

“LAURENS: Burr, the revolution’s imminent. What do you stall for?

HAMILTON: If you stand for nothing, Burr, what’ll you fall for?”

(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 25)

He serves as Hamilton’s adversary with his negative qualities overblown and his positive ones drastically toned down, the opposite of Miranda’s treatment of Hamilton’s character. He is the odd one out of Hamilton’s friend group, urging them to keep their plans to themselves if they want to succeed:

“BURR: Geniuses, lower your voices.

You keep out of trouble and you double your choices.

I’m with you, but the situation is fraught.

You’ve got to be carefully taught:

If you talk, you’re gonna get shot!”

(ibid., p. 27)

In reality, Aaron Burr was different. However, that is not to say he was not just as controversial as the other Founding Fathers. The darkest shadow was cast on his life by what is today known as the *Burr Conspiracy*. To this day, historians do not know what Burr’s true plan was and his intentions still remain unclear (Longley, 2022). The conspiracy is that around 1804, Burr aimed to establish a country in the newly-acquired Louisiana territory and become its leader. He allegedly wanted to achieve this by separating this territory from the US with the help of British and Spanish forces. That help never came. Instead, rumors about Burr’s plan began to spread and Burr was called to court and tried for treason per President Jefferson’s demand. Because no “overt act” of treason was found, the jury declared Burr not guilty. Nevertheless, this incident damaged Burr’s reputation, forcing him to flee to Europe and not come back until a few years later. After his return to the US, he spent the rest of his life practicing law. (ibid.)

According to Isenberg (2016), Burr’s image has been distorted and his person misunderstood. She blames this on a smear campaign orchestrated by Burr’s adversaries. As a result of this smear campaign, a distorted image of Burr was spread by print media and subsequently carried over to current-day pop culture, solidifying Burr as the odd one

out among the Founding Fathers. (ibid.) Even though Miranda (in Mead, 2015) stated in an interview that he considers Burr to have been just as brilliant as Hamilton, the musical still repeats the distorted narrative because it is convenient for the plot.

In order for Hamilton to appear heroic, there needed to be a sufficiently contrasting character whose qualities would highlight Hamilton's accomplishments, and Aaron Burr is the one fulfilling this function. Although Burr is humanized by being depicted as someone who feels left out and inadequate, Miranda still repeats the narrative of an envious, unsuccessful, cunning man who resorts to desperate solutions to become successful. Consequently, even if some people happen to sympathize with Burr's character, it is out of pity. In the penultimate song *The World Was Wide Enough*, Burr complains:

“History obliterates.

In every picture it paints,

It paints me and all my mistakes.

...

I survived, but I paid for it.

Now I'm the villain in your history.”

(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, pp. 274-275)

In spite of this, *Hamilton* brings forth Burr's shadows and disregards his positive contributions, the opposite of the depiction of the other Founders. It shows the Founders-Chic treatment of Burr as a somewhat relatable person whose struggles are universal and contemporary. Consequently, Burr's relatability is built on his outcast image.

The song *Wait for It* introduces Burr in depth for the first time. Burr compares himself with Hamilton whom he describes as highly prolific and successful, wondering what his own purpose in life is as if he himself was not accomplished: “BURR: And if there's a reason I'm still alive when everyone who loves me has died, I'm willing to wait for it.” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 91) This is only partially true as will be demonstrated in the following paragraph. Burr is depicted as idle in the line “I'm not standing still, I am lying in wait.” (ibid.) To put him in contrast with the frantic workaholic Hamilton. Burr further wonders: “What is it like in his shoes?” (ibid.), expressing envy of Hamilton's success. Overall, this song is the song defining Burr's traits as described in

the previous paragraphs. Moreover, it compares Hamilton's prolificacy versus Burr's lack thereof, thus equaling quantity with success.

Burr had his own share of accomplishments which are not mentioned in the play. Hamilton is praised as a right-hand man to Washington while Burr's former, equal position as aide-de-camp to General Montgomery (Isenberg, 2016) is not even hinted at. Burr was an accomplished soldier like many of the Founding Fathers. Further, as Isenberg (ibid.) writes, he was more democratic than Hamilton. Thus, if anyone should be fictionally depicted as a democrat in *Hamilton*, it is Burr. Moreover, unlike Hamilton, Burr advocated for the naturalized foreigners' right to be elected for government (ibid.), therefore if comparisons should be made, Burr was more pro-immigrant, yet it is Hamilton who is inaccurately portrayed as such despite his previously mentioned opposition to pro-immigrant issues.

If there is one thing about Burr that the musical shows accurately, it is the fact that he was an enigmatic person. Upon first meeting Hamilton, Burr advises him: "Talk less... Smile more... Don't let them know what you're against or what you're for." (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 24) As Chernow (p. 192) says, Burr was secretive and "chameleon"-like. This is why the Burr Conspiracy still remains a mystery because Burr never told anyone his true intentions. He once described himself in the third person as "...a grave, silent, strange sort of animal, inasmuch that we know not what to make of him." (Chernow, p. 192). *Hamilton* takes Burr's ambiguity a step further when in *Schuyler Defeated*, Hamilton accuses Burr of switching political parties from Federalist to Democratic-Republican to defeat Philip Schuler. The truth is that up until taking Philip Schuyler's Senate seat in 1791, Burr's political affiliation was not yet clear-cut (Monticello, n.d.). However, he mostly sided with the Democratic-Republicans, which became more apparent around the disputes over the Jay Treaty in 1795 (ibid.). Therefore, Miranda's claim that Burr changed political parties is not accurate.

If there was to be a model example of shaping characters to Miranda's liking and convenience, it would be the way the musical deals with feminism. The personification of feminism in *Hamilton* is Angelica Schuyler – the eldest daughter of senator Philip Schuyler and sister of Hamilton's wife, Eliza. In *The Schuyler Sisters*, Angelica sings about equality and having read Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. Then she has a line

referring to the *Declaration of Independence*: “And when I meet Thomas Jefferson, I’m ‘a compel him to include women in the sequel!” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 44) As Isenberg (2016) writes, the feminist inclinations of Angelica Schuyler, her sisters or Hamilton are fully fictional as far as history records are concerned. However, it was Burr and his wife Theodosia who were avid feminists. They believed in women and men’s equality. They supported the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft – a prominent feminist in their time. Thus, Burr and Theodosia’s daughter Theodosia received the same education a boy would, which was progressive and more than unusual for that time. What is more, Hamilton mocked Burr for his belief that women and men were intellectually equal. (ibid.)

Isenberg (2016) writes about Burr:

*“He was not just a disciple of the Enlightenment, but also an advocate for criminal justice reform, freedom of the press, women’s rights, and the rights of immigrants.”*

None of these progressive values of Burr’s can be seen in *Hamilton*. In order to have a villain, Miranda had to overlook these.

## **Summary**

Looking at the lives of real Hamilton and Burr, it is apparent that they were both controversial figures. In the case of both, Hamilton and Burr, the focus is on their characters rather than a combination of the latter and their political personalities. Miranda chooses to highlight Hamilton’s positive traits and in Burr’s case, his negative ones, which causes them to look different than they really were. Hamilton was much more divisive and much less democratic and liberal, while Burr was much more progressive and initiative than the musical shows. Their roles in the musical could be easily reversed, with Burr as the hero and Hamilton as the villain. Furthermore, the portrayal of these two men is not very historically accurate. Their portrayal alters the public opinion about both of them, in Burr’s case a little less, which, according to Pope (2021), is an irresponsible reason for taking artistic liberties.

## **4.3 Hamilton and Burr’s relationship**

The relationship between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr had always been less than ideal, which Miranda portrays accurately. Upon their first meeting in the musical, Burr

advises Hamilton to “talk less” and “smile more” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 24), by which Miranda illustrates their contrasting personalities. This theme continues throughout the musical, describing their relationship as gradually souring into outright antagonism.

Hamilton was a Federalist, and Burr was a Democratic-Republican. As Maranzani (2016) writes, even though they worked on several law cases together, their opposing political views and affiliations were major stumbling blocks in their relationship. Their antagonism intensified after Burr pulled a few strings to defeat Hamilton’s father-in-law Philip Schuyler and won his seat in the Senate in 1791, which Hamilton did not take lightly (ibid.).

The musical correctly describes this event in the song *Schuyler Defeated* in which Hamilton’s son Philip reads a newspaper to Eliza, informing her about Burr’s defeat of “grampa” Schuyler. However, when enraged Hamilton confronts Burr with the situation, he says to Burr: “Since when are you a Democratic-Republican?” and “You changed parties to run against my father-in-law,” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 191) which is untrue. As Verell (2015) writes, Burr was not clearly affiliated with either party at that time, therefore, he did not change parties as the musical purports.

In 1800, when running for president, Burr was affiliated with the Democratic-Republican party. As Isenberg (2007, p. 181) says, the presidential election of 1800 ended up in a tie between Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, and the decision was moved over to the Federalist-dominated House of Representatives. In the musical, Hamilton is the one who sways the election in Jefferson’s favor even though he hates him. Hamilton sings: “But when all is said and all is done. Jefferson has beliefs. Burr has none.” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 261) In reality, as Isenberg (2007, p. 213) writes, Hamilton was not a central figure in deciding the election. According to Isenberg (ibid., p. 211), even though Hamilton wrote letters to persuade people to vote against Burr, it was actually Federalist James A. Bayard of Maryland who played a crucial role in deciding the election (ibid., p. 219-220). Bayard, previously voting for Burr on behalf of Maryland, decided to withhold his vote on certain terms to which Jefferson agreed. His action was followed by Vermont, South Carolina and Delaware who did not vote either, thus, Jefferson won. Burr became the Vice President as was the rule at that time. (ibid.)

In the musical, Hamilton's voting for Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800 is the catalyst for their duel. In *Your Obedient Servant*, Burr, enraged by the fact that Hamilton voted for Jefferson, challenges him to a duel (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, pp. 266-267). As Isenberg (2007, pp. 256-259) writes, in reality, it was one of the plethora of insults Hamilton aimed at Burr. In 1804, Charles D. Cooper published a letter in a newspaper, sharing Hamilton's latest insults of Burr and adding that Hamilton said even more "despicable" things about Burr. Burr expected Hamilton to deny his statement which Hamilton refused to do. Thus, tired of Hamilton's never-ending insults, Burr challenged him to a duel. (ibid.)

The Hamilton-Burr duel remains a mystery to historians. The historical record does not provide answers about Hamilton's real intentions, nor about who shot first. The only clear fact is that Burr shot Hamilton, who died the following day. Miranda treated the duel carefully and with respect to historical record. He does not make unqualified decisions or create fictions. In the book (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, pp. 270-271), it is described that Miranda did not let himself be pushed by artistic director Oscar Eustis to give people answers about Hamilton's motivations behind accepting Burr's challenge to a duel. He does not answer questions which cannot be answered about the duel, thus leaving it the mystery it has always been (ibid.).

## **Summary**

The core of Hamilton and Burr's relationship is depicted accurately in *Hamilton*. Their antagonism was not immediate. The two men collaborated on law cases, but their opposing personalities and opinions kept them at distance. Their enmity developed gradually until it resulted in the infamous duel. The historical outline is what *Hamilton* describes accurately. The artistic license Miranda took was taken mainly about the men's personalities to overstate Burr's villainy and Hamilton's importance.

## 5 Slavery and Race

As stated in the previous chapter, one of the main faults of Founders Chic is its fail to properly address slavery and such is the case with *Hamilton*. Like all other topics inconvenient for the narrative, slavery is glossed over in the musical. Hamilton and his friends are introduced as “a bunch of revolutionary manumission abolitionists” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 27) which is only partially true as this chapter will explore. Laurens’ character says: “But we’ll never be truly free until those in bondage have the same rights as you and me” (ibid.) but aside from one other line in the same vein, this is all that the musical provides about slavery in connection with the heroes of the story. The topic is brought up again in the second act in *Cabinet Battle #1*, however, not with the intention to discuss it but to blame Jefferson – Hamilton’s antagonist – for it. The song describes the Compromise of 1790, the crux of which was Hamilton’s effort to persuade members of Congress to approve his plan to assume state debts. As most Southerners and Democratic-Republicans, Jefferson is opposed to Hamilton’s idea because most Southern states have their debts paid, most importantly Virginia where Jefferson is from. Hamilton calls Jefferson out on the fact that Virginia’s debts are paid owing to slaves:

“A civics lesson from a slaver. Hey neighbor  
Your debts are paid cuz you don’t pay for labor  
“We plant seeds in the South. We create.”  
Yeah, keep ranting  
We know who’s really doing the planting”  
(Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 161)

This is a problematic statement because the lyrics quoted above heavily suggest that it was only the Southern states who held slaves by which *Hamilton* overlooks the problem of slavery in the North, thus playing down its gravity and not acknowledging its victims. Harper (2003a) states that the American Revolution was the greatest catalyst for abolition and by 1790, only 6 percent of all US slaves were in the Northern states. However, this does not mean that these states should be absolved of their guilt. As Harper (ibid.) writes, the North was still participating in slave trade even after the revolution. *Hamilton* portrays the abolitionist leaning of its characters as political liberalism, however, according to Harper (ibid.), the main reasons for the gradual emancipation of slaves in real life were



“practical” above else. Furthermore, there has been a prevalent problem of erasing the slavery narrative from the history of the Northern states. As Harper (2003b) mentions, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Northern states, especially the New England states, were trying to erase their black history by blaming the South for still engaging in slaveholding and for the hardships of the freed slaves in the North. Therefore, this attitude of overlooking the history of slavery in the North and blaming the South for it is still prevalent and *Hamilton* does not try to change it, instead continuing in it.

The musical also makes Jefferson a so-called scapegoat as he is one of two characters directly charged with slavery. Madison, who is also a Southerner, only has a few lines in *Cabinet Battle #1* and although Hamilton says some nasty things about him, Hamilton’s antagonism is more focused on Jefferson throughout the musical. This way, the “Southern” blame is put on Jefferson, thus providing Miranda with a distraction from the North’s slavery issue and absolving the musical’s heroes of the guilt of owning slaves.

### **5.1 Alexander Hamilton and Slavery**

In reality, most of the Founding Fathers were guilty of slaveholding. Chernow calls Hamilton “a fierce abolitionist” (2005, p. 23) but later incidentally mentions that Hamilton “*may* have owned one or two household slaves” (ibid., 210). According to Jessie Serfilippi’s new research, there is evidence in Hamilton’s notebooks that he participated in buying slaves for other people and himself and that he did not document every transaction (Serfilippi, 2020, p. 4). Serfilippi (ibid., pp. 2-3) writes that Hamilton’s abolitionist interests had always been more political than humanitarian in nature. As an example, she mentions Hamilton’s indignation at the running over of American slaves to the British side where they were promised freedom in accordance with the Treaty of Paris of 1783 which Hamilton saw as stealing of “property”. Two years later, in defending the Jay Treaty, he stated that taking people’s freedom is “odious and immoral a thing”. Both instances align with his political interests (ibid., p. 2).

Chernow (2005, p. 211) does admit to Hamilton’s trading slaves but he purports without evidence that Hamilton did so “reluctantly”. Chernow also claims that Hamilton’s childhood in the slavery-ridden Caribbean made him detest slavery (ibid., p. 210), even though Hogeland (2018, p. 27) writes that there is no historical evidence for this claim. Yet, many more historians repeat this narrative first introduced by Hamilton’s son and

first biographer John Church Hamilton (ibid.) and which, according to Serfilippi (2020, p. 3), is unfounded.

For their seriousness, slavery hand in hand with racism are the topics *Hamilton* is criticized for the most. In reaction to *Hamilton*, American writer Ishmael Reed wrote a play titled *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda* which deals with these issues. In the play, Miranda has drug-induced dreams in which he is visited by the ghosts of Native Americans, slaves owned by the Schuyler family and George Washington, Harriet Tubman, George Washington himself and Alexander Hamilton. The ghosts of the Native Americans and slaves tell Miranda the truth about Washington and Hamilton, claiming that Ron Chernow's book on Hamilton is whitewashed history. The play is packed with historical facts about slavery and the oppression and suffering of Native Americans and African Americans. Furthermore, it portrays Hamilton and Washington in a realistic way without polishing them up and downplaying their involvement in slavery.

Serfilippi (2020) presented new research based on Hamilton's cash books, correspondence and other primary sources which confirm that Hamilton was no "fierce abolitionist" as Chernow and other historians claim. Even Chernow, contradicting himself, admits that there were nine slaves in the Hamilton household, one of which – a boy named Ajax – was assigned to Hamilton (Chernow, 2005, p. 23). Serfilippi (2020, p. 5) also mentions Robert Hendrickson's claim that there were seven slaves. Instead of making him detest slavery, Hamilton's teenage job at a trading post made him focused on improving his own life rather than care about the condition of enslaved blacks (ibid.). In his adulthood, regarding slavery, Hamilton most often assumed the role of a middleman in slave trade for his in-law family. Among other transactions, Serfilippi mentions the purchase of "a negro woman and child" whom Hamilton purchased for his brother-in-law John Baker Church. (Serfilippi, 2020, p. 8) Hamilton also provided legal advice to his clients pertaining slave trade (ibid., p. 11). Finally, Serfilippi (ibid., p. 16) provides an account of Hamilton purchasing a slave for his own family from George Clinton, and later in 1795, buying two slaves for himself. Most historians argument with Hamilton's membership in the New York Manumission Society. However, according to Chernow, over a half of the men owned slaves while being members of said society (Chernow, 2005, p. 215) including Hamilton (Serfilippi, 2020, p. 11). Adding to this the fact that Hamilton married into the Schuyler family, the third largest slave-owning family in Albany County

(ibid. p. 15), it is downright ignorant and offensive that historians would label Hamilton a staunch abolitionist.

## 5.2 George Washington and Slavery

Just like other elite white men in his time, Washington was no different when it comes to the question of slavery. In *Hamilton*, Washington is portrayed as a “venerated Virginian veteran” (Miranda and McCarter, 2016, p. 61) and does not have a single line about slavery, neither is slavery mentioned in connection with him. Yet, in reality, slavery was an inseparable part of Washington’s life until his death.

As Brockell (2019) writes, when Washington was 11 years old, his late father left him with ten slaves. Washington was buying and renting slaves in his adulthood, and in 1759, he married Martha Custis with her own share of slaves (ibid.). Washington lived at an estate named Mount Vernon which is now a historic site. At least 577 slaves were kept at Mount Vernon during Washington’s life (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, 2022b). Until the revolution, Washington did not see slavery as something bad (Brockell, 2019). In 1766, he punished Tom (a slave) for trying to escape by selling him to Saint Kitts (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, 2022b). As Blakemore (2020) writes, he was a demanding master and he had no problem ordering the beating and whipping of defiant slaves or separating enslaved families as a punishment. He also chased after his runaway slaves and bypassed laws to prevent them from gaining freedom. (ibid.)

According to Brockell (2019), Washington’s outlook on slavery began changing with the Revolutionary War in the face of calls for freedom and equality which impacted him. He realized that owning slaves was immoral and expressed a wish not to participate in it anymore. However, he never put his words into action. He did not manumit his slaves even though he could legally do so according to a Virginian law of 1782. (Brockell, 2019)

Wiencek (in Blakemore, 2020) describes Washington’s stance on slavery as contradictory. Indeed, in his will, Washington (1799) expresses his “earnest wish” to emancipate all of his slaves but decides to have them freed only after his wife’s death. He proceeds to justify this with the fact that if freed, the slaves would face “insu(per)able difficulties” because of being related with Martha’s slaves whom they would be separated from. Then, he orders that after Martha’s death, those slaves who are incapable of supporting themselves, be fed and clothed. Children without parents were to be supported

and educated until the age of 25. (ibid.) Only one slave was freed immediately after Washington's death – William Lee – a man of mixed race who fought along Washington's side in the Revolutionary War (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2022d). Nevertheless, Martha freed Washington's slaves approximately a year after his death because she was afraid they were plotting to kill her (Blakemore, 2020). However, Martha died in 1802, a year after Washington, therefore the enslaved people at Mount Vernon were separated anyway because Washington's slaves were freed and Martha's slaves were divided between her four heirs (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2022a).

As Michelson (2020) writes, Washington is also known for his cruelty toward Native Americans. This cruelty goes back several generations. The Iroquois nicknamed Washington's great-grandfather "Conotocarious" which means "Town Destroyer" and which Washington inherited. Both Washington and his great-grandfather were known for ordering the destroying of whole Native American villages (ibid.). Brockell (2019) writes that Washington was land-hungry, hence his entitlement to Native American land. He was friendly with the Natives but once they did not play by his rules, he was cruel with them (ibid.).

## **Summary**

The truth is still hard to swallow as many Americans, including former US president Donald Trump, do not see a problem with having Washington's and other racists' monuments standing for veneration (Michelson, 2020). Seeing as both Hamilton and Washington, the musical's heroes, participated in slavery and racism and were not abolitionists, it is historically inaccurate and morally wrong to portray them as heroes. For all their debatable "attempts" at improving the position of non-white people, their actions speak louder than their words, that is, if not condemned, they should at least be looked at critically. Polishing them up only continues the trend of ignoring the country's true history, resulting in overblown patriotism and a lack of Americans' self-awareness.

### **5.3 Race and the Casting of Hamilton**

As mentioned in the first chapter, the musical has been labeled color-conscious and color-blind. Color-conscious meaning that the majority of *Hamilton*'s roles are given to POC, color-blind meaning that race does not play any role in casting. While working on

*Hamilton*, Miranda (THNKR, 2013, 1:19-1:27) said that he does not “think in terms of race at all” in the process of casting the musical. However, as Smith writes (N. Smith, 2016), in 2016, the show’s casting call sought “non-white actors” which caused outrage. The producers then had to amend the wording but said they would continue in their pursuit of diversity. When asked to comment on the issue of color-conscious casting, Miranda refused to do so (Kohn, 2020).

Historian Lyra D. Monteiro (2018, p. 60) asserts that *Hamilton*’s casting is in no way color-blind. She labels the casting race-conscious in the title of her essay (ibid., p. 58), another term for color-conscious. She explains her idea by writing that roles with rap and other “black” genres are given to black and Latino actors while roles with pop and more traditional sound are given to white actors (ibid., p. 60).

As Monteiro (ibid.) writes, historians point out the issue of black actors playing white Founding Fathers. Some deem it progressive and some problematic (ibid.). According to Kohn (2020), the creators of the musical see this as a progressive move and an opportunity for POC to own the history of the US and to feel like they are finally being heard and seen, which the actors confirmed. On the other hand, critics like Ishmael Reed, the author of *The Haunting of Lin-Manuel Miranda*, criticize *Hamilton* for this. In an article, Reed (2015) prompts the readers to imagine that Jewish people would play the roles of Nazis which he likens to black actors playing white slave owners. Reed sees the casting as disrespectful to the suffering of enslaved people. He also criticizes *Hamilton*’s main source – Ron Chernow’s book – which he accuses of white veneration and covering up Hamilton’s involvement in slavery (ibid.). As mentioned before, Chernow (2005) does mention Hamilton’s involvement in slavery but presents it as regrettable and reluctant, for which there is no evidence.

Historian Anette Gordon-Reed (2016) says the issue is “complicated”. On one hand, the audience is expected to see that the actors are black, while on the other hand, they are expected to overlook the uncomfortable fact that black people were enslaved by the white people they portray (ibid.). This sounds like black history erasure reimaged. Gordon-Reed (2016) asserts that casting black actors protects *Hamilton* from criticism which would be much harsher if the actors were white. As an example, she mentions the very brief appearance of Jefferson’s slave Sally Hemings who would stand out much more

among a white cast (ibid.). Gordon-Reed (2016) also mentions that *Hamilton*'s black cast justifies the inability to portray real black figures. It is an easy way out to cast black and Latino actors and call it an inclusive play. Nevertheless, Gordon-Reed (2016) concludes that she likes the musical for Miranda's "great art" despite its serious shortcomings. She says that artists should be free to draw from history and it is historians' job to set the record straight (ibid.).

In the same vein, Monteiro (2016) claims she loves the musical even though it is "problematic". According to her, there is not one product of pop culture which would be unproblematic. She deems popular culture an inseparable part of people's lives and states that it is historians who should criticize its products and steer them in the direction of improvement and progress. Monteiro also urges its consumers to stay aware of the imperfect and problematic pop-cultural nature of works like *Hamilton* (ibid.).

Pointing to the problem of blind veneration, Isenberg (2017, p. 303) states that "Americans ought to feel uncomfortable about their collective past. We look foolish otherwise, as cheerleaders of American exceptionalism," thus also warning against uncritical acceptance of problematic narratives of American history.

## **Summary**

Some historians praise *Hamilton* for casting black people in the roles of white Founders and call it progressive while it is not. It does not help to improve racism awareness or educate about black and minority history. There is nothing revolutionary about it. The black actors of *Hamilton* portraying white Founders function as a cover-up for slavery and the horrors of their own history. The only revolutionary thing about *Hamilton* is the unusual combination of musical genres and Miranda's ingenious wordsmithery. Despite its flaws, historians approve of liking the musical, however, Monteiro urges the audience to keep in mind *Hamilton*'s pop-cultural nature containing imperfections. In a similar vein, Isenberg warns against accepting problematic stories of American past as true history. Nevertheless, historians Gordon-Reed and Monteiro agree that artists should be free to create art based on history and that historians should shed light on any potential problematic aspects of such artworks.

## 6 The Creators' Response to Criticism

This chapter deals with the creators' response to the criticism of *Hamilton*. It also introduces the Hamilton Education Program and evaluates it.

### 6.1 The Creators' Response to Criticism

Regarding *Hamilton*'s inaccuracies and omissions, Miranda's argument has always been the limited amount of show time, that is 2 and a half hours (in Kail, 2020, 11:25). In an interview, Miranda (in Delman, 2015) said that he tried to make the musical "as historically accurate as possible" while also making it engaging. He sees the show as a starting point for education, expressing a hope that *Hamilton* will inspire the audience to "dig deeper" and educate themselves about the things the musical does not have enough capacity for (in Kail, 2020, 5:50).

Thomas Kail (ibid., 12:53), the director of *Hamilton*, stated that the show does not provide answers and that rather than to answer questions, theater's role is to bring in deeper and different questions than people might have had before seeing the show. Kail's statement is debatable because the musical purports that Hamilton was an immigrant, abolitionist, progressive and held democratic values, or that Aaron Burr did not achieve much and took little initiative. Thus, the musical does provide answers; answers which are not always historically accurate. Harvard historian Annette Gordon-Reed (ibid., 29:20) agreed with Kail, adding that the important thing is to ask the right questions after seeing the production. The actors and creators agreed that *Hamilton*'s asset is that it sparks a discussion (ibid.).

Some historians expressed a concern that audiences will accept even misrepresented facts in works of historical fiction. However, Conway (in Stewart, 2015) argues that the average viewer is intelligent enough not to mistake dramatization of history for facts. Deeks (in Hudson, 2011) adds that if a historical drama is good, it should inspire people to want to learn more about real history. Moreover, as Conway (in Stewart, 2015) says, the demographic that goes to see a history musical is different than the demographic that would pick up a history book to read in their free time. Therefore, if playwrights of historical drama make their productions interesting and engaging, they can inspire an unlikely group of people to look more into history, thus inspiring people to educate

themselves. They make people “ask questions” as Gordon-Reed says and *Hamilton*’s creators and actors agree with.

Consequently, upon having acquainted themselves with historical facts, an educated person should have gained enough knowledge to decide for themselves whether they like a production despite its flaws or not. They should be acquainted with the pitfalls and flaws of a production so that they will not simply take over the limited and modified information that a piece of pop cultural product serves them.

## **6.2 Hamilton Education Program**

Taking his word about “digging deeper” seriously, from 2015 to 2020, Miranda and *Hamilton*’s producer Jeffrey Seller partnered with the Gilder Lehrman Institute and established the Hamilton Education Program. Their aim was to enable schools for low-income students to see *Hamilton* on Broadway and to include the musical in their history class (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, n.d.).

According to the Gilder-Lehrman Institute (ibid.), the students first learn about the Founding Era in the class using documents that are accessible to schools enrolled in the program. Subsequently, the students partner on group projects to create their own performance pieces based on what they have learned about the Founding Era. The Gilder Lehrman Institute provides all the necessary study materials on their special website. The website includes primary sources, videos and interviews with Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton*’s actors and biographer Ron Chernow. (ibid.)

The Gilder Lehrman Institute’s website (ibid.) states that by connecting history and performing arts, The Hamilton Education Program provides teachers to teach American history innovatively, giving the students an opportunity to connect with the Founding Era in their own way.

Creator Ishmael Reed (2015) calls this project “an insult”, questioning the benefits of integrated schools. Reed criticizes the way these schools promote white history where “perpetrators of genocide and slave holders are honored” (ibid.).

Based on Monteiro’s urging to keep in mind that *Hamilton* is a product of pop culture, therefore it is problematic but can still be enjoyed, it can be concluded that the teachers who participate in the Hamilton Education Program should inform their students about



the imperfections and problems which *Hamilton* fails to address. Only then, after being thoroughly informed, should the students see the show.

### **Summary**

*Hamilton*'s creators think that even though it is imperfect, the musical serves as a starting point for education. The creators and historian Gordon-Reed agree that *Hamilton* should make people ask questions and want to learn more about history. That is why the Hamilton Education Program was established, to help students learn about the Founding Era in a fun way. There are critics of the program but according to historian Monteiro, as long as the audience does not accept *Hamilton* as historically factual, there is no harm.

## Conclusion

This thesis aimed to determine whether the musical *Hamilton* is historically accurate enough to be considered a reliable account of the lives of the historical figures it portrays. Another objective was to evaluate the potential impact of the narrative the musical presents to its audience. The relationship of historical accuracy and artistic license was also explored in the thesis.

There are no official rules, only suggestions for incorporating historical facts into works of historical fiction. These say that any potential digression from historical facts should be justifiable, as in, all changes should be made for valid reasons. Changes of historical facts should not be made to alter public opinion about someone, to push a political narrative or to change historical facts altogether.

According to the above-stated suggestions, it was found that the musical contains some serious inaccuracies. These, however, do not pertain as much to historical events as to the portrayal of the characters whose personalities are too altered for the purpose of dramatization. Personality is the main focus of the musical, which was found to be problematic because by focusing on the characters' personalities, Miranda omits their often-flawed political conduct. Focusing on personality and omitting negatives is a characteristic of Founders Chic, a phenomenon that presents the Founding Fathers in an overly positive light which *Hamilton* is guilty of.

In the case of Alexander Hamilton, he is portrayed as an immigrant, which he was not. Neither was he an abolitionist nor a supporter of democracy as the musical claims. He traded slaves and he wanted a government inspired by monarchy. Regarding Hamilton's life story, the musical is correct, regarding his personality, incorrect.

Aaron Burr is portrayed a little more accurately than Hamilton. It is true that he was a secretive and enigmatic person like in the musical. However, Miranda built his character exclusively on this personality trait and chose to conceal his political ideas which were more progressive than Hamilton's. This shows a Founders-Chic treatment focused on personality.

It was also found that there is no evidence that the Schuyler sisters were feminists. Instead, Aaron Burr and his wife were feminists and brought up their daughter according to the feminist idea that men and women are equal – another fact unexplored in *Hamilton*.

Regarding George Washington, he is portrayed as an honorable war veteran and president. In real life, he held slaves and was cruel toward Native Americans which *Hamilton* does not mention.

The events portrayed in *Hamilton* are historically accurate with only minor embellishments. The personalities of the characters, however, were found to be too altered to be considered a reliable account of their lives. Miranda embellishes the Founders and portrays them as men who held modern values, mostly liberal ones. *Hamilton* evades the subject of slavery and racism in general. By absolving the heroes of the burden of slavery and racism and by focusing on their personality which it embellishes, the musical puts them on a pedestal and conceals their flaws.

Regarding *Hamilton*'s potential impact, most historians agree that it is harmless to enjoy the musical provided that people learn about its shortcomings.

## Résumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá historickou přesností amerického muzikálu *Hamilton*. V práci jsou zkoumány aspekty muzikálu, které jsou nejvíce kritizovány historiky. Tyto jsou dále porovnávány s historickými fakty. Bylo zjištěno, že aplikace historické přesnosti v žánru historické fikce nemá závazná pravidla, pouze doporučení. Na základě těchto doporučení bylo zjištěno, že *Hamilton* je spíše historicky přesný, co se týče historických událostí, ale z větší části historicky nepřesný, co se týče historických postav. Co se týče potenciálního dopadu muzikálu na publikum, většina historiků se shoduje, že by měla být brána na zřetel jeho zábavní povaha a lidé by měli být obeznámeni s jeho nedostatky.

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## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Sabina Pavlíková
<b>Katedra nebo ústav:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Ivan Čipkár, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2023

<b>Název závěrečné práce:</b>	Muzikál Hamilton a jeho historická přesnost
<b>Název závěrečné práce v angličtině:</b>	Hamilton the Musical and Its Historical Accuracy
<b>Anotace závěrečné práce:</b>	Bakalářská práce se zabývá historickou přesností amerického muzikálu <i>Hamilton</i> . V práci jsou zkoumány aspekty muzikálu, které jsou nejvíce kritizovány historiky. Tyto jsou dále porovnávány s historickými fakty. V práci je též zkoumána role historické přesnosti v žánru historické fikce. Dále je probírán potenciální dopad muzikálu na publikum.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Alexander Hamilton, Lin-Manuel Miranda, musical theater, history, historical accuracy, historical fiction
<b>Anotace závěrečné práce v angličtině:</b>	This bachelor thesis focuses on the historical accuracy of the American musical <i>Hamilton</i> . The thesis explores aspects of the musical which are most criticized by historians. These are subsequently compared with historical facts. The thesis also deals with the role of historical accuracy in works of historical fiction. It also explores <i>Hamilton</i> 's potential impact on its audience.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Alexander Hamilton, Lin-Manuel Miranda, muzikál, historie, historická přesnost, historická fikce
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	-
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	56
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Angličtina