WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?: INTERSECTIONS OF POWER, DOMESTICITY, AND SEXUALITY RELATING TO RAP AND SONG IN THE MUSICAL *HAMILTON*

By

Tia Marie Harvey

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree

Musicology—Master of Arts

2019

ABSTRACT

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?: INTERSECTIONS OF POWER, DOMESTICITY, AND SEXUALITY RELATING TO RAP AND SONG IN THE MUSICAL *HAMILTON*

By

Tia Marie Harvey

In January 2015, Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* premiered at The Public Theater in New York City. Later that year it moved to Broadway with an engagement at the Richard Rodgers Theater, followed by productions in Chicago and London. Commercially successful and critically acclaimed, *Hamilton* continues to hold significant cultural relevance in 2019. As a result of this musical's cultural significance, it has the ability to communicate positive, but also limiting, aspects of our society. In this thesis, I examine the concept of rap as a musical language of power. To do this, I assert that characters in *Hamilton* who have power, and particularly when expressing that power, do so through rap. In contrast, when characters don't have power, or are entering realms of the powerless (i.e. spaces gendered female), they do so through lyrical song.

In chapter 1, I set up the divide between rap and song as it primarily translates among male characters and class. Chapter 2 is focused on the domestic sphere, and in chapter 3 I discuss sexuality. In the conclusion of this thesis, I revisit the character of Eliza and explore the perceived power of her role as storyteller and the way in which the themes I discuss illuminate many missed opportunities to present an interpretation of America's founding that is truly revolutionary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like I imagine all thesis projects to be, the process of writing this has been one fraught with incredible growth as a scholar, but also immense struggle. First and foremost, I must thank Dr. Ray, my advisor on this project and in so many others, for helping me through those moments of self-doubt and encouraging me to solider on armed with tools and support to succeed. Her constant sympathetic ear and practical advice has helped me get this project to where it is today in a healthy way. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Drs. Kevin Bartig and Juliet Hess for introducing me to forms of scholarship that have shaped my understanding of what it means to study music academically. I would not be pursuing musicology without the guidance and support of these three individuals.

I would also like to thank my partner, Erik Anderson. Thank you for sitting with me in coffee shops, doing the laundry for the last three months, and helping me get through this semester. Thank you for supporting me reminding me that I do have meaningful things to say.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

In January 2015, Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* premiered at The Public Theater in New York City. Later that year it moved to Broadway with an engagement at the Richard Rodgers Theater, followed by productions in Chicago and London. Commercially successful and critically acclaimed, *Hamilton* continues to hold significant cultural relevance in 2019 as it tours across the U.S. and was just recently celebrated at the Kennedy Center Honors. With a cast of largely, if not entirely, non-white bodies, the sheer number of high-profile jobs for actors and actresses of color in *Hamilton* is unprecedented in a story about white historical figures. It is also worth noting how Miranda has been able to bring musical genres (hip-hop and R&B) and his invigorating depictions of America's founding fathers to diverse audiences.

But for all of the novel elements about *Hamilton's* scoring and casting choices, the way Miranda portrays the founding mothers in this country's early days is strikingly similar to how we've seen women portrayed in music, be it musical theater or opera, time and again. This issue, the portrayal and treatment of women in *Hamilton*, began as the focus of this thesis. In working with the material, however, it became clear there was a different musical question to explore.

In *Hamilton* rap is the musical language of power. By this, I mean that the characters who have power physically and narratively primarily express their power through rapped lines that are delivered more declaratively than lyrically. In a way, this is subversive: rap has historically not been considered a culturally prestigious genre. But how is that power disseminated among the characters in *Hamilton*, musically? I see a divide between not necessarily male and female, or even strictly (although largely) masculinity and femininity, but the power*ful* and the power*less* in the drama.

There are only three main characters in *Hamilton* who never rap: King George III, Eliza Schuyler-Hamilton, and Maria Reynolds. Consider King George III. In addition to being one of the only white characters in the original casting, he is characterized as effeminate and more for comedic relief than anything else. It should be noted that not only does he *not* rap, but the songs he does sing are in the style of a Jason Mraz pop-song, which is a genre largely targeted towards female consumption. Indeed, the lyrics to the King's "You'll be back" sing like a poppy break-up song, which of course it's meant to. The violence of the lyrics "I will send a fully armed battalion to remind you of my love" are so antiquated that they're amusing, and the setting in a pop-style ballad sounds like parody. The subtle choreography employed here-- shoulder bounce-- are arguably funny, but also serve to emasculate him.

Eliza, as wife to Hamilton and mother of his children, sings largely Broadway ballads and a touching lament. She is representative of the ideal woman, performing her role of mastering domesticity. Of all the women in *Hamilton*, Eliza is given the most stage time. Maria, on the other hand is given the least. The seductress of this story, she only sings one bluesy number of their affair and then lingers on stage for much of Act 2 without other lines. Both Eliza and Maria are united, although not directly in the musical, by their helplessness in the presence of Hamilton.

In thinking about these three characters who do not rap, and their subsequent musical portrayals, I consider how rap and singing translate amongst all characters throughout the musical. And so, in this thesis I explore the way rap and singing in *Hamilton* intersect with portrayals of domesticity, sexuality, and class.

In chapter one of this thesis, I begin by examining *Hamilton's* intersection of rapping, singing, and class. A significant focus of this chapter is Aaron Burr's musical setting and

numbers. In this chapter I also analyze the musical depiction of Hamilton's debate with Samuel Seabury in "Farmer Refuted" and briefly discuss Thomas Jefferson as well. Here, I discuss how we hear a difference in power as well as see one through the sung versus rapped performance of the character's lines.

In chapter two, I investigate the various musical and dramatic effects of domesticity on the female as well as several male characters in *Hamilton.* Regarding the women, I examine how Eliza Schuyler and Angelica Schuyler possess little agency to move the plot forward, and rather exist only to bolster the allure of and sympathy for the hero, Alexander Hamilton. I show how a musical celebrated for its progressive qualities continues to reaffirm traditional notions about women. I have selected these three women for this analysis because they 1) are named; 2) have significant "speaking" roles; and 3) have their own musical numbers.[1] Here, I focus on helplessness and domesticity. Both women, in one way or another, engage with their confinement to the domestic sphere and other constraints as women in eighteenth-century American society. Although helplessness and domesticity are not the same thing, in this drama, the two are closely related: the women's domestic responsibilities limit their ability to move freely throughout the world, or at least Hamilton's world of politics and men, all of whom have active musical and dramatic ways shaping (or at least attempting to shape) the world around them. Arguably, women of eighteenth-century America, would have been confined to the domestic sphere, but in a musical largely built around recasting and largely reimagining this history, why are the women still left stagnant?

[1] I should mention that Peggy Schuyler is also present in the musical, but will not be a focus of this thesis because her role is quite minimal.

Eliza's connection to the private sphere is most clear. Every song that features Eliza ties her to conventional roles first as sister, then wife, mother, and finally widow preserving her husband's legacy. I begin with the song "Helpless," which is led by Eliza in Act I, who recounts the evening where she and Alexander met. While Eliza is technically introduced to the audience earlier in the drama, with "The Schuyler Sisters," her perspective, motivations, and feelings are not heard until "Helpless." Thus, the audience only understands Eliza in relation to Alexander. The song "That would be enough" in Act I, furthermore, portrays Eliza's maternal qualities and sets the tone for nearly every scene in which we see her thereafter.

Although Miranda portrays Angelica Schuyler-Church as a witty, intelligent, and independent sister to Eliza with her quickly rapped lyrics in "The Schuyler Sisters," in Act I, she, too, finds find herself helpless with respect to the etiquette of society, social movement at the time, and indeed Alexander Hamilton himself as we will see in an analysis of "Satisfied." Angelica is portrayed as the "strong female character." In "The Schuyler Sisters" in Act I, Angelica leads the ensemble, and comments on how men say that she's "intense or I'm insane" for being well-read and wanting to add women to Declaration of Independence. This positions Angelica as a character meant to resist traditional narrative formulae. In reality, however, she does not. When a closer look is given to her contribution to the plot, Angelica's main role is introducing Eliza to Alexander, and then she is relegated entirely to background.

The latter part of this chapter focuses on several men in *Hamilton,* and how they perform domesticity. Here, I examine how when men such as Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington sing in the musical, it is because they have in some way left the realm of politics and entered the domestic sphere. I discuss how this serves to bolster the men's rhetorical tools, where it largely diminishes women's.

In chapter 3, I explore sexuality in *Hamilton.* The main focus of this chapter is the song "Say No to This," which depicts Hamilton's affair with Maria Reynolds. Here, I explore how Miranda brings the word "helpless" into the drama at this moment in a literal sense with the lyrics Reynolds sings, but also through detailing her abusive with relationship with then-husband, James Reynolds. I will suggest an alternate interpretation of this particular temptress to contrast the conventional "lady-in-red" trope. Here, I also focus significantly on how little narrative agency Maria possesses. I perform a close reading of the text for "Say No to This" and assert that we never actually hear Maria Reynolds's voice, as every utterance of her voice is preceded by "she said…" meaning that her words are mediated through Hamilton's perspective.

This strategy removes Reynold's agency in her own story, reduces here to nothing more than a ventriloquism of the woman she represents. Since the interpretation of this moment in Hamilton's biography represents significant deviations from historical events, I assert that Miranda uses Reynold's character mainly to garner sympathy for Hamilton. While "Say No to This" is the focus of this chapter, I also explore the way almost all of the women in *Hamilton* are tied to a role as sexual object, and also the ways in which women are framed more generally within the musical.

While I do not wish to diminish the various progressive qualities of *Hamilton* through this thesis, especially in the conclusion, I call attention to the ways in which power is enacted through gendered spaces throughout the musical. I discuss how the actual lives of the women in this musical were much more active and meaningful to the founding of this nation than the staged tropes portray. And so, in the conclusion, I revisit Eliza. Her role as the politician's wife, and the hagiography of Alexander Hamilton's story will be the focus here through the number which concludes the entire musical "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who tells your story."

CHAPTER 1

POWER AS IT PERTAINS TO RAP AND SONG

In this first chapter, I explore the means through which rap is the musical language of power in *Hamilton.* I show how those who possessed more power in revolutionary America, namely white, middle-class men, all use rap as their primary musical means. Exploring men's musical expressions of power, and lack of power prepares us to see the absence of power in more feminine realms of domesticity and sexuality discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Rap becomes the vehicle through which these characters change their narratives or drive the plot forward. The musical thereby makes a connection between masculine power and declamatory, speech-like delivery. By contrast, women, effeminate men, and men in domestic spaces perform in lyrical styles.

Aaron Burr, Sir

The second number in *Hamilton* introduces Aaron Burr, and indicates why he doesn't rap quite as much as the other revolutionary men in the story. For the first minute of the song "Aaron Burr, Sir" Hamilton relates how he'd heard of Burr and his accelerated path through school. Finally, we reach the moment that sets up the musical difference between these two when Burr sings (in response to Hamilton's lines which are delivered in a much more declarative manner).

Burr: *Talk less.*

Hamilton: *What?*

Burr: *Smile more*

Hamilton: *Ha.*

Burr: *Don't let them know what you're against or what you're for*

Hamilton: *You can't be serious*

Burr: *You wanna get ahead?*

Hamilton: *Yes.*

Burr: *Fools who run their mouths oft wind up dead…* (enter the "fools" Jon Lawrence, Lafayette, and Mulligan)

Here, Burr delivers his lines through lyrical passages—indeed, much more frequently than any of the other men in the musical, aside from King George III. Although he is constantly seeking power, he is passed over or intentionally blocked by Hamilton in this narrative. Miranda communicates Burr's powerlessness through his singing style. Lyrical singing becomes characterized as alien to the realms of power, as well as disingenuous and even dishonest compared to characters who the "lay it all on the line" in a frank, declamatory style. As a result of this juxtaposition, Hamilton appears more genuine, perhaps to a fault. While these musical distinctions provide a hermeneutic window for interpretation, rap may have been more practical. Hamilton does have, historically, so many words on record. Through rap, Miranda can deliver more words per second than long-breathed melodies.

This division between Burr and especially Hamilton exists throughout the musical. It emblematizes Burr's outsider status, and conveys his doomed quest for power the cements the divide between these two characters. I develop these ideas in more depth in chapter 2, where I discuss men's ties to domesticity. There, I explore Burr's "Wait for It" (Act I) and "The Room Where It Happens" (Act II) lyrical language as another means to express his powerlessness. In "Wait for It," Burr begins by talking about his mistress and familial upbringing, but dramaturgically it functions as Burr's moment to tell the audience who he really is and what he wants. Here, it is clear Burr feels powerless in the face of the death surrounding him, Hamilton's

lack of restraint moving through life, and that ultimately he decides to remain on the outside and wait for his moment. In addition to the powerlessness displayed here, it also shows a calculated self-control that Hamilton may interpret as disingenuous. It is another example of how these two men are set musically due to how they communicate their emotions (or not).

One of the most show-stopper, and Broadway like songs in all of *Hamilton* is "The Room Where It Happens" as the music speed toward the end of Act 2. Indeed, upon multiple viewings and an embarrassing number of listening to this musical, I still find this number the most exciting musically, choreographically, and dramatically. It is the moment in the musical when Burr realizes he is done waiting, a bit tragic that the melody is minor. This communicates that his desires will not be fulfilled—well that, and the singing. There is one moment later when we hear the "Room Where It Happens" motive in major for just a moment as Burr, Madison, and Jefferson confront Hamilton regarding his affair, but the glimpse quickly passes.

This song begins with innocent enough banter between Hamilton and Burr, but it is interrupted when Hamilton, Madison, and Jefferson retreat to talk politics in private. This is the second time in the musical Burr is left out of a meeting with Hamilton, the first concerning Washington in Act 1. Upon being physically barred from this important meeting, Burr begins singing "*No one else was in the room where it happened,"* and what starts as commentary on this moment historically quickly becomes an interrogation. The entire company demands "*What do you want Burr? What do you want"* and as the music clears out, Burr admits to wanting to be in the room where politics and power happen.

The choreography here is reminiscent of a full jazz/Broadway number with the spotlight always on Burr. He covers much of the stage, has a very dramatic moment on top of a table, and the song ends with a dramatic "*Click-boom!"* as the entire stage falls dark but for a light on Burr.

It is such an exciting moment in the musical, but it also communicates that Burr indeed will not ever actually be in the room where it happens. Even when Burr amasses some power, and although loses to Jefferson in the Presidential election of 1800, making him the nation's Vice President, Madison and Jefferson mock him directly vowing to change the law so the runner up is no longer the second in command (which they do).

Musically, it is clear Burr's quest for power is futile because of how Burr sings this whole number. When that is compared with "Eye of the Hurricane" in which Hamilton is cornered by his political enemies who attempt to strip him of power, Hamilton "Writes his way out," which takes on the form of a rapped monologue. For Burr's similar moment, he sings, communicating a musical powerlessness in this drama.

Burr is not consigned only to lyrical singing, however; he does rap when he functions as the narrator. At these times, Burr develops for the audience aspects of Hamilton's life and the forming of this nation. These are also moments where perhaps Burr's true feelings about Hamilton become most apparent. It recalls my discussion of the lines "*Talk less, smile more"* in which a character's most genuine and true self is revealed through more declarative statements. An example of this is Burr's moment as narrator in the introduction to "A Winter's Ball" early in Act I below. It is important to consider though that through most of these narrated moments Burr is functioning as observer, at least momentarily, as opposed to active participant.

How does the bastard orphan son of a whore go on and on,
Grow into more of a phenomenon?
What this obnoxious arrogant loudmouth brother
Be seated at the right hand of the father

The reinforcement here of Hamilton's status at birth, and critique of his character occur before the audience witnesses significant tension between the two, yet these lyrics on telling of Burr's true feelings. I then interpret the fact that they are delivered in a rapped style as more evidence of

that. This language only escalates until the moment Burr decides Hamilton is to blame for his political troubles and inability to acquire power:

How does Hamilton,
An arrogant,
Immigrant, orphan,
Bastard, whoreson,
Somehow endorse
Thomas Jefferson, his enemy,
A man he's despised since the beginning,
Just to keep me from winning?
(Sung) *I wanna be in the room where it happens —*

This song, "Your Obedient Servant," then takes the form of letters between Burr and Hamilton in which Burr sings is perspective on Hamilton's disrespect, with Hamilton rapping in defense. Burr sings until the moment he challenges Hamilton to a duel:

Then Stand, Alexander.
Weehawken. Dawn.
Guns. Drawn.

The above words are stated. They are not rapped, but not sung either.

"Farmer Refuted"

One of the clearest examples of the rap and singing power dichotomy appears in the song "Farmer Refuted" from Act I, in which Hamilton debates with Samuel Seabury, an Anglican rector opposed to the Continental Congress, and who according to biographer Ron Chernow was a man of "massive physique and learned mind….very pompous and wrote prose that bristled with energetic intelligence."[2] Seabury sings in British accent and classical style as he stands on a small box reading his "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress."

[2] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 57.

Hamilton and his friends (Lafayette, Mulligan, Laurens) argue with him as Burr offers to mediate.

This song serves as yet another example of how the music declares whether or not this character has power. Musically, this is one of few "classical" sounding moments in the whole musical. It starts with a string ensemble and then harpsichord performing a minuet. Seabury sings in a style that is much more "classical" in aesthetic with operatic vibrato on longer notes, elongated melodic lines, and crisp British diction. The first time through his speech, Seabury sings alone, with very minor interjections from the cast of "ruffians" already introduced in the music as follows:

Samuel Seabury: *...Heed not the rabble who scream revolution,*
They Have not your interests at heart.

Mulligan: *Oh my god. Tear this dude apart.* (Gesturing to Hamilton)

Seabury: *Chaos and bloodshed are not a solution.*
Don't let them lead you astray
This Congress does not speak for me.

Burr: *Let him be.*

Seabury: *They're playing a dangerous game.*
I pay the King shows you his mercy.
For shame, for shame…

Seabury's second time through the same text is not said so freely. This time, Hamilton speaks at the same time as Seabury, only instead of singing in the style of Seabury, Hamilton raps his lines in a more declarative manner. The word play in this passage is worth noting as we see Hamilton taking the language of Seabury, twisting them to his own uses. Miranda remarks:

> "The fun (and laborious part) of this tune was having Hamilton dismantle Seabury using the same vowels and cadences and talking over him. Heed becomes He'd.

Rabble/Unravel. Heart/*hard* to listen to you, etc. It felt like a kind of super power Hamilton could deploy to impress his friends."[3]

I assert we see much more work being done here though than simply showing off for friends. Throughout this song, we see or, perhaps more importantly, we hear the restructuring of society in America.

In this second iteration of his text, Hamilton speaks directly over Seabury. The counterpoint of their text is quite skillful on Miranda's part. Hamilton delivers, because he is rapping, almost twice as much text as Seabury in the same time musically. The accompaniment changes to support both characters aesthetically, at first at least. In this second verse, string pizzicati support both lines. By the end of this musical "conversation," however, the accompaniment begins to follow Hamilton's syncopated phrasing, abandoning its original lead, Seabury.

By the third time Seabury sings the same text, Hamilton dominates musically and physically. He has pushed Seabury off his soap box prop, shows the ability to understand Seabury's point of you even stronger with a reference to key changes and finally, Seabury doesn't speak his full text. We could make the argument that the audience doesn't need to hear the same text a third time, but the effect is that it makes more space for Hamilton's message.

In this third time through, there is a key change, and subsequent musical joke as Hamilton says "Don't modulate the key then not debate with me!" and then immediately changes the meter from ¾ to 6/8 on the line "Why should a tiny island across the sea regulate the price of tea?" I find this remarkable as we hear a class division between harmony and rhythm with these characters. Classical music has historically favored harmony over rhythm and so Seabury, being

[3] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 49.

associated with the elite, has the ability to alter the key. Hamilton, being an immigrant and of lower-class status, has rhythmic power to alter the meter. Yet, the way Hamilton not only calls attention to the harmonic shift, but excels in it, shows his superiority musically. It's important, too, that it moves from a elite minuet, to 6/8 time, which was associated with lower-class dances.

In addition to the musical superiority displayed by Hamilton, he employs superior rhetorical tools/strategies. Seabury's text in the argument never changes amongst the three repetitions. Whereas Hamilton not only clears a path for his words to be heard musically, but he also develops his arguments. This can be perceived as superior intellect as the repetition of Seabury's text makes him appear static, but Hamilton's lyrics never repeat and there are many more words in the same amount of space. Rhetorically, Hamilton is a more sophisticated orator.

Thus, at first in "Farmer Refuted," the elite have the control, demonstrated through Seabury's dominance of the sonic space lyrically and harmonically. In the second verse, as Hamilton and Seabury deliver their lines simultaneously, we witness a symbolic battle between Americans and the English. In the third verse, Hamilton, and subsequently the lower class he stands for, has taken over. The musical portrayals of class only support what is clearly present in the text. We see Seabury as a British loyalist, while Hamilton calls attention to revolutionary upstarts with lines like "The Have-nots are gonna win this." And so, in less than two minutes, we see a foreshadowing of the entire course of the Revolutionary War, and indeed a restructuring of society.

A Message from the King

In chapter 3, on sexuality, I write extensively on King George III's femininity. There, I discuss his costuming, mannerisms, and song style and assert that they all serve to position the

King as effeminate, if not explicitly homosexual. Some of those cues, particularly his accent, restrained movement, and limited musical material are also signifiers of his class. Other than Seabury discussed above, King George III is the only other character to perform his lines in a British accent. With the King the ties to Britain and royalty/upper class seem obvious. His restrained movements are indicative of this as well as he performs his numbers with impeccable posture, no dancing, and only upper body movement.

His limited musical material, while not necessarily a marker of class, communicates a lack of power. King George has three numbers: "You'll Be Back," "What Comes Next?," and "I Know Him." The first two appear in Act 1 and bookend The Revolutionary War. The third comes in Act 2. These numbers are made of the same musical material in both the melody and the accompaniment; only the lyrics change. Repeated musical material often suggests a lack of growth, or lack of intelligence in a character. Historically, repetitive musical motives are relegated for female characters, but in this musical where we know going in the King does not win, we also know he has no (or limited) power. His lack of music growth reflects this

Thomas Jefferson's Been Off In Paris

For the most part, Thomas Jefferson raps or delivers his lines in a declarative way. He debates with Hamilton in the both cabinet battle numbers. Historically, Jefferson was Hamilton's primary political nemesis. Jefferson's introductory number is a bit peculiar though, and is, on a personal note, my least favorite song in favorite. Appearing as the opening number to Act II, "What'd I miss?," Miranda notes, is in the style of "a sort of Lambert/Hendricks/Ross/Gill Scott-Heron mode—jazzy, proto-hip-hop, but not the boom bap of Hamilton. He has just as much fun

with words, but they swing and they sing."[4] Sonically, it doesn't match with how Jefferson is portrayed in the musical again after this introduction.

"What'd I miss?" consists of two oscillating styles. The first forty-five seconds of this number features Burr's introduction, which explains the time jump between acts, and it sets the stage for the political duel that unfolds in Act II and how Jefferson has been in France serving as the Ambassador to France. After this, the majority of "What'd I Miss?" is in a swing style. It's upbeat, with a walking bass line, and Jefferson even has a cane to dance around with. Miranda attributes the stylistic decision to the age difference between Hamilton and Jefferson, but I hear a bit more than this.[5]

The quick swing has a lightness and frivolity that I do not hear in the music of the other Revolutionaries. This lack of musical weight could be attributed to the fact that Jefferson missed essentially all of gore, pain, and trauma of war. In France during the war, Jefferson was absent during the development of this new language (rap) of the new and younger players (Hamilton) in the colonial political sphere. As a result, Jefferson is painted as an aloof Francophile.

The class divisions here are subtle, but present nonetheless. The way characters can marginalize them, and other musical elements support their distance from the center of the drama. Although Jefferson does not sing in Seabury's almost operatic style, he nonetheless does not "speak" in the speedily rapped lines like the musical's hero, Hamilton —yet. The greater lyricism might be related to the location in which it primarily takes place, Monticello, Jefferson's home. This would tie it to the domestic sphere and the language of *Hamilton*'s women; here,

[4] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 152.
[5] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 152.

however, I find the class components a more compelling and convincing interpretation. By the time we reach the next number in Act II, "Cabinet Battle #1," Jefferson has adjusted to this new musical language and debates Hamilton in a rapped style. Never again does the light-hearted Jefferson return, but the work of that number has been done. Hamilton has the rhetorical ammunition to spar with him verbally and musically later. Indeed, rap is so much the musical language of power here that in Act 2, after the span of songs concerning the domestic sphere, which are primarily sung, "Burn," "Blow Us All Away," "Stay Alive (Reprise)," and finally "It's Quiet Uptown," Jefferson delivers the line "*Can we get back to politics now?"* and the "Election of 1800" begins as musically rapping ensues. This stark transition in tone and musical style reaffirms the musical difference of the powerful and powerless spaces and characters in *Hamilton.*

CHAPTER 2

DOMESTICITY OR SONG CONFINING WOMEN AND HUMANIZING MEN

In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which domesticity acts upon the characters in *Hamilton*. Nearly every female utterance in this drama can be tied back to domesticity, and if not domesticity, then sexuality, which will be examined later in this thesis. This chapter focuses on the constraints of the domestic spheres for women and the way it's a rhetorical strategy to humanize the male characters.

Best of Wives, Best of Women: Eliza

I begin this discussion with Eliza Schuyler-Hamilton, the woman most clearly tied to, and tied down by, the domestic sphere. Eliza is one of only three characters in this musical who does not ever rap. I argue here that Eliza's lyrical lines communicate her role as loyal and dutiful wife.

Even before the audience "meets" Eliza officially, her character is attached to domesticity in the first song of the musical, "Alexander Hamilton." In this number, individuals cast members have verses describing Alexander Hamilton's childhood in the style of Sondheim's prologue in *Sweeney Todd*.[6] Many of lyrics here focus on Hamilton's bootstrap narrative: his work ethic and the many obstacles he has overcome. All of the lyrics focus on Hamilton's intelligence and ambition, are delivered by the men the audience will soon know as the Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Hercules Mulligan/James Madison.

[6] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 16.

Indeed, the lyrics John Laurens/Philip Hamilton deliver emblematize Hamilton's characterization:

The ten-dollar Founding Father without a father
Got a lot farther by working a lot harder
By being a lot smarter
Ny being a self-starter
By fourteen, they place him in charge of a trading charter

There is one verse here sung by a woman: the woman who we would later know as Hamilton's wife and the mother to his children, Eliza. Consider the following verse:

When he was ten, his father split, full of it, debt ridden,
Two years later, see Alex and his mother bed-ridden,
Half-dead sittin' in their own sick, the scent thick

Full Company (except Hamilton)(Whispering): *And Alex got better, but his mother went quick*

In this verse, explicitly about the death of Hamilton's mother, and not his many achievements or political pursuits, we not only enter the domestic sphere, but we are also seeing Hamilton in a weakened state – deathly sick. This is the only verse sung by a woman in the opening number, and it draws a connection between Eliza, domesticity, and feminine frailty.

Eliza's main strength in the show is her emotional support for Hamilton. Likewise, her music offers Hamilton a foundation on which to build his rhetorical flair displays strength in the form of being an emotional support and a pillar of stability in Hamilton's tumultuous life of politics. One such interpretation of why Eliza never raps appears on the media platform for annotating popular music lyrics, Genuis. The comment was in reference to Eliza's beat boxing, which occurs in "Take a Break," but appeared in an annotation by user rckstar123 for "Satisfied." The comment reads "…For instance, though Eliza doesn't rap, she does beatbox. And why do people beatbox? Well, sometimes they do it just for fun, but often people beatbox to provide a beat for someone else to rap over. That's how Eliza is smart. She's emotionally

intelligent and good at supporting other people."[7] This is an interesting way to rationalize Eliza's lack of rapping, and offers evidence that the feminine ideal remains invested in women's domesticity. After all, if we say that Eliza is brilliant for being able to support Alexander, then we never have to criticize how little power she actually has in the narrative.

Her relative powerlessness in *Hamilton* brings me now to a discussion of Eliza's first feature number in the musical, "Helpless." Theater Scholar, Stacy Wolf, has written at length about *Hamilton's* women, and so the following discussion of domesticity will build upon her work with the intent of enriching the feminist critique of *Hamilton.* As Wolf observes, "'Helpless' functions as Eliza's 'I Am/I Want' song, as she announces herself…and sets the scene."[8] Wolf uses the following lyrics to illustrate this:

> *I have never been the type to try and grab the spot light*
> *We were at a revel with some rebels on a hot night,*
> *Laughin' at my sister, as she's dazzling the room.*
> *Then you walked in and my heart went "Boom!"*

More than that, it is also the meet-cute for Alexander and Eliza. In this song, Eliza is portrayed as lovesick and passive, particularly the following:

> *I'm so into you*
> *I am so into you*
>
> *I know, I'm down for the count*
> *And I'm drownin' in 'em*

Compared to the quick-witted lines of Angelica, Eliza's come across as simple and almost naïve.

Chernow's description of Eliza is largely complimentary "Short and pretty, she was utterly devoid of conceit and was to prove an ideal companion for Hamilton, lending a strong

---

[7] Rckstar123, "Satisfied," Genius, September 25, 2015, , accessed April 03, 2019, https://genius.com/7917264.
[8] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 171, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.

home foundation to his turbulent life." He also notes that "her spelling was poor, and (how) she didn't write with the fluency of the other Schuylers."[9] Understanding that Chernow's biography is the inspiration for the characters in *Hamilton*, it then seems logical the way Miranda has written Eliza, in a sense, with slower lines and supportive musical roles like the beat boxing example above.

This places Eliza within a lineage of so many other leading ladies in musical theater. Wolf remarks of musical heroines can represent the "quintessentially heterosexual female: passive, contained, domestic—the cult of true womanhood."[10] Historian Barbara Welters expands on the nineteenth-century feminine ideal in "which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society…divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."[11] Welters specifies how this notion of womanhood laid out the ideal role for woman as a mother, daughter, sister, or wife.[12] These nineteenth-century notions of womanhood would become clearer over the course of Eliza's lifetime (years). Indeed, Eliza lives up to this cultural ideal in the musical since she appears only as dutiful daughter and sister, then wife and mother. Her ties to domesticity are strong and constant.

The style of "Helpless" is in the tradition of an R&B duet, where "a sweet girl sings about the boy she loves, and the rough-around-the-edges boy pops up to rap his reply."[13] Particularly interesting is the dialogue when Hamilton and Eliza meet. The audience will hear it

---

[9] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 130-31.
[10] Stacy Ellen Wolf, *A Problem like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American* Musical (Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2007), 140.
[11] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly*, 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 152.
[12] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 152.
[13] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 69.

twice: once here from Eliza's point of view, and then again from Angelica's perspective in "Satisfied."

Hamilton: *Where are you taking me?*

Angelica: *I'm about to change your life.*
Hamilton: *Then by all means, lead the way.*
Eliza: *Elizabeth Schuyler. It's a pleasure to meet you.*
Hamilton: *Schuyler?*
Angelica: *My Sister.*
Eliza: *Thank you for all your service.*
Hamilton: *If it takes fighting a war for us to meet, it will have been worth it.*
Angelica: *I'll leave you to it.*

Because of the musical connections, I discuss these songs in tandem. Here begins Eliza's narrative as dutiful wife to which Angelica will be juxtaposed, and Angelica's as muse, socially aware feminist, and destiny to not do much for the story is cemented. I will first compare the lyrics with Angelica's perspective put in, and then explore the way her musical accompaniment illuminates her path further.

Satisfied?

Miranda says that "in writing Angelica Schuyler, I decided, she's actually the smartest character in the show. So she has the most complicated and intricate raps, but she also sings these arias because her brain just literally works faster than everybody else's."[14] We see this perspective on Angelica most clearly in "Satisfied." Upon meeting Hamilton, and over the course of just 32 seconds on the cast album recording, Angelica raps the following:

> *So, so so—*
> *So this is what it feels like to match wits*
> *With someone at your level! What the hell is the catch?*

[14] "Lin-Manuel Miranda on Dirty Politics and the Founding Fathers," interview by Kerrie Hillman, WNYC Studios, January 29, 2016, , accessed April 3, 2019, https://www.wnyc.org/story/lin-manuel-miranda-on-dirty-politics-and-the-founding-fathers/.

The feeling of freedom, of seeing the light,
It's Ben Franklin with a key and a kite!
You see it, right?

The conversation lasted two minutes, maybe three minutes
Ev'rything we say in total agreement, it's
A dream and it's a bit of a dance,
A bit of a posture, it's a bit of stance.
He's a bit of a flirt, but I'm 'a give it a chance.
I asked about his family, did you see his answer?
His hands started fidgeting, he looked askance
He's penniless, he's flying by the seat of his pants

Handsome and boy does he know it!
Peach fuzz, and he can't even grow it!
I wanna take him far away from this place,
Then I turn and see my sister's face and she is…

This is undoubtedly a remarkable rap performance. It is at this point that "Helpless" reenters musically with Eliza's repetition of the word and interjections from Angelica as she then realizes "*Three fundamental truths at the exact same time."* These three truths, play through the meet-cute scene of Eliza and Hamilton once more. In the first, she acknowledges her duty to marry for economic means in "*I'm a girl in a world in which my only job is to marry rich…*" In the second, Angelica calls attention to that class/status elevation a relationship with her would provide Hamilton by rapping "*He's after me cuz I'm a Schuyler sister./That elevates his status I'd/have to be naïve to set that aside…"* And finally in the third truth, Angelica realizes how her love for and investment in her sister's happiness is more important than her own feelings. She then decides to introduce them to each other. What Angelica is essentially discussing here is coverture, or the legal status women under their husband's father's authority.

In *Historians on Hamilton* Catherine Allgor asserts coverture is fundamental to an understanding of revolutionary times in this country and expresses a disappointment in the missed opportunity for *Hamilton* to give "coverture its name and making it part of every

American's political vocabulary."[15] While the term "coverture" is new to even me, I have to admit I feel similarly in regard not just to this concept, but to the missed opportunities to be critical of Angelica's place in the world. It leaves me wondering if this is the kind of revelation Angelica was looking for her lines "*You want a revolution, I want a revaluation!"* from her introductory number "The Schuyler Sisters."

A feminist reading of this moment suggests that there is power in understanding the structure of society and how one fits within it. The skill alone required of the performer to deliver these lines attests to that, but ultimately Angelica is helpless in the face of these systemic barriers and the constraints of domesticity to actually affect her own narrative. Also important to mention is that this rap, this display of virtuosity and wit, is an internalized dialogue. The result is that Angelica is not able to put these skills and her intellectual prowess on public display the way the men surrounding her, namely Hamilton, do. She is instead, confined. Miranda illustrates this by admitting that "Angelica is a world class intellect in world that does not allow her to flex it."[16]

Musically, this can be heard as well. Angelica's "satisfied" theme, first heard in the piano, accompanies her through most of this song, and returns again later in Act II in the song "Take a Break." This theme is cyclical. It is an eight measure 8th note-based motive that rises and falls for the first seven measures, with an undulating bass note alternating between whole steps.

---

[15] Catherine Allgor, ""Remember . . . I'm Your Man" Masculinity, Marriage, and Gender in Hamilton" Excerpt From *Historians on Hamilton* Renee C. Romano & Claire Bond Potter in *Historians on Hamilton*: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 100.

[16] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 83.

It gets sort of stuck in a loop before it's able to start over and fall back into the pattern (see Figure 1). The rhythmic pattern changes from groupings of four notes to groupings of three.

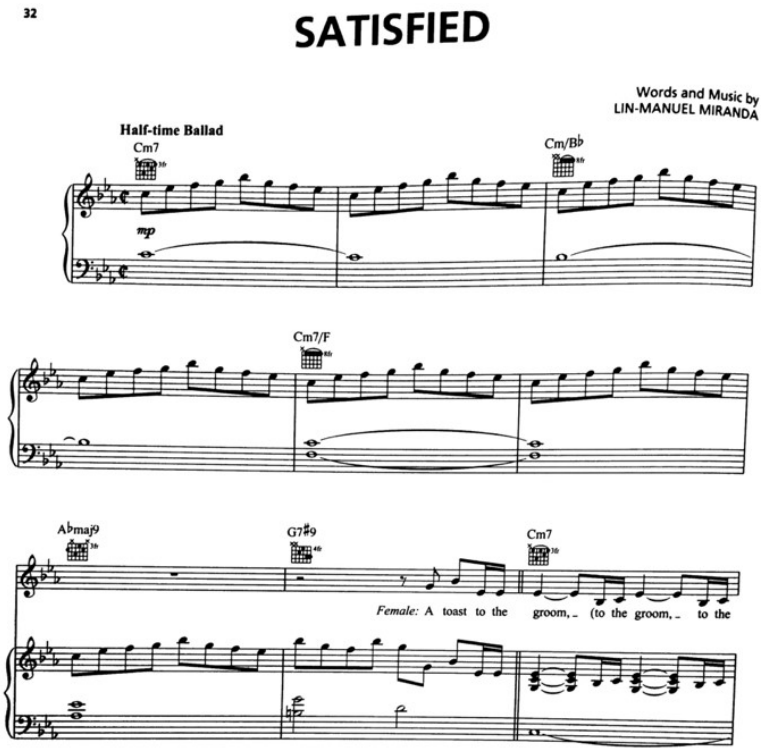

Figure 1: "Satisfied"[17]

If all of the discourse around Angelica being the smartest is true, she would be the most likely to break society's norms. However, this musical motive shows the will ultimately find herself unable to. The last measure of the phrase, with the change to the pattern I hear as Angelica trying to assert herself (the change from groupings of four to three), but cannot, and so and falls back into the pattern.

In addition to her virtuosic display in "Satisfied," Angelica raps in her introductory song "The Schuyler Sisters." Here, she is also pushing against the constraints of society. Consider the

[17] Lin-Manuel Miranda, *The Hamilton Mixtape* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2015).

following repeated lyric from in response to an unwanted romantic advance from Aaron Burr that most clear demonstrates this:

I've been reading Common Sense by Thomas Paine.
So men say that I'm intense or I'm insane.
You want a revolution? I want a revelation
So listen to my declaration:
"We hold these truths to be self-evident
That all men are created equal"
And when I meet Thomas Jefferson,
I'm 'a compel him to include women in the sequel! (Work!)

Here, we see a well-read woman who is outspoken about the inequality between men and women in the language of one of our country's most cherished documents. I can't help but wonder if this is more a lyric for the musical's audiences of today as opposed to historical representation of Angelica Schuyler's ideals. Although repeated many times, these lyrics comprise Angelica's only rap; all of her other utterances are sung. This piece nevertheless positions Angelica as the leader, most independent, and attractive of the Schuyler sisters.

After "Satisfied" in the musical, we barely hear from Angelica again, and she never again raps or shows her remarkable wit. She is married off in the finale of Act I, and she then makes a brief appearance in Act II, which I will examine shortly. Largely she has this forceful introduction, but thereafter becomes a minor character. Wolf argues that Angelica

> "plays the role of the muse, the supportive sister, the brainy equal of Hamilton who takes on no overt role in the country's formation. Though her intellectual prowess confounds stereotypes of women of colour, her helping role reinforces them. Angelica appears as a remarkable, powerful and potentially ground-breaking character but ultimately occupies a familiar gender stereotype."

I am quite critical of Miranda's representation of women generally. He works hard to retell the stories of our founding fathers with energy and motion. By contrast, it is disappointing to have

this founding mother and her significant friendships with the founding fathers pushed aside. Indeed, historically, Angelica did meet Thomas Jefferson, in France no less, she was one of Hamilton's confidants, and, according to Chernow, she was a "muse to some of the smartest politicians of her day, including Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and most of all, Hamilton."[18] Rather than being characterized as an important member of revolutionary society, Miranda, for lack of better phrase, sells Angelica short. I find myself wondering why, if Miranda found her so brilliant, she didn't receive more stage time and influence in the narrative, and in the musical is given even less credit than her historical counterpart.

One final piece of this dramaturgical moment in the musical I have yet to see explored thoroughly appears in the manner in which this whole scene unfolds. Leading seamlessly into "Helpless" and then "Satisfied" is "A Winter's Ball" led by Burr. It functions as a narrated moment, where Burr again sets the scene for the upcoming drama. But how is this love story framed? Consider the lyrics "*Now Hamilton's skill with the quill is undeniable/But what do we have in common?/We're reliable with the Ladies!"* which go on to talk about deflowering and "*if you could marry a sister, you're rich, son."* to which Hamilton responds "*Is it a question of if, Burr, or which one?"* as the Schuyler sisters enter. This kind of arranged and overt sexual aggression may be chalked up to "locker room talk," but I find it highly problematic in positioning the women as mere sexual objects (which I discuss more thoroughly in the chapter on sexuality), and their genuine emotional expressions that follow as trivial and manipulated.

[18] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 133.

Run Away With Us for the Summer

Examining Eliza more thoroughly and her ties to the domestic sphere is the course at this juncture. Musically, there is not much to say about "That Would Be Enough" as it pertains to Eliza. It appears about mid-way through Act One, and is domestic check-in with Hamilton. Eliza is pregnant with their first child and sweetly, passively, earnestly, sings to Hamilton about how she hopes that she and their growing family could be enough to satisfy Hamilton. It is an intimate moment in this rather high energy drama.

"Take A Break" (Act II) provides the first domestic check-in with Alexander since the birth of his son in Act I. It comes after the introduction of a new character, Thomas Jefferson (portrayed by the same actor as the Marquis Lafayette from Act II), and a cabinet battle mediated by Washington in which Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton perform a rap battle over Hamilton's debt plan. The song begins with Eliza giving a piano lesson to her son, Phillip, and then becomes an exchange of letters between Alexander and Angelica. On the surface, this song seems innocent, but goes far in developing the characters. Throughout "Take a Break," Miranda develops how little Eliza, and to a lesser extent, Angelica understand the scope of Hamilton's "important" the work; it solidifies the gulf between male and female ambitions. It's this moment that we realize Angelica (or any woman) isn't ever going to affect the plot. She is powerless to change the mind of this man.

Miranda describes this song as a chance to "let us know that Angelica and Hamilton are still letter-flirting, and see that Hamilton's work is driving him to distraction."[19] During this letter exchange Angelica's "Satisfied" motive returns, now orchestrated on harp, but the pattern

[19] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 83.

remains. The letter exchange focuses on Hamilton's political tensions. Angelica offers encouragement and swoons over comma placement. The musical motive here is a stinging reminder that the two will never be satisfied. Eliza interrupts this floating letter exchange, when she chastens her husband to spend some time with their son:

Eliza: *Take a break*

Alexander: *I am on my way*

Eliza: *There's a little surprise before supper and it cannot wait*

Alexander: *I'll be there in just a minute, save my plate*

Eliza: *Alexander*

Alexander: *(okay, okay)*
Eliza: *Your son is nine years old today*
He has something he'd like to say
He's been practicing all day
Philip, take it away

Philip (rapped with Eliza beat boxing): *Daddy, daddy, look*
My name is Philip
I am a poet, I wrote this poem just to show it
And I just turned nine
You can write rhymes but you can't write mine
I practice French and play piano with my mother
I have a sister, but I want a little brother

Alexander: *okay*

Philip:*My daddy's trying to start America's bank*
Un deux trois quatre cinq

Alexander: *Bravo!*

Even though we are firmly in the domestic sphere here, Hamilton is not singing. Eliza delivers lyrical lines with precise pitch, whereas Hamilton's fall somewhere in between the realm of speaking and singing. This could be read as Hamilton's divided focus; even when home he is still preoccupied with the world of governing and power.

However, in the lyrics above, there are few things of note happening. I wish to observe the way in which Philip, Alexander's first-born son, delivers his lines in rap. Even as a 9 year-old boy, Philip already has access to the musical means of power. But that is a side note to the rest of the work being done in this song. In this song, Eliza, later joined by Angelica, is urging her husband to take a break from work and spend time with his family. Here, Alexander, claims he can't due to all of the work he has to do. So we have yet another division of female and male spaces.

The implication here is that women simply don't understand the political work he has to complete. This song positions both Eliza and Angelica as passive and ties them to leisure as by the end of the song Angelica has indeed arrived back in America from England and the two beg him to join them on a trip out of town. It positions them both, but especially Eliza, as nags. Wolf explains that "these dynamics are overshadowed by the larger (masculine, public and historical) subject of the show: politics. Whatever his domestic (and later, marital) failings, Hamilton rises up from nothing and builds America, the noblest job of all. Eliza, then, embodies the all-too-familiar and unfortunate role of the nagging wife."[20] This song also positions Eliza and Angelica as practically regressive, calling Alexander back into the realm of the maternal. and Alexander as active, which are tropes about men and women going back to the one-sex model of reproduction.

Knowing that the Hamilton's affair is just around the corner, the women in some interpretations is then to blame for that as well. That is, the women insisted that Hamilton take the trip, and the affair was an unfortunate consequence. Indeed, this is the implication in Burr's introduction to the scene: "Someone under stress meets someone lookin' pretty…and

[20] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 175, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.

Alexander's by himself/I'll let him tell it." The focus of "And Alexander's by himself" stands out. This is particularly troubling as historically, the affair began while Eliza was home.[21] It leaves me wondering why these details were omitted.

Eliza Erases Herself from the Narrative

I turn now to Eliza's solo number in Act 2, "Burn." This song is a lament, a genre of song historically relegated for beautiful women in mourning to perform, and this one is no exception. It comes just after the Hamilton publishes *The Reynold's Pamphlet*, in which he publicly admits to and details his affair with Mariah Reynolds. Miranda admits that "Eliza's response is lost to time" and that this song constitutes immense creative freedom on his end.[22] In this song, Eliza enters under soft blue lighting in a flowing white gown that Wolf claims "makes her look vulnerable and open," carrying letters and a lantern.[23] On stage the only prop is a stone bench.

The musical transition to "Burn" is quite subtle. Triplets enter at the end of the bombastic and busy "Reynold's Pamphlet" that elide seamlessly into "Burn." "Burn" is the only number in which no man is physically on stage. As the triplet figure continues in the harp at the beginning of this song, a bass line enters in the piano that replicates the introduction to "Alexander Hamilton." Hamilton's presence thereby permeates this moment. As Eliza is reeling from the adultery, Hamilton lingers. Much as Angelica never again raps after "Satisfied," Eliza never again sings a solo upbeat number after "Helpless." Female characters' musical arcs imitate their

---

[21] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 364.
[22] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 238.
[23] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 175, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.

narrative arcs: they become less important as the story goes on, particularly after marriage. They seem to lose their energy, and indeed their individuality upon entering holy matrimony.

Later adaptations of *Hamilton*'s music nuance these characters. Since the musical's opening, a mixtape has been dropped (which was the original concept of the story), as well as other interpretations of many of the numbers. One such example is "First Burn" which is an earlier draft of "Burn" performed by various actresses who have played Eliza on stage in the many productions. In this version of "Burn," Eliza, or should I say the Elizas, are much more aggressive in their singing styles and there are additional lyrics placing more blame on Hamilton. In "Burn" from the staged production, Eliza is contained: she is a beautiful, sad woman, who never resorts to rage. "First Burn," however, adds additional verses that complicate this vision of Eliza. Here is a side by side comparison:

First Burn

I saved every letter you wrote me
From the moment I saw you
I knew you were mine
You said you were mine
I thought you were mine

Do you know what Angelica said
When I told her what you'd done?
She said
"You have married an Icarus
He has flown too close to the sun"

Don't take another step in my direction
I can't be trusted around you
Don't think you can talk your way
Into my arms, into my arms

I'm burning the letters you wrote me
You can stand over there if you want
I don't know who you are
I have so much to learn

I'm re-reading your letters
And watching them burn (burn)
I'm watching them burn (burn)

You published the letters she wrote to you
You told the whole world
How you brought this girl into our bed
In clearing your name, you have ruined our lives

Heaven forbid someone whisper
"He's part of some scheme"
Your enemy whispers
So you have to scream
I know about whispers
I see how you look at my sister

Don't
I'm not naive
I have seen women around you

Don't
Think I don't see
How they fall for your charms
All your charms

I'm erasing myself from the narrative
Let future historians wonder how Eliza reacted
When you broke her heart
You have thrown it all away
Stand back, watch it burn
Just watch it all burn

And when the time comes
Explain to the children
The pain and embarrassment
You put their mother through
When will you learn
That they are your legacy?
We are your legacy
If you thought you were mine (mine, mine)

Don't!
Burn

I saved every letter you wrote me
From the moment I read them
I knew you were mine
You said you were mine
I thought you were mine

Do you know what Angelica said
when we saw your first letter arrive?
She said, "Be careful with that one, love,
he will do what it takes to survive."

You and your words flooded my senses
Your sentences left me defenseless
You built me palaces out of paragraphs
You built cathedrals

I'm re-reading the letters you wrote me
I'm searching and scanning for answers in every line
For some kind of sign
And when you were mine
The world seemed to burn

Burn…

You published the letters she wrote you
You told the whole world
How you brought this girl into our bed
In clearing your name
You have ruined our lives

Do you know what Angelica said
when she read what you'd done?
She said, "You've married an Icarus,
he's flown too close to the sun."

You and your words obsessed with your legacy
Your sentences border on senseless
And you are paranoid in every paragraph
How they perceive you
You, you, you!

I'm erasing myself from the narrative
Let future historians wonder how Eliza
Reacted when you broke her heart

You have torn it all apart
I'm watching it burn
Watching it burn

The world has no right to my heart
The world has no place in our bed
They don't get to know what I said
I'm burning the memories
Burning the letters that might have redeemed you

You forfeit all rights to my heart
You forfeit the place in our bed
You'll sleep in your office instead
With only the memories of when you were mine

I hope that you burn...

In "First Burn" Eliza sings lines with more agency that even border on aggression than in the version that made it to the stage. Miranda has admitted how his portrayal of this scene is entirely fictitious, so it leaves me wondering why if, as the originator of this song, and already making so many changes to the character, or additions from her historical self, why not do so with the most energy?[24] But let's talk about that historical notion for just a moment.

In both versions, Eliza sings about Icarus flying too close to the sun. This comes directly from a letter Chernow references in the biography from Angelica to Eliza. It reads

> "…so merit, virtue, and talents, must have enemies and are always exposed to envy so that, my Eliza, you see the penalties attending the position of so amiable a man. All of

[24] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 238.

this you would not have suffered if you had married into a family less near the sun. But then [you would've missed] the pride, the pleasure, the nameless satisfactions."[25]

Here we see, contrary to how the line comes off as criticism of Hamilton in the musical, in the source material, Angelica is implying instead that this "nearness to the sun" is a positive, and indeed Chernow suggests that Eliza was willing to accept being "abundantly compensated by his (Hamilton's) love, intelligence, and charm" judging by her actions later in life.[26] However, a doting sister in-law and wife in complete acceptance of adultery may not fall well with twenty-first century audiences, hence the condemnation of the affair in "Burn," albeit a cooler version than Miranda originally conceived.

The specific lines omitted for the stage version that speak to this "cooling off" are

Don't take another step in my direction
I can't be trusted around you
Don't think you can talk your way
Into my arms, into my arms

Here, with use of the word "Don't," Eliza employs much more action than in the original. She is aware of Hamilton's way with words, and refuses to give him the opportunity to use his wits to defend himself in this. Another moment is:

Heaven forbid someone whisper
"He's part of some scheme"
Your enemy whispers
So you have to scream
I know about whispers
I see how you look at my sister
Don't
I'm not naive
I have seen women around you
Don't
Think I don't see
How they fall for your charms
All your charms

---

[25] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 543.
[26] Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 543-44.

The beginning of this verse was essentially streamlined in the stage version to *"And you are paranoid in every paragraph how they perceive you"* with the lines about a rumored romance between Angelica and Hamilton omitted entirely. What I find most disappointing about the loss of this verse is the omission of "I'm not naïve" because so much of the construction of her persona, especially in Act I, is built upon her naivety and indeed purity. It suggests an intelligence and awareness of the world that throughout the course of the musical, the audience never sees in Eliza. The final verse omitted is:

And when the time comes
Explain to the children
The pain and embarrassment
You put their mother through
When will you learn
That they are your legacy?
We are your legacy
If you thought you were mine (mine, mine) Don't

This last verse is what I find the most compelling though as Eliza is indeed Hamilton's legacy. She is the one who, after Hamilton's death preserves his letters, and tells his story in "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story." This kind of makes it into the staged version with the reference to historians?, but I appreciate the directness here in "First Burn" much more.

Domestic Life Was Never Quite My Style

The effect of the domestic sphere on the men in *Hamilton* is quite different. Whereas the women are almost always singing, as they're almost always tied to domesticity, for the men it becomes a rhetorical strategy, one that humanizes them or at least garners sympathy from audience members looking for a break from the political mayhem swirling around so much of this musical. In this section, I briefly call attention to the numbers "Wait For It," "Dear Theodosia," "History Has Its Eyes On You," "One Last Time," and "It's Quiet Uptown" and

point to the ways in which men's singing in these numbers reflects their departure from the public sphere in that moment.

I mentioned previously how rap is the musical language of power in *Hamilton*. This then positions more lyrical utterances of text, such as singing, as lacking power. So what to do with a character like Aaron Burr, who does a fair amount of both singing and rapping? First of all he's a man, and just by being male, he has some power. Even James Reynolds, who is portrayed somewhat comically with an oversized bow tie and skewed hat, raps, I assert because he's male (and in this moment is blackmailing Alexander and has power over his wife, Maria). But, Aaron Burr: As the narrator, he always speaks in a declarative manner (rap), but the numbers in the musical which feature him, are more sung in style.

In "Wait for It," Burr begins by singing about his romance with Theodosia Bartow Prevost, who at the time was married to a British officer. Being that this is romantic and sexual affair, it is tied closely to domesticity, and is therefore appropriate for Burr to be singing. The song then travels through Burr discussing his familial background (domestic), and feelings of helplessness in the face of the death surrounding him. I assert here that this powerlessness Burr's admitted weakness here is perhaps another reason he sings. He is struggling to find control, and the song ends with Burr expressing jealousy over Alexander's outgoing and ambitious demeanor. In this song Burr is expressing wanting Theodosia, wanting to be like Hamilton, wanting power, but feeling the need to wait until the time is right. He isn't the overconfident natural leader like the musical's protagonist, and what's worse he *wants* to be that way, but isn't. He is lusting after these things, but doesn't have them. We see this musically through the fact that in this moment when he's putting all of this desire on display, he sings it.

"Dear Theodosia" is a duet between Burr and Hamilton, in which they sing about being new fathers. It is a somewhat low-energy moment in *Hamilton*. It's one of the few moments when the audience (and most of the cast) get a chance to breathe, aside from Eliza's numbers. While this is a duet with Hamilton and Burr, the two never address each other on stage. They are each by a single chair and until a square shaped spot light. So instead of a traditional duet where characters come together, it is a moment where we see both characters reflecting on their new roles as fathers. It is a fairly quiet and lyrical song with both men singing and very little choreography.

As I began seeing the connection in *Hamilton* between the powerful/powerless and the way characters rap/sing, this song particularly strikes me in the lyrics that both Hamilton and Burr sing at different moments:

Domestic life was never quite my style
When you smile
It knocks me out, I fall apart
And I thought I was so smart

It is clear this song takes place in the domestic sphere, pedantically so. But that's not the exact thing I'd like to investigate here. What I'm interested in exploring is how that verse adds "and I thought I was so smart." I understand that this could be recognizing the surprise that both men feel at their own attachment to their children, but it also positions the domestic life as unintellectual and separate from their other realm.

I also think it is important to consider the work this song is doing for Alexander Hamilton, and how we would be much less interested in hearing Eliza singing the same song. Think of the sympathy gained for this character simply waxing lyrical about being a new father. Never mind the fact that the very next moment in the musical is about Alexander's intense obsession with work and writing in the finale of Act I, "Non-Stop." After this moment, Hamilton

does not engage fatherhood like this again. Why? There is evidence that he was very invested in the health of his children, but they get very little mention and only one of his eight children is ever named. Maybe more important than the "why" is the "what implications does this have?" One. Do we really view Hamilton as a caring father, or does this moment just function as a palate cleanser to the action-packed numbers on politics and power?

Let Me Tell You What I Wish I'd Known

George Washington primarily delivers his lines in a declarative, or rapped manner throughout *Hamilton*. There are two exceptions this: "History Has Its Eyes On You" from Act 1, and "One Last Time" from Act 2. In "History Has It's Eyes On You", Washington is singing to Hamilton in a very paternal way. Throughout the musical, Washington often refers to Hamilton as "son," which at one particular moment creates tension between the two, but is generally an apt portrayal of the mentor/mentee relationship. This aspect between the two men is shaped very strongly in both the musical and biography. The moment of this song also occurs while Hamilton has temporarily left Washington as aide de camp, and so is at home. I believe this weakened state of Washington (begging Hamilton to come back for the Battle of Yorktown), in conjunction with Hamilton's location at home and the paternal relationship Washington had with him place this song within the domestic sphere.

"One Last Time" essentially functions as, and has excerpts from, Washington's farewell address. It is a beautiful number that begins with more conversational/rapped dialogue that transitions to Washington singing about going home to Virginia. There is even a clever choreographed and written moment alluding? to Hamilton's ghostwriting of the address. Dramatically though, Washington is leaving office, and henceforth the musical, to enter the

domestic sphere of retirement. Therefore, this non-rapped song for Washington still fits with the rap is power idea as Washington is giving up, and leaving is position of power as President.

In Which Hamilton Sings for Forgiveness

Discussing "It's Quiet Uptown" is tricky. Throughout *Hamilton*, Burr delivers the bulk of the narration. As the musical jumps through time, Burr updates the audience on where and when the next scene is taking place or all of the things Hamilton has been doing since they last saw him. There is one moment though, where the narration is performed by Angelica, in "It's Quiet Uptown. Here, the Hamiltons are reeling in the wake of the death of their first born, Philip, who died in a duel.

Musically, it begins with a simple, repeating piano motive. Then Angelica begins the narration explaining the emotional state of the couple on center stage (Hamilton and Eliza) and that they have now moved "up town." This narration is unsurprisingly lyrical. For this narration, Angelica is staged in the top left corner, on the upper level/balcony. Her removal from the center stage performance area, I believe shows her role here as narrator as opposed to participant. It would be difficult, of course, to have the man who eventually kills Hamilton in a duel narrate the moment in which he and Eliza are dealing with the loss of their son in the same manner. I point to this change in narration not to villainize the choice, but only to illuminate one more way in which lyrical singing and women are attached to domesticity.

Earlier in this chapter I very briefly talked about Eliza's first solo number "That Would Be Enough" and mentioned that it did not have all that much new to contribute in the discussion on Eliza and domesticity. The same is not true for its melodic and close lyric reprisal by Hamilton in "It's Quiet Uptown." Compare the lyrics as they appeared both times:

Eliza in “That Would Be Enough:”

Look at where you are.
Look at where you started.
The fact that you’re alive is a miracle.
Just stay alive, that would be enough.

And if this child
Shares a fraction of your smile
Or a fragment of your mind, look out, world!
That would be enough.

I don’t pretend to know
The challenges you’re facing,
The worlds you keep erasing and creating in your mind.

But I’m not afraid
I know who I married.
So long as you come home at the end of the day
That would be enough.

Hamilton in “It’s Quiet Uptown:”

Look at where we are.
Look at where we started.
I know I don’t deserve you, Eliza.
But hear me out, that would be enough.
If I could spare his life
If I could trade his life for mine,
He’d be standing here right now
And you would smile, and that would be enough.

I don’t pretend to know
The challenges we’re facing.
I know there’s no replacing what we’ve lost and you need time.

But I’m not afraid.
I know who I married.
Just let me stay here by your side,
That would be enough

The parallels of both the song form and lyrics here are quite compelling in a very emotional moment of this musical. And since “Dear Theodosia” in Act I, this is the first time we hear

Hamilton sing significantly as a solo. I believe this moment illustrates yet again how the same melody, lyrics, and message do more positive work for men than the women delivering almost the same lines. When Eliza performs this melody in Act I, she is performing a role we're all too familiar with. It almost goes by without notice. But in this moment, nearly an hour later, with Hamilton performing it, the audience (myself included on the first few viewings) is in tears.

That isn't to say this song doesn't do any work for Eliza either. In the last verse of this song, Angelica, who is functioning as the narrator sings the lines "*They are standing in the garden, Alexander by Eliza's side. She takes his hand"* Eliza takes Hamilton's hand and then quietly sings the phrase "*It's quiet uptown.*" The full company (except for Hamilton and Eliza) then sing a cappella "*Forgiveness. Can you Imagine?"* and go through the chorus on final time. In this country's history, we have more examples of this narrative arc for women than I am comfortable to admit. The first that I was aware of growing up in the 90s was between President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. Sady Doyle discusses this affair in her feminist work, *Trainwreck*.[27] In this moment, by singing one line, Eliza is confirmed again as the dutiful wife standing by her husband and even forgiving him for past wrong doings.

[27] Sady Doyle, *Trainwreck: The Women We Love to Hate, Mock, and Fear - and Why* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2017), 194-204.

CHAPTER 3

SEXUALITY, OR HOW WOMEN AND A KING GAIN ENTRY INTO HAMILTON'S WORLD OF POLITICS

Thus far in this thesis, I've written quite a bit about how when the men sing more lyrically, they are leaving the realm of power and/or entering it: Eliza Hamilton, King George III of Great Britain, and Maria Reynolds. I argue here that this musically signifies these characters are never in power or perhaps more appropriately, never in control of their own narratives. It is also probably no surprise that these characters are in some ways the most effeminate of the musical as well.

To Remind You of My Love Da Da Da Da Da

I begin with the effeminacy of King George III. Musically, his songs are in the pop/alternative rock (very light rock) genre, akin to a Jason Mraz love song. Indeed, his first appearance on stage is in the song, "You'll Be Back," which sounds remarkably like Mraz's song "Lucky," featuring Colbie Caillat. According to *Hamilton's* orchestrator, Alex Lacamoire, the style is reminiscent of the 1960s British Invasion in pop music.[28] "You'll Be Back" functions as a break up song from King George to the colonists.

If the plucky performance of this character wasn't enough, it's almost as if the music mocks him in his message. If rap is the language of power in *Hamilton*, then musically we hear that the King has none. He sings all of his lines with a heavy British accent, which also serves to alienate him in a story of Revolutionary American politics. So while he does indeed conduct

[28] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 53.

many gruesome wars historically, he is not cast as a musical threat. In fact, as he is portrayed as effeminate so dramatically, it would be challenging to take his threats seriously. In addition to the sung nature of his musical numbers, their genre is also telling as they don't seem to be focused on the political or economic effects of the colonist's revolution, but instead focused on an emotion, love. Indeed, from the first lyrics, his perspective is centered on this emotion: "You say the price of my love's not a price that you're willing to pay." By connecting the King's text so strongly to an emotional sphere, his aggression is neutralized.

This "love" is contrasted with violent lyrics such as "I will kill your friends and family to remind you of my love" but these words can't land any way but comically when they're followed by a series of da-da-das in an upbeat song in major mode. Do we take these threats seriously as an audience? It's a tricky thing with a historical musical; we know he doesn't win the war. Is the flamboyance here meant to criticize the king or the noble class? An unfortunate consequence of making this character weak and comic is his effeminacy. I'm not sure I can explicitly interpret the King as homosexual, but there is a queerness about the way his role is portrayed. This is hardly a progressive characterization in the twenty-first century.

In addition to his musical portrayal, the King's casting, costuming, choreography, and general performance must be considered in his overall effect. In the original cast of *Hamilton*, King George was played by Jonathan Groff, a white male actor. The impact of this moment of whiteness in a play centered on actors of color is strong. It others him in a cast of predominantly black and brown bodies.

In addition, the King's costuming portrays a character of royalty and excess. The stage and characters in *Hamilton* are largely full of muted colors. The stage is entirely made to look like wood (brown), and the characters predominately appear in simple off-white, streamlined

eighteenth-century period costumes. The cast of main characters who are men sometimes wear a navy, brown, or dark purple coat in Act I. The Schuyler sisters are all costumed in pastels. None of their costumes particularly "pop" against the staging. Even in Act II, Washington and Burr change to black suits, Hamilton to a dark green. Throughout the entire musical, however, King George III wears bright red.

In his first appearance, King George comes out in a satin bright red suit. It has gold lace at all of the hems, and he is wearing a large golden crown that has also has a red satin inlay, under which is a powdered wig. Over top of his suit, he wears a long black and white ermine cape, and he carries with him a golden cane as well. In subsequent appearances, he loses the cape (Figure 2).

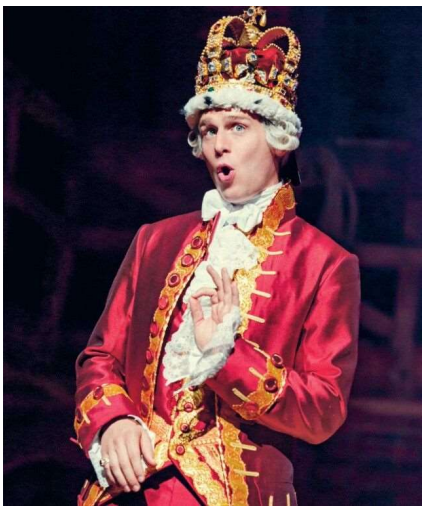

Figure 2: Jonathan Groff as King George III[29]

All of this speaks again to excess and a sense of the effete, which contrasts with the the King's restrained motions as he walks slowly out and performs the first two-thirds of "You'll Be

[29] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 219.

Back" without a single gesture. This increased restraint and controlled movement is indicative of his royal status, but it also highlights his few movements.

It is these movements, these small mannerisms and his lyrical singing that I believe most call attention to the King's effeminate nature. The first mannerism of note is in the end of "You'll Be Back" when, in the final chorus on "*da-da-da-da-da*," the King bobs his shoulders up and down. This call to Broadway, and indeed choreography of older musicals, is not a masculine gesture. Following his number "I Know Him," which is set to the same musical material as "You'll Be Back," the King moves to stage right and sits on a stool as a spectator for the unfolding drama. Here, he is gleeful at the prospect of what will happen as Washington steps down from the Presidency and John Adams succeeds him. In these moments he is sitting with his knees together, as women are often instructed to, and he moves his hands from side to side with a giant smile across his face. This moment concludes with King George giggling uncontrollably.

And finally, when Hamilton makes his affair public and Jefferson, Madison, and Burr are celebrating bringing down their political nemesis in "The Reynolds Pamphlet," King George comes out, still in his bright red suit, and prances around amongst all of the bustle happening on stage. Miranda refers to this moment in that it "kicks the deliciousness up to 11."[30] He also at one moment does a kind of breakdancing move in bottom stage right that seems to get a lot of laughs.

The creative team behind *Hamilton* confirms my interpretation of the King's role. Tommy Kail, the musical's director, writes about King George "How much more interesting who is going to the most horrible things, and is The Other, and yet we love him?"[31] King George's character is the comic relief. His femininity is portrayed so excessively that he is more

[30] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution*, 236.
[31] Ibid., 215.

of a caricature of a person than an actual person. It is possible to interpret this portrayal as a mockery of class, but it is troubling that the main course of doing so involves giving the King feminine traits compared to the hyper-masculine depictions of Hamilton and his colleagues.

Say No To This

Perhaps the most overtly sexual and sexualized character in the musical is Maria Reynolds, who sings in the blues number "Say No to This." This number comes right after "Take a Break" in which Angelica and Eliza implore Hamilton to take a break with them for the summer away from the city, but Hamilton decides to stay for work. Burr introduces this number:

Burr: *There's nothing like summer in the city.*
Someone under stress meets someone looking pretty.
There's trouble in the air, you can smell it,
And Alexander's by himself, I'll let him tell it…

This scene opens with Burr stage right, Hamilton in the center at his desk writing, and the ring of the stage begins to move as two lamp posts come into view and Maria Reynolds as well, giving the impression that Hamilton is inside, and Maria is walking outside. She is costumed in a low-cut red satin dress. Her hair is down in a loose natural style, and she is the only woman in the musical to have red lipstick. This costuming falls in line with the age-old trope of seductress seen in all forms of drama in western culture and is now synonymous with a sexuality promiscuous woman. So even before meeting Maria, the audience is primed for her role in Hamilton's story.

Consider how the lyrics above serve to illicit sympathy for Hamilton's condition, as he's susceptible to manipulation in this worn-down mental state. Never mind that thirty seconds before we heard his wife and sister in-law encouraging him to "take a break," and he refused. The emphasis here of "And Alexander's by himself" again I feel places blame not on Alexander

for refusing to take the break he so obviously needs, but instead on the women for abandoning him and not understanding the importance of his political work.

The other piece to tease out from this introduction is the line "I'll let him tell it." In this moment the role of narrator moves to Hamilton in a manner I find particularly troubling. On the decision to have Hamilton tell this moment in the narrative, Miranda says "Hamilton's the only one who can narrate the song at this point in the story: It happened to him, in secret, and we don't know Maria or James Reynolds yet. So he does it…The person closest to the action addresses the audience."[32] In my opinion (And Stacy Wolf's as well) this is a weak defense to have this moment in the musical be told entirely from the male's perspective. Wolf says on the matter "Miranda's (weak) reasoning intensifies this irresistible number's dissonant pleasures, reminding us that this is Alexander's story, and we never know what Maria thinks and what she is feeling."[33]

I will explore Maria's lack of agency soon, but first let's consider the argument that because we don't yet know the Reynolds, only Alexander can introduce them. It is a confusing defense to me as this musical is full of examples where Burr narrates the introduction of characters before they come on to the stage. The Schuyler sisters and Thomas Jefferson are all introduced to the audience in this manner. The implication this has for Maria is that she has a complete inability to speak for herself in the limited presence she has in this narrative. Again, Wolf states this notion clearly "But the song does not function to track her feelings. On the contrary, her role is narratively purposeful – to move his story forward."[34] Examining the sung

---

[32] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 176.
[33] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 176, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.
[34] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," 176.

dialogue here is more illuminative though than merely talking about them. Throughout most of this song Maria's lines are delivered in a bluesy sung style, and until the sexual climax, Hamilton's are delivered in what is best described as a soft rap. The ensemble is also present for most of this song and functions as a Greek chorus adding commentary throughout.

Hamilton: *I hadn't slept in a week.*
I was weak, I was awake.
You never seen a bastard orphan more in need of a break.
Longing for Angelica.
Missing my wife.
That's when Miss Maria Reynolds walked into my life, she said:

Maria: *I know you are a man of honor,*
I'm so sorry to bother you at home
But I don't know where to go, and I came here all alone.

Hamilton: *She said:*
Maria: *My husband's doin' me wrong*
Beatin' me, cheatin' me, mistreatin' me.
Suddenly he's up and gone
I don't have the means to go on.

Hamilton: *So I offered her a loan, I offered to walk her home, she said:*

Maria: *You're too kind, sir*

Hamilton: *I gave her thirty bucks that I had socked away*
She lived a block away, she said:

Maria: *This one's mine, sir*

Hamilton: *Then I said, "Well, I should head back home,"*
She turned red, she led me to her bed
Let her legs spread and said:

Maria: *Stay?*

Hamilton: *Hey*

Notice in the above beginning verses to "Say No to This" how every utterance from Maria is preceded with a "she said" from Hamilton. Never, do we hear Maria speak of her own will. This

continues throughout the song with such variants as “Her body’s saying “Hell yes,” and “she cried.” The only utterances we hear from Maria that could be perceived as her own, meaning they are preceded with Hamilton not saying some form of “she said” are at the sexual climax of song where the lines of Hamilton and Maria are essentially happening simultaneously and a moment where Hamilton threatens to leave and Maria experiences an emotional breakdown. The implication though of the way her lines are written is a kind of ventriloquizing of Maria, where she is functioning as nothing more than a puppet being used by the men (both Hamilton and her own husband, James) in her world.

In talking of sexuality, in “Say No to This” I hear, and we essentially see, sexual intercourse happening in a very explicit way. Throughout the course of this song, Hamilton’s and Maria’s lines get closer and closer together. Maria’s husband, James Reynolds, interrupts their duet. He is writing to blackmail Hamilton into paying financially for his escapades with Maria, which Hamilton ultimately decides to pay in order to keep seeing her. This letter solidifies our impression that Maria is designed to be the “whore” to Eliza’s “virgin.”

At this climax of the song though, the way Hamilton’s, Maria’s, and the ensemble’s lines overlap and end is indicative of how sexual intercourse is often portrayed in media. By this, I mean the lines get closer and closer, the way they are delivered loses more control, until the sexual release of what I infer here is an orgasm between Maria and Hamilton. Eventually, Hamilton and Maria say “Yes” in this part of the song simultaneously, signifying their mutual sexual climax as can be seen below. Maria’s “Yes” scoops upward in a sort of musical sigh. Throughout all of this, the ensemble comments “No!” repeatedly as if to discourage the act.

Hamilton:		Ensemble:
Yes.	Maria:	*Say no to this!*
	Yes!	
		No!
Yes.		*No!*
	Yes!	
		Say no to this!
Yes.	*Yes!*	*No!*
		No!
		Say no to this!
Yes.	*Yes!*	
		No!
		No!

It is also worth noting here that Hamilton sings with Maria, but never does so in a musical duet form with his own wife, Eliza. This shows a musical connection between Maria and Hamilton that is not present with any other woman, I assert because of the explicit sexual nature of their relationship.

Perhaps this one-sided perspective of the moment comes from the source material, Chernow's biography. Indeed, Chernow at one point says that "Maria portrayed herself as a wretched, lovelorn creature, desperate to see Hamilton again…" he says that her letter's "hysterical excesses" should have "alerted him (Hamilton) that he was dealing with a perilously unstable woman."[35] Use of such language implying emotional excess and indeed "hysterics" have a sexist lineage in western society, and it is disappointing to see them employed by an author in 2005. Throughout the majority of the chapter in Chernow's biography in which the affair occurs, Maria is rarely heard from. Most of what we know about this affair is from Hamilton's *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, in which he constructs the narrative of how the affair happened. Maria is never given a platform to defend herself. Understanding all of this from the source material for the musical, it then perhaps is logical why Maria is portrayed in a similar way

[35] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 366.

in the musical form. I must express here though my disappointment in neither Miranda nor Chernow making attempts to understand this moment from a female perspective.

While there isn't space here to do a thorough historiographical analysis of this moment, let's consider briefly that perspective. According to Chernow, Maria was in an unhappy, and at least emotionally, abusive marriage.[36] At a time when women were not able to live comfortably separate from a man, and when to be divorced meant to be "damaged goods," what exactly could she do? Historian Catherine Allgor writes,

> There are a few moments in Hamilton when the brutal and complete power of men over their wives is hinted at, albeit probably inadvertently. Understanding that married women were completely dependent on husbands, and consequently completely vulnerable if a spouse did not live up to the patriarchal bargain, explains Maria Reynolds's desperation, Alexander's response, and the implications of their extramarital affair. She has been deserted by her husband, and has no access to money or property.[37]

It seems that neither Hamilton nor Chernow can admit either way whether Maria's feelings for him were genuine, so why do we not have more sympathy for a woman so constrained by domesticity that it's possible she is being pimped out by her husband? Instead of a nuanced character, who speaks for herself, Maria is a seducing puppet dressed in red. She is the whore foil to Eliza's Madonna. Indeed, both Chernow and Wolf compare explicitly Maria and Eliza. Chernow refers to her as "the antithesis of the sturdy, sensible, loyal Eliza."[38] Wolf says

---

[36] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 367.
[37] Catherine Allgor, ""Remember . . . I'm Your Man" Masculinity, Marriage, and Gender in Hamilton" Excerpt From *Historians on Hamilton* Renee C. Romano & Claire Bond Potter in *Historians on Hamilton*: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 113.
[38] Ibid.

> Maria's appearance and social stature are the opposite of Eliza's: her low- cut, form-fitting red dress to Eliza's pale green gown with white fabric at the neck; Maria's hair long and flowing to Eliza's neat ponytail (or half-back ponytail); Maria's languid, undulating physicality to Eliza's perfectly straight posture; Maria's poverty to Eliza's wealth; Maria's blues to Eliza's Broadway ballad. Eliza represents the cult of true womanhood and Maria is the Jezebel – an already racialized type – but they are linked by the lyric 'this one's mine' and most of all, by being 'helpless'.[39]

What I find interesting, more so than the differences between Eliza and Maria, is the thing that unites them in this musical, their helplessness in Hamilton's presence.

In the chapter on domesticity, I spoke at length regarding Eliza's song "Helpless." In that number, where Eliza falls in love with Hamilton at first sight, she expresses how she is helplessly in love with Hamilton after looking into his eyes. While the word "helpless" isn't as prevalent in "Say No to This," we see that Hamilton is attracted to helplessness in Maria by his lyrics *"But god she looks so helpless, and her body's saying 'Hell yes."* Miranda intentionally positions helpless women as Hamilton's "kryptonite" or his ultimate undoing.[40]

Maria is helpless in her domestic space, and employs the word at a key moment expressing this: "*Please don't leave me with him* (her husband James) *helpless."* I interpret this latter utterance by Maria as an indication of abuse and it is sad to me how the music blows by this to get to the consummation of the affair. After this song, Maria is never heard from again. She lingers on stage, leaning in doorways, mostly in the shadows, between this song and the

---

[39] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 176, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.
[40] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 77.

reveal of the affair publicly 10 songs later in "The Reynolds Pamphlet." I believe this is because they affair continued for almost a year until Hamilton finally ended it. So while Maria is physically present on stage throughout much of Act 2, her action in the narrative is limited to one number in which we never even hear her speak for herself. This is indicative of the larger gender politics on display throughout *Hamilton.*

Son of a Whore: Our Introduction to All Women in *Hamilton*

"Say No to This" is not the only example in *Hamilton* in which women are reduced to sexual objects. In fact, in almost all cases, the only way a woman makes it into this narrative at all is by being somehow sexually desirable. Even the women who are referenced, but never appear onstage or have speaking lines fall into this role. The first of which is Hamilton's mother, the "whore," referenced in the opening line of the musical.

Burr: *How does a bastard, orphan son of a whore and a Scotsman,*
dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean
By providence, impoverished, in squalor,
grow up to be a hero and a scholar?'

This is how the musical, *Hamilton,* begins. So let's tease out that first line for just a moment. "*How does a bastard orphan, son of a whore and Scotsman…?*" Whore: Most definitions of that words somehow involve prostitution, or the selling of sexual acts for money. In Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton, which is supposedly the inspiration for this musical, he paints Rachel Faucett (Alexander's mother, who is unnamed in *Hamilton*) as much more complete character than that.[41] She was married to Johann Michael Lavien, and left him and their son in 1750. After this separation, she met a James Hamilton and the two presumably

[41] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 9-25.

fell for each other as they lived together and had two sons over the course of 13 years before Hamilton (the father) left her and his sons.

There are of course many more details than this, and I don't expect all of them to make it into a moment's reference in a musical. However, why the choice to label this woman a "whore" and her deserting husband a "Scotsman," and what implications does that have? Consider how that sets the tone for women throughout the entire drama. That word choice is not a very progressive one, which is one word often touted about what this musical is. So as the audience, our very first perception of a woman in this narrative is a disparaging one, and it doesn't really get much better from there. Not only is it disparaging, but it also is a word that centers on sex, which in this musical seems to be primarily what women are good for: sex as a whore to birth Hamilton from Rachel Faucett (who again is not named in the musical), sex as wife and mother with Eliza, the teasing of sex with the witty Angelica, and the unadulterated sex of an affair with Maria. From the word "go" the women in this narrative are trapped by their position as sexual objects.

Consider another woman who is mentioned, but not physically present in the drama, Theodosia Bartow Prevost/Burr. She is the woman Burr sings about in "Wait for it." In Hamilton's wedding, she is referenced by Jon Laurens as a "*special something on the side."* It would seem Burr's feelings for Theodosia were genuine as upon the death of her British husband in history, the two did wed and have a child together, a daughter whom Theodosia ensured was educated. But in the musical she is portrayed as nothing more than a mistress and possession with the lines:

Theodosia writes me a letter ev'ry day.
I'm keeping her bed warm while her husband is away.
He's on the British side in Georgia.
He's tryin' to keep the colonies in line.

But he can keep all of Georgia.
Theodosia, she's mine.

Theodosia isn't present in the Chernow biography, and so my assumption is that this is why she is not in the musical, but a cursory Wikipedia search shows that Theodosia was perhaps as much the intelligent as Angelica, yet receives no stage time.[42]

Another mistress flits by in one line of the musical, Thomas Jefferson's. In the opening of Act 2, with "What'd I Miss?," Thomas Jefferson sings:

There's a letter on my desk from the President
Haven't even put my bags down yet
Sally be a lamb, darlin' won'tcha open it?"

At this moment one of the female ensemble cast members (presumably Sally) brings a letter to Jefferson. Miranda calls this "Our Sally Hemings shout-out."[43] Sally Hemings was of course a woman who was enslaved by Jefferson and is known to have been in a long-term relationship with as he fathered her children. None of that is explicit in the musical, but the subtext is there if you're familiar with the history. It is an example of yet another woman in this narrative only present because of her sexual ties to a man.

What is almost comical about the next point is that the only woman who isn't explicitly tied to sexuality in this whole musical is Peggy Schuyler. She is with Angelica and Eliza in "The Schuyler Sisters," with the only solo line of "*And Peggy."* It seems that she is more of an

[42] "Theodosia Bartow Prevost," Wikipedia, March 08, 2019, accessed April 04, 2019, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosia_Bartow_Prevost.
[43] Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton The Revolution* (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 152.

afterthought than a really character. Her role in Act 1 seems to be a casting of convenience for the actress playing Maria in Act 2 to have a reason to be on stage earlier in the drama.

Every Part Aflame

Angelica's sexuality is a bit more nuanced. Just like all the women in *Hamilton* are tied to sexuality, Angelica is as well, but she seems to be a sexual being in her own right. She is set up in Act I as alluring, flirtatious, societally aware as I explored in the chapter on domesticity. What I intentionally neglected discussing there was the implied love triangle between her, Eliza, and Hamilton.

When Elizabeth (Eliza) Schuyler and Alexander Hamilton met, Eliza's older sister, Angelica, was already married to John Church. It was actually quite a scandalous story as Angelica eloped with John, not typical at all in 1777 – or 2019, really. In the musical, *Hamilton,* though Angelica and Eliza were both single and looking for partners. We can see this in how Angelica is "*looking for a mind at work*" in "The Schuyler Sisters," how she seems to regret introducing Eliza and Alexander in "Satisfied," and finally the way and that she marries, although it is never named to who in the musical, in the finale to Act I.

The broader implication of this is Angelica's loss of the independence the actual Angelica embodied by marrying whom she wanted without permission from her father. Instead we see her pitted against her sister for the love of a man, who just happens to be the hero of the drama. The purpose here was purely for dramatic effect, as Miranda admits "it's stronger dramatically if societally she can't marry you. And in reality, she was married when they met."[44]

[44] Lin-Manuel Miranda, "Satisfied," Genius, September 25, 2015, accessed April 04, 2019, https://genius.com/7912429.

What this quotation from Miranda reveals is that the alteration to Angelica's life was a choice. Miranda thus strips what little independence Angelica possessed historically to amplify the attraction and desirably of Alexander, and her viability as a sexual partner.

But Angelica does possess at least some sexual agency here. One moment in particular I believe could be read as a woman expressing ownership of her sexuality, or at least acknowledgment of sexual desires, both occur in "Satisfied" from Act I. At the beginning of "Satisfied" the stage setting physically rewinds back to the moment Hamilton entered the Schuyler sister's lives in "Helpless," only now to be played from Angelica's point of view. At the end of this rewinding of time Angelica says "*Set my heart aflame, ev'ry part aflame…"* The separation of her heart, where romantic emotions are felt, and "ev'ry part" where it's alluded to physical reactions are felt, is key. I believe this is signifying a sexual desire for Hamilton by Angelica in addition to the intellectual attachment the two display.

Ladies!

Outside of the sexuality of the women themselves in *Hamilton*, is also the positioning of women more generally in the world of the musical. Consider how Burr and Angelica first interact in "The Schuyler Sisters" from Act 1:

Burr: *Excuse me, miss, I know it's not funny*
But your perfume smells like your daddy's got money.
Why you slummin' in the city in your fancy heels
You searchin for an urchin who can give you ideals?

Angelica: *Burr, you disgust me.*

Burr: *Ah, so you've discussed me.*
I'm a trust fund, baby, you can trust me!

While the above lines also intersect with class and status, it also is an example of an unwanted sexual/romantic advance akin to cat-calling in this musical. Burr is not approaching Angelica out of genuine interest, but rather because he sees her as a vehicle through whom he might acquire wealth.

Another example of the general positioning of women occurs in "A Winter's Ball." After a brief introduction by Burr explain how Hamilton is working for Washington now, the song continues as such:

Burr: *Now Hamilton's skill with a quill is undeniable*
But what do we have in common?
We're reliable with the

All men: *Ladies!*

Burr: *There are so many to deflower.*

All men: *Ladies!*
The line above most obviously tied to the positioning of women as sexual objects is "deflower," referring to a woman's virginity.

Burr: *Looks! Proximity to power.*

All men: *Ladies!*

And here we have an emphasis on women's physical appearance as well as their likeliness to be drawn to powerful men, apparently.

Burr: *They delighted and distracted him.*
Martha Washington named her feral tomcat after him!

Hamilton: *That's true.*

Burr is referring to Hamilton here, with the "feral tomcat" being an analogy for sexually aggressive.

Company: *Seventeen-eighty*

Burr: *A winter's ball*
And the Schuyler sisters are the envy of all
Yo, if you can marry a sister, you're rich, son

Hamilton: *Is it a question of if, Burr, or which one?*

And finally, we have the women's financial associations positioning them as sexual, or marital conquests. The women the audience gets to know more thoroughly in "Helpless" and "Satisfied" are not framed as equals, individuals, or even romantic pursuits, but more as a means to an end in climbing the social ladder of revolutionary society. Much of what I've discussed above pertains to femininity and women as sexual objects, but it should be noted that this musical does just as much work constructing notions of masculinity. As Catherine Allgor points out "Miranda chooses to celebrate masculinity as a central element of the Revolution, and a certain kind of masculinity that is defined by violence, sexual conquest, and ambitious social climbing."[45] It's possible Miranda made these decisions to reflect eighteenth-century social norms. However, so much about this story has been updated and changed to reflect twentieth-century values, so it is disappointing to see the sexual and gender politics of this drama still stuck 200 years in the past.

[45] Catherine Allgor, ""Remember . . . I'm Your Man" Masculinity, Marriage, and Gender in Hamilton" Excerpt from *Historians on Hamilton* Renee C. Romano & Claire Bond Potter in *Historians on Hamilton*: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 105.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have explored many different elements pertaining to *Hamilton.* In Chapter 1, I discussed class and how it fell along sung/rap lines pertaining to power. In Chapter 2, I discussed the effects of domesticity upon the male and female characters in this musical, and how they are then musically portrayed in those moments. In Chapter 3, I focused on sexuality primarily as it pertained to and objectified most, if not all, women in *Hamilton*. There, I also explored the feminine aspects of King George's performance. Now, in the conclusion, I would like to briefly revisit Eliza, one last time, and the notion of storytelling and history.

The final number of this musical is a lyrical one involving all of the cast except for Hamilton himself, who the audience has just seen fatally lose a duel. It begins with a brief reprise of Washington's opening lines from "History Has Its Eyes on You," and runs through other main characters detailing important moments from Hamilton's career, all dressed in vanilla colored versions of the costumes they've been wearing throughout, until getting to Eliza. As it turns out the answer for Hamilton to this song's title, "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?," is his wife, Eliza, who lived 50 years after her husband's death.

It's a sensitive and rather quiet ending for a musical so full of high energy masculine war and politics. Although, as discussed at length in this thesis, Eliza in all of her true womanhood, could never be set with such aggressive music. There's been quite a bit of discussion on this moment and whether it is or isn't a feminist statement. Eliza's is the last independent voice the audience hears in the musical, which in a sense is powerful. It left contributor to *The New*

Yorker, Michael Schulman "wondering whether the "Hamilton" of the title isn't just Alexander, but Eliza, too."[46] I, however, am not so optimistic.

For Stacy Wolf, "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?" "is a profound gesture of respect towards Eliza. But theatrically, it is too little too late."[47] Even Schulman, just a few lines before making the leap that *Hamilton* is actually about both Hamiltons questions "Is it a feminist ending? Almost. The notion that men do the deeds and the women tell their stories isn't exactly Germaine Greer-worthy."[48] What I believe Wolf misses, and Schulman merely hints at is that yes, the author of this story is Eliza, but she is not telling *her* story. All of this musical, and indeed this finale, isn't about Eliza, her feelings, her existence, her motives, it is all—even when hearing from Eliza as we do here, about Alexander.

In the final chapter if his biography of Hamilton, dedicated to and titled "Eliza," Chernow tells readers about how the widow spent those 50 years after her husband's death and paints a picture of an intelligent, strong, resourceful woman well aware of the political world and how to meet her own needs. He says

> Because Eliza Hamilton tried to erase herself from her husband's story, she has languished in virtually complete historical obscurity. To the extent that she has drawn attention, she has been depicted as a broken, weeping, neurasthenic creature, clinging to her Bible and lacking any identity other than that of Hamilton's widow. In fact, she was a

[46] Michael Schulman, "The Women of "Hamilton,"" *The New Yorker*, August 6, 2015, , https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-women-of-hamilton.
[47] Stacy Wolf, "*Hamilton's* women," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 177, doi: 10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.
[48] Michael Schulman, "The Women of "Hamilton"

> woman of towering strength and integrity who consecrated much of her extended widowhood to serving widows, orphans, and poor children.[49]

But is this the picture we see of Eliza in this finale? I would say hardly. Yes, the audience learns of her starting an orphanage in this passage:

Eliza: *Oh. Can I show you what I'm proudest of?*

Company (Except Hamilton): *The orphanage*

Eliza: *I establish the first private orphanage in New York City*

Company (Except Hamilton): *The orphanage*

Eliza: *I help to raise hundreds of children*
I get to see them growing up

Company (Except Hamilton): *The orphanage*

Eliza: *In their eyes I see you, Alexander*
I see you every—

Eliza, Company (Except Hamilton): *Time*

Eliza: *And when my time is up*
Have I done enough?
Will they tell my story? Company: *Will they tell your story?*

But even here, in a passage about an activity Eliza did separate from preserving the legacy of men (like every other passage in this song), the lyrics revert to a focus on Alexander (*In their eyes I see you, Alexander).* This is all in fulfillment of Eliza's role as the dutiful politician's wife. And indeed, in an era of coverture, where upper class women are not expected to work, and when Hamilton did not set up his family to be financially solvent after his death, I wonder if Eliza had any other recourse but to preserve her husband's legacy. By doing so she preserved her

[49] Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005), 728.

social status, but perhaps even more basic, the ability to feed and educate her family. Eliza's feature in this finale begins with the line "*I put myself back in the narrative."* And I can't help but wonder if that's true. Yes, she has the last word and tells Hamilton's story, and there's an amount of agency in that. But amongst the angel's choir, and beautifully sung delivery of this song, does she have enough power to bring herself, and indeed all of the women in this story, out of the periphery? I find myself agreeing with Wolf that it is too little, too late.

In this thesis, I explored the way power was musically cued amongst both male and female characters in *Hamilton.* While the repercussions of this reflecting on masculinity more generally are problematic in that they propagate the many tropes of toxic masculinity, I find the limited and powerless performance of femininity more troubling. With women in this musical narrative relegated to the periphery and viewed primarily as sexual objects, a continued assumption of these roles is given silent complicity. Especially when considering that the actual women this narrative represents were intelligent, strong, complicated figures in their own right, it is disappointing to think of all *Hamilton* could've done that it sadly does not. I hope though, that through discussing the performance of power in *Hamilton*, we can learn from this and that maybe the next musical cultural moment with the reach of *Hamilton* will be a more intersectional one.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allgor, Catherine. "“Remember . . . I’m Your Man” Masculinity, Marriage, and Gender in Hamilton” Excerpt From *Historians on Hamilton* Renee C. Romano & Claire Bond Potter In Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America’s Past, 100-21. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018.

Chernow, Ron. *Alexander Hamilton*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2005.

Doyle, Sady. *Trainwreck: The Women We Love to Hate, Mock, and Fear - and Why*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2017.

"Lin-Manuel Miranda on Dirty Politics and the Founding Fathers." Interview by Kerrie Hillman. WNYC Studios. January 29, 2016. Accessed April 3, 2019. https://www.wnyc.org/story/lin-manuel-miranda-on-dirty-politics-and-the-founding-fathers/.

Miranda, Lin-Manuel, and Jeremy McCarter. *Hamilton The Revolution*. New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.

Miranda, Lin-Manuel. "Satisfied." Genius. September 25, 2015. Accessed April 04, 2019. https://genius.com/7912429.

Miranda, Lin-Manuel. *The Hamilton Mixtape*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2015.

Rckstar123. "Satisfied." Genius. September 25, 2015. Accessed April 03, 2019. https://genius.com/7917264.

Michael Schulman. "The Women of “Hamilton”." The New Yorker, August 6, 2015. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-women-of-hamilton.

"Theodosia Bartow Prevost." Wikipedia. March 08, 2019. Accessed April 04, 2019. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosia_Bartow_Prevost.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860." American Quarterly, 1st ser., 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151-74.

Wolf, Stacy Ellen. *A Problem like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*. Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2007.

Wolf, Stacy. "Hamilton’s Women." Studies in Musical Theatre 12, no. 2 (June 2018): 167-80. doi:10.1386/smt.12.2.167_1.