

# Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?: Gendered Legacies in *Hamilton*

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*Hamilton: An American Musical*, written, composed by, and starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, made its Broadway debut in August 2015. Since then, *Hamilton* has won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and a record-breaking sixteen Tony Award nominations. Miranda also received a \$625,000 MacArthur Fellowship, more commonly referred to as a “Genius Grant”. *Hamilton* has been heralded as a game-changer for Broadway musicals, starring a racially-diverse cast and supported by contemporary music styles including rap, hip hop, and jazz. It is one of the most popularly successful musicals in recent memory, inspired by the life and times of American founding-father Alexander Hamilton.

One of the key themes in the *Hamilton* musical is the concept of legacy. In historical terms, a legacy is handed down from one generation to another. Glenn Llopis writes in an article for *Forbes* that leaving a legacy should be a key concern for leaders who want to perform to the best of their ability in business: “The best leadership legacies are a consequence of success coming to those who are surrounded by people that want their success to continue.” Other authors and analysts (see Kerr, Wallace, Hunt, Galford and Maruca) write that workers can and should tailor their careers to suit the personal legacy they wish to leave behind. In a *Time* magazine interview written by JJ Abrams, Lin-Manuel Miranda stated that he has been preoccupied with legacy “since [he] was a kid”:

We have this amount of time. It’s the tiniest grain of sand of time we’re allowed on this earth. And what do we leave behind? I think that

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question has gnawed at me as long as I've been conscious. That's something that Hamilton outright states in our show and I think that's something I share with him. (Abrams)

It is important to examine the themes and issues explored and critiqued in this musical for two reasons. The first is that theatre has long been considered an important medium for social commentary (according to scholars such as Langas, Denning, and Papa), and musical theatre as a rhetorical text has attracted significant academic study (according to scholars such as Wolf, Jones, Swain, and Barnes). A strong tradition of studies exists that focus on specific musicals as case studies for theoretical criticism. Scholars have examined *Oklahoma!* for its portrayals of ethnicity and gender (Aiken 277; Cook 35), *Rent* for its portrayals of LGBTQ+ identities and cultures (Sebesta 419; Schrader 23), and of course the Broadway hit *Wicked* has attracted academic criticism from performance scholars (Wolf 1), cultural theorists (Schrader 7), and comparative literature scholars (Burger 1).

The second reason to examine this musical is the fact that its sheer popularity across demographics indicates its success in engaging with important themes and issues relevant to the audience. Popular culture is a reflective media; it engages with and explores cultural themes and trends. While *Hamilton* is a period piece, the themes of, for example, gun violence and political division are particularly significant to contemporary times, and I argue that *Hamilton* is popular because the audience has found something with which to engage. This paper examines the representations of gender and how different genders engage with legacy and power in the musical, this paper intends to examine how these concepts are considered in this particular lens. This is not to say that *Hamilton* has had the last word on this matter, but the progression of how these ideas are conceptualized helps researchers understand popular culture and society.

The *Hamilton* soundtrack/cast album allows listeners to hear each song performed by the original *Hamilton* cast. *Hamilton* is a sung-through show, so the complete narrative can be found on this album. Characterization and motivation, the plot of the narrative, and significant themes are all present in the song lyrics. The contemporary music styles of rap, hip hop, and jazz are lyrics-focused and deeply entrenched in the storytelling-through-music tradition and this contributes to the depth of the album (Barco 63; Flores 85). John Bush Jones writes that "greater numbers of Americans have always listened to popular music than regularly attend musical theatre," so incorporating popular music styles bridges the gap between the *Hamilton*

musical's historicity and the contemporary audience (318). Musical styles can also reveal character in the musical. Thomas Jefferson, for example, sings in a laid-back jazz style typical of the American south, while the Marquis de Lafayette's rap vocals are used to portray his developing mastery of the English language.

Musical themes also connect elements of the story, drawing the listener to reflect on what has come before at various stages of the narrative. Miranda employs *contrafacta* (certain melodies which are performed repeatedly with different lyrics) to draw the dramatic connections between characters and situations. Although Joseph P Swain argues that Andrew Lloyd Webber's uses of *contrafacta* in *Jesus Christ Superstar* "drastically alters the lyric to a certain melody" which creates a "less dramatic association between the melody and the action [and] a fatal weakening of the melody's dramatic function" (321). In *Hamilton*, the technique is crucially important for this musical to stimulate intra-narrative unity and support the through-lines of the legacy theme. While Stacy Wolf argues that analyses of musical theatre should examine the "total experience to understand how the pieces of a richly multivalent performance make meaning", the *Hamilton* cast album, available on iTunes, represents the most complete version of the story that is available to the largest number of consumers, and will therefore be the primary focus of this essay's analysis (5).

This essay is not concerned with author-oriented textual analysis nor is it intended to be an examination of Miranda's relationship with the concept of legacy and how this relationship may have influenced his writing. This essay is intended to reflect on how ambition and legacy are portrayed in the *Hamilton* musical, and, in particular, how the gender of the characters affects how they interact with the concept of legacy. Using a critical discourse analysis of the lyrics in the musical, this essay concludes that ambition and legacy are gendered within *Hamilton*. In *Hamilton*, with female legacies are portrayed as more philanthropic and less ultimately destructive despite being informed by the historical limitations on women at the time.

### Give Us a Verse; Drop Some Knowledge!

I do not consider gender a stable, ahistorical, or placeless concept, but for the purposes of this article I will use the concept of "gender" in its Western contemporary iteration because that is the context of *Hamilton's* target audience. Gender is considered in Western culture to be a relational concept, where "masculinity" relies on a binary relationship with "femininity" (Romøren and Stephens 216; Reynolds 96; Connell 62). Of course, many

different gender identities and expressions exist in contemporary society, and this essay is not intended to enforce the gender binary. It is intended to comment on how male- and female-identifying individuals are portrayed in a specific piece of musical theatre.

When it comes to portrayals of gender in text, the context of the narrative—both in terms of when it was written and when it was set—is important. Occasionally, a text may be written after the time period in which it was set, and so characters' portrayals may be colored by nostalgia. Nostalgia has been in vogue in American musicals since the 1970s with the production of *Grease* (Jones 305). While this has allowed historical musicals like *Hamilton* to gain prominence, it has relegated female characters to predominantly supporting roles and can have a somewhat limiting effect on the types of characters and stories available to female performers in the industry (Barnes 14). The gender imbalance at the structural level could also be a factor in the gendered divide which is often seen in Broadway musicals: if producers, directors, writers, and composers are men, then it stands to reason that the musicals will privilege the masculine experience (Barnes 14).

Gender tends to be portrayed on a spectrum between very masculine and very feminine. Romøren and Stephens developed a list of “masculine” traits which are typically associated with hyper-masculinity, and although their essay was published over ten years ago, the list remains relevant:

...to be self-regarding, a physical or verbal bully, overbearing in relation to women and children, (over)fond of alcohol, violent, short-tempered, neglectful of personal appearance, hostile to difference/otherness, actually or implicitly misogynistic, sexually exploitative, insistent upon differentiated gender roles and prone to impose these on others, classist, racist, generally xenophobic, sport-focused, insensitive, inattentive when others are speaking, aimless, possessive. (220)

Romøren and Stephens write that repeated experiences condition consumers of media to associate these traits with masculinity, arguing that the presence of three or more of the traits is generally an indication that a character is performing hyper-masculinity. Female characters can also perform hyper-masculinity, though that is arguably not the case in *Hamilton*.

In *Hamilton*, the majority of male characters appear to be driven by a desire to cultivate or defend their legacies as the stories that future generations will tell about their exploits. Traditionally feminine concerns such as family

and the home are portrayed as an unnecessary distraction; as seen, for example, when Hamilton refuses to go on holiday with his family to focus on his congressional work. Although contemporary articles and books which advocate for legacy as a key component of leadership are not specifically written for men, it is perhaps telling that the majority are written by men (see, for example, the works of Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, Simon Sinek, Tim Irwin and Tim Tassopoulos, and Seth Godin). Female-written leadership manuals are often preoccupied with avoiding conflict and approaching business with an awareness that the reader may need to exercise caution in a male-dominated environment (see Chu).

In the context of the *Hamilton* musical, I argue that Hamilton is a “cultivator”; he is motivated by a desire to cultivate his legacy so that future generations will remember him. Since he comes from a family with no real legacy to speak of, he needs to build his own from the ground up. Aaron Burr, along with Hamilton’s son Philip, are “defenders” and this can be seen in their continued reference to the legacies their parents cultivated before them in the lyrics they sing. In “Wait for It,” Burr sings: “When they died they left no instructions/ Just a legacy to protect.” In “Blow Us All Away,” Philip sings: “He disparaged my father’s legacy in front of a crowd/ I can’t have that, I’m making my father proud.” This framing of legacy as something that should be protected and cultivated establishes “legacy” as a matter of personal ambition. They are not driven by philanthropic concerns. Instead, these characters are primarily concerned with perception and image. This is self-regarding behavior, which is listed as the first indicator of hyper-masculinity in Romøren and Stephens’ list.

### The Masculine Ambition: I Am Not Throwing Away My Shot!

In *Hamilton*, the masculine ambition for personal legacy is portrayed as being cultivated through either wealth or military prowess. During “Right Hand Man,” Hamilton performs his desire to die on the battlefield so that his legacy will be assured:

HAMILTON: If they tell my story/ I am either gonna die on the battlefield in glory or

HAMILTON /BURR/ MULLIGAN/ LAURENS/ LAFAYETTE: Rise up!

The “rise up” in this set of lyrics refers to Hamilton’s and the rest of the male characters’ desire to move between social groups and advance themselves.

Among the male characters’ lyrics, there is a preoccupation with ensuring that their children be the ones to defend their legacies moving forward. In “The Story of Tonight,” Hamilton sings: “I may not live to see our glory/ But I will gladly join the fight/ And when our children tell our story/ They’ll tell the story of tonight”. The expectation that the children will be the ones to defend the legacies of their fathers, is in line with the patriarchal expectation of continuing male family lines.

Alexander Hamilton’s character arc is particularly preoccupied with his own legacy, as is shown through the repetition of lyrical themes in the musical’s songs, such as “I wanna build something that’s gonna outlive me.” Initially Hamilton is introduced to the audience by the rest of the cast in the opening number, when they sing not only of his origins as an orphaned, illegitimate child, but also of the legacy he will eventually leave behind: “Will they know you rewrote the game?/ The world will never be the same”. “My Shot,” Hamilton’s first big number, focuses on Hamilton’s desire to rise above the circumstances he was born in and give the world something to remember him by” “Don’t be shocked when your history book mentions me.” This recurring theme of historical memory becomes more important as the narrative progresses, and the characters are shown to be aware that the events of *Hamilton* will shape future historical discourse.

Other characters recognize Hamilton’s desire, though some notable instances exist where characters try to warn him against focusing on future generations’ perceptions of the past. Eliza Hamilton repeatedly asks him to focus instead on the present with his family. During “History Has Its Eyes on You,” George Washington explains to Hamilton that what they are doing will have lasting consequences on the legacy that Hamilton leaves behind.

WASHINGTON: Let me tell you what I wish I’d known/ When I was young and dreamed of glory/ You have no control

WASHINGTON/ CHORUS: Who lives, who dies, who tells your story.

This song foreshadows Hamilton’s early death, as well as the fact that it is Eliza, and not Hamilton, who will have the most power over his legacy when he is gone. Washington is presented in *Hamilton* as an older, wiser version of Hamilton, someone who was once concerned with legacy and has since shifted

his priorities to philanthropy—this will be explored later in this essay. It is arguable that Washington's words have the opposite effect: Hamilton's portrayed behavior over the course of the rest of the musical indicates his awareness that history will remember him and the steps he takes to try to ensure that history remembers him favorably.

In *Hamilton*, war and wealth are thematically connected with the male characters; it is the men who fight in the Revolutionary War while the women remain in the primary care positions of their households. During "One Last Time," Washington transitions from war hero and national leader to the home environment: "I wanna sit under my own vine and fig tree... At home in this nation we've made." In this transition, Hamilton argues strongly against Washington's stepping down from the Presidency, claiming that the citizenry will see Washington as "weak" for choosing to end his leadership role. Here, the listener sees quite clearly where Hamilton stands on the subject of men moving away from leadership roles. While he eventually does support Washington in his transition, and Washington's song ends on a triumphant note, there is a reluctance to Hamilton's verses. The audience uses Hamilton as a frame of reference, and so these moments where he is trying to convince Washington to remain in power are telling, and then reluctantly following his lead is telling. The song also includes a songified version of Washington's Farewell Address, which draws the listener's attention back to Washington's legacy as President, reminding them again that history has its eyes on him despite his desire to retire: "I shall also carry with me/ The hope/ That my country will/ View [my errors] with indulgence."

Hamilton's cultivation of his legacy has two significant consequences in the musical: the Reynolds Pamphlet and his son's murder. The publication of the Reynolds Pamphlet is prompted when his political rivals discover the payments he'd made to the husband of his mistress, Maria Reynolds. Rather than risk accusations of corruption, Hamilton comes clean about the affair, assuming that it will not hurt his political career if he is honest with the people: "Overwhelm them with honesty/ In the eye of the hurricane/ This is the only way to protect my legacy". Unfortunately, the Reynolds Pamphlet has the opposite effect: it destroys his chances of winning the presidency as well as his marriage. A significant consequence of Hamilton's desire to cultivate legacy which will be explored in more detail later in this essay.

There is a lyrical and thematic separation between male characters' careers and their family lives at the beginning of the musical. This separation, and the emphasis placed on the career as the site where legacy will be cultivated (with family expected to carry it into future generations), genders the concept. This

was seen in George Washington's case, when his desire to switch from the Presidency to "under [his] own vine and fig tree" drew Hamilton's incredulity. In *Hamilton*, the female characters live at home and raise the children while the men work (or fight); by emphasizing the careers of the men as the important "legacy" that they will leave, the male characters are shown to value the masculine domain over the feminine.

After the Reynolds Pamphlet's publication, and Eliza's song "Burn," the narrative skips several years to Philip Hamilton's duel and murder. In the lyrics to "Blow Us All Away," Hamilton's preoccupation with legacy has been passed on to his eldest male child. This could be read partly as a consequence to Hamilton's construction of his career and his legacy earlier in the play as more important than family, as well as a thematic call to the tradition of male children keeping their family name after marriage and by extension carrying on their family's legacy. Philip Hamilton sings the opening lines of "Blow Us All Away" as a *contrafactum* of Hamilton's first lines in "My Shot," and so Philip echoes of Hamilton's ambitions:

"My Shot":

HAMILTON: I'm 'a get a scholarship to King's College!/ I prob'ly shouldn't brag, but dag, I amaze and astonish!

"Blow Us All Away":

PHILIP: Meet the latest graduate of King's College!/ I prob'ly shouldn't brag, but dag, I amaze and astonish!

The lyrics to "Blow Us All Away" reiterate Philip's motivations stemming from a desire to protect his father's legacy, which he considers an extension of his own. During the song, Philip discovers that a classmate of his made a defamatory speech about Hamilton, and Philip challenges the man to a duel. When Philip explains his reasoning to his father, he sings: "I doubt you would have let it slide and I was not about to." This continued comparison between Philip and his father is demonstrative of the legacy that Hamilton has cultivated through his son.

During "It's Quiet Uptown," which follows Philip's death, Hamilton is shown to retreat from public life and begin to prioritize his family:

HAMILTON: I spend hours in the garden/ I walk alone to the store/  
And it's quiet uptown/ I never liked the quiet before/ I take the  
children to church on Sunday

This verse, where he notes that he “never liked the quiet before” demonstrates his shift in priorities from the fast-paced, action-packed world of political intrigue, to quiet days with his family. Of course, this shift in priorities does not last, and when Aaron Burr challenges Hamilton to a duel in “Your Obedient Servant,” a duet, Hamilton’s musical style falls back into the old, “swaggering” style of beat that he’d used when debating Samuel Seabury in “Farmer Refuted,” and he begins to argue that he is in the right:

HAMILTON: Hey, I have not been shy/ I am just a guy in the public eye/ Trying to do my best for our republic [...] I won’t apologize for doing what’s right.

Here, Hamilton’s lyrics are preoccupied with defending his honor. He notes that he is “in the public eye” and therefore is obligated to be truthful. Despite the portrayed shift in priorities following his son’s death in “It’s Quiet Uptown,” Hamilton’s decision to continue antagonizing Burr indicates that, on some level, the character remains convinced that his cultivated legacy requires rigorous defense.

Hamilton’s death in “The World Was Wide Enough” leaves the listener with a mixed message as to the character’s motivation before and during the duel. Hamilton and Burr perform a *contrafactum* of the songs from the two previous duels: Laurens vs. Lee, and Philip vs. Eaker. This establishes the tone of the scene as one of adversarial expectation. The music stops, however, after the shots fire, leaving Hamilton to perform an accapella verse. He begins to question how history will see him and whether killing Burr is worth the risk to his cultivated legacy:

HAMILTON: Legacy. What is a legacy?/ It’s planting seeds in a garden you never get to see [...] [America is] a place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and rise up/ I’m running out of time. I’m running, and my time’s up/ Wise up. Eyes up [...] Teach me how to say goodbye

The final line in Hamilton’s verse, “Raise a glass to freedom,” reminds the listener of “The Story of Tonight” from the first act, which establishes a narrative link between the two songs. In “The Story of Tonight,” Hamilton and his friends sing about the glory of their futures, and during “The World Was

Wide Enough,” Hamilton is confident that his orphan fingerprints will remain on the world when he is dead.

In *Hamilton*, “legacy” as a concept is something to be cultivated and defended, but in the case of the male characters this desire to create a good legacy continuously leads to tragedy. When male characters choose to exit the public sphere and relinquish what control they had over how history will view them, as in the case with George Washington, an unease exists in the way that other male characters view them. Hamilton fiercely cultivates and defends his legacy, and encourages his son to do the same, but the priority he gives to his legacy leads to his murder at the conclusion of the play. The violent lengths that male characters go to cultivate and defend their legacies, and their willingness to make sacrifices that cause harm to others, indicates that the male-coded approach to legacy is ultimately destructive.

### The Feminine Legacy: That Would Be Enough

If there is an awareness among the male characters that their stories will eventually make it into history books, the same can also be said of the female characters. The female characters, however, are shown to approach the cultivation and defense of legacy differently. There are four named women in the musical: the Schuyler sisters (Angelica, Peggy, and Eliza), and Maria Reynolds. It is Eliza’s effect on Hamilton’s legacy and her approach to defending legacy through philanthropy that is particularly noteworthy.

In the first act, Eliza’s songs are predominantly concerned with her place in Hamilton’s life. She repeats her desire to be a part of Hamilton’s narrative, and to “be enough” for him. When Eliza sings about wanting to be enough for Hamilton, it is framed as her asking him to be satisfied with family life. She is shown to value his relationship with his family: “You deserve the chance to meet your son.”, This frame is opposed to his potential future as a rich soldier if he survives the war. This is also the first time that Eliza acknowledges that history has its eyes not only on Hamilton, but on her as his wife: “Oh, let me be a part of the narrative/ In the story they will write someday.” This establishes the power over that narrative and their combined legacy with Hamilton.

After the Reynolds Pamphlet is published, Eliza sings her solo song “Burn.” During this song, Eliza burns the letters that Hamilton used to woo her. The song frames this act as a very self-aware act of historical narrative erasure. Eliza understands that future historians will read her correspondence with Hamilton, hoping to get a sense of his relationship with his wife and

perhaps of who he was as a person beyond his politics. In burning the letters, she intends to thwart their efforts: “Let future historians wonder how Eliza reacted when you broke her heart [...] I’m burning the memories/ Burning the letters that might have redeemed you”. This is an act to ensure her own privacy, as well as the first acknowledgment the listener has that Eliza has some control over the narrative—if only in that she can silence herself: “I’m erasing myself from the narrative”.

Her original position in “That Would Be Enough” is one of passive self-effacement, but in “Burn” a shift occurs towards what could be called active passivity or self-erasure. It is an act of agency, but one which relies on Eliza removing herself from historical discourse. There is no guarantee that her voice would have been acknowledged in historical record if her correspondence with Hamilton had been discovered and read, considering that women’s voices have traditionally been sidelined in history. In the context of the musical, burning the letters allows Eliza to take control of the narrative. It is portrayed as a revolutionary act. In the context of *Hamilton*, Eliza Hamilton’s letter burning is performed during the only solo; all other songs in the musical are shared among characters or with the chorus. In “Burn,” Eliza is on her own. The lyrics are Eliza’s, the actions are Eliza’s, and her decision to erase herself from the narrative that she had begged to be a part of in the first act establishes her as a character who has chosen to separate herself from the self-regarding and destructive legacy that Hamilton is cultivating.

As an aside, but one that I consider extremely important from a feminist perspective, Eliza’s “Burn” places the culpability for the affair between Hamilton and Maria squarely on Hamilton. In “Say No to This,” when Hamilton begins his affair with Maria, and during “We Know,” when his political rivals confront him, Hamilton tries to place the blame for the affair on Maria by casting her as the seductress: “I am helpless”; “She courted me/ Escorted me to bed.” John Reynolds calls Maria his “whore wife,” despite the fact that the lyrics imply that they planned the extortion together. The male characters frame the affair as something that the female character had the most agency over, while they were unwilling participants.

Eliza’s “Burn” mentions Maria only once: “You published the letters she wrote you/ You told the whole world how you brought this girl into our bed.” The “Burn” lyrics avoid gendered slurs or accusations towards the female; the action of bringing her to bed is Hamilton’s, and thus the culpability for the affair is his. This reframing of the narrative that the male characters have built up offers a contrasting perspective on the traditional femme fatale position which Maria Reynolds seems to occupy in the male characters’ perspectives.

The character is re-framed by Hamilton's wife, the injured party in the affair, as someone who, while complicit, is not responsible for Eliza's pain.

The closing number for the musical, "Who lives, Who dies, Who tells your story," opens with Washington singing a reprise of "History has its eyes on you." The song begins with a callback to the play's continuing theme of legacy, and in particular the lack of power that people have over their own. Washington's opening for the closing song reminds listeners that Hamilton, who is now deceased, could not control who lived or who died in the play, and now that he is gone he cannot control how his legacy will continue without his controlling influence or violent defenders. The music builds towards the second half of the song, until the chorus begins to repeat the phrase: "Who tells your story?" After the fourth repetition, the male voices fall silent and the female voices take over:

CHORUS (FEMALE VOICES): Eliza

ELIZA: I put myself back in the narrative

CHORUS (FEMALE VOICES): Eliza

ELIZA: I stop wasting time on tears/ I live another fifty years/ It's not enough

Eliza's line "I put myself back in the narrative" is a very active phrase. There is a sense of ownership here, not only of the narrative but of her place in it. Eliza's active decision to insert herself in the narrative is a stronger expression of agency than her self-erasure because it commands attention rather than diverts it. Instead of the passive desire for a man to allow her into the story with "Oh, let me be a part of the narrative," Eliza takes control of Hamilton's story, answering the question "Who tells your story?" with her own female voice.

The rest of the song details how Eliza takes control defending Hamilton's legacy, as well as the legacies of the other men in the play:

ELIZA: I interview every soldier who fought by your side

MULLIGAN/LAFAYETTE/LAURENS: She tells our story  
[...]

ELIZA: I raise funds in D.C. for the Washington Monument

WASHINGTON: She tells my story

The rest of Eliza's "story"—that is, the description of the years following Hamilton's death which makes up the conclusion of the musical—is motivated by a desire to defend the legacies of male characters ("Have I done enough? Will they tell your story?"). She enlists Angelica, another strong female voice in the musical, to help her: "I rely on Angelica." This could be read in one of two ways: either Eliza has sidelined herself once again and submitted to the patriarchal expectation of masculine legacy taking precedence over female legacy, or the character is motivated by a desire to create positive consequences to the ambitions and legacies left behind by the male characters because she has the power to do so. The author of this essay chooses to argue for the somewhat more optimistic latter option.

Given the toxic and destructive consequences suffered by the male characters who had tried to cultivate and defend their personal legacies, the fact that Eliza attempts to build male legacies through philanthropy, such as "I speak out against slavery," indicates that in the context of the *Hamilton* musical, the power over legacy lies in being able to tell others' stories, and can yield positive consequences when the female characters take control. The traditionally masculine self-regarding behaviors performed by the male characters leave legacies that require violent defense, as seen in Philip Hamilton's narrative arc. It is the female survivors—the ones who are left behind to tell the stories of those who died fighting—who have the power to shape legacy positively.

### Legacy. What Is a Legacy?

The progression of the conceptualization of these legacy and gender helps researchers understand popular culture and society through the extremely popular lens of the *Hamilton* musical. In the *Hamilton*, a clear gendered difference exists between the male characters' and the female characters' approach to ambition and personal legacy. The female approach is structured as less toxic and destructive than the masculine approach. Despite the fact that the masculine motivation of protecting personal legacy led to the two murders in the play, Hamilton's character values the cultivation of his legacy until the moment he is shot. He is constantly at odds with other characters; first with

the English during the revolution, then with his fellow cabinet members, then with Eliza.

At the conclusion of the musical, Eliza explains how she worked tirelessly to defend Hamilton's legacy, and while this could be considered on par with Hamilton's struggle, the music is styled smoothly, and the character's vocals are played as calm and confident. Eliza is not struggling here. While male legacy is portrayed as a toxic fight, it is Eliza who can erase herself, rewrite herself, and defend the legacies of others at will. Because of this, the musical portrays female legacies as ultimately less destructive and more philanthropic than their male counterparts, and so the gendered portrayal of legacy privileges women in this historical musical.

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