

“Another Immigrant Comin’ Up from
the Bottom”: Reframing Alexander
Hamilton’s Life as an Immigrant
Narrative Through Hip Hop and
Historical Fiction in Miranda’s
Hamilton: an American Musical

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Tutkielmani tarkastelee Lin-Manuel Mirandan musikaalin *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2016) librettoa maahanmuuttokysymysten näkökulmasta. Musikaali yhdistää kerronnassaan hip hop musiikkia ja historiallista fiktiota, joten tutkielmani tarkastelee miten nämä ainesosat vaikuttavat musikaalin kerrontaan. Pro Gradu väittää, että *Hamilton* esittää päähenkilönsä Alexander Hamiltonin elämäntarinan maahanmuuttotarinaan, joka uudelleenrakentaa Yhdysvaltain perustusmyytin maahanmuuttoposiitiviseksi kertomukseksi hip hop-musiikin sekä historiallisen kaunokirjallisen kerronnan kautta.

Pro Gradu tarkastelee aluksi hip hop tutkimuksen taustoja rakentaen perustelua sille, että rap-lyriikkaa voidaan analysoida runoutena. Tutkielma väittää, että rap on osa afrikkalaisamerikkalaisen kirjallisuustradition luonnollista jatkumoa ja on täten oikeutettu statukseensa runoutena. Tämän jälkeen tutkimus etenee musikaalin analyysiin, jossa aluksi käsitellään rap-runoudelle tyypillisiä kielikuvia ja ominaisuuksia, sekä sitä miten nämä ominaisuudet ilmenevät *Hamilton*-musikaalissa.

Seuraavaksi tutkimus käsittelee historiallisen fiktion analyysia erityisesti suhteessa musikaaliin. Osio tutkii historian ja fiktion suhdetta, sekä totuuden merkitystä niin historiallisessa kirjallisuudessa yleensä, kuin *Hamilton*-musikaalissakin.

Viimeiseksi tutkimus käsittelee maahanmuuttokysymyksiä *Hamilton*-musikaalissa. Tutkimus käy läpi aluksi Yhdysvaltain maahanmuuton historiaa sen perustamisajoilta nykypäivään. Tämän jälkeen tutkimus käy läpi maahanmuuttokirjallisuuden tavallisimpia rakenteita ja määrittelee maahanmuuttokirjallisuuden päärakenteiksi maahanmuuttaja sankarin, hänen taipaleensa sekä tapahtumat, jotka määrittelevät tuota taivalta. Tutkimus analysoi *Hamilton*-musikaalia näiden rakenteiden kautta. Lopuksi tutkimus käy läpi, miten rap-runous ja historiallinen fiktio vaikuttavat musikaalin rakentamaan maahanmuuttotarinaan. Tutkimus tulee siihen lopputulokseen, että rap-musiikin ja historiallisen fiktion kautta *Hamilton* uudelleenmäärittelee Alexander Hamiltonin elämäntarinan maahanmuuttotarinaan, joka vahvistaa positiivista kuvaa maahanmuuttajista yhdysvaltalaisessa yhteiskunnassa.

Asiasanat:

hip hop, kirjallisuuden tutkimus, libretot, lyriikka, maahanmuutto, musikaalit, näytelmäkirjallisuus, raplyriikka, vähemmistökirjallisuus, Yhdysvallat

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1. Introduction

It's really astonishing that in a country founded by immigrants, "immigrant" has somehow become a bad word.

J. Period in "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)" in *The Hamilton Mixtape* (2016)

In early December of 2016, the hip hop album *The Hamilton Mixtape* debuted as number one on Billboard's 200 list (Caulfield, 2016). It was an album inspired by the musical theater phenomenon *Hamilton: An American Musical* that had begun its Broadway run a year earlier. *The Hamilton Mixtape* (2016) consists of both covers of the hits from the musical as well as original music inspired by the play by hip hop and pop artists such as Nas, Common, Alicia Keyes, and Sia. The original songs follow the themes of the play and thus at the center of the album is the question of what it feels like to be a marginalized person in today's United States. The song "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)", which opens with the above statement made by the music producer J. Period, focuses on the immigrant experiences in America. The issues of immigration have been a prevailing political question since America's founding and they continue to be at the center of contemporary political discussion both in the United States and worldwide. The contemporary political discussion on immigrant issues tend to frame immigration solely as a problem and the word immigrant, as J. Cole puts it, has "become a bad word" (The Hamilton Mixtape 2016).

The musical *Hamilton* (2015), written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, examines the issues of immigration in both the historical and contemporary America by reframing one of its Founding Fathers, Alexander Hamilton, life story as an immigrant narrative. This immigrant story is told through the mixture of historical fiction and hip hop music. These two main components of the play bring together the past and the present while examining the question of what it means to be an immigrant in America. The juxtaposition between the past and the present is further emphasized in the casting of the play. On the stage the Founders and other historically white characters become African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, as well as immigrants of America. For example, Miranda himself, a second-generation Puerto Rican immigrant, portrayed Alexander Hamilton as part of the play's original cast in 2015 until summer 2016. Consequently, the casting choice mixed with hip hop creates a unique perspective to

examine the myth of the American Founding. The musical's director, Thomas Kail has described the play as "a story about America then, told by America now" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 33).

At the center of this fictionalized retelling of the American founding is the issue of immigration, both as it appeared during the founding of the nation as well as the way in which it is still present in contemporary America. The play reframes Alexander Hamilton's story as an immigrant narrative through the mixture of hip hop and historical fiction. This thesis examines the reframing of Alexander Hamilton's life story as an immigrant narrative by analyzing it through the theoretical framework of immigrant narratives presented by Madelaine Hron in her book *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture* (2009). In her book Hron examines the issues of immigrant literature in America by applying immigrant psychology into literary analysis. The focus of her work is both the physical and psychological suffering that is expressed in the literature of immigrants in America. She argues that this suffering often goes ignored and the prevailing view on immigrants is that once an immigrant is successful in their assimilation to their new country, all suffering will cease to exist. Her research offers the main parameters through which this thesis examines *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative. Hron (2009, 15) identifies three main components of immigrant narratives, which are *the immigrant hero*, *the journey* and *the series of trials* that the immigrant goes through. This thesis analyzes the play through these three main components of immigrant narrative while simultaneously examining the roles of hip hop and historical fiction in the reframing of Alexander Hamilton's story as an immigrant narrative.

The thesis argues that *Hamilton* reinforces the idea of America as a nation of immigrants in a positive regard by retelling the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton's life as an immigrant story. The play achieves this by mixing historical fiction with rap poetics, which together reshape Hamilton into an immigrant hero. Through historical fiction, Hamilton is purposefully presented as an immigrant hero against the fact that the historical Hamilton held growingly anti-immigration ideals towards the end of his life. The rap poetics represents the contemporary America and is used as a literary device to further reinforce the idea of America as a multicultural and multiethnic nation.

My personal interest in studying hip hop through literary criticism rose from my love and appreciation for the genre of music. I grew up listening to American hip hop of the 1990s and the early 2000s. As my understanding of the music grew I came to question my own fascination and identification with a genre of music that had barely any resemblance to my own reality. As a non-American white woman, I could not directly relate to what the mostly male and mostly African American hip hop artists that I listened to were rapping about. I find it important to further note here that I am conducting my research as a white woman, and as such I inevitably approach the topic at least to some extent through my own ethnic identity.

In time I grew more critical towards the common issues surrounding hip hop, particularly its misogyny problem. Yet there was something captivating about hip hop that kept me hooked despite the fact that it often did not speak to my own experience, and occasionally went directly against my existence as a woman. However, my questioning of the genre did not turn me away from it but instead awakened my curiosity to understand its underlying issues more complexly as well as to figure out what it was that truly captivated me in hip hop music. I discovered the academic field of hip hop studies and uncovered many hip hop scholars, such as Tricia Rose, Jeff Chang, Michael Eric Dyson, and Inka Rantakallio who were critical of the genre yet still passionate fans of it. More importantly, I realized my love for rap and hip hop came from the same source my love for literature comes from. My passion for hip hop is rooted in its unique approach towards the use of language. Rap is unlike any other genre of music as it is deeply connected to the poetic use of language. As this thesis will argue, rap is poetry, and my fascination and connection towards it comes from my fascination and connection to language and literature. Language resides at the core of rap as much as it exists at the core of literature. Thus, in my thesis I seek to delve deeper into the language and poetics of rap and hip hop.

Hip hop studies is an interdisciplinary field of research that incorporates multiple different fields of study, such as sociology, cultural studies, study of politics and so on. Yet, few scholars have written about the study of hip hop and rap as a form of literature. Those who have written about the poetics of rap have placed major focus of their research into defending rap's place as a poetic artform with literary merit and as such, worthy of further literary analysis. Among the scholars to do this important

work are Alexs Pate and Adam Bradley, whose formative research on hip hop poetics are the foundation of my research about rap's poetics. Both scholars have written books on the topic of hip hop poetics and aim to build a case for the study of hip hop and rap as a literary form. Pate's book *In the Heart of the Beat: The Poetry of Rap* (2010) offers a method through which rap can be read and analyzed as a form of poetry. His aim is to promote the appreciation of rap as a literary form rather than just as a controversial and popular genre of music. In his book, Pate argues that at its core, rap is a form of complex literary expression and through his research Pate builds a case for rap's literary merits. In a similar vein, Bradley's book *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* ([2009] 2017) argues that rap is the most significant development that has happened to poetry in the past several decades. He also seeks to build a case for hip hop's literary merits and in his work, Bradley offers an in-depth examination of the most prevalent literary devices used in rap poetics.

The aim of my own research is to expand the study of rap poetics by examining further how hip hop studies can be included as a major component of literary criticism and to offer a complex example of how rap poetics can enrich the study of literature. Hence, in my research I will not place major focus on building an argument for hip hop's literary merits as Pate and Bradley have already done so. Instead, I will examine the arguments presented by Pate and Bradley and demonstrate their methods in practice by applying these to the libretto of the hip hop musical *Hamilton*. The primary focus of my research is analyzing how the issues of immigration are dealt within the play.

As stated earlier, rap is not the only major component through which *Hamilton* builds its immigrant narrative. Historical fiction and the idea of truth plays a major role in the construction of Hamilton as an immigrant hero. In fact, it is the combination of hip hop poetics and historical fiction that achieves the effect of reinforcing the view of America as the nation of immigrants. Thus, in my research the study of historical fiction alongside the research on rap poetics forms the basis of my analysis of *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative.

Section two of this thesis builds a case for rap as a form of poetry by placing it as part of the organic evolution of African American literary tradition. Section three examines more closely the poetic devices of rap while analyzing how these devices

appear in *Hamilton*. By examining the works of Bradley and Pate we can identify seven main components of rap poetics, which are then closely examined in this section. The following section four discusses the study of historical fiction while examining the role of truth and historical accuracy in *Hamilton*. The fifth section analyzes *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative through the theoretical framework provided by Hron. The section first discusses the immigrant history of America and the idea of America as a nation of immigrant. The analysis then moves on to examine the character of Hamilton as an immigrant hero, as well as his immigrant journey and the series of trials he goes through during it. Finally, the section discusses the roles of rap poetry and historical fiction in the retelling of Hamilton's life as an immigrant narrative. The thesis concludes that through the combination of rap poetry and historical fiction *Hamilton* is able to reframe Alexander Hamilton's life story as an immigrant narrative that reinforces the positive aspects of immigration and sees it as an enrichment and strength of American nation.

1.1. Notes on the Primary Source and a Brief Summary of *Hamilton*

At the time when this research was conducted, the full libretto of *Hamilton: An American Musical* had only been published in a book that in addition to the play's libretto includes intermittent chapters about the creation of the play. The book is titled *Hamilton: The Revolution – Being the Complete Libretto of the Broadway Musical with a True Account of its Creation, and Concise Remarks on Hip-Hop, the Power of Stories, and the New America* (2016). The book lists as its authors the playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda as well as Jeremy McCarter. The way the book is conducted is that the libretto of the play is divided into sections while there are intermittent chapters in between, which describe the creation of the play as well as provide historical and cultural context to the libretto. The play itself is written by Miranda and the intermittent chapters are written by McCarter. In my research my analysis focuses solely on the libretto of *Hamilton* written by Miranda. However, at times I have used the information provided by McCarter as context for my analysis. Thus, when referencing the libretto or the intermittent chapters the thesis marks the book as its source. However, all references made to the libretto are solely the work of Miranda, whereas

references to the book that provide context or background information are then leaning on the writings of McCarter.

Furthermore, to make following the thesis easier, I will provide a very brief summary on the events of the play. *Hamilton* tells the life story of its titular character in forty-six musical numbers and without any intermittent dialogue. The play begins with Hamilton's early childhood on the small Caribbean island of Nevis, where he was born. Hamilton's father abandons him and his mother when Hamilton is only ten years old and his mother dies two years later leaving Hamilton an orphan. When Hamilton is nineteen years old a hurricane destroys his hometown, which inspires Hamilton to write an essay about the event. The essay is so impressive that some of the people in Nevis set up a collection to send Hamilton to the American colonies where he can get an education. When Hamilton arrives to New York he meets Aaron Burr who will become his enemy and biggest political rival and eventually kill Hamilton in a duel when Hamilton is only in his late forties.

The young Hamilton joins the revolution and fights in the Revolutionary war (1775-1783). During the war he impresses general George Washington who after the war, as the country's first President, appoints him as the country's first Treasury Secretary in 1789. During the war Hamilton also meets and marries his wife Eliza Schuyler. After the war Hamilton goes to have an impressive political career and his main achievement is his contribution to the creation of America's financial system. During his career Hamilton makes a lot of enemies, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and his relationship with Aaron Burr grows increasingly volatile and culminates in the duel where Hamilton's life comes to an untimely end.

2. Acknowledging Rap as a form of Poetry

I picked up the pen like Hamilton
Street analyst, now I write words that try to channel 'em
No political power—just lyrical power

Nas in “Wrote My Way Out” in *The Hamilton Mixtape* (2016)

Alexander Hamilton was a gifted and prolific writer during his time, who through his writing was able to rise from poverty and become one of the most influential political figures of early America. Similarly, many gifted rappers have been able to use their writing as way to rise from poverty to success. One of those gifted rappers is the New York born artist Nas, who in the above verse compares his success to that of Hamilton. Both men were able to rise from their dire circumstances through their gift of writing, yet as Nas points out, Hamilton’s power came from his political position, but for Nas, his only power is in his writing. The power of rap relies in its lyrical power and not in its music. The power of rap is the power of poetry and this section examines what makes rap also a genre of poetry and not simply a genre of music.

Hip hop emerged in the mid-1970s from the South Bronx neighborhood in New York, and the academic study of hip hop, or hip hop studies as it became to be called in the mid 2000’s, began to emerge twenty years later (Miller et al. 2014, 8). Tricia Rose’s *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994) is often mentioned as one of the early founding texts of the academic field of hip hop studies. In her book, Rose (1994) examines the evolution of rap and hip hop culture, the technological and oral practices of rap music, the relationship between rap and the politics of African American culture, as well as the sexual politics in rap music concerning African American female rappers. By being one of the first books of critical research on hip hop and its surrounding culture, Rose’s *Black Noise* helped to legitimize the field of hip hop studies. In her book Rose defines rap as one of the main components of hip hop culture as a form of music “that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America” (Rose 1994, 2). The terms hip hop and rap are often used as interchangeable, yet hip hop refers to the overall culture whereas rap is the specific genre of music created within that culture. Rose (1994, 2) defines hip hop culture as the culture of African American and Afro-Caribbean people that besides rap,

consists of the components of graffiti art and breakdance. However, hip hop has evolved greatly since the writing of Rose's book and today hip hop culture is widely spread around the globe and has a strong influence on different cultural forms from other genres of music to fashion.

In the first ever issue of *The Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, published as recently as 2014, hip hop studies is explained to include a multitude of different fields of study, ranging from sociology to religious studies, from cultural studies to critical race theory and so on (Miller et al. 2014, 9). Thus, hip hop studies is a truly multidisciplinary field of study. Furthermore, the article notes that the field is ever expanding to different areas such as gender studies and popular culture studies (Miller et al. 2014, 9). Interestingly yet not surprisingly, the article does not at any point mention the study of language nor literary criticism. What makes this unsurprising is the fact that much of hip hop studies has been more concerned over the historical or political criticism of hip hop culture than the language of hip hop and rap. Interestingly, the article fails to make any mentions of the study of language although even a casual listener of rap music is most likely aware of the important role of language and wordplay as a core element of rap. David Caplan (2014, 13) points out that the critical approaches to hip hop hardly ever examine in detail the poetics of rap and when scholars do highlight skillful rhymes they only do so through quotes without a deeper analysis of the quality of the rhymes, as if laying out a quote is enough to demonstrate the literary merit of the verse.

Although the field of hip hop studies has been in existence since the early 1990s, it still lacks the full recognition of rap as a literary form worth of further analysis. As Caplan (2014, 13) points out, the issues of rap's poetic merits are often strongly debated. In fact, the two major scholars examining rap as a form of poetry, Bradley and Pate, both begin their books on rap poetics by defending the idea of studying rap through literary criticism. In the introduction of his book Pate (2010, xvi) notes that while hip hop studies is a growing field, much of the writing still focuses on the "social, political, economic, technological, and community-oriented issues" within hip hop and rap. Furthermore, Pate adds (2010, xvi), that in much of these writings, rap lyrics are presented as evidence to demonstrate the existence of particular social, political or economic circumstances. Despite language and the lyrics being at the center of rap music, studying rap as a literary form is still rather new. So new in fact,

that scholars like Pate and Bradley, still need to defend such idea. Pate has expressed his frustration with this issue rather elegantly in the following passage from his book:

There are, in fact, many people who love rap, who are committed to hip hop and are still dismayed at the amount of energy and language it requires to establish its literary significance. They would much rather have a conversation in which the artistic quality and effectiveness of rap as a literary expression were a given. (Pate 2010, xx)

As this thesis demonstrates, the idea of rap as a literary art form worth studying is not yet fully acknowledged and thus an argument has to be made for considering rap as a form of poetry.

This section further examines the idea of studying rap as a literary form and makes the argument that rap can be recognized and analyzed as a form of poetry. The section first explores and dismantles the most predominant arguments against rap's poetics. Secondly, it examines rap's literary merits and poetics by first defining poetry and then demonstrating how rap fits this definition. Finally, I illustrate how hip hop and rap are a part of the evolution of African American cultural and literary traditions by arguing that rap emerged from the African American political and artistic movements of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. By examining the history of African American literature and poetry, we can argue that it is precisely the origins from which rap emerged and the traditions the artform carries on that makes it poetry.

2.1. The Common Objections of Considering Rap as Poetry

The obvious objection for studying rap as poetry is the question of difference between rap and other genres of music. What makes rap lyrics different from for example pop lyrics or country songs and thus merits its examination through literary criticism? Bradley (2017, xvi) argues that what distinguishes rap from other music genres is the way the lyrics are written. In rap verse the rhythm of language must correspond with the rhythm of the music, or the beat, whereas for example in pop music the lyrics must also correspond with the melody of the song (Bradley 2017, xvi). Therefore, although many rap songs themselves contain complex melodies, the rhythm of the language and the beat dominate as the main fixture of the sound (Bradley 2017, xvii). Bradley argues that for this reason rap lyrics can be considered in isolation from the music solely as

textual poetry without much difficulty (Bradley 2017, xvii).

Furthermore, in distinguishing the difference between song lyrics and literary poetry, critics have argued that song lyrics are not required to produce what Bradley calls “sophisticated poetic effects” and in fact lyrics that do have these poetics effects may take attention away from the music (Bradley 2017, xvii). Due to rap’s commitment to the rhythm rather than melody, it is able to liberate itself from traditional conventions of musical form and create a distinguishable poetic form that is separate from the music (Bradley 2017, xvii). Rap also challenges the notion that song lyrics do not contain most of the established structures of literary poetry (Bradley 2017, xvii). As Bradley (2010, xvii) argues, rap lyrics do in fact contain sophisticated poetic formations that align with the structures of literary poetry, and in fact, rap poetry is one of the most meticulously constructed form of contemporary poetry. Bradley (2017, xvii) also adds that while rap’s poetry can be examined through literary criticism it can simultaneously be recognized as a form of music.

In his book, Bradley (2017) divides the literary devices of rap poetry into three categories, which are rhythm, rhyme, and wordplay. Bradley (2017, 4) identifies rhythm as rap’s most central element and argues that the most prominent kind of rhythm within a rap song is created by the beat. Nevertheless, while the most obvious element of rhythm to a listener of a rap song is the beat, the language of rap itself is also characterized by its rhythmic expression. In contrast to Bradley’s view on rap’s poetics, Pate (2010, 4) argues that the poetics of rap is composed by different elements, of which the beat is simply a one of them. One of the main arguments Pate (2010, 4) makes in his book is that rather than the music or the beat, the textual poetry is the most pivotal element of rap. In contrary to Bradley’s claim, Pate (2010, 4) argues that in order to analyze rap as literary form, we must disregard the music altogether.

Both Bradley and Pate make well rounded arguments for the role of music in rap’s poetics and I would suggest that rap can be analyzed as poetry both by including the rhythm of the beat into the analysis or by solely focusing on the textual aspects of the rap poem. Whichever view point one should choose to rely on depends on the analytical perspective of the research. For example, to examine the literary techniques of rap poetry, the significance of the beat should be considered and discussed. However, if one seeks to analyze the rap poem’s content through the tools of literary

criticism the rap poem could be completely separated from its musical aspects. The rhythm of the rap poem still exists within the language of it, although its relation to the beat is not entirely obvious in the rhythm of the language. In my thesis I seek to examine *Hamilton* through both perspectives by first demonstrating how the rap's poetics are present in the musical and then later focusing my analysis entirely on the textual aspects of the play.

Distinguishing rap's difference from other genres of music is not the only barrier one needs to overcome when seeking broader recognition for rap as a form of poetry. Another drawback for the idea of seeing rap as poetry comes from the same criticisms rap in general often receives. Rap is often accused of being profane, misogynistic, and that it promotes violence as well as glorifies socially defective culture among urban black communities (Rose 2008, 62). In her follow-up book to *Black Noise*, Rose (2008, 262) examines the debates around hip hop from both sides by analyzing the main arguments of both the hip hop critics and defenders as well as proposing ways in which consumers of hip hop can transform it into a more tolerant culture.

The main argument against hip hop in general is, as Rose states, "the claim that it glorifies, encourages, and causes violence" (2008, 34). This idea stems from the unproven belief that the consumption of violent stories or images causes violence (Rose 2008, 35). Hip hop, having stemmed from the dire circumstances of 1970s Bronx, has a longstanding tradition in portraying the life of black and brown youth in urban areas, which often include descriptions of violence. However, as Rose (2008, 35) points out, the evidence to promote the idea that the consumption of violent stories or images can be causally linked to cause violent behavior is insufficient. This concern over popular culture's effect on violence in everyday life consistently targets disproportionately people of color, individually and as a group (Rose 2008, 35). People of color are unduly affiliated with violence and therefore isolating hip hop culture as a cause for the violence should be highly questioned as it further stigmatizes certain groups of people and their artistic expression (Rose 2008, 35-36).

Another main criticism against hip hop and one that has often been cited while arguing against rap's literary merits, is that of misogyny and profane use of language (Pate 2010, 57-61). Rose (2008, 114) states that sexism in hip hop is a real and visible issue, yet the discussion surrounding it rarely seeks to achieve the equality of women

of color. The discussion on sexism in hip hop often perpetuates the idea that American culture was more enlightened in the past than what it is now (Rose 2008, 117). This idealized view of the past leads to the argument that blames the young men of color for causing the decline of the culture and that hip hop culture itself is the evidence of their guilt (Rose 2008, 118). This argument relies heavily not just on the idealized view of the past, but also on the idea that the mainstream American culture reflects a completely different model of masculinity than that of black culture (Rose 2008, 118). In contrast to the masculinity of black culture, the American model of masculinity is presumably respectful of women and their rights (Rose 2008, 118). However, as Rose (2008, 118) states, in reality the “mainstream masculinity continues to treat women as fundamentally less valuable than men”. Consequently, to present the mainstream ideals of masculinity as proper and respectful of women and then claim that hip hop promotes misogynistic and violent ideals of masculinity is to put blame of a larger societal problem solely on a marginalized group of people.

The problem of misogyny in hip hop is real, but hip hop does not create the culture of sexism, rather hip hop is created in a sexist culture, which then is being reflected in some of the music the culture produces. The issues of misogyny or violence in hip hop should not be ignored, but to single out hip hop as the root of a problem that is a systemic issue within the society is completely discriminatory to the people who live and create hip hop culture. Furthermore, the issues of hip hop, whether exaggerated or not, do not justify the dismissal of rap’s literary merits.

Caplan (2014, 14), argues that to claim that hip hop should not be considered as poetry due to its issues of misogyny or violent and profane language suggests that hip hop is not important enough of closer examination. The debate on the issue tends to revolve around the question of cultural prestige based on the idea that poetry must be honorable for it to be considered poetry (Caplan 2014, 15). Therefore, the argument for rap’s poetics elevates its prestige, yet to argue against it diminishes its worth (Caplan 2014, 15). Although, hip hop culture and rap music have their issues, these issues do not justify the dismissal of rap’s poetic merits at offhand. Likewise, to accept rap as poetry does not mean that these issues should be denied. Rap can be both problematic and literary since poetry is not defined by the decency or the offensiveness of the poem’s language or content.

2.2. Rap as Part of African American Literary Tradition

The previous section examined the main arguments against the idea of considering rap as poetry, yet as this thesis argues, rap actually *is* poetry. To put it simply, rap is poetry because it is a direct continuation of the poetic and literary traditions of African American literature. However, before examining further the evolution of rap as a form of African American literary tradition, we must first look at how poetry is defined. The problem with defining poetry is that there is no straightforward definition for it. As Caplan (2014, 14) points out, poetry is often mistaken as something that has a fixed definition containing all the different cultures, time periods, and genres it exists in. Yet, there is no stable definition for poetry that can be applied to all these different cultures, time periods and genres it resides in. The definition of poetry often relies on how poetry and prose are differentiated from one another (Aviram 1994, 44). According to Amittai F. Aviram, prose has generally been defined as “writing of speech that is *not poetry*”, yet in contrast, poetry cannot be defined simply as writing that is not prose (Aviram 1994, 45).

Pate (2010, 15) tackles the problem of defining poetry by using a variety of complementary definitions of it. One of the ways in which he defines poetry is through an idea of poetry being like a mirror that seeks to reflect the truth of the poet and the world in which they reside in (Pate 2010, 15). The poet’s purpose is to reveal the actual truth about the life and the people from the circumstances from which the poet comes (Pate 2010, 15). The poet’s writing then reflects this truth through the kind of language that is most organic and best represents the reality of those people (Pate 2010, 15).

Poetry can be loosely defined as a form of writing that seeks to reflect the truth of the people and the circumstances that concern the poet, written through language that best represent those people and their circumstances. Therefore, by this definition, rap truly is poetry. Since its emergence in the 1970s, rap has sought out to tell the true experiences of particularly black and brown people in America, and eventually other marginalized groups around the world. Rap has always told the truth in the organic language of the rappers and their communities, and therefore the argument that rap is not poetry due to its sometimes profane or problematic language does not hold up. Rap’s poetry exists precisely in its language, since it is the natural, most truthful

language of the rappers. This definition of poetry may seem somewhat vague on its own, but as Pate (2010, 15) notes, the challenge of defining poetry is emphasized by the abstract language used to define it. Therefore, to make a case for rap's poetics I cannot simply rely on an abstract definition of what poetry is and how rap fits into that definition. Rap is poetry because it is an organic development of the poetic and literary traditions of African American culture. To examine rap's poetics more comprehensively, we must look at the history of African American literature to demonstrate how rap evolved from that literary tradition.

When hip hop culture and rap started gradually taking form in the late 1970's New York it did not emerge out of nothing, rather it was a continuation of the traditions of African American culture. To be more precise, as Pate (2010, 3) points out, rap rose from the post-modern African American literature and its origins can be traced back to the African American poetic and oral traditions. Musically though, rap has its roots in Jamaican dub as well as southern blues (Bradley 2017, xxxii). Despite rap being a form of music, as it originates from both oral and musical traditions of black culture, it has a heightened focus on language and the poetics of African American oral and literary traditions. As Bradley (2017, xxxii) continues, rap "originated as much from speech as from song".

Much like rap, African American literary tradition itself shares this duality of text and sound (Brown 1999, 28). Fahamisha Patricia Brown (1999, 28) writes in her book on African American poetry and its vernacular culture that a considerable amount of African American literature is meant to be spoken out loud and often in front of an audience. Furthermore, she adds that the relationship between the written and oral traditions in African American literature comes from the idea that the written word is an expansion of the spoken word (Brown 1999, 28-29). In African cultures there is an appreciation towards skillful use of words and poetic expressions as well as storytelling, and for these attributes to become fully realized they need to be read as well as heard by an audience (Brown 1999, 29).

Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward, Jr. (2011, 2) have written a brief introduction to the evolution of African American literature, which begins with the statement that African American literature did not originate from the United States but rather from the mainly West African oral and written traditions. The Middle

Passage across the Atlantic Ocean and the scattering around “the New World” that followed it, changed African identities of the diverse group of enslaved people (Graham & Ward Jr. 2011, 2). The black sound that characterizes African American literature was born from the circumstances of the slave trade. This black sound, as Graham and Ward Jr. (2011, 8) puts it, is demonstrated “through the languages of music and the voice”. What brought this domination of sound to African American literary tradition came from a law that forbid African Americans to learn to write or read English (Graham & Ward Jr. 2011, 8). This caused African Americans to develop a complex system of communication that incorporated different instruments of sound created by one’s voice, body or musical instruments (ibid.). These systems of communication as well as the creolized languages of the enslaved Africans formed the foundation of African American oral and print literary traditions (ibid.). What followed this development period of African American literature was a time of changing circumstances for the lives of African Americans in the early twentieth century, which in the African American literary tradition birthed what Graham and Ward Jr. (2011, 10-11) call “a specific African American modernism”.

African American modernism laid its foundation from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1950s (Werner & Shannon 2011, 241). Between the late 1910s until mid-1930s, African American culture was very much centered around Harlem in New York (ibid.) Thus, Harlem came to be known as the mecca of black culture and the time period to be called Harlem Renaissance (Bernard 2011, 270). The period of laying down the foundation of African American modernism was followed by the era of Civil Rights Movement and the Black Arts Movement that took place from the 1950s to 1976, followed by a period of poetic change within African American literature (Graham & Ward 2011, 11). This time of poetic transformations of African American literature in the mid-1970s coincided with the emergence of hip hop. Hence, when hip hop’s relation to the evolution of African American literature is examined, it becomes evident that hip hop evolved from the same literary traditions than all the other African American literary traditions do.

First, Rap as an artform shares the appreciation towards the same literary devices of text and sound that most African American literature does, and by mixing poetic expression with music and the oral tradition it demands to be both read as well

as listened to. Rap's relationship to music is an organic aspect of it as it evolved from African American literary tradition, which emphasizes the role of sound in poetry and literature. At its core rap is an organic continuation of the literary and oral traditions of African American culture. In fact, the infusion of music and poetry is not a new phenomenon and by no means original to rap poetry. Before the early twentieth century music had a much more central role in poetry (Bradley 2017, xviii). Furthermore, just as orality has a long tradition in African American cultural traditions, so does music and the way it has been used to enrich the poetic form, for which Langston Hughes and Scott-Heron are notable examples (Pate 2010, 22). Thus, the musicality and orality are one of the key characteristics of what links rap back to the African American cultural and literary traditions.

Second, perhaps the most notable similarity that rap shares with African American literature and poetry is its aim to blend its principles of art with politics and social justice, much like the African American poetry of the 1970s that was inspired by the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s (Bolden 2011, 532). Pate (2010, 6) argues that this infusion of aesthetics and politics has always been at the core of African American poetry and that the poetry written by African Americans has strived to empower African American people. However, the Black Power Movement and the artistic movement it inspired, the Black Arts Movement (BAM), had a significant impact on the poetic expression of African American poetry. As Pate (2010, 20) writes, the poets of the BAM challenged the system by resisting the status quo of the domination of white culture and sought to establish a visible presence for African American culture. Furthermore, Pate (2010, 21) adds, that in the poetry of rap there exists "the same ugliness, frustration, anger, and dread" that can be find in the poetry that emerged from BAM.

The similarities of rap and the poetry that emerged from the black political and artistic movements of the 1960s and 1970s is not coincidental. As stated earlier, hip hop culture and rap music emerged in the late 1970s New York, which coincides with the transformations of African American poetry. Rap came to existence in the South Bronx in the mid-1970s, which was, as Pate (2010, 27) states, a complex time characterized by different sociopolitical factors. The most prominent factor of that time in concerning the birth of hip hop was the need for the urban black and Latinx

youths to communicate their experiences (Pate 2010, 27). Thus, rap was always meant to continue the political traditions of African American literary culture. The language of rap is the poet's source of power and as Pate (2010, 3) notes, to acknowledge the literary capabilities of the rap poet is an important act in itself since "literary talent is not readily acknowledged when it emanates from inner-city ghettos". The mainstream discussion about rap and rappers often portrays the artists as illiterate as if not acknowledging the literary capabilities of rap poets (Pate 2010, 3). Rap has given a voice for marginalized people and enabled rap poets to better oppose the status quo (Pate 2010, 16). Pate (2010, 16) argues that because of this opposing nature of rap poetry it "works the way poetic expression has always worked". Bradley (2017, xvi) then writes, that rap did not only give a form of expression to a group of marginalized people, it did so by enabling them to use "their own often profane, always assertive" language.

In conclusion, to put it simply, rap is poetry because it is a direct continuation of the poetic and literary traditions of African American literature. It could be easy to dismiss its poetics without the deeper understanding of the evolution of African American cultural and literary traditions that strongly link textual and oral expressions, much like rap does. To call rap just music is to dismiss the traditions that it emerged from and that it still carries on within African American literary tradition. I have purposefully not yet discussed the broader poetic devices that rap often employs while making the argument for rap's poetics. This is due to the fact that while rappers do apply many conventional poetic devices in their works, at the core of rap's poetics is the fact that it emerged from a long and rich tradition of African American literature. While understanding rap's poetic devices will make the case for rap's poetics more precise, the key argument is the fact that rap emerged from African American literature and its post-modern poetic movement and for that reason rap *is* poetry. However, the key to acknowledging rap's status as poetry is not only to understand its history and how the artistic expression came to existence, but to also recognize the extensive use of complex poetic devices within rap. The next section examines these devices, while analyzing how they appear in the libretto of *Hamilton*.

3. Poetic Devices of Rap and How They Manifest in *Hamilton*

Best of all, he made the leap that virtually nobody else had made, using hip-hop to tell a story that had nothing to do with hip-hop — using it as form, not content.

Jeremy McCarter on Lin-Manuel Miranda in *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016, 10).

Miranda's work in his musicals is unique in how he incorporates hip hop as a story telling device. Before *Hamilton*, Miranda had written another successful musical *In the Heights*, which is based on the mainly Hispanic-American neighborhood of Washington Heights in New York City where Miranda grew up in (McCarter & Miranda 2016, 10). Much like *Hamilton*, *Heights* was an immigrant story, but unlike *Hamilton*, the musical was not purely hip hop but rather a fusion of salsa and traditional Broadway ballads alongside hip hop (McCarter & Miranda 2016, 10). However, it was the first successful musical story told partly through hip hop, or as McCarter puts it, it was the hip hop musical he had waited for that finally came “[a]fter many disappointments and false alarms” (McCarter & Miranda 2016, 10). Another difference between Miranda's two plays is that *Heights* is a story about the Latinx community in the Washington Heights of Manhattan, thus hip hop can be seen as a natural form of storytelling in a musical that deals with the community and the place where hip hop originated from. However, *Hamilton* is a piece of historical fiction about the white founders of the United States and hence the choice to cast people of color and to rely almost solely on hip hop as a genre and culture to tell the story might at first seem odd. Yet, as I am arguing in my thesis, through hip hop *Hamilton* is able to highlight its protagonist's life as an immigrant story, and by having the characters communicate through rap the play is able to tell this historical story in a way that makes it contemporary. This section of the thesis explores the role of hip hop and rap as a form of storytelling in the musical *Hamilton* and how the literary devices of rap poetry are present in the musical.

Although the main argument for considering rap a form of poetry relies on its origins as a continuation of African American literary traditions, to make a comprehensive argument for rap as poetry one needs to also understand the extensive use of poetic devices in rap. Both Bradley and Pate share their own views on how to read rap poetry and how rap achieves its poetic effects. Examining the research and

analytical methods of Bradley and Pate we can identify seven main components of rap's poetics. These main components are *rhythm*, *rhyme*, *wordplay*, *referencing*, *style*, *storytelling*, and *signifying*. Together these components work as analytical devices that can be used to uncover the rap poem's core meaning or message. This section discusses each of these components while examining how they appear in *Hamilton* in order to both better demonstrate rap's poetic merits as well as to showcase how rap is utilized as a storytelling device in *Hamilton*.

The two main elements in any given poetry are rhythm and *meter*. Bradley (2017, 7) defines poetic rhythm as "the natural pattern of speech in relation to a given meter", and meter is the arrangement of the rhythm within a poem. Derek Attridge (1995, 12) writes that one of the main functions of rhythm in poetry is to create heightened language. By this he means that in a metric verse the meter is an organizational instrument that creates the feeling that every syllable has an important role (ibid.). He explains that by having a consistent rhythm the poem appears as a cohesive entity (ibid.). Additionally, the function of rhythm is to create expectations in the reader's or listener's mind, and by diverging from the expected the poet is able to emphasize certain words and moments within the poem (Attridge 1995, 15). Bradley (2017, 10-11) argues that in rap, beat is a key element of the rhythm and the beat creates the predictability of the rhythm, which allows the rapper to diverge from expectations in order to emphasize certain words and moments within the rap poem. Bradley (2017, 29) claims that since rap is inherently an oral medium the rhythm can only be found partly within the text and to fully comprehend rap's rhythm one must take the beat of the music into account when analyzing rap's poetic rhythm. Yet, Pate (2010, 110) argues that by examining the rap poem's structure through the tools of line measurement such as meter, the rhythm of the rap poem can be detected outside the music or the beat.

Attridge (1995, 48) writes that the meter, whether in music or poetry, consist of three main features, first of which is the *organization* of the rhythm, which creates the two other features, the *regularity* and the *strength* of the meter. The pattern of the meter created by its regularity creates the poem's beat, which creates the measurable components of the poem (Attridge 1995, 48). To examine how this poetic rhythm appears in Miranda's *Hamilton* we can consider this next verse from the play's

third musical number “My Shot”. To highlight the rhythm of the below verse, stressed syllables have been marked in bold and the number of stressed syllables within a line have been indicated in brackets while the number of overall syllables of a line are in square brackets.

- ¹**Scratch** that (1) [2]
²**This** is **not** a **moment**, it’s the **movement** (4) [10]
³**Where** all the **hungriest brothers** with something to **prove** went. (4) [14]
⁴**Foes** **oppose** us, we take an **honest stand**, (4) [10]
⁵We **roll** like **Moses**, clamin’ our **promised land**. (4) [11]
⁶**And?** If we **win** our **independence?** (4) [9]
⁷Zat a **guarantee** of **freedom** for **our** **descendants?** (4) [13]
⁸Or will the **blood** we **shed** **begin** an **endless** (4) [11]
⁹**Cycle** of **vengeance** and **death** with no **defendants?** (4) [12]
¹⁰I **know** the **action** in the **street** is **excitin’**, (4) [12]
¹¹But **Jesus**, **between** all the **bleedin’** ‘n **fightin’** I’ve been **readin’** ‘n **writin’**. (6) [19]
¹²We **need** to **handle** our **financial situation**. (4) [13]
¹³Are we a **nation** of **states?** What’s the **state** of our **nation?** (4) [14]
¹⁴I’m **past** **patiently waitin’**. I’m **passionately smashin’** every **expectation**, (7) [20]
¹⁵**Every** **action’s** an **act** of **creation!** (4) [10]
¹⁶I’m **laughin’** in the **face** of **casualties** and **sorrow**, (4) [13]
¹⁷For the **first** time, I’m **thinkin’** **past** **tomorrow**. (4) [11] (Miranda & Mc Carter 2016, 29, line division edited)

To analyze the meter and thus the rhythm of a poem one must identify the stressed and unstressed syllables of the lines, which create a sequence that reveals the beat of the poem. The beat usually falls onto the stressed syllable due to the fact that the stressed syllable is the one that is the more prominent syllable making the pattern of the stresses easier to detect (Attridge 1995, 49). The way in which these stressed and unstressed syllables are arranged create the regularity of the poem’s rhythm (Attridge 1995, 49).

We can see in the above verse that the most prominent pattern here is the four-beat rhythm, which Bradley (2017, 10) points out to be one of the most common poetic measures in rap. The number of unstressed syllables varies between the beats, or the stressed syllables, but the number of beats in most lines is four. Only two of the lines in the above verse have more beats than four and those are the lines 11 and 14. Line 11 has six beats and nineteen overall syllables, whereas line 14 has seven beats and twenty syllables. What this verse demonstrates of the rhythm of rap is both the

regularity of the beat as well as the unexpectedness that can be created by deviating from it. The inserting of these two lines in an otherwise regular four-beat rhythmic verse creates an element of surprise within the verse's rhythmic structure. This unexpectedness highlights the significance of the lines 11 and 14. In the terms of establishing Hamilton's character, "My Shot" is the most significant musical number in the play. It seeks to establish Hamilton as the young and driven genius that he is. These two lines, through their unexpected rhythm, highlight Hamilton's intellect as a character as he demonstrates his ambition as well as his impeccable language skills.

Rhyme is the second central component of rap's poetics and it can be defined as words or phrases that repeat the sounds of the final stressed vowel of the word and the sounds that come after it (Bradley 2017, 43). Whereas Bradley (2017, 3) argues that rhythm is the most central element of rap, Pate (2010, 111) claims rhyme to be at the center of rap and that rhythm exists to serve the rhyme. Yet, both rhythm and rhyme serve a central role in rap's poetics and one would not be as effective without the other.

Rhyme has two key roles within rap, first of which is its ability to carry information in an accessible way and to exist within a cultural context (Pate 2010, 112). Rhyming is familiar to us and it has been used throughout the history of speech as a form of expression for love, humor, and conflict (Pate 2010, 112). The second key role of rhyme in rap is its ability to transform common words and phrases of everyday speech into something surprising and new (Bradley 2017, 42). Through rhyme rappers seek to communicate their message or story in an unexpected way while still conforming to the restrictions and rules of rhyming. The familiarity and unexpectedness of rhyming is what makes it one of rap's core elements. *Hamilton* as a play uses rap as its medium to communicate a familiar story in an unexpected way through a surprising medium of hip hop and rap in order to reveal something new from a familiar story. To exemplify the technique of rhyming in *Hamilton* I shall briefly examine four of the techniques Bradley discusses in his book, *chain rhyme*, *assonance*, *alliteration*, and *consonance*.

Chain rhyme is one of the common rhyming techniques utilized in rap and it refers to a technique of repeating a single rhyme in a sequence of lines or verses (Bradley 2017, 64). In *Hamilton* there is an excellent example of this technique that

carries throughout the play. In this ongoing chain rhyme, the character Aaron Burr's last name is the main word to which all the other words are continuously rhymed. To highlight the use of chain rhyme in the examples below, I have bolded the words in which the chain rhyme appears. This chain rhyme first appears in the following verse from the second song of the play, "Aaron Burr, Sir".

HAMILTON: Pardon me. Are you Aaron **Burr, sir**?

BURR: That depends. Who's asking?

HAMILTON: Oh, well, **sure, sir**.

I'm Alexander Hamilton. I'm at your **service, sir**.
I have been looking for you.

BURR: I'm getting **nervous**.

HAMILTON: **Sir**...

I **heard** your name at Princeton. I
was seeking an accelerated course
of study when I got sort of out of
sorts with a buddy of yours. I may
have bunched him. It's a **blur, sir**.
He handles the financials?

BURR: You punched the **bursar**. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 23)

This chain rhyme in *Hamilton* also incorporates the poetic device known as assonance, which refers to the repetition of unaccented vowel sounds (Bradley 2017, 55). The primary function of assonance is the gratification of the repeated sound and also to bring the reader's or listener's focus to specific words or lines (Bradley 2017, 55). Other closely related poetic devices are alliteration and consonance, which refer to the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning or within words (Bradley 2017, 54-55). Alliteration refers to the repetition of the consonant sounds in the beginning of words and consonance refers to the repetition of a consonant sound within the words (Bradley 2017, 54-55). In the example above, there appears the repetition of both the schwa vowel sound as well as the consonant sound r. The schwa sound is much more prominent within the words than the r-sound, thus the technique here is assonance rather than consonance.

As stated before, this chain rhyme is used throughout the play, whenever

Burr's name is mentioned. Another example of this chain rhyme can be found, for example, in the following verse from the musical number "Ten Duel Commandments":

BURR: **Alexander**.

HAMILTON: Aaron **Burr, sir**.

BURR: Can we agree that duels are dumb and **immature**?

HAMILTON: **Sure**.

But your man has to **answer** for his **words, Burr**.

BURR: With his life? We both know that's **absurd**, sir. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 100)

This use of a continuous chain rhyme with the word Burr establishes the significance of Burr's character especially in relation to Hamilton. As seen in the first example, which is the first appearance of this chain rhyme, Hamilton appears to admire Burr, whom he has been excited to meet. As their relationship changes, the two become rivalries and eventual enemies, which is demonstrated in the previous example. In this verse, Hamilton and Burr are arguing whether general Charles Lee, who has been bad mouthing their commander Washington, should answer for his words in a duel against John Laurens. Although this is not where Hamilton and Burr duel against each other, by being the so-called lieutenants for the two men taking part in the duel, they are still essentially each other's adversaries. The tone of the chain rhyme changes from admiration to frustration, exemplifying the change in the relationship between these two men. Through the use of assonance this chain rhyme is able to further underline this message.

Wordplay is the third major poetic device of rap that can be loosely defined as the range of techniques used in rap that have emerged over the years and that achieve certain effects through the creative use of words (Bradley 2017, 78). In other words, wordplay is a range of literary devices such as the frequently used *metaphor* or *simile* and a range of other lesser known devices such as *chiasmus* or *antanaclasis*. These devices are used in rap to build unexpected bridges between familiar words and ideas (Bradley 2017, 79).

Two of the well-known wordplay devices are simile and metaphor. Simile refers

to the technique of a comparison between two different things by making the connection clear by using particles such as *like* or *as* (Bradley 2017, 79). The purpose of similes is often to highlight the surprising similarity of these two very different things (Bradley 2017, 79). Metaphor is a literary device that makes a direct connection between the two different things without the use of particles (Bradley 2017, 80). Both simile and metaphor create a relationship between the two things and both are prominently featured in rap's poetics (Bradley 2017, 80). Both are also heavily featured in the rap poetics of *Hamilton*. For example, both can be found in the following verse from the play's musical number "My Shot", in which I have indicated the simile by bolding the lines and underlining the connective particle, and highlighted the metaphor by marking it in bolded italics:

HAMILON: I am not throwing away my shot!
I am not throwing away my shot!
Hey yo, I'm just **like my country,**
I'm young, scrappy and hungry,
And I'm not throwing away my shot!
[...]
I'm a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal
Tryin' to reach my goal. My power of speech: unimpeachable. (1.3.8-21.)

Here Hamilton is first comparing himself to his newly founded but not yet independent country of the American colonies through the use of simile. The line compares Hamilton to his country by using the particle *like*, which is a clear indicator that the wordplay device used here is a simile rather than a metaphor. The line is then followed by the description that both fits the new country as well as Hamilton himself. They are both young, as in this song Hamilton is just nineteen years old and the new nation has barely been born, and they are both scrappy, or fierce in their hunger for independence. A few lines below, Hamilton is once again comparing himself to something inanimate, but this time he does it through a metaphor. In this line Hamilton is compared to an actual diamond in the rough, a metaphor for his unpolished brilliance.

Metaphors can also be used in extended forms as in having a whole verse or an entire song to be a metaphor for something and this type of metaphor is known as

conceit (Bradley 2017, 89). In *Hamilton* a song that acts as a conceit is the musical number “Ten Duel Commandments”, as the whole musical number works as a metaphor for rules of gang disputes in contemporary America. To fully understand the song’s metaphor, one must be familiar with aspects of hip hop history and the music of the rapper Notorious B.I.G., or Biggie, since the template for the musical number comes directly from Biggie’s song “Ten Crack Commandments” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 95). The original song to which the *Hamilton*’s musical number refers presents the ten rules governing the business of drug dealing. Similarly, the song in *Hamilton* presents the ten rules for the eighteenth-century customs of dueling as the characters Laurens and Lee and their lieutenants Hamilton and Burr get ready for their duel. By knowing where this musical number originated from, it can be argued that the song “Ten Duel Commandments” becomes a conceit for the rules of the street in contemporary urban America. “Ten Duel Commandments” is one of the distinct points in which *Hamilton* bridges the gap between the historical America and the America of the present through hip hop. The following verse provides an example of the use of conceit in “Ten Duel Commandments”:

FULL COMPANY: It’s the Ten Duel
Commandments.
Number one!

LAURENS: The challenge: demand satisfaction.
If they apologize no need for further action.

COMPANY: Number two!

LAURENS: If they don’t grab a friend, that’s
your second.

HAMILTON: Your lieutenant when there’s
reckoning to be reckoned.

COMPANY: Number three!

LEE: Have your seconds meet face to face.

BURR: Negotiate a peace...

HAMILTON: Or negotiate a time and place.

BURR: This is commonplace, ‘specially ‘tween
recruits.

COMPANY: Most disputes die, and no one shoots. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 99)

Here the characters involved in the duel recount the rules of dueling that resemble the unwritten rules of gang disputes. For example, the last line states that most of the disputes that lead to duels come to an end without anyone taking a shot. This resembles what Lorine A. Hughes (2005, 169) explores in her extensive study on gang violence in America, in which she researched why sometimes gang encounters and disputes become resolved without any violence. Violence is less likely to ensue when settling the dispute nonviolently is unlikely to damage one's reputation. (Hughes 2005, 170). Similarly, in *Hamilton*, the duels sometimes take place only for the two disputing parties to save face and have them appear on the dueling ground, while the dispute still gets resolved peacefully and without any violence. The musical number "Ten Duel Commandments" works entirely as a song that demonstrates the rules of duels while making a comparison to the rules of gang disputes.

In addition to wordplay, the language of rap in general frequently employs the use of indirect expressions and codes (Pate 2010, 52). This means that words are used to stand in for other words or expressions than what they actually mean (Pate 2010, 52). For these codes to be understood one must have knowledge of the things that the rapper is referring to (Pate 2010, 52). The hip hop references in *Hamilton* for example, are a part of this coded language and as demonstrated above, for them to become apparent to the viewer, listener, or reader of the play, one must be aware of the things they reference. The act of referencing is the fourth main element of rap as rap poems tend to make references to either other rap poems and rappers, or to the historical, political, or economic realities that support the poems overall message or themes (Pate 2010, 93). Referencing is what makes rap's language alive as rap is always changing and constantly making references to past and contemporary culture (Pate 2010, 51-52).

The act of referencing is certainly present in *Hamilton* as the musical makes numerous references to hip hop culture and other hip hop artists. Much like most rap lyrics, one does not need to be aware of these references in order to understand the broader message or the story, yet to fully appreciate rap's poetics in *Hamilton* one must understand its references and thus have awareness and knowledge on hip hop

history and culture. I have previously discussed some of these references to hip hop culture, most notably in the song “Ten Duel Commandments” but in order to showcase to extensiveness of hip hop references in *Hamilton* I shall offer three more examples.

Some of the hip hop references in *Hamilton* are more obvious than others. For example, in the song “My Shot” the following line “Only nineteen but my mind is older” is a direct reference to a rap song by the hip hop duo Mobb Deep (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 26). A very similar line appears in their song “Shook Ones Part II” from their 1995 album *The Infamous*, in which the rapper Prodigy delivers a line that goes “I’m only 19, but my mind is old” (Mobb Deep, 1995). As an almost direct quote, to appreciate this nod to the hip hop culture of the 1990s, one only needs to be aware of this one particular group or a song.

The next example of referencing in *Hamilton*, instead of quoting its source material, makes use of its meter and rhyming scheme in the following line from the song “Cabinet Battle #1” in which Jefferson exclaims: “Such a blunder sometimes it makes me wonder why I even bring the thunder” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 102). This is a reference to the song “The Message” by the hip hop group Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five in which there is the line: “It’s like a jungle sometimes It makes me wonder how I keep from going under” (Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, 1982). “The Message” is often mistakenly referred to as the first hip hop song to convey a political message, yet there were political rap songs that came before it, such as “Hard Times” (1980) by Kurtis Blow and “Vicious Rap” (1980) by Tanya “Sweet Tee” Winley (Chang 2005, 179). However, the influence that “The Message” had on the future hip hop generations grants the song its status as one of the most important political rap songs in hip hop’s history. This allusion does not only refer to a certain hip hop group but to also the early hip hop history and its political origins. For one to truly understand this reference one must have the basic knowledge of hip hop history.

A less obvious but possibly an easier reference to hip hop culture to detect appears in the very first song “Alexander Hamilton”, which introduces the main character through the repetition of the question “What’s your name, man?” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 16-17). This is reminiscent of the similar questions repeatedly asked in numerous songs in hip hop music, such as “Who Am I? (What’s My Name?)” by artist Snoop Dogg (1993), “What’s My Name?” by hip hop artist DMX (1999), and “What’s

My Name?” by rhythm and blues singer Rihanna featuring the rapper Drake (2010). The reason why this nod to hip hop culture might be more obvious to the listener or the reader is the fact that it has become a rather common trope in contemporary hip hop music.

Style is the fifth main component of rap, which in this context means the characteristics of the individual rappers that are defined by the shared qualities of the sound between groups of artists (Bradley 2017, 103-104). The somewhat unifying sound of these groups is formed by shared characteristics, such as a region, a time period, or a subgenre of hip hop (Bradley 2017, 104). For style to be detectable it has to have predictability in its key characteristics and thus a style is formed when there are certain characteristics that form patterns that can be anticipated (Bradley 2017, 104).

In *Hamilton* style is utilized to emphasize the distinguishing qualities of each character. The use of style is particularly evident in the characters of Hamilton and Burr. The differentiating styles that these characters embody in the play further highlight the juxtaposition of the characters and their relationship. This is particularly clear when examining the most pivotal musical numbers of each character. As stated earlier, “My Shot” is the musical number that perfectly embodies the character of Hamilton. The song is written in abundant and wordy language, which in the textual form of the rap poem demonstrates the fast-paced rapping in the song. Burr’s pivotal musical number is then “Wait for It”, which unlike Hamilton’s fast paced rap number, is reminiscent of the slower-paced genre of Jamaican dancehall. This musical number is less wordy or dynamic than Hamilton’s key song. The following verses demonstrate these differences in the musical numbers and highlight the differences of each character. The first verse is an excerpt from “My Shot”:

I’m ‘a get a scholarship to King’s College
I prob’ly shouldn’t brag, but dang, I amaze and
astonish.
The problem is I got a lot of brains but
no polish
I gotta holler just to be heard.
With very word, I drop knowledge! (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 26)

The next verse is from the musical number “Wait for It”:

BURR:
My
grandfather
was a fire and
brimstone [...]
preacher, [...]

But these are
things that
the homilies
and hymns
won't teach [...]
ya. [...]

My mother [...]
was a genius [...]
My father
commanded [...]
respect. [...]

BURR: When they died they left no instructions.
Just a legacy to protect. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 91)

The first thing that is very noticeable stylewise in these two examples is the wordiness of Hamilton. Furthermore, the pacing and line division of these two rap poems is rather different. The pacing and line division in “My Shot” is very dynamic whereas “Wait for It” has very short lines that follow a stable pattern. These two songs demonstrate the differences between Hamilton and Burr as characters, which is further emphasized by the styles the two characters utilize throughout the play. Hamilton as a character is very wordy, smart and dynamic, whereas Burr is a much calmer and calculating character who wants to weight all of his options before he takes action. These songs perfectly exemplify the ways in which *Hamilton* utilizes the styles of hip hop poetics to further construct the play’s characters.

The sixth main element of rap poetics is the unique quality of rap music’s inclination to storytelling, which Bradley (2017, 133) argues differentiates rap from other genres of music. In fact, storytelling is at the core of most rap songs and the motivation for rap to tell stories is in the aim to tell these familiar stories in unexpected and surprising ways (Bradley 2017, 135). This is precisely what *Hamilton* seeks to do, and as I would argue, achieves, by telling the story of one of America’s Founding Father’s through the poetics of rap. It is an unexpected storytelling method

that renders the familiar story into something new and fresh that can further highlight the ignored aspect of the nation's history, that America was built by not only the white Founders but by the mixture of European colonists, other immigrants, enslaved people as well as Native Americans. Bradley (2017, 136) describes rap stories as something that can inhabit anything from few lines of a verse to an entire song or even multiple songs. In *Hamilton*, of course, the story is told in multiple songs throughout the entire play. Rap stories and the way they are told, make it possible for the listeners or readers to get inside the voices and experiences of other people and better understand other realities and different possibilities (Bradley 2017, 136). The storytelling in *Hamilton* will be examined in depth in the section five that analyses the play as an immigrant narrative. Yet, what is important to note here is the significance of hip hop and rap as the storytelling method of *Hamilton*. As this section has expressed numerous times, rap seeks to create new ways and perspectives to experience familiar stories and situations through the unexpectedness of its literary devices. This is precisely what *Hamilton* seeks to accomplish through the unexpected mixture of hip hop poetics and historical fiction. It creates a new and surprising way of examining the myth of the American founding that can reveal a more complex version of the nation's history.

The seventh and final component of hip hop is the African American cultural tradition of signifying, which Bradley (2017, 153) describes as the cultural practice of African American literary tradition that uses repetition and difference as well as the actions of bragging or attempts to outsmart the other. In his groundbreaking study, *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988, 51) explains signifying to be "the rhetorical principle in Afro-American vernacular discourse" that dates back through the Middle Passage to Western Africa where the slave trade originated (Gates Jr. 1988, 44). Bradley (2017, 153-154) explains that the tradition of signifying has existed in many forms in the African American literary tradition. One of those forms is the ritual of competitive insulting in which the competition would be won by the one who could outwit the other while remaining one's composition (Bradley 2017, 154). Another example of signifying is the tradition of the toast, which is a longform narrative poem recited out loud and in which the underdog of the narrative usually rises up to the top (Bradley 2017, 154).

The first device of signifying appears in *Hamilton* in the form of rap battles. Rap

battles in general are the expression of the competitive insulting form of signifying within hip hop culture. In *Hamilton*, the often-heated cabinet meetings are represented in the form of rap battles. In these battles Hamilton and Jefferson go against each other in various political issues, yet these political debates are driven by personal insults rather than political rhetoric. The following verse from the musical number “Cabinet Battle #1” demonstrates how these cabinet meetings are presented as rap battles in *Hamilton*:

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

Here Hamilton and Jefferson are debating about the financial plan of the government. Hamilton wants the government to assume state debts, which infuriates Jefferson who represents the interest of the American South. He argues that the Southern states should not participate in paying the other states' debts since they are essentially debt free. Thus, Hamilton uses what Jefferson has argued against him and insinuates that the Southern states are only debt free because they rely on slavery as a form of free labor. This is then a personal insult to Jefferson who is a known slaveowner. Therefore, the cabinet meetings in *Hamilton* represented as rap battles demonstrate the tradition of signifying of both African American literary tradition as well as rap poetics.

Through these seven main components of rap poetics, the main theme or the message of the rap poem can be revealed. Pate argues that in every rap poem there is a one core meaning the text seeks to convey (Pate 2010, 94). The core meaning of the poem can be sought out by examining the seven main poetic devices of a given rap poem. This thesis argues that the core meaning of *Hamilton* is to present Alexander Hamilton's life as an immigrant narrative, which then demonstrates American immigration as a positive characteristic of the country's national history and identity. All the poetic elements and devices discussed in this section work towards building this core meaning of the play. This core meaning in *Hamilton* will be further examined in section five, which analyses the play as an immigrant narrative. The next section

examines the play through historical fiction while discussing the issues of truth and historical accuracy within *Hamilton*.

4. The Issues of Analyzing Historical Fiction and the Questions of Truth in *Hamilton*

But remember from here on in, history has its eyes on you.

George Washington as a character in *Hamilton* (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 120)

The ideas of history being constructed through narratives and the power of storytelling are prevailing themes in *Hamilton*. The musical concludes with the questions “Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 281). This is a phrase and a sentiment that gets repeated throughout the play. The play asks the question who gets to have the power to decide what parts of history get told and how that narrative is constructed. The character George Washington, as the first president of the United States, is particularly aware of the weight of history on his shoulders. He knows that whatever he does will be retold and reconstructed by the generations to come and that his actions are always affecting the future history. Washington’s awareness of the weight of the making of history serves as a reminder that history always has its eyes on the present. It is through historical narratives as well as historical fiction that the past gets continuously reconstructed and reframed.

This section first discusses the relationship between history and fiction and then examines the ways in which history is portrayed in *Hamilton* as well as how the creative choices or historical inaccuracies affect and serve the story. The Historical Novel Society (HNS) defines historical novels as follows:

To be deemed historical [...] a novel must have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time of those events (who therefore approaches them only by research). We also consider the following styles of novel to be historical fiction for our purposes: alternate histories [...], pseudo-histories [...], time-slip novels [...], historical fantasies [...] and multiple-time novels. (Lee, 2018)

This is a rather loose definition, yet it is a one that Grant Rodwell (2013, 47) has leaned on in his book on historical fiction in education. He writes that the terms history and historical fiction need to be distinguished from each other as both serve a different purpose (Rodwell 2013, 54). The two terms are differentiated by the fact that history refers to a method of examining the past whereas historical fiction is the act of

creating narratives through the extended use of historical characters and events (Rodwell 2013, 54). This is precisely what Miranda does in *Hamilton* as it is a creative piece of art that uses historical figures and events to tell its story. By including hip hop as the key element of the storytelling *Hamilton* tells the story founded in history in a new and unexpected way.

4.1. The Relationship Between History and Fiction

History has a close but complicated relationship with fiction since history has for long been viewed to stand at the opposite end to fiction as it has sought to tell the true account of the past, which is not what fiction, even if historical, is ultimately concerned about (Southgate 2009, 1). Yet, what is true in terms of history is not straightforwardly defined and history itself is a constructed version of the past, much like fiction can be. In the past decades there has been a rise in questioning the definition of truth in history and the idea that a historian is able to fully represent the truth of the past (Southgate 2009, 6). After all, both history and fiction rely on narrative construction of the events represented, yet their ultimate goals are rather different. Whereas history is concerned with representing as objective account of the past as possible, fiction does not have to limit itself with the questions of truth. Historical fiction has the freedom to take past events or historical characters and shape them to serve the narrative of the story rather than the truth of the past. Yet, historical fictions serve an important role in the ways in which we understand our past.

Jerome De Groot (2016, 2) suggests that historical fictions affect the ways in which the past is constructed and understood within a society. Furthermore, as Beverly C. Southgate (2009, 126) points out, history also has an effect on how we construct our identities. We build our identities, especially our personal national identities and the collective identities of our nations, on our understanding of the past. Thus, as much as history has an effect on our national identities, historical fictions have the power to reinforce or reshape those identities. Historical fictions have two main outcomes, first of which is the effect historical fictions have on the imagery of the past and how history is viewed in a given society (De Groot 2016, 2). The second outcome is that historical fictions provide a way to examine how history is presented and through historical fictions these presentations of history can be questioned (De Groot 2016, 2).

As for the study of historical fiction, much of it so far has focused mostly on examining how the past has been represented, yet in historical fictions it is not history that is being represented but rather ways for one to understand the past (De Groot 2016, 3). When studying historical fictions, one should not focus solely on how history is represented but rather to bring attention to how historical fiction creates different ways to examine the past (De Groot 2016, 5). Analyzing historical fictions in these more comprehensive ways reveals the theoretical consequences of the representation of history in fiction (De Groot 2016, 6).

Regarding truth in historical fiction, De Groot (2016, 13) brings up the idea of reader's trust on what is written. He points out that historical fiction creates a contract of trust between the reader and the text in which the reader is aware that what is being presented is fictional, yet at the same time the reader also trusts that the text represents the past in a realistic and authentic way (De Groot 2016, 13). As such, history in historical fiction appears as familiar and plays a role in the construction of the past (ibid.). Authenticity has a heightened role in historical fiction and the fictionalized representation of the past creates what can be called the *authenticity fallacy* (De Groot 2016, 16). The authenticity fallacy demands the historical fiction to represent the past in a seemingly authentic way and to narrate the past in a believable manner. This is called *translation of the past*, which means that the audience must experience the illusion created through this translation as an authentic representation of the past (De Groot 2016, 16).

Since *Hamilton* reimagines the myth of the American founding, in my thesis I am particularly concerned with reinforcing or reframing national identities through historical fictions. As stated earlier, history serves an important role in the construction of national identities through the understanding of our nation's past. De Groot (2016, 49) argues that historical fiction can act as an instrument to examine nations' national myths and thus reshape the ways in which those myths and the identities built on them are formed. Nations themselves are constructed through shared historical identities, which are built on the stories and myths of the nation's origin (De Groot 2016, 49). Historical fiction recognizes the fact that nation and national identities are complex, ever changing and always renegotiated (De Groot 2016, 50). Historical fictions dealing with national histories take part in the debates on history that create

the ways to examine the relationship to past through the idea of national identity (De Groot 2016, 81). Through the analysis of historical fiction as a representation of history one can seek to reveal how the ideas of the past affect identities, such as nationhood. *Hamilton* as a play about the myth of the American Founding examines these very ideas of national identity and nationhood. Through the unexpected mixture of historical fiction and hip hop music the play is able to offer a new perspective through which the nation's origin can be examined. The next subsection is concerned with the issues of historical fiction in *Hamilton*, focusing particularly on the issues of national myths and the representation of history and truth in *Hamilton*.

4.2. The Questions of Truth and Historical Accuracy in *Hamilton*

In a 2003 article H. W. Brands writes about the rising interest and admiration towards the Founding Fathers in the twenty-first century. He explains that the interest and admiration towards the Founders has always been in a flux, but at the time of the article's publication in 2003 the interest in the Founders was incredibly high (Brands 2003, 101). *Hamilton* can be seen as the continuation of this interest towards the Founders as the play is based on Ron Chernow's 2004 biography *Alexander Hamilton*, which itself is very much a part of the rising interest towards the founders. As Billy G. Smith (2017, 521) writes in his article on the musical *Hamilton*, Chernow's book on Hamilton is an account of history that fits the idea of a Great Man theory that scholars of history have moved away from in the recent decades. These types of books have been criticized by academics of perpetuating the uncritical and safe interpretations of the American Founding (Owen 2017, 509). This safe interpretation of the American Founding has a significant role in constructing the myth of the Founding and the Founding Fathers. Brown (2017, 489) points out in his article on the musical, that these kinds of historical myths change in the course of time and are reframed for the needs of contemporary users of history. In the myth of the American Founding the Founding Fathers are often seen as remarkable men who through their extraordinary qualities play a key factor in the success of the founding of the nation (Owen 2017, 511).

In his article, Owen (2017, 510) places *Hamilton* somewhere in between the idea of the Founders Myth and the more critical approach to the founding of the nation. The historical Hamilton was a much more conservative figure than the one that

the musical presents. Yet, as Owen (2017, 510) points out, having rap as the primary mode of storytelling in the musical, the play is able to represent Hamilton and the other characters “as vibrant, energetic, rambunctious crowd, in stark contrast to the fusty and distant figures often presented in high school textbooks”. This mode of storytelling, as well as casting people of color in these historically white roles, modernizes the myth of the Founding fathers and freshens the interpretations of this historical era (Owen 2017, 510). However, Owen (ibid.) also points out that by leaning so heavily on Chernow’s biography, which Owen accuses of being a hagiographic account of Alexander Hamilton, the play does not challenge the traditional understandings the American Founding, despite the innovative aspects of the play.

Instead, Hamilton is presented as a character whose goal is to take his newly independent country to the future of greatness, which then represents the Great Man interpretation of history (Owen 2017, 511). This type of interpretation of history reinforces the idea that history is made solely by individuals and that the possible contemporary political failings could only be fixed by the right individual. Furthermore, as the play represents Hamilton as an immigrant building his way up from nothing to political success, it also purposefully omits certain historical facts about the life of the real Hamilton. The play represents Hamilton as a controversial figure because he is an arrogant go-getter who will not allow anyone to stand in the way of his political pursuits. The most controversial political view Hamilton advocates for in the play is his financial plan to assume the debts of the states and to establish a national bank. Yet in reality, Hamilton held numerous other more controversial views than his financial plan. For example, he endorsed the idea of military leadership and when he was invited to make a speech at the Constitutional Convention he delivered a speech in favor of establishing monarchy in America (Owen 2017, 512). Yet, in the play, most of Hamilton’s controversial political views are erased. The next verse showcases how the play represents the events that took place in the Constitutional Convention:

BURR: Hamilton, at the Constitutional Convention

HAMILTON: I was chosen for the
Constitutional Convention

BURR: There as a New York junior delegate:

HAMILTON:
Now what I'm going
to say may sound
indelicate . . .

COMPANY:
Awww!

BURR:
Goes and proposes
his own form of
government!

What!

His own plan
for a new form of
government!

What!

BURR: Talks for six hours! The convention
is listless! (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 138)

The above verse demonstrates how Hamilton's controversial and undemocratic ideas of forming a monarchy are not clearly represented in the play. Instead the play chooses to discuss Hamilton's speech only in vague terms. Owen (2017, 513) argues that by presenting Hamilton as an idealized immigrant story Miranda dismisses the historical Hamilton who did not trust democracy and whose political ideals were in favor of the economic elite.

Perhaps the biggest omission of historical accuracy in *Hamilton* is how the play leaves out the titular character's views on immigration. Brown (2017, 494) argues that Hamilton in the play is presented as the more progressive Founder in contrast to the others, although in reality, Hamilton began holding more anti-immigrant ideals towards the end of his life. Magness (2017, 498) states in his article on *Hamilton* that through the omission of Hamilton's rather conservative immigrant policies the musical ignores the growingly nationalistic ideals that Hamilton developed towards the end of his life. Furthermore, the historical Hamilton was very much against the beliefs on immigration that the character of Hamilton embodies in the play (Owen 2017, 489). Hamilton grew increasingly negative towards immigration and was an advocate for more restrictive immigrant laws in his later years (Owen 2017, 498). Much of the academic writing on *Hamilton* has thus far focused on the historical representation, or rather misrepresentation, of Hamilton as a character. Owen (2017, 515) argues that while the play encourages the contemporary audiences to examine the history of the Founding Fathers and thus enables them to question a broader scope of history, the

play also contributes to the myth of the American Founding and through this contribution shapes the ideas of national identity. Because of this contribution to the national identity, Owen (2017, 515) argues that historical fiction should then stay faithful to the history the story seeks to represent. Furthermore, he points out that the importance of Hamilton as a historical figure does not come from the ideas or ideals he represented but from his actions and achievements (Owen 2017, 515). Yet, according to Owen (2017, 516) the play represents Hamilton through the Great Man narrative and fails to address the complex reality of the American Founding more comprehensively. Brown (2017, 495) points out that one should apply caution to the bending of historical facts for the sake of the goals of storytelling (Brown 2017, 495). He asserts that the problem in *Hamilton* is not the factual errors but rather the interpretation of history the play makes.

I would argue that there is a possibility that someone who sees, listens, or reads the play will see *Hamilton* as an accurate retelling of history and assume that the historical Hamilton was a champion for immigration. However, the real value of the play is not in its historical accuracy but precisely in its reframing of history. Besides, historical fiction does not have to restrict itself with the burden of truth or historical accuracy, rather the historical elements are there to serve the story, not history. As demonstrated above, historical fiction allows us to examine historical myths critically and enables us to question the constructions of our national identities. *Hamilton* creates a way to examine the myth of the American Founding, which serves an important role in the building of American identity, from a new perspective. That perspective brings the marginalized people of American society to the forefront of the play and examines history through their eyes. The play is able to do this through the mixture of rap poetics and historical fiction. *Hamilton* goes to reframe the myth of the American Founding as a piece of history that stands at the center of American national identity. This reframing makes a part of the nation's foundational history accessible to all Americans and not just to those who can easily see themselves in the white Founders. *Hamilton* reframes history through the perspective of marginalized people in order to include marginalized groups in the myth of the American Founding.

Instead of criticizing *Hamilton* for the purposeful representation of Hamilton as an immigrant hero through the fictional reframing of history, I am more critical of the

play's negligence to include real historical figures of color in its retelling, or to address the role of Native Americans in the founding of the country. As Smith (2017, 522) points out, in Revolution-era America a great number of African Americans sought to find their own way towards freedom and independence. Slaves made up twenty percent of the overall population and during that time many of them achieved their goals of personal liberation and those who were able to free themselves during the war were able to build their own communities in the Northern parts of America (Smith 2017, 522).

Yet, in *Hamilton*, the people physically present in the play are the white Founders and other historically white characters. Whether they are portrayed by people of color communicating through the language of hip hop does not change the fact that *Hamilton* still represents the more traditional view of the American Founding in which the historically black characters have no role. Furthermore, the play makes no mention of Native Americans, who also played a major role in both the fight for independence as well as the founding of the nation and paid a hard price for it. During the Revolution, Native Americans faced a hard choice of whether to side with the colonialists, the Brits, or try to achieve the stance of neutrality (Schmidt 2014, 8). Once the war was over Native Americans faced the issue of settlers coming for their land and trying to dismantle the governing systems of Native American cultures (Schmidt 2014, 8). The failure to mention any historical African American or Native American figures in the play reinforces the idea of *Hamilton* as a piece of historical fiction perpetuating the myth of Founders as the Great Men of history. However, as explained above, America was not founded simply by a few great white men, and the history of the founding is much more complex and diverse than the traditional Great Men myth makes it out to be. The play ignores the opportunity to highlight any African American or Native American historical figures, such as James Armistead Lafayette, an African American who served as a double spy in the Revolutionary War and helped to bring victory in the crucial battle of Yorktown (Nash 2000, 13), or the people of the Oneida tribe, who fought along the colonists in the Revolutionary war (Tiro 2011, 39).

Hamilton oversimplifies the complex story of the founding and the building of the nation, in which, as the play attests, immigrants played a major role, but so did enslaved people as well as Native Americans. The play does explore the Founders as

slaveowners and the complexities of the issue, yet still neglects to even mention Native Americans, which is a palpable flaw in an otherwise progressive play. However, *Hamilton* does certainly succeed in presenting Alexander Hamilton as the immigrant hero of the story through whom the play is able to reframe the national myth of the American Founding. In the play this national myth is constructed into a narrative that reinforces a positive image on immigration and reinforces the idea that America has been a nation of immigrants from its beginning. The next section further examines *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative constructed through historical fiction and poetics of rap.

5. *Hamilton* as an Immigrant Narrative

Man, I was brave, sailing on graves
Don't think I didn't notice those tombstones disguised as waves
I'm no dummy, here is something funny,
You can be an immigrant without risking your lives
Or crossing these borders with thrifty supplies
All you got to do is see the world with new eyes.

K'Naan in "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)" in *The Hamilton Mixtape*
(2016)

In the above verse from the song "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)" rapper K'Naan, a Somali immigrant in Canada, recounts his own experience of immigrating to North America. The tombstones he talks about refers to the Middle Passage of the African slaves, a journey that took the lives of some and for those who survived ended in centuries of slavery. As K'Naan recounts his own immigrant journey he understands the danger and the heavy history of the passage, yet he also believes that to be an immigrant one does not have to experience the physical immigrant journey. K'Naan asserts that by adopting a new perspective to the surrounding world one can metaphorically experience the journey of immigrants and thus, in a spiritual sense, become an immigrant oneself. The immigrant experience is one of struggle but also of hope and new beginnings. Through looking at the world with new eyes one can experience their familiar culture and surroundings with the same complexity and wonder as immigrants do. Furthermore, by experiencing the world through this new perspective one can then learn to better understand the world of immigrants and see that we are far more connected by our similarities than divided by our differences. Thus, in the above verse, K'Naan ultimately seeks to dismantle the ideas of otherness between citizens and immigrants, because if we open our eyes to new ways of seeing we can understand that we are all connected through our shared human experience.

One of the ways to dismantle otherness between citizens and immigrants is through more complex representations of immigrant narratives particularly in fiction. As explained in the previous section, historical fiction can help to examine national histories and myths in a more critical way and improve our understanding of the past. Similarly, immigrant narratives in fiction can increase our awareness of the realities of immigrant experiences and help to dismantle the othering of immigrants.

In his 1986 book, Werner Sollors writes compellingly about the relationship between the “Puritan typology and immigration” in the context of American culture and literature (Sollors 1986, 6). He argues that if American Literature can be distinctively differentiated from European Literature it must have clear characteristics of its own (ibid.). Therefore, to examine the distinctive qualities of American literature, the genre of immigrant narratives offers a way to further explore this question (ibid.). Through studying immigrant literature one can detect how the Americanness of American literature is obtained and thus identify what defines an individual as an American (Sollors 1986, 7). For example, the two types of novels that I see quintessentially as American are ones that explore the settler-frontier stories, or that deal with the idea of the American Dream, such as Willa Cather’s classic frontier novel *O Pioneers!* (1913), Larry McMurtry’s famous western *Lonesome Dove* (1985), F. Scott Fitzgerald’s quintessential novel about the American Dream *The Great Gatsby* (1925), or Ralph Ellison’s racially conscious look at the idea of American Dream *Invisible Man* (1952). Both novel types are characterized with the drive and desire to control one’s destiny by building a greater life for one’s self. Similarly, the immigrant story in the American context is characterized by the idea of an immigrant arriving to America to make a better life for themselves. Furthermore, through the struggles and hardships, the immigrant is expected to find their success and to transform from immigrant to an American.

This section examines the basic principles of immigrant narratives by first considering the history of immigration in the United States. It then further explores the topic of immigrant narratives in literature. Finally, we will analyze the play *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative. I will examine how the story fits into the traditional parameters of immigrant fiction. I argue that the play *Hamilton* reinforces the idea of America as a nation of immigrants in positive regard by presenting Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers, as an immigrant hero of the story who helped to shape and build the nation. Through the combination of historical fiction and rap poetics the play is able to achieve this reinforcement of the idea of America as a nation of immigrants. By mixing together the historical narrative of the founding of the country, which part of American national identity is built on, with the contemporary literary form of rap poetry the play creates a world that is both contemporary and

historical. This results in a story that both reinforces the idea that immigrants played a significant part in the founding of the country as well as a story that makes observations on the attitudes towards immigration in the contemporary America. In the play the character Hamilton represents the immigrants who in the past as well as in the present keep building and shaping the nation.

5.1. History of Immigration in the United States

The United States has been defined by its immigrants since the foundation of the country so much so that the country has often been described as a nation of immigrants (Martin 2011, 1). In her book on the history of immigration in America, Susan F. Martin (2011, 2) points out that immigration has played a key role in the making of America and will continue to do so in the future. Yet, as Martin (ibid.) argues, this expression of nation of immigrants simplifies the issue as it forces all immigrants and the different forms of immigration into one unified group. Instead, Martin (ibid.) identifies three models of immigration, which developed in three different American colonies. The first of the three models of immigration originated from the Virginian colony that was founded in 1607 (Martin 2011, 3). The immigration in the Virginian colony consisted of laborers, servants and slaves that were admitted or brought to the colony, but who did not possess full citizenship and as such did not have most of the rights that the full citizens enjoyed (ibid.). The second model originated from the Massachusetts colony, which sought to found a colony consisting of people with a shared religion and values (ibid.). The Massachusetts model of immigration was based on allowing immigrants who shared the same religious views to the colony while simultaneously excluding, or even killing, those who went against those values (ibid.). The third model of immigration originated from the Pennsylvanian colony and was based on the ideals of tolerance and diversity (ibid.). This Pennsylvanian model, which was based on the idea of equal rights would become the dominating model of immigration in the early America (ibid.).

Martin (2011, 4) points out that all three of these models advocate for immigration although the purpose of immigration differs in each one. The Virginian model supports the immigration of laborers who are not seen as citizens but rather as work force imported to the United States temporarily as needed (Martin 2011, 4). The

Massachusetts model excludes immigrants based on ideology and the Pennsylvanian model leans towards the Americanization of the immigrants through the promise of equal rights (ibid.). Yet, the trends of immigration have not been as straightforward as these models suggest and as Martin (2011, 4) points out, none of these models have been applied as immigrant policies in their pure form. When looking at today's model of immigration it appears as a mixture of all three (ibid.). In the post-9/11 America the fear of terrorism as well as fundamentalist Islam have increased the popularity of the Massachusetts model of exclusion based on ideological or religious beliefs (ibid.).

The *Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (Trump, 2017) issued by the United States President Donald Trump in January 2017 was a restriction on immigration that targeted six Muslim countries and thus came to be known as the Muslim ban (*BBC News*, 2017). The ban is a recent example of the ideology-based Massachusetts model of immigration. Furthermore, in the previous years the increasing need for cheap labor has allowed the country to tolerate undocumented immigration to the United States, which represents the Virginian model of immigration (Martin 2011, 4). The United States' economy has been known to have benefitted from this undocumented immigration (Hanson 2007). However, during President Trump's administration, the trend in Virginian model of immigration has once again taken a turn. One striking example of this is President Trump's persistence to build a wall on the American-Mexican border in order to tackle illegal immigration (McCarthy, 2018). The current immigration model is then returning back to the Massachusetts model as the immigration policies are guided by the exclusion of people based on ethnicity or religion. Nonetheless, the immigration trends of today as well as the past have been characterized by all three of these models.

The next subsection examines more closely the history of immigration in the United States. For the purpose of my thesis I am mostly interested in the immigration history of Alexander Hamilton's time as well as contemporary America. Thus, I will further explore the history of immigration during the formation of the Republic as well as immigration in contemporary America, from which *Hamilton* the musical emerges.

5.1.1. Immigration in Hamilton's America

Questions of immigration were a major issue in the newly founded Republic in the late 1700s America (Martin 2011, 60). There was hesitation towards immigration and uncertainty to which direction the new nation should take its immigrant policies (ibid.). The Founders were concerned about the unpredictability of the effects that immigration would have on the newly independent nation (ibid.). The fear was that large-scale immigration to America would create a risk for sectional conflict (Spalding 1994, 35). Jefferson, for example, believed that the country might remain more stable and peaceful if they would not allow large-scale immigration into the country (Martin 2011, 60).

One of the key issues in terms of immigration in the new Republic was the need for labor (Martin 2011, 63). Alexander Hamilton argued for labor driven immigration as he believed immigrant laborers would be needed if America wanted to become a trader in the global economy and not to remain as merely an agricultural country (Martin 2011, 64). Hamilton believed that the American economic conditions, such as low taxes and minimal regulation, would encourage entrepreneurship within the country and thus inspire European immigration to the United States in hopes to enjoy the advantages of American capitalism (Spalding 1994, 36).

Due to the imminent need for labor force, the question about immigration was mainly about how immigration would be executed (Martin 2011, 65). A major proportion of the work force in the newly independent America was made of slaves, particularly in the southern regions of the country (ibid.). Many of the Founders themselves, for example Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, were slaveholders and thus the question about slavery was met with ambivalence among the Founders (ibid.). Hamilton himself was not a slaveholder, although as Owen (2017, 511) puts it, he was by no means anti-slavery and in fact his wife Eliza Schuyler's family "had significant mercantile ties with the slave trade".

Slavery was seen as an integral part of the building of the new nation because of the need for labor. The question of slavery was not whether it should be abolished or not, but rather how the nation should deal with the issue of slave trade, which was ended by the Congress in 1808 (Martin 2011, 65). Furthermore, before the revolution,

Britain had been importing convicts as labor force to the colonies and this practice came to an end in 1788 (Martin 2011, 66). In terms of voluntary immigration, the Virginian model of servitude and labor force became less favored as the immediate post-Revolution views on immigration shifted towards equal rights and immigration driven by liberation rather than servitude (Martin 2011, 66-67). Spalding (1994, 35) argues that in fact Americans of the newly founded nation had a strong desire “to share the blessings of liberty they had secured for themselves with the rest of mankind”.

The vast and diverse geographical area of the new nation as well as its small population size motivated immigration, and many of the Founders saw considerable immigration as an integral part of the Republic’s survival (Martin 2011, 67-68). Yet the concern was how to keep the growing population relatively homogenous in order to sustain large scale immigration for their American experiment (Martin 2011, 68-69). The key was for the arriving immigrants to be assimilated into the country and for them to adopt American culture and values, and this was to be done through language (Spalding 1994, 35). What created a shared sense of nationalism and American identity for both the citizens and the immigrants of the new nation was not the common sources of national identity but education (Martin 2011, 70). The answer to the issue of immigration was education as it would enable the citizens and immigrants alike to mutually benefit from the American society despite their socioeconomic circumstances or place of origin (Martin 2011, 71). There were still attitudes of uncertainty towards immigration but the key to assimilation came from the high value on education (ibid.). Hamilton himself shared the concerns held by many of the Founders concerning immigration and the assimilation to the new nation (Spalding 1994, 39). To him the answer to the issue was either to restrict immigration or ensure that immigrants would adapt to America (ibid.). As demonstrated above, during the formation of the new nation, America came to embrace naturalization over restriction as the rest of the Founders believed it to support the ideals of liberty held by the newly founded Republic (ibid.).

It is important to note here that Hamilton’s views on immigration harshened towards the end of his life. Magness (2017, 498) writes that towards the later years of his life, Hamilton’s political views became increasingly nationalistic. For example,

Hamilton played a key role in establishing the Alien and Sedition act, which allowed president the power to deport people who he viewed as a danger to the country as well as to restrict certain groups of people to stay in the country (Magness 2017, 502). Magness (2017, 500) argues that Hamilton's political views and the politics he advocated could be describes as "nationalistic xenophobia". The immigration laws in the United States have since gone through many changes, the last two major immigration legislations being the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990, which both caused an increase in immigration to the United States (Martin 2011, 184). Thus, the issue of immigration remains a central question in contemporary American politics, which will be further examined in the next subsection.

5.1.2. Immigration in contemporary America

The immigrant issues have stayed in the forefront of the political debate in the United States since the founding of the nation. However, in the past few years under President Trump's administration the country has seen a growing conservatism in the policies and attitudes towards immigration. In her book Martin (2011, 287) explains the significance of the presidency of Barack Obama in terms of American immigrant history as President Obama himself is a second-generation African immigrant. Before President Obama, only five other presidents had immigrant roots and all of them were European descendants (Martin 2011, 287).

Although, the significance of Obama's presidency in terms of what it signifies in the long history of immigration in the nation of immigrants cannot and should not be underestimated, the contemporary America of President Trump's administration appears in a very different light in terms of policies and attitudes towards immigration than the America before him. However, even before Trump's 2017 inauguration, the issues of immigration in contemporary America were rather complex. One of these key issues, as identified by Martin (2011, 289) is the question of illegal immigration. As Martin (ibid.) states, illegal immigration threatens both legal immigration as well as the legitimacy of the law. She argues that in order to tackle the issue of undocumented immigrants, the illegal migration flow should be reduced (Martin 2011, 290). How this

reduction should be executed is an argument of preference between two different models, either by focusing on border control or on the internal issues within the country such as worksite enforcement as employment is one of the biggest driving forces of illegal immigration (Martin 2011, 290-291). Martin (2011, 297), who in her book favors the return to the Pennsylvanian model of equal rights driven immigration, suggests that legal immigration should be revitalized and she herself promotes the idea of more flexible modes of immigration. Legalization of undocumented immigrants as well as refugee and asylum policies are key issues in the debate about contemporary immigration in America (Martin 2011, 300-302).

However, the American political sphere has seen a drastic change since Martin's book was published in 2011. President Trump's immigrant policies are leaning vastly towards the Massachusetts model of ideology as the mode for immigration policies. I argue that this ambiguous ideology of Trump's America is based on the belief that American interests, which are presumed to be threatened by immigration, can be protected through isolationism. In fact, President Trump's original immigration order was called "Make America Safe Again", indicating that unauthorized immigrants are criminals that threaten the nation's security (Heyer 2018, 150). Furthermore, according to President Trump, immigrants pose a threat to the American economy, despite the fact that studies have shown that the labor force consisting of immigrants has benefitted the United States economy (Heyer 2018, 152). Heyer expresses the effects of what she calls the "America First" ideology in a compelling way as she writes:

The administration has connected economic anxieties with anxieties over cultural shifts, shaping a particular vision of "America First" that casts newcomers as threatening to the nation's identity. Tapping into the related anti-immigrant sentiment has provoked the demonization of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. (Heyer 2018, 152)

However, as Waldinger (2017, 1412) puts it in his article discussing immigration and the election of President Trump, Trump's presidency is not the cause of anti-immigrant rhetoric, instead the growing concerns towards immigration helped him get elected. As President Trump is in significant power, he has the ability to shape the immigration policies of the country as well as to further fuel the anti-immigrant attitudes of some of the American citizens.

The issues of immigration in the contemporary America are facing increasingly unstable conditions, even more so than in the past. The Founders also tackled with the issues of immigration through the questions of safety but went on to embrace the opportunities created by immigration through the idea that those who were granted a full citizenship would adopt a new American identity (Spalding 1994, 42). In her book written in pre-Trump America, Martin (2011, 309) advocates strongly for the Pennsylvanian model of immigration as she concludes her book by stating that the United States has throughout the nation's history always been a nation of immigrants. According to her research, the country has vastly benefitted from its immigrants and she argues that "[t]he true power of American dream" is to be welcoming towards immigrants and supporting them to adapt into their new American identity. Yet, the contemporary America has taken a swift turn in terms of the immigrant policies and views of both the post-Revolution era America as well as the not so distant past of Obama's America. This is precisely why *Hamilton* as a story of the American Founding offers a strong message against the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Trump's America. The next subsection will further examine how the issues of immigration are explored in literature as well as explain the main principles of immigrant fictions before analyzing how the immigrant narrative is explored in *Hamilton*.

5.2. Issues of Immigration in literature

Just as in immigrant policies of the past and contemporary America, the idea of assimilation or adapting the national identity of the host country prevails in immigrant literature. The pressure is for an immigrant to go through an educational journey that ends in the adaptation of the new national identity. Thus, the immigrant experience can be measured as successful or unsuccessful by assessing the immigrant's ability to integrate into the new country. This is of course a rather simplistic and problematic view on the immigrant experience. The immigrant's journey is a lonely one, as Ferguson (2013, 141) attests in his book on American loneliness in fiction. Ferguson (ibid.) writes that the immigrant's journey into America is characterized not only by its loneliness but also by the fear of the unknown. A key feature of the immigrant narrative is that of struggle; struggle for employment, struggle with a new language and with the assumptions the immigrants face from the citizens while simultaneously

being challenged with discrimination, financial struggles and impossible expectations in their new home (Ferguson 2013, 142).

Hron (2009, xii) writes in her book on immigrant suffering in immigrant narratives that most people are aware of the struggles that immigrants face, yet they are also unaware of the continuing suffering many immigrants “experience even years after their arrival in a new country, or even as second- or third-generation immigrants”. Furthermore, the inadequate understanding of the immigrant struggles has real repercussions in the lives of immigrants as attitudes towards immigration can shape legislation and public policy (Hron 2009, xii). Hron (2009, xiii) argues that these attitudes and beliefs about the lives and experiences of immigrants often come from the fictional representations of immigrants. This is certainly a valid argument as fiction has the power to widen our understanding of the world and the experiences of other people. The political debate on issues of immigration also has the power to affect the public views on immigration and the current political climate among the leaders of Trump’s America has been very hostile towards immigration. Thus, there is a great need for fictional immigrant narratives to construct a more complex representation of immigrant lives than merely one of success or unsuccess. Hron (2009, xiv) also points out that immigrant narratives influence immigrants themselves as they try to fit the narrow views on immigrants enforced by immigrant fictions. This puts an enormous pressure on immigrants to fit into the conventional ideals of the very narrow views of what it means to be a successful immigrant (Hron 2009, xiv).

In her book, Hron explores the issue of immigrant suffering and explains that the overarching view on immigrant suffering is the belief that as one assimilates to the new host country and thus becomes an immigrant success, all suffering should cease to exist (Hron 2011, 3-4). This of course is an oversimplified view on the immigrant experiences that relies on the erasure of the immigrant’s own identity. The truly successful immigrant is the one that transforms him or herself from an immigrant into an American. After all, this was the ideal that the Founding Fathers set up during the formation of the nation. This does not mean that the immigrant experience is seen as an easy one, but rather, as Hron (2009, 4) points out, that the suffering and hardship are necessary steps in the immigrant’s journey towards success. The pressure to succeed and to assimilate to one’s new country is reinforced by the immigrants

themselves as the ones who are seen as having succeeded often lament the idea that one can succeed and be transformed into a stronger person (Hron 2009, 4). Hron (2009, 5) argues that if we shift our cultural understanding of the immigrant experience it would allow a more realistic understanding of the immigrant experience and may even serve to ease the immigrant suffering. Immigrant fictions have the power to play a significant part in the widening of the understanding of immigrant experiences.

The genre of immigrant literature that Hron (2009, 15) calls “general immigrant narrative” emerged from the large-scale immigration wave that hit America in the late nineteenth century. Hron (2009, 15) identifies three main elements of this general immigrant narrative, which are *a hero*, *a journey*, and *a series of trials*. All of these three elements affect the views on immigrant experiences, especially the understanding of the struggles of these experiences (Hron 2009, 15). Firstly, the hero of the story, the immigrant, does not fit the typical idea of a hero who usually transforms into a hero through admirable heroic acts (Hron 2009, 15). Instead, the immigrant hero is distinguished by their otherness as the immigrant represents the unified experience of the people of their ethnicity rather than an individual (Hron 2009, 16). This otherness is the key characteristic of the immigrant hero and the true test of the hero’s journey is for the hero to rid themselves from this otherness. In other words, for the hero’s journey to be successful, they must become assimilated into the new country and adapt a new national identity. In terms of American immigrant narrative, the immigrant must become an American.

The journey is the second main element of immigrant narratives as identified by Hron and this journey often entails a “departure, passage, and finally [...] an educational journey where the immigrant learns to assimilate various sociocultural norms” (Hron 2009, 15-16). This form of journey enforces the idea that the immigrant’s story is not only about a physical arrival, but a metaphorical arrival as well, in which the immigrant will finally arrive when he or she assimilate to their new home country (Hron 2009, 16). The third and final main element of the immigrant narrative is the series of trials that the immigrant experiences throughout their journey (Hron 2009, 16). Through these trials the immigrant leaves behind their old values and adapts a new national identity (Hron 2009, 16).

This kind of simplified immigrant narrative then creates the idea of what Hron (2009, 20) calls *myth of success*. It reinforces the belief that there are successful and unsuccessful immigrants and that those who are successful are the ones who have been able to leave their former identity behind and become Americans. It creates pressure for immigrants to not only adapt to the new culture and language they inhabit, but also to abandon their own cultural traditions, customs and beliefs in order to be successful. Yet, an immigrant experience is less straightforward than that. A successful immigrant story can include adapting into a new country as well as holding one's own cultural identity in high regard. The next subsection examines how the play *Hamilton* fits into constructions of general immigrant narratives.

5.3. *Hamilton* as an Immigrant Story

Hamilton establishes itself as an immigrant narrative from the very beginning of the play in its opening song "Alexander Hamilton", which showcases the titular character Alexander Hamilton's journey from the Caribbean island of Nevis to the American colonies while describing him as "[a]nother immigrant comin' up from the bottom" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 17). This section analyzes how the play as an immigrant story fits into the structures of a general immigrant narrative outlined by Hron (2009, 15), which includes, as explained previously, the three elements of a hero, a journey, and a series of trials. Alexander Hamilton is the immigrant hero of the story and I argue that *Hamilton* establishes him as such through his otherness, his relationship in juxtaposition to Burr, Hamilton's motive to establish a legacy, as well as through his own immigrant identity. Furthermore, Hamilton's journey in the play focuses mostly on his educational journey rather than a physical one. The thesis argues that Hamilton's educational journey is one from pride and arrogance to humility, and that this journey happens through the series of trials Hamilton goes through during the play.

This section analyzes Hamilton as an immigrant hero, followed by an examination on Hamilton's immigrant journey and the series of trials he goes through. Finally, this section also examines the role of rap and historical fiction in the retelling of Hamilton's story as an immigrant narrative. The thesis argues that *Hamilton* reinforces a positive image of America as a nation of immigrants through a complex yet

empathetic presentation of Hamilton as an immigrant hero. The play does this through mixing together elements of rap and historical fiction in the reshaping of Hamilton's life story as an immigrant narrative.

5.3.1. Alexander Hamilton as an Immigrant Hero

In principle, Alexander Hamilton as a historical figure was a domestic immigrant of the British Empire, since the island of Nevis that he was from was at the time a part of the British territories as were the American colonies he emigrated to (Magness 2017, 499). Thus, Hamilton was not an immigrant in the usual sense of the word as he did not emigrate to the colonies from a foreign country unable to understand the culture or the language of his new home. Hron (2009, 6) explains the term immigrant as a word that was first used to describe people who migrated to a country other than where they were born. In its contemporary use, according to Hron (2009, 6), the term immigrant usually refers to people labeled as "'ethnic' or 'non-White' other" and is particularly used in political discussions. In the play the character of Hamilton is presented as an immigrant hero who is defined by his otherness much like the general model for an immigrant hero suggests. Hron (2009, 15) writes that immigrant heroes are fundamentally other and in fact, immigrant heroes are not seen as individual but rather as the representation of the ethnic group, which they belong to.

The decision to mold Hamilton into an immigrant hero in the play transforms the story of the Founding Father into an immigrant narrative. Analyzing Alexander Hamilton as an immigrant hero we can identify four main components that construct Hamilton as the immigrant hero of the narrative. These components are Hamilton's otherness, the juxtaposition between him and Aaron Burr, the driving motive for Hamilton's actions, which is his obsession with creating a legacy, and finally Hamilton's own immigrant identity.

As stated above, Hron (2009, 17) claims that the hero of an immigrant narrative is typically characterized by their otherness, rather than by some heroic traits the character might possess. Similarly, what establishes Hamilton as an immigrant hero of the narrative is his otherness, which is created by the tension between Hamilton and some of the other Founders such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Burr. Burr has a heightened role in the play as Hamilton's antagonist and I will further analyze the

effects the relationship between Hamilton and Burr later in this section. What makes Hamilton the other in contrast to these three characters is his background as a Caribbean born orphan who as a teenager emigrates to the American Colonies. Jefferson, Madison and Burr are all what Magness (2017, 497) calls the “descendants of old Virginia and New England aristocracy”. This difference in background and status is the source of tension between Hamilton and the other Founding Father’s in the play. Whereas the American born Founders can rely on the status they have acquired at birth, Hamilton as an orphan immigrant must build his own way up.

Hamilton is not the typical immigrant hero that exists in general immigrant narratives. Hron (2009, 17) describes the general immigrant hero as someone who “often lacks basic social skills” as they exist in a foreign environment in which they struggle with “linguistic or social inadequacies”, which they seek to get rid of through the assimilation process. Instead Hamilton is rather arrogant, intelligent, self-assured and proud, which is visible in the way he conducts his politics. Hamilton’s politics is another source of tension between him and the other characters. For example, Hamilton and Jefferson have very opposing views on how the newly independent country should be governed, which leads Jefferson and his friends Madison and Burr to conspire against Hamilton to strip away his political powers. The three blame Hamilton for the growing size of the government and are against Hamilton’s financial policy of centralized national credit. They see Hamilton’s financial plan as unfavorable to the government as well their own political views. The fact that Hamilton has been able to establish policies that go against the political ideals of particularly Jefferson and Madison affect their political careers in the eyes of their own political supporters. Thus, the three men plot against Hamilton and as they do so, Hamilton’s immigrant status is brought into the discussion, as the following verse illustrates:

MADISON, BURR, JEFFERSON:
Oh!
This immigrant isn’t somebody we chose.
Oh!
This immigrant’s keeping us all on our toes.
Oh!
Let’s show these Federalists who
 they’re up against!
Oh!

JEFFERSON, MADISON: Southern, motherfuckin' –

JEFFERSON, MADISON, BURR:
Democratic Republicans! (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 200)

The verse above showcases how the three men use Hamilton's immigrant status to other him. Hamilton is seen as other not only because of his political alliance to the Federalists as opposed to the Democratic Republicans, but also and more importantly because he is an immigrant rather than a born American.

Later in the play when the three men confront Hamilton as they believe he has embezzled the government's money and want to use their information to destroy Hamilton's political career, the men once again use Hamilton's immigrant identity against him. The following verse from the musical number "We Know" demonstrates the immigrant views of the three men:

BURR: An immigrant embezzling our government
funds—

JEFFERSON, MADISON: I can almost see the
headline, your career is done.

BURR: I hope you saved some money for your
daughter and sons.

BURR, JEFFERSON, MADISON: Ya best g'wan
run back where you come from— (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 229)

This further demonstrates how the three men view Hamilton's immigrant identity in negative regard. The scene also echoes the contemporary attitudes towards immigrants. If an immigrant faces a scandal in the media or the public their immigrant status is often brought to forefront as if to explain their undesired behavior. Furthermore, the insult "go back where you came from" is a phrase that not only immigrants but people of color, despite their citizenship status or origin of birth, often receive from people who experience their existence as a threat. Hron (2009, 4) writes in her book that this kind of sentiment of suggesting an immigrant to go back where they came from is a common response to the immigrant suffering. If an immigrant expresses their struggles they are often met with the response of "if it is so bad here, why don't you return to your homeland?" (Hron 2009, 4). This is a way to further other the immigrant. The idea is, as Hron (2009, 4) puts it, that once an immigrant arrives to

their new home country, their struggles should cease to exist and the immigrant should become assimilated to their new home country. Thus, if an immigrant expresses their struggles it is seen as a justification for people to other them. Everyone experiences hardship in their lives and so do immigrants, which means that if an immigrant vocalizes their experiences of struggle, it can be used to other them even if said struggles are not related to their experience as an immigrant. In *Hamilton* Burr, Jefferson, and Madison suggest that Alexander Hamilton should run back to his home to Nevis, not because he has complained about his struggles but because he has essentially failed to live up to their standards of being an American. The three men see Hamilton as other simply because he does not share the same values or political views as they do. An immigrant is not allowed to have opinions or views that oppose the opinions of the born citizens.

Hamilton's otherness is even more visible in his relationship between his friend-turned-political-rival and enemy, Burr. As Magness (2017, 499) points out, "Hamilton's place of birth becomes a differentiating point between him and his political adversaries". This is especially true for the New England born Burr who as Magness further explains, "makes use of every opportunity to remind the audience of his rival's low birth, making it a major plot device for the tension between the two characters" (Magness 2017, 499). The dynamics between Hamilton and Burr is further heightened by the fact that Burr is the play's primary narrator. This makes Burr's significance for Hamilton's immigrant story more prevalent than those of the other characters. The following passage is the opening scene of *Hamilton* and it illustrates how Burr is established as the primary narrator from the very beginning of the play:

Lights up on Aaron Burr & the company.

AARON 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? (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 16)

The verse demonstrates how Hamilton's story is experienced mostly through Burr's point of view. He introduces Hamilton as a bastard orphan who is unlikely to become the successful person he became. The question of how Hamilton did succeed is the one that *Hamilton* the musical seeks to answer during the course of the play. Andie

Silva and Shereen Inayatulla (2017, 190) explain in their article that the opening verse of *Hamilton* brings the issues of access and privilege to the forefront of the play. They argue that the question of “how does someone without birth, wealth or colonial heritage get to become a national, historical figure” is not only a recurring theme of the play but also at the heart of Burr’s obsession towards Hamilton (Silva & Inayatulla 2017, 190).

The question of Hamilton’s success is the question that troubles Burr throughout their relationship as Burr is perplexed by the fact that Hamilton, an orphan immigrant, is the one to rise to political prominence while Burr, the man born to privilege and status, is always a few steps behind him. In the musical number “A Winter’s Ball” Burr once again questions Hamilton’s rise to success as Hamilton has gained himself a position as general George Washington’s “right hand man” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 60). The following passage demonstrates Burr’s frustration with Hamilton:

BURR: How does the bastard orphan son of a
whore go on and on,
Grown into more of a phenomenon?
Watch this obnoxious arrogant loudmouth
bother
Be seated at the right hand of the father. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 70)

Burr keeps calling Hamilton these negative descriptors instead of his actual name, which illustrates his dislike towards Hamilton. This is a typical literary device of rap poetry called *epithet*, which Burr uses throughout the play. The use of epithets in rap is part of the wordplay element of rap poetry discussed in broader detail in section three. Bradley defines epithet as the names derived from the “process of naming, of exchanging one identity for another” (Bradley 2017, 91). Through Burr’s continuous use of epithet’s regarding Hamilton the play demonstrates Burr’s increasingly negative feelings towards him. The epithets first and foremost establish the fact that whatever descriptors Burr uses instead of Hamilton’s name, he is using those words and phrases in a negative manner. Therefore, when Burr describes Hamilton as an immigrant, for example in the following verse from the musical number “Your Obedient Servant”, he is using the word as a negative descriptor for Hamilton:

BURR: 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? (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 266)

This example demonstrate how the play establishes Burr's disgust towards Hamilton being created by Hamilton's background as an immigrant rising from his harsh circumstances to political success. The juxtaposition between Hamilton and Burr represents the tension between the concepts of a citizen and an immigrant. As Hron (2009, 15) explains, in immigrant narratives the hero is seen as the embodiment of "a foreign ethnic collective". Thus, in the play Hamilton as an immigrant hero represents all immigrants, and in similar vein Burr embodies the American citizens. The relationship symbolizes the mistrust and skepticism citizens sometimes feel towards immigrants, whether in Hamilton's era America where the Founding Fathers questioned the safety of immigration or the contemporary America where the questions surrounding immigration have very much stayed the same. Burr sees Hamilton as a threat and questions his right to succeed. To Burr Hamilton is the reason why Burr himself has not risen to the political prominence he believes to be entitled to. Instead, an immigrant has come and stolen his place in the political elite.

Silva and Inayatulla (2017, 199) discuss in their article the tension between Hamilton and Burr that arises from Burr's entitlement and resentment towards Hamilton. As discussed earlier in the thesis, Hamilton and Burr are characterized by two songs that best describe their temperaments and characteristics, "My Shot" and "Wait for it". Silva and Inayatulla (2017, 199) explain that these two songs represent the ideological differences of these two characters. Whereas Hamilton's ideology of taking ones shot represents opportunity, Burr's willingness to wait for his chance to come freezes him in time causing his stagnation, which ultimately leads to his frustration that then turns to violence when Burr kills Hamilton (Silva & Inayatulla 2017, 199).

Burr's frustration and growingly hostile attitude towards Hamilton represents the common attitudes towards immigrants who, as discussed earlier, are not seen just

as a security threat but a threat to the economy as well. A common anti-immigrant view is that immigrants are taking the jobs and advantages that belong to the citizens themselves. In *Hamilton*, Burr blames Hamilton, the immigrant, for his own failings and is incapable of understanding the larger societal system that works against him (Silva & Inayatulla 2017, 199). Similarly, in society, it is easy to blame immigration for larger societal problems such as unemployment or violence rather than to recognize the social structures that create these issues. Thus, in *Hamilton* the characters Hamilton and Burr symbolize this tense relationship between immigrants and citizens.

Despite the tension between Hamilton and Burr, the two characters are actually quite similar at least in what motivates their drive to succeed. Both men are overly concerned over the legacies they want to leave behind. Hamilton's obsession to build a legacy is the third main component used to construct him as an immigrant hero. The difference between these two characters is that whereas Hamilton as an immigrant rising from poverty has to build his legacy from the ground up, Burr has to protect the legacy he already carries. As Burr expresses it, "Hamilton faces an endless uphill climb. [...] / He has something to prove / He has nothing to lose" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 92). As an orphan immigrant Hamilton faces many adversaries in his quest for success and because of his background he needs to prove that he is worthy of the prominence he gains along his career. Furthermore, as Hamilton comes from essentially nothing, he does not have much to lose. Hamilton's background and lack of privilege is what shapes Hamilton as an immigrant character. Similarly, to general immigrant narratives, as the immigrant hero of the play, Hamilton has to build his life from the ground up and to prove his worthiness as an American. However, the way in which Hamilton goes about this is what differentiates him from the traditional immigrant hero. In contrast to the self-confident Hamilton, the typical hero of the general immigrant narrative is naïve and hopeful (Boelhower 1981, 6). As Burr describes him, Hamilton is an arrogant and loudmouthed character who is unafraid to voice his opinions. In contrast to the general immigrant hero, Hamilton believes himself to be always right and views his policies as the only right and logical choices for the new government.

For example, when Hamilton as a Treasury secretary introduces his financial plan for the government to undertake state debt and to found a national bank, he is

met with strong opposition from the Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson's political allies. A discussion between Hamilton and Washington in the following verse illustrates Hamilton's arrogant attitude towards his political opponents when he is unable to get the approval for his financial plan:

Washington & Hamilton, alone.

WASHINGTON: You wanna pull yourself together?

HAMILTON: I'm sorry, these Virginians are birds of a feather.

WASHINGTON: Young man, I'm from Virginia. So watch your mouth.

HAMILTON: So we let the Congress get held hostage by the South?

WASHINGTON: You need more votes.

HAMILTON: No, we need bold strokes. We need this plan.

WASHINGTON: No, you need to convince more folks.

HAMILTON: Well, James Madison won't talk to me, that's a nonstarter.

WASHINGTON: Winning was easy, young man. Governing's harder.

HAMILTON: They're being intransigent.

WASHINGTON: You have to find a compromise.

HAMILTON: But they don't have a plan, they just hate mine! (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 163)

Firstly, Hamilton calls his opponents "Virginians" with similar negative connotations as they do when they describe him as an immigrant. To him these men from the American south are not as intelligent as him and thus they flock together as "birds of a feather" rather than thinking for themselves. Secondly, he calls them uncompromising when in fact he is being just as unyielding as his opponents are. Hamilton believes so strongly in his own financial plan that he thinks it needs to be approved by any means necessary. This demonstrates his arrogance as he believes he is smarter than anyone else and knows for certain what is best for the newly independent nation. The general immigrant hero is characterized by their naïveté, and their actions are usually driven

by the world view, which the hero has inherited from their country of origin (Boelhower 1981, 6). Hamilton differentiates himself from this general immigrant hero particularly through his self-assured personality as well as his progressive world view that is very much focused on the future of America rather than characterized by his Caribbean-born past. Hamilton himself is not oblivious to his own arrogance as he at one point describes his political personality in a letter to Angelica by stating that “I’m a polymath, a pain in the ass, a massive pain” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 168). What is exceptional about Hamilton as an immigrant hero is the fact that he does not try to conform to the ideas of immigrant humility.

The play establishes Hamilton as an immigrant hero through Hamilton’s otherness, his juxtaposition between Burr who uses his immigrant identity against him, and his drive to establish his legacy no matter the cost. In addition, the last main element of Hamilton as an immigrant hero is Hamilton’s own identity as an immigrant. Whereas Burr’s view on Hamilton as an immigrant is rather negative and Hamilton as an immigrant character is often unpleasantly arrogant and flawed, what establishes his immigrant identity in positive regard is how Hamilton uses this identity himself.

Hron (2009, 29) explains that the most common theme of immigrant narratives is what she calls *identitary instability*. This identitary instability refers to the immigrant’s questioning of their own identity (Hron 2009, 29). Immigrants often feel a shift in their identity once they arrive to their new home country and they might begin to feel that they do not know themselves anymore (ibid.) Some might even feel as if they have two identities, the one they present to the outside world and another they keep hidden, the identity they have carried with them from their country of origin (ibid.) What differentiates Hamilton from the general immigrant hero is that he does not experience this identitary instability and instead he embraces his own immigrant identity.

For example, during the final battle in the war for independence Hamilton has the following exchange with another immigrant character, his French ally Lafayette:

Hamilton & Lafayette enter and embrace.

LAFAYETTE: Monsieur Hamilton.

HAMILTON: Monsieur Lafayette.

LAFAYETTE: In command where you belong.

HAMILTON: How you say, no sweat.
We're finally on the field. We've had a quite run.

LAFAYETTE: Immigrants.

HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE: We get the job done. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 121)

Here through this exchange Hamilton expresses his own immigrant identity and how he believes that the very fact that he is an immigrant makes him also an overachiever who gets the job done whether in the war or in his political career.

An even more powerful example of Hamilton's own immigrant identity comes in the character's final moment in the play as he is about to die from the bullet shot by Burr. As Magness (2017, 499) puts it, "Hamilton dreams of a legacy in which other refugees, migrants, and low-born persons might come to enjoy the promises of self-made success in the country he helped to found". Hamilton's ultimate legacy is to be the representation of the nation built by immigrants where even the people like him can rise to success. In his last moments alive Hamilton contemplates the true meaning of a legacy in the following verse:

Legacy. What is a legacy?
It's planting seeds in a garden you never get
to see.
I wrote some notes at the beginning of a song
someone will sing for me.
America, you great unfinished symphony,
You sent for me.
You let me make a difference.
A place where even orphan immigrants can
leave their fingerprints and rise up. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 273)

This is the legacy the play establishes as Hamilton's main achievement. *Hamilton* asserts its main character's life story as an immigrant narrative in which Hamilton represents all American immigrants. Silva and Inayatulla (2017, 191) argue that *Hamilton* presents Alexander Hamilton as immigrant savior who redefines the ideas of American national identity. Similarly, my thesis argues that through *Hamilton* the play reinforces the idea of America as a nation of immigrants in positive regard.

Furthermore, in the end Burr too learns that the world has space for both people like him and the ones like Hamilton. The tragedy is that Burr has to take

Hamilton's life for him to realize this. At the end of the play Burr expresses his regret of not being more tolerant towards Hamilton as the following verse illustrates:

Now I'm the villain in your history.
I was too young and blind to see.
I should've known.
I should've known
The world was wide enough for both
Hamilton and me. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 275)

As Burr in the play represents American citizens and Hamilton represents immigrants, the above scene in the play delivers an important message regarding the opposition between the two groups. Through these juxtaposing characters *Hamilton* asserts that the world is complex and wide enough to encompass people from all walks of life. Silva and Inayatulla (2017, 194) discuss the difference between Hamilton and Burr, which culminates in their final moments together. Hamilton spends his life always working towards the future and even though he is afraid of dying young, he uses that fear to drive him forwards (Silva & Inayatulla 2017, 194). When Hamilton dies, he leaves his legacy for the future generations to build on and sees it as the fulfillment of his destiny (ibid.) In contrast, Burr remains stuck in his obsession with the past and himself as he becomes "the inevitable villain in this story" (ibid.) As Hamilton and Burr are representations of immigrants and citizens, the play portrays immigrants as the ones moving the country forward and citizens who oppose those immigrants, like Burr, are the ones being stuck in the way of progress.

The above two verses are part of the scene where Hamilton's journey ends. Although in the play Hamilton is successful in establishing his ultimate legacy for immigrant success, his immigrant story is not simply a success story. After all, his life ends in an untimely death by his political rival, Aaron Burr. The next subsection further explores Hamilton's immigrant journey and the series of trials he goes through during this journey.

5.3.2. Alexander Hamilton's Immigrant Journey and the Series of Trials

Hamilton's immigrant journey does not follow the general model of immigrant narratives outlined by Hron (2009, 15-16) in which the immigrant hero through a series

of trials assimilates into their new home country and adapts a new national identity. Hron (2009, 15) describes the immigrant journey as a passage from the immigrant's home to their new host country. Such journey often entails departure, passage and arrival (Hron 2009, 15-16). However, Hron (2009, 16) argues that the more significant part of the immigrant's journey is their educational journey, one typical to a *Bildungsroman*. Tobias Boes (2012, 1) describes the *Bildungsroman* as a "novel of formation" that centers around the protagonist's spiritual and intellectual growth. Hron (2009, 16) argues that in terms of immigrant narratives, the idea of a *Bildungsroman* refers to the immigrant's educational journey. The educational journey, which the immigrants goes through is a metaphorical journey during which the immigrant learns to assimilate into the social and cultural norms of their host country (Hron 2009, 16). This educational journey happens through a series of trials which result in the immigrant's assimilation, which transform the immigrant into an American (ibid.)

In *Hamilton* the story focuses mainly on the metaphorical journey of its titular character, the *Bildungsroman* of Alexander Hamilton. However, what differentiates Hamilton's educational transformation from the typical educational journey of general immigrant narratives is that Hamilton's journey is not one of assimilation. Instead, I argue that Hamilton's educational and spiritual transformation is one from pride and arrogance to humility. During the series of trials that Hamilton faces during his educational journey he experiences a shift in his priorities that cause him to reevaluate his motivations in building a legacy. Hamilton begins his educational journey from a place of arrogance, in which he is driven by his desire to create a name for himself. His transformation comes to conclusion right before his death in which he realizes that the legacy he has built is not for himself but for the future generations of immigrants that will find their way to America long after him. Thus, this thesis argues that Hamilton's spiritual education does not deal with assimilation as general immigrant narratives usually do. Instead, Hamilton's educational journey transforms his egoistical views on building a legacy into his hopes to lead the way for future generations of immigrants in America. In this section I will analyze Hamilton's educational transformation by examining the series of trials he goes through and how the significant events in his life lead him from arrogance to humility. Examining *Hamilton* through the parameters of

general immigrant narratives we can identify seven main trials that advance Hamilton's educational journey from arrogance to humility and his understanding of the true value of his legacy. These seven main trials of Hamilton's life are all necessary parts of his educational journey. These trials are Hamilton's early life and departure to America, the Revolutionary War, becoming a father and losing his close friend, Hamilton's political career, his major scandal of having an affair, the death of his son Philip, and finally the duel between Hamilton and Burr that ends up in Hamilton's death. In this section I will discuss each major trial of Hamilton's life while analyzing how these trials move Hamilton closer towards the revelation of his educational journey.

The basis of Hamilton's educational journey differentiates his story from the general immigrant narrative as the country to which Hamilton emigrates is not an established nation but rather one that is in the beginning of building itself. Thus, there is no comprehensive national identity for Hamilton to adapt to. Although, as established earlier, Hamilton identifies himself as an immigrant, this does not prevent him from seeing himself also as an American revolutionary. Early on in his spiritual education Hamilton describes himself as "just like my country, I'm young, scrappy and hungry", which indicates his almost immediate sense of belonging to the American colonies (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 26). He wants to be a part of the fight for independence and later in the shaping of the policies of the newly independent nation.

As discussed earlier, Hamilton is motivated by his need to establish a legacy, and he wants his legacy to be the mark he will make on the young, scrappy country precisely because he is able to feel early on that the country belongs just as much to him as it does to the other Founders. Thus, Hamilton's educational journey as an immigrant is not characterized by the traditional aspects of immigrant narratives where the immigrant hero will go through a series of trials and assimilate to their new country by adapting to its national identity. Hamilton already holds a national identity of an American upon his arrival to his home country. Analyzing *Hamilton* as a Bildungsroman we can conclude that instead of the traditional transformation towards assimilation, his educational transformation is about the personal journey from pride to humility and a shift in his motivation to build a legacy, which happens through the series of trials Hamilton experiences during this journey.

Hamilton's physical journey to the American colonies begins from the very first musical number of the play "Alexander Hamilton". As discussed earlier, Hron (2009, 15-16) identifies three main components for the immigrant journey, which are the departure and the passage from the origin country as well as the educational transformation of the immigrant. In *Hamilton*, the departure and the passage both take place rather quickly in the opening song of the play. Hron (2009, 16) writes that in contemporary immigrant narratives it is common for the story to not focus heavily on the departure or passage of the journey. Instead, Hron (ibid.) explains, contemporary immigrant narratives tend to center around the immigrant's life in the host country much like *Hamilton* does.

The series of trials in Hamilton's early life shape him as a person while establishing the direction of his journey. The following verse demonstrates how Burr describes Hamilton's determination to better his life as well as the physical journey Hamilton takes to the American colonies:

BURR: There would have been nothin' left to do
For someone less astute,
He woulda been dead or destitute
Without a cent or restitution,
Started workin' — clerkin' for his late mother's
 landlord,
Tradin' sugar cane and rum and all the things
 he can't afford
Scammin' for every [...]
book he can get his [...]
hands on
Plannin' for the future [...]
see him now as he [...]
stands on
The bow of a ship
headed for a new
land.
In New York you can
be a new man. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 17).

The above verse demonstrates not only Hamilton's resilience and drive for a better life but also how his emigration to the American colonies allows him to reinvent himself as a new person. As Hamilton makes the physical journey from Nevis to America, he also begins his spiritual education, which commences with his transformation from a poor

young man in the Caribbean into a driven young immigrant in the American colonies.

As Hamilton arrives to New York he is determined to build a legacy for himself no matter the cost. He dreams of martyrdom and dying in a war as the following conversation he has with Washington during the Revolutionary war illustrates:

WASHINGTON: It's alright, you want to fight,
you've got hunger.

I was just like you when I was younger.
Head full of fantasies of dyin' like a martyr?

HAMILTON: Yes.

WASHINGTON: Dying is easy, young man.
Living is harder. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 64).

This demonstrates the arrogance of young Hamilton who is thinking about the war from a very personal perspective as his own way to secure his legacy. He believes that either he will die in the war and secure his legacy as a martyr, or if he survives he can then use his success as a soldier to advance in his life. Hamilton describes the war as his only way to advance in life as he sees that he is "either gonna die on the battlefield in glory or [...] / Rise up" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 60).

Hron (2009, 17) explains that the series of trials an immigrant goes through during the narrative are "a basic requirement in most narrative forms" that drive both the plot of the story as well as the hero's educational journey to assimilation. Although Hamilton's educational transformation does not follow the general immigrant narrative, he too achieves his spiritual education through the series of trials. The Revolutionary war is the first major trial Hamilton faces during his new life in the American colonies. Hamilton plays a crucial role in the Revolutionary war as Washington's right-hand man and thus Hamilton has a big part in the victory of the American colonies as they win their independence from Britain. As this major trial in Hamilton's life leads into an even greater victory it also feeds Hamilton's arrogance as well as his drive to contribute to the policies of the newly independent nation.

Towards the end of the war Hamilton faces two other major life events, the first which is him becoming a father and the second being the death of his dear friend John Laurens, who dies right after the war "in a gunfight against British troops retreating from South Carolina" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 131). These two events

change Hamilton in a similar manner as they both strengthen his drive to play a key role in the building of the new nation. Hamilton wants to build a strong nation for his son, as the following verse demonstrates:

I'll make the world safe
and sound for you . . .
Will come of age with our young nation.
We'll bleed and fight for you, we'll make it right
for you.

If we lay a strong enough foundation
We'll pass it onto you, we'll give the world to
you, and you'll blow us all away . . .
someday, someday. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 129).

The verse illustrates a small shift in Hamilton's priorities as he is now also driven by his desire to secure his son's future by working hard towards establishing a stable country for him to grow up in. Before becoming a father, Hamilton was mostly driven by his own desire to advance in life but now he has the additional pressure to build a stable nation for his son. This is a turning point in Hamilton's priorities in his educational transformation towards humility, but as we shall see, he is still a long way from the end of his spiritual education.

Furthermore, when Hamilton learns about the death of his friend Laurens and his wife Eliza asks him if he is alright, Hamilton's only response is to state that "I have so much work to do" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 131). Thus, these two events represent a change in Hamilton's life that reinforces his need to work towards his goals. The difference is that before he was simply motivated only by his own desire to secure his legacy, but now Hamilton seeks to ensure the legacies of his son as well as his deceased friend. However, neither of these major trials move Hamilton directly towards humility, rather they both reinforce his pride and arrogance as he begins his political career as a Treasury Secretary for President Washington's administration.

Hamilton's political career is a crucial phase in Hamilton's educational journey as well as a source of numerous trials during his life. For a play about the myth of the American Founding, *Hamilton* focuses surprisingly little on the Revolutionary war and places a much greater focus on the political revolution that takes place after the war. The whole second act deals with Hamilton's political life and his struggles with his

political rivals. The main political trial of Hamilton's career is his struggle to get his financial plan through in Congress as well as a public revelation of an affair he had with a woman named Maria Reynolds.

The affair is a crucial trial in Hamilton's life as it will end up being the reason for Hamilton's eventual political downfall. While Hamilton's main political challenge is to get his financial plan approved, the affair is the most significant event to further Hamilton's educational journey from arrogance towards humility. When Jefferson, Madison and Burr find out about Hamilton's affair, in order to be the one in control of his own story and to prevent false rumors, Hamilton decides to reveal his affair to the public himself by writing a pamphlet under the name *The Reynolds Pamphlet*. The publication of *The Reynolds Pamphlet* is the culmination of Hamilton's arrogance as he publishes the incredibly personal essay without any regard to the effects it will have on his wife and family. The only concern Hamilton has is to protect his name and he believes that even if he damages his personal reputation his political reputation will stay intact. To Hamilton his greatest priority is to protect his legacy rather than the feelings of his wife and family as he makes their personal business into a very public affair. The revelation of his affair will however, have far more greater consequences than Hamilton could have imagined.

Firstly, the scandal is the cause for Hamilton's political downfall as the disgrace of the affair puts brakes on Hamilton's political career. As Jefferson puts it in the play: "Well, he's never gon' be president now" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 234). Secondly, the affair of course has a tremendous effect on Hamilton's relationship with his wife Eliza as it comes to as much a surprise to her as it does to everyone else. After the affair is revealed, Eliza expresses her pain by burning the letters Hamilton has written her over the years. The following passage illustrates the great pain Hamilton has caused to his wife:

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.
[...]
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 . . . (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 238)

Here Eliza herself indicates how Hamilton's only concern has been to clear his own name and to protect his legacy without any regard for how his revelation will hurt his wife and family. Hamilton has even published the letters Maria has written to him adding to Eliza's humiliation. Furthermore, as Eliza points out, Hamilton's only worry is how he himself is perceived and not how his wife will be seen after the affair is revealed to the whole nation. Ultimately, Hamilton is not changed by neither of these consequences for his actions. He is not made more humble by the fact that he has most likely ruined his political prospects nor even by the fact that he has caused great pain to his wife. Instead, the event that acts as a catalyst for Hamilton's journey towards humility is the death of his son Philip, which is caused by the sequence of events that begin with Hamilton's affair.

Whereas Eliza is rightfully heartbroken by Hamilton's actions, their eldest son Philip still holds his father in high regard. Therefore, when after the scandal Philip hears that a man named George Eacker made malicious remarks about Hamilton, he goes and finds Mr. Eacker and starts an argument with him that ends up with Philip challenging Eacker into a duel. Philip tells about this to his father who then assures to Philip that if he aims his pistol at the sky the duel will be sorted out peacefully. Hamilton promises to Philip that Eacker will "follow suit if he is truly a man of honor" and warns Philip not to shoot Eacker as it would bring great pain to the already heartbroken Eliza. Hamilton does not consider the fact that Eacker might not be a man of honor and during the duel Eacker shoots Philip before the end of the countdown. Later the same day, Philip dies in the arms of his parents.

The death of his son becomes the ultimate catalyst of change for Hamilton. This change is immediately evident in him, which is illustrated by the following verse from the musical number "It's Quiet Uptown" that explores the family's grief:

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.
A sign of the cross at the door.
And I pray.
That never used to happen before. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 253)

The above paragraph demonstrates the change in Hamilton's temperament as grief changes him into someone who finds solace in quiet and prayer. This is a drastic change from the opinionated, driven, and arrogant person Hamilton has been presented as throughout the play. The grief of the family also has another surprising consequence as it brings Hamilton and Eliza closer together and allows Eliza to forgive his husband's humiliating affair.

Although the change in Hamilton's character is immediately evident in the way he grieves his son's death, there are still parts of Hamilton's arrogance and pride left in him, which prevent him from realizing the true value of his legacy. Thus, Hamilton's spiritual education does not come to an end after his son's death but rather in the final moments of his own life. The final trial of Hamilton's educational journey is the duel between him and Burr. Hamilton's final moment in the play is him reflecting on the true value of his legacy as he asks the question of "[w]hat is a legacy?" and comes to the conclusion that the true meaning of his legacy is not to create a name for himself but to help to establish "[a] place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingertips and rise up (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 273). In his final moments Hamilton reaches the conclusion of his spiritual education from arrogance to humility as he realizes that the value of his legacy is to pave the way for the future generations of immigrants wanting to build a life in America.

Hamilton's educational journey is not one that ends in successful assimilation but rather a transformation in his personal values. Hron (2009, 18-19) writes that immigrant narratives are often presented as successful stories of assimilation because "if all immigrant stories are success stories, we are also successful as a society – we are hospitable, undiscriminating, classless, and pluralistic; we have a thriving economy, are generous to the poor, and proudly embrace racial, ethnic, and gender differences." In *Hamilton* Alexander Hamilton reaches the end of his educational journey from arrogance to humility at the very last moments of his life. In a sense, Hamilton is successful in completing his transformation, yet it comes with the price of his own life.

Therefore, Hamilton's immigrant journey cannot be characterized simply as a success or as a failure. His journey does not fall into the traditional parameters of immigrant success and although he completes his educational journey his life also ends in tragedy. *Hamilton* presents the immigrant journey of its immigrant narrative more complexly than what the traditional parameters of immigrant narratives would allow.

In the play, Hamilton succeeds in his desire to establish a legacy as he paves the way for future immigrants to succeed in America, yet he fails in the sense that his self-serving drive to build a name for himself puts him in the way of Burr who then kills him. Hron (2009, 19) discusses the idea of immigrant success by arguing that it is closely related to the capitalist idea of the American Dream. Similarly to immigrant success, the American Dream represents the idea that everyone can achieve their dreams of success if they work hard enough for them (Hron 2009, 19). *Hamilton* represents a similar idea of success as through his hard work Alexander Hamilton is able to secure his dream of establishing a legacy. However, the fact that his life ends in a tragic and untimely death complicates the way in which the play explores the myth of immigrant success. The play demonstrates how a blind drive to achieve the American Dream can also result in tragedy.

To conclude, Hamilton's immigrant journey does not follow the general immigrant narrative of achieving assimilation and adapting a new national identity. *Hamilton* presents Alexander Hamilton's immigrant transformation through the idea of the Bildungsroman, in which Hamilton goes through an educational transformation from arrogance to humility. This transformation enables Hamilton to understand that his true legacy is not his desire to self-servingly build a name for himself but rather the way in which his actions will pave the way for the future generations of immigrants. Hamilton's spiritual education happens through the series of trials he goes through during his life. The most significant of which is the death of his son Philip and the events that lead to his own death.

The musical does not end with Hamilton's death, instead it closes up with the musical number that asks the question of "who lives, who dies, who tells your story?" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 280). Throughout the play *Hamilton* is concerned with the questions of the making and retelling of history and the power of storytelling. The next section examines how through historical fiction and rap poetics Hamilton's story is

shaped into an immigrant narrative that seeks to reframe the images and ideas about immigration in America in a way that favors tolerance towards immigration.

5.3.3. Retelling Alexander Hamilton's Story as an Immigrant Narrative Through Hip Hop and Historical Fiction

Rap poetics and historical fiction make up the two main components of *Hamilton* through which the play constructs Alexander Hamilton's life as an immigrant narrative. By mixing together these two components the play presents a unique perspective through which the myth of American Founding can be examined. Furthermore, by having the historical characters communicate through rap, *Hamilton* makes the nation's founding accessible and identifiable to a broader audience. Historical narratives shape national identities and the cornerstone of American national identity is the myth of the American Founding. This subsection examines the specific roles rap poetics and historical fiction play in the construction of the play as an immigrant narrative.

McAllister (2017, 280) argues in his article that hip hop is not only a fitting storytelling device for *Hamilton*, but that as a culture it has a similar origin story than the birth of the American nation. Both, the birth of America as well as the birth of hip hop were revolutionary events made possible through gifted writers (McAllister 2017, 280). Whereas the founding of America leans on such texts as *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine or *The Declaration of Independence* drafted by Thomas Jefferson, the birth of hip hop leans on the works of the early rappers of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In *Hamilton*, the titular character is presented as a gifted writer capable of writing himself out of the dire circumstances of his life. In hip hop there exists a trope of rappers writing their way out of their own harsh or limiting conditions, whether it be personal circumstances or the hardships of belonging to a marginalized group of people in the United States.

The play first contrasts Hamilton to this typical hip hop trope in the opening number "Alexander Hamilton" by demonstrating how he writes his way out of the Caribbean island of Nevis into the middle of the American revolution. The more striking illustration of Hamilton writing his way to success comes in the song "Hurricane" where he contemplates his plan to reveal his affair with Maria Reynolds to

the public in order to protect his legacy. The following passage from this musical number presents Hamilton as a character whose greatest strength is his skill to write himself out of any adversary that he faces:

I wrote my way out,
Wrote everything down far as I could see.
I wrote my way out.
I looked up and the town had its eyes on me.
They passed a plate around.
Total strangers
Moved to kindness by my story.
Raised enough for me to book passage on a ship
that was New York bound . . .
I wrote my way out of hell.
I wrote my way to revolution.
I was louder than the crack in the bell.
I wrote Eliza love letters until she fell.
I wrote about the Constitution and defended it
well.
And in the face of ignorance and resistance,
I wrote financial systems into existence.
And when my prayers to God were met with
indifference.
I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 232)

Here Hamilton attests that through his skillful writing he has been able to leave the harsh realities of his past behind, make his wife Eliza fall in love with him, and that his writing is what established the financial system of the new nation.

Similarly, hip hop itself is full of examples of artists who have written their way to success, for example rappers Jay-Z or Kendrick Lamar, both of whom have extensively rapped about the circumstances which they overcame through their music. The trope is so prevalent in hip hop culture that rappers, despite their circumstances, boast with their success and having achieved it through their craft of rapping. Similarly, in the above passage, Hamilton flaunts with pride the accomplishments he has achieved through his writing. He believes himself to be capable to write himself out of any situation, such as the scandal of his affair with Maria Reynolds. Much like with the gifted rappers of our time, the greatest talent of Hamilton is his ability to shape the world around him through his writing.

Hamilton's skills do not go unnoticed for the people around him and in fact

throughout the play several characters question how or why Hamilton is able to write as well and as much as he does. For example, after the war Hamilton tries to get Burr to write with him a series of essays to defend the Constitution. Yet Burr who is afraid of such act's consequences, refuses the offer. Instead, Hamilton goes to write the series of essays, which came to be known as *The Federalist Papers*, with James Madison and John Jay. In the play, Burr is astonished by the number of essays that Hamilton is able to write as he explains that the three men planned to write 25 essays yet they ended up writing 85 essays in only six months. Of those 85 essays Hamilton himself ended up writing 51, whereas Jay wrote only 5 and Madison wrote 29. Burr is astonished by Hamilton's capabilities and wonders how he is able to write the way he does, as the following verse from the song "Non-Stop" demonstrates:

BURR:

How do you write
Like you're [...]
Running out of time?

Write day and night
Like you're
Running out of time? [...]

COMPANY: How do you write like tomorrow
won't arrive?
How do you write like you need it to survive?
How do you write ev'ry second you're alive? (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 143)

The above passage illustrates the astonishment of not only Burr but most people, as his sentiments are repeated by the entire company. Hamilton, who truly was a prolific writer in his life, is then presented in the play, much like many gifted rappers of our time, as someone who is not only capable to achieve great things through his writing but to whom writing is the way to survive.

In the song "My Shot" Hamilton expresses his fear of time as he says "See, I never thought I'd live past twenty / Where I come from some get half as many" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 28). The fear of time is one of the driving motives for Hamilton's excessive writing. The above line illustrates how Hamilton grew up in a place where someone like him, an orphan living in poverty, was not expected to have a long life, let alone succeed. Similarly, many of the young men and women who turn to

rap and hip hop culture come from circumstances that paint a dire picture of what to expect from one's future. For them, and for Hamilton, writing is the way to leave behind those circumstances and rise up towards success. Thus, by using rap poetics as the storytelling method in Hamilton the play is able to elevate the myth of the American founding as accessible to broader audiences. By having the Founders and other characters express themselves through rap the play makes them more familiar and relatable for contemporary audiences. Through rap the play is able to present Hamilton in a similar vein as many rappers have presented themselves throughout the existence of hip hop culture as someone who rose to success through their writing. By contrasting Hamilton's story with the rags to riches trope prevailing in hip hop culture the play reframes the myth of the American founding as a historical narrative that becomes identifiable for the people who live and create hip hop culture and particularly the ethnically and racially marginalized people of America.

Rap in *Hamilton* represents contemporary America and it is used as a storytelling device to further reinforce the idea of America as a cultural and ethnic melting pot. By mixing rap poetry as a method of storytelling with historical fiction, the play creates what McAllister (2017, 284) calls "historical and visual dissonance". In the play the racial and ethnic hierarchy prevailing America gets turned upside down when in the story the historically white Founding Fathers are transformed into racially and ethnically marginalized people of color (McAllister 2017, 284). The flipping around the prevailing racial and ethnic hierarchy of America is particularly evident in the scene in which the Founders, portrayed by actors of color communicating through rap, celebrate the victory of the Revolutionary war. At the end of the musical number "Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down)" Hamilton and his friends repeat with astonishment "We won! We won" as the rest of the company sings "The world turned upside down!" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 123). This is where according to McAllister (2017, 284) the historical and visual dissonance is most present. In this scene the historically white Founders are now being portrayed by black and brown actors who in the society of Hamilton's time as well as contemporary America belong to marginalized group of people (McAllister 2017, 284). This creates the historical and visual dissonance as the play turns the historical story of the Revolutionary war upside down when the marginalized people become the victorious revolutionists who won the

American independence (McAllister 2017, 284). This sort of effect can only be achieved through the mixture of hip hop and historical fiction. Similarly, presenting Hamilton's life as an immigrant narrative that brings the idea of America as nation of immigrants to the foreground, acquires reshaping of the myth of the Founding through rap and historical fiction.

In order to achieve the desired effect, *Hamilton* needs to retell the piece of history as a narrative that both fits and reinforces the main themes of the play. Thus, the play takes some liberties as how it reshapes its historical narrative. An obvious liberty is taken with the casting and the storytelling method of rap, but the play also reshapes the characters and some of the events of history, particularly the play's hero Hamilton. As discussed earlier, the historical Hamilton held growingly anti-immigrant views towards the end of his life. Furthermore, he was not as far removed from the stain of slavery as the play makes him up to be. The family he married into, the Schulers, had strong ties to the slave trade. These historical facts, as well as the issues of truth in historical fiction were examined in section four, yet this section further examines the reasons behind the liberties to reshape history in *Hamilton*, which is to reframe Hamilton as the immigrant hero of the play.

Hamilton is the immigrant hero of the story and as such it would be out of character for him to grow increasingly against immigration. The Hamilton of the play holds a strong immigrant identity and the reframing of him as an immigrant hero relies on the reshaping of the historical Hamilton in this fictionalized version of him. The play presents a somewhat cleaner version of Hamilton yet it does so in order to focus on the core message of America as a country built by the people the society has marginalized throughout history, such as immigrants or enslaved people and their descendants. In reality Hamilton was not as much of an immigrant hero, as the play makes him out to be. Yet, the play reshapes the myth of the American Founding precisely so that it can reframe history and reinforce the idea of Hamilton as an immigrant hero who laid the foundation of success for all the immigrants that came after him.

Brown (2017, 489) points out in his article that historical myths, such as the American Founding, transform through time in order to fit modern purposes. For example, in the case of *Hamilton*, the myth of the American Founding is reframed as

an immigrant narrative to create a more favorable image on immigration for the contemporary American society. Brown (2017, 490) emphasizes that viewing historical narratives as myths does not automatically mean that these myths are untrue or fictitious. Yet it is important to understand that historical narratives are reproduced by the following generations in a manner that fits their contemporary purposes (Brown 2017, 490). Therefore, to construct the myth of the American Founding in *Hamilton* as an immigrant story through rap and historical fiction reframes the Founding into a historical narrative that belongs just as much to the marginalized people as it does to the white Americans. By erasing parts of Hamilton's history in terms of immigration and slavery, the play is able to reshape its main character into the immigrant hero the play needs him to be. Therefore, *Hamilton* is able to reshape the myth of the Founding to serve its contemporary purposes.

Brown (2017, 492) argues that *Hamilton* embodies two particular realities in terms of contemporary America. Those realities are the fact that race and hypocrisy are an integral part of the Founding myth and that the ideals that guided the founding of America still have a significant standing in the culture and national identity of contemporary Americans (Brown 2017, 492). This is precisely why *Hamilton* has to present its immigrant hero as a cleaned-up version of himself. The play seeks to reshape the myth of the American Founding because it holds such a significant weight in the national identity of Americans and it aims to bring that myth closer to the marginalized people who before have not been able to feel a sense of belonging to the founding myth of their country. The myth of the American Founding has previously stood on the shoulders of the Founding Fathers although America was not founded just by this group of white men, but through the labor of immigrants, enslaved people and Native Americans. However, many of the previous historical narratives of the Founding have completely ignored these marginalized groups of people.

Through reconstructing the myth of not only the Founding but the Founders themselves, *Hamilton* brings accessibility to the central narrative of the myth of the Founding. The actors of the original Broadway run have commented on playing these historically white characters as people of color and what that has meant to them. Daveed Diggs, who played both Jefferson and Lafayette as part of the original cast, said that the play made him feel more connected to American history (Miranda & McCarter

2016, 149). Leslie Odom Jr., who played Aaron Burr in the original casting of the play said “that playing a Founding Father [...] made him feel newly invested in the country’s origins, something that always seemed remote from his life as a black man in America” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 160). Thus, the play makes connection not only with the Founding but also with the Founders and the people of contemporary America. This connection is then further reinforced by mixing historical fiction with the modernity of hip hop culture and rap music.

Brown (2017, 492) argues that the play is able to examine the issues of race indirectly through the play’s casting of people of color in these historically white roles. Similarly, I argue that through rap poetics, *Hamilton* can bring the issues of race and ethnicity in the forefront of the libretto of the play. In the libretto of *Hamilton*, rap represents what the casting of people of color then represents on stage. Nereson (2016, 1055) argues in her article that hip hop is the most effective way for *Hamilton* to tell the story of the American Founding in a manner that enables marginalized people to relate to the historical figures and event of the story. Brown (2017, 494) claims, that the play’s goal to build a bridge between the history of the nation’s founding and the marginalized people of contemporary America pays the price of historical accuracy. Moreover, he claims that this method of reframing and erasing parts of history blurs the central issues of the Founding and the relationship that contemporary America has with the historical narrative of the Founding (Brown 2017, 494). I would argue that instead of confusing the issues of the Founding, *Hamilton* is able to crystalize its core theme of America as a nation of immigrants through the reframing and erasure of certain aspects of the myth of the Founding. Furthermore, historical fiction does not have the same responsibility of serving historical accuracy as history does. Therefore, examining *Hamilton* through historical accuracy does not bring a deserved focus on the achievements of the play.

One of the things that *Hamilton* achieves as a piece of historical fiction is its ability to offer commentary on the contemporary issues of today’s America. For example, Hamilton and Jefferson argue whether to provide aid to France in their war against England. Hamilton who is against this idea argues the following: “If we try to fight in every revolution in the world, we never stop. Where do we draw the line?” (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 193). This line in the play makes commentary on America’s

interventionist policies such as the numerous interventions the country has led in foreign warfare. Similarly, when Burr switches his political party alliances in order to run for a seat in the Senate against Hamilton's father-in-law and wins, he explains his actions to Hamilton as follows:

BURR: Oh, Wall Street thinks you're great.
You'll always be adored by the things you create
But upstate, [...]
People think you're crooked!
And Schuyler's seat was up for grabs,
so I took it. (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 191)

This is a commentary on the close ties many politicians have been accused of having with Wall Street and refers to the idea of crooked politics as well as the uprising towards the economic inequality in the United States, which then created the 2011 Occupy Wall Street Movement.

The above examples demonstrate the connection between contemporary America and the country's history the play is able to make through historical fiction and rap poetics. As McAllister (2017, 288) puts it, *Hamilton* creates an idealized version of America, both in its founding as well as its contemporary state. Yet, through this idealized version of history *Hamilton* is able to represent America as country whose success was established by the fact that America is a cultural melting pot where immigrants played a role in building that success. The play reframes the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton's life into an immigrant narrative in which Hamilton is transformed to an immigrant hero who lays down the foundation for a place where, as Hamilton himself puts it, "even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and rise up" (Miranda & McCarter 2016, 273).

History shapes our identities, particularly the historical narratives and myths of our nations, and through historical fiction we can reshape national identities. Similarly, immigrant narratives can shape views and attitudes towards immigrants. By choosing to create a piece of historical fiction based on the myth of the American Founding, which reframes the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton as an immigrant hero, the play attempts to shift attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. Immigrants are not the others they are viewed as, for they have been part of the very fabric and foundation of the country since the beginning of the Republic. Furthermore, by

including rap poetics into the retelling of the myth of the Founding, *Hamilton* bridges the gap between the historical narrative and contemporary America regarding marginalized people who have not before been able to directly identify with the founding of their nation.

6. “Another Immigrant Coming Up from the Bottom”: Conclusion

In the beginning of this thesis I set out to expand the study of rap poetics by presenting a research that would utilize the previous studies on the poetry of rap conducted by Bradley and Pate, but one that would also advance the study of rap poetry by making it a major component of my literary analysis. The idea was that as the research on rap as a form of literature has so far focused mainly on defending the genre’s literary validity, this thesis would not place major focus on defending rap’s poetic merits, as Bradley and Pate have already successfully done so. Instead, my research would focus on providing a comprehensive example in how to include hip hop studies as a major component of literary criticism and the ways in which rap poetics can enrich the study of literature. I chose the libretto of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical *Hamilton: An American Musical* as my primary research material because the play incorporates the elements of historical fiction and hip hop in the retelling of Alexander Hamilton’s story as an immigrant narrative. Thus, the source material perfectly suited the initial objective of my research, which was to bring hip hop studies as a central element to literary analysis. I set out to analyze the themes of immigration in *Hamilton* by examining the roles of rap poetry and historical fiction in the reframing of Hamilton’s story as an immigrant narrative.

I began my research by providing a brief analysis on the poetics of rap while defending the genre’s literary merits. After making the argument for rap’s poetic merits the thesis moved towards analyzing the primary source material through the analytical methods of rap poetry. In the next section, the thesis discussed the common issues of historical fiction such as its close relationship with history as well as the concerns over historical accuracy. In the fifth section of the thesis, I analyzed *Hamilton* as an immigrant narrative through the three main components of general immigrant narratives, which are the hero, the journey, and the series of trials that take place during that journey (Hron 2009, 15). The thesis concludes with the discussion of the role of rap and historical fiction in the retelling of Hamilton’s story as an immigrant narrative. The thesis argues that through rap and historical fiction the play is able to examine the myth of the American Founding from a new and unique perspective. Furthermore, through the mixture of rap and historical fiction in the reframing of

Hamilton's life story as an immigrant narrative, *Hamilton* reinforces the idea of America as a nation of immigrant in positive regard. As the play blends rap poetics together with the myth of the Founding it bridges the gap between the historical narrative and contemporary America regarding the marginalized people who have not before been able to directly identify with the founding of their nation.

Hamilton brings immigrant narratives to the forefront of the historical consciousness of contemporary America. As America and the rest of the world are experiencing politically unpredictable times and the issue of immigration is often at the center of political debates, there exists a need in contemporary societies for more complex and positive representations of immigrant narratives. The opening musical number of the play asserts Alexander Hamilton as "another immigrant coming up from the bottom" and the play itself presents Hamilton as the immigrant Founder of America who paved the way for the generations of immigrants that came after him to find their own place in the cultural melting pot of America. As I have established in my research, *Hamilton* provides a more complex representation of immigrant narratives that seeks to contribute to the societal need of more comprehensive yet positive representations of immigrants.

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Finnish Summary

Johdanto

Lin-Manuel Mirandan suureen suosioon noussut musikaali *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015) kertoo yhden Yhdysvaltain perustajaisän Alexander Hamiltonin elämäntarinan hip hop musiikin ja historiallisen kaunokirjallisuuden kautta. Näiden kahden kerronnallisen elementin kautta *Hamilton* muovaa Alexander Hamiltonin elämän maahanmuuttotarinnaksi. Alexander Hamilton syntyy Karibianmeren Nevis saarella, jossa hän elää orpona köyhyydessä hänen isänsä hylätessään perheensä ja äitinsä kuollessa, kun Hamilton on vain kaksitoistavuotias. Hamilton muuttaa teini-ikänsä loppupuolella Yhdysvaltain siirtokuntaan New Yorkiin, jossa hän tutustuu muihin Amerikan itsenäisyyttä kannattaviin nuoriin. Hamilton taistelee Yhdysvaltain vapaussodassa itsenäisyyden puolesta, ja sodan päättyessä hän nousee poliittiseen valtaan Presidentti George Washingtonin nimittäessä hänet Yhdysvaltain ensimmäiseksi valtionvarainministeriksi. Poliittisen uransa aikana Hamilton saa itselleen monta vihamiestä, joista yksi, Aaron Burr, surmaa hänet kaksintaistelussa Hamiltonin ollessa vain 49-vuotias.

Hamilton-musikaali esittää Alexander Hamiltonin elämäntarinan maahanmuuttotarinnana, joka rakentaa Hamiltonin hahmon edustamaan Yhdysvaltain maahanmuuttotaustaista väestöä. Musikaali esittää maahanmuuton osana Yhdysvaltain kansallista identiteettiä vahvistaen ajatusta siitä, että Yhdysvallat on kansojen sulatusuuni, jota maahanmuutto on muovannut sen itsenäistymisestä saakka. *Hamilton* ennen kaikkea esittää Yhdysvallan maahanmuuton positiivisena asiana, jossa eri kansojen yhteensulautuminen on valtion ja sen kansanidentiteetin rikkaus. Tällainen maahanmuuttopositiivinen kerronta Yhdysvaltain perustamismyytistä on erityisen vaikuttavaa aikana, jolloin maahanmuuttokysymykset ja -kriittisyys ovat sekä Yhdysvaltain että muun maailman poliittisessa keskiössä.

Pro Gradu tutkielma analysoi Hamilton musikaalia maahanmuuttotarinnana ja väittää että, musikaali uudelleenrakentaa Yhdysvaltain perustusmyytin maahanmuuttopositiiviseksi kertomukseksi hip hop-musiikin sekä historiallisen kaunokirjallisen kerronnan kautta. Kehystäessään Alexander Hamiltonin elämän

maahanmuuttajatarinaksi *Hamilton* vahvistaa ajatusta Yhdysvalloista kansojen sulatusuunina positiivisessa mielessä.

Tutkielma rakentuu neljään pääosaa, joista ensimmäinen perustelee miksi rap-lyriikkaa tulisi ajatella ja analysoida yhtenä kirjallisuuden ja runouden alalajina. Osio nojaa vahvasti kahden hip hop tutkijan, Alexis Paten ja Adam Bradley'n merkittävään työhön rap-runoudesta. Paten kirja *In the Heart of the Beat: The Poetry of Rap* (2010) käsittelee rap-runouden analyysin keinoja ja pyrkii nostattamaan rap-lyriikan varteenotettavaksi kirjallisuuden tyyli-lajiksi. Myös Bradley'n kirja *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* ([2009] 2017) väittelee rap-runouden kirjallisen ansiokkuuden puolesta, antaen samalla kokonaisvaltaisen katsauksen rap-runouden kaunokirjallisille tyylikeinoille.

Toiseksi Pro Gradu analysoi rap-runouden kirjallisia elementtejä sekä sitä, miten nuo elementit esiintyvät *Hamiltonissa*. Kolmanneksi tutkielma käsittelee historiallisen tarinankerronnan tutkimusta sekä *Hamiltonin* historiallista täsmällisyyttä. Tutkielma väittää, että esittääkseen Alexander Hamiltonin elämän maahanmuuttotarinaan musikaalin täytyy toteuttaa taiteellisia vapauksiaan historiallisen totuuden muovaamisessa. Pro Gradun viimeinen osa analysoi tapaa, jolla musikaali esittää Hamiltonin elämän maahanmuuttotarinaan. Analyysi nojaa Madelaine Hronin tutkimukseen maahanmuuttokirjallisuudesta hänen teoksessaan *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture* (2009). Kirjassaan Hron tutkii maahanmuuttokirjallisuutta psykoanalyysin kautta, keskittyen erityisesti maahanmuuttokirjallisuudessa esiintyvään maahanmuuttajakärsimyksen kokemukseen. Hron (2009, 15) tuo ilmi kirjassaan kolme maahanmuuttokirjallisuuden pääpiirrettä, jotka ovat *maahanmuuttaja sankari* ("immigrant hero"), *maahanmuuttajan taival* ("the journey") sekä *maahanmuuttajataipaleen koettelemukset* ("the series of trials"). Pro Gradun analyysi *Hamiltonista* maahanmuuttokertomuksena perustuukin näihin kolmeen elementtiin.

Rap runoutena

Hip hop-kulttuuri syntyi 1970-luvulla Bronxin eteläosissa New Yorkin osavaltiossa Yhdysvalloissa. Hip hop-tutkimus taas alkoi kehittyä kaksikymmentävuotta itse

alakulttuurin syntymisen jälkeen (Miller et al. 2014, 8). Termit hip hop ja rap sekoitetaan usein keskenään, mutta hip hop viittaa koko afrikkalaisamerikkalaiseen alakulttuuriin, johon kuuluu myös esimerkiksi graffititaide sekä breikkitantsi, kun taas rap viittaa ainoastaan tiettyyn hip hop-kulttuurin musiikkilajiin. Tricia Rose kirjoitti yhden varhaisen hip hop-tutkimuksen merkittävimmistä teoksista *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994). Hän määrittelee rapin hip hop-kulttuurin tuottamaksi musiikinlajiksi, joka tuo esiin sellaisten ihmisryhmien äänet, jotka ovat muuten jääneet amerikkalaisen yhteiskunnan väliinputoajiksi (Rose 1994, 2).

Hip hop-tutkimus on monitieteellinen tutkimusala, joka liittyy hip hopin analysoimiseen muun muassa sosiologiaa, teologiaa ja kulttuurintutkimusta (Miller et al. 2014, 9). Kuitenkin rapin analysoiminen kirjallisuuden alalajina on tähänastisessa hip hop-tutkimuksessa jäänyt vähäiselle huomiolle. Rapin kaunokirjallisia ansioita ei ole vielä hyväksytty täysin olemassa oleviksi, josta syystä sekä Pate että Bradley kumpikin keskittävät suuren osan työstään todistaakseen rapin arvon runouden alalajina. Hip hop syntyi afrikkalaisamerikkalaisen kulttuuriperinteen jatkumona ja rap itsessään sai alkunsa afrikkalaisamerikkalaisesta postmodernista kirjallisuudesta (Pate 2010, 3). Ääni ja teksti ovat kumpikin tärkeitä elementtejä afrikkalaisamerikkalaisessa kirjallisuusperinteessä (Brown 1999, 28). Näin ollen rapin yhdistelmä musiikkia ja runoutta on luonnollinen osa tuon kirjallisuusperinteen jatkumoa. Rap onkin runoutta juuri siksi, että se on suora jatkumo afrikkalaisamerikkalaisen runouden ja kirjallisuuden perinteitä.

Rapin kaunokirjalliset elementit

Analysoidessa Paten ja Bradley'n tekstejä rap-runoudesta voidaan nimetä seitsemän rapille olennaisinta kaunokirjallista elementtiä, jotka ovat *rytmi*, *riimitys*, *sanaleikki*, *viittaukset*, *tyyli*, *tarinankerronta* sekä *merkitseminen (signifying)*. Rytmi sekä riimi ovat rapin runouden keskiössä ja vaikka Bradley sekä Pate kumpikin painottavat tutkimuksissaan vain yhtä ylitse toisen, Pro Gradu argumentoi että, molemmat elementit toimivat rap-runouden pääelementteinä. Bradley (2017, 10-11) väittää tekstissään, että rytmi on rap-runouden pääelementti. Hän myöskin korostaa analyysissään musiikin keskeistä roolia rap-runouden tutkimuksessa. Pate (2010, 4)

taas väittää, että rap-runoutta voidaan myös analysoida huomioimatta lainkaan musiikkia. Pro Gradu hyödyntää analyysissään kumpaakin menetelmää ja argumentoi, että musiikin keskeisyys rap-runouden tutkimuksessa riippuu siitä mitä asiaa tutkimuksessa halutaan korostaa. Esimerkiksi, analysoidessani *Hamilton*-musikaalin rap-runoudellisia kirjallisuuden elementtejä huomioi tutkimukseni analyysissään myös musiikin. Kun taas analysoin *Hamilton*-musikaalin libretossa esiintyviä maahanmuuttoteemoja ei tutkimus ota huomioon näytelmän musiikkia.

Sekä rytmi että riimi pyrkivät muovaamaan tutun ja ennalta-arvattavan asian uudeksi ja yllättäväksi. Runon säkeiden rytmi luo ennalta-arvattavan kaavan, josta poikkeavat säkeet nousevat erityisesti esiin. Näin ollen rap-artisti voi korostaa haluamaansa sanomaa yllättävällä rytmin muutoksella runon säkeiden kaavassa. Samoin riimi pyrkii kommunikoimaan rap-runouden sanomaa tai tarinaa luomalla ennalta-arvaamattomia riimipareja. Hip hop sopii *Hamilton*-musikaalin ilmaisuvälineeksi juuri rap-runouden ennalta-arvaamattomuuden vuoksi. *Hamilton* pyrkii kertomaan historiallisesti tunnetun tarinan Amerikan perustamisesta uudella ja yllättävällä tavalla. Aivan kuten hip hopin elementit rytmi sekä riimi pyrkivät muovaamaan tutut tarinat ja kaavat uusiksi ja yllättäviksi.

Loput rap-runouden elementeistä, sanaleikki, viittaukset, tyyli, tarinankerronta sekä merkitseminen, pyrkivät myöskin rikkomaan kaavoja sekä näin muovaamaan tutut asiat ja tarinat uudelleenlaisiksi. Sanaleikki pyrkii viestittämään sanomaansa koodatun kielen kautta ja luomaan runouden elementtejä, jotka ovat täysin ymmärrettävissä vain niille, jotka osaavat purkaa tuon koodin. Viittaukset ja kielikuvat ovat sanaleikille tyypillisiä kirjallisuuden tehokeinoja. Viittaukset toisten rap-artistien töihin tai hip hop-kulttuurin ominaisuuksiin ovat myös rap-runouden yleisiä piirteitä. Jotta rap runon merkitys voi tulla täysin ymmärretyksi, tulee sen viittausten avautua runon lukijalle tai kuuntelijalle. Tämä taas vaatii rap-runon lukijalta tai kuulijalta laajempaa hip hop-kulttuurin ja musiikin tietämystä. Rap-runoutta voi kuitenkin arvostaa ja tulkita ilman, että ymmärtää jokaista rap-runoudessa tehtävää viittausta. Viittauksilla rap-runous pyrkii kaventamaan välimatkaa menneen ja nykyisyyden välillä. Aivan kuten *Hamilton*-musikaali pyrkii rap-runouden ja historiallisen tarinankerronnan kautta kaventamaan välimatkaa Amerikan perustamishistorian ja nykypäivän välillä.

Rap-runouden viides elementti on tyyli, jolla hip hopin kontekstissa viitataan

rap-artistin ominaispiirteisiin, jotka kyseinen artisti jakaa tiettyjen hip hop artistien kesken (Bradley 2017, 103-104). Jaettujen ominaispiirteiden kautta rap-artistit tai -runot voidaan jakaa tiettyyn kategoriaan esimerkiksi alueen, aikakauden, tai musiikin alalajin mukaan (Bradley 2017, 104). *Hamilton*issa tyyliä käytetään korostamaan näytelmän hahmojen tiettyjä ominaispiirteitä. Esimerkiksi Alexander Hamilton ja Aaron Burr kommunikoivat musikaalissa hyvin eri tyylein. Hamiltonin tyyli on nopeampainen ja sanarikas, joka taas alleviivaa hänen hahmonsäilyä sekä kunnianhimoa. Burrin tyyli on taas paljon rauhallisempi, joka korostaa hänen varauksellisuuttaan ja harkitsevaisuuttaan.

Bradley (2017, 133) väittää teoksessaan, että tarinankerronta erottaa rap-musiikin kaikista muista musiikin tyyllilajeista. Tarinankerronta onkin monen rap-runon keskiössä ja usein rap-runot pyrkivätkin kertomaan tuttuja tarinoita ja tapauksia uudella ja yllättävällä tavalla (Bradley 2017, 135). Rap-runouden viimeinen pääelementti on merkitseminen (signifying), joka on afrikkalaisamerikkalaisen kirjallisuusperinteelle ominainen kulttuurinen tapa, johon liittyy asioiden toistoa ja erottelua, kerskailua sekä pyrkimystä olla kielellisissä ilmauksissaan toista nokkelampi (Bradley 2017, 153). Hip hopissa ja rap-runoudessa merkitseminen liittyy usein rap-kamppailuihin, joissa kaksi rap-artistia taistelee toisiaan vastaan sanasodassa, pyrkimyksenään nujertaa toinen kielellisen leikittelyn kautta.

Rap-runouden pääelementtejä tutkimalla Pro Gradu pyrkii perustelemaan rap-runouden merkittävyyttä sekä kirjallisuuden että hip hopin tutkimuksessa. Tutkielma käsittelee myös sitä, miten nämä rap-runoudelliset elementit näkyvät *Hamilton*-musikaalissa.

Historiallisen Kaunokirjallisuuden Analysointi ja Totuudenkysymys *Hamilton*-musikaalissa

Yhdysvaltalainen historiallisen kaunokirjallisuuden yhdistys, The Historical Novel Society, määrittelee historiallisen kaunokirjallisuuden sellaisena kirjallisuutena, joka on kirjoitettu vähintään viisikymmentä vuotta kirjan historiallisten tapahtumien jälkeen tai jonka kirjailija itse ei ole ollut elossa kyseisen tapahtuman aikaan (Lee, 2018). Historiallisena kaunokirjallisuutena voidaan ajatella myös sellaisia romaaneja, jotka

käsittelevät vaihtoehtoista historiaa, keksittyä historiaa, aikamatkustusta, historiallista fantasiaa, sekä useita eri aikakausia käsittelevät romaanit (Lee, 2018).

Historia ja historiallinen kaunokirjallisuus eroavat toisistaan siten, että historia viittaa metodiin, jonka kautta menneisyyttä voidaan analysoida, kun taas historiallinen kaunokirjallisuus on puhtaasti historiaan pohjautuvaa fiktiivistä kerrontaa, joka kerronnassaan hyödyntää historiallisia tapahtumia ja henkilöitä (Rodwell 2013, 54). *Hamilton*-musikaali voidaankin määritellä historialliseksi näytelmäksi, sillä se on näytelmäkirjallista taidetta, joka hyödyntää tarinassaan tunnettuja historiallisia tapahtumia sekä henkilöitä. Hip hopin ja historiallisen näytelmäkirjallisuuden avulla *Hamilton* pyrkii käsittelemään Yhdysvaltain perustusmyyttiä uudella ja yllättävällä tavalla. Historiallinen fiktio muovaa miten yhteiskunta näkee ja kokee oman kansallisen historiansa (De Groot 2016, 2). Näin ollen historiallisen tarinankerronnan kautta voidaan vaikuttaa kansalliseen identiteettiin. Historiallisella fiktiolla on kaksi lopputulosta, joista ensimmäinen on sen vaikutus historian näkemykseen sekä siihen, miten kukin yhteiskunta tulkitsee historiaa (De Groot 2016, 2). Toinen lopputulos on se, että historiallisen fiktion kautta voidaan tulkita sitä, miten historialliset tapahtumat on esitetty ja näin ollen historian näkemyksiä voidaan kyseenalaistaa historiallisen fiktion kautta (De Groot 2016, 2).

Hamiltonin kautta voidaan uudelleen tulkita Yhdysvaltain perustajamyttiä, jossa perustajaisät on usein esitetty sankarillisina hahmoina, joita ilman Yhdysvaltain synty ei olisi ollut mahdollista. *Hamilton*-musikaalissa nämä sankarilliset hahmot muovautuvat sekä näyttelijävalintojen että hip hopin kautta edustamaan Yhdysvaltain väestön vähemmistöjä. Suurinta osaa näytelmän rooleista näyttelee Yhdysvaltain rodullistettuun vähemmistöön kuuluvia näyttelijöitä, kuten afrikkalaisamerikkalaisia, latinx, tai Amerikan-aasialaisia näyttelijöitä. Historiallisesti valkoisia ihmisiä näytteleekin näytelmässä siis joukko rodullistettuja näyttelijöitä, jotka ilmaisevat itseään hip hop-musiikin ja kulttuurin kautta. Näin ollen *Hamilton* tuo Yhdysvaltain rodullistetut ihmiset heidän valtionsa perustamismyytin keskiöön.

Jotta *Hamilton* pystyy käsittelemään Yhdysvaltain perustamishistoriaa sen haluaman uuden näkökulman kautta, tulee sen ottaa tiettyjä taiteellisia vapauksia historian kerronnassaan. Näistä vapauksista silmiinpistävin on tietysti näytelmän roolittaminen ja hip hop-musiikillinen kerronta. Kuitenkin *Hamilton* myös muovaa

näytelmässään tiettyjä historiallisia faktoja, esimerkiksi Alexander Hamiltonin hahmon suuntautuminen maahanmuuttoon muovautuu näytelmässä uuteen uskoon. Historiallisen Hamiltonin maahanmuuttoaikakäsitteet kehittyivät aina vain kriittisempään suuntaan hänen elämänsä loppupuolella (Brown 2017, 494). *Hamilton*-musikaalissa Alexander Hamilton halutaan kuitenkin esittää tarinan maahanmuuttajasankarina. Näin ollen hänen hahmoaan ei voida samalla esittää maahanmuuttokriittikkona sillä se olisi ristiriidassa näytelmän Hamiltonin maahanmuuttoidentiteettiä vastaan.

Vaikka *Hamilton* onnistuu hienosti muovaamaan Alexander Hamiltonin tarinan maahanmuuttopositiiviseksi kertomukseksi, musikaali ansaitsee kritiikkiä sen osalta, kuinka musikaalista puuttuu täysin afroamerikkalaisten sekä Amerikan alkuperäiskansojen läsnäolo. *Hamilton* keskittyy kerronnassaan täysin historiallisesti valkoisten ihmisten edustamiseen. Näin ollen musikaali jättää lähes täysin huomioimatta orjuutetut afroamerikkalaiset sekä sivuuttaa täysin amerikkalaisten alkuperäiskansojen olemassaolon. Näytelmä käsittelee pinnallisesti orjien vapauttamista sekä mainitsee afroamerikkalaisten osuuden Amerikan vapaustaisteluissa, mutta jättää huomioimatta amerikkalaisten alkuperäiskansojen osallisuuden Amerikan perustamisajan historiaan sekä vapaussotaan. Näytelmä ei myöskään tuo esiin, miten alkuperäiskansoja on sorrettu sodan jälkeisessä Amerikassa aina tähän päivään asti. Näin ollen erityisesti alkuperäiskansojen täydellinen sivuuttaminen *Hamilton*-musikaalissa ilmentää kuinka alkuperäiskansojen kohtelu on edelleen kipeä kysymys Yhdysvaltain nykykulttuurissa.

***Hamilton* Maahanmuuttokertomuksena**

Hamilton-musikaali uudelleen muovaa Alexander Hamiltonin elämän maahanmuuttotariksi, vahvistaen positiivista kuvaa Amerikasta kansojen sulatusuunina. Viimeisessä osassa Pro Gradu analysoi *Hamilton*-musikaalia maahanmuuttotarinaan hyödyntäen Hronin maahanmuuttokerronnan viitekehystä. Hron määrittelee kirjassaan kolme yleisen maahanmuuttokerronnan päätekijää, jotka ovat sankari, matka, sekä sankarin koettelemukset (Hron 2009, 15). Analysoidessa Alexander Hamiltonia maahanmuuttajasankarina voidaan määritellä neljä pääpiirrettä,

joiden kautta Hamilton rakentuu tarinan maahanmuuttosankariksi. Nuo elementit ovat Hamiltonin toiseus, hänen ja Burrin vastakkainasettelu, Hamiltonin toimintaa ajava motivaatio, sekä hänen oma maahanmuuttoidentiteettinsä.

Hamiltonin suhteet toisiin perustajaisiin määrittelee hänen toiseutensa. Erityisesti Hamiltonin suhde Burriin, Jeffersoniin ja Madisoniin korostaa Hamiltonin toiseutta maahanmuuttajana. Burr, Jefferson, sekä Madison ovat kaikki syntyneet Amerikan siirtokuntiin ja näin ollen ovat synnynnäisiä Amerikan kansalaisia. Hamilton taas on syntynyt Karibian-meren Nevis-saarella ja muuttanut teini-ikäisenä New Yorkin siirtokuntaan. Nämä kolme miestä käyttävät Hamiltonin maahanmuuttajaidentiteettiä häntä itseään vastaa, jonka kautta Hamiltonin toiseus korostuu entisestään.

Hamiltonin ja Burrin välinen vastakkainasettelu tuo erityisesti esiin Hamiltonin toiseuden. Nämä kaksi hahmoa edustavatkin tarinassa maahanmuuttajien ja synnynnäisten kansalaisten vastakkainasettelua. Hron (2009, 16) kirjottaa kirjassaan, että maahanmuuttajasankari edustaa maahanmuuttajatarinoissa oman etnisyytensä yhtenäistä kokemusta, eikä näin ollen edusta tarinassa pelkästään yksilöllistä itseään. Hamiltonin ja Burrin vastakkainasettelu siis symboloi niitä maahanmuuttokysymyksiä, jotka ovat vallinneet Amerikassa sitten maan perustamisesta saakka.

Hamiltonin toimintaa ohjaava motiivi on hänen päämääränsä turvata hänen imagollinen perintönsä. Hamilton haluaa saada nimensä historian kirjoihin ja on valmis tekemään mitä tahansa päämääränsä toteuttamiseen, jopa kuolemaan marttyyrinä sodassa. Tyypillisesti maahanmuuttotarinoissa tarinan sankaria ajaa toive integroitua uuteen kotimaahansa ja muuntautua maan kansalaiseksi. Hamilton taas kokee jo tarinan alkumetreillä itsenä amerikkalaiseksi ja häntä ajaa motivaatio oman perintönsä turvaamisesta. Hamiltonin maahanmuuttajataival poikkeaa myös tyypillisestä maahanmuuttotarinan taipaleesta. Tyypillisesti maahanmuuttotarinan taival keskittyy maahanmuuttaja sankarin sopeutumiseen uuteen kotimaahan. Maahanmuuttaja sankari käy läpi eri koettelemuksia, joiden kautta hän lopulta sopeutuu uuteen kotimaahansa ja muuntautuu tuon maan kansalaiseksi. *Hamilton*-musikaalissa taas Alexander Hamiltonin käy läpi eri koettelemuksia, jotka sopeutumisen sijaan saavat hänet ymmärtämään hänen perintönsä todellisen tarkoituksen. Juuri ennen kuolemaansa Hamilton tajuaa, että hänen perintönsä todellinen arvo ei ole saada nimeään historian kirjoihin vaan se, että hän on onnistunut luomaan pohjan tulevien

sukupolvien maahanmuuttajien menestykselle. Tavallaan Hamilton onnistuu taipaleessaan, mutta traagisesti hänen matkansa päättyy hänen ennenaikaiseen kuolemaansa. Näin ollen *Hamilton*-näytelmä esittää Hamiltonin maahanmuuttotarinan monimutkaisempana kokonaisuutena mitä maahanmuuttokertomukset yleensä tekevät. Hamiltonin tarina ei ole puhdas menestystarina, vaikka hän onnistuikin ymmärtämään perintönsä todellisen merkityksen. Hamiltonin tarinan epäonnistuminen onkin se, että ne samat koettelemukset, jotka johtavat Hamiltonin oivallukseen sinetöivät myös hänen kohtalonsa kuolla kaksintaistelussa Burria vastaan.

Lopuksi

Historia muovaa ihmisten kansallista identiteettiä ja erityisesti historialliset tarinat ja kansallismyytit vaikuttavat kansallisen identiteetin luomiseen. Näin ollen historiallisen kaunokirjallisuuden ja muun fiktion kautta voidaan vaikuttaa ihmisten kansalliseen identiteettiin. Samoin maahanmuuttotarinat muovaavat ihmisten suhtautumista maahanmuuttajiin ja voi myös vahvistaa itse maahanmuuttajien positiivista minäkuvaa. *Hamiltonin* yhdistelmä historiallista näytelmäkirjallisuutta ja hip hopia kehystääkin Yhdysvaltain perustusmyytin uudelleen maahanmuuttopositiiviseksi kertomukseksi, jossa Alexander Hamilton symboloi Yhdysvaltain maahanmuuttajaväestöä. Näin ollen *Hamilton* maahanmuuttajasankarina kykenee muovaamaan asenteita ja näkemyksiä, sekä maahanmuuttoa että Yhdysvaltain kansallishistoriaa kohtaan.

Hamilton tuo maahanmuuttajatarinat nyky-Amerikan historiallisen tietoisuuden keskiöön. Sekä Yhdysvallat että muu maailma elävät poliittisesti epävakaita aikoja ja erityisesti maahanmuuttokysymykset ovat olleet viimeaikaisten poliittisten keskustelujen keskiössä. Näin ollen on olemassa tarve erityisesti maahanmuuttopositiivisille tarinoille kuten *Hamilton*. Musikaalin ensimmäinen kohtaaminen julistaa, että Alexander Hamilton on jälleen yksi maahanmuuttaja, joka nousee pohjalta menestykseen ja näytelmä itsessään maalaa Hamiltonin perustajaisänä, joka luo tietä tulevan sukupolven maahanmuuttajille ja heidän mahdollisuuksilleen menestyä Amerikassa. Näin ollen *Hamilton* onnistuu luomaan monimuotoisen

maahanmuuttotarinan, joka vastaa yhteiskunnan tarpeisiin todellisista mutta positiivisista maahanmuuttokuvista.