



Rider of the Purple S(t)age: How the Drag King Reinvents the Classical Hollywood Cowboy

Abstract

This essay explores how the contemporary drag king deconstructs and appropriates the iconography of the classical Hollywood western to reimagine the cowboy figure through subcultural drag performance. Through a combination of interviews and textual, ideological, and genre analyses, this case study illustrates how one drag king in the Washington, DC drag scene, King Molasses, responds to the western's prescriptive and normative constructions of gender and race by naming them and transforming them into new sites of resistance. Dragging the cinematic cowboy troubles the western's thematic binary oppositions between the individual and society, the masculine and feminine, as well as the cowboy archetype's rigid racial construction. The drag king's embodiment of the Hollywood cowboy renders visible the erasures inherent in the American frontier mythology of this figure, and simultaneously infuses these symbols with new meanings in the context of drag performance to create new subcultural voices and subjectivities.

Drag performance has been explored extensively by poststructuralist, queer, feminist, and critical race scholars in the fields of cultural sociology, history, and performance. This body of work tends to be ethnographic in nature and is often centered on nightlife and cabaret cultures of queer communities. Through a queer scholarly lens, drag is treated as a personal and, at times, political endeavor that serves valuable social functions for performers and audiences alike, including the fostering of collective identities and the building of grassroots LGBTQ+ social movements. However, in cinema and media studies, drag is often marginalized, and usually only referenced in passing to support larger studies of other aspects of film and media production.

In this essay—a precursor to my larger project on the interplay between classical Hollywood and contemporary drag performance, “Of Men and Monsters: A Messy Anatomy of Drag Kings and Media Iconography”—I examine how the iconography of the classical western film genre has

been refashioned and repurposed within contemporary drag subculture. Although not inherently political, Judith Butler comments on the subversive potential of drag performance “to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality” (125). In the process, drag exposes unseen relationships between gender and power. Directing these notions toward media, this essay investigates how one drag king’s appropriation of media imagery reveals such relationships in popular film. In particular, I consider how the drag king’s embodiment of the cinematic cowboy of Old Hollywood masterfully deconstructs colonial notions of gender and race attached to this on-screen figure to create new subcultural subjectivities.

Tall Tales of the Classical Hollywood Western

In displaying both hypermasculinity and queerness, the generic cowboy figure is well suited to drag king performance. In artistic communities without well-established or archived subcultural histories, popular media can be an important site to mine aes-

thetic forms. However, the whiteness and heteronormativity in these images are often treated as a default to which other subjectivities are compared or evaluated. African American studies scholar Hazel Carby argues that white texts should be examined “to make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative start of existence” (193); as such, it is vital to further explore and understand these on-screen masculinities. In their study of drag king subcultures, Jack Halberstam observes a lack of theatricality in white masculinities that appears to express “the idea that masculinity is ‘just is,’ while femininity reeks of the artificial” (111). Halberstam asserts that white masculinities need to be made visible before they can be performed by drag kings. This essay puts white cisgender hegemonic masculinity¹ in the spotlight to dissect and, in the process, denaturalize it—something that drag kings have been doing for decades.

Film genre scholar Thomas Schatz describes the western as “without question, the richest and most enduring genre of Hollywood’s repertoire” (45). As such, the genre maintains strong associations with myths about the history, culture, and national identity of the U.S. Roger Horrocks asserts that Hollywood is one of the most prominent myth-making institutions in Western culture, and that the western is a major source of that mythic construction with its own set of symbols and narratives, many pertaining to U.S.-American notions of masculinity. For example, he describes the western as “a masculine genre par excellence,” arguing that western novels and films are “‘phallic discourses’ taken to an endpoint—men gaze at each other, pump bullets into each other’s bodies,” and lust after women in bar rooms (3, 56). The cowboy is the Hollywood western’s main protagonist, and the themes of the genre are broadly rooted in reductive, binary oppositions. The drag king appropriates and articulates elements of the western to expose and critique the binaries embedded in its themes, deconstructing oppositions between the individual cowboy and society, between masculinity and femininity, as well as critiquing binaries marked by the genre’s rigid racial codes such as the protagonist-versus-antagonist opposition.

The theme of the individual versus society is common in western film plots that revolve around the colonial acts of territorial expansion depicted in the archetypal Old West, roughly during the latter half of the

eighteenth century. According to media studies scholar Yvonne Tasker, the mythology of the western hero centers around a battle for territories that depends on violence perpetuated by white masculinity, deemed necessary to the formation and maintenance of a lawful community. This construction of masculinity in the western is in line with twentieth-century Anglo-American imperialism and is often enacted within the genre as a conflict between the Anglo settler and the Native American—and the annihilation of the latter.² Many scholars have noted that the violence presumed to be required by the cinematic cowboy to achieve social order simultaneously leads to his expulsion from the community, resulting in a solitary, stoic figure existing outside the boundaries of civilized society (see, for example, Pye 251; Tasker 113; Tompkins 219–220).

The cowboy figure’s iconography includes boots, chaps, and a conspicuous wide-brimmed hat—tools of his cattle herding trade—as well as a holster and gun in the inevitable event of conflict. These elements align with the Hollywood western’s other narrow interpretations of masculinity. Save for singing cowboys, such as Gene Autry, this figure has most often been portrayed as rugged, physically capable, and a man of few words, most notably in the performances of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. Andrew Smith documents an even earlier emergence of this heteromale aesthetic in the western through William S. Hart’s “quiet, intense, and subdued acting style” and in actors’ physical prowess in later shoot-‘em-up westerns that foreground horseback riding, strength, and athleticism—what he describes as “the best examples of Hollywood’s engagement with the new [U.S.-American] notions of manhood” (161, 209).

Finally, as the genre’s hero, the cowboy is often defined against the people he seeks to subject. His whiteness is reinforced by his history of racial violence, most visibly the oppression of Indigenous peoples, although also in the on-screen construction of African American, Latino/a, and other non-white entities as “others” (Tasker 117). The western’s construction of the cowboy as exclusively white is also mythical in nature, since up to one-third of cowboys were of African and Mexican descent (Venable 62). However, as the American West took its symbolic shape in popular culture and on screen, many figures of Indigenous, African, and Mexi-

1. This essay borrows the term “hegemonic masculinity” from Raewyn W. Connell to refer to masculinity that occupies an authoritative position relative to others within a culture’s given pattern of social relations (76).

2. For examples of how contemporary drag performers respond to the erasure of Indigenous subjectivities in popular media and culture through drag performance, see, for example, Mx. Wolverine in Toronto and Papi Churro in San Francisco, as of 2023.

can descent were written out of this history. As historian Michael N. Searles observes, “In the history and literature of scholars and writers alike, the only color that mattered was white” (216).

The Hollywood western brought all of these themes together in the myth of the U.S.-American frontier and its hero. Richard Slotkin describes the frontier myth as “the conception of America as a wide-open land of unlimited opportunity for the strong, ambitious, and self-reliant individual to thrust his way to the top” (*Regeneration Through Violence* 5). The frontier is seen as a potential Garden of Eden for settlers, though primitive and removed from civilization. This myth has been restructured in yet another way with the false notion that early settlers could regain their fortunes and nation through violence. In the Western, this myth depicts the U.S. as a racial entity, “a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation, which defines itself by destroying or subjugating a ‘non-white’ enemy” (Slotkin, “Unit Pride” 473).

These western binaries are epitomized in several films directed by John Ford, particularly *Stagecoach* (1939), in which John Wayne stars as Ringo Kid, a (wrongly imprisoned) outlaw vowing revenge for his family’s murder. Adapted from a short story by Ernest Haycox, the film depicts Anglo settlers’ dramatic stagecoach journey across a rugged and allegedly uncharted West in 1880. *Stagecoach* was partially shot amidst Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park’s desert landscape and sandstone rock formations, in Navajo Reservation territory. In an extended chase scene in which nameless Apache Indian horseback riders attack the Anglo settlers, Wayne’s physical prowess and skill with a rifle prove useful to the passengers as he picks off attackers one by one from atop the speeding stagecoach. The scene was shot mostly at eye level, although some low angles from under the horses accentuate its brutality, and the trampling of one rider under the stagecoach is made visceral by a stunt double’s performance. Amidst the flying arrows and gunfighting, a close-up depicts an infant being held by its frightened white mother inside the coach. At the last minute, the stagecoach passengers are rescued by the US cavalry and, at the end of the film, Ringo Kid is released to live out his life, not among the townsfolk, but with his love interest in a remote cabin “across the border.”

Cowboys are Frequently Secretly Fond of Each Other

Interdisciplinary analyses from both cultural and film studies have gradually shifted critical discourse on the Hollywood western to decenter the view of the cowboy hero as strictly a model of heteromascularity.

This conceptual shift in scholarship calls attention to something that queer communities have long recognized and celebrated: the cowboy is a very queer figure. The western depicts the cowboy as a lonely, stoic figure, yet often places him in an intense or intimate relationship with another person. The hero rarely finds intimacy in a heterosexual relationship, instead coupling with another man, whether friend, enemy, or sidekick. Steven Cohan observes that the western masculine figure keeps a variety of relations with other men, for instance, in the homosocial “hard man” / “soft boy” dynamic in *Red River* (1948) between the grizzly cattleman Dunson (John Wayne) and youthful cowboy Matthew (played by queer Hollywood icon, Montgomery Clift; 207).



Figure 1. John Wayne, the “hard man”, and Montgomery Clift, the “soft boy”, in *Red River* (1948).

Horrocks also cites the example of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*’s (1969) “slow motion mutual seduction, full of glamorous good looks and derring-do” between the characters played by Paul Newman and Robert Redford (66). However, despite being drawn to each other, masculine figures in the Hollywood western are never actually depicted within homosexual relationships. The drag king appropriates the cowboy figure from this liminal space of the Hollywood western and places him in subcultural contexts in which the genre’s homoerotic and genderqueer subtexts are made explicit.

Dragging the Cowboy

King Molasses, a drag king in the Washington, DC drag scene, responds to the western’s prescriptive and normative constructions of gender and race by naming them and transforming them into new sites of resistance. Through textual, genre and ideological analyses of one of Molasses’s routines, I examine the ways in which the drag king appropriates generic symbols of



Figure 2. A promotional photo of King Molasses.

the cowboy figure in ways that trouble the binaries of individual/society, masculine/feminine, and the rigid racial divides between screen figures. This research further aims to deepen understanding of the meaning-making that occurs through the appropriation of Hollywood imagery in the context of trans subcultures in line with a burgeoning critical transgender approach to cinema and media by foregrounding the work of a nonbinary cultural producer and employing ethnographic methods, namely interviews with the performer (as suggested in Cael M. Keegan and Laura Horak 164; Thomas J. Billard and Eriq Zang 197–198). The drag king, Molasses, deploys classical western iconography in the context of drag performance to reimagine the cowboy figure, speak back to systems of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, and illuminate Black and LGBTQ+ histories that have gone unrepresented in the genre and in classical Hollywood cinema more broadly.

Molasses began performing drag in 2018. Their

drag name evokes the stickiness and sweetness of molasses, though it is also suggestive of historical links between U.S. colonization, slave trades, and molasses. They have performed with the drag production company Pretty Boi Drag (PBD), founded by fellow drag king Pretty Rik E to forge space for Black and brown performers in what had been a predominantly white drag scene. Molasses has since co-created Half & Half, a drag show produced with PBD alumnus Blaq Dynamite. Like PBD, Half & Half's philosophy is to make contemporary drag culture as inclusive as possible, including prioritizing the casting of racially diverse and gender-diverse performers.

Social media and the move toward online platforms spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic have increased drag king visibility. Whereas kings have typically been visible at local nightclubs and burlesque venues, their glorious sneers, swaggers, and silicon bulges are now available online for theoretically anyone to view. Close readings of Molasses's drag routines shared through

Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube reveal the drag king's tendency to wear a hat, whether a cowboy hat, a West African palm hat, a kufi cap, or a gele. The hat, paired with a full beard made from synthetic hair that is applied before every performance, initially served as a masking function to alleviate anxieties about "being found out" in another environment where being a drag performer might be misunderstood or regarded with disapproval. Another aspect of Molasses's performance that stands out is their choice to lip-sync to the songs of musical artists with various gender and racial identities, which allows them to use signifiers of gender and race in their performances to different effects.

"Black Velvet"

The routine I analyze here is Molasses's rendition of Alannah Myles's "Black Velvet," a blues-rock ballad released on the singer's eponymous debut album in 1989. The song lyrics reference the impact of Elvis Presley's music in the Southern US, although the song has since become somewhat of a lesbian anthem. The performances I analyze here were originally recorded during an evening drag show at JR's Bar, a gay neighborhood bar, and the Berlin Nightclub, both in Washington, DC. The performance at JR's takes place at night, the lights are dim, and the air above the performer appears misty. The setting of the performance at the Berlin is similarly dark, punctuated with sparse neon lighting and spotlights on the performer. The first things one notices as the performance begins are the thick beard, the black leather chaps, boots, and the black cowboy hat. Molasses's posture is tall, and the hat is tilted conspicuously low, hiding their eyes in the shadow. The crowd is high-spirited, gathered closely around the stage, with hands reaching out as part of the custom to tip the drag king. The performer begins to move slowly at first, in time with the bluesy guitar. Their dancing, an eclectic mix of freestyle hip-hop and burlesque moves, is full of swagger; every gesture, roll, and grind hits the swinging beat of the verse. Molasses glides confidently across the stage to an audience member to retrieve bills, tossing them away with a dramatic flourish. In response, another audience member and fellow drag performer, Lucy Stooles, screams, "You can have my *wallet!*" Singling out a second audience member when the tempo slows, Molasses kneels, sustaining a brief gaze and gently brushing the audience member's cheek with the back of their hand. As the pace of the song picks up again, Molasses struts to another part of the stage and rips open their white sleeveless shirt, revealing a black vest and binder underneath. Whoops and hollers demonstrate the audience's enthusiasm.



Figure 3. King Molasses's performance of "Black Velvet".

Building on this excitement, the drag king executes an impressive dolphin dive to the floor, then bends backward before reaching to grab the mic with a rock star bravado that complements the song's rousing chorus. In the inclusive spaces of JR's and the Berlin Nightclub, generic binaries begin to break down. First, the performer's deployment of western iconography within this intimate performer-audience relationship complicates the opposition between individual and society in the western. Audience participation, including call-and-response interactions, fuels the drag king's performance and heightens the experience for both the performer and the audience. Molasses can reach out to individual audience members for authentic interaction—sincere, flirtatious, or simply playful—with the understanding that the audience recognizes the meaning of the gesture and will reciprocate. The intimacy of this shared experience dismantles the notion of the lonely, stoic cowboy who is an outsider; rather, the cowboy is embraced here.

Furthermore, the drag king's performance does not exhibit the cinematic cowboy's impassive heteromale acting style. On the contrary, Molasses's cowboy emotes through their dancing, gestures, and facial expressions, visibly moved by the music and in acknowledgment of the audience's lively reactions. "Black Velvet" was the first song they performed by a musician who is not Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB). Combining the symbols of the cowboy—boots, chaps, and the wide-brimmed hat—with Myles's sensual vocals unsettles the notion of a strict masculine/feminine binary.

Notably, the cowboy's customary firearm is not one of the performer's sartorial choices for this performance. Drag kings often pack a prosthetic, creating the illusion of a bulge that is made more visible by the tendency of some to strip down to their undergarments on stage. The replacement of the six-shooter with a symbolic phallus highlights another distinction between masculinities performed on the screen versus in the space of drag performance: violence is not typically valorized in drag king performance. In an online essay entitled "Can Drag Kings Help Us to Reimagine Masculinity for the 21st Century?", Spanish drag performer Prinx Silver, who performs their own take on the drag cowboy, explains their personal view on masculinity: "The only masculinity I'm concerned with is the one that's trans and queer, that makes you work on your empathy [...] the one where you express yourself and reach out to people, and say that you love them. This, to me, is at the core of the masculinity of drag kings."

A performer's gender often develops or shifts through participation in a drag king subculture, which is considered by its members to be a safe space to express oneself (see, for example, Horowitz 38–43; Shapiro 259–266). In the case of Molasses, for example, the performer gave their stage alter ego they/them pronouns before themselves. This personal link between performance and identity is encapsulated by Katie Horowitz: "Drag is meaningful not because it proves that gender is a fiction, but because it proves that gender is real—and no less so for being performed" (113). The cowboy aesthetic began to appear in Molasses's performance after a hiatus from drag during the pandemic. Upon returning to drag, they chose to perform to Myles's "Black Velvet," in part because the song brings together both feminine and masculine elements that are affirming to them. Acquiring leather fabric for a costume proved to be difficult at the time, so they thrifted a black cowboy hat, something they believed fit the Southern theme of Myles's song, and later they further developed the look with black chaps, vest, and heeled boots. Despite being an unplanned costume choice, these elements resonated with Molasses:

When I put [the cowboy hat] on, I felt that energy and charge, too. I think it's mine in the sense of how the diaspora functions. As a Black person in the world, I think we are all incredibly connected through the mythologies and heroes that we create in our pantheons, and I feel like that connection to a Black masculine person whose face is half obscured and stands tall against the injustice present around them—that feels *very* Black to me.

The audience agrees, and comments on Instagram

include "@kingmolasses BLACK IS KING," in which "Black" in the song title takes on a new meaning in the context of Molasses's performance. Molasses elaborates on how the iconography of the cowboy operates in their performance: "My connection to it and my power here is that I'm using a signifier or symbol that resonates with a lot of people, specifically around masculinity—and I think that is their way into me—but I'm going to just take you wherever I take you, which is the fuckery of it all..." The performer infuses these symbols with new meaning in the context of drag performance, disrupting the interpellation of audience members as subjects of dominant ideologies of race and gender, and allowing space for the creation of new voices and subjectivities—for example, by reimagining the cowboy figure within a new mythology, a Black "pantheon," as a hero who will "stand tall against the injustice present around them," such as anti-Black and anti-LGBTQ+ oppression.

The drag king's performance parallels a similar practice seen at the turn of the twentieth century. In tracing a history of minstrel performers, Annemarie Bean observes that African American male impersonators inverted assumptions of white minstrelsy, such as those of the emasculated Black man or the sexualized Black woman. To illustrate the former, minstrels such as Florence Hines and Alberta "Bert" Whitman turned the ineffectual "black dandy" caricature common in white minstrelsy into "a Jazz Age sophisticate, resplendent in black topcoat, tails, twirling a cane, and donning a top hat" (Bean 182). Molasses's contemporary drag performance similarly borrows a dominant mode of communication, "imprint[ing]" cultural signifiers with new meanings, associations, and values in the creation of a subcultural code that is constructed within drag's symbiotic relationship with mass media (Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson 55). Indeed, Molasses is cognizant of the cinematic cowboy figure's dominant cultural meaning in this process:

As a Black person and someone who lives in America with generations of African American people who have been cowboys and are still cowboys today, [I understand] how the predominant imagery of a cowboy is that of a white man on a horse with a hat and very hierarchal, with him being above the land, above rules, or above, in some ways, other people, when it comes to the dynamics of systemic oppression and white violence in America. I am a little tentative when I think of its origin, but I think [my use of the imagery] is authentic to me. I was drawn to the cowboy imagery in a way that so many of us are: the look feels

like it's *Rebel Without a Cause*. It feels like it's above establishment rules to be a cowboy. So there are romanticized markers in the visual aspects of the cowboy, as well as the historical reckoning that is in constant tension with it.

The performer's engagement with the western's white-washing not only underscores the cowboy's association with racial violence, but also calls attention to the erasure of Black figures from U.S.-American frontier history. In fact, historian Albert S. Broussard asserts that although fictitious portrayals of the cowboy largely ignore Black cowboys, the latter accounted for an estimated one-quarter of all cowboys, or more than 5,000 individuals, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, including Black ranchers, horse trainers, lawmen, and scouts who were instrumental in the cattle industry and in shaping the American West (vii-viii). Moreover, there were legendary Black women cowhands. Cecilia Gutierrez Venable traces the histories of several of these women, with one notable example being Johana July, a Black Seminole vaquera who raised livestock and broke horses in nineteenth-century Mexico. The trans cowboy is also typically left out of American history, though another long-time cowboy who worked in Idaho and Oregon in the late nineteenth century named Little Joe Monahan was later discovered to have been transgender upon his death in 1904 (62–63).

Conclusion

This analysis illustrates how one drag king's embodiment of the Hollywood cowboy figure renders visible the erasures inherent within American frontier mythology, while simultaneously appropriating western iconography to imagine and create new subjectivities. While the multiplicity of subcultural drag performance cannot be contained in one project, the seamless transformation of this figure in the context of this drag performance also calls into question assumptions about the masculinity of other hegemonic on-screen figures. The dragging of a generically masculine figure such as the cinematic cowboy demonstrates that mass media need not make us subjects of a fixed dominant culture, but rather, these images can be used to legitimize wholly new subcultural masculinities.

Ash Kinney *d'Harcourt* earned a doctorate in cognitive psychology at UT Austin and is currently a PhD candidate in Media Studies in the Radio-Television Film department. They recently published two book chapters: one on the negotiation between cultural visibility and preservation of drag ball identities in "RuPaul's Drag Race" and another on the queer reworking of the romantic comedy genre in the contemporary television rom-sitcom "Take My Wife." Ash's dissertation project, "Of Men and Monsters: A Messy Anatomy of Drag Kings and Media Iconography," investigates how the subcultural performance of drag has evolved from drag balls to digital platforms in tandem with popular US media genres and figures. Their research interests include feminist and LGBTQ+ media studies, genre, screen cultures and industries.

Works Cited

- Bean, Annemarie. "Black Minstrelsy and Double Inversion, Circa 1890." *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader*, edited by Harry J. Elam, Jr. and David Krasner, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 171–191.
- Billard, Thomas J. and Erique Zhang. "Toward a Transgender Critique of Media Representation." *JCMS*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2022, pp. 194–199.
- Broussard, Albert S. "Foreword." *Black Cowboys in the American West: On the Range, On the stage, Behind the Badge*, edited by Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, University of Oklahoma Press, 2016, pp. vii–ix.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge, 1993.
- Carby, Hazel. "The Multicultural Wars." *Black Popular Culture*, edited by Michele Wallace and Gina Dent, Bay Press, 1992, pp. 187–199.
- Cohan, Steven. *Masked Men: Masculinity and Movies in the Fifties*. Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Connell, Raewyn W. *Masculinities*. University of California Press, 1995.
- Grey, Zane. *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1912.
- Halberstam, Jack. "Mackdaddy, Superfly, Rapper: Gender, Race, and Masculinity in the Drag King Scene." *Social Text*, vol. 52/53, 1997, pp. 104–131.
- Hall, Stuart and Tony Jefferson, Eds. *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. Routledge, 1975.
- Horowitz, Katie. *Drag, Interperformance, and the Trouble with Queerness*. Routledge, 2020.

- Horrocks, Roger. *Male Myths and Icons: Masculinity in Popular Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.
- Keegan, Cael M. and Laura Horak, "Introduction," *JCMS*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2022, pp. 164–168.
- Prinx Silver. "Can Drag Kings Help Us to Reimagine Masculinity for the 21st Century?" *Soho House*, 7 Aug. 2022. <https://www.sohohouse.com/en-us/house-notes/issue-006/film-and-entertainment/pride-voices-prinx-silver-on-drag-kings>.
- Pye, Douglas. "The Western (Genre and Movies)." *Film Genre Reader IV*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, University of Texas Press, 2012, 239–254.
- Schatz, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Film making, and the Studio System*. Random House, 1981.
- Searles, Michael N. "Concluding Overview: In Search of the Black Cowboy." *Black Cowboys in the American West: On the Range, On the stage, Behind the Badge*, edited by Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, University of Oklahoma Press, 2016, pp. 211–226.
- Smith, Andrew B. *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood*. University Press of Colorado, 2003.
- Tasker, Yvonne. "Contested Masculinities: The Action Film, the War Film, and the Western." *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, edited by Kristin Lené Hole, Dijana Jelača, E. Ann Kaplan, and Patrice Petro, Routledge, 2017, pp. 111–120.
- Venable, Cecilia Guitierrez. "Havin' a Good Time: Women Cowhands and Johana July, a Black Seminole Vaquero." *Black Cowboys in the American West: On the Range, On the Stage, Behind the Badge*, edited by Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, University of Oklahoma Press, 2016, pp. 59–74.
- Shapiro, Eve. "Drag Kinging and the Transformation of Gender Identities." *Gender and Society*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp. 250–271.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1973.
- Slotkin, Richard. "Unit Pride. Ethnic Platoons and Myths of American Nationality." *American Literary History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2001, pp. 469–498.
- Tompkins, Jane. *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*. Oxford University Press, 1992.



Figure 4. A performance by King Molasses.