“THE PRESENT STATUS IN GAY ART IS NULL. I DIS-A-GREE!”: CARL CORLEY’S LIFE AND WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

HANNAH GIVENS: “The Present Status in Gay Art is Null. I Dis-a-gree!”: Carl Corley’s Life and Work
(Under the direction of Dr. Julia Brock.)

In recent years, the field of queer history has become increasingly interested in pulp fiction as a site of identity and community-building in the 1960s. However, pulp novels are often not preserved and their authors remain anonymous or secretive. Similarly, the field of Southern queer history is relatively new and offers limited sources for understanding regional distinctiveness. This paper and project focus on the Southern author and artist Carl Corley, using his work archived at Duke University. As a gay pulp author and artist from Mississippi and Louisiana who published under his own name, Corley is both a unique and a potentially representative figure. This essay outlines Corley’s unique perspectives as shown in his novels, with particular attention to how Southern attitudes compared with the rest of the country. The public history project associated with this research is the website www.carlcorley.com, presenting digital scans of Corley’s art and novels in partnership with the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University. Using this site, the public will be able to explore the work in its own right, while historians, literary scholars, and other professionals will also benefit from research access.

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In America, queer history often seems to have “begun” with the Stonewall uprising in 1969, a flashpoint of queer visibility said to have triggered the modern era of identity politics. Of course, no event comes from nothing, and as historians study queer history in increasing depth, they find more and more ways that queer people have lived and expressed themselves before the era of visibility and identity politics. While there are many ways to approach this history, art and fiction provide invaluable perspectives on not only how people lived, but how they thought and felt about their lives. Over the past twenty years, historians of queer experience have become increasingly interested in pulp fiction as a site of identity and community-building in the 1960s and as a way to understand the period immediately before Stonewall. However, pulp novels are often not preserved, their authors remain anonymous or secretive, and their readerships have never been easy to understand. Similarly, the field of queer history in the U.S. South is relatively new and offers limited sources for understanding any regional distinctiveness in narrative, production, distribution, and reception.

Southern author and artist Carl Corley serves as a case study to shed light on the gay pulp genre and queer Southern history. Because of historian John Howard’s work tracking down Corley in Louisiana and facilitating the transfer of his papers to Duke University, a wide range of sources related to his life and work are now well preserved and available. These largely unexamined resources provide a unique opportunity to explore what role this pulp author’s complex identity played in his books: in what ways is he unique, and in what ways

representative? What can Corley's substantial body of work convey about not only his own identity, but gay and Southern identities in the 1960s and onward, and about how those identities might intersect? As an author, artist, World War II veteran, white Southerner, gay man, science fiction enthusiast, and more, his life and work sit in a fascinating intersection of historical fields. Corley's life and work demonstrate that queer Southerners differed from their mainstream cousins in background experience and priorities, but they participated in a thriving queer culture and engaged in a national dialogue about queerness and what it should mean.

While LGBT+ history has existed as a field in the U.S. since 1970, books addressing the South as a region only began appearing in the late 1990s with the oral history work of James T. Sears and analytical explorations written and edited by John Howard.[1] Howard in particular contributed an understanding of the South based on the "three Rs": race, religion, and rurality.[2] Interest in the topic stirred again in the late 2000s, with a book on Atlanta and an oral history analysis about black gay Southern men.[3] There has also been some interest in rural queerness in the 2010s, which often overlaps with literature on the South because of the region's characterization as rural, but even including these texts the field is very small.[4]

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[1] James T. Sears, *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); John Howard, ed., *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South* (New York University Press, 1997); --, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[2] Howard, *Carryin' On*, 5.

[3] Wesley Chenault and Stacy Braukman, *Images of America: Gay and Lesbian Atlanta* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008); E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[4] Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York: New York University, 2010); Mary L. Gray, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (New York University Press, 2009); Mary L.

Queer pulp fiction has been a topic of study for about the same length of time. In the years after Stonewall, the era of "coming out," activists asserted that life and culture beforeStonewall had been self-loathing and closeted.[5] Pulp fiction in particular—a genre distinguished by cheap paper, hack writing, and salacious covers, which included lesbian and gay subgenres depicting many queer identities and behaviours—was swept under the rug because of its perceived "trashiness" and sexual content.

This perception began to change in the late nineties as historians embraced pulp. In 1999, editor Patricia Juliana Smith included two essays about the significance of lesbian and gay pulp in *The Queer Sixties.* Pulps were interpreted as an important cultural site of community-building, one of the only places queer people could see versions of themselves, even if those representations were sometimes negative. This development helped pave the way for later queer organizing, activism, and visibility.[6] After *The Queer Sixties*, two books on queer pulp art and one excerpting gay pulp novels appeared in the 2000s, allowing for more attention to this material.[7] Most recently, in 2013, the essay collection *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction: The Misplaced Heritage* by Gunn and Harker made an extended version of the same argument, and contributed to that scholarship by publishing a variety of essays analysing specific authors and titles.[8]

Gray, Colin R. Johnson, and Brian Joseph Gilley, eds, *Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies* (New York University Press, 2016).

[5] John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities, A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998), 321-338.

[6] Patricia Juliana Smith, ed., *The Queer Sixties* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1-42.

[7] Susan Stryker, *Queer Pulp: Perverted Passions from the Golden Age of the Paperback* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001); Michael Bronski, *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003); Ian Young, "How Gay Paperbacks Changed America," *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 8, no. 6 (Dec. 31, 2001): 14.

That pulp fiction had a community and identity-building impact is amply demonstrated in the historical literature, but pulp study still struggles from lack of sources, and, with the above exception of John Howard, no one has yet applied a regional lens. Howard devoted a chapter of his book *Men Like That* to cultural representations of homosexuality and spent much of that chapter discussing the work of Carl Corley, entwining him with both southern and pulp histories from the start. As a gay pulp author and artist from Mississippi and Louisiana who published under his own name, Corley is both a unique and a potentially representative figure. Even earlier, in the anthology *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South,* Howard explained the theoretical problem: "The history of (homo)sexuality, as currently framed, is less about sex or desire than it is about identity, community, and politics. Southerners, rural people especially, don't fit."[9] Corley bridges both worlds, engaging with a national conversation about identity, but writing extensively about sex and desire while firmly locating himself in the rural South. He spent portions of his life in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, but did not choose to stay, and consistently presents a country-boy perspective in his novels.

Despite the ostensible visibility of his dozens of novels, Corley's life outside of his writing is full of narrative gaps. Still, common themes tend to recur often throughout his life and work, and he must have been interested in art from a young age. He was born in 1921 in Florence, Mississippi, and grew up on a farm. He graduated from Florence High in 1938, and apparently attended Millsaps College twenty miles away in Jackson for one year, studying art and Bible. He then worked in the Coca Cola advertising department for two years, until the beginning of World War II.

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[8] Drewey Wayne Gunn and Jaime Harker, eds., *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction: The Misplaced Heritage* (Amherst and Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

[9] Howard, *Carryin' On*, 4-5.

Corley joined the Marine Corps and served as an intelligence scout and quick-sketch artist with the R-2 division in the Pacific theater, including the famous battles at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, and Iwo Jima. During this time he kept a scrapbook of his own photographs, drawings, and poems, as well as mementos from others, letters from home, and news clippings about battles he remembered or friends also in the service. He drew several scenes of destruction and death after fighting, and wrote several mournful poems about war, but the main tone of this scrapbook is a motivation to remember his own experiences and identify people he had known. In a mid-1990s interview with John Howard, he reported having one lover in the military, whom he identified as "the most significant relationship of his life," who was killed at Iwo Jima.[10] Corley was discharged in October 1945, a month after the war's official conclusion. He later used fictionalized versions of his military experience in many of his novels, most prominently *A Chosen World* and *The Scarlet Lantern,* including the trauma of losing a loved one in battle.

Immediately after the war, Corley returned to his father's house in Florence, where he used a back room as a "studio-bedroom" through 1947. In 1948, he started at the Mississippi Department of Highway as an artist. For the next eighteen years he wrote books, apparently including a history of the Marine Corps according to one retrospective article in his papers, although this does not seem to have survived if it was written at all. More often he wrote Southern literature and science fiction novels, but never succeeded in publishing during this period aside from some manuscripts he may have self-published or had bound for his own use.

Corley did however continue to pursue his own visual art with success. For the state, he painted maps, illustrations, advertisements, local scenes, and posters both decorative and

[10] Howard, *Men Like That,* 219.

educational. In his own time, he studied physique art and painted such things as homoerotic posters issued through Sir Prise Publishers of Chicago.[11] He used the name Sola Roga Art Studio in Florence, a term used again in his later science fiction works, although it is unclear whether the studio was a physical location. He also spent time decorating his house: square and pink on the outside, with the interior walls were covered in his own murals, including Egyptian queens, Michelangelo statues, sea monsters, and more. The furniture was a frenzy of colors and textures.[12] One of his later protagonists, in the book *A Chosen World*, reproduced this decorating style for his own apartment. The descriptions indicate that Corley felt it was urbane and eminently stylish, if out of the ordinary. His papers include several photos of an unnamed lover taken in the house.

In 1960, Corley sold his property and moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he took a similar artistic position with the Louisiana Department of Transportation (LDOT) and shortly became Supervisor of the Art & Model Unit of the Public Relations and Education Section. He met a young man in 1966 who became his lifelong partner, and stayed with the Louisiana DOT until 1981, earning a number of commendations and awards.[13] He continued a prolific artistic output, and gained success as a writer. While he produced manuscripts before and after, many of which survive in his papers, Corley issued his entire written oeuvre of twenty-one pulp novels in a span of six years, beginning in 1966 and ending in 1971.

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[11] Ibid., 211.

[12] Ibid., 194, 211.

[13] Carl Corley, Unpublished Memoir, n.d., Unprocessed Carl V. Corley Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Pulp fiction has its antecedents in penny dreadfuls and dime novels of the 1800s, but its more direct predecessors were comic books and cheap magazines of the 1930s and 1940s. Mid-century, publishers emerged issuing cheap pocket-book reprints of mainstream titles, as well as those offering more salacious material specially written for the cheap market. Named for the paper on which they were printed, pulp magazines and novels are popularly associated with hardboiled detective stories and improbable science-fiction adventures, but included other genres and plenty of more-realistic drama as well. The pulp genre is best defined by its sensibilities rather than content. As defined by historian Michael Bronski, pulp "mistakes sentimentality for emotions, hysteria for drama, and is happy to entertain us with preconceived images and ideas, but never challenges us to move beyond them."[14] However, pulps' marginal status compared to mainstream literary fiction meant writers could include more explicit queer content in the name of—or under the guise of—sensationalism and cautionary tales. Corley, among others, openly challenged readers to accept queer people in society with speeches in books like *A Chosen World* and *A Lover Mourned*.

Although many pulps incorporate characters who might be more accurately termed queer, bisexual, transgender, or otherwise in the 2000s, and many books do not find contemporary labels to be relevant at all, the subgenre generally falls into two niches: lesbian pulp and gay pulp. Lesbian pulps follow a different trajectory than the gay pulps discussed in this essay, popular between 1950 and 1965. Although many were exploitative texts written by men, lesbian women also wrote for the genre. Some successful lesbian pulps sold copies in the millions, and major works by lesbian authors like Vin Packer, and Ann Bannon are now considered classics of

[14] Bronski, *Pulp Friction*, 133.

lesbian literature.[15] Radclyffe Hall's path-breaking 1928 literary novel *The Well of Loneliness* also appeared in pulp reprints.

In contrast, gay pulps only started becoming popular in the mid-Sixties, losing prominence in the mid-to-late Seventies (and were not subsequently embraced by modern gay culture). However, they drew on a background of physique magazines that had entered widespread circulation after World War II, in an American culture increasingly preoccupied with healthy male bodies.[16] While many factors influenced this trend, not least the images of destroyed male bodies associated with the war, gay men were involved from the start, and the magazines were clearly homoerotic in tone by the 1950s. The photographer known as "Bruce of Los Angeles" and Bob Mizer of the Athletic Model Guild started well-known photography businesses in the 1940s, and Bob Mizer began circulating his *Physique Pictorial* magazine in 1951. By the mid-Fifties about twenty such magazines were in print, emanating from Los Angeles but using a number of other publishers around the country, including one in Metairie, Louisiana, just outside of New Orleans. These magazines reached between sixty and seventy thousand readers, by subscription or direct purchase.[17]

While content varied from photographer to photographer, magazines generally offered full-page photographs of muscular men posing, sometimes with occupational props or scenery,

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[15] Yvonne Keller, "Pulp Politics: Strategies of Vision in Pro-Lesbian Pulp Novels, 1955-1965" in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Routledge, 1999), 2.

[16] Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence*, 207-215; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*, 20th Anniversary Ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 272; Bronski, 25-29.

[17] Tracy Morgan, "Pages of Whiteness: Race, Physique Magazines, and the Emergence of Public Gay Culture" in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Anthology*, ed. Brett Beemyn and Mickey Eliason (New York University Press, 1996), 285.

often simply staged against a plain background while wearing a thong (then known as a posing strap). Many of these magazines used Greek or All-American athletic paraphernalia to create "clumsy" veneers of heterosexuality, but strongly signalled their queerness at the same time, even with the same references to Ancient Greece.[18] Moral watchdogs saw through these prevarications at least as early as the Fifties, and sometimes called for the authorities to eliminate such publications. Likewise, police sometimes arrested Bob Mizer and other physique peddlers as pornographers. Queer readers were not fooled either, and even mentioned "physical culture" and "art photography" in personal advertisements to identify themselves as gay, or carried the magazines as a visual cue to pick up men in public.[19] Mail-order catalogues in the same vein offered "greeting cards, musical LPs, pulp novels, bar guides, lingerie, cologne, and jewelry" used for similar purposes, all of which indicate that the physique "hobby" was not a secretive, private pursuit but rather highly interactive and public.[20]

This small but thriving industry helped create the later understanding of gayness as white and moneyed, since this was the demographic able to afford the consumer culture that became most visible later on. More immediately this burgeoning consumer culture helped build a sense of gay community as a possibility.[21] Despite a modern sense that activism and consumerism are incompatible, consumerism—particularly the consumption of printed material—encouraged men

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[18] Whitney Strub, "Challenging the Anti-Pleasure League: Physique Pictorial and the Cultivation of Gay Politics" in *Modern Print Activism in the United States*, ed. Rachel Schreiber (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2013), 170.

[19] David K. Johnson, "Physique Pioneers: The Politics of 1960s Gay Consumer Culture," *Journal of Social History* 43 no. 4 (September 2010): 867-70, 875.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Morgan, "Pages of Whiteness."

to see themselves as part of a group, a necessary precondition for activism. Furthermore, the magazines gay men consumed directly supported the beginnings of organized activism both monetarily and philosophically. Hall Call, head of what is commonly considered the first gay organization, supported his Mattachine Society with his Pan-Graphic Press, which issued not only the respectable *Mattachine Review* but also a gay bar guide and several gay pulp novels in later years. The founders of one mail-order company, Directory Services, Inc., appealed to basic rights in challenging censorship, as did Bob Mizer of *Physique Pictorial*, whose magazine took on a distinctly more activist tone after his arrest for obscenity. Mizer openly directed interested readers not only to the American Civil Liberties Union, but One, Inc., and the *Mattachine Review*, despite Mattachine's efforts to distance itself from anything seen as tawdry or sexual.[22]

Despite the connections, circulation numbers for physique magazines (and later pulp novels) dwarf the levels of activist participation during the same periods, so privileging activism in the historical narrative would be misleading.[23] Organizations like the Mattachine Society were arguably much more secretive than the pulp fandom, and unlike popular fiction, failed to engage queer people where they were, both spatially and socially. They did not attract large numbers of members or subscribers until the 1970s after Stonewall. While activist societies often craved respectability in the 1950s and 1960s, queer media embraced pleasure and desire as part of sexual subjectivity. Carl Corley was steeped in this artistic culture, as a consumer and as a creator, with an ambition to become "the greatest male physique artist of all."[24] Just as queer pulp descended from physique magazines, Corley brought the same sensibility to his fiction.

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[22] Johnson, "Physique Pioneers," 870-1, 882-3; Strub, "Challenging the Anti-Pleasure League," 161-3, 167, 171.

[23] Strub, "Challenging the Anti-Pleasure League," 162.

[24] Howard, *Men Like That*, 219.

Of course, pulp also had antecedents in the literary world. The famous Kinsey Report of 1948 brought attention to the widespread nature of homosexual activity in America, and while this was an early normalizing influence, it also led to backlash and a "culture of suspicion" for anyone or anything that might seem gay. Coded, "closeted," unhappy literature was one manifestation of this culture.[25] Serious novels like *Giovanni's Room*; *A Single Man*; and *Other Voices, Other Rooms* fit into this loose genre, but even these books were hard to find since bookstores and libraries often refused to carry such risqué titles.[26]

Cheap, small pulps, on the other hand, had a distribution model based on the magazine trade. Publishers issued new books on a monthly or weekly basis, often in established lines addressing predictable topics. They shipped directly to small outlets such as pharmacies and general stores where stockers had no literary reputations to uphold, including those in rural areas. Stores began by stocking reprints of mainstream books like those above, and expanded with the market to include paperback originals, the pulp genre proper. As publishers became more reliable, books also came with mail-order forms so customers could purchase them directly from anywhere, and adult bookstores began to appear in cities, sometimes including queer-themed collections.[27]

This dissemination came by way of the Supreme Court's slow relaxation of pornography and censorship laws by the early 1960s.[28] While erotica and queer literature had always

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[25] Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 178, 183-4.

[26] Young, "How Gay Paperbacks Changed America."

[27] Ibid.; Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 6.

[28] See *Roth v. United States* (1957), *ONE, Inc. v. Olesen* (1958), *Smith v. California* (1959), *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964), *Memoirs v. Massachusetts* (1966).

circulated, publishers could now enter a burgeoning field with less fear of arrest or harassment, and books' content could become dramatically more sexual. This, combined with the availability of cheap materials and a growing community of gay physique-magazine readers, made for an explosion of gay pulp novels. Gunn and Harker's study counted only one gay-themed paperback originally published in 1960 and twenty-six in 1965, but 250 in 1969. They report that over 700 gay pulps reached the market in the last half of the 1960s, wherever magazines were typically sold, including "supermarkets, convenience stores, drugstores, five-and-tens, tobacconists, newsstands, bus stations, railway stations, and airline terminals."[29] Significantly, as part of a larger genre of sexual literature intended to titillate the general public, these queer books were mostly written by gay men, about gay men, and for gay men. Many more gay men read pulps than they did the *Mattachine Review*, but likewise, in a time when overt gay themes never appeared on television and rarely in public discourse, the straight mainstream also learned about queer life through pulps.

This visibility meant almost all pulp authors used pseudonyms, "expand[ing] the closet while minimizing the risk of being exposed."[30] While the possibility of queerness was becoming more well known, individuals still feared backlash if their queerness should be discovered. Some, like Joseph Hansen and Samuel Steward, published mainstream novels under their own names and pulp novels under pen names (James Colton and Phil Andros, respectively). The extraordinarily prolific writer Victor J. Banis, the "godfather of modern popular gay fiction," wrote under at least eleven names, and publishers often used standard house names as branding for books in a given genre, regardless of how many authors wrote in the series or if they might

[29] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 1-2.

[30] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 272.

have wanted recognition.[31] Carl Corley is one of only two or three authors known to have used their own names.[32]

Greenleaf Classics was the foremost gay pulp publisher of the time, and issued some of the most gay-positive literature, including the wildly popular *Song of the Loon* by Richard Amory in 1966. Scholars credit this book with breaking the market open for gay pulp in general, and particularly for positive stories with happy endings.[33] Victor J. Banis has even commented in retrospect that queer history should not be divided into before and after Stonewall, but before and after Greenleaf.[34] The second prominent company was Publisher's Export Co. (PEC), which published the grand majority of Corley's twenty-one books, but seemed less comfortable with gay content and often inserted moralistic sections as some degree of camouflage.

The degree of editorial intervention in Corley's work may be impossible to determine exactly, although there are indications. The most obvious is the ending to his second novel, *My Purple Winter*, in which the narrative suddenly switches from first to third person in order to kill the main character while in the process of redemption.[35] Many of his books also contain repeated references to being led astray into a world of homosexual torment, without any such event happening in the story. He frequently uses the concept of a "twilight world," a recognized code

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[31] Thomas L. Long, "Editor's Welcome: Short Shorts," *Harrington Gay Men's Literary Quarterly*, 8, no. 3 (2006): 2.

[32] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 8; Young, "How Gay Paperbacks Changed America."

[33] Young, "How Gay Paperbacks Changed America."

[34] Andrew Belonsky, "Victor Banis, The Grandfather of Gay…" *www.out.com*, September 26, 2013, https://www.out.com/entertainment/art-books/2013/09/26/victor-banis-grandfather-gay.

[35] Howard, *Men Like That*, 205-6.

term for gay themes in a novel, but for him it often refers to some form of PTSD connected with World War II.[36] This link will be explored in more detail below, but even in cases where the trauma is overtly sexual, many protagonists still finish stories in established same-sex relationships and satisfying careers.

Even more importantly, overt pro-gay statements substantially outweigh these occasional twilight references. Corley did not shy away from gaybashing and violence in his plots, but frequently indulged in editorializing on his characters' behalves, explaining that discrimination and society were the root cause of any perceived misery in gay life. The conclusion of Corley's autobiographical first novel, *A Chosen World,* is entirely given to this sort of advocacy. Scholars of lesbian fiction generally assume that readers were savvy enough to simply ignore moralistic sections and endings like that of *My Purple Winter,* and often skipped books' final sections.[37] Giving gay pulp readers—and, indeed, external moralizers—the same credit, probably very few people were fooled.

These same gay-positive sequences are often rich with implications for Corley's concept of queerness, which is closely linked to gender expression. His protagonists are physically small, almost rendered in miniature, but Corley constantly reassures readers that they are "all male" and "utterly masculine." He describes their clothing, stance, and everything they do by telling readers it is the most truly masculine style of doing it. He justifies this not in reference to women, but in blatant revulsion of effeminate men who dress or behave in a girlish way.

Many of the protagonists, especially the younger boys, begin with absolutely no concept of queerness and only discover it as a category when they hear a derogatory term, usually "fairy"

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[36] Bronski, *Pulp Friction,* 196-7.

[37] Smith, *The Queer Sixties,* xx-xxi.

or sometimes “queer.” Those who are familiar with the idea associate “queers” with overtly effeminate behaviour or the wearing of makeup. It is reasonable to assume this was Corley’s early experience, and his constant assertion of manliness is a reaction to a cultural assumption that being queer meant being unmanly, which did not fit with his own image of himself. More mature characters (and those written later) have often heard of queerness at school or during military service, although they typically have not incorporated it into their own self-concept due to association with cross-dressing or mincing behaviour, and often have not seriously thought about the topic at all.

These boys frequently narrate their first sexual experiences as teens, and usually consider it quite natural, just happening to fall into sex after admiring another boy. The rural characters especially tend to think they are the only boys in the world who feel this way, although they do not see this as a problem. Later, after the inevitable dissolution of his first relationship, the protagonist discovers the existence of a queer subculture from another man or by visiting a gay bar. This sequence became more fraught as Corley wrote additional books; for instance *A Fool’s Advice* took its theme as conflict between natural animal attraction between two men and a religious purity that demanded heterosexuality or abstinence.

Later characters also seem more likely to know the term “queer” and use it as a noun for other people, although they typically only use it as an adjective for sexual behaviour for themselves. Corley rarely used “homosexual” or “gay,” finding them too medical and too feminine sounding respectively, although he was aware of both.[38] In *A Chosen World*, his first and most autobiographical novel, he suggests his own system of “Toros” and “mannequins” to address what he saw as a gap in terminology. “Mannequin” replaced “the gays, the faggots, the

[38] Carl Corley, *A Chosen World* (Agoura, CA: Pad Library, 1966), 166-67.

queens, the nellies—those of exaggerated femininity," because they were "alive, yet not alive, more doll like than human, more life like than statues—yet glittering with that artificial glow which holds in its realm a fascination unequalled."[39] "Toro" essentially replaced the term "masculine homosexual," chosen for this reason:

> … for, to me, this is the most masculine word in the human language today. … I shall refer to these as Toro's [sic], so that from my mind to the world, I hope, this therm [*sic*] will eventually stick and find its place among those unappropriate [*sic*] terms which will fade out completely and become forgotten."[40]

This naming convention has been completely eclipsed by the use of "gay" or "queer" as a general term, or "bear" and "twink" for types of gay gender expression, and there is no evidence that any readers used Corley's terms. He used them several additional times in *A Chosen World*, but stopped using them in later books. (Later in life, he embraced the word "queer" with its connotations of oddness.)[41]

Still, no matter what the word, Corley was identifying subsets of homosexual men, whom he understood to be a separate type of man based on attraction to other men. Straight men—not defined as such but rather an amorphous group and the existence of which required a definition for homosexuals—might engage in sex with a homosexual man or rape him, but were not part of the classification. For Corley, gay men might be gloriously masculine or undesirably feminine, but were still part of one class, as in *My Purple Winter*: "A fairy is a man, like us, who loves only other men. Some are masculine in their personalities, others are more feminine."[42] The same

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Corley, Unpublished Memoir, n.d.

[42] Carl Corley, *My Purple Winter* (San Diego, CA: Publisher's Export Co., 1966), 115.

sequence shows a young country boy slightly horrified at the suggestion that he might wear women's clothes because he prefers to be the penetrated partner, and characters do not consistently embrace "fairy" as an identity word, but the explanation captures the idea that some commonality connects gay men across gender expression.

Corley's concept of in-between identities is shakier, indicating a lack of widespread awareness. Bisexuality is not a familiar category, although he seems to harbour no judgment toward men who have sex with both men and women. The occasional protagonist has straight sex in his backstory, although not sex that electrified him like contact with men. Corley also seems to have included a bisexual love-interest character in *A Chosen World*, although there is no use of the word or perceived need for a label. Rex notes Luther looking at a dancing girl with lust, and later realizes Luther is looking at him in the same way. When Luther says Rex is the "purtiest person I have ever seen," Rex "noticed he used the word (person) rather than boy or girl, which put us in a special category."[43]

Corley's engagement with trans subjectivities usually centers on the practice of female impersonation. Many characters recall seeing these shows in cities, and his novel *Brazen Image* stars a young female impersonator. The idea of intersexuality, combined with crossdressing, does seem to have been reasonably familiar to Corley's rural contemporaries and precursors, although located in othered spaces like city clubs and even freak shows. The protagonist of *A Chosen World* remembers seeing a "Morphodite" (signifying hermaphrodite or intersexual) in the Jackson, Mississippi, state fair when he was younger. While Corley does not seem to fully comprehend, he shows a degree of sympathy in the person's statement to their audience: "You

[43] Corley, *A Chosen World,* 48.

laugh … But remember, someday you will marry and you will become mothers. And you do not know what your children will be."[44]

In *Brazen Image*, Corley draws a stark line between character Dewy Bow's authentic femininity and that of the other gay men who allegedly want to be women, perhaps indicating a perceived difference between Dewy as a trans woman and the other performers as drag queens. However, the tone of the piece has more in common with Corley's typical defences of masculinity: Dewy is the most feminine and most alluring in contrast to the merely effeminate performers, just as he and the rest of Corley's protagonists are the most masculine and most alluring in contrast to effeminate gay men. Unlike most of the protagonists, Dewy feels more conflicted about his queerness because of his interest in crossdressing and the judgment of his family, adding another dimension to Corley's defensiveness where female-coded behaviour is concerned.

Female characters rarely take significant roles in Corley's fiction, but in contrast to the work of some other authors such as Richard Amory's *Song of the Loon* series, they play important supporting roles. Protagonists have female classmates and family members who are sometimes important thematically, although rarely active in the narrative itself. Sisters and ex-girlfriends are often revealed to the protagonist as lesbians, the word generally uncontested compared to the many words Corley used to identify queer men. In some cases they are used as examples of the importance of "gaydar" and mutual recognition for gay life; in others they are unrecognized and used as object lessons for queer loneliness and need for community. Mothers, aunts, and other female relatives are presented only inasmuch as they relate to the gay

[44] Ibid., 61.

protagonist's self-image, often credited for his queerness by absence or smothering, and sometimes cautiously supportive.

Corley's general references to women as a group are deeply problematic. He frequently praises the violence of men, accusing women of not appreciating "the limitless savagery of the male"[45] or "feigning weakness" during sex and thereby losing their husbands, while simultaneously praising men's delicate emotions and saying "it is the effeminate natures that are cold and hard," again chasing men into the arms of other men.[46] In *The Scarlet Lantern,* the potentially bisexual male lead spends most of the novel pursuing an androgynous female love interest, but in an unexpected inversion of the usual "bury your gays" tropes, the woman commits suicide and the lead finds true love in the arms of her brother.[47] While the sister was vain and selfish for her distress over the prospect of having a child, the brother puts all of his lover's desires first and is happy to raise their child as his own—while, of course, remaining utterly masculine. These sexist implications seem unexamined and inconsistent however, and Corley makes some exceptions for white Southern belles who fit into his image of an idealized South based on the novel *Gone with the Wind.*[48] Gracious behaviour gave women a legible place and value in his milieu.

Again, few of Corley's assumptions seem closely interrogated. While women and effeminate men are vaguely distasteful, his protagonists almost inevitably prefer to be the penetrated partner during anal sex, and even express desires to be "wives" for their partners and

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[45] Corley, *My Purple Winter*, 54-5.

[46] Corley, *A Chosen World*, 156, 170.

[47] "Bury Your Gays," *TVTropes.com,* accessed April 28 2017, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BuryYourGays.

[48] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937).

keep house for them. These preferences have often been considered incompatible with the kind of hypermasculinity most Corley protagonists insist upon the rest of the time, which may account for their constant protests. It also has interesting implications for the history of sex. For most protagonists, even or especially the young country boys, receptive anal sex seems to be the most natural thing in the world, despite acute pain. Their partners typically initiate and are more aware of what they want to do, but the result is the same. In some novels characters receive or perform oral sex later in the plot and are shocked that such a thing is possible, upending the usual sequence of contemporary gay porn. There is no mention of lubrication until Corley had already issued several books, making one wonder if he heard about the possibility from readers.

It is unclear if these idiosyncrasies were specific to Corley or if they were common attitudes at the time among rural Southerners. While the literary mainstream included gay southern authors like Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote, and the pulp market included fellow Mississippians like Elliot Chaze and George H. Smith, Corley seems to have been an outlier representing gay Southern pulp. Victor J. Banis was raised in the Midwest, lived in Alabama briefly, and has moved across the country several times since retirement, but his pulp career took place mostly in Los Angeles. While some gay pulp authors knew each other, mainly a cluster around Banis and another, including Richard Amory, in the San Francisco Bay area, no evidence survives to link Corley personally with his peers.[49]

In any case, Corley was known for "specializ[ing] in romantic stories about boys from the country,"[50] and his plots show a complex relationship between the country and the city. The mainstream narrative construction for rural queer people is a journey to the city where anonymity

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[49] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 10-12.

[50] Young, "How Gay Paperbacks Changed America."

allows one to associate with other queer people and come out. With the recent interest in rural queer studies, a counternarrative has emerged showing how many queer people have lived in rural areas permanently, and that such regions may not be as hostile to queer people as they have been stereotyped.[51] Corley falls somewhere in between. For him the city can be overwhelming, and may contain corrupting influences, but can also offer opportunities and places to meet other queer people. Young protagonists frequently express a desire to leave their hometowns and meet new kinds of people. Some of them return to idyllic country life or express regret for leaving, but others do not.

New Orleans and Baton Rouge were Corley's cities of choice in his novels, reflecting his own time in Baton Rouge and move to New Orleans in 1960. His protagonists' visits include lengthy descriptions of colourful streets, and often a litany of tourist attractions including the famous statue of Andrew Jackson and "Cafe Demonde" (Cafe du Monde). He also frequently included gay and drag bars as settings, most significantly "The Looking Glass," a fictionalized version of real-life gay Baton Rouge bar The Mirror Room in which he met his partner.[52] In this context The Looking Glass is an odd place for the character, not initially recognized as a gay bar, but a place where all kinds of gay men and occasionally lesbians could meet. The character meets a romantic partner there, but more often frequents the establishment for general social purposes.

Outside of New Orleans with its distinctive culture, Corley was fascinated by a glamorous Old South openly tied to *Gone with the Wind.* He even wrote a full manuscript for a sequel in longhand, and although he never published that manuscript, his 1968 novel *Attala Rose*

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[51] Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks*; Herring, *Another Country*; Gray, *Out in the Country*; Gray, *Queering the Countryside.*

[52] Corley, Unpublished Memoir, n.d.

is clearly meant to be in the same genre. Even in seemingly unrelated books like *The Scarlet Lantern* with its post-WWII Japanese setting, and unpublished science-fiction comics set in space, characters idolize the Old South for its masculinity and graciousness. This nostalgia is not cast in terms of race, and Corley usually nods toward a kind of equality. His protagonists generally express approval for integrated public services, for example and do not understand the motivations behind segregation. This seeming openness, however, belies a deep racial tension in his work.

Corley's white protagonists engage in frequent sex with men of color, but the narrative codes these men as natural and animalistic in both positive and negative ways. Nature is typically idealized in the sense of homosexual sex taking place in nature and being part of it, with some sex partners positively compared to stallions, but darker-skinned partners are seen as more animalistic, and in a slightly threatening fashion. Corley also tends to avoid blackness, burying the South's unpleasant history and the sexualization of subjugated men by transmuting it into stories about white boys being attracted to Native American, Japanese, and Creole men, among others. In *Brazen Image,* ostensibly the novel most about gender, much of the story deals with white protagonist Dewy Bow's attraction to a young African American man named Cheka, with open references to civil rights marches of the Sixties and the possible lynching that could occur if Cheka associated with him. Midway through, the plot takes a sudden turn away from racial themes in favor of Dewy's interest in female impersonation. They have one perfunctory sexual encounter, but Cheka is relegated to the status of Dewy's servant, almost as if Corley realized he was veering into troublesome waters and decided gender was an easier taboo to explore.

Encounters with Japanese men, most prominently in *A Scarlet Lantern,* are more closely related to Corley's military service in the Pacific rather than the racial politics of the American

South. In his novels, Japanese men are most comparable to Southern white men. Corley has only a surface understanding of Japanese culture, but Japanese men are not subject to the same kind of animalistic othering. Some of his best writing appears in *A Scarlet Lantern*'s sadness over the war's destructive legacy, which he equates to Civil War damage and humiliation of the white South, thus conferring the same sense of dignity on Japanese and Southern men. He commemorated Japanese prisoners and casualties in his war scrapbook, and used a young man he admired as the model for Rasha in *A Scarlet Lantern.*

World War II was a massive upheaval for a generation of young Americans, and for many gay men, it was their first exposure to others like themselves.[53] Corley's books casually confirm this reading, but he does not look back at the war with excessive fondness. The main event in his autobiographical novel *A Chosen World* is a long-term sequence of gang rapes by other soldiers on the island of Guam. Corley has said his most significant relationship took place in the Marines and that this person was his only partner there, indicating that the rape is as fictional as it appears, but in the book it stands in for the trauma of the war itself.[54] The protagonist's "twilight world" is a persistent depression and emptiness that never fully passes after he returns home from the rape (war). While it would be unreasonable to diagnose Corley with PTSD from this alone, he clearly found the war to be a powerful and haunting experience.

Drawing from the idea of queer autobiography suggested by literary scholar Jesse Ataide, there are hints of Corley's real life throughout his novels, some obvious and some more complex. As Ataide says of pulp author Samuel Steward's work, "there is little … that cannot be characterized as 'queer' in all the varied meaning and connotations of the term, and never more

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[53] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*.

[54] Howard, *Men Like That,* 219.

so than when he is writing about situations he experienced in his own life."[55] Corley too spun a dizzying web of fiction and reality in his novels, but as Ataide shows, that should not keep them from being considered autobiographies in an important psychoemotional sense. While most of the layered meanings cannot be retrieved without him, he clearly poured his own psyche into his work, from troubling undertones of racism and sexism to a simple love of nature and the Southern landscape. He reused names and characters multiple times—his Marine lover was probably named Cisco, judging from *A Chosen World,* the name's reuse in other settings, and a reference in a short handwritten memoir from his papers. An even-more-often-used motif is the face of Pe'pa Paree, Corley's idealized Cajun whose face appears not only on every page of Corley's massive Illustrated History of Louisiana but in many other paintings and comics. Corley based Pe'pa Paree on his life partner, who posed for almost every drawing.[56]

Themes also run through all Corley's work showing what was important to him and what occupied his mind. Most of these themes have already been addressed at least briefly, but future literature papers could expand substantially on any of them. The politics of sex, rape and violence in his fiction deserve a complete treatment, keeping in mind that while it may be tempting to credit authors with inventing outlandish sexual content for masturbatory purposes, Samuel Steward's documented sex life far outstripped the activities he described in his Phil Andros pulp novels, and historians can assume no one-to-one relationship between pornography and reality.[57]

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[55] Jesse Ataide, "The 'Strange Mimesis' of Queer Autobiography: Subversive Pseudonyms in Samuel M. Steward's Autobiographical Writing," *Interpretations* 25 (2013), 14-30.

[56] Corley, Unpublished Memoir, n.d.

[57] Justin Spring, *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

Corley's odd relationship to religion also bears examining. His pulp characters and author's notes to unpublished books generally confirm him as an atheist, but Christian imagery held a fascination for him. He self-published *The Agony of Christ* in 1967, at the high point of his pulp success, but the book's purpose is indistinct. It claims to be vaguely meditative and meant for religious purposes, but in practice occupies itself describing Jesus as an ideal of physical masculine perfection. Corley later painted scenes from Jesus' life in series and wrote an unpublished novel combining Genesis with the story of an immortal "robut" (robot). Religious references, along with a certain Southern languor in description, seem to be part of his aspirations to high literature—aspirations shared by a number of pulp authors.[58] Similarly, art histories such as *Queer Pulp* by Susan Stryker have paid some attention to Corley's covers, but a close analysis of his staging and renderings would not be out of place, especially given his predilection for painting his own characters differently from how they are described in his texts.

Finally, no discussion of literature as history can be complete without some consideration of readership. In 1971, 15% of gay men said they "developed their ideas of what it means to be gay" through reading—a very high percentage compared to the general population of readers.[59] While circulation was high, it is currently impossible to tell how many people were reading pulp novels, how many of them were queer, or how many people read a specific novel or author. Still, comparisons can be made among authors. Corley was popular enough to have three of his novels reprinted in one edition, which presumes a level of interest, and he also had a small story published in the anthology *In Homage to Priapus* from Greenleaf in 1970 before publishing two

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[58] Richard Amory, *Song of the Loon* (1966. Reprint. Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 2005), appendices.

[59] Loughery, 184.

novels with them in 1971.[60] Corley was at least a recognized author in pulp circles, perhaps a slightly odd one known for rural settings and distinctive covers, but one who contributed to a trend of gay identity, open sexuality, and demand for respect. Using his own name not only indicates his personal search for literary recognition, but also his status as a successful brand for PEC. Much as queer pulps made queerness visible and also created community, Corley's work made rural queerness visible. He would have attracted a readership not only of curious straight people and gay men sexualizing country boys, but also of isolated young men seeking representations of themselves.

Pulp's popularity waned sharply in the 1970s as publishers began to compete with openly queer mainstream books and the burgeoning world of gay video pornography.[61] Companies began mandating more and more sex scenes in novels, with the result that readers became less invested in the books—while the stories had always been overtly sexual, they had been less anatomically explicit at the beginning, and authors had more freedom to give sex scenes meaning within a plot.[62] Corley published almost all his books between 1966 and 1968. He added one novel and a reprint in 1970, followed by two short novels in 1971. Although he continued producing manuscripts for literary novels, he left publishing behind after 1971.

Corley's work at the Louisiana Department of Transportation (LDOT) had continued without interruption, and in the Seventies he spent his free time painting Southern scenes and creating lavishly illustrated pen-and-ink comics featuring Pe'pa Paree, a character who participated in all of Louisiana history. He published these in *The Eunice News*, the local paper

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[60] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 12-13.

[61] Jeffrey Escoffier, *Bigger than Life: The History of Gay Porn Cinema from Beefcake to Hardcore* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2009).

[62] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 8, 14-5; Bronski, *Pulp Friction*, 7.

of Eunice, Louisiana, and pages from this comic fill boxes in his archived collection. Editor-owner Matt Vernon supported his work, also printing a variety of Corley's cartoons and a shorter *Illustrated History of Genesis*. The paper also published a "collector's edition" volume of art taken from the Pe'pa Paree series, titled *Carl Corley's Illustrated History of Louisiana*, in 1981.

Corley was fired from his day job the same year at the age of fifty-nine, five months before retirement. He blamed this on ageism, saying a new director dismissed several older employees, although some subtle homophobia may have been involved in the choice as well. His coworkers were aware that he wrote, and he painted pulp-inspired murals on his car, but they were either not aware of the books' content or preferred to maintain ignorance.[63] News publications about his art as early as 1969 identified him as an author without listing any book titles. After leaving the LDOT, he moved to Zachary, Louisiana, with his partner, where they bought a small piece of land, lived in a trailer, and operated "Carl's Beau-Art Galerie" for two years. The gallery sold Corley's miniature paintings with display easels, but according to Corley's short memoir this kind of gallery drew "the bizarre, the freakish, and the kookie grotesque," and the small town was not prepared to deal with it, so Corley eventually closed the business.[64]

Corley continued to write, and drew beautiful science-fiction comics based on his childhood love of Flash Gordon. He tried to publish many of these works, but the only successes were two small comics published by Nuance Inc., which received his usual full-page art and cut it into pieces for the montages they wanted. Corley obviously resented this, and seems also to

[63] Howard, *Men Like That*, 218-20.

[64] Corley, Unpublished Memoir, n.d.

have resented major publishers' lack of interest in his comics. (He blamed it on the gay content, although the openly pornographic art—same- and opposite-sex—was probably more relevant.)

By the late 1990s, when John Howard interviewed him, Corley was in poor health and spent much of his time tending his garden or his dog, Johnny Reb. He was happy for his work to be celebrated and gave an extensive collection of papers and art to Duke University, as well as copies of all his books, but was less interested in the limelight for himself. According to his memoir, he and his partner still lived on the same property in two trailers, a mutually beneficial arrangement allowing Corley to pursue his art in a separate studio. He had reconnected with his brother's family after some time, was writing and illustrating his life story, and felt himself to be at the end of his life, maintaining a small private cemetery plot. He had not owned a telephone since he retired.

Almost twenty years later, Corley still lived at the same address at the age of ninety-three, a powerful yet almost-entirely-unknown example of how no gay stereotypes tell the whole truth. His note to this writer in January 2016 sums up his career, creating the most queer-positive work he could in a genre that is only now receiving recognition for the cultural change it helped create. Written in Corley's trademark all-capital hand, it reads: "I HAVE A CLOSET FILLED WITH MANUSCRIPTS, YET THE PRESENT PRESS STATES THAT THE 'PRESENT STATUS' IN GAY ART IS NULL. I DIS-A-GREE!"

Further attempts to contact him have not been successful.

CREATING WWW.CARLCORLEY.COM

The public history project associated with this essay consists of a website that presents Carl Corley's work online. I worked with the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University to digitize all of Corley's books and several collections of art in summer 2016, began the website as an assignment for a digital history class in Fall 2016, and completed the website in Summer 2017.

The seed for this project came from a historiography assignment in my first semester as a public history student. My research into the historiography of the queer South led me to the monograph *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* by John Howard. When his research into Carl Corley in the 1990s piqued my interest, I quickly discovered how difficult it was to access Corley's work. A Google search turned up only a few images, and hard copies of his books ran into the hundreds of dollars. University archive holdings were limited in scope, and presented barriers of time and distance. I knew from my own interest that Corley's work held an appeal for queer readers and scholars, and I began to realize that it, as a particular example of queer literature, also represented a historically significant but resource-poor genre.

The Rubenstein Library holds not only a full set of Corley's published novels, but an extensive collection of his unpublished work, art, and papers. In communication with several librarians including Laura Micham, the Rubenstein's Curator of Gender and Sexuality History Collections, I arranged to scan much of this material for the website. The library's mission statement meshes perfectly with the website project:

> The David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library builds distinctive collection of original materials and preserves them for use on campus and around the world. In support of Duke University's mission of "knowledge in service to society," we collect a diversity of voices in a wide range of formats, with a focus on our signature areas of strength. Our innovative use of technology, expert description and cataloging, tailored reference and instructional services, and engaging public programming provide a variety of ways to discover our holdings.[1]

While the www.carlcorley.com website is not an official Rubenstein initiative, it was completed with the library's blessing and with the help of many librarians, particularly Laura Micham. The project supports their mission of preserving distinctive materials for wide use, particularly via innovative technology. Digitization creates not only a backup of the hard copies, but also allows any number of researchers to access the material without risking damage, and connects the work to a public that might not otherwise hear of the collection at all. Duke and the Rubenstein also aim to collect diverse resources that serve society, and Corley's openly gay-positive work certainly fits that bill. Presenting it showcases diversity and connects queer readers to their past, contradicting the mainstream narrative that queer people must be miserable and in the closet prior to the 1970s.[2]

The first stage of work for this project consisted of a week-long trip to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, in June 2016. I scanned roughly 30GB of material, including all Corley's published novels, about a dozen unfinished comics, and various art collections. I also photographed a World War II scrapbook and other material too delicate to scan. I used the Rubenstein reading room's KIC Bookeye 4 overhead scanner, which offers an adjustable bed to protect book bindings, insuring that the originals would not be damaged during the process. I

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[1] Duke University Libraries, "About the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library," https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/about/library.

[2] Michael Bronski, *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003).

scanned books at a minimum of 300 DPI for online publication, and art at up to 600 DPI to preserve details.[3] I scanned books in black-and-white to keep the file sizes manageable and help avoid distractions in the finished product, and art in color as needed. Throughout the process, I maintained a filing and numbering system to keep track of the scans, and kept regular online backups of finished work. After returning to Georgia, I created a third backup of the material and then focused on research until the fall semester, when I began construction on the website as part of Digital History class.

The website is built on the Wordpress platform and hosted by Reclaim Hosting. Wordpress allows for a smooth browsing experience, and I chose this platform for its widespread familiarity in order to facilitate deeper engagement with the materials themselves. I did not have the skills to create a site completely from scratch, and felt that a complicated or unfamiliar website would only frustrate users and keep their attention on navigating the site rather than reading. I chose Reclaim Hosting based on our use of it in class, since it is a proven, flexible, and cost-effective hosting option designed for students and educational institution. I divided the web content into a "Gallery" that lists the art collections and comics, and a "Library" showing the novels. I also included a home page with a brief introduction, a "Research" page with a bibliography, and an "About" page containing acknowledgements.

After experimenting with several Wordpress plugins and other websites, I chose FlipHTML5 flipbooks to display the novels and comics. FlipHTML5 creates attractive and realistically book-like interfaces that can be embedded into any webpage, with easily-understood navigation buttons. These flipbooks use the newest HTML5 standards and will function reliably

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[3] Digital Library of Georgia, "Digital Library of Georgia Digitization Guide," last modified September 2004. http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/AboutDLG/DigitizationGuide.html?Welcome.

for PC, Mac, and mobile users for years into the future.[4] They also offer search capability for any books that have been converted from image to text, which increases their usefulness for researchers. For collections of individual art pieces, I used the Wordpress plugin "Huge IT Image Gallery," because it offered a no-frills image slider with captions, which were not an option with flipbooks. For all material, I cropped each scan to show only the image, or in some cases knit divided books into single files, and uploaded each collection or book to Wordpress or FlipHTML5.

The academic strength of this topic, the number of sources available, was also its main weakness as a project. While it posed no insurmountable technical challenges, the number of scans to be handled meant a full week of scanning (which still left much unpublished material unexamined), several dozen hours of cropping and editing, and much time experimenting with web design. In practice, these time constraints represent errors in formatting that have yet to be fixed, such as some distorted comic-book pages where originals varied in size.

Creating text versions of the book pages using optical character recognition would have meant greater legibility, accessibility for users of assistive technology, and searchability, but it would have taken some 600 hours to create and edit these documents and it was out of reach for this project.[5] Similarly, an experienced web designer on a project team would have helped streamline the process and created more time for historical writing and analysis that would have provided more context for visitors. Still, the core of the project was to make the materials

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[4] Sarah Thiel, *Build it Once: A Basic Primer for the Creation of Online Exhibitions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

[5] WebAIM, "Considering the User Perspective: A Summary of Design Issues," *WebAIM: Web Accessibility in Mind*, last modified October 2012, http://webaim.org/articles/userperspective; Ted Underwood, "Seven ways humanists are using computers to understand text," *The Stone and the Shell*, last modified June 2015, https://tedunderwood.com/2015/06/04/seven-ways-humanists-are-using-computers-to-understand-text.

available, and that has been accomplished. The Rubenstein's librarians will be able to direct long-distance researchers to the site, and an upcoming post for their blog will not only publicize the website but also help them highlight their collections and services.

While the site has only been publicly available for about a month at this writing and has not yet been promoted given its unfinished nature, I have installed Google Analytics (via the Google Analytics for Wordpress by MonsterInsights plugin) and will be able to assess usage accordingly. Planned promotions begin with professional connections, including a blog post featuring Carl Corley that I will write for the Rubenstein Library's blog. I also plan to provide a link and description to sites such as www.pulpmags.org and www.thepulp.net to attract enthusiasts. In the future, I also hope to create dedicated social media channels for the project, complete individual title listings on book-focused social media sites such as Goodreads and Librarything, and pursue marketing opportunities with queer-focused websites and bookstores.

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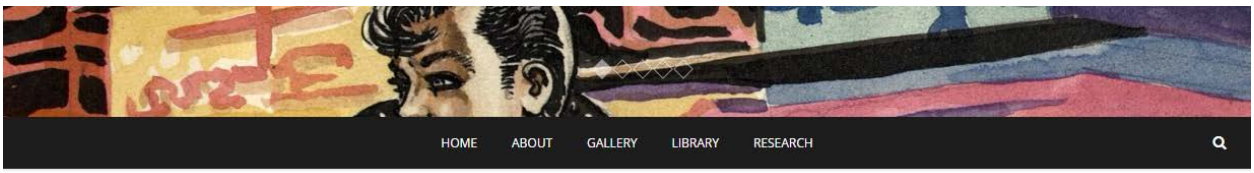
APPENDIX

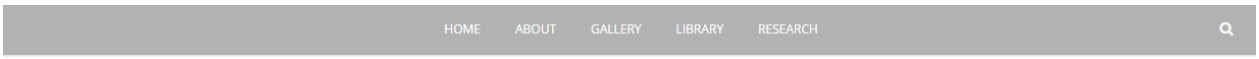


Home

Carl Corley was born in Mississippi in 1919, fought at Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima during World War II, and spent the following forty years as an engineering artist for the Mississippi and Louisiana Departments of Transportation. But while he was drawing maps and illustrating scenes of Louisiana folklife, he was also writing dozens of semi-autobiographical gay-themed pulp novels, painting most of their covers himself, and publishing them under his own name through major pulp companies of the late 1960s. In the 1970s and after, he devoted himself to newspaper comic strips about local history and religious topics, while also writing and drawing extensive gay-themed science-fiction comics. Those stories went unpublished, and Corley's novels became harder and harder to find... until now.

Find more information in the menu above, or go straight to the gallery and library for gay-themed art, comics, and novels!

Home page.



About

About the Project

This website is a combined digital exhibit and archive, created as the public component of a master's degree thesis in the University of West Georgia's public history program.

Original materials are held by the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University, which kindly granted permission for this project. The collection remains open to researchers, and any further requests for publication should be directed to the library: Guide to the Carl V. Corley Papers, 1930s-1990s. The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Research citation: [Item], in www.CarlCorley.com. Accessed [date], [URL of gallery or library].

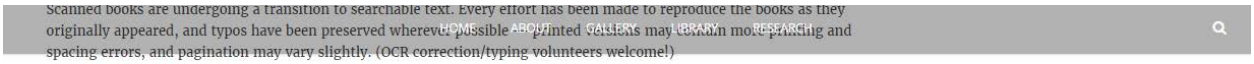
About the Historian

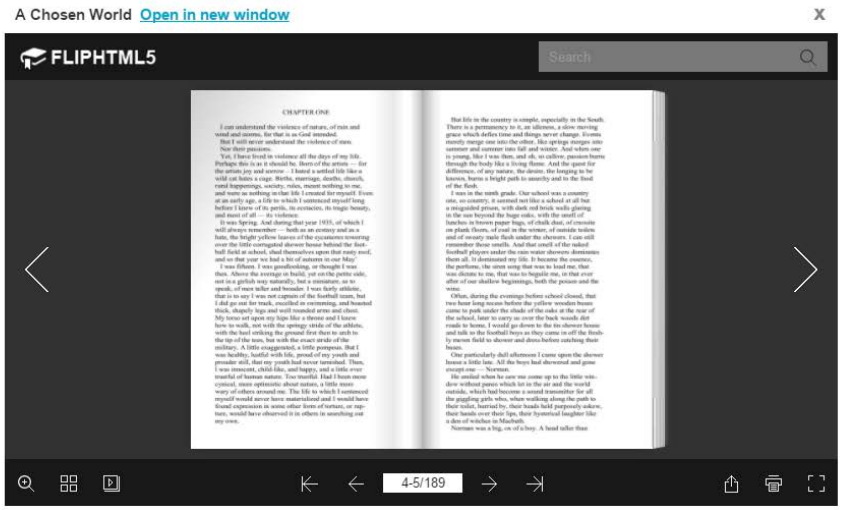
Hannah Givens is a public historian focusing on queer, literary, and digital histories.

Thesis committee: Dr. Julia Brock (University of West Georgia), Dr. Stephanie Chalifoux (University of West Georgia), Dr. John Howard (King's College London).

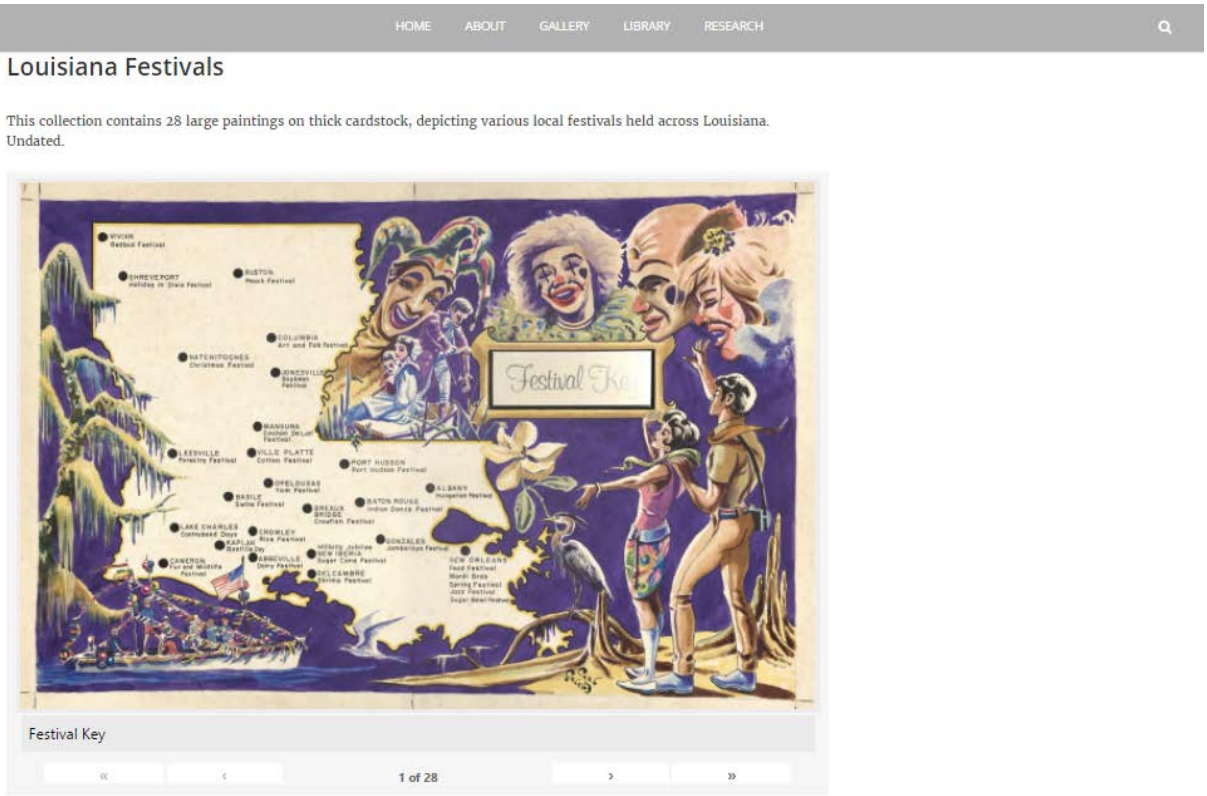
Contact

About page.





A novel open in FlipHTML5.



An image gallery.