Gay literature has its authors: Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, André Gide, Jean Genet, Tennessee Williams, Renaud Camus, Yves Navarre, and Michel Tremblay, among others. The works of these authors have been recognized by literary scholars as having helped shape gay identity and community. Published mostly in the 1960s, gay pulp novels, extremely popular and widely read, were also one of the very few books to send gay readers a positive representation of themselves. However, these pulps have been until now largely ignored and excluded from the gay literary canon. Gunn and Harker’s collection of essays focuses entirely on these pulp fictions that were very important for the gay movement in the 1960s and the 1970s. As Randall Ivey, one of the contributors to the volume, indicates, gay pulp novels not only cover a wide variety of genres, including fantasy, horror, historical fiction, and rural narratives, but also “helped galvanize gay men into organizing into a political bloc ready to fight for changes in American attitudes and laws, so … these books in a real sense paved the way for the Stonewall riots that would erupt in New York at the end of the decade” (198).

In their introduction to the volume, the editors describe the general characteristics of the gay pulp fiction genre. Easily recognizable by their tawdry and provocative covers, their cheap paper, and their strong sexual tone, these novels were most of the time published under pseudonyms and available everywhere, including train stations and newsstands. What distinguished gay pulp novels from the regular pulps aimed at heterosexual readers was their content: while the latter offered a negative view of homosexuals, who were perceived as sinners, deviants, and criminals, the former presented them as normal people and as a community whose rights had to be recognized by legal and social institutions. Therefore, gay pulp novels must be not only analyzed as literary documents, but also as historical artefacts that attest to the evolution of the gay community in America.

The essays in this collection, including Reed Massengill’s contribution, titled “Carnal Matters: The Alexander Goodman Story,” concentrate on this history of gay pulps in the United States. One of the first publishers of gay pulp fiction was Herman Lynn Womack, who acquired Grecian Guild Press in 1958. Womack was the first
publisher to specifically aim his products, such as the physique magazine *Grecian Guild Pictorial*, at an openly gay readership. The many pulp novels and physique magazines he published in the 1960s, as well as *The International Guild Guide*, which appeared in 1964, showed, as Alfred Kinsey did in the 1940s, that homosexuality was widespread, common, and normal. One of Womack’s authors, George Haimsohn, was one of the most prolific gay pulp writers of his time and a pivotal figure in the gay publishing industry. In his article on Haimsohn, who used the pen name Alexander Goodman, Reed Massengill insists on the great role played by Haimsohn’s novels *Carnal Matters* (1965), *The Gay Psychedelic Sex Book* (1967), and other gay pulps in countering “negative mainstream print narratives with an alternate, more authentic point of view” (84). Massengill also considers Haimsohn’s strong and sometimes troubled relationship with his editor.

All of Haimsohn’s novels, like most of the pulps, have been largely forgotten, a fact that is explored by Whitney Strub in his essay “Historicizing Pulp: Gay Male Pulp and the Narrativization of Queer Cultural History.” In fact, when they appeared, gay pulp novels were rejected by the main gay groups and associations – first by the homophile associations such as the Mattachine Society, who wanted to distance themselves from the explicit content of these publications and show a respectable image of homosexuality in order to be integrated in society; and second by the gay liberation groups that emerged after the Stonewall Riots, who considered gay pulps “closet novels” (65) that did not correspond to their unapologetic declarations of gayness.

The other essays in *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction* offer additional readings and interpretations of gay pulps, though they are more theoretical in nature than the historical contribution made by Massengill. Pamela Robertson Wojcik’s contribution on Lou Rand Hogan’s *The Gay Detective* and *The Gay Cookbook* is based on Judith Butler’s theory of gender as a performance and on the fluidity of gender roles. Ann Marie Scholt’s analysis of the 1966 short story collection *Stud*, written by Phil Andros, is also centred on identity, more specifically about masculinity and issues related to fetishism, sadomasochism, violence, prostitution, and interracial conflicts. In her essay on *Song of the Loon* (1966), Beth M. Bouloukos shows that Richard Amory’s novel owes its narrative structure, characters, and style to the Spanish pastoral romances and novels, notably Jorge de Montemayor’s *La Diana* and Gaspar Gil Polo’s *Diana Enamorada*. Jaime Harker’s
article on Christopher Isherwood is less about the representation of gay pulp fiction in the novel than Isherwood’s personal analysis of Hinduism. In “Transcendent Submission: Resistance to Oppression in Jay Greene’s Behind these Walls,” Nicholas Alexander Hayes gets inspiration from Michel Foucault’s Discipline and Punish and observes the different power relations and sexual dynamics between characters.

The last essay of the collection, written by Jeremy Fisher, is the only one on gay pulps produced outside the United States. Fisher underscores the overtly conservative and homophobic context of Australia in the 1970s while examining the conditions that facilitated the expansion of the gay pulp market in that country. Even though prints about homosexuality, including scientific reports, were systematically banned in Australia before 1969 and even though the book market was dependent on importations from the United States and primarily the United Kingdom, gay pulps and more generally gay novels were periodically published in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, such as The Gay Way (1974), issued by Horwitz Script Publications. It would have been interesting to read additional scholarship on the production, dissemination, and reception of gay pulps in other cultural areas and countries.

All in all, 1960s Gay Pulp Fiction is a remarkable work about a subject that has been long neglected by academics. Well written and precise, this collection will surely be useful to scholars specializing in queer history and to those interested in popular culture. If there is one thing to remember about this book, it is that the Stonewall riots were not the starting point for gay literature and publishing history. In fact, before those events, there was a varied and lively gay literature, still mostly unknown to this day. As book historians, it is now our task to unveil it.

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The American Antiquarian Society was founded in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1812 on the belief that “the collection & preservation of the Antiquities of our Country … have a tendency to enlarge