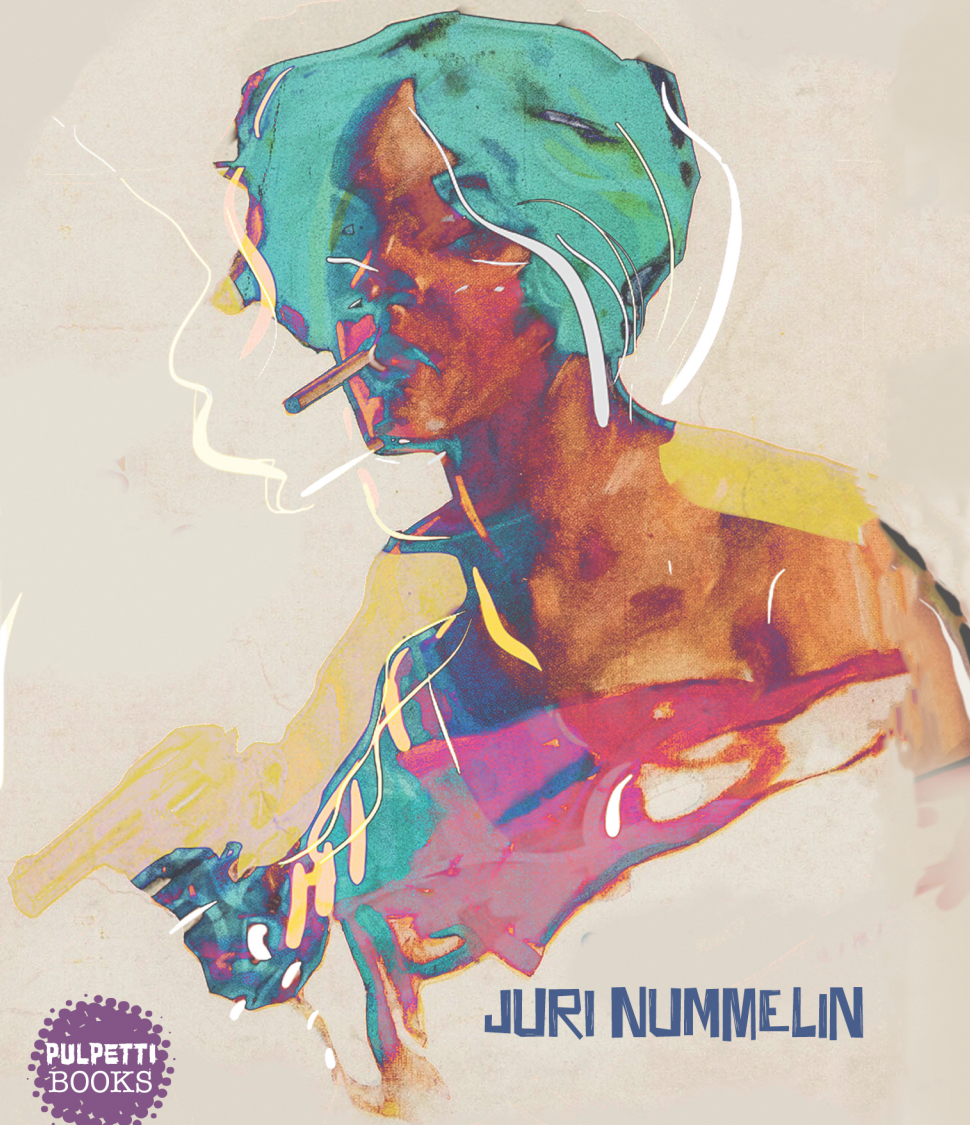


WRITINGS ON NOIR, HARDBOILED,
SLEAZE AND OTHER GENRES

DARK PLACES AND LITTLE TRAMPS



JURI NUMMELIN

Dark Places and Little Tramps

Juri Nummelin

Dark Places and Little Tramps

Writings on noir, hardboiled,
sleaze and other genres

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Preface

This book is a collection of book reviews from my blog called Pulpetti (Finnish for pulpit). I set the blog up in 2005 and updated it irregularly into 2022, when I finally stopped. Pulpetti, as the title probably tells you, was mainly about pulp or pulpish fiction, stuff that was published in pulp magazines, paperback novels and other low-end literary venues. I also wrote a lot about obscure films and some classics, and there was also a lot about my family issues and other odds and ends (I even published some poems there!), but sometime around 2010 I decided to concentrate on the reviews of pulp fiction and films and stop talking about my personal life, other than some work-related stuff, i.e. translating crime fiction, writing about it and what have you. I also started other blogs where I could direct my seemingly endless energy.

Blogs around the world were mainly in English when I started Pulpetti, so it was natural to me that Pulpetti was also in English. I'm not a native speaker, as I live in Finland, but I've always thought my English is quite fluent. At times I also published in Finnish, and I remember writer J. D. Rhoades saying that those parts in Pulpetti sounded like Elvish to him.

Pulpetti brought many connections. From 2004 to 2011, I published a crime fiction fanzine called Isku in Finnish, and I got lots of new hardboiled and noir writing in them, stories by Patti Abbott, Bill Crider, Christa Faust, Ed Gorman, Jason Starr and Kevin Wignall, to name just a few. I couldn't have had the same supply of good stories without blogging. Thanks go also to the Rara-Avis e-mail list which was still going strong during those years.

Largely thanks to Pulpetti, I had also connections to sample new crime novels for a paperback line I was editing for a Finnish publisher, namely Arktinen Banaani. I hand-picked books for the line in 2008–2010. The line went bust after only six books, but what classics they were: Duane Swierczynski's *The Wheelman*, Kevin Wignall's *Who Is Conrad Hirst?*, Allan Guthrie's *Kiss Her Goodbye*, Scott Phillips's *The Ice Harvest*, Christa Faust's *Money Shot* and James Sallis's *Drive*. How could you not love those books?

But it seems the Finnish audience was able to resist their call, and the publisher really didn't know what to do with the books, so the paperback line ceased. After the paperbacks, there came a few books in hardcover (Kevin Wignall's *The Dark Flag*, which still hasn't been published in English and probably never will, Duane Swierczynski's *The Blonde*, and Ken Bruen's *London Boulevard*, plus two crime novels by Finnish authors), but they vanished without a trace. A writer friend of mine, Antti Tuomainen, said to me that one day someone's gonna pick up one of these books, decides to become a writer and writes a book that changes the course of history. Here's hoping...

Why did I stop blogging then? I simply couldn't find the time anymore: I was already writing or doing some other writing-related work six, seven or even eight hours every day, so I thought it would be too tiresome to try to come up with something worthwhile to be published in a blog. And then there was social media, namely Facebook, where I could also publish stuff about my writing and pulpish fiction. Sometime around 2020 Facebook stopped showing links to Google-owned Blogger in its newsfeed, so it became quite frustrating to publish something on Blogspot and then find out no one has read it. There are other problems with Facebook that I wholeheartedly recognize, and when I wrote the first draft of this introduction, I was on a Facebook break. But having written so extensively about books I loved and deeply cared about, I wanted to have these reviews at hand and in print, just in case Google decides to cease all defunct or dormant blogs. (I'm doing a book also with my film reviews in Pulpetti.)

As I said, Pulpetti was mainly about pulpish fiction, mostly hardboiled and noir writing, but also some westerns, some horror, some fantasy, some sleaze and other erotica and other genres. Many of the reviews in Pulpetti were born out of making a sequel to my original *Pulpografia* (2000, in Finnish only), a reference book on American crime and mystery writers published mainly in the pulp and paperback format. I also did a book on American western writers, so it was natural to post about that genre as well.

In the early 2020s I started finishing up the sequel to *Pulpografia*, and I had to read some men's adventure books, a genre I'm not very much interested in, but which seems quite popular nowadays. When I was writing my first

book over 20 years ago, I concentrated on genres that I really cared about, the noir and hardboiled stuff, but the wind has changed, at least according to the sites like Paperback Warrior and Facebook groups like Men's Adventure Paperbacks of the 20th Century, where men's adventure books, like the Mack Bolans by Don Pendleton, are very much a fad. (As I'm writing this introduction, the sequel is not finished yet, but I'm hoping it will see the light of day in 2025).

In this book, there's also a large section on neo-noir, since I was reading (and still am!) new American, British and Irish crime fiction, mainly in the noir or neo-noir subgenre. I think there hasn't been any kind of history of neo-noir fiction, so this could be a start, or at least someone can use this as a source or a reference work. A word of warning: neo-noir is a famously slippery genre, so someone might think that not all the books mentioned here are neo-noir or even noir.

We have also a section on sleaze or sex paperbacks of the 1960s and 1970s (and later ones as well). Many people know that lots of sleaze paperbacks are also crime fiction. Just to name a few: Lawrence Sanders, Donald Westlake, Robert Silverberg, Orrie Hitt, Barry Malzberg... I did a book on sleaze paperbacks in 2020, called *Pulpografia Erotica*. It concentrates on American books that were published also in Finnish, so the scope is limited and haphazard. I discovered lots of crime-related books that have never been called to the attention of crime fiction aficionados, though, so I think this section should prove interesting to many paperback fans.

There are also sections on westerns and some other genres as well, with a short segment of non-fiction books and magazines. One of the most important segments in this book focuses on older British crime fiction, about which I did a book in 2014 (again, only in Finnish). There are reviews and articles on British spy books, but also stuff about British private eye books, some of which are very light pastiches of the genuine American stuff. James Hadley Chase has many of his books reviewed, though I really don't find him that appealing.

In the end, we have some reviews on crime/noir graphic novels, and also some stuff on Finnish literature, mainly Aino Kallas and Mika Waltari, but

also a survey of older Finnish private eye fiction. “Reviews in brief” is just what it is: very short reviews on hardboiled, noir and other novels.

The book doesn’t contain the blog posts as they were, since I’ve edited them and taken out stuff that’s not relevant anymore, i.e. things about where I was reading the book or some such. I’ve also combined some of the shorter reviews into longer ones, for example in the case of James Hadley Chase.

The texts are arranged alphabetically according to the writer’s surname. I’ve also added the publishing info, and you can find the publisher and the year of the first edition in the headers. (In this time of e-books, it’s becoming more and more difficult to find the publishing year and the name of the original publisher!)

I hope you find this mixed-up collection of reviews and essays interesting and entertaining.

Turku, Finland, March 2025

Juri Nummelin

DARK PLACES AND LITTLE TRAMPS collects Juri Nummelin's writings on noir, hardboiled, sleaze and other literary genres of yesteryear.

The author has written extensively about genre fiction and popular culture for over four decades, but this new volume is the first publication of his writings in English. Among many other subjects, it features a lengthy section on neo-noir and writers like Gillian Flynn, Allan Guthrie, Jason Starr and Duane Swierczynski. He also investigates British spy and crime fiction and includes chapters on western and horror. Nummelin shines new light to many of these areas, such as the largely forgotten topic of sleaze paperbacks.

Juri Nummelin is a Finnish writer and publisher who has had a life-long crush on hardboiled and noir. His blog, Pulpetti, was for many years a steady source of news and opinions about pulp and paperback fiction and edgy new crime writing. The texts in this volume are culled from the blog, but they have been newly edited and organized by genre. In the book, Nummelin also reminisces about his experiences in attempting to get new neo-noir writers published in the Finnish language.

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