

Derleth, August (1909-1971)

Encyclopedia Article

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A better description of August Derleth's massive output could not be found than in Alison M. Wilson's *August Derleth: A Bibliography*. Born February 24, 1909, "August Derleth ... one of the most versatile and prolific American authors of the twentieth century is certainly one of its most neglected. In a career that spanned over 40 years, he produced a steady stream of novels, short stories, poems, and essays about his native Wisconsin; mystery and horror tales; and biographies, histories, and children's books, while simultaneously writing articles and reviewing books for countless magazines and newspapers, and running his own publishing house." Despite the flood that streamed from his pen, none of Derleth's critically acclaimed regional novels ever sold over 5,000 copies, while his fantasy, children's, and mystery fiction fared only marginally better. Since his death in 1971, he is best remembered for his Solar Pons stories, modeled closely on Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tales, and for his founding with Donald Wandrei in 1939 of Arkham House, a publishing concern that specialized in macabre fiction. Arkham House was notable for publishing the work of neglected pulp fiction horror and fantasy writers of the 1930s like H. P. Lovecraft, as well as European weird fiction writers such as Arthur Machen and Lord Dunsany.

Further Reading:

Derleth, August. *Arkham House: The First Twenty Years: 1939-1959*. Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1959.

———. *August Derleth: Thirty Years of Writing, 1926-1956*. Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1956.

———. *Thirty Years of Arkham House, 1939-1969*. Sauk City, Wisconsin, Arkham House, 1970.

Wilson, Alison M. *August Derleth: A Bibliography*. Metuchen, New Jersey, Scarecrow Press, 1983.