

help fill a need in what is currently a hot area of study and is a much better purchase than any of the single-volume efforts released over the past few years.—Craig Shufelt, Director, Fort McMurray Public Library, Alberta, Canada

Notable African American Writers. Ed. by the Editors of Salem Press. Magill's Choice. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2006. 3 vols. acid free \$207 (ISBN 1-58765-272-2).

The scope of *Notable African American Writers* is coverage of “eighty great novelists, poets, playwrights, short-story writers, and writers of nonfiction from Colonial America to today” (vii). Its purpose is “to help readers to better understand the experience of African Americans and provide an opportunity to examine African American literary culture across history from poet Phillis Wheatley (1753) to playwright Susan Lori Parks (1963)” (vii).

Sixty-eight of the essays in these volumes originally appeared in other Salem Press sets: *Critical Survey of Drama* (2003), *Critical Survey of Poetry* (2003), *Critical Survey of Short Fiction* (2001), and *Critical Survey of Long Fiction* (2000). Only twelve essays were commissioned specifically for *Notable African American Writers*: those on Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alex Haley, Virginia Hamilton, Martin Luther King Jr., Nella Larsen, Terry McMillan, Walter Dean Myers, Gordon Parks Sr., Booker T. Washington, and Cornel West.

Those readers familiar with Magill's literary criticism series of books will find the layout of this three-volume set instantly recognizable. Magill's is known for its precise layout: author's name, major genre, place of birth, place of death, chronological listing of the works, achievements, biography, and finally the analysis of the author's literary career as well as an annotated bibliography at the end of each article.

Among the titles classified by the Library of Congress with the subject heading: American Literature—African American Authors—Dictionaries, this set is a much better buy in comparison with other familiar titles, such as Shari Hatch's *African American Writers: A Dictionary* (ABC-Clio, 2000); Valerie Smith's *African American Writers* (Scribner, 2001) and Philip Bader's *A to Z of African Americans: African American Writers* (Facts On File, 2004). *Notable African American Writers* adds so much more value.

For the purposes of comparison, I took a look at the coverage of one author, Jean Toomer (1894–1967), a well-known writer who is covered in each set. Each of the three comparison titles includes the name and birth and death dates at the beginning of the entry. Similarities fall off dramatically after that.

Both Hatch's *African American Writers: A Dictionary* and Bader's *A to Z of African Americans* go right into Toomer's life and intersperse it with his literary contributions. They both devote around two to three pages to the author and provide references or further reading without annotations. So for an abbreviated treatment of Jean Toomer, look to these titles.

Smith's *African American Writers* devotes most of its pages to an analysis of Toomer's book, *Cane* (Harper, 1923), choos-

ing not to spend its time analyzing Toomer's lesser known works as *Notable African American Writers* does. For an in-depth analysis of the author's life and how he came to his life's work, consult *African American Writers*.

Notable African American Authors offers a much better layout of the main facts about an author's work and breaks it down into genres. After an analysis of the author's major achievements and a short biography, the genre is identified (for example, short fiction) with an analysis of each of the author's major works within that genre. In addition, *Notable African American Writers* gives the researcher an added bonus in volume three: four overview essays on the African American writer's contribution to the various literary genres.

For the more extensive and precise treatment of the author and his major works, consult first *Notable African American Writers* and if that title is not available, then Smith's *African American Writers* as a second choice. I highly recommend *Notable African American Writers* for large academic and public libraries.—M. Elaine Hughes, *African American Studies Liaison Librarian, Georgia State University, Atlanta*

Notable Latino Writers. Ed. by the Editors of Salem Press. Magill's Choice series. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2006. 3 vols. acid free \$207 (ISBN 1-58765-243-9).

Notable Latino Writers recompiles 122 essays on Latino authors, most previously included in Magill's *Cyclopedia of World Authors*, 4th revised ed. (2004), and in several other Salem titles. The current work stands out for its use of a distinctively broad definition of Latino, used “to refer to authors living in the Americas who speak—or descend from those who spoke—any romance (hence ‘Latin’) language, as well as those of Latin American descent living in the United States...” (vii). In addition to U.S. Latino writers, the set covers some of the best-known authors from Latin American countries (including Brazil) and historical periods from the colonial to the twenty-first century. The main criterion for the inclusion of a Latin-American writer is that significant works are commonly available in English.

Arranged alphabetically, each entry contains a brief biography, quotations from representative works, and a partial list of the author's works by genre in both the original language and English translation. Many entries include photographs or portraits of the author. Volume 3 contains seven overview essays on Latin American and Latino literary genres (drama, long and short fiction, poetry), a list of some four hundred-plus Latino authors not covered in the work, a bibliography of secondary sources, and an excellent annotated listing of electronic resources for Latin American and Latino literary research. Several indexes allow users to find material by genre, country, chronology, title, and subject.

Notable Latino Writers is a useful compilation for the subject area and makes no claims to being comprehensive, but it also does not provide the reader with any idea of its selection criteria, other than that the authors' works be available in English. This is certainly problematic in an area of literary

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research with both an established canon and with vibrant newcomers—both current popular writers and those whose works may have been neglected or marginalized in the past by virtue of the authors' social class, race, gender, or other criteria. For example, the essay on "Latino Short Fiction" devotes nearly two pages to a discussion of the work of Américo Paredes (Mexican-American folklorist and novelist), but there is no separate entry on Paredes, although he is included in the "More Latino Writers" list. Luis Urrea, author of the best-selling novel *The Hummingbird's Daughter* (Little, Brown 2005) and also of the acclaimed nonfiction work, *The Devil's Highway* (Little, Brown, 2004), does not appear at all. The work is to be commended though, for including many writers (Rubén Darío, Elena Poniatowska, José Martí, Eduardo Galeano, to name only a few) known for journalism, history, and other works of nonfiction.

Libraries with access to the Thomson Gale Dictionary of Literary Biography series will find the material more complete and scholarly than Magill's. (For coverage of Latino and Latin-American authors, the critical volumes are: *Chicano Writers*, First Series, vol. 82 [1989]; *Chicano Writers*, Second Series, vol. 122 [1992]; *Chicano Writers*, Third Series, vol. 209 [1999]; *Latin-American Dramatists*, First Series, vol. 305 [2005]; *Modern Latin-American Fiction Writers*, First Series, vol. 113 [1992]; and *Modern Latin-American Fiction Writers*, Second Series, vol. 145 [1994].) Scholarly coverage of Latin American literature can be found in the *Encyclopedia of Latin-American and Caribbean Literature, 1900–2003*, (Routledge, 2004) and *Encyclopedia of Latin-American Literature* (Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997). *Latin-American Writers* (Scribner, 1989) and its *Supplement* (2002) is a standard reference in English for Latin America, while *Latino and Latina Writers* (Scribner, 2004) covers U.S. Latino/a authors.

Small academic libraries, as well as high school and public libraries serving Latino readers, would benefit from the well-organized, concise, and relatively inexpensive information provided by *Notable Latino Writers*. Larger college and university libraries may find that they already provide more comprehensive and scholarly information, both in the print resources listed above and in online reference databases such as Thomson Gale's *Literature Resource Center* or *Oxford Reference Online*.—Molly Molloy, *Border and Latin American Subject Specialist, Reference and Research Services, New Mexico State University Library, Las Cruces*

Science and Scientists. Ed. by Editors of Salem Press. Magill's Choice series. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2006. 3 vols. acid free \$207 (ISBN 1-58765-302-8).

Science and Scientists focuses on breakthroughs in scientific theory and understanding. The three volumes not only follow the format Magill's Choice has used so successfully in its other reference books, it incorporates text from several other Magill's Choice titles. Some of these entries have been updated, some have been edited to accommodate the focus on the scientific advance, and others are virtually unchanged.

Entries are arranged alphabetically and include the date, people involved, and a list of suggested readings. This arrangement isolates entries in the same discipline from each other. In contrast, Stephen G. Brush's *The History of Modern Science: A Guide to the Second Scientific Revolution* (Iowa State Univ. Pr., 1988) gives each discipline a chapter that allows the reader to easily follow progress within each discipline.

The text in *Science and Scientists* provides the context for each breakthrough and its impact on science. The language is accessible and illustrations and sidebars enhance the text. Subject and name indexes provide additional entrance to the content. The third volume contains a list of Nobel Laureates in the sciences, a chronology of scientific advances from 585 B.C.E. to 2005, and a list of Web sites about science. Overall, this set is accurate and attractive. It will help nonhistorians and nonscientists learn more about the history of science.

Other sets that encompass some of the same information include Frank N. Magill's *Great Events From History II Science & Technology Series* (Salem, 1991) and Neil Schlager's *Science and Its Times* (Gale Group, 2000). These sets cover ancient to modern times, and each of them provides context for each discovery or advance. If your library owns one of these other titles and doesn't have much demand for science history, you may not want to purchase *Science and Scientists*. Public and school libraries will find *Science and Scientists* well suited for their nonspecialist clientele.—Robin N. Sinn, *Research Services Librarian, The Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland*

Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia. Ed. by Alan Soble. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006. 2 vols. acid free \$299.95 (ISBN 0-313-32686-X).

This resource is remarkable in that it straddles the lines between a reference work and a study companion, between scholarly and general-interest reading. The stated "general goal" is to "educate its readers in the fundamental questions, approaches, insights, and conclusions in the continuing and expanding field of the philosophical study of human sexuality and, in the process, to be not only instructive but also thought-provoking and occasionally entertaining" (preface, [xi]). Editor Alan Soble meets and surpasses this goal. This work does not offer easy fixes or categorizations to problems in the way popular culture often does. As Soble explains in the introduction, "what philosophical thought about sexuality tends to reveal, even flaunt, is that the Human Condition cannot be reduced to easy formulas and platitudes, that our sexual existence . . . is barely recognized by ourselves and much too complex to be neatly ordered . . ." (xxii).

The historical scope exceeds that indicated by the title, including entries on pre-Platonic and post-Paglian philosophy. The 153 signed entries by thirty-three contributors (fifty entries discussing figures, sixty covering topics, and forty covering schools of thought) are well balanced. Writing styles reflect various philosophical methods, from analytic to continental, and diverse perspectives, from libertarian to conser-