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BRAVE WORDS: BOOKS, FATAL TO THEIR AUTHORS

Publish or perish, maybe ... but publish and perish?

An exhibit of books now on display at the Chester Fritz Library explores the fates of authors who were condemned to death owing to their literary zeal, deeply held convictions, and often to an excess of opinion about those politically, socially, or religiously powerful. Throughout history, scientists, poets, priests, and others met their fates due to the bravery (or sometimes the folly) of their outspoken published beliefs. The works of 16 writers were chosen for display, spanning the years from the Greek and Roman empires to the present day.

The tragedies attested to by these persecutions often were part of larger social upheaval. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century was a brutal time throughout Europe, and not just for authors. It was an era of great repression by the Catholic Church toward those who challenged its authority and beliefs. William Tyndale (ca. 1495-1536) was condemned by the church and burned at the stake largely for his daring audacity to translate the Bible (Pentateuch and New Testament) into English. Up until this time it was the sole right of the church to interpret the divine word, which it did, among other ways, in the “vulgate” translation of the Bible then in use (written in Latin, a translation from the original Hebrew and Greek). Tyndale was arrested in Antwerp in 1536 as a result of a plot possibly aided by the English. Some years earlier, Tyndale earned the enmity of the English king, Henry VIII, for his religious tract “The Obedience of a Christian Man and How Christian Rulers Ought to Govern,” published in 1528 and directed at the monarch. Tyndale would get his “revenge,” though. Scarcely two generations later, another English monarch, James I, would call a council to publish an “authorized” version of the Bible that would steal extensively from Tyndale’s supposedly heretical efforts. On display is a copy of Tyndale’s Old Testament (New Haven: Yale University Press, c1992), and a copy of his condemnation of church officials, “The Practice of Prelates” (in The Works of William Tyndale, Berkshire, England: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1964).

Another religious author silenced for his views on the Catholic Church was the Czech priest, John Hus (1373-1415). In his Treatise on the Church, which was written probably around the years 1412-14, Hus laid out his principle criticisms against dogma, clerical corruption relating to the purchase of church offices, charging fees for sacraments, and other issues. He was put on trial at the Council of Constance in 1415, found guilty, and burned at the stake. His martyrdom inspired and consolidated his religious followers into a movement called the “Hussites,” which later became an influential force in the era of the Reformation. Hus’ execution had an immediate impact throughout the Czech and German communities of medieval Bohemia. After his execution, Hus’ followers began claiming that “the goose was not yet cooked.” The phrase was a pun on the Czech word, “hus,” which means “goose,” and is still used today, although its origins are all but forgotten.

Socinian and Unitarian author John Biddle (1615-1662) was imprisoned several times during his life. He generally is recognized as the father of Unitarianism in England. In 1647, he published his Twelve Arguments Drawn Out of Scripture, with the title continuing “wherein the commonly received opinion touching the deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and fully refuted.” The book was ordered burned, and Biddle was imprisoned. Personal friends in power intervened on his behalf, and eventually secured his release. But Biddle would not be silenced. Even after the Ordinance of 1648 made it punishable by death to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, he nevertheless published two anti-Trinitarian tracts that once again landed him in jail. The intervention of friends secured his release once more, but Biddle would not be free to worship and preach his views in public until the Act of
Jefferson, youth as soon as their minds are sufficiently matured for that
controversial in Restoration-era England. Charles II saw this as
the Duke of York, who would later rule as James II. Sidney's
which was a failed attempt to assassinate the king and his brother,
"branch of study." (Sowerby's
still awards grants anonymously
unpublished manuscript discovered in his possession. The
was arrested in 1787, imprisoned, and forced
accomplished a
exile for seven years, until 1662. When
he finally returned to England, Biddle
again was arrested and was fined an
amount he could not afford to pay. He
spent five weeks in a debtors' prison,
illness and died on the morning of
September 22, 1662. It was in response to this tragic in Justice that the
Catalogue of the library of Thomas

Dagne Olsen Papers

Following the August 1994 death of North Dakota Representative Dagne Olsen, the State Capitol Press Association remembered her as "setting a standard for public service." This reputation was cemented even before her service in the State House. Before her election to the State House, Olsen was known for handing out business cards with "Dagne Olsen, just a housewife" on the front, and "Lawyer, lobbyist, wife, mother, and grandmother" on the back. This represents one item to be found in 16 linear feet of recently acquired and processed papers that document Olsen's life and political career.

Olsen was born on March 19, 1933, in Dutton, Minnesota. She graduated from Park River (North Dakota) High School in 1951, and began attending the University of North Dakota later that year. Her first marriage was foredoomed during her time at UND, where Dagne was very involved in the university community. She pledged for Delta Zeta, and was a member of the Women's Recreation Association, Delta Phi Delta (honorary art society), Pi Lambda Theta (honorary society for women in education), and the Future Teachers of America. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics in 1955. She was exiled from Rome

Olsen decided to run. She was elected in 1980, and served seven consecutive terms in the House of Representatives. A staunch Republican, Olsen effectively mirrored the fiscal, social, and political views of her rural, conservative district. It was the twin themes of abortion and health care, however, that stand out as central to Olsen's time in Bismarck.

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THE POPULAR READING COLLECTION

Amid the endless studying, the exhausting research, and the agonizing exams, many students may long for the chance to curl up with a good book to read simply for pleasure and relaxation. Nick Wrangler, a 2001-2002 off-campus student senator and political science major, recognized this need and decided to act. In the Spring Semester of 2002 he approached the Director of Libraries, Wilbur Stolt, with the idea of a recreational reading collection for the Chester Fritz Library. After they worked on a plan, Wrangler authored and introduced a bill in the Student Senate that would provide funding for the Library to acquire such a collection. The Student Senate approved the bill and allocated $15,000 for the project.

In the fall of 2002, Library bibliographers began selecting titles for the Popular Reading Collection that would provide some of the best in modern fiction appealing to a wide variety of recreational reading interests. The Collection includes a number of genres such as mystery, science fiction, romance, historical fiction and westerns that are not associated with specific disciplines. Books were selected from various lists of award-winners, popular college reading, and publishers' best sellers.

One can find books by well-known authors like Mary Higgins Clark and Tom Clancy next to such titles as the 1966 Hugo Award Winner, The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, by long-time popular author Robert A. Heinlein, and Shooting Chant (An Ella Clah Mystery) by contemporary Native American authors Aimee & David Thurlo. The collection also includes works by Lisa Scottoline, the New York Times 2002 best-selling author, and Gunter Grass, winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize of Literature. The popular John Grisham novels are on the shelf along with historical fiction like The Gates of the Alamo by Stephen Harrigan.

An extra dimension to the collection is the biography genre, which includes contemporary as well as historical persons. They are as diverse as Jesse James, the Beatles, George and Laura Bush, Benjamin Franklin, and Tom Brokaw.

On November 22, 2002, Library staff and UNO students attended a special dedication ceremony of the Popular Reading Collection in the old-world charm of the Chester Fritz Library’s second floor Reading Room. Wilbur Stolt thanked the Student Government for their support of the Collection for the Library and added, “It is a wonderful supplement to the Library’s research collections.” The Library welcomes any additional funding the Student Government may wish to contribute to further enhance the popularity of this collection. More than one hundred books have circulated thus far and an increased demand is anticipated during the coming months.

Bibliographers will continue to review notable book and best seller lists through the Spring Semester. The collection has grown to over 575 titles. Approximately 200 more titles will be ordered. There is a “Suggestion” Box on a shelf in the Popular Reading Collection where students are encouraged to submit book requests for possible purchase. Over 20 suggestions have been recommended thus far. Modern fiction and biographies given as gifts to the Library will also be added to the Collection when appropriate.

Information about individual books in the Collection can be found in the Library’s online catalog, ODIN. The books are arranged alphabetically by authors’ or biographers’ last names to allow for ease of browsing. Anyone who has a UND library barcode can check them out for personal use; but if one prefers, he or she may just curl up in a nearby chair to read a good book.

Mary Drewes, Collection Development and Information Access Services

(Dagne Olsen, continued from page 3)

Olsen’s support for health care, however, did have a distinctive conservative spin. In 1985 and 1987, she argued unsuccessfully for a repeal of North Dakota’s Certificate of Need law, which required that health care facilities obtain approval from the State Health Council before beginning major construction projects or obtaining costly equipment. She told the House that these regulations simply were unnecessary, not cost effective, and introduced an unneeded amount of bureaucracy and governmental control. In 1989, she sponsored HB 1439, which would have eliminated health care price data publications. Olsen felt the publications added to the cost of health care, and did not lower costs through the introduction of price competition. In 1993, during her last legislative session, she voted against SB2466, which would have created an universal health care program for all North Dakotans.

Her reputation for speaking her mind, regardless of subject, occasioned a fair amount of controversy. In 1989, she authored a bill calling for the closure of UND-Lake Region and its conversion to a Centennial Model School. After the bill elicited an adverse response, Olsen told the Grand Forks Herald “I go on the theory that a person can never be afraid of controversy or addressing new ideas. We have to make decisions that aren’t always popular. I never came down here to win a popularity contest.”

Olsen received a liver transplant in 1991. This did not deter her from winning a seventh term in 1992. She was campaigning for re-election in 1994, when she died on August 20th in Manvel.

The Olsen family deposited the Dagne Olsen Papers in the Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections in 1999 and 2000. The inventory for the collection is available on the Library’s website at:

http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/library/Collections/og1388.html

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