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## Autumn Newsletter 2000

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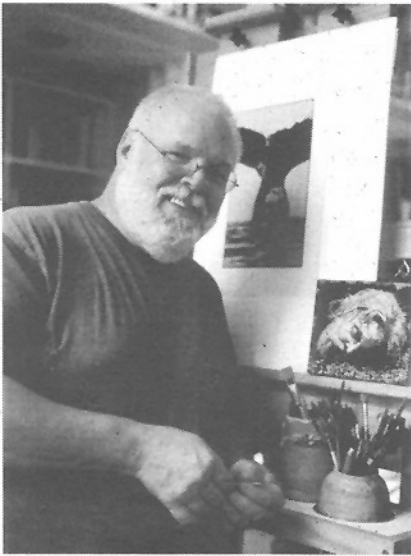
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# 2000 Friends of the Connecticut College Library Autumn Newsletter

## THE CRAFT OF BARRY MOSER

BY CHARLES T. PRICE, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ART HISTORY



The most recent addition to the growing collection of fine printing housed in the special collections of the Charles E. Shain Library is the Pennyroyal Caxton Press edition of *The Holy Bible*. Behind the making of this splendid book is the hand, mind, and energy of Barry Moser.

Barry Moser is the proprietor of the Pennyroyal Press and one of a small and remarkable group of printer-illustrators working in the United States. With the publicity surrounding the appearance of the *Bible*, he is probably the most widely known.

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Barry Moser was brought up in an area where the language of the King James Bible still colors everyday speech. He was educated in the South but in 1968 moved, with his family, to Easthampton, Massachusetts where he taught at Williston Academy and continued his own education. Now Easthampton is only a short trip from Northampton, Massachusetts where, in the 1960s, Leonard Baskin was teaching at Smith College and producing his own fine books at the Gehenna Press. With the help of Baskin and of Harold McGrath, the master pressman for the Gehenna Press, Moser began to bring out the incunables of the still unnamed Pennyroyal Press.

While he was still teaching at Williston Academy, he acquired a press and type for the school and with the help of his students printed a short and lively essay by J.A.M. Whistler, *The Red Rag*. This bore the imprint of the Castalia Press, a name that remained with the school when Moser set off on his own. Moser has explained that he chose the name Pennyroyal, a medicinal herb widespread in New England, because his friend David R. Godine, the publisher, had named his press Mandragora, that is, after the mandrake plant. The Pennyroyal Press then began with the printing of small-scale works which were illustrated with wood engravings by Moser.

A turning point in Moser's career came in 1979 when he was asked by Andrew Hoyen of the Arion Press of San Francisco to illustrate with wood engravings one of the masterworks of American literature, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The decision of the University of California Press to reproduce the very costly Arion Press book in a trade edition at a modest price probably meant that the name of Barry Moser reached a



wider circulation than that fairly circumscribed group of collectors of fine printing. Subsequently as Pennyroyal Press books have appeared they have been usually accompanied by commercial versions, in this way overcoming the problem of limited edition presses: that books meant to be handled and read are usually locked up in rare book collections or private libraries.

The success of *Moby Dick* led Moser toward the creation of his first large scale effort, the Pennyroyal Press Sesquicentennial Edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* of 1982. The success of this book led immediately to the preparation of its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*. These were followed by Pennyroyal editions of other classics including *Huckleberry Finn* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*.

Although books such as these reveal a sympathy with what are usually thought of as "children's books," Barry Moser resisted the invitations of commercial publishers to supply illustrations for children's literature on the grounds that too often the writers and illustrators of such books were coy and condescending to their readers who are, after all, intelligent if inexperienced people. There came a day, in 1984, when it was suggested that he try a book intended for children and taken from the Uncle Remus stories of Joel Chandler Harris. That was the beginning of a sequence of classic and modern books for the young (some written by Barry Moser) treated to an acerbic realism that precludes the cuteness to which he had objected. With the range of books for children contained in the Helen Gildersleeve Collection, the Charles E. Shain Library can boast an extensive selection of Barry Moser's work.

The idea of an illustrated *Bible* had long occupied Barry Moser's thoughts. A *Bible* wholly interpreted in pictures by one artist had not appeared since Gustave Doré's of 1865. And Doré had not had to cut his own blocks as Barry Moser intended to. The obstacles seemed formidable: the size, the dignity, the number of blocks to be cut, the financing were too great for the Pennyroyal Press to undertake alone. The project became possible when a friend, bibliophile and businessman Bruce Kovner, chairman of the Caxton Corporation, supplied the backing and after four years of work the Pennyroyal Caxton *Holy Bible* was finished to greet a new millennium and to climax thirty years of superlative printing.

The money was found from multiple sources to purchase this monument of fine printing for Connecticut College. They include the Friends of the Library Fund, the Brian Rogers Fund, the Palmer Memorial Room Fund and the Major Purchase Fund. Several Friends of the Library made generous individual contributions: Mark Samuels Lasner, Charles T. Price, Mary Kent, and Brian and Carol Rogers.

## ILLUSTRATOR BARRY MOSER TO GIVE SOUND LAB LECTURE

Renowned wood engraver Barry Moser, illustrator and designer of the Pennyroyal Caxton *Holy Bible*, will be the speaker at the third annual Sound Lab Lecture on September 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Ernst Common Room in the Blaustein Humanities Center. The library's copy of the limited edition of *The Holy Bible* will be on display in the lobby of Shain Library. Copies of the trade edition will be available for purchase after the lecture and Moser will sign them. The Sound Lab Lecture is co-sponsored by the Sound Lab Foundation and the Friends of the Library.

The Friends of the  
Connecticut College Library

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September 2000

## SHAIN LIBRARY EXHIBITION "THE CRAFT OF BARRY MOSER"

An exhibition to accompany the lecture by Barry Moser will be shown in the lobby of Shain Library from August 16 to October 13. The main feature of the exhibition is the library's copy of *The Holy Bible*, which is number 78 of the 400 copies printed for the limited edition. The exhibition also shows pages and prints from Moser's limited editions of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, other Pennyroyal Press publications and several examples of his work for commercial presses. By looking at the engraving tools and other materials borrowed from Barry Moser for the exhibition, it is possible to trace the genesis of one of the engravings in *The Holy Bible* from magazine photo to finished illustration. The illustrations for *The Holy Bible* were engraved on a synthetic material called Resingrave. His earlier engravings are on wood. More information about the making of the Pennyroyal Caxton Press *Holy Bible* can be found at the Press's web site <<http://www.pennyroyal-caxton.com/>>



## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ONLINE

The Special Collections Home Page now features a link to the online version of an Architectural Studies independent study project that was exhibited in Shain Library last year from November 29 to December 23. The show was called "New London: Then and Now." It was created by Benjamin J.

Robinson, class of 2000. For his project, Ben studied historic photographs and postcards of New London architecture from the collections in the New London Public Library, the Day, the Lyman Allyn Museum, the New London Historical Society and Connecticut College Special Collections. After deciding which buildings or scenes he wanted to rephotograph in 1999, he tried to duplicate the exact camera angles for his own shots. The result was a display of Ben's modern photographs paired with their historic counterparts accompanied by a brief description. During the second semester, Ben turned his project into an online web site <<http://cat.conncoll.edu/Projects/Robinson/FirstPage.htm>> created in the Arts and Technology program. The opening page is especially striking, as you watch a 1900s photograph of Whale Oil Row metamorphose into its 1999 counterpart before your eyes. If you missed the library exhibition, you can now see it online.

"eO'Neill.com: an Electronic Archive"  
<<http://www.eoneill.com>> is a relative newcomer to the Eugene O'Neill scholarship field, but it is rapidly becoming a first stop for anyone using the Internet to find information about O'Neill. eO'Neill.com is the brainchild of O'Neill collector and aficionado Harley Hammerman, MD and webmaster. It includes the complete texts of some O'Neill plays, an electronic publishing house for contributed essays relating to O'Neill and a very useful electronic forum where scholars and students can post questions and share information. eO'Neill.com is a first stop for O'Neill scholars because it provides links to many of the major sources of O'Neill scholarship: the Beinecke Library at Yale, the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, the Barrett Library at the University of Virginia, the Princeton University Library, the Eugene O'Neill Foundation at Tao House, the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection at Connecticut College, as well as the Eugene O'Neill Letters Project, compiled by Travis Bogard and Jackson R. Bryer. Dr. Hammerman also provides access to his own large collection of O'Neill material with scanned photographs, letters, manuscripts and other documents.

The Special Collections Home Page now boasts a new link to one of its special collections, the Lear/Carson Collection  
<<http://www.conncoll.edu/is/info-resources/special-collections/learcarson.htm>> In 1998, Linda Lear,

biographer, environmental historian and distinguished alumna of Connecticut College, deposited the manuscripts she had collected in the course of researching and writing her award-winning biography, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (Holt, 1997), as a gift in perpetuity to the library's Special Collections. She has continued to give material to supplement the collection, which is an important resource to scholars of environmental history. The collection has also become a research tool for students at Connecticut College. During the Spring 2000 semester students in the English course "The Natural Environment and the North American Literary Imagination" were given access to material in the Lear/Carson Collection. It was a wonderful opportunity for undergraduate students to use archival resources to write their papers.

If you do not have access to the Internet at home, please call Laurie Deredita at 439-2654 to arrange a demonstration.

## LIBRARY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Every Spring the Friends of the Library awards a scholarship of five hundred dollars to support and encourage the professional development of a Connecticut College graduate who is planning to do graduate study in the fields of library science, book conservation or archival management. The 2000 award went to Alice-Jennifer (AJ) Groome, a graduate of the class of 1986, who will complete her degree in library science at Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science. She plans to specialize in academic librarianship. AJ worked in various positions in Shain Library until the end of 1999.

## UPDATE ON ROGERS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ENDOWMENT FUND

When Brian Rogers retired as Special Collections Librarian in 1998, an endowed fund for the purpose of acquiring more rare books and archival materials for the library's collection was created in his honor. Mark Samuels Lasner '74, book collector and long-time Friend of the Library, promised a lead gift to the Rogers fund on the condition that the college raise \$75,000 from other donors. We are pleased to report that Mark's challenge had been met by January of this year and that the Rogers Fund is already providing a substantial income for new purchases for Special Collections.

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY GATHERING TO MEET LEE HISLE

The Friends of the Library met on May 17, for a lively reception in the Palmer Room. The purpose of the gathering was to thank the Friends for their generous support of Special Collections and to introduce them to Lee Hisle, the new Vice President for Information Services. Everyone who attended was able to chat with Lee and to hear his short talk to the group about his own background growing up on the campus of a small liberal arts college in Kentucky and his early interest in literature and books.

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership, new or renewed, in the Friends of the Library is welcomed at any time of the year. The dues from the Friends of the Library support the purchase of books like Barry Moser's *Holy Bible*, receptions and lectures, the *Newsletter*, and the library scholarship.

If you wish to join at this time, or know of someone who is interested, a check payable to Connecticut College may be mailed to the Friends of the Library, Charles E. Shain Library, Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Avenue, New London, CT 06320. Membership has the following categories: contributing (\$30), associate (\$50), patron (\$100), benefactor (\$300 or more). Dues in the associate, patron and benefactor categories include library borrowing privileges.