



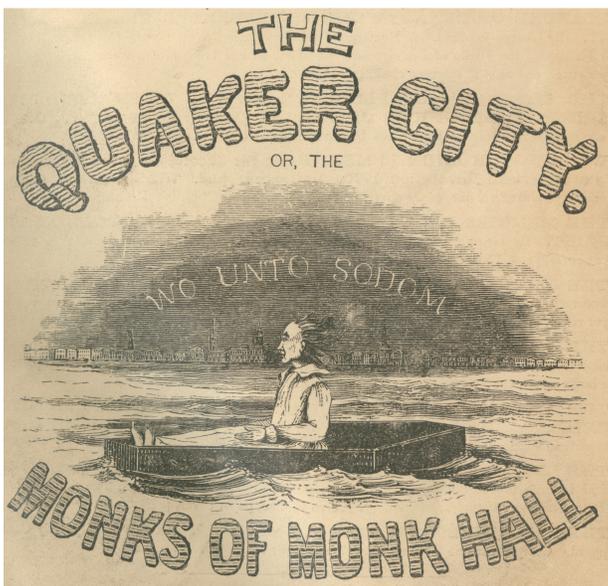
The Library Company OF PHILADELPHIA

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Contact: Debbie Shapiro
Library Company of Philadelphia
www.librarycompany.org; 215-546-3181
dshapiro@librarycompany.org

ORIGINS OF AMERICAN FICTION'S "DARK SIDE" EXPOSED IN NEW GOTHIC EXHIBITION

PHILADELPHIA September 23, 2008: Perhaps the most enlightened, genteel, urbane, and humane of American cities in the first half of the 19th century, Philadelphia spawned a literary tradition of Lurid Crime, Weird Hallucination, and the Brooding Supernatural. Just in time for Halloween, the Library Company's new exhibition "Philadelphia Gothic: Murders, Mysteries, Monsters, & Mayhem Inspire American Fiction, 1798-1854," illuminates this stunning paradox.



Detail from front wrapper of George Lippard, *The Quaker City* (Philadelphia, 1876)

By the 1840s, "The Quaker City" had become a byword for sheer horror! This was the work of three largely forgotten Philadelphia novelists: Charles Brockden Brown, Robert Montgomery Bird, and George Lippard. This exhibition resuscitates these writers, through first editions of their major works and oil portraits that have never before been exhibited, and puts them in the company of Edgar Allan Poe, who absorbed their themes and obsessions while he lived in Philadelphia, the birthplace of the Gothic tradition in American literature.

The exhibition opens to public, free of charge, Wednesday, October 29, 2008 and will run through April 14, 2009 in the Louise Lux-Sions and Harry Sions Gallery at 1314 Locust Street (open from 9:00am to 4:45pm, Monday through Friday).

An opening reception will also take place on October 29th, from 5:00 – 7:00pm, featuring a talk on "The Paradox of Philadelphia Gothic" by Christopher Looby, Professor of English at the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Neil K. Fitzgerald, a literary historian, long-time Library Company shareholder, and guest curator of the exhibition, will also be on hand. The event is free and open to the public, but reservations are requested. Contact Debbie Shapiro at dshapiro@librarycompany.org or 215-546-3181 to RSVP.

Lenders to the exhibition include Brown descendants Pamela Sinkler-Todd and Dr. Fitzgerald, Bird descendant Robert M. Bird, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania Library, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Atwater Kent Museum.

Background Information about the Library Company

The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library concentrating on American society and culture from the 17th through 19th centuries. Free and open to the public, the Library Company houses an extensive non-circulating collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera and works of art. The mission of the Library Company is to preserve, interpret, make available, and augment the valuable materials within our care. We serve a diverse constituency throughout Philadelphia and the nation, offering comprehensive reader services, an internationally renowned fellowship program, an online public access catalog, and regular exhibitions and public programs. Located at 1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, it is open to the public free of charge from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Library Company can be found online at www.librarycompany.org.

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