The Chapter of Perfection: A Neglected Influence on George Lippard

On June 25, 1853, George Lippard wrote to a friend in Cleveland: “My health in general is good, but I have *that within me which passeth show*—in other words, I am sentenced to death by consumption . . .; a year hence your friend will be among those who have been.” Within less than a year his premonition of an early death came true. On February 9, 1854, George Lippard, not yet quite thirty-two-years old, died in Philadelphia. On the day after his death, the *Public Ledger* commented: “He was the author of a number of novels, which have been read probably as extensively as those of any other writer in the country. . . .”

Today Lippard is all but completely forgotten. The general encyclopedias fail to include his name, and while the biographical dictionaries of American authors credit him with writing novels that evince vigor and imagination, they have few other recommendations. Yet Lippard was one of the most original and striking personalities of his time in this country. His books were best sellers, and during the decade between 1844 and 1854 Lippard was the most widely-read writer in the United States. He not only wrote books which far outsold those of any other author of fiction then writing in America, and had his stories reprinted in newspapers throughout the country, but also received the highest rates then paid by American weeklies to any of their writers—Longfellow and Cooper excepted.

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1 [John Bell Bouton], *The Life and Choice Writings of George Lippard* (New York, 1855), 76.
Lippard's style was heavily criticized even in his own day. Written in haste, his works contain the ingredients that would appeal to the uncritical reading public: "tangled heaps of seductions and catastrophes, plots, murders, rescues and revenge." Overloaded by all the trappings of worn-out Gothic romance—hooded villains, menaced maidens with snow-white bosoms, floating coffins—the plots often become unintelligible.

His most famous novel, *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, written in 1844 when Lippard was twenty-two, was a publishing phenomenon. In less than a year more than 60,000 copies were sold and even after Lippard's death, the book was said to be selling at the rate of 30,000 copies a year. A pirated version was published in London, and in 1847 there even appeared a German translation by Friedrich Gerstäcker, a writer of considerable repute at the time.

The sensational nature of this novel played no small part in making it so popular. Joseph Jackson has said of *The Quaker City*: "For pure, unadulterated villainy probably no novel has produced its equal." Lippard's book raised a storm of controversy and the author was heavily criticized for its immorality. The press, by attacks and vindications, kept up the popular excitement, and the close similarity of an incident in the novel to a recent tragic event in Philadelphia only increased interest shown in the work. Besides this tragic incident, Lippard included shocking revelations concerning prominent Philadelphians, based on his own knowledge and suspicions about Philadelphia society. After the reading public had realized that Lippard drew his plot from real life, the book became the talk of the town. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a violent reaction to this "exposé" of a supposedly reputable and staid community.

In the preface to the twenty-seventh edition of *The Quaker City*, Lippard felt it necessary to defend himself against the charges of immorality by stating the motives which impelled him to write this book:

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6 Butterfield, 286.
7 Ibid., 287.
8 Ibid.
9 Bouton, 27.
10 Jackson, 385.
11 Ibid., 384–385.
I determined to write a book which should describe all the phases of a corrupt social system, as manifested in the city of Philadelphia. . . . My motive in its composition was . . . destitute of any ideas of sensualism. . . .

Would to God that the evils recorded in these pages were not based upon facts! Would to God that the experience of my life had not impressed me so vividly with the colossal vices . . . presented in the social system of the Large City in the Nineteenth Century. . . . If you discover a chapter, a page, or a line that conflicts with the great idea of Human Brotherhood promulgated by the Redeemer, I ask you with all my soul to reject that chapter, that passage, that line. At the same time remember the idea which impelled me to produce the book. Remember that my life, from the age of sixteen up to twenty-five was one perpetual battle with hardships and difficulty . . . such as rarely is recorded in the experience of childhood or manhood.\(^\text{12}\)

This preoccupation with exposing wrongs and correcting social injustices pervades all of Lippard's works. He considered literature to be of value only when it aimed at effecting social reforms. All other literature was, according to Lippard, "good for nothing at all."\(^\text{13}\) It is therefore not surprising that he implemented his strong feelings on a practical level by founding a philanthropic organization called The Brotherhood of the Union, which was a socialistic religious fraternity. From its inception in 1849 to the beginning of the Civil War, it was one of the strongest orders in the country.\(^\text{14}\)

Critics repeatedly point out Lippard's "decidedly Marxian theories" but, at the same time, they emphasize the fact that there was only a very slight chance, if any at all, of Lippard's being influenced by Marx.\(^\text{15}\) We know that Lippard was acquainted with European socialism. He read Charles Fourier, and spoke with understanding of Louis Blanc and the poet-reformer Michelet. He also admired the humanitarian novels of Eugène Sue and Charles Dickens.\(^\text{16}\) However, in an article entitled "George Lippard and the Secret Brotherhood," Roger Butterfield states that there is no reason to believe that Lippard was unduly influenced by "imported thinking." Butter-

\(^{12}\) Bouton, 18–19.

\(^{13}\) Butterfield, 290.

\(^{14}\) *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, III, 734.


\(^{16}\) Butterfield, 291.
field feels that Lippard's rebellious temperament was a local product whose roots can be found in the events of his early life.\textsuperscript{17}

It is quite true that events in early life exerted a lasting influence on Lippard's thinking. They are found as recurring themes in almost all of his works. That these experiences exerted a profound influence on Lippard throughout his life has been correctly pointed out by the critics, but not one of them has seen the important connection between the historical background of the Wissahickon Creek near Germantown, Pennsylvania, in whose vicinity Lippard spent most of his youth, and the "socialistic theories" he was to expound later on. Not even Joseph Jackson, who, judging by the title of his article, "George Lippard: Misunderstood Man of Letters," professed to understand Lippard better than most commentators, has seen this connection.\textsuperscript{18} The social injustices which Lippard experienced in his childhood undoubtedly left their mark upon him. He says so himself in the preface to the edition of *The Quaker City* mentioned earlier. But this youthful encounter with social injustice does not give us any clue to the intellectual forces at work in the formation of Lippard's peculiar brand of, what might be termed, "Christian socialism." It merely provides the reason for Lippard's initial receptivity to socialistic ideas.

Let us turn to the history of the Wissahickon and the tales and legends surrounding it in order to discover the inspiration for many of Lippard's ideas, for it was on the banks of the Wissahickon that a group of German mystics under the leadership of Johannes Kelpius founded a religious fraternity known by its members as the Chapter of Perfection.\textsuperscript{19} Although this fraternity had ceased to exist before Lippard's time, the religious and social tenets of both the Chapter and Lippard indicate that important intellectual connections exist between them. To establish the validity of this hypothesis, ideas common to both Kelpius' monastic community and Lippard's works

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Jackson, 376-391.

\textsuperscript{19} "Most writers erroneously call the Kelpius Brotherhood the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, a name derived from Revelation, Chapter twelve, verse six, 'And the woman fled into the wilderness...'. There is no evidence that the Brethren ever used that name themselves. However, they did use the name of Chapter of Perfection." Andrew Steinmetz, "Kelpius, The Hermit of the Wissahickon," *American-German Review*, VII, No. 6 (August, 1941), 9.
need to be pointed out to demonstrate that Lippard not only knew about the Chapter of Perfection and its ideals, but also believed in those ideals sufficiently to try to implement them on a practical level in his Brotherhood of the Union, as well as identifying them closely with the events of the American Revolution, thus creating his own mythology around the figure of George Washington. Because the connection between Lippard and Kelpius has never been suggested before, it will be necessary to treat the background of both men.

Johannes Kelpius, the son of Georg Kelp, a Lutheran pastor, was born in 1673 in the vicinity of Densdorf in Transylvania. After his father's death in 1685 Johannes was sent to the university at Altdorf, then a suburb of Nürnberg, to complete his studies, and in 1689, at the age of sixteen, he was honored with the title of Magister, or, as it is stated in the old records of the former university "der freien Künste und Weltweisheit Doctor."

The period in which Kelpius grew up was one of spiritual unrest in German theological circles. The agitation was largely brought about by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), who advocated a system of personal and practical piety, having as its central principle: "That Christianity was first of all life, and that the strongest proof of the truth of its doctrine was to be found in the religious experience of believing." Organizations were formed which became known as collegia pietatis, seminars for the cultivation of evangelical morality, and the individual members became known as Pietists. Soon these collegia became homes for mystics of every kind throughout Germany.

One of the most important centers of Pietism was the city of Erfurth, which became a rallying point for students, mystics, and Pietists from all parts of Germany. As Pietism spread in Germany, special edicts were issued against it which forbade public and private assemblies of Pietists, as well as the dissemination of their literature.

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 49.
23 Ibid., 51.
24 Ibid.
Among those who were attracted to Pietism was Johann Jacob Zimmermann of Bietigheim near Stuttgart. Zimmermann was a mathematician and astronomer of European distinction. In 1694 he lost his position as pastor of a Württemberg Lutheran church owing to his prediction of a coming millenium revealed to him through astronomical calculations.\textsuperscript{25} In 1690 or 1691 Zimmermann went to Erfurth where he completed his plan of organizing a Chapter of Perfection which he intended to implement in the New World. Influenced by the teachings of Johannes Tauler, Jacob Böhme, and Spener, the Chapter sought to restore true piety to the existing Church without creating a new religion.\textsuperscript{26}

During his stay in Altdorf, Kelpius befriended his tutor, Johannes Fabricius, a famed scholar and outstanding Pietist. Through him Kelpius became acquainted with Zimmermann, whose assistant he later became. Zimmermann did not live to see his plans fulfilled. He died in 1693 in Rotterdam, on the eve of embarkation for England.\textsuperscript{27} Kelpius was then elected leader of the Chapter of Perfection. In August, 1693, the Kelpius fraternity arrived in London and remained there until February 25th of the following year. During this stay in London close contact was maintained with the Philadelphia Society, which had been organized by Jane Leade and John Cordage for the study of Böhme's works.\textsuperscript{28}

After almost four months on board ship, the Kelpius group finally arrived in Philadelphia on June 23, 1694. From there the group walked the six miles to Germantown, where one of its most influential citizens arranged for their sustenance until they could establish themselves on the Wissahickon. The tract of land where the group settled was located on what is still known as the "Ridge," which was believed to be the highest point of land in the vicinity of Germantown. It is part of a range of hills which forms the rugged valley through which the Wissahickon flows, not far from where its waters join the Schuylkill. There the Brethren cleared the land and erected a log house, called the Tabernacle. It was forty feet square, had a large room for religious services, a schoolroom, and forty cells

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{26} Steinmetz, 9.
\textsuperscript{27} Sachse, 61.
\textsuperscript{28} Steinmetz, 8.
for the Brethren. (The Chapter of Perfection believed that the num-
bers four and forty were especially significant. The membership, for
example, was always limited to an exact forty brethren.)

Halfway down the steep hill there is a small natural cave which Kelpius
enlarged and used for contemplation and prayer. Near the cave
flows a spring which is still known today as the Hermit's, or Kelpius',
Spring.

The hermits devoted most of their time to prayer and religious
services in the Tabernacle. Services were open to the public, and in
the schoolroom children as well as adults were welcome. The mem-
bers of the Chapter desired to live in religious harmony with all
men and sought to look after the spiritual welfare of the general
community, while perfecting themselves for the coming millenium.

Some of the more advanced members of the Chapter are said to
have studied Hermetic Arts, "not, however, in search of metallic
transmutation but rather the Elixir of Life," which could be used
to provide remedies for alleviation of human suffering. Other mem-
ers cast horoscopes or prepared astrological talismans. According
to Julius Sachse, astronomy also attracted much attention. In the
primitive observatory that surmounted the Tabernacle nightly vig-
ils were maintained for a celestial phenomenon that would signal the
approaching millenium. Because of these strange activities of the
hermits on the Ridge, the community has always been surrounded
by a veil of mystery. Many gruesome tales of occult rites and cere-
monies were recounted by the naturally superstitious population in
the vicinity until some of these tales were accepted as facts.

After the death of Kelpius in 1708, the Brotherhood either slowly
disintegrated or was absorbed by the Ephrata Cloisters on the
Coalico. Today all vestiges of the original Hermits on the Ridge
have disappeared.

29 Sachse, 37-42.
30 Ibid., 70-73.
31 Ibid., 78-80.
32 Arthur Edward Waite, The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross (New Hyde Park, N. Y.,
1961), 609.
33 Ibid., 610.
34 Sachse, 71.
36 Steinmetz, 12.
37 Sachse, 202.
Growing up in such historically colorful surroundings evidently exercised a powerful effect on Lippard’s impressionable young mind. His ancestors had been among the earliest German settlers of Pennsylvania. Lippard’s father, Daniel, was a descendent of Johann Libbert, one of the Palatines who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1736 when Kelpius had been dead but twenty-eight years and Conrad Matthäi, the last of the Ridge Hermits, was yet to live twelve years. It is most probable, therefore, that Johann Libbert was familiar with the stories told about the religious brethren on the Wissahickon.

George Lippard was born on a farm near Yellow Springs in Chester County on April 10, 1822. At the age of three or four he was practically abandoned by his parents. George was left with his German-speaking grandfather in Germantown in whose vicinity some of the most tragic events of the Revolution had taken place. Not far away flows the Wissahickon, whose beauties and historic past Lippard was to glorify in his novels and legends. John Bell Bouton, Lippard’s first biographer, calls the Wissahickon “one of the best tutors of his infancy.”

When he was twenty Lippard found work writing sketches about life in Philadelphia on the staff of a sensational daily, The Spirit of the Times. He soon made a name for himself as a journalist with his lively essays distinguished for their high humor and cutting satire. Very soon Lippard’s influence was reflected in the newspaper’s rapidly rising circulation figures. In less than six months’ time Lippard overworked himself, and for reasons of health was compelled to quit his position. After a few months’ rest, he took up his pen again and

38 Jackson, 377. Jackson actually calls him John Libbert rather than Johann. There is some question in my mind as to whether this information given by Jackson is correct. According to Daniel Rupp’s A Collection of Thirty Thousand Names of Immigrants in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1876), 101, the only Libbert who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1736 was a Jacob Libbert. He is said to have arrived on Sept. 1, 1736, on board the ship Harle. Jacob Libbert is also listed as being a native of the Palatinate. I have checked other years as well and have not come across any other persons by the name of Libbert. Libbert’s name was later Anglicized to Lippard.

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Bouton, 7.
42 Jackson, 377.
43 Butterfield, 291.
44 Bouton, 10.
wrote a European tale called "Philippe de Agramont" and sold it to the Saturday Evening Post for fifteen dollars. He had started upon his professional career as an author.  

In 1847 Lippard was at the height of his success and was already regarded as a kind of literary madcap, a "young petrel who swooped, gyrated and cut his circles over the roofs and chimney tops of Philadelphia, sailing up the Wissahickon and down the Brandywine, now scouting its romantic history and now foolishness and vice." Even so, Philadelphians must have been surprised by Lippard's latest act of nonconformity. On a moonlit evening in May, 1847, a fantastic ceremony took place on the banks of the Wissahickon. On the summit of a huge rock, known as Mom Rinker's Rock, overlooking the wild waters, George Lippard and Rose Newman were married by the Reverend C. Chauncey Burr. Because Lippard's sister was the only witness, speculations soon arose about the nature of the ceremonies, which some people claimed were primitive Indian rites. This strange event left many people puzzled, but John Bell Bouton writes:

It was meet that he [Lippard] should be married there—on a spot consecrated by his early joys and sorrows... He had taken his first lessons of nature amid its [Wissahickon] grand and gloomy scenery. He had stretched himself under the huge trees that shade its waves, and dreamed strange dreams of future fame and a humanity to be helped and gladdened by his labors.

Lippard's own admission of indebtedness to the Wissahickon and its history was expressed a year after his marriage in the prologue of his latest novel:

A Dream has been lingering about my heart for years—a dream whose lights and shadows, strong contrasts and deep passions, I have found

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45 Jackson, 379.
46 American Authors 1600-1900, 468.
47 Bouton, 46. Rose Newman was said to be "the daughter of respectable parents, residing in Philadelphia." The Rev. C. Chauncey Burr was a very good friend of Lippard and defended him from charges of immorality and sensationalism. See his introductory essay to Legends of the American Revolution (Philadelphia, 1847).
49 Bouton, 46.
embodied, in actual form, in the rocks and hills, the streamlet and the gorge of the Wissahikon. That Dream I have attempted to put on paper, and called it "Paul Ardenheim."

Paul Ardenheim, The Monk of Wissahikon (1848) purports to reveal the secret history of the American Revolution. The plot traces a series of peculiar incidents which connect the Revolution with events that took place in Germany during the seventeenth century, and George Washington with the Monk of Wissahickon. Lippard does not claim that the incidents themselves occurred at precisely the time and place set down by him, but he does claim that they are "true to the springs of human action" and seems clearly to allude to the Chapter of Perfection on the Wissahikon when he says that his novel: "covers ground hitherto untrodden—the influence which the German mind manifested in the case of the early settlers has exerted upon the history of Pennsylvania, and the cause of human progress."

In Paul Ardenheim Lippard not only incorporates many of the ideas of the Chapter of Perfection, but also includes many of the superstitions that surrounded the Hermits on the Ridge. Dr. Christopher Witt, an Englishman who joined the Kelpius community in 1704, was reputed to be a magus or diviner and was known to the populace as the Hex-Master of Spook Hill. Always accompanying Dr. Witt was a mulatto, who acted as Witt's servant and who was regarded by the population as a spirit sent from the underworld at the request of his master. Both Dr. Witt and his black servant have their faithful counterparts in Lippard's Paul Ardenheim. Astronomy and the Elixir of Life, which are closely associated with the Chapter of Perfection, also play an important part in Lippard's novel.

Lippard claims to base his story on several manuscripts written either in a secret code or in German. Although the main manuscript

51 Ibid.
52 Steinmetz, 10.
53 Sachse, 413.
54 Dr. Witt and his black servant correspond to Isaac van Behme (alias Sir Ralph Wyttonhurst) and his servant Black David (alias Ranulphe Lord Mount Sepulchre, alias the Great Fiend, alias Rolof Sener).
is concerned with Rosicrucianism, the many Rosicrucian elements that occur throughout the novel cannot be traced directly to Kelpius. According to Sachse, the Tabernacle of the Chapter of Perfection was surmounted by a watchtower and observatory from which the Rosicrucian symbol, an encircled white cross, pointed toward the East. He further claims that the Chapter used Rosicrucian manuscripts now owned by him. Arthur Waite, author of *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (1961), is rather sceptical of this. Having studied the tenets of the Chapter of Perfection and having searched in vain for any characteristic Rosicrucian vestiges in the letters of Kelpius, Waite concludes that the Chapter was not Rosicrucian, although some of the members may have belonged to the Rosicrucian Order. At least one member, Doctor Witt, was thought to be a Rosicrucian. In Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia* we read that Dr. Witt "was a student and a believer in all the learned absurdities and marvellous pretensions of the Rosicrucian philosophy." Dr. Witt's activities and repute may have led Lippard to conclude that the other members of the Chapter of Perfection were also Rosicrucians. Sachse's book, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, did not appear until 1895, and it is possible that he reached his conclusions about the supposed Rosicrucian nature of the Chapter after reading Lippard's *Paul Ardenheim*.

It is difficult even to begin a simple plot outline of *Paul Ardenheim* without resorting to chronological charts and family trees. I shall therefore attempt to convey to the reader only that part of the plot pertinent to what Lippard believed to be the contributions made by the German settlers—that is, the contributions to human progress made by the members of the religious community on the Wissahickon.

The crucial part of the novel is set forth in seven chapters which Lippard devotes to a German manuscript supposedly written by a Brother Anselm. Anselm, we later learn, was one of the original members of the group who came to America from Germany with Paul Ardenheim's father. Each chapter deals with one aspect of what Lippard evidently believes to constitute Rosicrucianism. The first chapter takes place in a cave in Bohemia where followers of

55 Sachse, 8–10.
56 Waite, 606.
John Huss have sought refuge from religious persecution. The dominant thought expressed in this section is that Jesus, as a son of toil, is the only redeemer of the poor.\footnote{Paul Ardenheim, 287-290.}

The second chapter retells a legend from the tenth century. A heretic is kept prisoner in a Bohemian monastery for having preached communism to the serfs. He claims that the day will come "when there shall be nor Priest, nor Lord . . . nor Church. Then shall . . . all men be brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of the Poor." After three years, life and freedom are offered to the heretic on the condition that he use his considerable artistic skill in molding a gold image of Christ. He sculpts, however, an image of Jesus in lead, "a Sullen Spectre scowling upon the agony and anguish of mankind . . . not as he walked in the sands of Palestine, full of Godlike love for Man" but as he is imprisoned in the hollow forms, the blasphemous ritual of the Church. According to tradition there was concealed within this leaden image a bright and beautiful statue of Christ in gold, which would burst out of the leaden shell with the advent of new times.\footnote{Ibid., 290-302.} The third chapter dealing with the manuscript tells of the appearance of the lead image on various occasions in the history of the world.\footnote{Ibid., 303-305.}

Chapter four, entitled "The Parliament of the World," recounts the secret meeting of the Congress of Brotherhood in a mountain cavern in Germany during the 1620's. In the possession of the members of the Congress is the lead image of Christ. The members of the Congress are eight in number, all ancestors of their more famous descendants. The Supreme Chief is Leon Buonaparte of Corsica. Meeting with him are the Seven Elders, the representatives from different countries around the world. France is represented by Robespierre. England's representative is Lawrence Washington, who is about to depart for the New World because his native land is no longer a land of free men. Anselm, a peasant and author of the manuscript, represents Germany.\footnote{Ibid., 305-311.}

In the fifth chapter the history of the Rosy Cross is recounted by Anselm. Anselm speaks of "a Secret Order extending over all the earth, and dating its origin back to that dim time, when history
becomes a fable, and chronology a shadow.” Yet all the work done by this tremendous organization has so far been in vain. True brotherhood has yet to be realized. A new effort must be made. The divine idea of brotherhood must be embodied in a form that will speak directly to the hearts of men. It cannot be embodied by philosophers, priests, or kings who “do not live in the same world” with the millions of mankind. The principle of brotherhood must be embodied in the life of a laborer, in Jesus, the son of a carpenter, who said that: “religion consisted not in priests or kings, nor in churches . . . but simply in loving one another.” Anselm will even sacrifice the belief in the oneness of Christ and God if it should prove to be a barrier to achieving true brotherhood.  

The next two chapters tell of the future of the Brotherhood. Alluding to William Penn, Anselm prophesies that less than fifty years from the day of their meeting “God will send an Apostle of Peace to plant the Olive Branch of Brotherhood on the shores of the New World.” That same God will send a Deliverer in 1775 to assert the sanctity of the New World. Before adjourning, the Congress elects Anselm new Supreme Chief. The next Supreme Chief will be chosen in 1777 when the Congress meets again in the New World.

For the remainder of the story it is necessary to go outside of the manuscript. In 1755 Brother Anselm befriends Count Gaspard-Michael who lives in the Palatinate. After the death of the Count’s wife, a voice of God tells him to sail with Anselm to the New World, where they arrive in 1756. There, in the wilderness of America, they are to await the coming of the Deliverer. The Count’s son is to be brought up in the wilderness, far removed from the toil and vanity of the world; only thus will he receive the proper training to assume the position of Supreme Chief of the Brotherhood in 1777. In America the son is given the name of Paul Ardenheim for he is to remain unaware of his noble lineage. In this manner Lippard explains the background of Paul Ardenheim and his father, known respectively as the Monk of Wissahickon, and Priest of the Wissahickon.

Paul’s father predicts that the Deliverer will come at the third hour after midnight of January 1, 1775. At the prophesied time a

62 Ibid., 311–318.
63 Ibid., 318–336.
stranger, drawn by some mysterious force, arrives at the cabin on the Wissahickon. In an elaborate ceremony the stranger, who remains nameless, is told of his singular mission in life and is anointed Deliverer of the New World by Paul Ardenheim's father. The stranger is none other than George Washington.

Lippard did not write systematically and never hesitated to freely add his own "facts" to the historical facts. It is therefore not surprising that neither Paul Ardenheim nor his father can be said to be modeled very closely on any one particular member of Kelpius' Chapter of Perfection. Several factors, however, indicate an unmistakable parallel between Paul Ardenheim and Kelpius. The locale in which Lippard places Ardenheim corresponds closely to Kelpius' environment. An illustration facing the title page of Paul Ardenheim depicts a cabin on a hill as well as a cave with a body of water near it, which could either be the Wissahickon or Kelpius' Spring. This observation by itself is inconclusive since there were other hermits on the Ridge before and after the death of Kelpius. However, only Kelpius' family background approximates that of Paul Ardenheim. Because the Kelpius family was elevated to knighthood with the predicate "von Sternberg," Kelpius was sometimes referred to as the Baron. This fact about his ancestry was widely known by the local populace. In Watson's Annals of Philadelphia we learn of Kelpius that: "tradition says he was noble." Paul Ardenheim also carries the title of Baron.

There are, however, more important parallels existing between the Kelpius Fraternity and the Brotherhood which Lippard depicts in his novel Paul Ardenheim. The members of the Chapter of Perfection had come to the New World to escape the religious intolerance of the European "Babel." The Brethren were convinced that they had to live in celibacy, apart from the vices and temptations of the world, in order to prepare to receive revelations which could only be imparted in the solitude of the wilderness. This conviction is set forth by Kelpius in his discourse on "The Threesfold Wilderness State." Although the Brethren had primarily come to America to
await the coming millenium, they realized that the calculations might prove incorrect. If this should be the case, the community’s members would go out among men and work for the regeneration of true brotherhood in the world. It was also one of the chief objects of Kelpius to bring about a union of all the various German sects that existed in Pennsylvania, and to unite them in one universal Christian Church. The members of the Chapter desired to live in love and religious harmony with all men, and to accomplish this they refused to be identified with any one religious sect.

In Lippard’s novel, Paul Ardenheim is also found in the New World leading the life of a celibate. His mind has been shaped in the solitude of the Wissahickon where he has lived as far back as he can remember. He is also destined to play an important part in the regeneration of brotherhood. He will become Supreme Chief of the Congress of Brotherhood which will proclaim a religion without doctrine, held together only by the common belief that freedom and brotherhood are embodied in the figure of Jesus Christ. The belief in the coming millenium is reflected in the prophecy that a deliverer will appear in the darkest hour of despotism and free the New World from the tyranny of kings. The appearance of Washington will mark the beginning epoch in the regeneration of all mankind: “upon the Truth or Falsehood of this Deliverer ... hangs the destiny of mankind, for at least three centuries.” In Europe, France will be chosen by God to fight the first battle in the cause of man. Inspired by Paul Ardenheim, Robespierre is destined to continue the regenerative process started by Washington. But the French Revolution will not be the last revolution. Further revolutions are predicted for 1848 or 1884, and the Epoch of Brotherhood among men will be achieved in 1890.

In *Paul Ardenheim* Lippard has created his own mythology around the figure of George Washington. The Wissahickon, whose “every nook of the wild-wood has its tale of ancient days,” provided Lippard with an ideal source and background for the creation of his mythology. There legends existed of both the American Revolution and the model community of brotherhood on the Ridge. By

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69 Paul Ardenheim, 320.
70 Ibid., 536.
71 Ibid., 322.
72 Bouton, 100.
interweaving the lore of the Wissahickon with the events of the Revolution, Lippard succeeds in making Washington a central figure around whom he groups all of his ideas of freedom and brotherhood. Because Lippard primarily wrote to express ideas and little else, it is understandable that he devotes more pages to the treatment of Washington than any other writer of fiction up to the present day. Lippard seems to regard Washington as a demigod. A brief look at Washington’s ancestry and youth as Lippard described them in his works will confirm this judgment.

In 1792 the historical Washington was asked to fill in an incomplete genealogical table. He compiled one which traced his ancestors as far back as 1657. Washington was unable to go beyond that date. Many attempts were subsequently made to trace Washington’s ancestry further back. In 1879 the fantastic researches of Albert Welles led to the publication of a Pedigree and History of the Washington Family from Odin, B.C. 70, to General Washington. It is doubtful whether Lippard, even with his imaginative mind, could have approved of the heathen Norse deity as an ancestor of Washington. In the first legend of Washington and His Men (1849), titled “The Last of the Washingtons,” Lippard gives his own highly original account of Washington’s ancestry, going back only as far as the fifteenth century and telling of the secret marriage in Yorkshire of a noble woman to a peasant named Washington. Out of this symbolic union comes a son, Lawrence Washington, whose name Lippard calls nobler than “all the names inscribed on the . . . scroll of British Heraldry.” To Lippard he is of noble lineage because the blood in his veins did not course in the veins of royalty but in that of a peasant. Shortly after the birth of Lawrence Washington both his parents die; the mother in a convent, the father in the dungeon of a monastery. He had been guilty of marrying someone of a higher station and preaching heresy. Before he dies an old parchment is found on him which was inscribed: “THE SPIRIT OF JEHOVAH IS UPON ME TO PREACH GOOD TIDINGS TO THE POOR.”

75 Ibid., 496.
The second legend, “The Mother’s Prayer,” takes place in February, 1732. “Mary the Mother,” as Lippard calls Mary Washington, hears a voice from heaven, and, in a dream composed of a succession of vivid pictures, it is revealed to her how she can influence the destiny of her son. He must grow up in the wilderness, for only there will the heart of the boy “ripen into virtuous manhood.”

Further legends tell of Washington’s upbringing in the wilderness between the ages of seventeen and twenty. There he receives a broader education than schools can ever give. Alone, with only the family Bible at his side, Washington communes with nature and God and has prophetic dreams about the coming of a Deliverer of the New World. But, as we have already seen, Washington remains unaware of his destiny until the Priest of Wissahickon tells him of his mission and anoints him Deliverer of the New World.

Even on a superficial level it becomes obvious that Lippard’s mythologized George Washington is not only a Christ figure but that it may also owe much in its conception to another prototype, namely Kelpius. Both spring of noble lineage—even if only partially—yet both identify with the common people in whose service they place themselves. Washington, like Kelpius, is seen essentially as a religious leader serving religious goals. Both spend part of their life in the wilderness: Kelpius, to await and prepare for the coming millenium; Washington, to receive the proper education for his role as Deliverer of the New World, to be anointed such by the Priest of Wissahickon and then to bring about the fulfillment of the prophesied millenium by ushering in a new age, an age of true brotherhood among all men. One rather significant and curious fact, disregarded up to now, might explain Lippard’s reason for interweaving the lore of the Wissahickon with the events of the Revolution. As previously mentioned, the Chapter of Perfection believed the numbers four and forty to be of special significance. Steeped in the legends surrounding the Wissahickon, Lippard might have known this. Whether he did or not, the startling coincidence remains that Lippard’s very strong beliefs in the American ideals of 1776 could be supported and argued for by no one better than a person who believed in the ideals of the Kelpius fraternity. Thus the American

77 Ibid., 12.
78 Ibid., 15-20.
Revolution could be regarded as heralding the beginning of the millenium, and to a follower of the Chapter of Perfection the date would be unquestionable proof: 1776 divided by 4 is —!

The mythologized figure of Washington does not only play an important role in Lippard’s works, but also in his Brotherhood of the Union. The idea of a Brotherhood of the Union was an early one with Lippard. He grew up with it and it was one of the cherished dreams of his youth. In *The Nazarene; or, The Last of the Washingtons*, which appeared in 1846, Lippard states his intentions in writing this book: “it will be my object to illustrate this principle: The immense good which may be accomplished by a Brotherhood, who, rejecting all sectarian dogmas, take for their rule of action, those great truths of Christ our Saviour on which all sects agree.”

The novel was to remain a fragment, but the Brotherhood became a reality in 1849. It was a secret organization which worked for the cause of labor, but did not seek to array labor against capital. Brotherhood of the Union meant: “The Union of the good against the bad . . . the Union of the Workers against the Idlers who do not work, but who do steal the fruits of labor’s toils. . . .” It was an “Association of workers for their own good, until every worker is a capitalist.”

Lippard devoted much time to writing the ritual of the Brotherhood. In 1849 he thoroughly immersed himself in the study of the lore of the Masons, Odd Fellows, Illuminati, Rosicrucians and other mystic orders. In July, one month after the disclosure of the founding of the Brotherhood, Lippard boasted that it was the only secret society in the world which had “preserved its purity through the long night of ages. . . .” He described the rituals he wrote for it as “the most copious . . . of any secret society in the world . . . not one word or line of [which] but was framed and penned by me.”

Although Lippard was both a Mason and an Odd Fellow at the time of his death, he believed his own organization to be superior.

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79 Bouton, 58.
81 Bouton, 60.
82 Butterfield, 297.
to all the other orders of that kind, because it alone struck at the
very root of the evils that had oppressed the human race for so long.
He called this organization the only American order in the world
because it alone was imbued with the great idea of America: i.e.,
that the New World was given by God to the laborers of the world as
their own domain, and because the order regarded the New World
as the agent chosen by God for the regeneration of the oppressed
of all nations and races. Through the Brotherhood of the Union
Lippard attempted in his own way to bring about the millenium
which he defined in a single brief sentence: “When every man in the
world looks to the welfare of his brother, then the Lord Christ will
appear on the earth, not in bodily shape, but in the happiness of
the whole family of man.”

As the members of the Illuminati Society were given names from
classical antiquity, so Lippard made his Brotherhood peculiarly
American by giving names of illustrious Americans from the time
of the Revolution to several officers of the subordinate circles, such
as Chief Jefferson and Chief Franklin. Lippard, of course, reserved
the title of Chief Washington for himself.

Although he evidently believed the Chapter of Perfection to be-
long to the Rosicrucian Order, he did not emulate it in his Brother-
hood of the Union as much as one might have been led to believe.
Nevertheless, since a Rosicrucian Order was not formally organized
in America until 1858, there is a possibility that Lippard, through
his works, might have been influential in its founding.

Along with Lippard’s intense patriotism, he remained deeply
aware and proud of his German ancestry. The sequence in which he
names foreign countries is indicative of his attitude toward them.
Germany and France are always mentioned first, with England,
“that Carthage of Modern History,” never failing to come last.
Lippard admires France and always praises the tri-coloured flag as
the emblem of hope and promise, yet he loves Germany more. For
it was in Germany that the idea of brotherhood, as embodied in the

86 Bouton, 60.
87 George Lippard, The Man with the Mask. A Sequel to the Memoirs of a Preacher
88 Bouton, 61.
89 George Lippard, Legends of Mexico (Philadelphia, 1847), 13.
figure of Christ, was kept alive during times of despotism and oppression. Later, this idea of brotherhood was transplanted to the New World by the German settlers of whom Lippard wrote:

It is true, they were superstitious, these early settlers of Pennsylvania—believed somewhat fervently in astrology, magic, witchcraft—were imbued with all the mysticism of their Fatherland—and yet with all, they had an unyielding hope in Man, a childlike faith in God.\(^{90}\)

Within the very heart of Germantown there is a cemetery in whose bounds lie the remains of Dr. Christopher Witt, the Hex-Master of Spook Hill, and his mulatto servant. There also are buried Daniel Geissler, the \textit{famulus} of Kelpius, and several other members of the original Kelpius party who died in Germantown.\(^{91}\) In this same cemetery were interred Lippard’s forefathers, a fact hitherto unknown. Nowhere does Lippard express greater indebtedness to the ideals of the Chapter of Perfection than in his description of this cemetery:

It is to me a holy thought, that here my bones will one day repose. For here, in a lengthening line, extend the tombstones sacred to the memory of my fathers, far back in time. . . . In every flower that wildly blooms there, you find written: “This soil is sacred from the creeds. Here rests the Indian and the white man; here sleep in one sod the Catholic, Presbyterian, Quaker, Methodist, Lutheran, Mennonist, Deist, Infidel. Here, creeds forgotten, all are men and women again, and not one but is there a simple child of God.

This graveyard was established by men of all creeds, more than a century ago. May that day be darkness when creeds shall enter this rude gate. Better that man had never been born who shall pollute this soil with the earthly clamor of sect.\(^{92}\)

The Chapter of Perfection, this model community of brotherhood on the Wissahickon thus seems to have influenced George Lippard

\(^{90}\) Paul Ardenheim, 1.

\(^{91}\) Sachse, 419–420.

\(^{92}\) Bouton, 8–9. For proof that Lippard’s forefathers and members of the Kelpius community are both buried there, I give these two articles: Peter D. Keyser, “Inscriptions in the Upper Germantown Burying-Ground,” \textit{PMHB}, IX (1885), 82–88, which lists the members of the Lippard family buried in that cemetery; Keyser’s article, “A History of the Upper Germantown Burying-Ground,” appearing in the same magazine, VIII (1884), 414–426. This latter article proves that it is the burying ground of Christopher Witt and other members of the Kelpius fraternity.
profundely. In Paul Ardenheim, The Monk of Wissahikon, Lippard expresses the same dream that brought the Kelpius fraternity to the New World, the dream of a coming millenium, of an age of true brotherhood among all men. Although the novel with its many Gothic elements has been called the most improbable book in the world by its author, it contains much truth, for as Lippard explains: “Everything great in science, history or religion has at its first view been the most improbable thing in the world. These are certain truths that cannot be told, unless linked with the charm of fiction.”

*University of Colorado*

*Carsten E. Seecamp*

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93 Paul Ardenheim, 10.
94 Ibid., 534.
95 The Nazarene, 7.