The first impulse of the imagination is always to combine in the object all the elements which lie together in the mind, to project them indiscriminately into a single conception of reality, enriched with as many qualities as there are phases and values in our experience. But these phases have diverse origins and do not permanently hang together. It becomes after a while impossible to keep them attached to a single image; they have to be distributed according to their true order and connections, some objectified into a physical universe of mechanism and law, others built into a system of rational objects, into a hierarchy of logical and moral ideas. So the lovely pantheon of the Greeks yielded in time to analysis and was dissolved into abstract science and conscious fable. So, too, the body and soul of later religions may come to be divided, when they render back to earth what they contain of positive history and to the heaven of man’s indomitable idealism what they contain of aspiration and hope.1

Throughout the western world, recent years have witnessed a noticeable revival of interest in myth in general and, in particular, the concept of paradise, perhaps one of the most potent and universal ideas ever to have arisen from the human imagination. It is no surprise that the closing decades of the twentieth century should have experienced such a revival. Movements of spiritual and social regeneration are associated throughout history with periods of actual or potential crisis, and few would deny that the manifold evils of this century have engendered a global mood of futility and disappointment. Recoiling, then, from the apparently insoluble problems of the physical world, people turn instinctively to visions

of a perfect world, one of the small number of myths which, according to Northrop Frye, "outline, as broadly as words can do, humanity's vision of its nature and destiny, its place in the universe, its sense both of inclusion in and exclusion from an infinitely bigger order." In this examination of the myth, I shall argue that the apparent disappearance of paradisaical concern was in fact a shift of mode such that, in terms to be explained later, an Arcadian emphasis was gradually superseded by a Utopian one, with a concomitant increase in ideological potential. I shall further argue that the European discovery of the Americas was of pivotal importance in restoring the concept to the forefront of the imagination and that we are currently witnessing, in the growing ecological movement, the culmination of one aspect of this concern. The study, like Gaul, is divided into three parts: the first paper will serve as an introduction to the historical development of paradise thought in the west; the second will trace the growth of the revitalised paradise myth from the discovery of the Americas to the modern environmentalist and New Age movements; and the third will attempt a cross-cultural overview, identifying the central aspects of the myth and comparing them to their manifestations in other cultural systems.

Although never wholly absent from the abiding central concerns of western culture, the paradisaical idea at least since the Enlightenment, and possibly since the Renaissance, seemed at one level to have been increasingly marginalised, relegated to an intellectual and imaginative periphery. (Here in this limbo it continues to serve out a debased existence as a lazy metaphor for developers and travel agents usually, ironically enough, in connection with new instances of environmental desecration in the tropics. The reasons for the loss of importance of the paradise idea would seem to be readily apparent; in an essay on the history of the myth in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Frank and Fritzie Manzel have shown how:

The biological and anthropological discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries completed the subversion of the Edenic myth — the further back one went the more bestial man appeared, and the idea of a heavenly paradise could

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3Rousseau is clearly a special case, and will be considered at length in the second part of this study.
no longer have a prototype on earth in the beginning of things.\textsuperscript{5}

This process can be thought of as one of the final stages in a gradual erosion of both traditional religious faith and spirituality generally, and its replacement by an equivalent trust in the idea of unending and irreversible scientific progress. (This transition has been studied in fascinating detail and traced back to the Renaissance and beyond by Norman Cohn,\textsuperscript{6} and by Ernest Lee Tuveson.\textsuperscript{7}) This is not to say that the underlying metaphysical structure, or indeed the ontological conception of man, necessarily changed. In the work cited earlier, Frye discusses the great cosmological metaphor of the chain of being, which had dominated western imagination from at least the early Christian centuries:

The same metaphors are there, but the ideologies they have incidentally inspired are dissolving into new ones. The coming of mythical analogies to evolution in the nineteenth century did not change much in this picture [i.e. the chain of being], except that it usually cut off the top [i.e. the angels and God], leaving man, who was assumed to be the highest product of evolution, with nothing above him unless he surpassed himself, as he was urged to do in Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{8}

In the twentieth century, a great rediscovery of the power and appeal of the paradise myth occurred in the sixties, when the empty materialism and selfishness of western culture provoked a truly spiritual revolution among the young. The aims of this revolution were many, diffuse, and often unexpressed, but most of the participants shared in common a profound dissatisfaction with contemporary society and a sincere desire to improve it. In one respect, an attempt was made to redefine the notion of happiness, the pursuit of which (in the United States, at least) was a constitutionally endorsed birthright. (Jefferson, as one of the best-read men of his day, would have used the term in full awareness of its classical heritage, doubtless regretting the linguistic impoverishment by which he only had one noun

\textsuperscript{8}Frye, op. cit., p. 174. The image of the chain of being derived whatever scientific validity it had from a Ptolemaic conception of the universe, and the Copernican paradigm shift enabled Voltaire, among others, to criticise the image as nothing more than a justification of political authority structures; that is, an ideology.
at his disposal compared to the Greeks’ carefully distinguished six.9) Apart from a generalised anti-materialist disgust, faith in scientific progress eventually culminating in a perfect state — a faith that had sustained earlier generations — had been comprehensively destroyed by such scientifically produced horrors as the Holocaust and nuclear arms proliferation. Furthermore, science was clearly unable to respond to the challenges posed by third world poverty, disease and famine. There has since been an attempt to replace this drastic breakdown of faith in scientific progress with the vision of an information age, in which computer technology will improve communication. Access to knowledge will, it is claimed, be enhanced to such a degree that the harmoniously co-operative global village of McLuhan’s more optimistic imaginings lies just around the corner.10 This seems to many people however, to be essentially a case of old wine in new bottles, and Bill McKibben, one of the most eloquent of today’s writers on ecology, has rebuffed the prophets of this electronic apocalypse by emphasising that there are vital areas of human existence that no advance in technology can impinge upon, at least to their betterment:

We believe that we live in the “age of information,” that there has been an information “explosion,” an information “revolution.” While in a certain narrow sense this is the case, in many important ways just the opposite is true. We also live at a moment of deep ignorance, when vital knowledge that humans have always possessed about who we are and where we live seems beyond our reach. An Unenlightenment. An age of missing information.11

The dimension missing, of course, from most paradisaical visions based on scientific or technological progress is that of corresponding inward spiritual development; a mythology based, I would argue, on the individual’s relationship with the natural world around him. Joseph Campbell has written of the existence of two distinct mythological patterns, and his analysis12 suggests why the doctrines and practices of institutionalised Christianity (and, by implication, other religions) were ultimately as unsatisfying as faith in the idea of progress:

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9 They also employed a separate set of six nouns to express the various states of the supplementary emotion of joy.
10 Buckminster Fuller and Alvin Toffler are other recent examples of writers of this persuasion, and their visions may be called Utopian using the terminology suggested below.
12 Strikingly congruent with those insights of Santayana with which I prefaced this discussion.(See Note 1.)
I have become increasingly aware of the fact that there are two entirely different types of mythologies in the world. There are mythologies that emphasise, with more or less force, the sociological situation to which the myth is to be applied. These are socially based mythologies, and they insist on the laws of that social order as being the laws. We find this kind of mythology in the bible. ... [But on the other hand there are the] nature rules [that] live in the human heart. ... The classic example of this mythology is the Dionysian system.\(^\text{13}\)

To the young revolutionaries of the sixties, traditional religion was therefore similarly inadequate, as another rule-bound, socially sanctioned, external system, and large numbers of young people began genuinely to seek for a new spiritual paradigm. Unfortunately, such idealism can be destructively close to ideology, a point I shall return to later in this essay, and this essentially hopeful movement faded sadly out under pressure from both its own internal contradictions and external repression. The very innocence of the movement meant that some of its most valuable characteristics could be appropriated and perverted either by hostile critics with interests in preserving the status quo, or by cynical market manipulators.\(^\text{14}\) The disgust and despair subsequently engendered by such phenomena as the Vietnam war, Watergate, ecological indifference and the adulation and apparent success of role models such as Ivan Boesky and Donald Trump, all culminating in the dominant greed culture of the Reagan-Thatcher years, should have destroyed any lingering grounds for optimism.

The idealistic belief in the possibility of a perfect world not dependent on technological progress could hardly be extinguished however; indeed, as a variant of paradise myth it has been a recognisable element of human consciousness in all cultures throughout history, and appears to be one of the small number of essential myths that define and sustain our humanity, in the sense indicated by Frye above.\(^\text{15}\) The survival of paradise myth is most clearly seen in two contemporary phenomena: the currently strong environmentalist movement and, at the opposite end, as it were, of the pragmatic spectrum, it is also a central component of that amorphous entity known as the New Age movement. The environmental


\(^\text{14}\)As in any system dependent for its existence on faith, a fact known to their advantage by manufacturers of snake-oil, New Age pet rock salesmen, auto mechanics and television evangelists, among others.

\(^\text{15}\)See Note 2.
movement, although inevitably politicised and, to that extent, compromised.\textsuperscript{16} promotes a vision of man in harmony with the natural world which is a recurring feature of paradise myth. The New Age movement, while occasionally seeming more intent on hugging trees than saving them, has a great deal in common with environmentalists. Very much a legacy of the sixties, this eclectic, California-based orphism encompasses a bewildering range of doctrines and practices, from academically serious economists,anthropologists and historians, to the likes of Shirley Maclaine and her absurd but harmless preoccupation with her previous existence as a Celtic princess. (Inevitably, as happened in the sixties, the movement has also attracted, like jackals to vulnerable prey, ravening hordes of outrageously cynical entrepreneurs charging huge sums for coloured glass healing crystals or organising seminars on near-death experiences — the latter activity a growth industry, it would appear.) In terms of doctrinal content, the only common belief uniting New Age enthusiasts would seem to be that in the possibility and imminence of a benign apocalypse. Harold Bloom, not a sympathetic critic of the movement, categorises New Age believers thus:

Monistic ecologists of the spirit, they proclaim that now is the acceptable time for a great leap forward in paradigms, despite one's gloomy sense that the era belongs to Reagan, Bush, and similar anchors of the Old Age. ... Our planet is not about to float off into a cosmic greenpeace, but at least it is heartening that the New Age Orphics dream of so amiable a conclusion.\textsuperscript{17}

The remainder of this paper will attempt to identify the nature and development of the mythological paradigm shift that I believe has contributed to the appearance and current importance of these two movements, especially in the large area where they overlap, an area we might call spiritual ecology. Partly for its enormous cultural influence, but more for what I hope to show is its mythological significance, I shall take America to be both a temporal and geographical focus.

\textsuperscript{16}The recent election of Albert Gore to the American vice-presidency is a heartening development for the environmental movement, as well as a clear demonstration of the growing popular appeal of environmentalism. It is still an open question, however, whether there is real political will for environmentalist reform or whether Gore's inclusion on the ticket is mere political expediency. See Michael Weisskopf, "The Dream Team?", Outside, November 1992, pp. 70-168.

Before continuing this discussion, however, we need to develop, or at least define, a terminology appropriate to the subject, and I wish to propose terms to represent and differentiate between the salient characteristics of what I consider to be four broad conceptual categories of paradise. In an essay on Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers*, W.H. Auden makes a fundamental distinction between “the Arcadian whose favourite daydream is of Eden, and the Utopian whose favourite daydream is of New Jerusalem”,18 and to these two terms I would add the coining Hesperidean, whose favourite daydream would be of reaching an existent but hidden earthly paradise. A fourth term, Elysian, I shall reserve for discussion of conceptions of an afterlife, the complexities of which demand separate treatment; I shall thus be referring to it only glancingly in this essay. As for the first three terms, the basic distinguishing factor between them is that of their respective temporal orientations; the Elysian mode, by referring to a post-death state, is generally outside world-time. (Although spatial boundaries are not clear-cut; in many versions of the myth, the passages between one world and the next are as much physical as metaphorical, even if they involve great hardship or special powers.)

By Arcadian I mean to indicate a yearning for a splendid yet innocent, pre-lapsarian paradise located in the past, the *sunt lacrimae rerum* idea that has spawned mythologies as diverse as the Golden Age of Hesiod, the Atlantis of Plato’s *Timaeus*, the pre-agrarian noble savagery of Rousseau, Wordsworth’s reverence for nature and the child-worship of what sometimes seems like the entire Victorian literary canon. The vision in its primary form is predominantly bucolic, and as such is the inspiration for the literary genre of pastoral. The banal quotidian nostalgia of ‘things aren’t what they used to be in the good old days’ partakes of this impulse, and a startlingly unexpected example cropped up in, of all places, the recent film, “Star Trek VI”. Mr Spock, on his final voyage for the USS Enterprise,19 is found to have on his cabin wall a reproduction of Chagall’s ‘Expulsion from Paradise’. “A reminder,” he tells a puzzled guest, “that nothing lasts for ever.”20 Although usually considered as a glorious past beyond recall, the Arcadian paradise may in some versions of the myth be recoverable, either through a cyclical conception of history, or as a culmination to creation.

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19Although, Mr Spock having been brought back from the dead once, this is not guaranteed.

20Except possibly ‘Star Trek.’
as in Judaist and Christian Millennialism. The Arcadian paradise is the fundamental concept on which all other variants depend.

The term Utopian comes, of course, from Thomas More’s eponymous book of 1516, where the word was manufactured from Greek roots meaning ‘not place.’ (A recent book has made the intriguing suggestion that More may have based his view of an ideal society on an actual report of a voyage made to the new world and a real Mayan community encountered in the Yucatan peninsula.) More was not the first to outline such a society; Plato’s Republic and Augustine’s City of God (albeit a mystical conception) are forerunners from pagan and Christian traditions. For present purposes however, I shall use the term Utopian to refer to the belief in the possibility of creating an earthly paradise, a perfect society, usually modelled on an Arcadian vision. In his introduction to the Penguin edition of Utopia, Paul Turner noted in 1965 that “More’s Utopia gave its name to a literary genre, of which well over a hundred specimens have been published, the last in 1962; but the germ of Utopian fiction is probably to be found in ancient descriptions of paradise.” Although there are many Christian versions, it is an essentially humanist vision, and lies at the heart of so many of the eighteenth and nineteenth century plans for ideal communities (including the Constitution of the United States), just as it was later to inspire the hippy communes of the sixties. The fundamental continuity of the impulse may be illustrated by taking as representative the Pantisocracy movement of Coleridge and Southey, in that it was to be “an experimental society, living in pastoral seclusion, sharing property, labour, and self-government equally among all its adult members, both men and women.” To be Utopian is of necessity to be idealist and, as mentioned earlier, idealism all too often degenerates into ideology. However well-intentioned, religious missionaries, communists, proselytisers of all kinds, down to George Bush of the ‘new world order’ all have Utopian visions of the ideal society, and all too often seek to impose them by force, if necessary. (Symbolic language though it might be,

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22This is the date for the original Latin text. Ralph Robinson’s first English translation came in 1551.
23Loraine Stobbart, Utopia Fact or Fiction (London: Alan Sutton, 1992).
26The very existence of the literary genre for which we have had to coin the term dystopian indicates the extent to which writers from Swift and Butler to Orwell and Huxley have perceived the dark side to the Utopian dream. ‘Serious’ science fiction writing seems to be predominantly dystopian, and the current popularity of morally unambiguous fantasy writing can perhaps be seen as an Arcadian or Hesperidean reaction to these gloomy visions.
I for one am always vaguely disturbed by the amount of martial equipment Blake feels necessary in order to build Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land.") The problem is not only that the idea of Utopia is culturally conditioned, but that it is mythologically conditioned, and depends ultimately on individual conceptions of Arcadia. As Isaiah Berlin puts it:

The idea of a single, perfect society of all mankind must be internally self-contradictory, because the Valhalla of the Germans is necessarily different from the ideal of a future life of the French, because the paradise of the Muslims is not that of Jews or Christians, because a society in which a Frenchman would attain to harmonious fulfilment is a society which to a German might prove suffocating.\footnote{Isaiah Berlin \textit{The Crooked Timber of Humanity} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 40.}

These cultural differences between conceptions of paradise, and their ramifications in intercultural behaviour will be the subject of the third part of this investigation.

My third term, Hesperidean, is named for the Garden of the Hesperides, in Classical myth a marvellous place of great natural beauty, abundant fruit and clement seasons located somewhere in the far west. The Hesperides were beautiful nymphs, daughters of the evening star, Hesperus. (Bulfinch has suggested that "poets, led by the analogy of the lovely appearance of the western sky at sunset, viewed the west as a region of brightness and glory."\footnote{Thomas Bulfinch, \textit{The Age of Fable} (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1969), p. 151.}) It is the Isle of Avalon to which Arthur is taken after the last battle, the Happy Isles to which Tennyson's Ulysses wishes to sail, and the promised land of the Hebrews. It is Thoreau's Walden, Gaugin's Tahiti and Stevenson's Samoa. Turning eastward (conceived as the source of spiritual wisdom), it is also the Shangri-La of James Hilton's 1933 novel \textit{Lost Horizon}, the mystical India of Hermann Hesse's \textit{Journey to the East} (1956) and (obviously influenced more by fable than reality) the magical destination of Kathmandu for the hippy pilgrims of the sixties. At its most basic it is the feeling that there must be somewhere on the earth that is perfect, if only we knew where to look, and it is perhaps in part responsible for the rootlessness and wanderlust so prevalent in contemporary western society. Review-
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ing a study of twentieth century travel writing (itself a genre which has experienced a remarkable surge in popularity recently), Frank McLynn notes that "A running theme in the books of all these travellers is that industrialised, urbanised, banalistic Britain is 'bad' and the remote areas of the world 'good'."²⁹ (It is also to this conviction that travel companies and Hawai'i timeshare salesmen make their dubious appeals.) Stretching the boundaries of the term beyond the geophysical world, we might also categorise as Hesperidean in impulse the search for a different plane of reality, by means of drugs, spiritualism or transcendental meditation. In his provocative yet scholarly study of the historical importance of psychotropic drugs, for example, Terence McKenna concludes that by means of Shamanic hallucinogens such as psilocybin "Paradise is our birthright and can be claimed by any one of us."³⁰

In terms of individual myths, the above categories are not discrete divisions; many, if not all concepts of paradise show elements of more than one orientation. We can at least go on now, however, to discuss the history of the paraisaical idea using the terms of our new taxonomy.

1992 is an appropriate year for considering the present relevance of the paradise myth. This five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's (re)discovery of the American continent has been marked by a fantastic outpouring of articles, exhibitions, books, and films, many of which refer explicitly to paraisaical themes in either their titles or their contents. It is not my intention here to get involved in any currently fashionable revisionist assessment of Columbus's character, the morality of colonisation, or the anthropological impact of European civilisation on the indigenous societies. My concern is rather the mythological significance of the new world reached by Columbus, and the eventual re-emergence of paraisaical imagery in the environmentalist and New Age movements.

The mediaeval Europe from which Columbus sailed in 1492 was a world still dominated by the Christian church and its rigidly Arcadian view (constituting an ideology) of an irrecoverably lost paradise. Man was a fallen being condemned to live and die in an imperfect world until the second coming of Christ, the Millennium (according to some) and the last judgement, after which the deserving would be transported to an Elysian heaven. "Belief in a life

everlasting lay at the very centre of Christianity. To true Christians, life on earth was almost irrelevant. During it they obeyed the precepts of Catholicism to safeguard their future in paradise.\textsuperscript{31} Crucially for our purposes, the church gave no encouragement to the view that the world of nature (everything below man on the chain of being) was to be studied or respected. The mediaeval mind was terrified by the vast, dark forests and the cold, lonely mountains and cared nothing for either their beauty or their ecological function; it was enough to know that God had provided man with certain animal, mineral and vegetable resources, and given him dominion over them, to make his exile endurable. It is true that, as mentioned earlier, this confidence in a divinely-sanctioned human dominion was contemporaneous with the first dawning of the humanist renaissance, and the beginning of the transfer of faith away from Christian dogma to individualist human rationality and science alluded to earlier in this paper. Within the church itself of course, the reaction against the authoritarianism of mediaeval Catholicism brought about the emergence of the questioning, independent spirit of Protestantism. Unfortunately for the new world, the church's attitude and the humanist attitude meshed all too well in their responses to the natural world; as Keith Thomas puts it: "Human civilisation indeed was virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature."\textsuperscript{32} In a recent book on Columbus, typically entitled \textit{The Conquest of Paradise}, Kirkpatrick Sale describes the prevailing attitude towards the environment in fifteenth century Europe:

From these elemental patterns in Europe's tapestry of nature — ignorance and fear, separation and hostility, dominance and exploitation — a discernible image emerges: of a world more mechanistic than organic, more artificial than intrinsic, more corporeal than numinous, from which intimacy, sacredness, and reverence have all but vanished (it would be the achievement of the next five centuries to eliminate them entirely) and in which something colder, duller, and more lifeless presides instead.\textsuperscript{33}

The north American continent five hundred years ago was perhaps the most richly endowed

\textsuperscript{31}William Manchester, \textit{A World Lit Only by Fire} (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), pp. 112–3.
landscape in the history of the world. 820 million acres of forest, 600 acres of grassland, 430 million acres of open woodland and 50 million acres of desert were held in an ecological equilibrium that had obtained for perhaps twenty thousand years.34 This huge area supported a human population of perhaps a million, living in what sophisticated Europeans of the time (and since) regarded as a primitive, generally pre-agrarian civilisation, yet in remarkable environmental harmony with the land, regarded and reverenced, as in so many early cultures, as the Great Mother.35 (Although many Amerindian tribes were hunter-gatherers, others had very sophisticated agricultural skills. A recent writer asserts that “Native Americans domesticated a truly astounding range of plants, not only maize, beans, and hundreds of varieties of potatoes, but a myriad of lesser crops too. They were among the most expert of farmers in the world in 1492.”36) Coming from the brown and dessicated landscapes of Andalusia and Estramadura, where the unchecked grazing of three million Merino sheep had devastated the ecology, at the conscious level Columbus and his men could not fail to respond to the lushness and fertility of the new world.37 The impact of Europe on America and its indigenes has been described and discussed at exhaustive length in any number of books, and articles in 1992, yet the corresponding eastward influence of the idea of the new world on European consciousness, at least at levels deeper than the superficially apparent, has received less attention. Yet it seems to me that the encounter with this actual Hesperides, although it was systematically and savagely destroyed in a breathtakingly short time by Europe, nevertheless had a profound effect at the mythological level.38 Certainly, news of the marvels of this earthly paradise caused great excitement in Europe, and the response of both the artistic and the commercial imaginations was immediate. In the literary sphere, mention has already been made of More’s Utopia and its possible inspiration, and the new world soon became a stock metaphor (or rather, in Yeats’s term, a ‘myth-kitty’) for poets. By the end of the sixteenth century Shakespeare was portraying Arcadian-

37Columbus himself specifically equates “the Terrestrial Paradise” with his landfall on the coast of what would prove to be South America on his third voyage. See Sale, op. cit., p. 175.
38The south seas voyages of Bougainville and Cook in the eighteenth century were to have, in many ways, a similar effect. Their impact however, lacking the context of mediaeval Christianity, was not so mythologically resonant; the imaginative shackles, as it were, had been broken.
Utopian tensions in a Forest of Arden\textsuperscript{39} surely inspired more by the new world than by Warwickshire, and Donne, a few lines after claiming that she brought him “A heaven like Mahomet’s Paradise”\textsuperscript{40} was apostrophising his mistress thus:

\begin{quote}
O my America! My new found land,
My kingdome, safest when with one man man’d,
My Myne of precious stones, My Emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee!\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

In \textit{Paradise Lost}, written about the time of the English restoration, the Eden of the puritan John Milton, with its portrayal of Adam’s light agricultural work, vegetarian diet, and lovingly described sexual relations perhaps owes some of its details to descriptions of the new world. At any rate, it is a far more imaginatively attractive Arcadia than that of the mediaeval church.\textsuperscript{42} Importantly, the latent myth underlying a great deal of post-Columbian love poetry, from the Elizabethans through Blake to Lawrence, is an identification of woman’s body both with a garden, and with paradise.\textsuperscript{43} This ancient metaphor is found, with varying emphases, in Sumerian poetry, Greek myth and the Bible, and has obvious fertility connections, but also suggests links with Great Mother worship and the etymology of paradise (from the Persian, ‘enclosed garden’). This whole myth complex was obviously highly threatening to so intensely patriarchal a religion as Christianity, and the early church was relentless in its zeal to stamp out, or at least adopt and ‘Christianise’, any remnants of such pagan superstition. No doubt the urban origins of Christianity also contributed to its displacement of this myth by the image of the church as the bride of Christ, thus stripping the original metaphor of much of its fertility-associated power.\textsuperscript{44} (This may be seen as a tactical mistake on the part of the church, however; rightly or wrongly most cultures ascribe more

\textsuperscript{39}Or, significantly, an island; \textit{The Tempest} can be read as an astonishingly subtle exploration of this theme.

\textsuperscript{40}A more sensual vision than the anaemic Christian version.

\textsuperscript{41}John Donne, “To His Mistris Going To Bed”, ll. 21-30. The pun on ‘dis-covering’ is perhaps even more effective in the light of the subsequent deforestation of the new world.

\textsuperscript{42}There is even a remarkable passage in which Adam asks Raphael whether angels enjoy sexual relations in heaven. The angel blushes(!) and hurries away without answering, but we have clearly come a long way from the mediaeval obsession with angels dancing on pinheads. See John Milton, \textit{Paradise Lost}, Book VIII, ll. 614-620.

\textsuperscript{43}We might also think of the Jungian concept of the \textit{anima}, the female element in the male psyche which has symbolic affinities with nature.

\textsuperscript{44}Although the myth obviously survived in other displaced forms, such as the worship of the Virgin Mary. The ostensibly Christian Arthurian cycle also hinges on the mythic conception of a king ritually wedded to the land.
authority to the mother than the bride.) At any rate, the success of sceptical humanism in breaking the imaginatively stranglehold of the mediaeval church reawakened what we might call a mythic receptivity in European minds.

Notwithstanding the immense artistic impact of the new world however, as creatures of their time and habit the Europeans initiated the systematic exploitation of this immense bounty with zeal and efficiency. Robin Lane Fox, in his exhaustive (and exhausting) study of truth and fiction in the bible, finds universal meaning in the Genesis story: “We are expelled from our Edens and sacrifice our happiness to the ambitions of our intellects.” Nevertheless, at a deeper level a long-dormant chord had been struck and a seed, unfortunately too slow in its germination to preserve the new world in its pristine state, had been planted. A Hesperides had been discovered, and its example could remind the human soul of what Arcadia was like, or inspire the human mind as to what Utopia could be.

The pattern suggested by the analysis offered above is one whereby the Christian church, displacing the ready pagan acceptance of the centrality of paradise myth, the “lovely pantheon of the Greeks”, gradually imposed its own reductionist ideology of an irrecoverable Arcadia and a conditional Elysium. Once the ideological authority of the church began to break down under the pressure of Renaissance humanism however, man became once again mythologically receptive to alternative conceptions of paradise. The discovery of the Hesperidean new world acted as an immensely powerful stimulus to the mythological imagination (and the mythic memory), and this is immediately reflected in post-Columbian literature. At least latent in this artistic response is a redefined conception of man’s relation to the natural world, and in the next part of this study I shall attempt to trace the development of this idea, along with its paradisaical implications, through to the environmentalist and New Age movements of today.

46 See Note 1.