Introduction: Seeking lost paradise

Fair world, where are you? Return again,
Sweet springtime of nature!
Alas, only in the magic land of song
Does your fabled memory live on.[1]

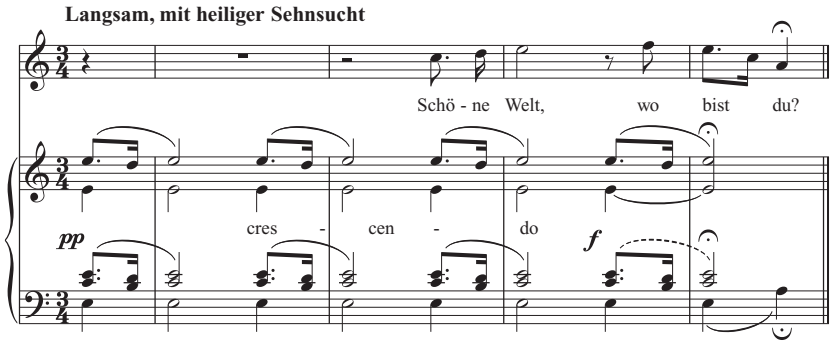
Friedrich Schiller

Oh, that land of joy,
In dreams I see it often,
But, come morning sun,
It's gone like foam.[2]

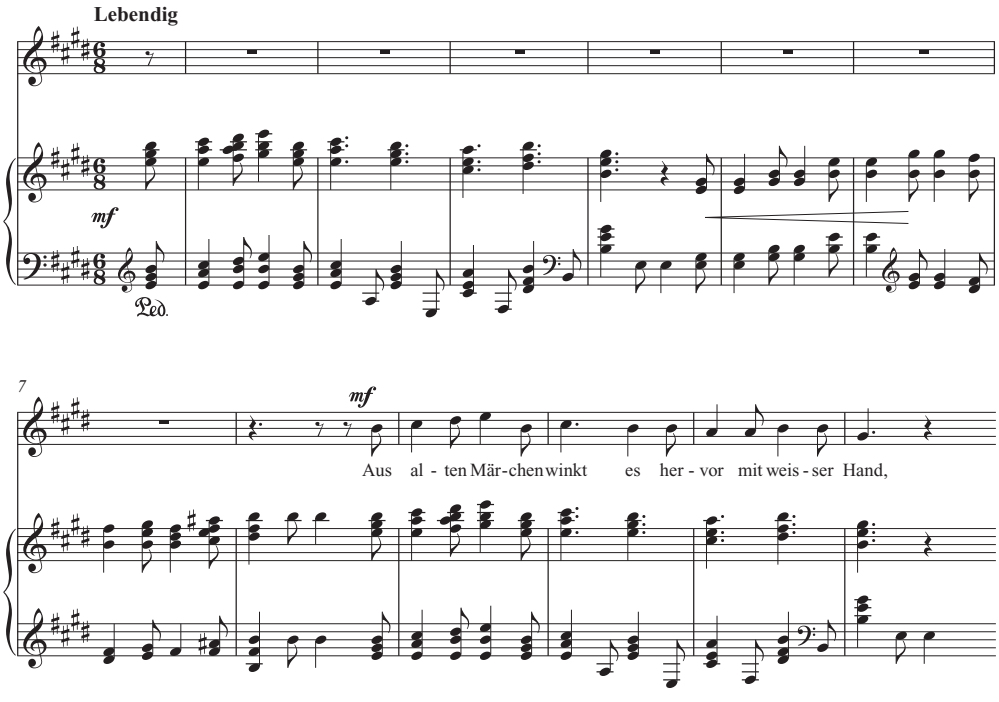
Heinrich Heine

To a casual listener, Franz Schubert's "Die Götter Griechenlands," D. 677, and Robert Schumann's "Aus alten Märchen winkt es," Op. 48, no. 15, could hardly sound less alike. From their first notes, the two songs stake out positions at opposite ends of the Lied's expressive spectrum. "Die Götter Griechenlands," to which Schubert affixed the suggestive heading *Langsam mit heiliger Sehnsucht*, limps ahead with music conveying intense yet hopeless yearning. Anapestic rhythms that settle heavily into the downbeat and abundant chord doublings saddle the music with weightiness. A sustained 8/6 chord over the dominant supporting the opening line "Fair world, where are you?" imparts instability. The hushed dynamics and minor tonality reinforce the somber mood. "Aus alten Märchen winkt es," by contrast, bursts out of the starting gate with high-spirited playfulness. Marked *Lebendig*, the song races by. Root position tonic chords provide firm harmonic footing while forte dynamics and the major tonality enhance the air of exuberance (Examples 0.1 and 0.2).

Given their striking contrasts, it may come as a surprise that the two songs have the same subject. Both evoke a form of paradise – for Schubert, the "fair world" of classical antiquity, for Schumann, the "magic land" of fairy tales. Both have protagonists who self-consciously lament its loss. As if experiencing anew mankind's expulsion from Eden, they contemplate the idyllic realm from beyond its closed gates, and express a fervent if futile desire to return. Both works too convey the welcome recognition that song



Example 0.1 Schubert, "Die Götter Griechenlands," 2nd version, D. 677b, mm. 1–4



Example 0.2 Schumann, "Aus alten Märchen winkt es," Op. 48, no. 15, mm. 1–12

retains traces of that realm. How do Lieder so different in demeanor communicate this common theme? On the most basic level, each work, through the interaction of poetry and music, conjures two worlds: the protagonist's dreary reality and the dreamlike paradise for which he yearns. Schubert's and Schumann's compositional strategies differ, but their intent – to express the dialectical tension between these disparate worlds – is similar.

"Die Götter Griechenlands" draws most obviously on modal contrasts, minor for the protagonist's present plight, major for his idealized conception of antiquity. Shifts between parallel keys signal changes of focus from one world to the other. As the A minor tonality of the opening measures gives way to A major, the expression of loss ("Fair world, where are you?") yields to an evocation of the distant ideal ("Return again, / Sweet springtime of nature!"). Inversely, the lines "Alas, only in the magic land of song / Does your fabled memory live on" sound first in F# major, then immediately afterwards in F# minor, suggesting different perspectives on their meaning. The brighter major tonality evokes the magic of song; the parallel minor reemphasizes antiquity's grievous absence.

"Aus alten Märchen winkt es," which unfolds entirely in the major mode, differentiates fantasy and reality primarily through rhythmic contrasts. While the first six stanzas, describing the wondrous fairy tale world of imagination, proceed at a quick pace, the seventh introduces augmented rhythms that in effect slow the tempo by half. The climactic word "ach!" beginning the seventh stanza (repeated for emphasis over four measures of dominant seventh harmony) prompts a musical scene change. The sprightly quarter and eighth notes disappear, and the opening music returns, now dressed in long note values and performed *mit innigster Empfindung* – a musical transformation that underscores the altered poetic perspective. Focus shifts from the fantastic, seemingly boundless realm of imagination (the poetic imagery becomes increasingly bizarre during the first six stanzas) to the speaker's drab reality, destroying the joyous illusion. The song's ending encourages reevaluation of its beginning. Beneath the gaiety lurks gravity.

The blatant differences between these two songs exemplify the rich variety of Romantic Lieder while the subtler similarities suggest the powerful influence of certain archetypal themes on that repertoire. Among the most prominent is the myth of lost paradise underpinning "Die Götter Griechenlands," "Aus alten Märchen winkt es," and innumerable other Romantic Lieder. This theme resonates with particular intensity and frequency in the songs of Schubert, but also finds expression in those of nearly every other nineteenth-century Lied composer.

The wealth of art songs conveying longing for paradise stems partly from the theme's profound impact on the Weimar Classicists Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and several generations of Romantic poets, whose verse attracted Lied composers from the late eighteenth century through the late nineteenth. Nostalgia for a lost Golden Age was indeed central to Romanticism in many disciplines, from literature to music, art, philosophy, history, politics, and religion.[3] The Lied proved a particularly compelling medium. Art songs can communicate nostalgia in countless

ways. Through the enchantments of poetry and music, they may also seem to preserve parts of the paradise whose loss they lament, offering the prospect of restored bliss, or at least a certain solace. "Die Götter Griechenlands," "Aus alten Märchen winkt es," and related Lieder might be viewed as antidotes to the very condition that gives rise to their expression of hopeless yearning.

The paradox invites deeper reflection on the intriguing relationship between Romantic Lieder and the myth of lost paradise. How did the myth find expression in the words and music of art song? How might that expression have influenced the genre's origin and subsequent development? It is no coincidence that the Lied began to gain favor among poets, composers, performers, and audiences during the later eighteenth century, a time when heightened self-consciousness, central to the myth, became a dominant feature of philosophy and aesthetics. The intensification of self scrutiny in nineteenth-century German Romantic poetry (emblematized in the figure of the *Doppelgänger*) and the continued use of Enlightenment and Romantic era poems as song texts throughout the nineteenth century made the Lied tradition's ties to the paradise myth both protracted and complex.

While music scholars have alluded to the lost paradise myth in studies of the Lied,[4] it has not represented the focus of any book. The present inquiry is intended to help fill this gap. By no means does it purport to be a comprehensive overview of Romantic *Sehnsucht* in nineteenth-century art song. The vast size of the Lied repertoire and myriad manifestations of such longing make such a goal impractical. This book does, however, aim to reveal the intimate connection between Romantic quests for lost paradise and the Lied tradition. Through a series of autonomous yet interrelated chapters, I hope to substantiate two related claims: first, that the archetypal paradise myth, with its constituent stages of unity, division, and potential reunification, finds expression thematically, stylistically, and structurally in art songs from throughout the nineteenth century, and second, that nostalgia for lost paradise in its various Enlightenment and Romantic incarnations played a crucial role in the emergence and evolution of the genre, i.e., Lieder geared towards planned performance rather than spontaneous expression. The art song might be said to arise from the infusion of self-consciousness into the natural activity of singing, from the Lied protagonist's yearning to reenter the gates of a metaphorical Eden. (In this regard, the protagonist often seems a thinly disguised surrogate for the poet and/or composer, each a representative of humanity in its fallen state.) Exploring both the diversity and commonalities of various nostalgic quests illuminates the beautiful, emotional world of Romantic Lieder, a repertory whose aesthetic riches offer intimations of paradise regained.

Lost paradise: a universal myth

To the western world, the most familiar and influential versions of the lost paradise myth involve the Greek Golden Age and Hebraic Garden of Eden. In Greece, the myth first surfaces in the works of Hesiod and Homer, recorded in writing during the eighth century BC. (The Greek form of the word "paradise" did not actually come into existence until four centuries later.)[5] Hesiod looked back with nostalgia to what he identified as the Golden Age, or first Age of Man, long preceding his own degenerate time. As described in *Works and Days* (as well as *Theogony*), during the blissful period before Zeus ruled the heavens, men lived essentially like gods:

In the beginning, the immortals
who have their homes on Olympos
created the golden generation of mortal people.
These lived in Kronos' time, when he
was the king in heaven.
They lived as if they were gods,
their hearts free from all sorrow,
by themselves, and without hard work or pain;
no miserable
old age came their way; their hands, their feet,
did not alter.
They took their pleasure in festivals,
and lived without troubles.
When they died, it was as if they fell asleep.
All goods
were theirs. The fruitful grainland
yielded its harvest to them
of its own accord; this was great and abundant,
while they at their pleasure
quietly looked after their works,
in the midst of good things
(prosperous in flocks, on friendly terms with
the blessed immortals).[6]

Following the Golden Age were the Silver and Bronze Ages. During these times, Hesiod asserts, humans became increasingly corrupt, violent, and selfish – traits that led the gods to punish them with miserable lives and painful deaths. In the succeeding Heroic Age, people again exhibited godlike characteristics. They maintained close relationships with the deities and,

upon dying, were permitted to travel to the Isles of the Blessed, or Elysian Fields. But this period too came to an end, with humankind, in Hesiod's own time, returning to a miserable state and individuals suffering cruel fates at the whim of the gods.

In Hesiod's view, the Golden Age lay in the irretrievable past. Other Greeks, including Homer, Pindar, Apollodorus, and Plato, also spoke of a Golden Age of man, but did not agree that it was entirely lost. Homer, for example, noted the paradisiacal existence of the Phaeacians and Ethiopians, and Pindar that of the Hyperboreans. These tribes, however, were thought to inhabit distant and inaccessible regions of the earth; the blissfulness they enjoyed was, to the Greeks, only an alluring fantasy.[7] For the most part, Greek writers looked back nostalgically to an idyllic past and did not entertain hopes of regaining it.

The Hebraic story of the Garden of Eden also associates paradise with a time of origins and first people. Before their transgression, as related in the Old Testament (Genesis 2, 3), Adam and Eve are without want or care, enjoying the beauty and abundance of God's creation in unconscious naturalness and innocence. They have no need to work and no death to fear, only a stern warning to obey.

> And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.[8]

Upon succumbing to the serpent and tasting the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve ensure their expulsion from blissful existence. They are driven out of the garden, away from the tree of life (whose fruit would grant them godlike immortality), to experience shame, toil, misery, and death, as will all of their descendents. Naiveté gives way to knowledge, unity to division. Humanity's new self-consciousness is founded upon the recognition of difference, opposition, and separation.

As with Hesiod's Golden Age, the Old Testament attributes the loss of paradise to defects in the human character. A willingness to flout God's will by disregarding his single prohibition leads to the expulsion from Eden. But unlike Hesiod's Golden Age, the Biblical conception of paradise is not confined to a time of origins. In the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions that drew inspiration from the story of Eden, paradise also came to be associated with the future. Another Golden Age, even better than the first, was thought yet to come, as described in the New Testament's Book of Revelation.

Many world cultures, both civilized and primitive, embrace paradise myths. The Chinese Taoist Age of Perfect Virtue and the Australian Aborigines' Dreamtime, for example, display striking similarities to the Greek Golden Age and Hebraic Garden of Eden. Comparable myths have arisen on every continent and continue to play an important role in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. This is not the place for a detailed description of paradise myths from across the globe, a project that has been ably undertaken by other scholars.[9] For our purposes, it will suffice to review some central elements of this universal myth, which captivated writers and artists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[10]

Virtually all paradise myths describe an Age of Innocence – the first in a series of world ages – when people lived amidst a miraculous landscape featuring sacred rivers, magical trees, and mountains that reach to the heavens. In many accounts, the first humans themselves possess wondrous powers. Their skin glows; they can fly; they speak a single language, enabling all people to understand and trust one another; they understand the language of the beasts and thus can live peacefully with the animal kingdom. Typically, the first humans are of pristine moral character, exhibiting goodness, naturalness, and spontaneity. They are also blessed with immortality, thus shielded from the tensions of existence within historical time. Perhaps most significant, during the Age of Innocence, the first humans enjoy an intimate relation with the divine. Earth and heaven are in close proximity (connected by mountains, trees, ladders, ropes, and rainbows), allowing easy passage between them and granting humans direct access to the gods. Humans are perpetually in the presence of divinity and live in harmony with the divine will.

The Age of Innocence comes to an end because of a tragic event: a calamitous change in human character, leading to humanity's estrangement from both heaven and nature.[11] (Even paradise myths from ancient or primitive cultures recognize the occurrence of a Fall, a drastic alteration in the nature of human existence. For example, although later generations would look back with nostalgia to the paradise of classical antiquity, ancient Greeks such as Hesiod, regarding their own time as degenerate, associated the Golden Age with a yet earlier period.) The effects are numerous and profound. The blissfulness of the Age of Innocence disappears, along with many of the first humans' miraculous powers.

With disobedience, attachment, and forgetting come the loss of contact with the sacred Source; death and the necessity for reproduction; and limitations of various kinds, such as the loss of luminosity and the abilities to fly and to communicate with

the animals. Human beings must now labor to obtain what they need to survive, must invent technologies to compensate for the diminution of their various natural abilities, and must wander through life unaware of their real nature, purpose, and collective past.[12]

Most disastrous, the gods withdraw from the human sphere. In their fallen state, humans experience a devastating estrangement from divinity.

Loss of paradise is inevitably followed by yearning for its restoration. Humans long to be reunited with the divine essence with which they had once enjoyed transcendent wholeness. They pine for the annulment of time, an escape from death, the recovery of innocent bliss. Intense nostalgia is thus a central component of the universal lost paradise myth. Man's yearning might be directed wholly toward the past, or also the imagined future when the gates to paradise, whether on Earth or in heaven, might once more be unlocked. Either way, in most versions of the myth, the "present" time of narration belongs to the tragic period after the Fall.

Romantic retellings of the lost paradise myth

Surprisingly few Romantic art songs mention either Greek or Hebraic conceptions of paradise. One is Schubert's "Elysium," D. 584, a Schiller setting resembling an extended solo cantata. The work does not portray Hesiod's Golden Age but rather what the ancient Greeks viewed as a similarly idyllic state of existence – the final resting place of the blessed dead, characterized by infinite beauty, joy, tranquility, springtime, and love: "Elysian life / Is eternal bliss, eternal lightness." Biblical Eden, in turn, plays an important role in Hugo Wolf's "Fußreise" (Mörike Lieder no. 10). In expressing the exhilaration aroused by an early morning hike through the woods, the song alludes to the sensual delights of man's primal paradise: "My dear old Adam feels / Autumn- and spring-fever too, / God-heartened, / Never-foolishly wasted / First-delight-of-paradise." Schumann's "Warte, warte, wilde Schiffmann" (Heine *Liederkreis*, Op. 24, no. 6) employs the Biblical myth in quite a different way. Here the story of Eve's transgression in Eden helps convey the speaker's bitterness at the seemingly inevitable misery inflicted upon him by the girl he loves: "Remember the ancient story / Of the serpent in Paradise, / Who, by wicked gift of an apple, / Cast our forebear into woe? // All ill has come with the apple! / Eve brought with it death, / Eris – the flames of Troy, / you – both, flames and death." Apart from such scattered references, however, Greek and Hebraic notions of paradise have little direct involvement in the Romantic Lied repertoire.

Their influence is nevertheless both powerful and palpable. Although late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets generally avoided Biblical imagery, they were intrigued by the myth of lost paradise related in the Holy Scriptures, and their largely secular reformulations of it served as the textual basis for innumerable Romantic Lieder. The Enlightenment and Romantic generations glimpsed the lost idyllic world in many places: in the cultures of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, in children, women, and country folk, in nature and exotic lands, in dream visions, myths, and fairy tales, in ballads and folk song, even in death. These diverse manifestations of paradise, exemplifying naturalness, simplicity, spontaneity, the German character, and other cherished ideals, inspired intense yearning, as attested by countless works of literature, art, and music, including Romantic Lieder.

Romanticism was not, of course, confined to secular subjects; overt expressions of Christianity and religious spiritual striving figure prominently in many nineteenth-century artworks, from Novalis's (Friedrich von Hardenberg) six poetic *Hymnen an die Nacht* to the paintings of the German Nazarenes to Anton Bruckner's choral masses to Richard Wagner's music drama *Parsifal*. Within the Lied repertoire, notable examples include Ludwig van Beethoven's *Gellert Lieder*, Op. 48, nos. 1–6; Schubert's "Die junge Nonne," D. 828, and "Ellens Gesang III" (Ave Maria), D. 839; Peter Cornelius's *Weihnachtslieder*, Op. 8, nos. 1–6; Wolf's ten *Geistliche Lieder* from the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, and Antonin Dvorak's *Biblical Songs*, Op. 99. Yet many Romantics (including some of these composers) felt alienated from conventional Christianity with its notion of original sin and code of self-denial, which ran counter to their desire for self-fulfillment.[13] Although Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Joseph von Eichendorff, and other Romantics embraced Catholicism, and the Christian Middle Ages captivated the imagination of German writers and artists throughout the nineteenth century, in numerous Romantic artworks the expression of longing for a lost idyllic world – as in Schubert's "Der Wanderer" (D. 489, 493; "Where are you, my beloved land? / Sought, dreamt of, yet never known!") and "Kennst du das Land" (D. 321; "There, o there / I desire to go with you, my beloved!") – may be understood to represent a displaced theology. As the three main parts of this book suggest, Romantic *Sehnsucht* for a lost Golden Age had strong roots in the secular culture of the Enlightenment.

Germans – who ever since the disastrous Thirty Years War (1618–48) had suffered from an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the politically, economically, and culturally dominant French – were particularly susceptible to feelings of nostalgia for "a better world."[14] Numerous German philosophical tracts, literary works, and aesthetic essays from the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries are founded upon the belief that both modern man and cultured society had lost their integrity, or natural wholeness, resulting in a plethora of perplexing dualities – freedom and necessity, reason and desire, artifice and naturalness. One of the first writers to critique the modern world in terms that evoke the Biblical story of Eden was Schiller. In both his aesthetic and creative writings, he not only diagnosed the ills of his age but also proposed a means for recovery, thus extending the mythical parallel from paradise lost to paradise regained, or exile to redemption. Although grounded in Enlightenment modes of thought, his works provided a strong impetus for the fledgling Romantic movements in Germany and England (the latter especially through his impact on Samuel Taylor Coleridge), and shed light on nineteenth-century formulations of the lost paradise myth. A brief review of some of Schiller's most influential aesthetic ideas serves as a springboard for exploring how the myth shaped Romanticism and more specifically Romantic Lieder.

Writing during the 1790s, a time of cultural and political turmoil, Schiller called attention to the fragmented nature of both individuals and society as a whole – a crisis he attributed largely to the over-specialization of human knowledge and activity. In the sixth letter of *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794–95; *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*), he decries modern man's inability to develop the full range of his faculties and the sorrowful implications for contemporary culture: "One has to go the rounds from one individual to another in order to be able to piece together a complete image of the species."[15] For all the Enlightenment's vaunted claims of progress, it had become increasingly difficult to perceive the whole of man's existence, whether of individuals or society.

In various respects, Schiller's critique of the modern world echoes those of earlier writers such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Johann Gottfried Herder, but he develops his ideas in an original manner. In his famous essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1795; *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*), Schiller, displaying a penchant for Kantian dualities, identifies two ways of looking at the world, exemplified by two types of poet: "The poet . . . either *is* nature or he will *seek* it. The former makes for the naïve poet, the latter for the sentimental poet."[16] Although Schiller's argument is clouded by inconsistencies, shifting terminology, and a general looseness of structure, it is not difficult to discern the fundamental distinction he has in mind between the "naïve" and the "sentimental," or their relation to the myth of lost paradise.

In Schiller's view, the natural state of plants, minerals, animals, and landscapes, the natural humanity of children, country folk, and the antique