

Theodor Körner Connects Art, War, and the German Fatherland (1813)

Abstract

The poet Theodor Körner (1791–1813) emerged from a process of nationalist mythmaking as a hero of the Napoleonic Wars, which were celebrated as the “Wars of Liberation.” He was depicted as a “poet and thinker” who battled for the nation and died for it. The very title of his posthumously published volume of poems, *Lyre and Sword*, represents the fusion of art and war.

Source

Where is the singer's fatherland? —
Where from noble minds sparks flew,
Where for beauty wreaths were laid,
Where stalwart hearts joyfully blazed,
For all that is sacred and true,
There was found my fatherland!

What name the singer's fatherland? —
Now o'er the graves of its dead sons,
It weeps under a foreign yoke,
Known once just as the Land of Oaks,
This free land, this German land,
Thus was called my fatherland!

What laments the singer's fatherland? —
That its peoples' princes bent,
Before the winds of the raging foe,
Forgetting the sacred oath they swore,
That its appeal unheeded went,
This laments my fatherland!

Whom calls the singer's fatherland? —
It calls out to the silenced Gods,
Thundering with desperation,
For its freedom, its salvation,
For the vengeance-wreaking hand,
For this calls out my fatherland!

What wants the singer's fatherland? —
To drive the bloodhound from its bounds,
To know the battle has been won,
And freely carry its free sons,
Or lay them free beneath the ground,
This wants the singer's fatherland!

And what hopes the singer's fatherland? —
It hopes for justice to be done,
Hopes for its loyal folk to wake,
Hopes that God will vengeance take,
Does its avenger not mistake,
This hopes the singer's fatherland!

Source: Theodor Körner, "Mein Vaterland," in *Leyer und Schwerdt*. Berlin: Nicolai, 1914, pp. 23–24. Available online at: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/koerner_leyer_1814

Translation: Deborah Cohen

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