

Love of the Fatherland and Fatherly Love
Jacob Grimm's Political Thought

The Scholar in Politics

Jacob Grimm would often claim that he preferred the quiet, even reclusive existence of a scholar,¹ and yet he found himself in the midst of decisive political events more than once in his life and could observe, often closely, dramatic developments as they unfolded in major European cities, such as Paris, Vienna, Berlin, or Frankfurt. At moments, he was caught up in central political occurrences of the first half of the nineteenth century, some of which distracted him from his work, disrupted his career, tore him away from his home, and pushed him into exile but also heightened his reputation and made him a figure of national renown. You could tell a story about Grimm in which he repeatedly stumbled onto the scene of politics, found himself entangled in spectacular events, and became an icon of political struggles, only to withdraw again into scholarship when he had reached the point of exhaustion.

However, Grimm's political positions were generated through the relationship of philological scholarship – its animating spirit and defining purpose, its methods and results – to political rule. For Grimm, philology meant love of the word, and, in the case of *German* philology, loving dedication to the vernacular spoken in and by the German nation. He did claim that his work in the field of German or Germanic Studies, a field he co-created and promoted over decades, embodied and expressed a love for the fatherland. The aim of Grimm's project of rendering politics more philological meant to infuse rule with similar respect and love: the exercise of power should limit itself to the boundaries already set by the national vernacular and always be guided by loving devotion to the nation, its character, and its past.

Grimm's politics were at the same time transformational and frustratingly vague, ambitious and curiously limited. Grimm believed himself to have a philologically grounded notion of the extent and shape of the unit of

rule; the philologist could settle boundary disputes by delineating nations. Yet his philological nationalism was fairly reticent about the question of the right system of governance *within* the established unit. He certainly envisaged a more important role for the nationally defined people in politics but never called for some form of popular rule. He still believed in traditional monarchical order as the guarantee of governmental stability and unity but would no longer accept royal indifference to national integrity. Hesitant to take sides in ideological conflicts within the nation and seemingly unwilling to specify the ultimate source and bearer of political sovereignty – the monarch or the people – Grimm wished that the ties of understanding and solidarity across hierarchies in the linguistic and ethno-cultural community would guarantee political harmony; the frequent invocations of love papered over inevitable tensions.

Jacob Grimm's Political Biography

How did Jacob Grimm end up in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Frankfurt? Paris was the capital of defeated, post-Napoleonic France, Vienna the birthplace of a restored continental order, Berlin the center of the rising power of Prussia, and Frankfurt the site of the first democratically elected German national assembly. What brought Grimm to these cities at various points between 1814 and 1848, just as they were the focal points of consequential political events and developments?

After the Wars of Liberation fought against Napoleon, Jacob Grimm, then in his late twenties and living in Kassel, applied for the job as the secretary of the Hessian diplomatic mission to the anti-Napoleonic allies. He was given the position and quickly joined the troops on a drawn-out march toward Paris.² In the loud and intimidating French capital, he supported the representation of Hessian interests and tried to recover the books and artworks taken from the Hessian court and brought to Paris as part of Napoleon's effort to make the city the majestic cultural center of a vast French empire.³ As a librarian under the French regime in Westphalia, Grimm had been forced to assist with the systematic confiscation of valuable books;⁴ after the wars, he would make not one but two trips to Paris to retrieve them, along with paintings by artists like Rembrandt and Rubens.⁵ Wilhelm Grimm was also peripherally involved in this effort to reverse Napoleon's campaign of cultural conquest and concentration. In late 1815, he published a brief, anonymous magazine report about the ongoing restitution in Kassel and regretted the absence of paintings by, for instance, Leonardo da Vinci. They were the Elector's

rightful property, Wilhelm Grimm claimed, but added that the loss offended all Hessians and Germans;⁶ the interests of the ruler apparently coincided with a national cause.

After his time in Paris, Jacob Grimm also travelled with the Hessian legation to the Habsburg capital Vienna,⁷ to be present at the European congress as the boundaries of states were settled and an international system of peace constructed after a quarter century of continent-wide warfare.⁸ In this position, Grimm clearly took a direct interest in politics and wrote articles urging German lands to collaborate and respect one another; conflicts “in Germany among Germans [*in Deutschland unter Deutschen*]” would be a grave sin, a symptom of corruption beyond measure.⁹ Yet he failed to please some of his superiors in the small Hessian diplomatic contingent, who wanted him to intercept information about diplomatically relevant developments in Viennese venues rather than write editorials and spend time with scholars and poets in the city.¹⁰ The mutual irritation was unsurprising; the congress, a grandiose meeting place for large numbers of visitors representing the European royalty and nobility,¹¹ was not the most congenial environment for a young scholar from a modest civil servant background.

The young Grimm’s wish for trans-German political concord that would manifest the cultural and linguistic unity of all German-speaking peoples was also at odds with the deals struck among the traditional European aristocratic and royal elites. For figures such as the leading Austrian diplomat Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859), the restoration and consolidation of royal authority combined with regularized diplomatic communication among traditional European political elites were the keys to stability and peace, not the unification of national peoples and their induction into politics.¹² According to the conservative analysis, popular revolution had fatally destabilized governance and unleashed the unconstrained ambitions of a tyrant, which had led to a long period of European-wide destruction.¹³ To contain such chaos, princes ought to be firmly in power over their areas, and in permanent contact with one another, to stifle local rebellions and prevent geopolitical instability. The “restorative federalism” of the German Confederation,¹⁴ a bundle of about forty independent German states, was supposed to be sufficiently strong to withstand French military aggression but not stand as one centralized German-national state of excessive might.¹⁵ Jacob Grimm did not at this time demand a single nation-state, but he was alienated by how aristocratic cliques conducted negotiations about the future of all Germans in disregard of actual populations.

Grimm had neither fascination nor talent for a diplomatic career and resigned from his post as secretary in 1815; the string of visits to centers of European politics as a civil servant on various diplomatic expeditions came to an end. Yet he continued to serve the government in Hesse as a librarian, and also a somewhat reluctant part-time censor, from 1816 to 1829,¹⁶ a long stretch of relative quiet and productivity.¹⁷ Jacob Grimm and his brother were content with their calm situation, even though their relationship to the princely government deteriorated over time, especially after the succession of Wilhelm II (1777–1847), the son of the old Hessian Elector, who was willfully ignorant of the Grimms' scholarly achievements and eventually promoted dilettantes over the more qualified brothers.¹⁸ Disappointed, both Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm left Kassel in 1829 for posts at the university in Göttingen, a town in the larger kingdom of Hanover, north of Hesse, ruled in so-called personal union by the British monarch; George III, whose father and grandfather had spoken German, was king in two kingdoms, The United Kingdom and Hanover. In Göttingen, Jacob Grimm assumed a post as professor and librarian at one of the finest universities in Germany, a rank it had achieved at least partly because of the historical Anglo-Hanoverian communications and relatively light and liberal rule by the distant British court.¹⁹ Göttingen was also where Grimm was to take a more explicit and controversial political stance, no longer an observer of German and European politics, but – temporarily and not terribly enthusiastically – a key character.

The background to the political events in Göttingen was the struggle over constitutions, a struggle central to the *Vormärz* era, the period from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the European-wide revolutions of 1848. To many people in the circles of the brothers Grimm, constitutionalized monarchies seemed the proper political form of the age. After the revolution, monarchy was on the defensive, compelled to justify itself anew,²⁰ but many educated professionals in German lands nonetheless feared its complete dismantling; the lesson of the French Revolution seemed to be that regicide entailed chaos, dissolution, and the rise of upstart oppressors. In this situation, German liberals in the post-congress period typically championed constitutions that would fix and stabilize the rule of the monarch, render kingship a position within an articulated system that included elements of popular representation, and secure basic liberties for citizens no longer defined exclusively as the subjects or dependents of a paternal king. Such constitutions would put an end to unconstrained, absolutist rule but do so without decapitating the monarch.²¹ The constitutional documents would set some moderate and moderating limits to royal power – allow for

representative assemblies and define rights such as freedom of the press and opinion – but not undermine traditional authority. German liberalism in fact largely coincided with such a call for constitutional monarchism,²² in which a hereditary king would continue as the head of state in charge of executive and legislative power but nonetheless allow for more cooperative decision-making procedures.²³

Such reformist demands seemed modest; the monarch would, after all, remain firmly on the throne and the collective of citizens would not exercise sovereign power.²⁴ More conservative figures even insisted that the king would only issue a constitution that he could then also revoke, and that constitutional monarchy consisted in the king's gracious self-restraint and willingness to rule in a legal state removed from pure personal patrimonialism.²⁵ Yet the very idea of popular representation did convert the ruler into one party in an ongoing negotiation.²⁶ The king would no longer rule over a kingdom understood as his exclusive possession but would instead have to act in concert with the people, at least minimally, in accordance with procedures specified in a constitutional document,²⁷ although one typically issued by the sitting dynasty. The result was a dualist vision of rule, and numerous attempts to imagine mediations between kingship and popular freedom.²⁸

The middle-aged Jacob Grimm was in many ways a typical representative of the age, in that he piously spoke of the need for harmonious interaction between the prince and the people.²⁹ Specifically, Grimm invoked the benefits of a common German nationhood uniting the king and his subjects. In a nationally circumscribed state, he hoped, shared cultural belonging would constitute a basis for a mutual trust and accommodation between the monarch and the citizens, but later commentators have generally remained skeptical. Constitutionalized monarchy was, many have claimed, marred by unresolved oppositions³⁰ and represented a transitional and ultimately impossible combination of absolutism and parliamentarism.³¹ In this view, the constitutional monarchy was a compromise formation,³² a constellation of contradictory elements in which the source of ultimate authority remained undefined. The political form was, the historian James Sheehan writes, characterized by a “persistent obscurity about the ultimate locus of power,” and a shared care for the nation did not clarify the situation.³³

In the late 1830s, the kingdom of Hanover became the site of an emblematic conflict over a constitution and Jacob Grimm played a leading part. It was in the university town of Göttingen that a rigidly traditionalist king with an absolutist understanding of his prerogatives clashed with educated professionals in state service, a group to which Grimm belonged. The background to

the conflict was complicated. With the ascendance of Queen Victoria to the British throne in 1837, Hanover's personal union with Great Britain ended, since the law of the German kingdom did not permit female succession. William IV could be the ruler of both Britain and Hanover; Queen Victoria could not. Instead, Victoria's uncle Ernst August (1771–1851), the Duke of Cumberland, succeeded to the Hanoverian throne; he had studied in Göttingen in the 1780s and, returning as the king, he became the first ruler to actually live in Hanover in more than a century.³⁴ However, Ernst August was over 65 years old at the time and had the reputation of an archconservative military man.³⁵ Shortly after his arrival in his kingdom, he dissolved the parliament and abrogated the most recent and quite modern constitution, which had been adopted in 1833, partly drafted by the political philosopher and historian Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann, close friend of the brothers Grimm.³⁶ In a report back to England, Ernst August wrote that he had “cut the wings of this democracy.”³⁷ The professors, and among them Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, had, as was usual, sworn an oath of allegiance to the suddenly suspended constitution as servants of the state,³⁸ and they balked at the king's imperious demeanor. In a sense, both sides, the king and the group of professors, believed that the other had acted rashly, beyond the bounds of their legitimate space of action, and called for a return to an earlier condition. The king, a defendant of royal preeminence, thought the recent constitution arbitrary and illegal, imposed without his consent,³⁹ while the professors deemed the sudden revocation of the constitution a brazen autocratic action in defiance of an appropriately balanced system of rule. In Hanover, the compromise of constitutional monarchy seemed to come apart as a new king simply annulled the recently adopted constitution.

To voice resistance, the Grimms' colleague Dahlmann wrote a letter of protest signed by six other Göttingen professors, among them the brothers Grimm, addressed only to the board of the university.⁴⁰ After the protest had been unintentionally leaked and circulated widely by Göttingen students, King Ernst August responded by discharging the professors, and Jacob Grimm, Dahlmann, and the younger literary historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805–71) were compelled to leave the kingdom.⁴¹ In the meantime, the protestation letter reached the general public; newspapers reported on the affair; and, over time, there were even campaigns collecting funds in support of the professors. In some camps, the Grimms and their peers were celebrated as heroic defenders of the constitutional order. The brothers worried more about the arbitrary initiative of the ruler inattentive to the life of the people and cared less about the actual content of the constitution,⁴² but their stance against the king electrified liberal

students.⁴³ Even though Grimm and his peers often cloaked their unbroken commitment to the Hanoverian constitution in the language of Protestant religious piety and humble fidelity, the collective action of the professorial circle had demonstrated that civil servants no longer simply served the king.⁴⁴

With Jacob Grimm ejected from Hanover, the brothers felt offended, even wounded, and they were certainly anxious about their future, but they were eventually invited to Berlin as members of the Prussian Academy by King Frederick William IV, who ascended to the throne in 1841, and proceeded to rehabilitate a series of censored and maligned nationalist academics, among them Ernst Moritz Arndt and Christoph Dahlmann. The brothers Grimm were recruited to Berlin thanks to the tireless lobbying work of Bettina von Arnim, to whom the brothers had dedicated their *Children's and Household Tales*.⁴⁵ The recruitment was of course approved by the Prussian monarch but kept as discreet as possible because of the king's family ties to the Hanoverian ruler: Ernst August was the brother-in-law of Frederick William's father, William III.⁴⁶

The 1840s spent in Berlin was to be the decade of Jacob Grimm's most direct participation in the political process, as a parliamentary delegate in the first German national assembly, the Frankfurt parliament. In early 1848, revolutionary conditions in large cities and rural spots all over Europe and Germany, among them Berlin, seemed to suggest the possibility of a momentous political transformation. Urban crowds rioted, workers went on strike, farmers occupied land and refused to render services to lords, and insurgents clashed with armed forces on the streets of Vienna and Berlin, causing Metternich to flee the Habsburg Empire and the Prussian army to retreat from the capital.⁴⁷ The cascades of unrest set off by a sequence of poor harvests and recession-like years that aggravated pauperization put severe pressure on governments all over Europe, causing many to crumble.⁴⁸ European monarchies, among them those in German states, seemed unable to defend themselves against rapidly spreading mass rebellions.⁴⁹

In this situation, prominent German liberals gathered in March 1848 to call for the formation of a national parliament that would exercise greater power than any previous German assembly and yet cooperate with princes amenable to reform.⁵⁰ The aim of those involved was initially not to dissolve the forty or so sovereign German states to create one unitary national state. Their plan was instead to establish a national parliamentary institution that would communicate with the circle of German rulers⁵¹ and then discuss and resolve the interlinked questions of Germany's future

political order, federative structure, and territorial extent. Should Germans live in a monarchy or perhaps in a future republic, a federative union or a unitary state, and what areas should be incorporated as German? The dominant groups within German liberalism remained committed to the continued existence of a monarchical executive,⁵² but one compelled to interact with a democratically elected assembly that represented a uniform body of citizens.⁵³ Elections took place all over Germany in May 1848, allowing all adult and independent male citizens to vote, restrictions that were differently interpreted in different German lands.⁵⁴

Following political developments from Berlin, Jacob Grimm took part in a series of preelection meetings and eventually did travel to Frankfurt as an elected delegate, but then as a representative for a constituency in the Rhineland where he replaced Ernst Moritz Arndt who had an alternative seat.⁵⁵ A member of an academic elite, Grimm was in many ways a typical Frankfurt parliamentarian. Around a tenth of the delegates were professors, and administrative and judicial officials as well as lawyers were in a majority; businessmen, industrialists, and landowners were less well represented.⁵⁶ Once an observer in Paris and Vienna and an exiled defender of the constitution in Hanover, it would seem that Jacob Grimm had finally become a political actor as a delegate in an assembly striving for political influence in all of Germany. Grimm, now well over 60 years old, began service as a parliamentarian.

In the actual building where the parliament started its work in late spring of 1848, the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, Jacob Grimm was even placed in a symbolic spot in the very middle and enjoyed the reputation as an icon of German unity.⁵⁷ He did submit proposals and speak to the assembly and even emerged as an occasional radical, arguing not for the abolition of kingship but for the elimination of noble ranks in Germany.⁵⁸ The nobility was a historically significant class, Grimm conceded, but the practice of knighting distinguished citizens was no longer necessary and produced absurd linguistic results, a sure symptom of the obsolescence of feudal gradations. The noble name "Heinrich von Kronberg" made some sense – Heinrich came *from* Kronberg – but not "Johann Wolfgang von Goethe," since Goethe was not a location.⁵⁹ In Grimm's implicit view, monarchy should be retained in German lands but no longer rest on the social and political dominance of an aristocratic elite. Instead, kings should rule as unifying figures over a de-stratified, more egalitarian national community.⁶⁰ For Grimm, an individual's birth and genealogy were still decisive, but only because they guaranteed *national* membership, not hereditary noble status;

the concept of nationhood required a form of governance based in equality under law.⁶¹ Grimm's motion was voted down.

Eventually, Grimm left the parliament early and returned to Berlin. Worried about his health and ultimately indifferent to the everyday business of politics, Grimm departed from Frankfurt before the parliamentary session came to a close.⁶² He was also deeply discouraged by the Prussian government's truce with the Danish king in late August 1848,⁶³ an armistice that concluded the conflict over Schleswig and Holstein and simultaneously demonstrated that the parliament did not control the military or foreign policy.⁶⁴ Grimm did not want to speak out against the decision of his king,⁶⁵ and yet felt he had to follow his conscience and retreat from an assembly that accepted the end of the Prussian campaign against Denmark and harmed the national cause.⁶⁶ Disappointed, Grimm wrote to his brother in Berlin that the Prussian government had failed Germany; it had committed "an un-German action [*sich einer undeutschen handlung schuldig gemacht*]."⁶⁷ Grimm traveled from Frankfurt to Berlin in October 1848 and in November, large Prussian forces loyal to the king marched into the capital; took control of major streets, squares, and buildings; and stifled any resistance in the city⁶⁸ – it was a monarchist *coup d'état*.⁶⁹ The next year, the German national assembly was dissolved, effectively powerless against German princes who could still count on the support of their armies as well as the administrative and judicial bureaucracies.⁷⁰

Paris, Vienna, Göttingen, Berlin, and Frankfurt – these cities were stations in Jacob Grimm's political biography, as the sites of tumultuous, even epochal events, and in some cases stages for an increasingly public role. After stepping down as a Frankfurt delegate and returning to Berlin, Grimm did not cease to observe or comment on politics in the following decade, and there were further political incidents in the lives of the brothers as well as further proclamations from Jacob Grimm.⁷¹ Yet his most intensive involvement and his most widely recognized moments as a representative of the German constitutional and nationalist movement were in the past.

At the end of his life, Jacob Grimm could look back on an at least intermittently political career. He had served as a Hessian official in post-Napoleonic Paris tasked with the recovery of stolen art, a somewhat disgruntled and underpaid secretary at the Congress of Vienna,⁷² emerged publicly as a principled professor taking a stand against an autocratic king in Göttingen to then reappear, ten years later, as a widely venerated delegate in the German national parliament. The sequence of events and places could be read as a story of gradual national-liberal emancipation

neatly embodied by the biography of one famous scholar. Grimm started out as a civil servant in the stagnant, absolutist Electorate of Hesse, became widely known as a defender of the constitution standing against the rigid Hanoverian king, and finally went to Frankfurt as an elected representative of the German people. Jacob Grimm's career would then instantiate a narrative of a frequently frustrated but nonetheless slowly progressing process of liberalization and democratization, in which educated and propertied groups in Germany demanded, and tried to seize, a greater political role vis-à-vis traditional princely rulers. Grimm's life was a long journey, from a mid-size and fairly provincial principality to a more integrated national arena, from service in absolutist conditions to the first German parliament.

In the Service of the King

Yet this story of Grimm's political biography does not capture his enduring, professional relationship to power as it was exercised in early nineteenth-century German lands. Jacob Grimm was employed, deployed, promoted, rejected, and recruited many times, almost always by an incumbent elector or king, for whom he could appear as a promising or insufficiently subservient servant of the state, a useful administrator-scholar, or an impertinent one. Together with his brother, Grimm experienced more than once just how much it mattered exactly who governed the lands where he lived and worked. The Elector Wilhelm I of Hesse, Jérôme Bonaparte King of Westphalia, the Elector Wilhelm II of Hesse, Ernst August I King of Hanover, and finally Frederick William IV of Prussia – each of these rulers in some way decided Grimm's professional situation, his tasks, and his status, for the simple reason that he was working in administrative and academic capacities for princely states. Like many other university-educated professionals employed in the administrative or judicial bureaucracy, Grimm's chief wish was to reform the state and educate the rulers on which he relied for secure employment and perhaps also a sense of existential comfort in an era of accelerated change.⁷³ While he hoped that the age of “unlimited power [*unumschränkter Herrschaft*]” of princes who treated states as their patrimonial possessions would come to an end,⁷⁴ he could also express the worry that the resolute separation of powers would fragment monarchical authority, weaken its reputation, and fatally destabilize governance.⁷⁵

There was nothing extraordinary about Grimm's professional service to a string of rulers in smaller or larger German principalities. Eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century German states and statelets relied on academically trained professionals who “wrote histories, compiled statistics, edited government directories, compendiums, handbooks, public affairs newspapers, and journals, gave special instruction to court residents and their children, censored private publications, even served on diplomatic missions.”⁷⁶ Many items on this list apply directly to Jacob Grimm. He served as the court librarian and archivist under Jérôme Bonaparte in Kassel; a secretary, censor, and librarian under the first Hessian Elector; a librarian and professor in Göttingen; and an academy member and funded lexicographer in Berlin. Jacob Grimm himself never worked as a tutor at the court, but Wilhelm Grimm did, trying to teach the Hessian Elector’s indifferent and apathetic son in the early 1820s.⁷⁷

In this light, Jacob Grimm emerges as a fairly typical early nineteenth-century figure, the academically trained government employee, sometimes a scholar-administrator with particular tasks and sometimes a professor in the state-supported university system; a university post effectively meant working as a state servant tasked with the education of further generations of state servants.⁷⁸ Grimm came from a family of civil servants bound to the personal rule of the local landgrave and continued in that tradition;⁷⁹ while he insisted on the dignity and independence of the well-educated, professional, and incorruptible bureaucrat, he remained a salaried official in states headed by princes. For most of his life, he was a “servant of the state [*staatsdiener*]” working in some administrative or academic capacity under a “prince [*fürst*].”⁸⁰ The laws that regulated civil service increasingly granted bureaucrats greater autonomy, and Grimm insisted on the entitlement of civil servants to stable employment as well as their right to relinquish their positions should they so wish.⁸¹ Yet during Grimm’s lifetime, the administrative apparatus clearly remained an instrument of monarchs who selected, promoted, and in some cases dismissed bureaucrats.⁸²

Despite his posthumous fame as the coauthor or coeditor of the world’s most widely available collection of folktales, Grimm was in his own time not an author making a living in the book market and the public sphere; he was in some sense not even primarily a professor with the university as his natural professional home.⁸³ Instead, he was a professional with a legal and historical education who remained in close and direct contact with princes and monarchs and depended on employment in the state. He certainly always remained at a distance from other sectors of society, such as agriculture, private enterprise of any kind, or early industry. While he occasionally and very publicly appeared as a politicized civil servant and parliamentary delegate, he stayed close to the orbit of one or the other

prince or king. Grimm was, after all, trained for and belonged to the organizational arm of state power, and his welfare depended on reliably discharging duties to princes; he had no experience of democratic governance and did not really believe in its viability; he wanted an “alert popular element [*waches volkselement*],” but not a democracy.⁸⁴ Grimm’s life was at all times enmeshed with the princely and monarchical state.

This overview suggests a slightly different story than the one of gradual emancipation. Throughout his career, Grimm looked like a professional who managed to survive an unpredictable sequence of changes at the top:⁸⁵ he lost his position under the Hessian Elector but was hired by the new French king installed by Napoleon, only to find employment again in the restored Electorate after Napoleon’s demise. He left Kassel for Göttingen after being ignored at the Hessian court but eventually ended up in Prussian Berlin, recruited by the Prussian ruler after refusing to comply with the actions of the Hanoverian king. The 1840s may have been Jacob Grimm’s decade of vigorous political participation, including his work in the first German national parliament, but since Frederick William IV of Prussia had been personally involved in the rehabilitation of both brothers in 1841, giving them new official positions of security and prestige, Grimm believed he stood in a relationship of strong personal loyalty and obligation to the king.⁸⁶ This attachment to the institution of monarchy was not merely a private stance, but something he was happy to announce to the public. When presenting himself to the voters in his assigned parliamentary district in 1848, he assured the electorate in a newspaper note that he was a staunch antiradical: “I stand for a free, united fatherland under a powerful king, and against all republican desires [*republikanische Geliüste*].”⁸⁷

For both Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the historically long-lasting institution of kingship understandably loomed large in their political imagination. They could grumble and protest about clumsy, indifferent, arrogant monarchs and take a stand against a king’s rash suspension of a constitution supposed to temper royal power, but they did not question the fundamental necessity and rightness of monarchical government. At crucial junctures, they benefited from royal recognition and protection. Yet monarchy did not fully define their political horizon, for there was of course also the nation, the German nation, to which Grimm was singularly devoted as a scholar. Politically, Grimm aimed for a reconciliation between a strong monarchy and a constitutionally protected people, a reconciliation enabled by nationhood understood as a community of mutual affection. Grimm’s political vision of a philologically informed king ultimately

embodied his wish for an enduring connection between the nation he loved and the king he served.

Politics and the Love of the Fatherland

As a civil servant in an age that took steps toward the mixed form of constitutional monarchy, Jacob Grimm did not glorify kingship as divinely ordained. Few German thinkers invoked divine right in the post-revolutionary nineteenth century, not even leading conservatives, who instead spoke of the “monarchical principle,” a term for the monarch’s unified control over the legislative and executive functions of the state understood as a guarantee of order.⁸⁸ Grimm seemed to accept such a concentration of functions in the hands of a royal head of state, such a non-separation of powers,⁸⁹ and never understood monarchy as a historically superseded or deficient form of rule. He was neither a sycophant monarchist fearful of any degree of popular involvement nor a committed republican. Instead, he hoped for a new form of mediation between monarchical rule and popular freedom and dignity,⁹⁰ an “alert popular element” somehow integrated into the nation’s politics, but in no way a full-fledged democracy without a royal head.⁹¹ To achieve political balance, princes should adopt constitutions that would regulate their actions vis-à-vis the citizens, Grimm thought, but above all, kings should relate respectfully and even lovingly to the culturally and linguistically defined people and accept a given, natural, non-malleable, territorially limited ground for their rule. This knowledge of and love for the nation could be appreciated, even judged from the outside – by a philologist.

For Grimm, the nation was a community of love, and philological research devoted to the national community was a labor of love, a patient attempt to retrieve, order, and publicize literary materials that would constitute a restored cultural object of collective reverence. Together with Wilhelm Grimm, whose major philological study was an inventory of the ancient Germanic tradition of epic narrative, Jacob sought to bequeath an entire tradition to his contemporaries – German grammar, German myths, German laws, German legends, German tales. The research output served to construct large repositories that could serve as tangible proof of the existence of a German people as a linguistically distinct, self-enclosed, and self-generating *Volk*, a people with ancient roots, a collective subject to which political rule must show sensitivity and pledge fidelity.

Importantly, Grimm understood this life-defining attempt to resurrect a German vernacular culture as an expression of love; the word *liebe* often

figured in his vocabulary when it came time to justify or summarize his decades-long enterprise. In an autobiographical account written for a history of Hessian men of letters from 1831, Grimm wrote that love of the fatherland, *liebe zum vaterland*, was implanted in all the Grimm siblings early on without anyone actually speaking about it – it was simply woven into their modest family life.⁹² He returned to the theme at the end of the narrative, just before a bibliography of his writings, to add that the bulk of his texts were dedicated to the history of Germanic language, poetry, and law and in this way explored the common fatherland, a work he called dignified and solemn.⁹³ He viewed the results of his scholarly labor as acts of devotion, but the tomes with linguistic, historical, and ethno-cultural material were also meant to “nourish” the “love” for the fatherland.⁹⁴ The purpose of Grimm’s scholarship was not merely to expand historical learning, or to distill out of the past some directly applicable principles for present societal life, but to express and facilitate attachment and affection.

Love – love for the fatherland – was the motivation for and objective of Grimm’s research. At the second national meeting of Germanists in Lübeck in 1847, a member of the association gave a toast to Jacob Grimm as the field’s most prominent and wide-ranging scholar and the association’s president, a man who single-handedly had founded the study of Germanic grammar. Moved to the point of tears, almost unable to speak, Grimm replied with a declaration of love for Germany and the absolute supremacy of this love in the hierarchy of his passions and loyalties: “*ich liebe mein vaterland, mein vaterland ist mir immer über alles gegangen* [I love my fatherland, my fatherland has always gone above everything].”⁹⁵ Grimm was a nationalist in the sense that he publicly expressed love for the fatherland, a love that exceeded any other attachment in his life, an allegiance more sacred than all other ties.

The invocation of love was partly a gesture of its time. Grimm was a figure of the Romantic period, an age known for multiple philosophies of love. Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel, born in 1772, a little less than a generation before Grimm, believed that the rationalism of Enlightenment thought and the apparent legalistic character of Kantian ethics had fatally reduced the significance that love had held for morality in the Christian tradition.⁹⁶ Community, Schlegel believed, was principally formed through bonds of love and not through the commitment of reasoning minds to noncontradictory maxims or the discovery of shared interests.⁹⁷ The young Hegel, a contemporary of Schlegel and later his bitter critic, saw in love the avenue toward reconciliation between self and

other, subject and object. In love, you become united with what seems different and distinct, as the loving self both surrenders itself to another and finds or rediscovers itself expanded and enriched by someone or something outside of itself. In this way, love releases humans from their narrow self-attachment and parochialism, creates unity with others, and helps heal a world apparently riven with division and conflict.⁹⁸ Around 1800, then, love emerged as an element in a conceptual vocabulary meant to remedy the insufficiencies of a philosophy focused on the faculty of reason; rational insight alone could not determine how people ought to act ethically, relate to one another, unite and remain unified, and it certainly could not supply enough motivation and energy for an ethical life.

Jacob Grimm did not give love a central role in a philosophical project, as he had no philosophical project of his own, but his repeated statements of love for the fatherland indicate that he privileged a community of loyalty sustained by bonds of affection over any other principle of cohesion, such as the shared subjection to a wise patrimonial ruler or the contractual agreements of self-interested individuals.⁹⁹ His insistence on love of the fatherland aligned with a more traditional patriotism, the premodern and certainly pre-Romantic doctrine of *amor patriae*, which stipulated the natural inclination and fundamental obligation to defend one's country, to which one owed one's moral formation and religious education;¹⁰⁰ traditional patriotism, too, held that a vigorous civic life depended on an affective basis.¹⁰¹ However, in the texts of Jacob Grimm, love emerged as a fundamental principle of connection, without which *any* social life would remain arid and brittle; love would bind people together more effectively and more authentically than any other attitudes.¹⁰² In this sense, Grimm was a Romanticist.

Grimm's rhetoric of love emerged early in his writing career. In an 1811 treatise on the social and poetic continuity between German court poets and city poets, the young Jacob Grimm suggested that the state apparatus should not fear the proliferation of exclusive and close-knit guilds, associations, and corporations such as universities within its bounds. Seeking to reconcile – or to obfuscate – the difference between smaller face-to-face communities and the less personal structure of a state,¹⁰³ Grimm argued that sub-state associations would not necessarily divide loyalty and fragment authority so much as they would multiply people's connections to one another. There would be no tension between local community and supra-local state, Grimm concluded, where “love dwells within love.”¹⁰⁴ Such growth of love within love presupposed that the state itself already

inspired love among its subjects. Without the halo bestowed upon it by the inner affection of subjects, the state would, Grimm claimed, seem like an alien and “miserable establishment [*elende Einrichtung*].”¹⁰⁵ The word for a genuinely loved state, Grimm also wrote, was *Vaterland*, and what defined the fatherland was the unity of hearts prepared to die for it – humans prepared to abandon their individual lives for what constituted their common collective life.¹⁰⁶ In the early tract on medieval poetry, then, the “fatherland” was Grimm’s name for a polity insofar as it served as a treasured existential shelter and an encompassing realm of love for multiple smaller communities of love housed within it. Love for the fatherland was a consistent attitude of Grimms; he spoke of it in the early 1810s, the early 1830s, and the late 1840s, across venues and genres, in his early scholarly treatises, his brief notes toward a scholarly biography, and at ceremonial occasions late in his career. The rhetoric of love did not change, although the object of this love was quietly scaled up from provincial Hesse to a Germany yet to be unified; like the term *Heimat*, the “fatherland” proved a fairly elastic concept, able to render collectivities of various size emotionally accessible.¹⁰⁷

The Romanticist Jacob Grimm preached love and the nationalist Grimm specified, and respecified, its ultimate target, but what was the “fatherland” and why did it figure, for Jacob Grimm, as the object of a profound and predominant love? The *father-land*, the word itself, relies on the “metaphorical infusion of biological descent into spatial location,”¹⁰⁸ a spatial location that the mature Grimm believed he could delineate with scientific, grammatical means. The notion attributes parentage to territory and binds people to a supposedly generating and sustaining place to which they belong and to which they are entitled. The notion of a fatherland also indicates that conationals are each other’s kin – Grimm cared deeply about lateral relations, the “*collateralen*” that constituted a fraternity, a “brotherhood [*brüderschaft*],” and together formed a unit, even a tribe.¹⁰⁹ Not coincidentally, the two brothers Jacob and Wilhelm had very consciously and effectively made themselves known as the *brothers Grimm*.¹¹⁰ The fatherland was thus the bounded, territorial-familial community into which linked and like individuals were born. It gave life to human beings who therefore had to thank it for their very existence; it was land understood as the source and support of fraternal, communal being.¹¹¹ When Grimm announced a love for the fatherland that exceeded all other attachments, he can be said to have expressed pious reverence for what he perceived to be his origin, something that preceded and enveloped him, and even gave him life. To claim indifference to the

nation as fatherland would be to reject the very source of one's existence, to deny and hence betray the matrix and foundation of individual being.

Through his statements of love for the fatherland, Grimm attended to what he believed constituted the ground of his own existence, although he located this ground not in a divine being or in identifiable ancestors but in a historical community, not in the Father or the fathers but the fatherland. Against this backdrop, Grimm's philological work can be construed as an attempt to foster love as the appropriate attitude to a quasi-sacred source of present life. It was a philology dedicated neither to the prestigious classical heritage that still dominated gymnasiums and universities of Grimm's day nor to the scriptures of his Protestant environment, but one that instead applied the instruments of scholarly methodology to what Grimm called the "unremarkable, even despised conditions and particularities of Germany,"¹¹² which was his "country of birth."¹¹³ Grimm's work was an initially counter-canonical philology that required the difficult retrieval and restoration of previously neglected textual sources, and then the further illumination of those texts by reference to an even less valued non-textual "folk tradition [*volkstradition*]."¹¹⁴ The ultimate aim of this counter-canonical enterprise was to establish shared and stable objects of love, in effect a new collection of quasi-sacred texts that could lay claim to the kind of respect owed to traditional ancient and religious textual sources.¹¹⁵ If love for the German nation in Grimm's view amounted to piety toward an origin, his reconstructive and redemptive philological work constituted a systematic attempt at consecration; the supposedly unremarkable and even despised, the profane and even trivial, merited the same kind of philological attention as deeply revered classical and religious sources, since it belonged to the nation.¹¹⁶ Grimm's scholarship aimed to accumulate, catalogue, and disseminate as much material about the nation as was possible across the fields of language, literature, law, and religion, all to render more plausible the sense that nationhood represented the true reality of history and social life, one that demanded not only attention but affection and devotion. Philology was a disciplined practice of love dedicated to the nation as a community of love.

After this lengthy exploration of nationalist pathos, one might impatiently ask what kind of politics was implied by the rhetoric of love, or what political order would best embody and sustain the solidarity that Grimm understood as the source of authentic and lasting community. Grimm had little interest in declarations of devotion and sacrifice that went beyond the national border but also little genuine understanding for divisions or

conflicts *within* the nation. For him, love denoted unity, a sense of community much more profound than any temporary agreements among agents with otherwise separate interests.¹⁷ Needless to say, this vision diminished any appreciation for contentious politics conducted within the envisaged national space. He may have celebrated the plethora of associations and corporations as transgenerational communities of interest, mutual self-help, and familiarity, but he was uneasy about modern political parties, movements, and ideologies standing against one another and often evasively tried to appeal to an underlying unity as the basis for mutual understanding. The nation, in Grimm's view, should be a regionally and culturally varied but politically non-factionalized and only quietly stratified community of love, represented and guarded by a king.

When Grimm faced conflicts between radical critics and conservative defenders of the crown, as he inevitably did, he invoked the underlying commitment of all to the German nation. When confronted with the tension between princely power and constitutional constraint, he imagined the appearance of a *loving king* who would govern in accordance with the spirit of the people. In moments of conflict, then, Grimm retreated to assumptions about an extra-political and extra-judicial, entirely natural harmony guaranteed by nationhood. In this implicit vision, the battle lines of the age, between liberals and conservatives, between the king and the people, faded in a haze. The main principles of Grimm's political thinking seem to have been an aversion to conflict within the national space and the presumption of a unity that preexisted political conflict and negotiations. Yet the notion of love did serve as a criterion of confident, even aggressive judgment. Since devotion to the nation emerged as a requirement and source of legitimacy, Grimm could, as the self-appointed guardian of national being, sharply reject rulers who seemed lacking in love as well as dismiss combative political factions as overly rigid, narrowly focused, and even rude and repulsive. Jérôme Bonaparte lacked love for and knowledge of the German-speaking subjects, Grimm had written to Achim von Arnim, and clearly meant it as a definitive critique. The unloving king had no rightful claim to rule.

The Politics of National Unity

Grimm repeatedly explained that he viewed his linguistic, literary, and historical studies as a humble labor of love. Insofar as these scholarly studies yielded a principle of geopolitical boundary drawing, however, the sincere

devotion to nationhood broke with the existing political organization in Central Europe. In his commitment to the nation as the relevant political unit, Grimm effectively demanded an end to state formations that extended across and below the supposed national space; he stood for the dissolution of the empire, the consolidation or at least federative bundling of myriad principalities, but also the opening up of the walled city – the program was fairly ambitious.

The question here is whether the philologist's care for the bounded integrity of the German nation ever involved political responsibilities and positions other than the initial determination of proper cultural and linguistic borders for the sake of legitimate rule. Did Grimm envisage the retreat of the philologist, once the ground for the exercise of rule had been defined? Or did he believe that the nation committed him to further opinions or programs, even to a post-revolutionary ideology, such as liberalism or conservatism, including a critique or defense of kingship?

In their day, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were typically seen as liberals, especially because of their insistence, in Göttingen, on the integrity of a binding constitution in the confrontation with a king who annulled it. In his treatment of the “age of revolution,” the historian Eric Hobsbawm even singles out the brothers Grimm as prominent examples of authors who galvanized German liberals with their defiant stance.¹¹⁸ After the conflict in Hanover, the liberal German-language press of the day certainly celebrated Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and their colleagues as principled and courageous constitutionalists.¹¹⁹ In Leipzig, a group of publishers even raised voluntary contributions for the seven protesters, to compensate for their suddenly canceled salaries.¹²⁰ Yet it is instructive to see how Jacob Grimm sought to depoliticize the protest¹²¹ and generally eschewed ideological labels. In letters to his patrician and more conservative mentor Friedrich Carl von Savigny around the time of the French July Revolution in 1830, he assured his friend that he did not necessarily sympathize with the advocates of a constitution for Prussia and approved of it insofar as it would strengthen the love of the nation or the “national feeling [*nationalgefühl*]” among the general population.¹²² Grimm's ultimate concern, here as elsewhere, was the unifying love for the fatherland, the *vaterlandsliebe* of all.¹²³ In another letter from the same year, Grimm even briefly appeared as an unprincipled political Romantic, just as attracted by the colorful pomp of monarchy as by the intrepid decisiveness of protesters and revolutionaries.¹²⁴

Rather than forcefully and unequivocally take sides for monarchy or republicanism, Grimm preferred to speak about the harmonious adjustment between rulers and ruled. German princes, he wrote to Savigny, should

relinquish claims to unconstrained domination,¹²⁵ calm their fear of a politically interested population, and embrace the current enthusiasm for the nation. It ought to be the princes' task, he wrote, to stimulate the people's devotion to their own nation, at the very least by supporting initiatives in the realm of scholarship, his own domain.¹²⁶ Grimm neither argued for the defense nor the complete abolition of princely rule but was primarily concerned with its adaptation to the national character of the population, as disclosed by Germanist scholars.

The rejection of explicit terms in the letters to Savigny may partly have been an attempt to placate a mentor wary of political turbulence, but ideological ambivalence was a fairly consistent feature in Grimm's writings. In an 1819 letter to his childhood friend Paul Wigand, Grimm confessed that incompatible political philosophies nonetheless appeared to him to possess some element of truth; he could appreciate both calls for restoration of an old order and demands for the introduction of liberal constitutions that would limit princely power.¹²⁷ Displaying some self-insight, he then also expressed relief over the fact that he stood far away from the difficult art of governing, in which consequential decisions had to be made under multiple constraints.

Such vacillation was not just amateurishness admitted only in letters to close friends and colleagues but marked Grimm's public statements as well. He had, he wrote in his long commentary on his own dismissal in Göttingen, no theory of the state [*staatsrechtliche theorie*] and none to support.¹²⁸ He was familiar with the ideological oppositions of his day but could not quite take sides. Who does not, he asked, in some regard sympathize with "constitutionalist and the legitimists, the radicals and the absolutists," as long as they were all decent and honest?¹²⁹ The orthogonal positions all had their virtues, and all had their flaws. In another comment, Grimm claimed that he found constitutionalists overly hasty and pedantic in their eagerness to do away with the evolved particularities of a social order [*hergebrachte und angestammte ordnung*], but that the absolutists presumed an unnatural degree of societal immobility – both camps failed to appreciate the virtues of gradualism.¹³⁰ As the list of conflicting positions suggests, Grimm was not ignorant of the divisions of his time and had certainly read a number of works of political philosophy, such as texts by Johann Gottlob Fichte, Karl Ludwig von Haller, Benjamin Constant, Adam Müller, and of course the writings of friends and colleagues such as Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann and Ernst Moritz Arndt.¹³¹ However, in public as in private, he abstained from committing himself to any sharply defined doctrine regarding the optimal political order; his frequently

professed *vaterlandsliebe* did not permit him to take sides in a battle over the character of political rule in Germany as long as all ideological combatants were German.¹³²

Grimm was confident and even strident in debates about the *boundaries* of Germany but more diffident when it came to declaring support for one or the other vision of political order within the nation. Border settlement seems to have been the one task that the philologist was prepared to assume. As Michael Freeden has pointed out in his work on ideologies, nationalism is ideologically thin. It stands for a prioritization and positive valorization of a particular group that endows its members with an identity and claims their undivided loyalty.¹³³ The importance of this commitment to the nation as the fundamental component of humanity becomes obvious in an international setting: the world must be remade so that each people is given statehood; multinational empires, independent cities, and traditional principalities must all make room for a universalized nationalism, and the nation-state represents the most mature and most viable political form. Once the nation's independence has been established, however, the nationalist agenda appears underspecified.¹³⁴ After securing self-determination at the level of the nation, it is relatively quiet about liberties and rights for individuals within the new framework; despite its emphasis on the pseudo-kinship of conationals, it does not in itself generate a position on the optimal or just distribution of scarce goods within the community. Nationalism can combine with other ideologies. It can, for instance, make common cause with liberals in the pursuit of national self-governance or with conservatives in the attention to national history as a constraint upon the pace or direction of change – Jacob Grimm displayed both attitudes – but this adaptability only reveals the relative leanness of nationalist thought.

Jacob Grimm's vision encapsulated the radical character of early nineteenth-century nationalism but also its relative political reticence. He insisted on Germany's right to rule over itself as a nation of affiliated tribes united by a culture and a language, internally diverse but not fragmented, free from the oppression of an alien nation, and held together in some federal form. When the discussion moved to the precise political structure of the self-determining nation or potential catalogues of civil rights, however, Grimm often chose to convey ambivalence and indecision.¹³⁵ His statement on basic rights in the German national parliament was brief and unspecific and concluded with a salute to the hallowed German ground or territory; he felt more comfortable with the pathetic invocation of German unity than with the determination of

particular rights.¹³⁶ He did not propagandize for any one side in the conflict between constitutionalists and absolutists, liberals and restorationists, and he typically had little to say about the procedures for determining a legitimate leader. He was, finally, so indifferent to socio-economic structures, disparities of wealth, and pervasive penury that one may wonder what he was referring to when he spoke about the German “people”; it appeared as a figure abstracted from current social conditions and stratifications.¹³⁷ The “social question” that began to be discussed in Germany around 1840¹³⁸ and became so central to the upheavals of 1848¹³⁹ seems to have been largely alien to Grimm, although the widely discussed problem of pauperism cannot have been completely shielded from his view: in 1843, the family friend and ally Bettina von Arnim published a book dedicated to the Prussian king that included a report on the topic of poverty and incarceration in Berlin.¹⁴⁰ Bettina von Arnim, too, sought to capture the attention of the Prussian king, but with news about abject misery on the fringes of the capital.

It is entirely possible to pick out comments and positions in Grimm’s writing and connect them with contemporary camps and ideologies. He had to refuse the term “constitutionalist” actively because he did stand up for an extant constitution in Göttingen. He did believe that there were limits to princely power and that a ruler should be responsive to the people, although not by governing according to popular will, but, more vaguely and indirectly, in consonance with the people’s spirit, as it was expressed in cultural-historical objects of philological interest. While having to work in a commission for censorship in Kassel, he often preferred to choose the most tolerant option,¹⁴¹ partly because of time constraints and other pragmatic concerns but also partly because a coercive intervention would, he thought, do more harm than good.¹⁴² As mentioned earlier, in one of his more radical moments in 1848, he suggested the abolition of any legally enshrined recognition of noble status in Germany. No achievement for the fatherland, Grimm argued, required acknowledgment in the needlessly ostentatious form of knighting.¹⁴³ One senses here Grimm’s dislike for social hierarchies *within* the national space, although he hardly grasped class-based politics. Such examples suggest that Grimm at least on occasion could envision a more egalitarian community, so long as the individual subjects were equal by virtue of their shared national membership. Grimm’s anti-aristocracy was not necessarily fully or self-consciously democratic, but in its focus on the fraternal relationships among conationals, it did break with feudal stratification and paved the way for a more democratic conception of the population.

At the same time, Grimm might strike us as having a conservative temperament. He placed trust in the slow evolution of institutions and attitudes rather than intrusive attempts to steer a society toward an abstractly formulated ideal. He seems to have wanted to pull away from loudly proclaimed programs and characterized the young husband of his friend Paul Wigand's daughter as "a little too glaringly liberal."¹⁴⁴ The problem for Grimm here did not simply lie in the political stance but in the fervor and rigidity with which it was espoused and promoted; liberals appeared to him as strident "screamers."¹⁴⁵ This predilection for the modest and the muted was also apparent in his critique of the most vocal and radical collective carrier of early nineteenth-century German nationalism, the university fraternities. The *Burschenschaften* were, he wrote to Wigand in a letter from 1831, far too obstinate and solemn for his taste, unnaturally stiff in their commitment to principles.¹⁴⁶ A major demonstration for German national republicanism and the free press with thousands of participants, the so-called Hambacher fest in 1832,¹⁴⁷ Grimm dismissed as nothing less than revolting.¹⁴⁸

Grimm celebrated the self-regulating organism over the voluntary intervention by some empowered agent, whether that agent was a traditional monarch with means of coercion or a modern factional association. Language, to name the obvious instantiation of such an organism, could refresh itself, shed old forms but compensate for losses, and evolve without the deliberate and discernible intervention of any one speaker or group.¹⁴⁹ It was with an eye to such examples of quiet self-correction and self-regulation that Grimm expressed skepticism and occasional disdain for explicitly formulated and aggressively pursued political programs; only that which grew of its own accord was truly viable. Even so, such Romanticist organicism remained ideologically ambiguous.¹⁵⁰ Grimm typically argued for greater self-determination over decision-making from above and the importance of a unifying nationality over rigidly separated castes; these attitudes were compatible with the politically liberal critique of both absolutism and corporate society. However, he also generally showed a preference for evolved institutions and conventions over fascination with novel designs, which hints at his affiliation with the Romanticist counter-Enlightenment.¹⁵¹

Grimm was outspoken when it came to defining the nation and settling claims over lands and populations, but more elusive when it came to declaring his beliefs about the state's political organization. This was due, one could say, to his particular brand of philological nationalism. He paid professional scholarly attention to historically developed communities of

language and culture, which he thought allowed him to make definitive claims about the boundaries of legitimate rule; he knew where the line ran between the native and the foreign, the German and the non-German. The intervention or dominance of a national community by a “foreign people [*fremden volkes*]” certainly constituted a clear violation of its dignity, an unnatural denial of the fundamental reality of separate nations.¹⁵² When a potentially invidious issue emerged within the national space, however, in clashes between republicans and restorationists, liberals and conservatives,¹⁵³ Grimm’s vocabulary of unity and growth appeared a little less decisive, and this was noted in his time. Decades after 1848, the year of revolution, the German novelist and journalist Theodor Fontane recalled one of Jacob Grimm’s speeches as simultaneously evocative and vacuous: “And then the old Jacob Grimm went up to the podium . . . and said something or other about Germany, something quite general, which in any real political assembly would have made people call out ‘get to the point.’ But these words were not uttered by anyone, because everyone was touched and moved by the sight.”¹⁵⁴ This vagueness of the philologist, gently mocked by Fontane, was symptomatic; the Germanist scholar cared about the lingual and territorial unit of the nation but had few specific proposals to offer for its political future. As long as everyone engaged in political debates within a clearly defined and closed national discursive space, however, the nationalist had succeeded; the boundary had been drawn.

The Philologist King – the Loving King

Jacob Grimm wanted to be remembered for his love of the fatherland, not his attachment to a city, loyalty to a leader, or passionate engagement for a principle such as liberty or justice. Yet this love seems only to have been weakly generative politically and left many issues unaddressed. With its hyperalert concern for the borders of the collective unit, nationalism goes only so far ideologically once those borders have been determined and fortified. To cite a formulation from the political philosopher F. M. Barnard, Grimm concentrated on one aspect of political legitimacy, namely the “where” of legitimate government, and paid less attention to the “who” and the “how.”¹⁵⁵

Grimm’s commitment to the nation as the legitimate unit of rule was not entirely empty politically speaking. A ruler who is also a conational will, so the implied nationalist argument goes, be more likely to cherish and help cultivate the shared national culture, which constitutes the highest value and priority for nationalists. In the figure of the Prussian king, who had experienced the anti-Napoleonic wars, liked to read

historic romance novels, and was called a Romantic on the throne,¹⁵⁶ Grimm may briefly have felt that he encountered a ruler with some genuine interest in German culture, although he had often been wary of Prussian ambitions to dominate other German lands without respect for an internally diverse German ethnic and linguistic community.¹⁵⁷ The presumed ties of solidarity and common horizon among conationals, nationalists typically believe, also make the national leadership more inclined to promote the well-being of the subjects, or at least better able to understand the preferences of the culturally particular people.¹⁵⁸ When rulers and ruled hail from the same nation, their habits and interests are more likely to align. An imperial elite, by contrast, is more likely to ignore the dominated people's character or misunderstand the culturally separate subjects.¹⁵⁹ To speak of an ethnic or cultural dimension of political legitimacy may have its limited justification, although Grimm never quite expounded it.

Yet such a general, tacit assumption about the value of a hierarchy *within* the nation rather than *across* different ethnic or linguistic groups hardly answers the questions Grimm and his peers faced in the age of constitutional monarchy. In the post-revolutionary period, the idea of popular sovereignty was by no means universally embraced, but it could also not be completely suppressed; it loomed as a liberating or menacing vision and formed the backdrop to the national specification of the people as the only proper unit of any rule, independent of the structure of leadership. Among moderate liberals, however, the long-lived and symbolically potent institution of monarchy seemed to guarantee political stability and executive consistency in a volatile age, despite the erosion of its theological justifications.¹⁶⁰ For all their fervor, even radical nationalist propagandists such as Ernst Moritz Arndt and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn did not necessarily wish to dismantle royal rule.¹⁶¹ However, the many resulting attempts to forge a mixed constitution that integrated strong royal leadership while securing basic rights and allowing for popular influence remained contradictory and unsatisfactory. Grimm himself experienced how traditional rulers in Austria and Prussia were chased out of their capitals by uprisings motivated at least partly by the demand for a constitution, and of course he was himself exiled by a king whose first act was to abrogate an already adopted constitution. The key political form of Grimm's era, the constitutional monarchy, seemed like an incoherent compromise between post-revolutionary and traditional rule. It typically could not subdue the battle for power or answer the question about the "final and absolute" authority.¹⁶²

Radicals who argued for the foundation of a German republic and conservatives who called for a complete restoration of absolutist monarchies all hoped to resolve the dualism of constitutional monarchy – by eliminating it. Grimm’s peers among the moderate liberals, however, devised various means of resolution. Wilhelm Eduard Albrecht (1800–76), one of Grimm’s colleagues in the professorial group who defied the annulment of the Hanoverian constitution in 1837, sought to remove sovereignty from the king as well as from the people and argued instead that it belonged to the impersonal state.¹⁶³ In Albrecht’s view, the king was merely an “organ” of the state construed as a juridical person whose workings were specified in a constitutional document;¹⁶⁴ hence, neither the monarch nor the people possessed ultimate authority. Facing the same dilemma, Grimm suggested another, nonjuridical resolution to the conflict between princely power and popular autonomy. Shared nationality, understood as a thick tissue of homogeneous preferences and affective ties among conationals, would serve to bridge divisions. In the tension between royal and more democratized rule, between princely and popular sovereignty, cultural affiliation and national solidarity would help the monarch adapt his rule to the peculiarities of his own people and allow it to flourish according to its innate characteristic. However, this did not exactly help define the ultimate locus of decision-making. Facing the tension between paradigms of sovereignty and rule, one could say that Grimm opted for imprecision and wishful thinking, but it is clear that the widespread vision of a dual political power, a strong and authoritative monarchy as well as a fully awakened nation, compelled Grimm to search for some preestablished accord between the king and people.¹⁶⁵ Ethnic and cultural likeness as the basis for consonance and affection would, Grimm thought, ensure that rule remained unobtrusive and flexible vis-à-vis the population and that this population in turn would endorse and cherish its ruler.

For Grimm, these tensions of constitutional monarchy were not abstract possibilities. As mentioned, he was himself an agent and icon in the most famous constitutional struggle of the *Vormärz* period. In his 1838 public statement on the dismissal from the professorship in Göttingen, Grimm modestly indicated the utility of a constitution for a country, a set of fundamental laws to regulate the relationship between the ruler and the people. According to him, the “basic law of the state [*staatsgrundgesetz*]” could serve to inhibit abuses.¹⁶⁶ It could not really contribute to the kingdom’s flourishing, however, for its use value was entirely negative and regulatory. Grimm also downplayed the value of the Hanoverian

constitution in particular by saying that he did not want to comment on its specific virtues; many found flaws with it, he reported, and some thought it too democratic. Like all constitutions, it was an earthly creation and thus an impermanent and fragile thing, a mere “contract” between human agents.¹⁶⁷ Such a contract, however, should not be canceled as soon as a new ruler ascended to the throne; this would entail too much inconstancy and insecurity for the country. Instead, established constitutions ought to be respected and only be replaced or modified when both parties agreed on the terms; the king, Grimm concluded, ought to refrain from unilateral action. Grimm did not dispute the right of monarchs to rule, but he viewed them as partners in a relationship of mutuality and negotiation, without the prerogative to treat the nation as an object of command. In a strange rhetorical operation, Grimm managed both to downplay the sanctity of a constitution and to insist on the limits to the king’s right to revise or suspend it.

From Grimm’s Romanticist standpoint, a contract was an arrangement between self-interested parties for the maintenance of their relationship, and, as such, it failed to inspire; it was expedient but did not signify attachment. What did inspire, bring warmth, and foster intimacy was, as always, love, and the paragraph on the constitution in Grimm’s statement then somewhat hastily concluded on that note: “genuine blessings flow, however, from the prince’s pure love for his land [*der eigentliche segen geht allerdings von der reinen liebe des fürsten zu seinem lande*].”¹⁶⁸ The constitution existed to contain violations of the relationship between ruler and ruled, but its functionality, Grimm thought, was no replacement for genuine affection. Only a loving king would ensure the harmony between the ruler and the people and smooth the tensions in a traditional monarchy rendered constitutional.

Affectionate attachment was not the most traditional of royal attributes, and the suggestion that the king love the nation rather than show dominant strength and supreme wisdom might have been understood as a symptom of monarchy’s subtly reduced status. Regardless of how much Grimm celebrated royalty, a loving king was likely too emotionalized a figure for staunch restorationists.¹⁶⁹ Yet the king’s love for the nation might not be identical with the philologist’s devotion, even in Grimm’s own account. In Grimm’s formulation, the prince’s pure love for *his* land – *zu seinem Lande* – might still refer to the ruler’s paternal concern for his subjects,¹⁷⁰ his well-meaning, well-intentioned care for *his* inheritance, and not just his attachment to the nation as the most prominent of conationals. Grimm invoked love to imagine a natural equilibrium between the king

and the national people, but love itself was an ambiguous concept that could house both the new and the old, the philologist's passion for the nation as a community of love and the ruler's paternalist affection for his patrimony, love of the fatherland and fatherly love. Grimm's quietly traditionalist formulation about the love of the ruler for his land did not unambiguously picture the king as yet another member of the nation, and it at least alluded to the notion that the land constituted royal property. It remained unclear whether the country should be seen as the prince's fatherland or his father's land. Grimm's invocation of love did not so much resolve the tension between the people and the king as encapsulate it.