class necessarily entail the losses of another. But as that sense of conflict diminishes on the left, it has fallen to the right to remind voters that there really are losers in politics and that it is they—and only they—who speak for them. "All conservatism begins with loss," Andrew Sullivan rightly notes, which makes conservatism not the Party of Order, as Mill and others have claimed, but the party of the loser.[43]

The chief aim of the loser is not—and indeed cannot be—preservation or protection. It is recovery and restoration. That, I believe, is one of the secrets of conservatism's success. For all of its demotic frisson and ideological grandiosity, for all of its insistence upon triumph and will, movement and mobilization, conservatism can be an ultimately pedestrian affair. Because his losses are recent—the right agitates against reform in real time, not millennia after the fact—the conservative can credibly claim to his constituency, indeed to the polity at large, that his goals are practical and achievable. He merely seeks to regain what is his, and the fact that he once had it—indeed, probably had it for some time—suggests that he is capable of possessing it again. "It is not an old structure," Burke declared of Jacobin France, but "a recent wrong."[44] Where the left's program of redistribution raises the question of whether its beneficiaries are truly prepared to wield the powers they seek, the conservative project of restoration suffers from no such challenge. Unlike the reformer or the revolutionary, moreover, who faces the nearly impossible task of empowering the powerless—that is, of turning people from what they are into what they are not—the conservative merely asks his followers to do more of what they always have done (albeit, better and differently). As a result, his counterrevolution will not require the same disruption that the revolution has visited upon the country. "Four or five persons, perhaps," writes Maistre, "will give France a king."[45]