

Dark Ages, like the one who told his frustrated wife, ‘Nice girls aren’t supposed to climax.’ Today’s wife knows better.”<sup>28</sup>

What the conservative ultimately learns from his opponents, wittingly or unwittingly, is the power of political agency and the potency of the mass. From the trauma of revolution, conservatives learn that men and women, whether through willed acts of force or some other exercise of human agency, can order social relationships and political time. In every social movement or revolutionary moment, reformers and radicals have to invent—or rediscover—the idea that inequality and social hierarchy are not natural phenomena but human creations. If hierarchy can be created by men and women, it can be uncreated by men and women, and that is what a social movement or revolution sets out to do. From these efforts, conservatives learn a version of the same lesson. Where their predecessors in the old regime thought of inequality as a naturally occurring phenomenon, an inheritance passed on from generation to generation, the conservatives’ encounter with revolution teaches them that the revolutionaries were right after all: inequality is a human creation. And if it can be uncreated by men and women, it can be recreated by men and women.

“Citizens!” exclaims Maistre at the end of *Considerations on France*. “This is how counterrevolutions are made.”<sup>29</sup> Under the old regime, monarchy—like patriarchy or Jim Crow—isn’t made. It just is. It would be difficult to imagine a Loyseau or Bossuet declaring, “Men”—much less citizens—“this is how a monarchy is made.” But once the old regime is threatened or toppled, the conservative is forced to realize that it is human agency, the willed imposition of intellect and imagination upon the world, that generates and maintains inequality across time. Coming out of his confrontation with the revolution, the conservative voices the kind of affirmation of political agency one finds in this 1957 editorial