unconservative of ways: jettisoning the realism of his father and his party for an internationalism long considered the exclusive property of the left, pressing the forward march of history against the status quo of the Middle East.

Ever since Edmund Burke invented conservatism as an idea, the conservative has styled himself a man of prudence and moderation, his cause a sober—and sobering—recognition of limits. "To be conservative," we heard Michael Oakeshott declare in the introduction, "is to prefer the familiar to the unknown . . . the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant."[1] Yet the political efforts that have roused the conservative to his most profound reflections—the reactions against the French and Bolshevik revolutions; the defense of slavery and Jim Crow; the attack on social democracy and the welfare state; and the serial backlashes against the New Deal, the Great Society, civil rights, feminism, and gay rights—have been anything but that. Whether in Europe or the United States, in this century or previous ones, conservatism has been a forward movement of restless and relentless change, partial to risk taking and ideological adventurism, militant in its posture and populist in its bearings, friendly to upstarts and insurgents, outsiders and newcomers alike. While the conservative theorist claims for his tradition the mantle of prudence and moderation, there is a not-so-subterranean strain of imprudence and immoderation running through that tradition—a strain that, however counterintuitive it seems, connects Sarah Palin to Edmund Burke.

A consideration of this deeper strain of conservatism gives us a clearer sense of what conservatism is about. While conservatism is an ideology of reaction—originally against the French Revolution, more recently against the liberation movements of the sixties and seventies—that reaction has not been well understood. Far from yielding a knee-jerk defense of an unchanging old regime or