the death of what was supposed to live forever, the conservative can no longer look upon time as the natural ally or habitat of power. Time is now the enemy. Change, not permanence, is the universal governor, with change signifying neither progress nor improvement but death, and an early, unnatural death at that. "The decree of violent death," says Maistre, is "written on the very frontiers of life."[16] The problem with the defender of the old regime, says the conservative, is that he doesn't know this truth or, if he does, he lacks the will to do anything about it.

The second element we find in these early voices of reaction is a surprising admiration for the very revolution they are writing against. Maistre's most rapturous comments are reserved for the Jacobins, whose brutal will and penchant for violence—their "black magic"—he plainly envies. The revolutionaries have faith, in their cause and themselves, which transforms a movement of mediocrities into the most implacable force Europe has ever seen. Thanks to their efforts, France has been purified and restored to its rightful pride of place among the family of nations. "The revolutionary government," Maistre concludes, "hardened the soul of France by tempering it in blood."[17]

Burke, again, is more subtle but cuts more deeply. Great power, he suggests in *The Sublime and the Beautiful,* should never aspire to be—and can never actually be—beautiful. What great power needs is sublimity. The sublime is the sensation we experience in the face of extreme pain, danger, or terror. It is something like awe but tinged with fear and dread. Burke calls it "delightful horror." Great power should aspire to sublimity rather than beauty because sublimity produces "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling." It is an arresting yet invigorating emotion, which has the simultaneous but contradictory effect of diminishing and magnifying us. We feel annihilated by great power; at the same