

# THE AGE OF ANXIETY AND BEYOND

## 1945—



### SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

#### Selection from *The Second Sex*

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), a treatise on female sexuality and a classic text of feminism, appeared at a time when the push for women's rights had temporarily lost forward motion. Women in most countries of the West now had voting rights (starting in Britain in 1918), thereby achieving the goal of the first phase of feminism; and no other issue drew women together as did the suffrage cause. Beauvoir's treatise did not so much offer a specific issue for women to rally around as it constituted a more general call to action—for women to rethink the way that the sexes functioned and interacted. The burden of her message may be summed up in her bold line "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman." She rejected innate sexual differences and proclaimed that femaleness is learned and thus subject to revision. Her message launched a second wave of feminism, revolutionizing millions of readers who have dramatically revised the way they think and act.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), this apostle of latter-day feminism, was herself a contradictory figure. France's outstanding woman of letters from 1945 until her death, she wrote, besides *The Second Sex*, well-received novels (*She Came to Stay*, 1943; *The Mandarins*, 1954) and books of autobiography (*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, 1958; *The Prime of Life*, 1960). Yet she was content to take second place to Jean-Paul Sartre, her lifelong mentor and the lover with whom she was involved in an unlicensed, open "marriage." At all stages of her life with Sartre, she readily set aside her own plans to edit, sharpen, and deliver detailed responses to his writing, duties she considered an honor. Beauvoir condemned female subservience in *The Second Sex*, but in her own life she created a myth of Sartre's genius, apparently thinking her own fame depended on his.

#### *Reading the Selection*

This selection, taken from the "Introduction" to *The Second Sex*, summarizes Beauvoir's argument for sexual equality. Two of her prime analytical tools are the concepts of "the Self" and "the Other," borrowed from the German thinker Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). With these terms, she shows that in society as currently arranged, Man is the "Self," the essential being, the necessary sex; as such, Man defines Woman as "the Other," the inessential being,

"the second sex." The category of "Otherness"—which, according to Beauvoir, Woman shares with the American Negro, the Jew, and the proletariat—is a primordial way of thinking in which privileged groups distinguish themselves from those they consider inferior, mysterious, and thus in need of control.

Even more than that of Hegel, the spirit of Sartre hovers over this work. Following Sartre, Beauvoir rejects preexisting social and moral categories, so that a woman is not "a feminine creature" but is instead what she wills herself to be. Beauvoir does not claim that a woman should become a masculinized female. Indeed, she recognizes that a woman has "ovaries, a uterus [and] these . . . circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature." But a woman, just as a man, must "choose" (take responsibility for) her situation, including her sex. In Beauvoir's new social order, women will live side by side with men, economically and intellectually separate, each engaged in the project of transcendence; that is, both will work to leave behind a permanent record—such as states, art, literature, architecture, and philosophies.



## Introduction

A man would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: "I am a woman"; on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. The terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity. In the midst of an abstract discussion it is vexing to hear a man say: "You think thus and so because you are a woman"; but I know that my only defense is to reply: "I think thus and so because it is true," thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply: "And you think the contrary because you are a man," for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong. It amounts to this: just as for the ancients there was an absolute vertical with reference to which the oblique was defined, so there is an absolute human type, the masculine. Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. "The female is a female

by virtue of a certain lack of qualities," said Aristotle<sup>1</sup>; "we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness." And St. Thomas<sup>2</sup> for his part pronounced woman to be an "imperfect man," an "incidental" being. This is symbolized in Genesis<sup>3</sup> where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet<sup>4</sup> called "a supernumerary bone" of Adam.

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Michelet<sup>5</sup> writes: "Woman, the relative being. . . ." And Benda<sup>6</sup> is most positive in his *Rapport d'Uriel*: "The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself. . . . Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man." And she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called "the sex," by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex—absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.

The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), Greek philosopher whose writings dominated Western thought until the Scientific Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274), the leading Christian thinker of the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis The creation of Eve is in Genesis 2:21–23.

<sup>4</sup> Bossuet Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627–1704), French bishop and supporter of the absolutist King Louis XIV.

<sup>5</sup> Michelet Jules Michelet (1798–1874), French historian, famous for Romantic and Nationalist prose.

<sup>6</sup> Benda Julien Benda (1867–1956), French writer and leader of anti-Romantic school of criticism.

most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other. This duality was not originally attached to the division of the sexes; it was not dependent upon any empirical facts. It is revealed in such works as that of Granet on Chinese thought<sup>7</sup> and those of Dumézil on the East Indies and Rome.<sup>8</sup> The feminine element was at first no more involved in such pairs as Varuna-Mitra,<sup>9</sup> Uranus-Zeus,<sup>10</sup> Sun-Moon,<sup>11</sup> and Day-Night<sup>12</sup> than it was in the contrasts between Good and Evil, lucky and unlucky auspices,<sup>13</sup> right and left, God and Lucifer. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought.

Thus it is that no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself. If three travelers chance to occupy the same compartment, that is enough to make vaguely hostile "others" out of all the rest of the passengers on the train. In small-town eyes all persons not belonging to the village are "strangers" and suspect; to the native of a country all who inhabit other countries are "foreigners"; Jews are "different" for the anti-Semite, Negroes are "inferior" for American racists, aborigines are "natives" for colonists, proletarians are the "lower class" for the privileged.

Lévi-Strauss,<sup>14</sup> at the end of a profound work on the various forms of primitive societies, reaches the following conclusion: "Passage from the state of Nature to the state of Culture is marked by man's ability to view biological relations as a series of contrasts; duality, alternation, opposition, and symmetry, whether under definite or vague forms, constitute not so much phenomena to be explained as fundamental and immediately given data of social reality." These phenomena would be incomprehensible if in fact human society were simply a *Mitsein* or fellowship based on solidarity and friendliness. Things

become clear, on the contrary, if, following Hegel,<sup>15</sup> we find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed—he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object.

But the other consciousness, the other ego, sets up a reciprocal claim. The native traveling abroad is shocked to find himself in turn regarded as a "stranger" by the natives of neighboring countries. As a matter of fact, wars, festivals, trading, treaties, and contests among tribes, nations, and classes tend to deprive the concept *Other* of its absolute sense and to make manifest its relativity; willy-nilly, individuals and groups are forced to realize the reciprocity of their relations. How is it, then, that this reciprocity has not been recognized between the sexes, that one of the contrasting terms is set up as the sole essential, denying any relativity in regard to its correlative and defining the latter as pure otherness? Why is it that women do not dispute male sovereignty? No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential; it is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One. But if the Other is not to regain the status of being the One, he must be submissive enough to accept this alien point of view. Whence comes this submission in the case of woman?

There are, to be sure, other cases in which a certain category has been able to dominate another completely for a time. Very often this privilege depends upon inequality of numbers—the majority imposes its rule upon the minority or persecutes it. But women are not a minority, like the American Negroes or the Jews; there are as many women as men on earth. Again, the two groups concerned have often been originally independent; they may have been formerly unaware of each other's existence, or perhaps they recognized each other's autonomy. But a historical event has resulted in the subjugation of the weaker by the stronger. The scattering of the Jews, the introduction of slavery into America, the conquests of imperialism are examples in point. In these cases the oppressed retained at least the memory of former days; they possessed in common a past, a tradition, sometimes a religion or a culture.

The parallel drawn by Bebel<sup>16</sup> between women and the proletariat is valid in that neither ever formed a minority or a separate collective unit of mankind. And instead of a single historical event it is in both cases a historical development that explains their status as a class and accounts for the membership of particular individuals in that class. But proletarians have not always existed, whereas there have always been women. They are women

<sup>7</sup> Granet . . . thought French historian Marcel Granet (1884–1940), author of *Chinese Civilization* (1930).

<sup>8</sup> Dumézil . . . Rome Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), French philologist and historian of religions; research focused on the cultural background shared by Indo-European peoples.

<sup>9</sup> Varuna-Mitra In Hindu mythology, Varuna and Mitra are brothers. Varuna shines at night and is related to the Moon; Mitra sees by day and is related to the Sun.

<sup>10</sup> Uranus-Zeus In Greek mythology, Uranus and Zeus served as kings of the gods at different stages of early history. Uranus belonged to the first generation of gods; his reign coincided with a time of violence and injustice. Zeus belonged to the third generation of gods; his reign brought justice and order to the world.

<sup>11</sup> Sun-Moon In ancient cultures, the sun was worshiped as the source of light and heat, and hence considered a deity, usually masculine, as in the Babylonian Shamash. The moon was used to measure time and was also treated as a deity, invariably masculine until later times.

<sup>12</sup> Day-Night In Egyptian mythology, day and night were represented by the brother deities Horus and Seth, respectively, who were engaged in constant struggle.

<sup>13</sup> auspices Signs. In ancient Rome, the auspices were the priests who interpreted signs from birds, animals, or other phenomena, which were believed to foretell the future.

<sup>14</sup> Lévi-Strauss Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908), French social anthropologist, author of *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (*The Elementary Structures of Kinship*), first published in 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Hegel Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), German philosopher.

<sup>16</sup> Bebel August Bebel (1840–1913), German socialist, cofounder of the Social Democratic Party of Germany; author of *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (*Woman and Socialism*) (1883).

in virtue of their anatomy and physiology. Throughout history they have always been subordinated to men, and hence their dependency is not the result of a historical event or a social change—it was not something that occurred. The reason why otherness in this case seems to be an absolute is in part that it lacks the contingent or incidental nature of historical facts. A condition brought about at a certain time can be abolished at some other time, as the Negroes of Haiti<sup>17</sup> and others have proved; but it might seem that a natural condition is beyond the possibility of change. In truth, however, the nature of things is no more immutably given, once for all, than is historical reality. If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change. Proletarians say “We”; Negroes also. Regarding themselves as subjects, they transform the bourgeois, the whites, into “others.” But women do not say “We,” except at some congress of feminists or similar formal demonstration; men say “women,” and women use the same word in referring to themselves. They do not authentically assume a subjective attitude. The proletarians have accomplished the revolution in Russia,<sup>18</sup> the Negroes in Haiti, the Indo-Chinese are battling for it in Indo-China,<sup>19</sup> but the women’s effort has never been anything more than a symbolic agitation. They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received.

The reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat. They are not even promiscuously herded together in the way that creates community feeling among the American Negroes, the ghetto Jews, the workers of Saint-Denis,<sup>20</sup> or the factory hands of Renault.<sup>21</sup> They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men—fathers or husbands—more firmly than they are to other women. If they belong to the bourgeoisie, they feel solidarity with men of that class, not with proletarian women; if they are white, their allegiance is to white men, not to Negro women. The proletariat can propose to massacre the ruling class, and a sufficiently fanatical Jew or Negro

might dream of getting sole possession of the atomic bomb and making humanity wholly Jewish or black; but woman cannot even dream of exterminating the males. The bond that unites her to her oppressors is not comparable to any other. The division of the sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history. Male and female stand opposed within a primordial *Mitsein*, and woman has not broken it. The couple is a fundamental unity with its two halves riveted together, and the cleavage of society along the line of sex is impossible. Here is to be found the basic trait of woman: she is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another.

One could suppose that this reciprocity might have facilitated the liberation of woman. When Hercules sat at the feet of Omphale and helped with her spinning, his desire for her held him captive; but why did she fail to gain a lasting power<sup>22</sup>? To revenge herself on Jason, Medea killed their children<sup>23</sup>; and this grim legend would seem to suggest that she might have obtained a formidable influence over him through his love for his offspring. In *Lysistrata* Aristophanes gaily depicts a band of women who joined forces to gain social ends through the sexual needs of their men; but this is only a play.<sup>24</sup> In the legend of the Sabine women, the latter soon abandoned their plan of remaining sterile to punish their ravishers.<sup>25</sup> In truth woman has not been socially emancipated through man’s need—sexual desire and the desire for offspring—which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female.

Master and slave, also, are united by a reciprocal need, in this case economic, which does not liberate the slave. In the relation of master to slave the master does not make a point of the need that he has for the other; he has in his grasp the power of satisfying this need through his own action; whereas the slave, in his dependent condition, his hope and fear, is quite conscious of the need he has for his master. Even if the need is at bottom equally urgent for both, it always works in favor of the oppressor and against the oppressed. That is why the liberation of the working class, for example, has been slow.

Now, woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change. Almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man’s, and frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognized in the abstract, long-standing

<sup>17</sup> Negroes of Haiti The slave rebellion in the French colony of Santo Domingo in 1791, which created the independent black republic of Haiti, the first black governed state in the Western Hemisphere.

<sup>18</sup> revolution in Russia Led by the Bolsheviks in 1917.

<sup>19</sup> the Indo-Chinese . . . in Indo-China French Indo-China, comprising the protectorates of Cambodia, Laos, Annam, and Tonkin, was founded in 1887. After World War II, the area emerged under the control of the French government. In September 1945, the Vietnamese rebel leader Ho Chi Minh carved out the area called Vietnam and proclaimed its independence from France. France’s new government invaded and triggered the French Indo-China War, 1946–1954.

<sup>20</sup> Saint-Denis A working class neighborhood in Paris.

<sup>21</sup> Renault In 1945, the Renault automobile manufacturer became Regie Nationale des Usines Renault, under the control of the French government and headquartered in Boulogne-Billancourt.

<sup>22</sup> Hercules . . . power In Greek mythology, the hero Hercules was a slave to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, for three years. During this time, Omphale wore masculine clothes, a lion skin, and Hercules dressed in a female garment.

<sup>23</sup> Jason . . . children In Euripides’ play, *Medea*, Jason is married to the sorceress Medea; when he attempts a more politically advantageous marriage, Medea kills their children.

<sup>24</sup> *Lysistrata* A Greek comedy by Aristophanes, first performed in 411 B.C.

<sup>25</sup> the Sabine . . . ravishers An ancient Roman legend. Rome’s founders, lacking wives, abducted and raped the women of the Sabine people, a neighboring tribe.

custom prevents their full expression in the mores. In the economic sphere men and women can almost be said to make up two castes; other things being equal, the former hold the better jobs, get higher wages, and have more opportunity for success than their new competitors. In industry and politics men have a great many more positions and they monopolize the most important posts. In addition to all this, they enjoy a traditional prestige that the education of children tends in every way to support, for the present enshrines the past—and in the past all history has been made by men. At the present time, when women are beginning to take part in the affairs of the world, it is still a world that belongs to men—they have no doubt of it at all and women have scarcely any. To decline to be the Other, to refuse to be a party to the deal—this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste. Man-the-sovereign will provide woman-the-liege with material protection and will undertake the moral justification of her existence; thus she can evade at once both economic risk and the metaphysical risk of a liberty in which ends and aims must be contrived without assistance. Indeed, along with the ethical urge of each individual to affirm his subjective existence, there is also the temptation to forgo liberty and become a thing. This is an inauspicious road, for he who takes it—passive, lost, ruined—becomes henceforth the creature of another's will, frustrated in his transcendence and deprived of every value. But it is an easy road; on it one avoids the strain involved in undertaking an authentic existence. When man makes of woman the Other, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity. Thus, woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other.

But it will be asked at once: how did all this begin? It is easy to see that the duality of the sexes, like any duality, gives rise to conflict. And doubtless the winner will assume the status of absolute. But why should man have won from the start? It seems possible that women could have won the victory; or that the outcome of the conflict might never have been decided. How is it that this world has always belonged to the men and that things have begun to change only recently? Is this change a good thing? Will it bring about an equal sharing of the world between men and women?

These questions are not new, and they have often been answered. But the very fact that woman is the Other tends to cast suspicion upon all the justifications that men have ever been able to provide for it. These have all too evidently been dictated by men's interest. A little-known feminist of the seventeenth century, Poulain de la Barre,<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Poulain de la Barre François Poulain de la Barre (1647–1723), French woman scholar, author of *De l'égalité des deux sexes (Equality of the Two Sexes)* (1673).

put it this way: "All that has been written about women by men should be suspect for the men are at once judge and party to the lawsuit." Everywhere, at all times, the males have displayed their satisfaction in feeling that they are the lords of creation. "Blessed be God . . . that He did not make me a woman," say the Jews in their morning prayers,<sup>27</sup> while their wives pray on a note of resignation: "Blessed be the Lord, who created me according to His will." The first among the blessings for which Plato<sup>28</sup> thanked the gods was that he had been created free, not enslaved; the second, a man, not a woman. But the males could not enjoy this privilege fully unless they believed it to be founded on the absolute and the eternal; they sought to make the fact of their supremacy into a right. "Being men, those who have made and compiled the laws have favored their own sex, and jurists have elevated these laws into principles," to quote Poulain de la Barre once more.

Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. The religions invented by men reflect this wish for domination. In the legends of Eve<sup>29</sup> and Pandora<sup>30</sup> men have taken up arms against women. They have made use of philosophy and theology, as the quotations from Aristotle and St. Thomas have shown. Since ancient times satirists and moralists have delighted in showing up the weaknesses of women. We are familiar with the savage indictments hurled against women throughout French literature. Montherlant,<sup>31</sup> for example, follows the tradition of Jean de Meung,<sup>32</sup> though with less gusto. This hostility may at times be well founded, often it is gratuitous; but in truth it more or less successfully conceals a desire for self-justification. As Montaigne<sup>33</sup> says, "It is easier to accuse one sex than to excuse the other." Sometimes what is going on is clear enough. For instance, the Roman law limiting the rights of woman cited "the imbecility, the instability of the sex" just when the weakening of family ties seemed to threaten the interests of male heirs. And in the effort to keep the married woman under guardianship, appeal was made in the sixteenth century to the authority

<sup>27</sup> Jews . . . prayers In Hebrew, *shelo nsani ishah*.

<sup>28</sup> Plato (ca. 427–347 B.C.), Greek philosopher. Plato's attitude toward women is a topic of vigorous debate. On the one hand, in his ideal state, he called for educated women, along with educated men, to rule as philosopher-kings, but on the other hand, he made disparaging comments about women, as in this observation in *The Republic*: "The one sex is, so to speak, far and away beaten in every field by the other."

<sup>29</sup> Eve Genesis 3:7.

<sup>30</sup> Pandora From Greek, "all gifts." In Greek legend, Pandora opened a box against the advice of the gods, thus releasing all the evils that have plagued the world ever since.

<sup>31</sup> Montherlant Henry-Marie-Joseph Millon de Montherlant (1896–1972), French writer and social critic, opposed to democratic and "feminine" values.

<sup>32</sup> Jean de Meung Jean Chopinel, known as Jean de Meun or Meung (ca. 1240–before 1305), French poet, noted for his continuation of the *Romance de la Rose*, the great medieval poem on courtly love. De Meung's verses express a coarse antifeminism.

<sup>33</sup> Montaigne Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist.

of St. Augustine,<sup>34</sup> who declared that "woman is a creature neither decisive nor constant," at a time when the single woman was thought capable of managing her property. Montaigne understood clearly how arbitrary and unjust was woman's appointed lot: "Women are not in the wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them, since the men make these rules without consulting them. No wonder intrigue and strife abound." But he did not go so far as to champion their cause.

It was only later, in the eighteenth century, that genuinely democratic men began to view the matter objectively. Diderot,<sup>35</sup> among others, strove to show that woman is, like man, a human being. Later John Stuart Mill<sup>36</sup> came fervently to her defense. But these philosophers displayed unusual impartiality. In the nineteenth century the feminist quarrel became again a quarrel of partisans. One of the consequences of the industrial revolution was the entrance of women into productive labor, and it was just here that the claims of the feminists emerged from the realm of theory and acquired an eco-

nomie basis, while their opponents became the more aggressive. Although landed property lost power to some extent, the bourgeoisie clung to the old morality that found the guarantee of private property in the solidity of the family. Woman was ordered back into the home the more harshly as her emancipation became a real menace. Even within the working class the men endeavored to restrain woman's liberation, because they began to see the women as dangerous competitors—the more so because they were accustomed to work for lower wages. . . .

So it is that many men will affirm as if in good faith that women *are* the equals of man and that they have nothing to clamor for, while *at the same time* they will say that women can never be the equals of man and that their demands are in vain. It is, in point of fact, a difficult matter for man to realize the extreme importance of social discriminations which seem outwardly insignificant but which produce in women moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to spring from her original nature. The most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend woman's concrete situation. And there is no reason to put much trust in the men when they rush to the defense of privileges whose full extent they can hardly measure. We shall not, then, permit ourselves to be intimidated by the number and violence of the attacks launched against women, nor to be entrapped by the self-seeking eulogies bestowed on the "true woman," nor to profit by the enthusiasm for woman's destiny manifested by men who would not for the world have any part of it. . . .

<sup>34</sup> St. Augustine (354–430), Christian writer and church official; a Father of the Church.

<sup>35</sup> Diderot Denis Diderot (1713–1784), French writer and editor of the *Encyclopédie*.

<sup>36</sup> John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), English philosopher, economist, and advocate of utilitarianism; author of *The Subjection of Women* (1869), a key text of feminism.

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## MALCOLM X AND ALEX HALEY

### Selection from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

In the 1950s most African American leaders, rallying around Martin Luther King, Jr., adopted the political agenda of racial integration into the American mainstream. However, more militant leaders also began to emerge—leaders who saw the future of their race as separate from white culture and society. Believing whites to be against full integration, they argued that blacks should strive to become independent from white control; to this end, they advocated the use of violence if conditions called for it. The militant agenda of these leaders appealed to the minority of blacks on the margin of black society, particularly those who had run afoul of the white justice system or who believed, for whatever reason, that black separatism was necessary.

Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little, 1925–1965) was the most charismatic of these militant black leaders of the 1950s. His ideas are enjoying a renaissance today among a large group of African Americans, his life having become the subject of a major film. Malcolm X came from a poor midwestern family who suffered at the hands of white racists, their home being burned and the father brutally murdered. Malcolm's mentally unstable mother, unable to care for eight children, allowed them to be assigned to relatives' homes and state institutions. The teenaged Malcolm wound up first in Boston and then in New York, where he became a hustler and petty thief. Prison became his school. There, he learned about the Black Muslims, an American