

# Decoder Process

Bonnie Sparling

232 S. Summit, apartment D4  
Iowa City, IA  
52240

The “decoder process”, is constructed through a process of gathering, sorting, recombining and editing. It uses quotations collected from a variety of genres (literary, popular, governmental, social, etc.); it uses no original material. This invention of the everyday, the taken for granted, a mythic conceptualization of Woman cites, but does not agree with, the existing cultural fragments on Woman. The “decoder process” draws together bits and pieces of histories, literature, philosophy, and popular culture. The combination of these fragments creates a hybrid essayistic narrative. Reading the “decoder process” requires us to look differently, on both the figurative and literal levels, at the given, fixed code of Woman. This hybrid text also serves as a model of writing instant theory.

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It would be possible to assemble here a collection of “great passages” from literature and philosophy to show how, unobtrusively but crucially, a certain metaphor of woman has produced (rather than merely illustrated) a **discourse** that we are obliged “historically” to call the discourse of man. Given the accepted charge of the notions of production and constitution, one might reformulate this “The discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman.” A large woman, a very stout woman rolled into our **existence** in 1905. There she is. Before her no stranger had ever stroked my face. There is no later rival to the first woman a man becomes attached to—the first woman, that is to say, who is really a woman, the first one who appears to him surrounded by all the magnificence Parisian society insists on. The woman. The look. Luxuriously sheer. Incredibly silky. Unmistakably discrimination against women is disguised. As a matter of fact, some of these ways seem to fit into the framework of education. All her mannerisms **come** back to me when I think **of** her hands. It’s almost as if you held back the hands of time when you help counteract the signs of aging with Creme No. 1. At once I knew she had spent all her life in feeling miserable; this misery was her native element; its fluctuations, its varying **depths**, alone gave her the impression of moving and moving. What bothers me is that a sense of misery is not **enough** to make a permanent soul. Trying to make sense of what had happened he had sometimes thought there was absolute truth, something of wholeness and goodness which called to him from outside the dark tangle of himself. That’s the way she is; that’s the way they all are. From the very first day of marriage you cease to be an animal working for a mistress—you’re a human being working for an animal. They make such a mess of you that in the end you deserve everything you get. Now I’ve punished her and that makes me the bully. That’s how it’s always been: she’s the martyr and I’m the bully. But who made me this way? I was too worn out from working to support her to be able to hit her. Jim’s a hopeless **romantic**. I’m the ultimate **pragmatist**. So I was a little worried about his going overboard on my diamond engagement **ring**. Then again, I didn’t want to discourage him

too much. So instead of telling him I didn't need a diamond, and kicking myself later, I practiced kicking. I can reach farther with a kick. With one thrust, I can make it count. I'm not afraid to hurt someone who's hurting me. I made sure he saw a jeweler. He found out that today you can get a really nice diamond, without breaking your budget, for about 2 month's salary. Jim says it's the best 2 months he's **EVER** spent. I think the trial was the worst part. I hated the **sight** of him. I described the details of what took place. **Since** I knew the rapist previously and had been friendly with him, I guess the jury **decided** that I was his property and he could do whatever he wanted with me. A diamond is forever. He is a person who has a certain mental toughness (he does not fall for the first ideological street singer he happens to meet) and who is therefore able consciously to choose the most attractive to him. The words for male persons are also used as the common gender nouns in these instances and this has the **effect** of **constituting** an implicit equation between people and male people so that women come to be represented in discourse as a secondary sex, differentiated from an implied male norm. The happiness **of** man is: I will. The happiness of woman is: he wills. "Behold just now the world became perfect!" "And yes! I can certainly call it happiness. And since you've given it to me, it's something more isn't it? She passed her hand lightly through his hair. Nothing solicits an emotional response quite like thick, radiant, healthy-looking hair. I expect you're thinking I'm pretty and shallow like other Parisian women, but **do** remember that I'm willing to give you **everything**. The effect of this status differential within the family should not be overlooked. It helps to explain why many men say women are too pretty to improve the situation. But there is no need to fear that such a way of arranging society will lead to undesirable **results**. Believe no one who says it is necessary to indulge sex desire. The woman is fifteen, a high school student. It is four o'clock **p.m.** Her boyfriend's father has picked her up in his car after school to take her to meet his son. When he has pulled the car into the garage, this thirty-seven year old father of six **rapes** her. Surface is the disposition **of** woman: a mobile, stormy film over shallow

water. Man's disposition is deep. Woman feels his strength but does not comprehend it. And he was not satisfied. Like a madness, he must go on. He got some large stones, and threw them, one after the other, at the white-burning center of the moon, till there was no moon any more, only a few broken flakes tangled and glittering broadcast in the darkness, without aim or meaning, a darkened confusion. I had no confidence in myself. I kept on feeling, if only I could find some missing **element**, I could enjoy cleaning house. But the whole thing is structured so that a woman loses her identity, so that she puts herself aside for another person. It was not a problem for my husband. He **didn't** need to get his identity from our marriage. He got it from his job. A man's work does not satisfy his material needs alone. It gives him pleasure. **Every** day, year in and year out, each woman should ask herself, over and over again, "What does this man want me to do, right now?" At last there comes an order to me to satisfy the desires of **each** of the four; if I go cheerfully, each will give me a crown to help me along my way; if they must employ violence, the thing will be done all the same; but the better to guard their secret, once finished with me they will stab me, and will bury me at the foot of yonder tree. She whimpered: "In **reality I possess** private property only insofar as I have something vendible." He here bases the impossibility of abolishing private property by transforming it into the concept of property ownership. Possession was his ideal. "There is a golden light in you, which I wish you would give me." So she swerved down to the steep, tree-hidden bank above the pond where the alders twisted their **roots**. Dazed, her mind was all gone. She felt she had fallen to the ground and was spilled **out**. She **could** feel her soul crying out in her, lamenting desolately. She accepted it without remark. Nothing mattered to her. What did the small privacies matter? Women do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. Happiness must be subordinated to the discipline of monogamic reproduction, to the **established** system. There is no need to fear. The **second** had me kneel **down**, between his legs: sometimes

he slapped, powerfully but in a nervous manner, **either** my **cheeks** **OR** my breasts; sometimes his impure mouth fell to sucking mine. In an instant my faced turned purple, my chest red ... I was in pain, I begged him to spare me, tears left from my eyes; they roused him, he accelerated his acitivities; he bit my tongue, and the two strawberries on my breasts were so bruised that I slipped backward, but was kept from falling. They thrust me toward him, I was everywhere more furiously harrassed, and his ecstasy supervened...That's enough. If you use any more of these passages we agreed to cut I will stop your play. He played so roughly with me. I thought it was all in fun at first, but then he started slapping me, throwing me wildly around, leading me toward the bed. I screamed, and he slapped me harder and harder. I felt I had fallen to the ground and was spilled out, like water on the earth. Motionless and spent she remained in the gloom. Though even now she was aware that in the *darkness* was a little tumult of **ebbing** flakes on light, a cluster dancing secretly in **a round**, twining and coming steadily together. They were gathering a heart again, they were coming once more into being. Gradually the fragments caught together reunited, heaving, rocking, dancing, falling back as in **panic**, but working their way home again persistently, making semblance of fleeing away when they had advanced, but always flickering nearer, a little closer to the mark, the cluster growing mysteriously larger and brighter, as gleam after gleam fell in with the whole, until a distorted, frayed moon was shaking upon the waters again, **reasserted**, renewed, trying to recover from its convulsion, to get over the disfigurement and the agitation, to be whole and composed, at peace.

## **sources of *Decoder Process* text segments**

- Hannah Arendt . . . . . *On Revolution*  
 Silvano Arieti . . . . . *Creativity*  
 Honoré de Balzac . . . . . *Pere Goriot*  
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-*Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of H.E.W.*

-*Our Bodies, Ourselves, 1976 edition*

## **Advertisements taken from Fashion magazines:**

- Vogue . . . . . Chanel crème, De Beers diamonds  
 Glamour . . . . . Hanes hose, Style shampoo