

## Quartet

*By Heiner Mueller © 1980 Rotbuch Verlag  
Translation by Dennis Redmond © 2002*

(After Laclos)

Space-time: salon before the French Revolution/bunker after WW III

MERTEUIL Valmont. I thought your passion for me extinguished. Whence this sudden rekindling. And with such youthful violence. Too late in any case. You will no longer set my heart aflame. Not even once. Not anymore. I'm telling you this not without regret, Valmont. In any case there were minutes, perhaps should I say moments, a minute, that's an eternity, where I was happy thanks to your company. I speak on my behalf, Valmont. What do I know of your feelings. And perhaps I should rather speak of minutes, in which I could use you for this, you, that was your capacity to feel something in the operation of my physiology, which seems in recollection to be a feeling of happiness. You haven't forgotten how to operate this machine. Don't take your hand away. Not that I would feel anything for you. It is my skin which remembers. Or perhaps it is simply, I'm speaking of my skin, Valmont, indifferent, you know, as to which animal the instrument of its pleasure is attached to, hand or claw. When I close my eyes, you are handsome, Valmont. Or misshapen, if I want. The privilege of the blind. They've drawn the better lot in love. They've been spared the comedy of circumstantial relations: they see what they wish. The ideal would be blind and deafmute. The love of stones. Have I shocked you, Valmont. How easily dismayed you are. I hadn't known you were so. Has the world of women wounded you after me. Tears. Do you have a heart, Valmont. Since when. Or has your masculinity been damaged in my succession. Your breath smells of solitude. Did the successor of my successor send you packing. The jilted lover. No. Don't withdraw your kind offering, my dear sir. I'm buying. I'm buying in any case. Feelings are not to be feared. Why should I hate you, I didn't love you. Let's rub our hides against each other. Ah the slavery of bodies. The misery of being alive and not being a god. To have a consciousness and have no power over matter. Don't go too fast, Valmont. It's good like that. Yes yes yes yes. That was well played, no. What do I care about the pleasure of my body, I'm no stall-maid. My brain is working normally. I'm completely frigid, Valmont. My life My death My beloved.

*Enter Valmont.*

Valmont. You come punctual to the minute. And I almost regret your punctuality. You cut short a pleasure that I would've been glad to share with you, if it had not consisted precisely of its indivisibility, if you know what I mean.

VALMONT Am I to understand that you are once again in love, Marquise. For so am I, if you want to put it that way. Once again. I'd be sorry if I had thwarted the attack of a lover on your beautiful person. Through which window did he climb out. May I hope, that he broke his neck in the process.

MERTEUIL Pfui, Valmont. And save the compliment for the lady of your heart, wherever this organ might be located. I hope for your sake, that the new sheath is gilded. You ought

to know me better. In love. I thought we were united in considering what you call love as the domain of the servants. How could you consider me capable of such a base impulse. The highest happiness is the happiness of animals. It's seldom enough that it falls into our laps. You permitted me to feel it from time to time, when it still pleased me to use you for this, Valmont, and I hope, you did not do so badly for yourself either. Who is the lucky one of the moment. Or may one already call her the unlucky one.

VALMONT It's Tourvel. As far as your indivisible one is concerned

MERTEUIL Jealous. You, Valmont. What a relapse. I could understand, if you had known him. By the way I'm certain you've met him. A handsome man. Although not dissimilar to you. Even migratory birds flap in the net of habit, though their flight spans the continents. Turn around once. His advantage over you is youth. Also in bed, if you want to know. Do you want to know. A dream, if I take you, Valmont, for the reality, I beg your pardon. In ten years perhaps there wouldn't be any difference between you, presupposing I could turn you into stone right now with a loving Medusa's gaze. Or into a more pleasing material. A productive conception: the museum of our loves. We would have full houses, and how, Valmont, with the image-columns of our putrescent desires. Dead dreams, organized alphabetically or in chronological order, free from the accidents of the flesh, no longer affected by the terrors of transformation. Our memory needs crutches: one doesn't even remember the various curves of the pricks, let alone the faces: a mist. Tourvel is an insult. I did not give you your freedom so that you could mount this cow, Valmont. I could understand, if you took an interest in the little Volange, a fruit freshly plucked from the garden of the convent, my virgin niece, but Tourvel. I admit, she's an impressive chunk of flesh, but shared with a husband, who has bitten into it, a faithful husband, as I have all grounds to fear, and that for many years, what remains for you, Valmont. A remnant. Do you seriously want to poke around in this turbid remainder. I'm sorry for you, Valmont. If she were a whore, who had learned her trade. Merrault for example I'd share with ten men, but the sole lady of society, who is perverse enough to please herself in marriage, a religious nut with knees red from the church pew and fingers swollen from hand-wringing before the father confessor. These hands touch no genitals, Valmont, without the blessing of the church. I bet she dreams of the Divine Conception when her loving husband lowers himself on her, with the conjugal intent of making her a child, once a year. What is the despoliation of a landscape against the robbery of pleasure through the fidelity of a husband. To be sure the Earl of Gercourt speculates on the innocence of my niece. In good faith I might add: the notary already has the bill of sale. And perhaps you are afraid of his competition, he already snapped Vressac from under your nose, and you were two years younger at the time. You're getting old, Valmont. I thought it might give you pleasure, leaving aside the ride on the virgin, to crown the beautiful animal Gercourt with the inevitable antlers, before he enters his office as gamekeeper and all the poachers of the capital attack his forest and renew his subscription to this head-ornament. Be a good dog, Valmont, and pick up the scent while it's fresh. A little youth in bed, if the mirror no longer provides it. Why lift a leg on an poorbox. Or are you eating your heart out for the evening oats in the feed-bag [Gnadenbrot] of marriage. Do we want to set an example for the world and marry each other, Valmont.

VALMONT How could I dare to offend you so before the eyes of the world, Marquise. The oats could be poisoned. By the way I prefer to select my own hunt. Or the tree, on

which I lift a leg, as you prefer to call it. But no rain has fallen on you for far too long, when have you looked into the mirror last, friend of my soul. I wish I could be of service to you as a cloud, but the wind is driving me to new skies. I have no doubt that I'll bring the poorbox into bloom. As for the competition: Marquise, I know your memory. Even in Hell, you will not forget that the President preferred Tourvel to you. I am ready to be the loving tool of your revenge. And I expect a better hunt from the object of my adoration than from your virgin niece, inexperienced as she is in the arts of fortification. What could she have learned in the convent besides fasting and a little God-pleasing masturbation with the crucifix. I bet that after the frost of her tender prayers she burns for the driving thrust which puts an end to her innocence. She'll run into my knife before I even draw it. She won't double back once: she doesn't know the thrill of the hunt. What is game to me without the voluptuousness of the chase. Without the sweat of fear, the strangled breath, the white-eyed scattered look. The rest is digestion. My best tricks will make a fool of me like an empty theater does to an actor. I'll have to applaud myself. The tiger as thespian. May the mob get themselves off between door and threshold, their time is expensive, it's costing us money, our noble profession is to kill time. It requires everything of a human being: there's too much of it. Whoever could bring the clocks of the world to a standstill: eternity as permanent erection. Time is the hole of creation, all of humanity fits inside. To the mob the Church has stuffed it with God, we know that it is black and bottomless. When the mob figures this out, they will stuff us in as well.

MERTEUIL The clocks of the world. Are you having trouble, Valmont, getting your better self to stand at attention.

VALMONT With you, Marquise. Although I must concede, that I begin to understand, why fidelity is the wildest of all excesses. Too late, as far as our tender relation goes, but I intend to give myself a little practice in this new experience. I hate past events. Change accumulates them. Observe the growth of our nails, even in the coffin we sprout. And imagine if we had to live with the refuse of our years. Pyramids of filth, until the tape at the finish-line tears. Or in the excrescences of our bodies. Only death is eternal, life repeats itself, until the abyss yawns. Noah's Flood a leak in the sewer system. As for the loving husband goes: he is abroad on a secret mission. Perhaps he'll succeed, politic as he is, in starting a war. A useful poison against the boredom of devastation. Life becomes faster, when dying becomes a stage-play, the beauty of the world cuts less deeply into the heart, do we have a heart, Marquise, during the view of its destruction, one sees the parade of young asses, which confront us daily with our transience, we can't have them all, you know, and the clap to each one that escapes us, before the row of sword-blades and in the thunderbolt of the muzzle-flash with some composure. Do you sometimes think of death, Marquise. What does your mirror say. It's always the other one who looks out. We seek him, when we tunnel through strange bodies, away from ourselves. Could be, there is neither the other nor the other, only the nothingness in our souls, which croaks for fodder. When are you putting your virgin niece on view, Marquise.

MERTEUIL Have you found yourself back into your hide, Valmont. No man fails to stiffen at the thought of the departure of his precious flesh, fear makes for philosophers. Welcome to sin and forget the poorbox, before piety overcomes you and you forget your true vocation. What else have you learned aside from maneuvering your prick into a hole, the same out of which you fell, with the same more or less short-lived result, and always in the delusion, that the applause of foreign membranes is meant only for you, the

screams of pleasure go to your address, while you are still only a dull vehicle, indifferent and entirely interchangeable, for the pleasure of the woman, who uses you, the power-mad fool of her creation. You know very well that for a woman every man is a man too few. You know this, too, Valmont: that fate will catch up to you soon enough, not even to be that much any more, a man too few. Even the gravedigger will have fun with us.

VALMONT The bestiality of our conversation bores me. Every word rips a wound, every smile bares a fang. We should have our parts played by tigers. Given to a bite, given to a blow of the paw. The stage-craft of beasts.

MERTEUIL You're going to pieces, Valmont, you're getting sensitive. Virtue is an infectious disease. Our soul – what's that. A muscle or a membrane. What I'm afraid of is the night of the bodies. A four days journey from Paris in a mudhole, which belongs to my family, this chain of members and laps, beaded on the thread of an accidental name, bestowed on an unwashed Ur-ancestor by a stinking king, living like something between a human being and cattle. I hope not to see it in this life, or in another life, if there is another life. The mere thought of its stench causes me to sweat from all my pores. My mirror sweats its blood. It does not cloud over my image, I laugh at foreign misery like every animal, which is endowed with reason. But sometimes I dream that it steps out of my mirror on its feet out of stall-dung and totally without a face, but I see its hands clearly, claws and hips, when it tears the silk from my thighs and throws itself on me like clumps of earth on the coffin and perhaps its violence is the key, which closes my heart. Go, Valmont. The virgin tomorrow evening in the opera.

*Exit Valmont*

Madame Tourvel. I lay my heart at your feet. Don't be alarmed, beloved of my soul. Can you believe, that an unchaste thought dwells in this breast after so many weeks of your pious company. I concede, I was someone else, before the thunderbolt of your eyes hit me. Valmont the heart-breaker. I BREAK THE HEARTS OF THE PROUDEST WOMEN. I hadn't known you, Madame. A shame when I think about it. Through what filth I have waded through. What art of deception. What depravity. Sins like scarlet fever. The mere glance of a beautiful woman, what am I saying, the rear end of a market-wench, and I'm transformed into a ravenous beast. I was an abyss, Madame. Would you like a look inside, I wanted to say, downwards, pardon me, from the heights of your virtue. I see you blush. How does the red come to your cheeks, my dear. It suits you. But where does your imagination get the colors, with which you paint my sins. Out of the sacrament of marriage perhaps, which I thought had armored you against the earthly power of temptation. I would be tempted to spread out my sins in detail for you, do you want to see my catalogue, in order to see your becoming blush still longer. At the very least we can safely conclude that blood flows through your veins. Blood. The cruel fate of not being the first. Don't make me think of it. And if you opened your veins for me, all your blood could not outweigh the marriage, which someone else took ahead of me and for eternity. The irretrievable moment. The fatal one-time-only of the blink of an eye. And so forth. Don't make me think of it. Don't be afraid. I respect the holy bond, which ties you to your husband, and if he could no longer find the path to your bed, I would be the first to help him. His pleasure is my joy, since your virtue has taught me to hate the scoundrel, which I was, and knows your lap is sealed. I hardly dare to kiss your hand. And if I may be so presumptuous, I'm not driven by an earthly passion. Don't take your hand away, Madame. A drink in the desert. Even the love of God needed a body. Why else did he allow his son to take human form and gave him the cross as a lover. FLESH HAS ITS OWN SPIRIT. Do you want to be my cross. You are to another through the sacrament of your marriage and not with me. But perhaps your body has the one or the other hidden entrance, which does not fall under the interdiction, forgotten or denigrated by the love of the President. Can you believe that so much beauty should have the sole function of reproduction and this eternally a middle. Is it not blasphemy, to reserve this mouth, the in and out of the breath, solely for the one purpose of nutritional intake, the golden middle of this splendid bottom, the sorrowful labor of discharging excrement. Can this tongue move only syllables and dead matter. What a waste. And what miserliness at the same time. Twins of vices. Yes, you sin against God, Madame, if you leave the wearing away of your gifts to the teeth of time and the tender fauna of the cemetery. Can it be less than a mortal sin, not to do what we're given to think. To strangle the monstrous products of our gifted brains before the first timid cry. The instrument of our bodies, is it not given to us, to be played until silence breaks the strings. The thought not become deed poisons the soul. Living with the mortal sin of discrimination and discarding. Dying, only partly used. The salvation of your immortal soul is what lies on my heart, Madame, at every attempt on your unfortunately corruptible body. You will leave it lighter, if it's completely used. Heaven is covetous of all matter and Hell is exact, it punishes idleness and neglect, its eternal torture is applied to the neglected parts. The deepest fall into Hell is out of innocence.

*Enter Valmont.*

VALMONT I will think it over, my dear Valmont. It moves me, that you appear to be so worried over the health of my soul. I will not refrain from informing my husband that the Heavens have selected him to be the corruptor of all my openings. Not without mentioning the selfless source, from which the revelation leapt at me. I see, you share my anticipation at the voyage of discovery into the nuptial bed. You are a saint, Valmont. Or should I have deceived myself in you. Are you supposed to have deceived me. Are you playing a game with me. What does this grimace hide. A mask or a face. The horrifying suspicion sprouts in my heart that you are cloaking a very earthly passion in the cloak of the awe of God. Do you fear, Valmont, the wrath of an insulted wife.

MERTEUIL Fear. What do I have to fear from your wrath except the reconstruction of my shaken virtue. Fear. What does the conversion of the sinner count for without the daily dagger-thrust of desire, the sting of remorse, the benefit of chastisement. Fear. I seek your wrath, Madame. Like the desert for rain, like the blind for the lightning-flash, which explodes the night of his eyes. Do not withhold the punishing hand from my unruly flesh. Every blow will be a caress, every tear of your nails will be a gift from the Heavens, every bite a monument.

VALMONT I'm no goose, Valmont, as you seem to believe. I will not give you the pleasure of being a tool of your degenerate pleasure. Tears, Mylord.

MERTEUIL Why not, Queen. You kill me when you speak of daggers. Spill my blood, if that will satiate your wrath. But do not scorn my finest feelings. This frivolity does not come from your beautiful soul. You shouldn't copy a monster like Merteuil. You are a bad copy, to your honor. I beg your pardon for encompassing your hand, you alone can stop the flow of my tears. Let me rest on your lap – ah you still mistrust me. Let me dispel your doubts. A test of my constancy. For example bare these breasts, whose beauty the armor of your costume cannot hide anyway. May lightning strike me, if I so much as raise my eyes. Not to mention my hand, it will wither away if

VALMONT Fall, Valmont. Fall, lightning did strike you. And take your hand away, it smells of decay.

MERTEUIL You're cruel.

VALMONT I?

MERTEUIL By the way I have to make a confession. You invited a mortal sin on yourself with the defense of your nuptial bed.

VALMONT So you're dying for a good cause and we'll see each other again in the sight of God.

MERTEUIL I'm not familiar with the geography of Heaven. I'd be afraid of missing you in the ranks of the blessed, which are quite numerous, if one may be permitted to believe the Church. But I do not speak of myself: it's a question of the blood of a virgin. The niece of the monster, the little Volanges. She pursues me. Church, salon or theater, as soon as she sees me from afar, she sways her virgin bottom towards my weak flesh. A vessel of evil, all the more dangerous because it is so completely innocent, a rosy tool of Hell, a threat from nothingness. Ah, the nothingness in me. It grows and devours me. Daily it demands its sacrifice. One day the temptation will strike me down. I will become the devil, who thrusts this child into damnation, if you do not lend me a hand and more, my angel, who carries me over the abyss on wings of love. Do it, make the sacrifice for your helpless sister, if you want to keep your heart cold against me, proof against the

flame, which burns me. After all you're putting less at risk than a virgin. Must I tell you what the Heavens think. Hell will thank you thrice over if you insist on your undivided bed. Your coldness, Madam, throws three souls into the eternal fire, and what is a murder against the crime done to even one soul.

VALMONT Do I understand you aright, Vicomte. Because you cannot control your lechery or the, how did you put it, growing nothingness within you, which you must sacrifice daily, isn't your philosophical vacuum nothing more than the daily necessity of your quite earthly genital canal? And because this one virgin has not learned to move with propriety, in what sort of hellhole of a convent must she have grown up, the happiness of my marriage is supposed to

MERTEUIL This can't be you. This cold heart is not yours. You save or damn three immortal souls, Valmont, with the deployment or the refusal of a body, which decays anyway. Reflect on your better self. The pleasure will be multiple: the end sanctifies the means, the sting of the sacrifice will make the happiness of your marriage more perfect.

VALMONT You know, that I would rather kill myself than

MERTEUIL And renounce bliss. I speak of the eternal.

VALMONT It's enough, Valmont.

MERTEUIL Yes, it's enough. Forgive the terrible test which I had to subject you to, in order to learn what I know: Madame, you are an angel, and my price is not too high.

VALMONT What price, my friend.

MERTEUIL The lifelong renunciation of the thrill of sensuous fulfillment, which filled up my other life, ah, how far does it lie behind me, due to the lack of an object worthy of my adoration. Allow me at your feet

VALMONT The devil knows many disguises. A new mask, Valmont?

MERTEUIL Look at the proof of my truth. How am I supposed to be dangerous to you, with what am I supposed to penetrate into the crypt of your virtue. The devil has no part of me any more, pleasure no weapon. BARREN AND OPEN ROLLS THE OCEAN. If you don't trust your eyes, convince yourself with your tender hand. Lay your hand, Madame, on the empty spot between my thighs. Don't be afraid of anything, I am pure soul. Your hand, Madame.

VALMONT You are a holy man, Valmont. I permit you to kiss my feet.

MERTEUIL You make me happy, Madame. And throw me back into my abyss. This night in the opera I will again be exposed to the pleasure of a certain virgin, which the devil has recruited against me. Should I avoid her. Virtue becomes lazy without toiling at the thorn of temptation. Wouldn't you despise me, if I avoided the danger. MAN MUST GO FORTH INTO AN UNFRIENDLY WORLD. Every art needs practice. Do not send me unarmed into the battle. Three souls are in the flames, if my scarcely restrained flesh sprouts anew before the fresh greenery. The prey has power over the hunter, the terrors of the opera are sweet. Allow me to test my slight strength against your naked beauty, Queen, screened from the fence of marriage, so that I can keep your sacred image before my eyes, when I have to step out into the dark arena, locked into my weak flesh, facing the spearheads of girl's breasts.

VALMONT I wonder if you will resist these breasts, Vicomte. I see you wavering. Should we have deceived each other about the degree of your sanctity. Will you pass the sterner test. Here it is. I'm a woman, Valmont. Can you look at a woman and be no man.

MERTEUIL I can, my lady. As you see, no muscle bestirs, no nerve trembles within me from your offer. I scorn you with a light heart, rejoice with me. Tears. You weep with reason, Queen. Tears of joy, I know. You have every reason to be proud of being so scorned. I see, that you have understood me. Cover yourself, my love. An unchaste draught could strike you, cold as a husband's hand.

*Pause.*

VALMONT I think I could get used to being a woman, Marquise.

MERTEUIL I wish I could.

*Pause.*

VALMONT What now. Should we keep playing.

MERTEUIL We're playing? Keeping playing what?

VALMONT Virgin maid so fair, beautiful child, alluring niece. Ah the sight of your innocence makes me forget my sex and transforms me into your aunt, who recommended you so highly to me. No edifying thoughts. I will bore myself to death taking her sorrowful shape. I know every spot on your soul. I fall silent about the rest. But the doom between my legs, pray with me, that it does not rise up in rebellion against my virtue, and close the abyss of your eyes, before it swallows us up, almost causes me to wish for the exchange. Yes, I wish I could change it, this sex of mine, here in the shadow of the danger of losing myself utterly to your beauty. A loss, which can only be counterbalanced by the destruction of the image in the tumult of pleasure, which it so urgently invites. Only pleasure takes the blindfold away from love and grants it the vision through the veil of the skin into the coarseness of the flesh, the indifferent nourishment of graves. God must have willed it so, you know. Why else the weapon of the face. Whoever creates wishes destruction. And not before the flesh rots away does the soul have its exit. It's better if you discard it right away. If you were ugly. Only the timely liberation from the attributes of beauty ensures against the Fall of original sin. And it won't suffice, everything or nothing, nothing can happen to a skeleton, except for the wind playing with the bones beyond all sin. Let's forget what stands between us, before it binds us for the duration of a shiver, am I doing well, Marquise, everyone takes their turn doing gymnastics on the umbilical cord, and permit me to lend you my masculine protection, the arm of a father against the wickedness of the world, which you were not acquainted with in the stillness of the convent. I know, I assure you, my threatening sex, and the thought that a worthless brute, a dull novice, a lusting servant could break the seal with which nature secures the secret of your virginal womb, breaks my heart. I'd rather fall into sin myself than suffer such injustice, which cries out to the Heavens.

MERTEUIL Does it cry out. What's the fatherly hand looking for, Monsieur, on the parts of my body which the Mother Superior has forbidden me to touch.

VALMONT Why father. Let me be your priest, who is more of a father than the priest who opens the door to paradise for all the children of God. The key is in my hand, the signpost, the heavenly tool, the flaming sword. Time is of the essence: the lesson must be learned before the niece becomes an aunt. On bended knee, sinner. I know the dreams, which walk in your sleep. Repent and I will transform your punishment into grace. Do not fear for your innocence. The mansion of God has many dwellings. You only need to open these astounding lips, and the dove of the Lord will fly out and pour forth the Holy Spirit. It trembles with readiness, just look. What is life without the daily death. You speak with the tongues of angels. The school of the convent. The language of the Mother

Superior. One should not spit out the blessing of God. Whosoever giveth shall be given to. What falls one should stand upright. Christ would not have reached Golgotha without the righteous one, who helped him to carry the cross. Your hand, Madame. That is the resurrection. Did you say innocence. What you call your innocence is a blasphemy. HE loves only ONE virgin, the world can do with one savior. Do you think that this eager body has been given to you, so that you can walk alone in school, hidden from the eyes of the world. IT IS NOT GOOD FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO BE ALONE. If you want to know where God dwells, trust the trembling of your thighs, the weakness of your knees. A tiny membrane is supposed to stop us from being one body. PAIN IS SHORT AND JOY IS ETERNAL. Whoever brings light, ought not to fear the darkness: paradise has three entrances. Whoever slams shut the third embarrasses the master builder of the Trinity. THERE IS ROOM IN THE SMALLEST OF HUTS.

MERTEUIL You're very observant, my Lord. I'm obliged to you, for having shown so penetratingly, have been able to show me, where God dwells. I will make a note of all of His dwellings and take care that the stream of visitors does not cease and His guests are made welcome, so long as there is breath in me to receive them.

VALMONT Why not a bit longer. The breath should not be the condition of hospitality, death no grounds for divorce. Many guests may have special needs, LOVE IS AS STRONG AS DEATH. And allow me one thing more, my girl, who I may now call my lady. The woman has in the end only one beloved. I hear the alarm of battle, the clocks of the world striking at your defenseless beauty. The thought of this splendid body being seamed by the fall of the folds of the years, this mouth shriveling, these breasts decaying, this lap seemingly shrinking under the plough of time, so wounds my spirit, that I want to claim the occupation of doctor too and help you to eternal life. I want to be the midwife of death, which is our common future. I want to fold my loving hands around your neck. How else can I pray for your youth with any prospect of success. I want to emancipate your blood from the prison of the veins, your entrails from the constraint of the body, your bones from the choke-hold of the flesh. How else can I grasp with hands and see with eyes, what the transient shell withholds from my gaze and my grasp. I want to release the angel which lives in you into the solitude of the stars.

MERTEUIL The annihilation of the niece.

*Pause.*

MERTEUIL Should we devour each other, Valmont, so that this affair comes to an end, before you become completely tasteless.

VALMONT I regret to inform you that I have already dined, Marquise. The President's wife fell.

MERTEUIL The eternal wife.

VALMONT Madame de Tourvel.

MERTEUIL You're a whore, Valmont.

VALMONT I await my punishment, Queen.

MERTEUIL Didn't my love for the whore deserve chastisement.

VALMONT I'm filth. I want to eat your excrement.

MERTEUIL Filth to filth. I want you to spit on me.

VALMONT I want you to piss on me.

MERTEUIL Your excrement.

VALMONT Let us pray, milady, that Hell never separates us.

MERTEUIL And now let us have the President's wife die, Valmont, from her futile mistake. The sacrifice of the woman.

VALMONT I've thrown myself at your feet, Valmont, so that you won't stumble anymore. You've baptized me with the perfume of the gutter. From the heaven of my marriage I have thrown myself into the abyss of your desires to save this virgin. I told you, that I would give myself to death, if you did not withstand the evil that reached for you this time. I warned you, Valmont. All that I can do for you now is to include you in my final prayers. You are my murderer, Valmont.

MERTEUIL Am I. Too great an honor, Madame. I did not decree the commandment on whose behalf you wish to execute yourself. Haven't you drawn any other winnings of pleasure from your pious adultery, aside from the tender bite of the conscience which you now enjoy. You are not too cold for hell, if I may judge on the basis of our bed-game. And what the mob calls suicide is the crowning height of masturbation. You will permit me to draw my opera-glasses, so that I may better observe the play, your last, Queen, with fear and pity. I've had mirrors set up, so that you can die in the plural. And please do me the favor of taking this, your last glass of wine, from my unworthy hands

VALMONT I hope that I'll be able to contribute to your amusement, Valmont, with this my last performance, if I cannot count on a moral effect, due to my all too late glimpse into the swamp-muck of your soul. HOW TO GET RID OF THIS MOST WICKED BODY [in English in original]. I will open my veins like an unread book. You will learn to read it, Valmont, after me. I will do it with a scissors, because I am a woman. Every job has its own sense of humor. You could paint yourself a new grimace with my blood as make-up. I will seek a way to my heart through my flesh. That you have not found, Valmont, because you are a man, your breasts are empty, and only nothingness grows inside you. Your body is the body of your death, Valmont. A woman has many bodies. You have to draw it from yourself, if you want to see blood. Or one man has to draw it from another. The envy for the milk of our breasts is what makes you into butchers. If you could only give birth. I regret, Valmont, that this experience will be denied to you, this garden forbidden, due to a decision of nature which is difficult to understand. You would give your best part for it, if you only knew what you were missing, and we'd make a deal with nature. I loved you, Valmont. But I will stick a needle into my womb, before I kill myself, to make sure that nothing which you planted grows inside me, Valmont. You are a monster, and I want to become one. I will walk through your sleep, green and bloated from poison. I will dance for you, choking on the rope. My face will be a blue mask. The tongue bulging out. Head in the gas-oven, I will know that you stand behind me with no other thought than how to enter into me, and I, I will want it, while the gas bursts my lungs. It's good to be a woman, Valmont, and not a conqueror. When I close my eyes, I can see you rotting. I don't envy the sewer that grows in you, Valmont. Do you want to know more. I'm a dying encyclopedia of conversation, every word a clump of blood. You don't need to tell me, Marquise, that the wine was poisoned. I wish I could see you dying just as you see me now. By the way I'm still pleased with myself. This can masturbate even with the worms. I hope that my performance [Spiel] did not bore you. That would in fact be unpardonable.

MERTEUIL Death of a whore. Now we're alone cancer my lover.