Scene 1: Lear, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia (ii)

LEAR. Tell me, my daughters—

[Since now we will divest us both of rule, Interest of territory, cares of state—]

Which of you shall we say doth love us most, That we our largest bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril, Our eldest born, speak first.

GONERIL. Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter,

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,

Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;

As much as child e'er loved, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable,

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

CORDELIA, <aside>

What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

LEAR, <pointing to the map>

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,

With shadowy forests [and with champaigns riched,

With plenteous rivers] and wide-skirted meads.

We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's (issue)

Be this perpetual.—What says our second daughter,

Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? {Speak.}

REGAN. I am made of that self mettle as my sister

And prize me at her worth. In my true heart

I find she names my very deed of love;

Only she comes too short, that I profess

Myself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious square of sense (possesses,)

And find I am alone felicitate

In your dear Highness' love.

CORDELIA, <aside> Then poor Cordelia!

And yet not so, since I am sure my love's

More ponderous than my tongue.

LEAR. To thee and thine hereditary ever

Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,

No less in space, validity, and pleasure

Than that conferred on Goneril.—Now, our joy,

Although our last and least, to whose young love
[The vines of France and milk of Burgundy]

Strive to be interested,] what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters”? Speak.

CORDELIA Nothing, my lord.

[LEAR Nothing?

CORDELIA Nothing.]

LEAR. Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.

LEAR. How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me.
I return those duties back as are right fit:
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
(To love my father all.)

LEAR But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA Ay, my good lord.

LEAR So young and so untender?

CORDELIA So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR. Let it be so. Thy truth, then, be thy dower,
For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this forever.

i.e., vineyards; milk: i.e., pastures
to have a right or share; to be closely connected; draw: gain
duty or obligation (of child to father)
educated me, brought me up
fitting, appropriate
perchance, perhaps
will receive my vow or pledge
secret rites; Hecate: goddess of witchcraft and of the moon. a two-syllable word.};
operation . . . be: influence of the planets that govern human life and death
Propinquity . . . blood: kinship as . . . this: i.e., consider you a stranger from this moment