

# Corita Kent

## SPIRITUAL POP

These transcriptions are meant to facilitate understanding of the texts used in Corita Kent's screenprints. Kent often used small portions of text from larger documents, frequently mingling them with passages from other sources and authors. Note that these transcriptions reflect the work as written by Kent, including her idiosyncratic punctuation and spelling, and may not be identical to the source material.

Transcriptions of texts found in the screenprints on view; sources, when known, are indicated in brackets.

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### ***benedictio*, 1954**

Benedictio

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### ***christ and mary*, 1954**

Sacred Heart of Jesus

I place my trust in thee

May Mary's Heart immaculate be forever praised

I will bless every home where an image of my heart shall be honored.

{Excerpts from traditional Christian prayers}

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### ***wedding blessing*, 1957**

The GOD of Abraham of Jacob of Isaac Be with you and fulfill his blessing in you so that you may see your children's children to the third and 4th generation and thereafter Life everlasting life without end by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ who is God living and reigning with the Father and the Holy Ghost forever amen

{The Book of Common Prayer}

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### ***christ drew in the sand*, 1962**

But you, i beg you, check your wrath and scorn for man needs help from every creature born

{Berthold Brecht, excerpt from the poem "Concerning the Infanticide, Marie Farrar," 1922}

but Jesus stooped down and with his finger drew figures on the ground.

{John 8:6}

berthold brecht understands some things very well.

{Corita Kent}

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### ***walking over the sea*, 1962**

he came toward them walking over the sea

{Matthew 14:25, Mark 6:48}

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### ***for eleanor*, 1964**

THE BIG G STANDS FOR GOODN[ESS]

{General Mills slogan and logo}

4 ELEANOR

{Dedication to Eleanor Carpenter}

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### ***in*, 1964**

IN

WHEN I CHOOSE A WORD IT MEANS JUST WHAT I CHOOSE IT TO MEAN.

Lewis Carroll

{Lewis Carroll, excerpt from the novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1865}

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### ***our father*, 1964**

Give us everyday FLAV[OR] 1 2 3 square meals

{Unidentified source}

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### ***rejoices man's heart*, 1964**

gūs'to

What does it mean, anyway?

{Schlitz Brewing Company}

you fill the earth with the fruit of your works. wine that rejoices man's ♥ and bread to give his heart strength  
Ps 103

{Psalm 104:15}

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### ***the juiciest tomato of all, 1964***

the time is always out of joint...If we are provided with a sign that declares Del Monte tomatoes are juiciest it is not desecration to add: "Mary Mother is the juiciest tomato of them all." Perhaps this is what is meant when the slang term puts it, "She's a peach," or "What a tomato!" A cigarette commercial states: "So round, so firm, so fully packed" and we are strangely stirred, even ashamed as we are to be so taken in. We are not taken in. We yearn for the fully packed, the circle that is so juicy and perfect that not an ounce more can be added. We long for the "groaning board," the table overburdened with good things, so much we can never taste, let alone eat, all there is. We long for the heart that overflows for the all-accepting of the bounteous, of the real and not synthetic, for the armful of flowers that continues the breast, for the fingers that make a perfect blessing. There is no irreligiousness in joy, even if joy is pump-primed at first. Someone must enter the circle first, especially since the circle appears menacing. The fire must be lit, a lonely task, then it dances. The spark of flame teaches one person to dance and that person teaches others, and then everyone can be a flame. Every one can communicate. But someone must be burned. Perhaps everyone who would participate entirely in the dance must have some part of himself burned, and may shrink back. They look for some familiar action to relate to. There is too yawning a gulf between oneself and the spirit, so we turn to our supermarkets, allegories; a one-to-one relationship. You pay your money, you get your food, you eat it, it's gone. But intangibly, during the awkward part of the dance, with the whole heart not in it, with the eye furtively looking out for one's own ridiculousness, allegory becomes symbol, wine becomes blood, wafer flesh and the spark flames like bright balloons released, and the "heart leaps up to behold," and somehow we have been taken from the greedy signs of barter and buying, from supermarket to supermundane. We have proceeded from the awkward to the whole. The rose of all the world becomes, for awhile, and in our own terms, the "pause that refreshes," and possibly what was a pause becomes the life.

S. Eisenstein.

*{Samuel Eisenstein, letter to Corita Kent, 1964}*

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### ***wide open, 1964***

OPEN WIDE  
IN THAT THE KING OUT OF GLORY MAY  
ENTER IN

*{Psalm 24:9}*

OUT OF THE EXITS FROM POVERTY TO THE  
CHILDREN OF THE POOR LBJ

*{President Lyndon B. Johnson}*

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### ***for roses, 1965***

for best

*{Unidentified source}*

The sun anointed the world with yellow, with  
downpouring rays, Ah, through the golden lilies, the  
warm golden water; the yellow butterflies Over the  
golden roses yellow garlands were climbing up the trees.  
the day was a grace perfumed with gold in a golden  
awakening of life. Among the bones of the dead, God  
opened his yellow hands. Jimenez

*{Juan Ramón Jiménez, excerpt from the poem "Yellow Spring," 1909}*

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### ***power up, 1965***

POWER UP

*{Richfield Oil slogan}*

PO

God has chosen his mother to put an end to all the  
distance. The first choice of Christians is Christ. Where  
is your brother? Want nothing small about men. Except  
maybe their words, which should be modest and  
thoughtful and almost inaudible before their DEEDS.  
For the rest, bigness; heart, brain; imagination too; let it  
take the world in two hands and show us what it's like to  
BE! Tell us about it, we're hungry. Doesn't the bible call  
truth BREAD? We're starved, our smile has lost out, we  
crawl around on a thin margin—a life, maybe, but what  
for? And who wants it anyway? Where's the man who  
says yes, and says no, like a thunderclap? Where's the  
man whose no turns to yes in his mouth—he can't deny  
life, he asks like a new flower or a new day or a hero  
even; what more is there to love than I have loved?

When I hear bread breaking, I see something else; it seems almost as though God never meant us to do anything else. So beautiful a sound, the crust breaks like manna and falls all over everything, and then we EAT; bread gets inside humans and turns into what the experts call “formal glory of God.” But don’t let that worry you. Sometime in your life, hope you might see one starved man, the look on his face when the bread finally arrives. Hope you might have baked it or bought it or even needed it for yourself. For the look on his face for your hands meeting his across a piece of bread, you might be willing to lose a lot or suffer a lot—or die a little, even.

d. berrigan

WE

“Formal glory,” well yes. Maybe what we’re trying to understand is what they’re trying to say, who knows? I don’t think they understand—or every theologian would be working part time in a breadline. Who knows. Who might greet them there or how their words might change afterwards like stones into bread? Most theologians have never broken bread for anyone in their lives. Do you know, I think they think Christ is about as well fed as his statues are? But I don’t know. Man keeps breaking in. Take your “typical man” across the world. Let him in. Look at him, he isn’t white, he probably isn’t clean. He certainly isn’t well fed or American, or Catholic. So then what? What’s left? Well, maybe now we’re getting somewhere; Christ is ALL that’s left if you’re looking for a mystery. He’s real as a man. Don’t just stand there! Sit him down. Offer him some bread! He’ll understand that; bread comes across. So does Christ; Luke says so—in the breaking of the bread. What a beautiful sound—try and see! I keep thinking of that poor man. And his face, when someone on earth shows up against all odds to treat him like a human being. But that isn’t all, or even half the truth. The half, or more, is what he sees in you. And that’s a mercy, because Christ is merciless about the poor. He wants them around—always and everywhere. He’s condemned them to live with us. It’s terrifying. I mean for us too. It’s not only that we are ordered, rigorously ordered, to serve the poor. That’s hard enough; Christ gives so few orders in all the gospel. But the point is, what the poor see in us—and don’t see, too. We stand there, American, white, Catholic, with the keys of the kingdom and the keys of the world in our pocket. Everything about us says: Be like me! I’ve got it made. But the poor man sees the emperor—naked. Like the look of Christ, the poor man strips us down to the bone. And then if we’re lucky something dawns—even on us.

ER

Why, we’re the poor. The reel plays backward, everything’s reversed when the gospel is in the air. The clothes fly off Dives, he’s negro, he’s nothing, he’s got his hand out forever. Empty as a turned up skull. Watch the reel now - it’s important to see which way the bread is passing. To you, to me! We’re in luck. This is our day. The poor have it hard, the saying goes. Well, we’re the hardest thing they have. Do you know I think sometime if we poor rich are ever going to grow up into faith, it will only be because poor men are around - everywhere, always, everywhere, drunks, winos, junkeys, the defeated, the ne’er do wells, those who didn’t make it on to our guarded spoiled playground. And those who never wanted to play our game and whose rags are therefore a kind of riches we will never wear. All of them, a special Providence, a holy rain and sun, falling equably on the unjust, the smooth con men, the well oiled Cadillac humans and inhumans, the purblind, those who made it, the Christians and their impure gods in cupboards and banks and nuclear silos, the white unchristian west, all of us. Who but for the poor would never know who we are, or where we came from or where we are (just possibly) going,—in spite of tons of catechisms and the ten edition of the Handbook for Instant Salvation and the best of sellers, I Kept You Know Who Out and Found God. On the cloud of unknowing; nog. Blind as bats. Then a poor man (they are all miracle men, they have to be to live one day in our world) stands there. His poverty is like a few loaves and fishes—enough for everyone! He breaks and breaks bread and feeds us and we live up again and again literally bottomless with our need, going for broke, sore and ill tempered and jostling one another, hearing the word pass down the line, there’s hardly any left, resenting straining forward in a frenzy of despair. But there’s always enough.

UP

always some more. Christ guaranteed it—I don’t know why. The poor you have always with you. Like a marvelous legacy of God. His best possession, in our hands. Undeserved, like the Eucharist. O send someone in from the gate where Dives sits on a dung heap in his sores, send even one of the dogs to whimper for us—would Lazarus of his heart’s goodness let a dog lick up the crumbs from the floor, and carry even in a dog’s mouth something for the damned. This is the truth about the world, our Lord said Everything comes right, all the deep wrongs of existence are turned inside out, the rich are stripped even of their shrouds, the poor men go in

wedding garments. The first way to defeat Christianity is to strike Christians blind. Let the rich really think they have made it and can hang on to it all, and wheeler deal even with the angel of judgement named Christ, and (imagine) face him for the first time in death—when all of life is a great tragic Greek chorale sung by Christs in masks, sometimes furies, sometimes war racked women. Sometimes a foul wino in a pismire sings it out like a bird of paradise remembering his last incarnation, but never, never looks up when Mr. Big goes by. The untranslated, unbearable unbearable cry, pure judgement, pure anger, pure rejection. Reality! Reality! O the poor will line up before the Judge with Torrid Eyes, a handful of daisies in His right hand, a sword in the other. They look gently toward His right side. They know. Come. They were the workers of corporal mercy. They are saved for having been, for being, for being others. They save even us. They carried fresh bread to stale lives. Come, beloved of my Father. Daniel Berrigan

*{Priest Daniel Berrigan in a letter to Kent, ca. 1965}*

Round WONDER

*{Wonder Bread slogan}*

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**apples are basic, 1966**

apples are basic

*{Headline in Look magazine, November 22, 1965}*

big time

*{Unidentified source}*

rise of the fall

*{Unidentified source}*

it's a good sign when you admit you're lost

*{Unidentified source}*

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**please tame me, 1966**

COME ALIVE

*{Pepsi-Cola slogan}*

I can not play with you the fox said i am not tamed what does that mean said the little prince—tame? it is an act often neglected, it means to establish ties. too establish ties? Just that said the fox. To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. and I have no need of you. And you on your part, have no need of me. to you i am nothing more

than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. but if you tame me, then we shall need each other. to me, you will be unique in all the world. I am beginning to understand said the little prince. there is a flower...I think she has tamed me...it is possible said the fox. on earth one sees all sorts of things. O but this is not the earth said the little prince. the fox seemed perplexed and very curious. On another planet? Yes. Are there hunters on that planet? No. Nothing is perfect, sighed the fox. But he came back to his idea. My life is very monotonous, I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back to the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat...the fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time. Please tame me! he said. the little prince.

*{Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, excerpt from the novel The Little Prince, 1943}*

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**fresh bread, 1967**

Fresh bread, a secret agent

*{Adapted from title of a Life magazine article, June 23, 1967}*

A JUG OF WINE A LOAF OF BREAD AND WOW

*{H. H. Scott stereo equipment slogan}*

WHAT KIND OF A REVOLUTION WOULD IT BE  
IF ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE WHOLE WORLD  
WOULD SIT AROUND IN A CIRCLE AND EAT  
TOGETHER? ♥

*{Adapted from Kent, Footnotes and Headlines: A Play-Pray Book, 1967}*

WHAT YOU SEEK IN VAIN FOR HALF YOUR LIFE,  
ONE DAY YOU COME FULL UPON ALL THE  
FAMILY AT DINNER. THOREAU

*{Henry David Thoreau, as quoted in the eulogy delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1862}*

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**handle with care, 1967**

HANDLE WITH CARE

{Button photographed by Kent}

SEE THE MAN WHO CAN SAVE YOU THE MOST

{Chevrolet slogan}

THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN

{Carl Sandburg, excerpt from prologue to the exhibition catalogue  
Family of Man, 1955}

NO TIME AGO OR ELSE A LIFE WALKING IN THE  
DARK I MET CHRIST

JESUS) MY HEAR FLOPPED OVER AND LAY  
STILL WHILE HE PASSED (AS  
CLOSE AS I'M TO YOU YES CLOSER MADE OF  
NOTHING EXCEPT LONELINESS e.e.c

{E. E. Cummings, poem "no time ago," 1950}

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**somebody had to break the rules, 1967**

SERVIC[E] ENTRAN[CE]

{Street signage}

Somebody had to break the rules.

{Dash laundry detergent advertisement}

THE ROSE IS A ROSE  
AND WAS ALWAYS A ROSE  
BUT THE THEORY NOW GOES  
THAT THE APPLE'S A ROSE,  
AND THE PEAR IS, AND SO  
THE PLUM, I SUPPOSE.

THE DEAL ONLY KNOWS WHAT WILL NEXT  
PROVE A ROSE.

YOU, OF COURSE, ARE A ROSE  
BUT WERE ALWAYS A ROSE.

ROBERT FROST

{Robert Frost, poem "The Rose Family," 1928}

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**stars, 1967**

that's what's needed don't you see? that! nothing else  
matters half so much. to reassure one another. to answer  
each other. Perhaps only you can listen to me and not  
laugh. Everyone has, inside himself...what shall I call it?  
A piece of good news! Everyone is...a very great, very  
important character! Yes, that's what's we have to tell  
them up there! Every man must be persuaded—even if  
he's in rags—that he's immensely, immensely important!  
Everyone must respect him; and make him respect  
himself too. they must listen to him attentively. Don't  
stand on top of him, don't stand in his light. But look  
at him with deference. Give him great, great hopes, he  
needs them...especially if he's young. Spoil him! Yes,  
make him grow proud!

ugo betti

{Ugo Betti, excerpt from the play *The Burnt Flower-Bed*, 1952}

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**yellow submarine, 1967**

MAKE LOVE—NOT WAR

{Anti-Vietnam War slogan}

VIETNAM

what has it does to the home of the brave?

{Unidentified source}

AND OUR FRIENDS ARE ALL ON BOARD  
MANY MORE OF THEM LIVE NEXT DOOR  
LENNON MCCARTNEY

{John Lennon and Paul McCartney, excerpt from the song "Yellow  
Submarine," 1966}

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**A i love that one, 1968**

THE CIRCUS

(damn everything but)

{E. E. Cummings, excerpt from the i-six nonlectures given at Harvard  
University, 1952–53}

The Performances will take place in a COMMODIOUS  
MARQUEE, Fitted up in the most improved style,  
entirely new and lighted with portable Gas.  
{Unidentified source, most likely from a 19<sup>th</sup>-century  
entertainment poster}

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## **crazy enough, 1968**

I thank heaven that somebody's crazy enough to give me  
a daisy.

e.e.c.

{E. E. Cummings, excerpt from the poem "One Winter Afternoon,"  
1960}

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## **king's dream, 1969**

IT MAY GET ME CRUCIFIED I MAY EVEN DIE  
BUT I WANT IT SAID THAT HE DIED TO MAKE  
MEN FREE. MARTIN LUTHER KING

{Martin Luther King, Jr.}

Divine order radiating from Kings and Gods

{Adapted from article in Life magazine, April 12, 1968}

...A madman has put an end to his life, for I can only  
call him mad who did it and yet there has been enough  
of poison spread in this country during the past years  
and months, and this poison has had effect on people's  
minds. We must face this poison, we must root out this  
poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us  
and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way  
that our beloved teacher taught us to face them. The  
first thing to remember now is that no one of us dare  
misbehave because we are angry. We have to behave  
like strong and determined people, determined to face  
all the perils that surround us, determined to carry out  
the mandate that our great teacher and our great leader  
has given us, remembering always that if, as I believe, his  
spirit looks upon us and sees us, nothing would displease  
his soul as much as to see that we have indulged in any  
small behavior or any violence—Nehru in a speech given  
extemporaneously by radio to the people of India on the  
death by assassination of Gandhi—Jan. 30, 1948

{Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India}

I have a dream that my four little children will one day  
live in a nation where they will not be judged by the  
color of their skin but by the content of their character.  
With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling  
discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of  
brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work  
together, to pray together, to go to jail together to stand  
up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free  
one day.

{Martin Luther King, Jr.}

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## **news of the week, 1969**

Newsweek

APRIL 12, 1965 35c

Profile of the Viet Cong

{Cover of Newsweek, April 12, 1965}

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of dogs, Hell  
and despair are upon me, crack again and crack the  
marksman, I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs,  
thinn'd with the ooze of my skin. I fall on the weeds and  
stones. The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head  
with whip-stocks. Agonies are one of my changes of  
garments. I do not ask the wounded person how he feels,  
I myself become the wounded person, My hurts turn livid  
upon me as I lean on a cane and observe. Walt Whitman  
{Walt Whitman, excerpt from the poem "Song of Myself," 1855}

The plan of a slave-ship, showing the conditions in  
which slaves crossed the Atlantic. The slave trade was  
abolished by Great Britain in 1807, and other countries  
were persuaded to follow suit in 1815

{Unidentified source}

LIFE

DEEPER INTO THE VIETNAM WAR

A Marine is evacuated during patrol action against the  
Vietcong

July 2 1965 35¢

{Life magazine, July 2, 1965}

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## **third eye, 1969**

but if your third eye is open, which sees only the things  
that can't be seen, ...you may see with your third eye  
which is darkness.

d.h.

{D. H. Lawrence, excerpt from the short story "St. Mawr," 1925}

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## **me must be turned upside down to become we, 1972**

It's a two way street

{Unidentified source}

You took more than you gave.

I gave more than I took and that also is woe and vanity.

D. H. Lawrence

{D. H. Lawrence, excerpt from the short story "The Man Who Died,"  
1929}

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**to love is to expect, 1972**

We can only speak of hope. My relationship to myself is mediated by the presence of the other person, by what he is for me and what I am for him. To love any body is to expect something from him, something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfill this expectation. Yes, paradoxical as it may seem, to expect is in some way to give: but the opposite is none the less true; no longer to expect is to strike with sterility the being from whom no more is expected. It is then in some way to deprive him or to take from him in advance what is surely a certain possibility of inventing or creating. Everything looks as though we can only speak of hope where the interaction exists between him who gives and him who receives. G. Marcel

{Gabriel Marcel, excerpt from the essay "Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope," 1962}

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**welcome o life, 1973**

Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience, and to forge in the sanctity of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. James Joyce

{James Joyce, excerpt from the novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1916}

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**the legs of the earth are my legs—shell****writing #5, 1976**

It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.

The legs of the earth are my legs  
navajo chant

{Traditional Navajo prayer}

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**flowers grow, 1977**

flowers grow out of the dark moments

{Corita Kent}

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**love the moment, 1977**

love the moment and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries

{Corita Kent}

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**this moment, 1977**

this moment contains the fullness of all moments nothing else is needed

{Corita Kent}

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**bright bird, 1978**

Namaste

I greet the light in you

{Traditional Hindu greeting}

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**dancing star (2 of 4), 1978**

you must carry a chaos inside you to give birth to a dancing star

Nietzsche

{Friedrich Nietzsche, excerpt from the philosophical novel Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1883-91}

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**yes #3, 1979**

Love

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