



**Cento Celebration**  
*A chapbook of Rafter centos*

***Poets***

Katharina Bossman  
Annette Langlois Grunseth  
Ruth Harper  
Shirley Johnson Koepsell  
Lucy M. Radatz  
Thomas Shostak

Compiled March 2023  
Phyllis Cole-Dai

*These centos were among those created during a “30-Day Cento Quest” on [The Raft](#), January-February 2023. Poets used as the base text [Staying Power 2: Writings from a Year of Emergence](#), by Phyllis Cole-Dai. Page references refer to that book.*

*Thank you to the poets for allowing the reproduction of their poems in this informal chapbook. They retain all rights to their work.*

**As a Lightening**  
*Katharina Bossman*

We all create our own way home  
Heaven has given us all the signs we need  
If we listen with openness  
Frozen midway between holding on and letting go  
I find myself in a magical spot

The choice to meet this moment exactly  
The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you  
Floating in the infinite black of space  
For some awe-full things in this world  
words are inadequate  
Releasing what we think we know  
They're all part of the journey  
No way around but through.

What isn't said aloud  
Occurs in the silent spaces  
where the two worlds touch  
We may feel it in our spirit as a lightening  
And that mystery lives in us  
Touching again and again what is true

## **A Significant Tilt**

**Annette Langlois Grunseth**

Every moment is a living hinge	(22)
between what has been and what will be.	(22)
Listen to each other.	(10)
We are alive with love to give,	(18)
because of a certain slant of light.	(112)
Seek what's true.	(xiv)
Contemplate the forces of nature	(85)
one mystery at a time.	(13)
Sometimes we must mop up	(33)
puddles after a storm,	(33)
but there's no reason to push the river,	(97)
even though you might have to push it yourself.	(97)
Reimagine your nest,	(89)
soothe your spirit.	(89)
What do you want to hold onto?	(7)
Your energy might produce a spark	(32)
to ignite a dream.	(32)
Try an aimless but mindful walk,	(132)
smell the air after a soaking rain.	(167)
Learn to love zigzags and circles.	(97)
Laugh at your stumbles.	(104)
Release the need to control.	(77)
Ask yourself what you want to do, and do it.	(87)
You're learning how to be who you are now.	(157)
Set your own pace,	(104)
know that nobody's life is litter.	(176)
The gift is having a life to love.	(175)
Feel how love soaks into your skin.	(130)
Then watch our planet tilt a significant degree	(14)
on its kindness axis.	(14)

**Centos: Tidings of Comfort and Joy**  
*Ruth Harper*

Our proper work	
is to lay bare the hidden word,	(xiii)
make light-filled deliveries of love	(61)
in the silent spaces	
of what isn't said aloud.	(81)
What's in charge is Mystery.	(77)
We sit and wait. And hope.	(xiv)
Let whatever happens be enough.	(48)
The river is the guide and the journey.	(96)
I'll meet you on the other side.	(22)
The water winks and smiles in the sunshine,	(91)
dancing into every desolate space,	(154)
singing songs of comfort and strength,	(64)
stepping into joy again and again.	(166)

## Untitled

*Shirley Johnson Koepsell*

You can't say no to the river (96)

Walk its path as a guest. (105)

Breathe in, breathe out. (176)

Let go of all that binds your spirits. (75)

*We can't!* (145)

*It's too dark!* (145)

*We'll get lost and never return!* (145)

If you are lost, you will find who you are. (178)

If you feel forsaken, pay closer attention. (98)

There's no such thing as a simple miracle. (12)

Learn from the dark. (99)

*These words prepare us to be brave.* (68)

*This is how we do it:* (178)

*We breathe in and we breathe out.* (176)

*Light and clumsy,* (27)

*we take the big, necessary step.* (91)

*Whatever happens will be enough.* (48)

*We breathe in and breathe out.* (176)

*We learn from the dark.* (99)

*We grow in strength.* (27)

*Our feet are nimble on the rocks.* (91)

*We breathe in, we breathe out.* (176)

*We let go of all that binds our spirits.* (75)

*Softer, lighter, freer—* (55)

*we make a happy parade.* (17)

The sun is up. (6)

It's a new day. (6)

You who stand before me are full of light,  
ready for whatever life brings. (108)

*Bring on the burdens,* (29)

*bring on the tasks,* (29)

*bring on the visions.* (29)

*We'll see you again in the night woods,  
when the leaves begin to turn.* (100)

**Untitled**  
***Lucy Radatz***

What's in charge is Mystery.  
Esperance---hope. That abiding love for life that blooms even in my melancholy....a love for life that springs from devoted attention.  
The world is a tapestry of interdependency.  
Sometimes beauty stuns me into silence. All I can do is stop and stare.  
Stare up at the ancient rock . . . transported into awe.  
The sun is up. It is a new day. Put on the purple.  
My houseplants might be watching me.  
Eating is a celebration of survival.  
I squeeze and squish and squash every last tomato in my own hands.  
I am playing just to have fun.  
Besides, as any booklover knows, often the best fiction is true.  
Water winks and smiles in the sunshine.  
I can't say no to the river.  
My tears run in rivers.  
My repertoire best described as spiritual folk.  
I dream of a perfect world even while learning that perfect is a trap.  
Hope opens, need constricts.  
In the river I have everything I need even when I don't.  
Humility and good humor are essential. I'll not expect perfection.  
But how to be in this world?  
Never look anything but real.  
Air stirrer. Heart holder. Life bringer (names for grief).  
Hope for anything, expect nothing.  
Take an aimless but mindful walk.  
The real culprit is love.  
Loosen up, forget myself. The dance will just happen, if I want it. But it is also hard work, stepping into joy again and again, especially when I think I've lost it, or had it stolen.  
Joy is fuel and joy spreads, catchier than any virus.  
I'll watch for more opportunities to slow down, to do more activities by hand.  
To convert my despair into loving resolve.  
Do whatever helps not waste this precious unrepeatable day.  
I've a hunch that, like most, I am better at asking for what I want with my hands folded than with my hands open.  
These are the hands . . . that stitch the quilt that hangs in the house that love builds.  
This is who I am and will be.

## Going Through Life

*Thomas Shostak*

Personally, I want to hug more	p. 7
Make more music	p. 7
Cherish each day	p. 7
Get my ego out of the way	p. 10
Make significant what would	
Otherwise be tedious and dull,	p. 17
Learning to be brave.	p. 33
Speaking less and	
Listening more.	p. 81
Whatever happens	
Will be enough.	p. 48
Life just doesn't go on	
As planned.	p. 51
What's in charge	
Is Mystery.	p. 77
I resolved inwardly to regard	p. 80
<i>There's</i> no way around	
But through.	p. 67
<i>I'm not</i> the same person	
Who entered;	p. 85
<i>We're</i> never alone	
On the river.	p. 98
Whatever life brings	
<i>I'll be</i> ready.	p. 108
We're all beginners;	p. 124
We can re-treat ourselves,	p. 132
Open ourselves,	p. 172
Be the window.	p. 172