

CELEBRATING OUR SIXTIETH
John Rosenwald and Lee Sharkey

In 1950 Chad Walsh and Robert Glauber started a little poetry magazine. Marion and David Stocking, Chad's colleagues at Beloit College, soon joined the editorial staff and for many years sustained the journal, which moved with them to Maine when they retired in 1984. At the turn of the millennium, the *Beloit Poetry Journal* published a 400-page anthology, *A Fine Excess*, that showcased its contributions over a half century to contemporary literature.

Seven years earlier, Alison Walsh Sackett and Paul Sackett had approached the editors with an offer to establish in memory of her father the Chad Walsh Poetry Prize, to honor an outstanding poem or group of poems the *BPJ* had published the previous calendar year. At first the editorial board resisted singling out one poem for an all-or-nothing award, but Alison wisely insisted. And, in this vocation which ordinarily requires us to dole out much more rejection than acceptance, we have come to treasure being able each year to bestow upon a poet a significant gift—an acknowledgment of accomplishment and of devotion to the calling of poetry.

As the number of Walsh prize winners grew, we began to nurture the idea of gathering work by them into a single volume. And so we've chosen to celebrate our six decades of publishing poetry that matters with this chapbook of new work by sixteen of these poets—all except Patricia Goedicke, whose absence we feel both in this volume and in American letters more generally. True to our history, the gathering is varied and formally inventive. Collectively, the poems constitute the kind of far-ranging conversation that readers come to poetry to be moved and challenged by.

Over the years, the Walsh prize has gone to poets such as Albert Goldbarth, Susan Tichy, and Sherman Alexie, whom we had a history of publishing, and to others such as Jessica Goodfellow, Sam Reed, and—most recently—Onna Solomon, who were unknown to us until they sent us what became the prize-winning poem. As we like to say, we honor the poem and not the poet. Only at moments like this do we take the time to focus our attention on the writers as well as on their work. We celebrate the poets represented in this volume, and all the poets we have published over the decades, for their contributions to our literary and cultural life.