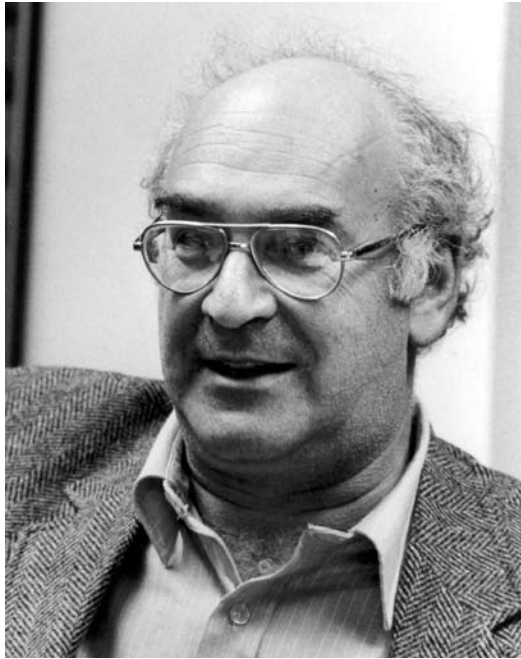


THE MILTON KESSLER MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR POETRY



WINNER

BEING BOYS

Steven Ostrowski

The day was blue and warm.
We were stoning pigeons.
They'd built nests under the trestle
and when we fired our sharp stones
they were trapped.
The terror of their coos
drummed against rusted steel.

Tommy Mydosh brought three cigarettes
swiped from his mother's purse.
Mine trembled in my hand.
John Casey swore to God
someday he'd kill his sister.
I wrote fuck you in the dirt
with a shaky finger.

Beads of blood on gray feathers,
I saw them flutter, settle in the gravel.
A gray dust covered my hands.
I tried and tried to blink
a fleck of ash out of my eye.
We were only boys being boys.
I knew that. Everybody knows that.