

## *The Place of Literature*

PAUL HOSTOVSKY

Mr. Gordon was perhaps a little tipsy  
at the awards ceremony, perhaps a little  
scornful of the football coach's ode  
to yardage, the basketball coach's  
paean to the MVP, the music teacher's touting  
her flautist, the science teacher his  
scion of Einstein. So when Mr. Gordon  
got up to give the literary magazine award  
to me, he lurched a little drunkenly, swayed  
a little imperceptibly, steeply rocking in his  
moment on stage. Not to be outdone,  
he said in his opinion I was probably  
the greatest poet writing in English anywhere today—  
and a gasp went up from the high school auditorium,  
then murmurs of admiration and disbelief and  
mutiny spread through the audience as I rose  
to accept Mr. Gordon's slightly exaggerated  
handshake. Then he kissed me on the mouth,  
and raised my hand above my head in the manner  
of referees and prizefighters, grinning glaringly  
over at the football coach, and nodding trochaically.