

The Place of Literature

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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.