

John Ciardi

Mr. President, I have the honor to present as a candidate for an honorary degree John Ciardi, lecturer, educator, and poetry editor of the *Saturday Review*. But these hardly begin to suggest the range of his interests and capabilities, a range which can perhaps best be expressed by applying to him the still meaningful and honorable appellation "man of letters." It was the man of letters who for a number of years taught literature to Harvard and Rutgers undergraduates, has been for almost a decade the presiding spirit at the famous Breadloaf School, and gave us one of the outstanding translations of Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. It was the man of letters, this time in a role played too infrequently by men of letters in the modern world, who gracefully and wittily and quite unself-consciously infused into the recalcitrant medium of television some of those qualities that he had exhibited in his teaching, writing, and editing. It was the man of letters who in still another role, and another key, delighted—and continues to delight—the thousands of children who have read and their grateful parents who have read to them the verses in such books as *I Met a Man* and *The Man who Sang the Sillies*. And it is as man of letters that he has fashioned over the years a significant body of poetry which has won for him just about every significant award for poetry.

Because Kalamazoo College is itself committed to that kind of versatility which while always regarding scholarship as the vital center encourages expeditions out to the frontiers, John Ciardi's career presents itself to us as a particularly apt model. On behalf of the Faculty of Kalamazoo College I recommend, therefore, that upon him be conferred the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters.