

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

Party 2006

A murderous heart, a heart like a smouldering bolus
of nitroglycerin, can reside in the mildest

poodle shampooer or pamphleteer for the Church
of Marzipan Hearts. And many other stalwart homilies

paraded through my door on the night of the famous Come
As Your Favorite Lesson Learned From Reading

party. If it was the Bobbsey Twins, then this explains
the man dressed as a children's petting zoo, and if

if it was Camus, then this explains the woman
in the hazmat suit, with the yellow-tape circle

of quarantine around her. Some of it didn't work:
the thunder-rumpus poignancy of *King Lear*

isn't a set of missing car keys. On the other hand,
the wisdoms of *Madame Bovary* and the Wonder Woman mythos

found their perfect expression, one in a tiny flower
dying in arid soil, and one in a muscular orchid

disguised as a tiny flower. Everyone attended,
every text was represented. And the Earth,

the original text, that we once read with our hands
and our tongues and our nostrils . . .

I'd invited the Earth, and she arrived too.
We were her costume. We were the breath

that fogs the mirror held over
a dying body: *Not yet, not yet.*