Apology

Albert Goldbarth

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APOLOGY

I don’t know what connects the different poetries of Jane Kenyon and Larry Levis, unless it’s love of life so rich it can afford to love the weeping at its center. And,

of course, that both of them are dead now, early. How we want to read their work for strength that’s independent of the happenstance

of elegiac context . . . which is what I try to have my students see in Plath and Keats, although I lie: we can’t read purely, to the point

where we will separate the great, exclamatory words of Shelley from the sea-reek of his body in the rocks upon the shore. Nor will we ever read Anne Sexton anymore

without the tailpipe. I write this in apology to Jane and Larry, poets who deserve a reading better than we bring.

And William Matthews too.