

Albert Goldbarth

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.