

JOHN

A sling-back chair and sweet red wine,  
 A letter not written, a friend not seen,  
 Quiet jazz, tempo slow, light, shadow,  
 Lungs full of water, nostrils still,  
 A pause in the music, a choke, a cough,  
 A trifle, just part of the piece,  
 A little flaw makes for relief.  
 The pianist smiles, a little trill,  
 And then a pause, and applause  
 And your lungs are filled  
 With water and sand and the drummer's hand  
 Beats out a rhythm thats going just a little too slow  
 And for an instant the music loses its pace,  
 Maybe they do it just for effect  
 To give the crowd just a glimpse of death,  
 Or maybe it's a rhythm I don't understand,  
 A pulse that has stopped, the grave of a friend.

— *J. Grenfell Featherstone*

A CHILD'S MAP OF PALESTINE,  
FOR COLORING

So easy not to remember  
 the veined foot holding my gaze  
 as, timid to know you better,  
 I touched you there, thinking  
 your bare foot on the beach sand  
 a kind of holy land, geographied  
 in dotted rivulets of blue ink.

Tracing routes in the frail sand  
 of that judean plain, I  
 lost myself; fasted, wept  
 and prayed. The devil offered all.  
 I took, deserting jordan  
 for other parts, convicted them  
 of manhood and lost reverence.

— *John Ditsky*