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 that’s 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, geographed
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