

To Softness

Under junk heaps and stripped and burning cars
and bombed-out buildings,
under iron and tin and plastic,
under U.S. Steel and Coca-Cola
beneath underpass and overpass,
under timetables, profitability, summits,
margins of error and cuts,
under for your own good and in our best interest,
under front-runner, leveraged buyouts, arms deals,
state of the union, and rates of exchange,
and the bridge repainted silver to cover all the black
graffitied hearts and birds and names,
it must be there like an ash heap
but alive, a half-formed thought
throbbing its slow pulse behind the lips,
a softness, a tenderness,
a hand turning pages throughout the night
in a bare room, eyes at the window,
breath at the door, something in need of protection,
something capable of feeling harm.