BATHROOM SONGS

_Cain_ (1969–1971)

Like the Persian prophet I look down
as Abel breathes asleep
swaddled in green, his golden head
enclosed like an artichoke heart.
About him grow the vegetables lately
named, cabbage and lettuce,
broad leaves under my cheek, while above
hangs the green grape, the only tree in the valley.
Such memories occupy my mind
as Abel, remembered in his chair,
or winding with deliberation
through his indifferent fingers my sleeky hair.

He is sleeping on the center of the world:
the flat earth grinding circles under the flat sky,
the center still, while the periphery
reends it, running or skulking like drooling dogs.
Yammer ahead like a smooth-backed, willful bitch;
or in the desert night, drag our hearts with memory.