The Ring of Fire (1968–1969)

Apollo I fire, January, 1967

Inside the capsule rolled up in a babyish ball
he had started to emerge by the escape-hatch
into the natural world of natural accident
because the whole thing happened rather slowly.
It took him several seconds to realize
what harm his desire to see the moon had done him,
and even seeing how he was going to die
he didn’t see at once that it was a tragedy,
only that it was as high as he would get;
and something pressed upon him quickly and brightly

and now he sees the fire and being inside it
is like a dentist who has crushed a tooth
that lies along the gum in rosy shards,
but must to the gagged child whisper from the height
of a taught fatherly vision, firmly, “You’re all right.”