What the Poet Thought
And What She Found in the Telluride Files: (1967–1968)

— The image of a drowned four-year-old child is sufficiently horrible, but it is the memory of his weight on my arm and the sun-bleached baby down on his back as last summer I waded with him into deep water that makes the fact of his death real and painful.

All year I’ve been so brave and mummy, writing “O don’t be lonely — I love you” to you far away;
And how our children are to be fat and red Piglets. And April creeps on the ocean, as soft
As a comforter. And I lean upon your arm
As we pace out along the shoals of the dead

I lean upon your arm and like a child
With a firm and palpable round neck and chin
Toe-pointing tread the blanching sand; thin back
Bleached and curved like a wave on the earth; for it drowned,
Fingers, shoulders, insteps, and the bright trunk.
And did your father listen to the knock,

Knock of exhausted asthma from your thin bed,
The rebellion of the terrifying ribs?
And did we hear the scissoring of your throat
Gasping and sobbing? — yet we now step forth
Weeping invisibly as children, until
We have roamed the bank and are tired; then we shall wait.