

3. *Transfiguration, 1968*

—after Robert Frank [* ,from the series *The Americans**]

When I see Frank's photograph
of a white infant in the dark arms
of a woman who must be the maid,
I think of my mother and the year
we spent alone—my father at sea.

The woman stands in profile, back
against a wall, holding her charge,
their faces side-by-side. The child,
angelic in white, purses her lips,
a small dimple furrowing the space
between her brows. Neither of them
looks toward the camera; nor
do they look at each other. That year,

when my mother took me for walks
she was mistaken again and again
for my maid. Years later, she told me
each time she said I was her daughter
strangers would stare in disbelief, then
empty the change from their pockets.

Now, I think of what must have been
her shame—or perhaps her anger—
as they put money in my small hands,

how she --faced-- [*--began--*] each day as if she were [--entered--*] [*how she carried me
each day/ as if*]
a prop, like the resolute woman
in the photograph --;-- [*—*] a black backdrop,