



THOMAS ROMA, *Sunset Park, 1993*. SEE *In Progress*, PAGE 19.

# DoubleTake

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FALL 1995

Human beings suffer,  
They torture one another,  
They get hurt and get hard.  
No poem or play or song  
Can fully right a wrong  
Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols  
Beat on their bars together.  
A hunger-striker's father  
Stands in the graveyard dumb.  
The police widow in veils  
Faints at the funeral home.

History says, *Don't hope*  
*On this side of the grave.*  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up,  
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change  
On the far side of revenge.  
Believe that a further shore  
Is reachable from here.  
Believe in miracles  
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing:  
The utter, self-revealing  
Double-take of feeling.  
If there's fire on the mountain  
Or lightning and storm  
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing  
The outcry and the birth-cry  
Of new life at its term.

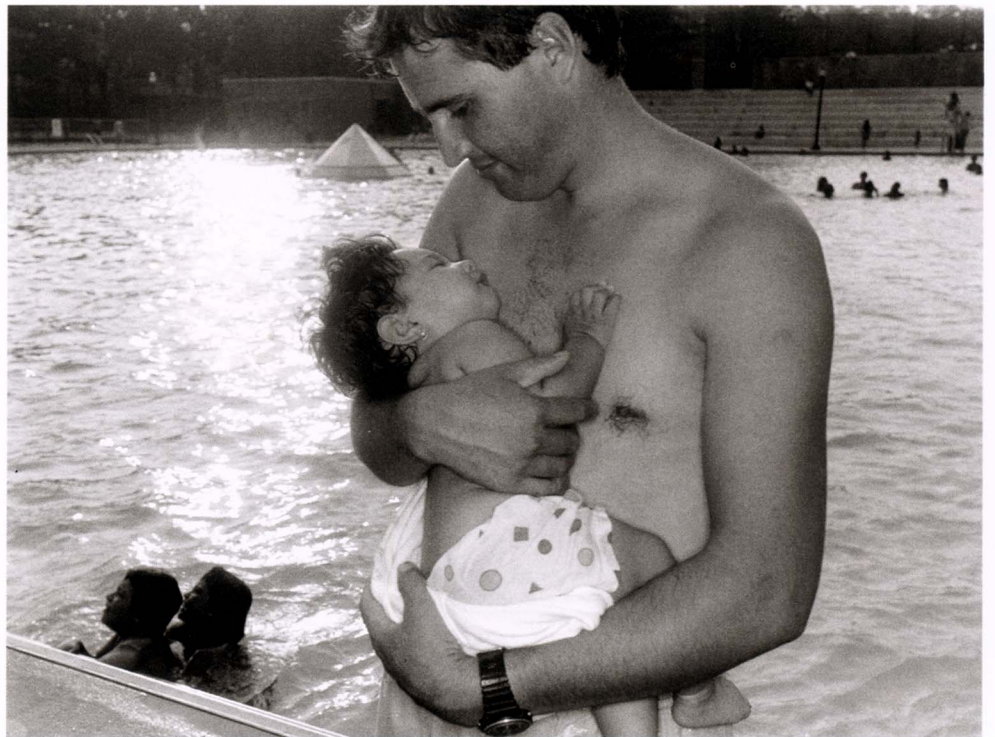
—SEAMUS HEANEY,  
from *The Cure at Troy*

Sunset Park, 1992

**Thomas Roma** was born in Brooklyn, has lived there all his life, has been photographing in that borough for many years. As a boy he came to this pool in the summer to beat the heat. The pool, located in Brooklyn's Sunset Park, is as big as two Olympic-sized ones. It attracts visitors from near and far and has become divided into various turfs—African Americans here, Hispanic people over there, a mix of, say, Irish and Italian families in yet another place: a pool as the proverbial melting pot. Roma has been able to cross those territorial demarcations with apparent ease: while others strip down to very little, he comes fully clothed and does his camera work, a familiar presence for many over the past years (he began this project in 1991). Roma has also photographed church services, and the two quite different studies have energized him in different ways—the moral seriousness of one, the exuberant, free-wheeling sensuality of the other, the sacred and the secular—a contrast that has challenged this photographer, who has often gone from the soaring spirituality of a hard-pressed Christian flock to the relaxed earthiness of the pool at the end of the day in the dreamy summer heat—a scene of muscles flexed, of love affirmed, loyalties tested, grudges given vent: the city's watering hole becomes a place of human display, passion, and intrigue. ■



Sunset Park, 1992



Sunset Park, 1991

