

**RICARDO PAU-LLOSA**

**Dove Lake**

—after *Thomas Eakins's Swimming (1885)*

The figures mount, peak, and dive into stasis,  
a frieze of youthful males in the raw that yet  
reflects, as does a chain of words, a sentence's  
urgent roll into a single thought.

Such is flesh, even the undesired,  
that—brute as sun, untainted by veil—  
it should lure the fervent eye from its tired  
enclave. And yet, beauty will never fail

to riddle the mind, impugn the soft contrivance,  
baffle instinct. The candid joys, in trance  
with bodies on rock and font, close and dance

in verticals and pyramid, in measures,  
that the compassing eye might guard the fissure—  
dressed and healed—between scene and desire.