

ON READING "THE LOST DIARIES OF FRANZ HALS"

**by
Naomi Myles**

Franz Hals of Haarlem
was a outdoors man
who yearned to paint
the sky over Holland
in all its moods,
fishermen and their nets,
the great shining sheets
that Dutch housewives
spread out to the sun.

Not studio stuff
with its tedious
underpainting
and trimming
and smoothing.

A hearty man
who adored his wife.
And, of course,
the children came
one after another
adding up to ten,
so Franz painted portraits.

Glowing colors
and bold modern strokes,
they almost looked alive
those homely Dutch burghers
who loved to pose
as noblemen in ornate
uniforms and plumes.

And always the strong
plain faces, wonderful noses:
Stubby cork noses
potato noses
bulbous noses
aristocratic noses
 with flaring nostrils
or arched noses, as if
 one of the herring boats
 in the harbor was in full sail.

And he crowned the noses with eyebrows
like winged birds
or rippling water
or bristled like himself,
slightly absurd and grumpy.