

JEAN STONE

THE GOLDEN HELMET

I've never told you this —
when we were young
I walked behind you in the street.

You were so timid
sharp faced girls
men who looked and looked away
lovers arm in arm
were hard for you to pass.
You swept wide around
a beggar.

I walked behind you to the Gallery.
You looked at crowd scenes Dutch interiors
How placidly, you may have thought,
she sits beside her spinning wheel . . .
A perfect blue, that bowl . . .
Unbelievable, the teeming Bruegel feast.

Portraits were for staring
not as in life
when looks will be returned.
Rembrandt's old soldier
his look of having seen it all
and being unafraid
held you the longest.

Why didn't I speak?
I thought you were not ready then
for conversation with strange men
but sharpening your wits.