

from "Third World"

III.

On the streets of The Biggest City in the World they could be
recognized by the jumbled
excess in their eyes
by the way they levitated, tremulous, over impossible yellow
thistles.

The city was also their house
they had a living room of brackish buildings downtown
a dark bedroom in Tlanesburgo
an enviable view in Belvedere
and underground passageways that everyone called the Metro.
In the kitchen which was everywhere the men came to know the
bite of garlic intimately
and those who were going to be women wore glass armor instead
of flowered aprons.

They could be recognized by the agility of their thighs and the
proficiency of their hands as they snatched.

They were the diurnal animals that took the parks by storm
solid like a flagpole ringed with light
the length of it appeased by wide red-black flags.
They, the ones with sad armpits and mouths bursting with the
greatest hunger
flung themselves upon the roundness of the world with arms
and legs made of net.
They could be recognized because it was difficult to know if they
were just going or if they were already returning aghast.
They were the ones who sang hymns out of tune and walked
upstream in parades
the contingent of dark individuals.

They could be recognized by their way of being absolutely,
roundly, cinematically wrong.

But above all they could be recognized by the excess in their eyes
obsidian stones inlaid in firm emaciated crania
tremendously stunned drops
kites flying spiral.

Beneath their light, the world was finally small
a broken toy that wasn't scary anymore.

Translated from the Spanish by Jen Hofer