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Singer at the Arcade

The passers-by didn't know whether to stop or not
 and those who stopped thought at first –
 this man belongs in a circus –
 this man with a woman's voice.
 But as he sang his operatic tones
 the people became more comfortable –
 some lit cigarettes, some leant against the walls of stone
 as his voice touched tenderly those walls of the arcade
 and pressed off gently as a swimmer in a somersault turn
 spreading through the air like blood through water
 feeling every corner, tasting every ear of the standing strollers
 who let their minds be taken from their lives,
 taken by the hand to the air under the arch
 to bask in the golden warmth of his voice
 transcending age-old boundaries, coming from his heart –
 they could see it in his face,
 in his bohemian robes colored like rainbows.
 His rhapsody focused a domain
 in which beauty always blooms
 as hermaphroditic tulips
 filling wall-less rooms,

until the end, when he had finished
 and they had blinked their eyes
 they didn't know if they should clap
 and bellow bravo cries,
 or allow the walls to resonate
 with the aftertaste of oneness.

Some clapped, therefore, regrettingly
 and dropped a euro near his feet
 while the others bowed and slipped away
 knowing only not yet to speak.

Matthew Homan