

AMSTERDAM

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In a spider's web, shaken slightly, continually
by the passage of pleasure boats that groove
reflected foliage with their wakes,
the Central Station greedily
awaits its prey of tourists.

Around the Waterlooplein a few 'Bildungslücken':
"Nein, das haben wir nicht gewusst."
An old mouth full of gaps -
houses ransacked for firewood
during the Hunger Winter, and everywhere
on walls memorial plaques to fallen priests
who were 'more than conquerors'.

The roof line's a filigree
of East Indian silver, gold spun thin
as the slave blood it was bought with
in the imperial past. But tolerance pays:
at the Hotel Spinoza
Marcuse is international. We learn how the state
is killing us with kindness, and we accept it.

All is facade. On the 'Gentlemen's Canal'
offices, university seminars,
grow into unwanted elegance
and behind them in walled summer gardens a flutter of dovecotes.
On the lawn a girl student's naked feet
toy with the Fanta bottles.
Look, it is a young city,

it has had a face-lift.