Profiteer

Edinburgh; that city of famous learned men
and discarded heaps of callused hands
must push back the curtains of hops haar,
recognise the faces hidden in its cornice,
Built on foundations of sedimentary and igneous rock
and layers of streets hiding crumbled faults
and vaults of secrets sealed in wax-stamped letters
and the lives of distant enslaved peoples
and not-so-distant women on Ranger’s Impartial List
and the other women burnt, strangled, and drowned;
Used as and when required,
they made the city’s fortune
fed a growing beast -
land chopped up and incorporated
scraped out fields
with loitering lord names
green belt pulled ever tighter
its notches; high density windows and
high-rise plans for a land that once held
a human zoo
which nobody knows about;
scratched off city plans, like an old unfashionable aunt;
very much of her time,
but there is, on that same map
a bloodied handprint
burns of red, running to its edges
joined by sewers over-flowing, carried to sea
to the city limits
that city of land and people breathing in the excess
into our industrial lungs -
Brutalist fumes
Victorian reek
Georgian stench
we must
paint our wastelands green
help the waterways run clear
let justice and purple campanula grown between the cracks
and face up to the past
to improve what comes next