Safranschou

Hundreds of years ago, a man in Germany was burned on a pyre of his own fake saffron according to the forgery laws of the land.

They caught me mixing silk threads with beet and empty-flavored stamens and this is my punishment:

The fire blooms me.

Flames secret as a crocus unleashing its first color in challenge to the bruise-pushed dawn.

I know there must be counterfeits for beauty—

Not sunrose. Not valentine, not dame of the heart. If I say red you will think of existing flowers but I am trying to name the color developing into my hands. From my wrists roped to the prison pole, where skin sheeting holds on as if tethered with only a song.
You cannot know how colors
chime until you listen—

The red inside
a mother’s skirt,
bloodberry. A throated
loon feather if birds could be made
of mostly smoke.

In time I will be
made of mostly smoke.

If this is dying—
all my calm
bones slowly being let out,
eroded to, their hollows
confessed—then let me have it,
let me call it beautiful.