Aubade Without You

Deployment Day 7

This morning I'm as raw
as a wet yolk. Still, I make
coffee, stack my dishes
in ordered rows. An invisible bird
spins the same four notes outside
my window, and I want to call
back, if just to shout, “You are alone.
You will always be alone.”
It flies off, and the silence
is heavier. At some point,
there will be nothing of you
left. The milk spoiled.
The sheets washed. Each corner
vacuumed of what remains.
Then who will I be? Perhaps
this is how ghosts are made—
in broad daylight, on a green day
in May, when a man texts his woman
to say “I love you”
two thousand miles away
and she responds, but it's too late.
All the birds have gone out.

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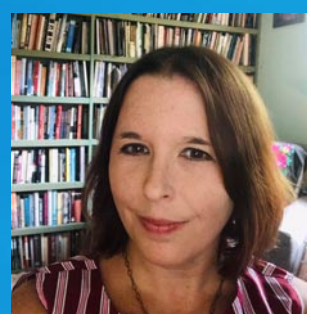
Erin Elizabeth Smith is the Executive Director for Sundress Publications and the Sundress Academy for the Arts. She is the author of three full-length collections of poetry, most recently *DOWN* (SFASU 2020), and her work has appeared in *Guernica*, *Ecotone*, *Crab Orchard*, and *Mid-American*, among others. Smith is a Distinguished Lecturer in the English Department at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.