there

Jasmine Elizabeth Smith

is a woman,
a negotiation of space—
the red line of vitals
now partitioned.
is she tired
the intake
for an entire house
her hands, make-shift, wash
negotiate the lint of cobwebs
she is kept inside
a house in ruin.

an entire house within her chest
shingles, banisters,
double paned &
the smallest of spaces.
of overcompensation?
her breath,
eighty lungs. every-day
the windows
& the door, bolted, make sure
that strangers inside of her are fed.
Watch now how she walks away.

Jasmine Elizabeth Smith is a Black poet and educator from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. She received her MFA from the University of California, Riverside and is a Cave Canem and Black Earth Institute Fellow. Her debut collection, South Flight (University of Georgia Press, 2022) was the recipient of the 2021 Georgia Prize and her work has been featured in publications such as POETRY, RHINO, Crazyhorse, World Literature Today among others. Jasmine Elizabeth Smith's poetic work is a confluence of poetry of witness, archival research, and radical imagination, in which constructed narratives of both real and invented characters become a space in which previously conceived notions of the Black experience can be challenged, complicated, and dismantled. Merging history and what is acutely felt from the margins of history, her poetry ranges from Black love in the peripheral of the Tulsa Race Massacres of 1921, the desires of Black Americans attempting to find fulfillment and dignity through the the perceived democracy of the The People's Temple in Guyana, and subvert the well worn tropes within the genre of Black Soul Westerns.