
POETRY | SPRING 2019

A Gullah Woman Comes To Clinic

By Ethan Stonerook

See her alone
her hands, effluvial
gifts washed from Sierra Leone.
Hands received
from West African mothers, strength
epigenetically kneaded
into them while bearing
witness to grandmothers
work and weave baskets
purchased by white folks
along the black of high-way
seventeen meandering
in the low-country
Sargasso golden salt marsh.

See her Atlas of tendons
medial passing nerves,
veins with names;
Long Reach, Rockudundee,
Little Ogeechee. Look at her

today,
across the fluorescent procedure room
antithesis to the glorious
soil into which she presses
down seeds, presses smooth
the weightless white flour, kneads
in butter, milk, salt. I ask,

“What do you want, to want,
to do?”

...

See the brackish creeks
slowly glimmer down
her tannin cheeks,
“I got pints and pints
of bright red tomatoes
put up. I jus’ wanna make
vegetable soup.”

Ethan Stonerook is a physician assistant at the bone marrow transplant program at Wake Forest University, who has worked with malignant hematology and transplant patients for the last seven years. He says, “I love the continuity and intimacy of care with patients in these settings and have used writing as my primary way to make meaning of and reconcile the moral and emotional consequences of such relationships in the setting of frequent untoward outcomes.”

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