

Coconut Oil

by Roshni Goyate

Vatika bottle sits in the bathroom,
contents solidified by London's night.
Mum microwaves it to a clear sap—
an ancestral ritual improvised.

She sits me down, braids unplaited,
drags plastic comb through my hair.
Ouch Mummy, Mummy not too hard!
Pretends my squeaks are not there.

Drip-drip onto my invisible scalp.
Grap-grip with the palms of her hand.
Rub-rub rub-rub taming flyaways.
Slap-slip onto the slick-dark of strands.

A soft scent, sweet and buttery, slippery
tinged with metallic sweat of my brow,
provokes questions in the playground,
Why do you smell so funny? How?

The powder-red shame of coconut oil
spray paints itself onto my skin.
I delete it from life like a bad line of code,
no chance of it coming back in.

When suddenly, this hair oil that gave me such grief
comes back for wellbeing's bright new age.
No longer smelling funny, a great white commodity
marked up for organic food shops. All the rage.