

## **black soap**

Oluwatomisin Oredein

my mother sold home  
in small black bars,  
her daughter's time  
in the garage  
pounding, molding, scenting.

never mind  
she tried hard  
to bargain away  
her oppression...

it worked for her -  
selling her culture  
for a few dollars  
and sense of purpose.

the soap they  
rubbed  
on their bodies  
was their best  
attempt  
to remember  
home –  
a time  
they never knew.

she wore  
the time-traveler's cloak  
converting nostalgia  
to the present.

she found her visibility again.  
satiating link.

she conjured ground,  
inspired purpose.  
they vested  
grounds,  
afforded  
purpose.

it shaped the ground  
to know  
one's purpose  
lived  
in blackness  
that could clean  
like no other.

melancholic souvenirs;  
where family is;  
where they all belonged.

what could wash this black skin  
leaving traces of land  
in its wake?

what could clean black tears?