

INHERITANCE

Adesiyan Oluwapelumi

Years later, I still dream of a house
filled with drowning fishes.

My father canoes my mother through
a cesspit. Together, they trudge as salmon and trout.

I travel waterlogged as a tadpole
with gills submerged in a basin of salt.

Sometimes all that holds us together
is water.

This boat is my body,
a continent of water seeking refuge.

I carry within me the history of my ancestral trauma.
I carry its shame like an ulcer wound.

My knees sunk into the labor of the ocean.
How do I stay afloat with this much weight?

Lord, let the currents not swerve me.
This ancestry is how we anchor ourselves to the living.

We dig up dykes of memory to preserve
the present. The earth is our witness.

A family tree grows tap roots.
Every kinfolk irrigates with their blood.

Our mothers say a child who has broken
the water jar has severed the blood tie.

Bless me, let me not know the brokenness
of water, nor the fade of memory.