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ARAO AMENY

## Home Is a Woman

Before I enter the matatu  
for the drive to Kampala then Lira  
the driver stops me to tell me  
he's never seen me on this route  
"you must live outside"  
I remember I live outside my own country  
I pretend not to hear  
and he says it again, this time behind a cigarette and a smile  
he asks me "who are your people? who is your father? your grandfather?"  
saying he may know my people

I tell him my mother's name and her mother's name  
and my great-grandmothers' names  
I tell him about the names of the land they could not inherit  
unless their brothers or fathers or husbands gave it to them  
I name and map the land, from that tree to the edge of the river  
I tell him where my great-grandmothers were born  
where my grandmothers were born  
where my mother was born  
I hum the names of the women in my family  
over and over again like a forgotten prayer  
a forbidden song  
he asks again "who are your forefathers, you girl?"  
I ask him "and who gave birth to them?" and I say the names of the women who gave  
birth to them

our ride is silent from Kampala to Lira  
he gives me a curious glance from the rearview mirror at my many faces  
looking at me while I hold on to my suitcase  
while I carry all the women living inside of me  
I carry them home