

## Gauntlet by Otoniya Juliane Bitek

Let's go write the poem that marks,  
marks me  
my body  
marks up  
inks down  
marks terror  
marks nightmare  
marks discipline  
marks canon  
this is where that howl deepens because this is where if how when & what we can write & now  
that I've become the script  
listen

this is a poem for Our own self

let's go where neither of us has gone before let's go see what's what

the right write let's go write the right stuff the write rites the right wrongs right the lies in the  
archive & write

the forgotten determined by who of us you disappeared

that then determines who's who who's what who's when because you know that you know that  
you know that

that's my face your feet landed on that last time don't you

so then mark these words mark me mark this page mark this day this time this is the rest of your  
life &

like a curse like the hail mary like petals of a daisy you will always return to this moment

on this page i got proof of life i got the full-throated laughter in recent days & i know where the  
red ribbons lay

i know the ones you call fallacy the ones you call myth the ones you said were of no  
consequence were lies but

after all were ribbons what Dionne Brand told us were signs of joy

as unsettled as we are as uninvited as perpetual guests holding on to a story clad in dark blue  
this is how we

got this place this is how we left this is where we came from this is why house yes but never home & this is

a canadian passport

we left didn't we

to survive just so they could never claim that they got every last one of us

that is an Acholi name one name two words this is my birthplace Kisumu Kenya

this is a canadian passport

my face two worlds the british queen's head on canadian money but you gotta wrap me up in Viola Desmond tens

not anthems not flags not the brand blue of a canadian passport this is canadian citizenship this is me now

this is the point

this is what I read

this is the rhythm of the page

where my skull hardens out what keeps me awake in the archives

where the curses are spelled out

& where we're marked up

the symbol of your power is

where we disappear

this this this this is a canadian passport

where my savage meets yours where my savage is you where my songs are the text of this economy

spelled out in musical notes

song & I stand

to the woman at steam clock in gastown prefaced & gagged by numbers like mine

the chorus of ancestors at the bottom of the ocean & the ones that ghost above

this is a Vancouver lyric

libelous like gassy gastown jack

often straight out threatens like jack himself not far from the angel who carries the body of a fallen soldier

at the bottom of granville

watch the angel weep now how she carries on how she drowns out the keening around a steamed up jack

we meet at clock tower to ghost him out across time & space.

like petals we're drawn to the centre

I could be a single sheet of paper

beneath your writing hand mark me write all over me but i'm no blank sheet

I am the song