

...and then there was Light



...and then there was Light

... and then there was Light speaks to the ideas that come from traversing the dark, the brilliance that forms in the womb that is creation itself. The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas invited poets to write from the “void”, which can be thought of as a place of nothingness, everywhere and nowhere, a space ripe for opportunity and growth. This theme was inspired by the artwork produced for the **11th National Exhibition: NELEVEN Into the Void**, which investigated ideas of hope, renewal, and survival in an environment plagued by the vestiges of colonialism.

Each poem gathered here takes a more personal understanding of this void-womb – navigating the complexities of grief and of hope, bringing lightness to the murky waters of heartbreak, or the pain of losing a loved one. Each poet also brings the knowledge that this grief is a bridge to self-mastery; it is this liminal space that nudges us toward the light at the end of tunnel so that we can create from a space of truth and a more nuanced perspective.

This chapbook compiles the poetry that was included in the NAGB’s installation for the FUZE Caribbean Art Fair 2025. Hopefully, this gentle collection serves as a mirror for your own grief, to be looked at, honoured, and healed by the inescapable mother of the void.

Letitia Marie Pratt, Associate Curator

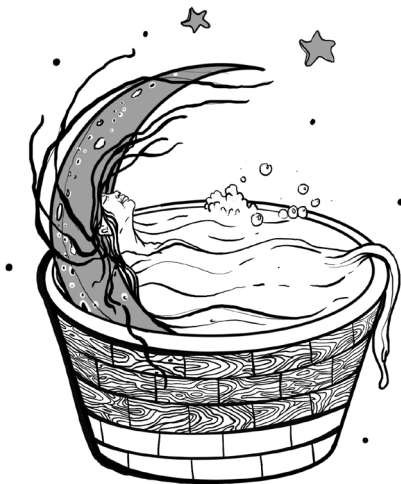
WHEN THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT BE STILL

kevante ac cash

i)

i am stripping moon from gaze
 sea from sand
 words from chorus
 milk from bowl

i am bathing in narrowness
i am black hole



ii)

dance with the light
 of grief

oh,
how i wish
it would
consume me
oh,
how i have
never been more
ready
to succumb
to weightless
sorrow.

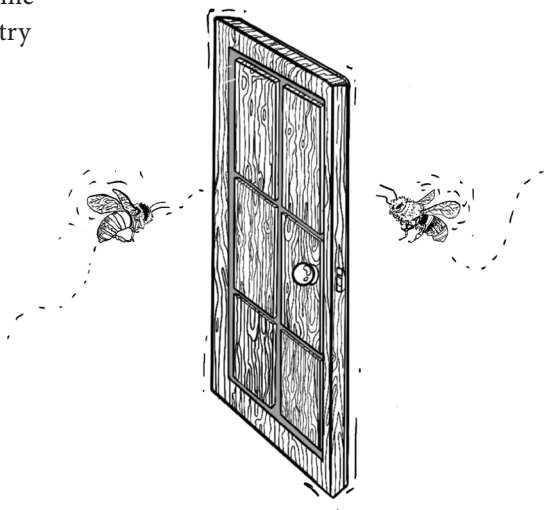
WHERE IS THE GREAT LIGHT

maelynn ford

am i past comfort
existing liminally
before + after

the void is not death
it is the absence of you
in this vivid world

where is the great light
to pull me back + ground me
there is poetry



CALABASH (*after Olive Senior*)
Xan Xi

I sit cross-legged
 on the divination mat
 my big belly sticking to my thighs
 in the balmy heat.

The infant growing
 inside me stretches long-ways;
 his feet pressing into my pelvis.
 I shift to the left.

Through the open doors
 of the Iyalosha's rooms
 I can see the Cuban sky-line –
 a jagged sequence

of pastel-painted high rises
 edged against a crimson
 and magenta sky.
 Men laugh in the street below.

Now she prays:
Omi tutu, Ona tutu, lle tutu
tutu Laroye
tutu Esu, tutu Orisa.

Each time she dips a
blackened, weather-worn finger
into cool water in a little calabash bowl.

Omi tutu- ooooooooo

A slight, shifting breeze
ruffles the ivory curtains
above the kitchen sink. The cock crows
inside the brown box.

*In the beginning
She made the calabash tree
and the biggest, fattest, one fell free
buss open in three*

*then Olofin said
this one is for the heavens
this one is for the earth. And this one
– this is for rebirth.*

Water in this gourd
like the water in my womb
for spirits, for parched throats,
for dry bones. *Let us raise the dead.*

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR DEATH

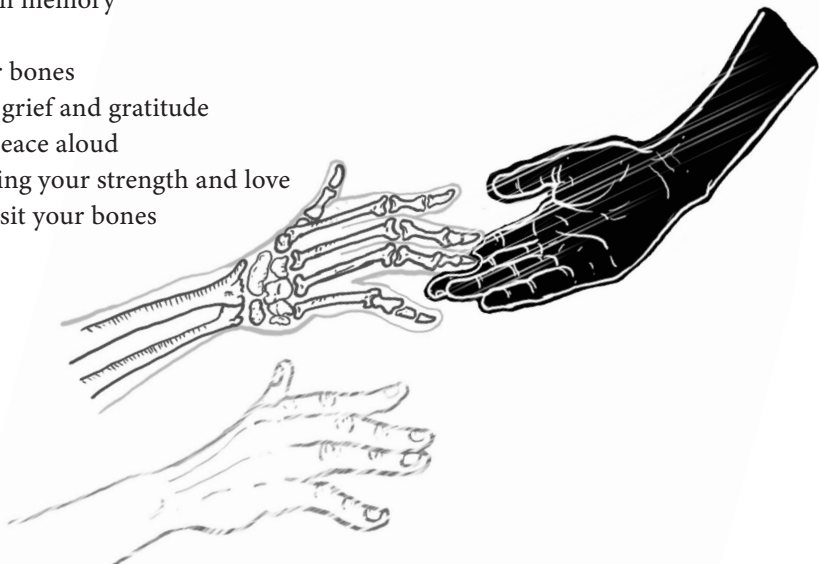
Zearier E. Munroe-Wilkinson

Across this plain of
flowers bright and undying
I visit your bones
to honor your vivid life

I search for joy as
a blunt rage and a dull ache
holds me softly and
breaks through my wall of darkness

this life is hard, so,
with hope I visit your bones
counting the great cost
quietly with memory

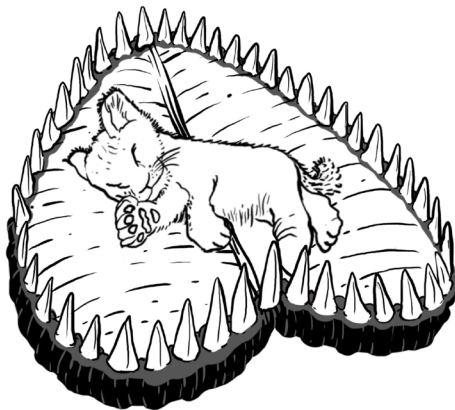
I visit your bones
screaming grief and gratitude
speaking peace aloud
remembering your strength and love
in love I visit your bones



MOTHER VOID (IN LEO)

Tania Pratt

Won't you grip my loose
aan limp— bring my bones back
to your den, press me
deep, beneath fang aan rib, a
cub remolded by heartbeat?



THE VOID-ANNEALING HURRICANE

Richardo Barrett

Ine see you in a minute
like a storm surge,

then the I of a hurricane,
it's calm, it's familiar here,

dis ain't numbers,
but everybody fears winds

your offerings of Cerise,
envy its rival, eternity its curse,

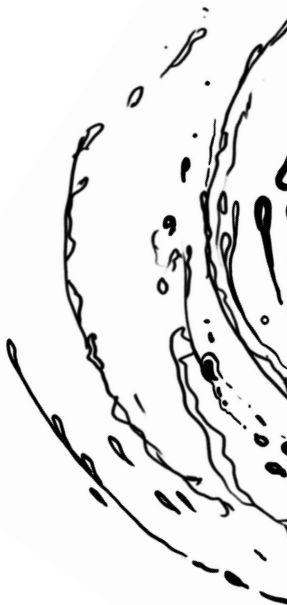
every street corner got you spending it,
the currency of nothing and everything,

existence, the flicker of brother time,
the encompassing velvet of all things,

us...we...they...them...shit,
I don't know, do you, does she,

sound, have nothing, to love up on
just me, vibrate on me

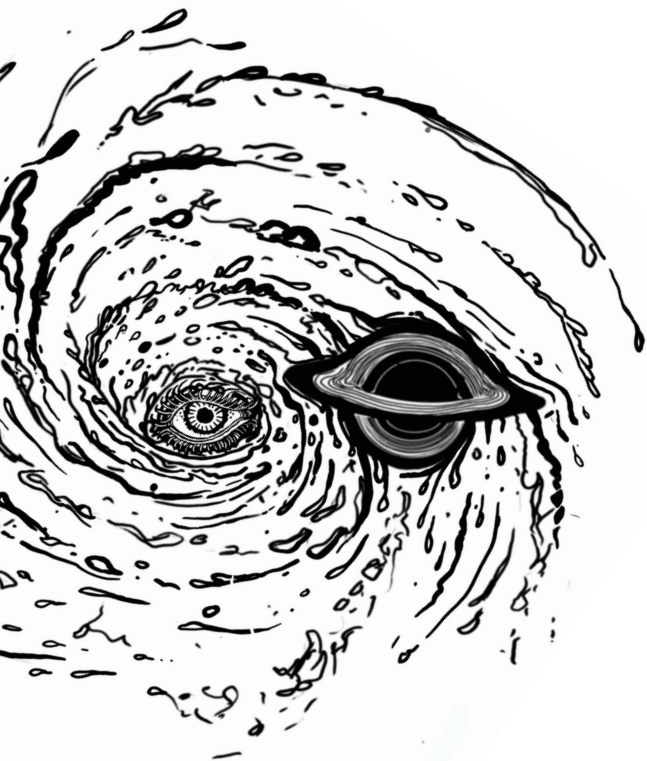
I am reality, I am joy, I am shame
but Ine da one nor the da two



play at the edge, the depths of the sea
categories can't map my intentions

eye stimulate and purge pleasure,
from tongue, flesh, bone and soul,

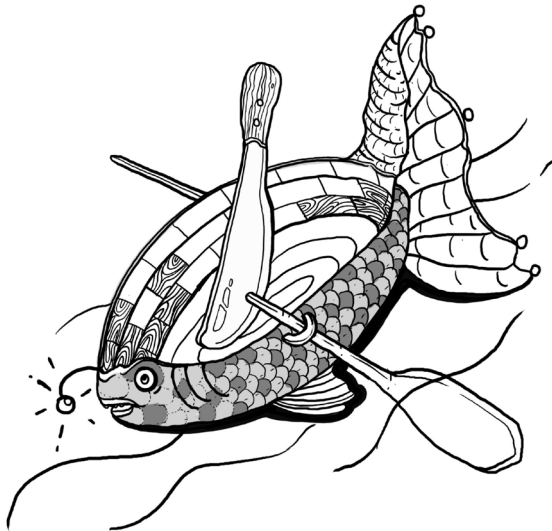
relax in my void, the ineluctable pain
the nostalgia of black



SALTWATER DIALECTIC: A REPRISE

Ide Thompson

let us be | unclear |
| uncertain |
| lets us be | in confusion
lets us be | out of many | one
vessel running | the waves of chance |
we make | our own | deliverance in Night
song | hummed by the small light | cutlass
in the belly | of the fish



COUPLETS RECORDED PAST EVENT HORIZON

Letitia Marie Pratt

...and now, we are a vortex:
involute, heavy

a myth that is
the heat of the spiral

where nothing flows
a universe collapses

this is how wounds are made
it burns, then dies

with a soft ringing
then a clash

matter as inevitable
fire before black –

in the end,
everything eats itself

as the mouth grows
out of the navel like a tumor

and nothing satisfies
but an endless light



VOID

Sonia Farmer

As in a completely empty space; the first lunar phase or the skull's eye socket on the Death card I pull that morning; as in removed or ransacked; the gap I tongue between my teeth or ancient calcified coral beds dissolved like some underwater rapture; as in unoccupied, a departure, not binding; the moon drifting away from Earth at the rate of my fingernail growth; as in once part; as in a reminder; as in eclipsed; those shuffling celestial shadows; an in obscuring; as in draining away or excreting; weeping taking me by surprise, witnessing that totality—no, recognizing that totality; as in free from; as in lacking; knowing exactly what you have lost, but only for a short while—not as in the fifth category; not magnitude 9.5; not the tsunami that visits my dreams and makes for me a blank slate—rigddht? Not as in an emptiness born out of loss—right? No, as in a hunger born out of loss; as in unfilled; as in seeking; as in remembering; as in desiring—knowing the probability and going there anyway; as in the Russian Roulette of each hurricane season; as in staring directly at the sun, its heavy black eyelid descending, midday darkness obliterating even language; as in the storm's vortex obliterating even sound; as in before you open the door, in the brief respite of that thunderous howl, to take in your new landscape of loss, your mouth waters for what you remember—remember? As in do I want it? The black limb of the moon?



As in there be dragons; as in unknown; the Bermuda Triangle,
that tooth sharpened on legend; as in home, as in
everyday erasure; as in the cone; the path; the zone—
do you want it? That void seared into your retina, the blindness
of knowing what comes after the roar, after the silence,
when you hear the song all of those trapped
birds sing as they migrate in the calm eye of this storm
that effaces their homes with its blink?



Ide Amari Thompson (@ifeille) is a Queer writer-academic. They are in love with queer sci-fi and cats, aspires to master calisthenics, and are an OG Solo Leveling fan.

kevanté ac cash (she/they, @alexia_chatelle) is a poet, dancer and love activist. they enjoy binge watching reality dating tv shows, hosting watch parties to psycho-analyze media with friends, and prioritizing rest and self care.

Letitia Marie Pratt (@letitia_marie) is a poet and curator. She likes to drink tea in the afternoons, go birdwatching, and host her cat friend, Gemini Cat.

Maelynn Ford (@maelynn.writes) is a poet, and Administrator. She is a lover of love, a spreader of joy, and is on a mission to convince everyone to adopt a Royal Bahamian Potcake.

Richardo Barrett is a jack of all trades. He enjoys gardening, watching anime, and howling at the moon with his dog, Goten.

Sonia Farmer (sonia-farmer.com) is a writer who also makes books, paper, and prints by hand at her studio Poinciana Paper Press. She likes reading and researching, touching paper instead of screens, and taking trains instead of planes.

Tancia Pratt (@nefernici) is an eclectic poet based in Nassau. She loves exfoliating her feet in the sand, cool cafes, curling up to a sweet psychothriller, and picking flowers.

Xan-Xi: She's a bad mamma jamma.

Zearier E. Munroe-Wilkinson is an educator, cultural worker, and anime villian apologist. She is extremely passionate about a life well lived and a job well done.

...and then there was Light

Published by the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas
As part of the art installation for FUZE Caribbean Art Fair 2025

Edited by: Letitia Marie Pratt, Associate Curator, NAGB
Designed by: Reagan Farrington, Communications Officer, NAGB
Illustrations by: Richardo Barrett, Collections Care Manager, NAGB

© 2025 National Art Gallery of The Bahamas
All rights reserved.





