

Yvonne C. Murphy

BIOLUMINESCENCE



I.

Red mangroves circle the lagoon,
their roots decomposing,
releasing tannins and nutrients
into the sediment. The sea
is attached by a thin neck
of water we can't see. Dino-
flagellates huddle into super-blooms,
biobursts of light only showing
themselves when disturbed.

We push our kayak through
the muck, sit inside, enter
another tenuous ecosystem.
The bay must recreate itself
continuously over time, losing
brightness after heavy rains
then replenishing, the way we,
long married, still reach
to each other at night—fragile
yet perennial, stable
in our inconsistencies.

II.

You sit on the boat's prow,
your oar temporarily out
of the water, insisting
I take it easy.
At midnight, all is pitch

except for periodic
fish trailing greenish-blue light
through the water.

The further we float away,
the darker it gets, murky depths
underneath. You claim
that we will find our way
but I am nervous—
we hear random voices
from the shoreline, try to aim
ourselves back. You are paddling
but I am unable to steer,
the refulgence is more than I can bear.

Calabash

A JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ARTS AND LETTERS

Volume 5, Number 1 / Summer-Fall 2008

Information about this work:

Bioluminescence

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Start Page: 01

URL: <http://www.nyu.edu/calabash/vol5no1/0501001.pdf>

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Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters
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