

cart
before
the horse

The Short Plays of
John Patrick Bray

POLYCHORON PRESS

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A note from the playwright:

Many thanks for picking up this volume of shorts! These plays have been produced at festivals and in venues around the country. Some have been published in anthologies with Applause and Smith and Kraus; while another has appeared on Indie Theatre Now. It's been a fantastic ride!

Six of the seven plays (excluding "Blue, Blue Moon") were all presented together under the title *Bray's Plays* by UGA Theatre at the University of Georgia, as part of the Studio Season. I've

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decided to leave them in the order as they were produced. I have also included the cast and creative team lists below.

Please note: the characters in these plays can be played by men, women, and by any ethnicity. *Green Sound*, for example, has been performed by two women. *Cookies* has been performed by three men, three women, a mix of men and women, and children. Yes, children (without amending the language – those poor kids!)

I owe a huge debt of thanks to UGA Theatre, University of Georgia, Rising Sun Performance Company, Ensemble Theater of Chattanooga, Heartland Theatre Company, EagerRisk Theatre, Cold Basement Dramatics, Axial Theatre, Rachel Klein Productions, Dennis Wayne Gleason, Ning Bhanbassha, GOOD Works Theatre Festival, re:Directions Theatre, Wishbone Theatre Collective, Greenhouse Ensemble Theatre, Athens Playwrights' Workshop, Rose of Athens Theatre, Gregory Bray, and so many more for having faith in these plays! My sincerest thanks!

A very special thank you, also, to Taylor Gruenloh, Todd Ristau, and the Hollins Playwright's Lab: great people doing great things!

A final word of thanks to Danielle, Daniel, and Sadie for being an amazing family.

“Blue, Blue Moon” received its world premiere as part of the GOOD Works Theatre Festival at the GOOD Acting Studio in Marietta, Georgia.

The production was directed by Emma K. Harr, and featured the following cast:

Jeanine: Laura E. Meyers
Gregory: Ralph Del Rosario
Little Greg: Sean Fife
Voice of little Jeanine: Sky Cameron Johnson

Production Stage Manager: Jim Walsh
Costume Design: Emma K. Harr
Lighting Design and Set Design: Robert Drake
Producer: Mario Good

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Bray's Plays ran February 4-9, 2014 at the Seney-Stovall Chapel in Athens, Georgia as part of the UGA Theatre Studio Season, featuring the cast and creative team:

The directors:

Alicia Corts: "Eleanor's Passing"

Chris Eaket: "Coffee On?"

C.A. Farris III: "On Top"

Mike Hussey: "Southern Werewolf"

Kristin Kundert-Gibbs: "Watery Grave" and "Cookies"

David Saltz: "Green Sound"

The ensemble:

Jayln Fleming (Gus, Eleanor's Passing; Broussard, Love Bites; Jake, "Watery Grave")

Chris Stalcup (Moe, "Eleanor's Passing"; Michael, "Coffee On?"; Richard, "Watery Grave")

Jeffrey Wages (Tall Glass, "Eleanor's Passing;" Toby, "Cookies")

Luke Georgecink (Bill, "On Top")

Jase Wingate (Taylor, "Green Sound"; George, "Watery Grave")

Bryan Perez (Walter, "Cookies")

Brooke Owens (Molly, "Green Sound")

Abby Holland (Wendy, "Coffee On?", Dirk, "Cookies")

Kayla Sklar (Janice, "On Top")

Suzanne Zoller (Missy, "Love Bites")

Production Coordinator: George Contini

Stage Manager: Caroline Caldwell

Assistant Stage Managers: Haley McIntosh, Caroline Caldwell

Special Effects: Josh Marsh

Lighting Design: Arnab Banerji

Graphic Design: Clay Chastain

Run Crew: Giselle Fernandez and Walker Smith

Dramaturges: Dr. Fran Teague, Will Dunlap, and Weldon Pless

Green Sound

Characters:

Taylor, mid-30's; wears glasses, sweats a lot

Molly, mid-30's; does not wear make-up

Setting:

Molly's apartment, Present Day.

Note:

This is meant to be played absolutely straight. The characters are completely sincere.

(LIGHTS UP in MOLLY'S apartment. There is a small kitchen table with two chairs. There is a window which allows sunlight in. There is a small table with a lamp. The apartment should have the appearance of being small and brightly lit. MOLLY is discovered sitting on her couch. She is drinking out of a tea-cup. She touches the tea-cup to her lips three times before taking a sip. She regards the tea-cup. She repeats the motion twice more. She stands up and moves to the kitchen-style table, setting the tea cup on the table. Perfectly in the center. She steps back looking at it. She turns it three times. There is a frantic knock at her door. She grabs the tea-cup. Looks for a place to put it. Sets it under the couch. Another frantic knock at the door. MOLLY stands up. Gets on her hands and knees. She crawls to the door. She taps it three times. There is another knock, gentler this time. She stands, still crouching, and taps three times. There are three taps from the other side. She brings herself to her full height. She looks through the eye-piece. She inhales. She steps back. She taps the door knob three times. She takes the doorknob and opens the door. It opens in.)

(TAYLOR is at the door. He is holding a light. The kind of light one might see over head in a coffee shop. It has some crystals, and all kinds of fuzzy wires sticking out of the top, like the top of a pineapple. It has been ripped out of the ceiling.)

TAYLOR

You weren't there today. I...I just. You haven't been there.

MOLLY

Your words are yellow.

TAYLOR

(Beat.) Okay. *(He enters.)* And it's everyday you're there.

MOLLY

I burned my tongue.

TAYLOR

(Beat.) Okay. *(They regard each other.)* I never burn my tongue. I get iced coffee. But just iced coffee. Black. I like the taste of black but I hate the taste of...hot. I like the taste of cold.

MOLLY

It's a yellow sound.

(She moves to touch his mouth, and retreats her hand.)

TAYLOR

You have a lot of light in here.

(He sets down the light fixture. He moves around the room pulling shades, dimming lights.)

MOLLY

Can you. Be. Green?

TAYLOR

I can be green. I think. What?

MOLLY

Green. Yellow sounds are. Blinding.

TAYLOR

Oh. *(He continues making the room darker.)* Burning your tongue is a good reason not to go back.

MOLLY

Only once.

TAYLOR

Right. Coffee betrays you. You need to find something else.

MOLLY

Don't kick my teacup.

(TAYLOR looks around. Does not see a tea-cup.)

TAYLOR

Okay.

MOLLY

I do go to work.

TAYLOR

Really?

MOLLY

Make-up counter at Molloy's.

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TAYLOR

Really?

MOLLY

I don't wear make-up.

TAYLOR

Really? *(Beat. He regards her.)* No, you don't wear make-up.

MOLLY

Your sound is red now.

TAYLOR

Oh.

MOLLY

Not green. Not yellow.

(TAYLOR looks around the room, which is sufficiently dark. He picks up the light he brought with him.)

TAYLOR

It doesn't look right. This. This here. This light. It doesn't make any sense. Over a table. Without you there. And so, I sat there, in the coffee shop, looking at other people, being touched by the light. And I was....sad.

MOLLY

Sad?

TAYLOR

Yes, I was sad. I sit there at 11:32 every day. And I leave at 1:01 every day. I take a long lunch. It takes me awhile to eat a muffin.

MOLLY

Oh.

TAYLOR

And you arrive between 11:43 and 11:52. You get a coffee. You sit under this light. The same light. I saw you sit there. Four days in a row. Most people don't sit. They leave. But you sit. Somehow at the same table. Under the same light.

MOLLY

You noticed?

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TAYLOR

Yes. I noticed. And when the light shines on other people. Nothing happens.

MOLLY

Oh.

TAYLOR

Yes. It doesn't work. It's not right.

MOLLY

Oh.

TAYLOR

You haven't been there for three days. And. And. You have a table. May I stand on it?

MOLLY

If you want to stand on my table. Please. Stand on my table.

(He stands on her table and raises the light.)

TAYLOR

I am not an electrician.

MOLLY

No.

TAYLOR

I'm a phenomenologist.

MOLLY

What is that?

TAYLOR

It's like an electrician. Sort of. I mean. *(He removes a small pocket knife and starts peeling away at one of the frizzy wires.)* I believe if you peel away structures: words, conversations, the way we're told to behave, all of it. I believe there is essence underneath. Covered in structures. Codes. We're being coded. So, you peel away the codes. Find the essence. But then, if you peel away the essence... *(he cuts the top off the wire)*...there are more structures. *(Beat.)* I'm not supposed to steal lights, you know.

MOLLY

Yes, I know. Was it hard?

TAYLOR

No. No one stopped me. I don't know why. I know the manager was looking. He has a beard that he colors. He is losing hair but keeps his hair in a ponytail, pulling more hair off of his head. He has a wart on his nose, and a laugh that is very loud and I think people like to hear his laugh. He wasn't laughing when I took this light. So. (Beat.) I think he called the police. But. I didn't see any police so I came right here because I followed you once so I know you lived here. (*She reacts.*) I wanted to say something to you but I couldn't say anything because the words wouldn't make sense and I needed to give you something so this is it. Because, that's the thing with words. If you peel those away, there is more essence. It continues. At the bottom is something outside of discourse. Words, I mean. There is something we can know, I mean. Can't know. Something we can't know. But it doesn't mean it isn't there. And. When you were under the light. I felt like the answer was somehow closer. I'm not making any sense to you.

MOLLY

(Beat.) You're almost making sense.

TAYLOR

I can just stand here. (*He holds the light up.*) For a while.

(MOLLY stands on the table with him. She regards the light. She touches one of the crystals. She look at him and touches his glasses. He becomes incredibly still.)

TAYLOR

I'm afraid of going to the doctors. I'm afraid they might not know enough. They might not care enough.

(She touches one of the crystals. And then his glasses.)

TAYLOR

What makes each component different? What makes each component the same? A wild being. With so many constructed truths. (*Beat.*) I gave up smoking three years ago. I thought that would restore my eyesight. It didn't make sense. I just thought health could be Karmatic.

MOLLY

You sound green now.

(She touches the crystal and then his glasses.)

TAYLOR

Do I?

(She helps him hold the light. It begins to shine brightly. They look at one another. Awe. Love. They say nothing. They stand in the glow. Music comes from somewhere. They regard one another occasionally.)

TAYLOR

Did I kick your teacup?

MOLLY

It's under the couch.

TAYLOR

Oh, good. That's where teacups belong.

MOLLY

Yes.

(They smile. Their nerves are dissipating. The stage goes green, with TAYLOR and MOLLY holding the light, as it changes from red to yellow to green. ALL LIGHTS FADE gradually. END OF PLAY.)