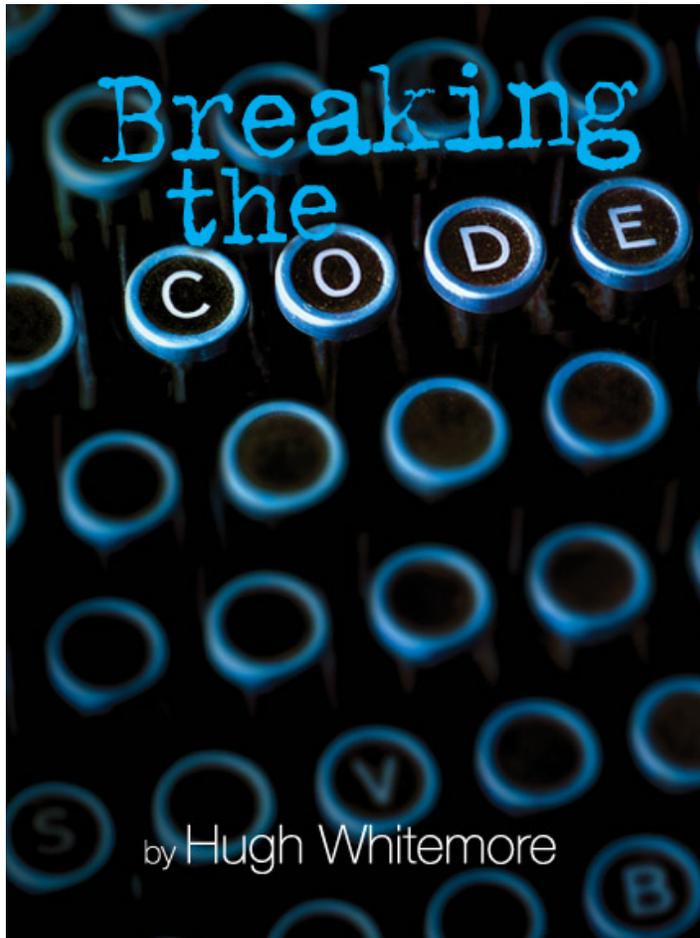


Jewel Theatre Audience Guide

Addendum: Ron Miller Biography



directed by Kirsten Brandt
by Susan Myer Siltan, Dramaturg
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RON MILLER

Ron Miller is the name of a character in an unfinished work of fiction that Alan, according to Dermot Turing in his 2016 book *Alan Turing Decoded*, had likely begun writing in mid-1952. Dermot refers to it as a six-page manuscript; in his 1983 book, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, Andrew Hodges calls it a short story, and describes it as three pages that are written in the "new, 'frank', rather jaundiced, socially conscious style of Angus Wilson," but "which did, however, compress acute reflections upon his life".

Neither author goes as far to say that Ron Miller is the actual man, Arnold Murray, with whom Alan had the affair that led to his arrest for gross indecency. However, "Ronald" is an anagram of "Arnold", and the other character in the story is "Alec", whom Hodges identifies as Alan himself. There is little doubt when reading the story that it mirrors the time, place and circumstances of the initial encounter between the two men, as well as Alan's state of mind at the time. In Part 2 of the 1992 television broadcast, "The Strange Life and Death of Dr. Turing", Episode 9 of Season 28 of the BBC *Horizon* series, Dr. Norman Routledge (1928-2013), a mathematician from King's College, Cambridge, and close friend of Alan's, reads from a letter he received from Alan shortly before his trial: "I shall shortly be pleading guilty to a charge of sexual offenses with a young man. The story about how it all came to be found out is a long and fascinating one, which I will have to make into a short story one day". This same letter contains the syllogism which has now become famous:

Turing believes machines think
Turing lies with men
Therefore machines do not think

Alan's fictional piece is reprinted below, courtesy of Dermot Turing and Andrew Hodges, so judge for yourself:

Alec Pryce was getting rather exhausted with his Christmas shopping. His method was slightly unconventional. He would walk round the shops in London or Manchester until he saw something which took his fancy, and think of some one of his friends and who would be pleased by it. It was a sort of allegory of his method of work (though he didn't know it) which depended on waiting for inspiration.

When applied to Christmas shopping this method led to a variety of

emotions just as much as when applied to work. Long periods of semi-despair wandering the stores, and every half hour or so, but quite erratically, something would leap out from the miserable background. This morning Alec had spent a good two hours at it. He had found a wooden fruit bowl which would just suit Mrs Bewley. She would be sure to appreciate it. Alec had also bought an electric blanket for his mother, who suffered from a poor circulation. It was more than he had wanted to pay, but she certainly needed just that, and would never think of getting one for herself. One or two other minor commitments had been dealt with. But now it was time for lunch, and Alec was walking towards the university but looking for a reasonably good restaurant.

Alec had been working rather hard until two or three weeks before. It was about interplanetary travel. Alec had always been rather keen on such crackpot problems, but although he rather liked to let himself go rather wildly to newspaper men or on the Third programme when he got the chance, when he wrote for technically brained readers his work was quite sound, or had been when he was younger. This last paper was real good stuff: better than he'd done since his mid twenties when he had introduced the idea which is now commonly known as 'Pryce's buoy'. Alec always felt a glow of pride when this phrase was used. The rather obvious double-entendre rather pleased him too. He always liked to parade his homosexuality, and in suitable company Alec could pretend that the word was spelt without the 'u'. It was quite some time now since he had 'had' anyone, in fact not since he had met that soldier in Paris last summer. Now that his paper was finished he might justifiably consider that he had earned another young man, and he knew where he might find one who might be suitable.

Ron Miller was distinctly bored. He had been out of any job for two months, and he'd got no cash. He ought to have had 10 quid or so for that little job he had helped Ernie over. All he had had to do was to hold the night watchman in conversation for a few minutes whilst the others got on with it. But still it wasn't really safe. Being questioned by the police was very uncomfortable.

Dermot ends there, but Hodges gives us a bit more:

... Upstairs Alec was taking off his overcoat; underneath as always he was

wearing an old sports coat and rather unpressed worsted trousers. He didn't care to wear a suit, preferred the 'undergraduate uniform' which suited his mental age, and encouraged him to believe he was still an attractive youth. This arrested development also showed itself in his work. All men, who were not regarded as prospective sexual partners, were father substitutes to whom Alec had to be [illegible] showing off his intellectual powers. The 'undergraduate uniform' had no conscious effect on Ron. In any case his attention was now concentrated entirely on the restaurant and its happenings. Alec was enjoying himself now. Usually when he went to a restaurant he felt self-conscious, either for being alone or for not doing the right thing ...

The story ends there. A passage appears to be missing between the two excerpts, but neither author explains if they selectively omitted it, or if it there weren't any more surviving pages. Hodges writes that it came to an end "at an appropriate point, for lonely consciousness of self-consciousness was at the centre of his ideas ... his problem lay in doing: doing or not doing the right thing".

As mentioned earlier, the man described as Ron Miller in the play is actually Arnold Murray (1933-1989). Andrew Hodges describes him in *Alan Turing: The Enigma*:

Arnold Murray, who was nineteen, came from the background of *The Road to Wigan Pier* [i.e., poor working class]. He had known bread and margarine at best. His father, a concrete layer when in work, knocked his mother about. Emaciated with malnutrition and nervousness in the blitz, he had been sent to a boys' camp out in Cheshire for schooling, and he was very proud of having shot to the top of the class with the new encouragement and competition. They had cheered for D-day and for VE day, but for him it meant return to a Manchester slum home by the pitch and tar distillery, and six months of technical school before his father made him leave for work. He had had several jobs, of which the longest lasting was that of making spectacle frames after the National Health Service began in 1948. (It was a trade that became a notable casualty of the Korean War, for Gaitskell's budget of 1950, setting in motion the massive rearmament of the new decade, ended the free provision of glasses.) Arnold had found release from a dreary existence in July 1951, hitching down to London for the Festival of Britain. But he had been

caught making a petty theft, and was sent back to Manchester on probation. He was still living with his family in Wythenshawe, and was currently unemployed and very hard up.

Arnold was searching for an identity, and thought that the world owed him something better than a life at the bottom of the heap. He had tried science – at fourteen he had blown out the windows with a chemistry-set concoction. And he had tried sex, with various experiences since that age. He was not a person with freedom or consistency of mind. He dreamt of a perfect relationship with a woman, but on the other hand liked the absence, when with men, of any sense of putting on a performance. He was also conscious of being called a 'Mary Ann' for intelligence and sensitivity. Middle-class men offered him manners and culture, and at this point of his development, homosexuality seemed something that belonged to an élite to which he aspired. He looked down on those who simply offered themselves directly for cash. Alan offered such a promise of association with gracious living – but this was not the whole story, for Alan combined this with a freshness and youthfulness that stood out on the Oxford Street background.

There is little I can add to the play's text in terms of how it portrays Arnold's relationship with Alan—according to court documents and other sources, it is an authentic representation. Hodges rounds out the picture, describing Alan as "Fair and with blue eyes, undernourished and with his thin hair already receding, desperate for better things and more receptive than so many educated people, Arnold touched Alan's soft spot for lost lambs, as well as other chords. He also had a determined vivacity and a saving sense of humour that could carry him through the most difficult situations."

Arnold was not represented by the same attorney who defended Alan; he had a separate attorney, Emlyn Hooson, who characterized him as "the innocent led astray by Alan's wiles". Hodges quotes the defense Hooson offered: "Murray is not a university Reader, he is a photo-printer. It was he who was approached by the other man. He has not such tendencies as Turing, and if he had not met Turing he would not have indulged in that practice". It was effective: the court gave Arnold a conditional discharge, "bound over to be of good behavior for Twelve Months". Hodges writes, "He left the court in a daze, hardly knowing to what he had confessed, and then found himself pointed out in the street by his neighbours. After a few weeks he escaped back to London, found a job in the

Lyons Corner House in the Strand, and rapidly made his way into anarchic Fitzrovia. Here in the coffee-bar world, meeting such people as Colin Wilson [English writer, philosopher and novelist], he was accepted as an individual and learned to play the guitar."

Hodges interviewed Arnold when researching his book and included it among some of his "difficult – and often rather moving – moments". He wrote that Arnold, "in conveying his recollections to me, was also shedding an albatross that had hung around his neck for twenty-five years. For he had returned to Manchester in 1954, only to be confronted by the news of Alan Turing's death. He was made to feel that he was to blame; and being both particularly vulnerable, and entirely unaware of a larger context, accepted a profound and unmentionable guilt. His success as a musician in the 1960s, and his movement into married life, could not resolve a trauma which had to wait until 1980 for enlightenment," when information about Bletchley Park and Alan's role in breaking the Enigma code was declassified.

In an internet search for more information about Murray's later life, I found History.StackExchange.com, aka History SE, a question and answer site for historians and history buffs. The question "Whatever happened to Turing's friend Arnold Murray?", yielded this answer by "Chris " on November 7, 2018:

Arnold was my uncle. He was convicted of homosexuality like Alan. I have read two books and they both have a different perspective of Arnold. He remained in Manchester and got married and had 2 kids. They split up. He moved away to London and got married again and had 2 more kids. The relationship broke down. He was a musician who had work published. He did enjoy mixing with intellectuals, musicians, art people. Anyone want to know anything specific. Apparently Alan and Arnold stayed in contact."

Shortly after Chris' answer posted, Lars Bosteen, a representative of History SE, asked for details of the two books he referred to, but Chris did not reply.

RESOURCES

Please see separate resources document provided as an addendum to this Guide.