The final pages of the chapter are devoted to how, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a certain Mrs. Emma Overd of Langport, Somerset decided to break all the taboos regarding female performance of the song when she was approached by the folksong collector Cecil Sharp, using the song to examine motivation for performance. The book concludes with an Afterword, in which the author reminisces his own studenthood in the late 1960s, at a time when new methods were being introduced to folklore research. As a young man "like everyone else, I was attracted, for they helped me expand my understanding [. . .] What *didn't* attract me was that [. . .] these "new perspectives" were too often explained within the terms of Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which [. . .] stressed [. . .] you could only embrace the new if you rejected the old" (151). This is the core issue of Roger deV. Renwick's present book, and as one reads through it one is primarily impressed by the way in which he is able to employ whatever theory is most appropriate for his subject matter. Indeed, he goes further, reminding those of us that study because we take delight in what we examine that "theoretical loyalty had to be secondary, had to emerge from subject loyalty: if a theory didn't make folksong interesting; if, however elegant and compelling, it didn't fit the obvious facts of the data; if it directed attention away from song and toward explanatory construct, then it wasn't for me" (151-52).

Substitute the word "folksong" for whatever your own area of study may happen to be.

Bolger, Dermot. *The Passion of Jerome*. London: Methuen, 1999. 89 pp.

Mária Kurdi

Dermot Bolger's career as playwright started with the works later published in a volume titled *A Dublin Quartet* (1992), which can best be described in terms of variations on the theme of quest, offering a sense of home, home country and identity as fluid and protean. Following the measurable success of this debut, *April Bright* (1995) broke a new path by channeling the search into a more personal direction. *The Passion of Jerome* (1999), written by Bolger during his writer-in-residence period at the Abbey Theatre, continues along largely the same line, having its protagonist encounter the ghosts of the past impinging on the present of contemporary Celtic Tiger Dublin life fractured by significant social differences. It stages the unfolding crisis and subsequent transformation of forty-year-old Jerome, a faithless Catholic who at first cynically labels himself as "an honest hypocrite" (8), and is shown involved in a vehement extramarital love affair with a much younger colleague his wife trusts as friend. Moreover, married to a rich Protestant woman he imagines himself happy without kids, referring to them as mere "appendages" (20), and appears to feel comfortable enough amid his entangled relationships. The play depicts how this complacent enough mask gets fiercely punctured, revealing inner hollowness behind a web of delusions and lies.

On the level of theatrical space *April Bright* changes the broader environment as setting in the earlier plays for a haunted house, well known from the Irish dramatic tradition, where a couple move in and strive to embark on a new life epitomized by the baby they expect. Likewise, the flat that the protagonist in *Jerome* tries to make into a kind of home (for clandestine meetings in this case) turns out to be haunted: the ghost

of a boy who committed suicide at fourteen keeps returning to it, the site where he decided to finish his life of loneliness and despair after his parents "went off the rails" (17). Entering the suburban area of Ballymun, the tower block that contains the flat, middle class Jerome is exposed to a world of poor and mostly alcoholic people whom he cannot think of as real. Bolger tackles the motif of hauntedness in a novel way, as it is only the shocking effect of miraculous visitations and incidents that can make his main character realize and comprehend the social otherness of the milieu. The realistic level of the play is grafted on by the surrealism of Jerome seeing or just feeling the presence of the hanging dead body of the boy and receiving stigmata as his hands are pierced by nails, a sign that he has to regain sensitivity through suffering to be able to respond to the restless soul of the young suicide.

Reinforcing the fusion of styles, the incompleteness suggested by the ghost in the Yeatsian mode derives also from the dead boy's age and his wretched circumstances: general deprivation and the loss of his parents too early prevented his growing into adulthood. His demise and lack of peace even after death underscore the hopeless fate of many youngsters like him who may be alive but remain on the margin of society without the prospect of having access to substantial opportunities and achieve maturity. Jerome, on the other hand, embodies the type of comparatively well-off people who tend to ignore the deprivileged part of the society, "taking the easy paths, making such a balls of everything" (58) as he says, and act in view of self-interest. The both physical and spiritual experience of being stigmatized and haunted by the ill-fated, tormented child and the problems leading to his suicide constitute a complex device to push Jerome off his formerly taken road.

Haunting the modern Irish theatre since its inception, the image of the child in Bolger's play assumes further dramatic significance: Jerome is allowed to reconsider his own personal trajectory in the light of the painfully eternalized boyhood of the poltergeist. His own childhood is recollected in terms of past certainties, as he "used to be somebody in Carlow," planning to become an architect: "I remember how I'd finish studying and stand in the garden, looking down at the lights of the town. I was twelve and I knew I was going to be someone" (37). The confrontation with his adult self at the present stage, however, culminates in the realization that he failed to fulfill those early dreams, and "Everything I've done for years is a mockery" (37). To an extent, he has not grown up like the dead boy, and begins to feel as if he were haunted not by a stranger but by his own never-completed younger self, "the stupid kid that I once was" (43). Like that of the ghost child, the spirit of Jerome is also trapped in the flat where the boy died and the man chose to be the scene of hiding away from himself and the weight of his past. Referring to Jerome's personal ambiguities Clara, his clear-sighted girl-friend recognizes the parallel unwittingly: "You used to make me laugh, like a boy trying to be grown-up. But you couldn't handle freedom" (39).

The next station of the self-searching Passion of Jerome is evoked by the compulsion to face the failure of his marriage, which is also bound up with a child's death, that of their baby girl. Incapable of sharing the concomitant grief with his wife, he sought to escape from pain and loss through self-deluding indulgences. As a person bearing the stigmata that resemble Jesus's wounds now he is asked by a desperate woman to pray over her dying grandchild, which he does in the hope of saving a child this time, unlike his own during the hopeless vigil in the hospital years before, when he "could do nothing, just sit and wait" (47) watching his wife's agony. Reliving this

painful memory he touches the little girl's face with the blood oozing from his wounds to take over her pain, pleading with God to "give this child the mercy that you withheld from mine" (59). But the child dies leaving Jerome to conclude that he is not able to save others like Jesus, he must "deal with all the shit and the squalor I'd run away from" (72), and heal himself by naming and coming to terms with his deeply buried secret traumas and tensions.

Relief for Jerome from being haunted by his own incompleteness through the young ghost of the place comes when he is capable of identifying with the tormented child figure and use a voice that speaks for himself as well as for the boy, his repressed other. In a state of revelation described as "*trance-like, overawed by the words spilling from him*" Jerome gives expression to the deepest fears and hopes that join the living and the dead: "Just stand beside me, put your arms around me and lift my body down. I'm so scared to face God, his light pulsating, beckoning. His heat, a white flame. I've been cold for too long. Let me pass through your body, your arteries, your veins, let me flow inside your blood, let me be redeemed" (83-84). Regaining faith in "a presence, beating within the beat of my own heart" which "used to be there when I was a child" (87), he walks out on the ruins of his old life for good, toward starting anew.

Though it incorporates Biblical and sacred motifs and phenomena, the play denies any ambition to offer a religious parable that would aim at reawakening let alone strengthening the Catholicism of an Irish audience whose life and mind have been increasingly secularized in our time. It even addresses the decline of the institutionalized power of the Church through a priest character who claims to be disturbingly helpless in the face of social wrongs. As in Yeats's theatre, change is perceived and explored as possible only on the individual level. There is no divine judge sitting on some bench high above, as Arthur Miller's Quentin realized before, yet a moral sensibility can be recuperated and the bridge between childhood innocence and adult perspectives discovered. And that is what happens to Jerome in the last scene once he has managed to embrace the intruding vision of the child like Holga in *After the Fall*, who kisses the ugly little idiot clutching at her clothes in her dream.

The spiritual transformation of Jerome seems to be motivated by the need to restore a moral dimension and meaning to human existence, which is haunting people under the circumstances of crass materialism, faceless and faithless liberalism in a fast developing postmodern society. Richly employing the supernatural in conjunction with the natural, Bolger's play introduces the audience to a profound sense of forces and energies operating beneath the surface of restricted mental framings and imposed routines. Taking the courage to confront and interpret them might open the way toward a kind of self-redemption even in an irretrievably Godless universe as the gripping story of Jerome testifies. To quote from the foreword of Patrick Mason, artistic director of The Abbey Theatre to the published text: "[. . .] it seems entirely appropriate that, a hundred years on in Yeats's theatre, this play should be the first in a new series of National Theatre programme playscript publications."