

Niall Rea

Research Topic : (2010 ongoing) Exploring the performance of queer identity (both on stage and in an extra-theatrical capacity) in conflict and post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Supervisors : Dr Mark Phelan

This AHRC funded practice as research PhD is situated within the intersection of Queer Studies, Performance Studies and Conflict Studies.

Queer theory (as an extension of feminist and gay-and-lesbian studies) unsettles fixed identities and as a deconstructive strategy could be seen to disrupt not only the sexual but also the socio-political discourse in Northern Irish 'straight' society. I am especially exploring a geographically queer theoretical template which positions identity at the intersection of embodiment, place, and practice.

In my current research, and in recently published articles, I propose that during the conflict, queer performed itself as a desegregated and disrupted the binaries of loyalist/Protestantism and republican/Catholicism. I am interested in the performance of this subversive identity by the queer protagonists in the work of Frank McGuinness, in that they elucidate this desegregating position. The structure of his plays explodes traditional Irish relations to identity and history, and further in that they take an oblique perspective on historical events, their structure is in itself 'queer' (from the Greek for cross, oblique, adverse).

I intend to place my research questions in the context of this queer critical framework and set it against some specific historical examples of queer identities' interaction with the wider society in Northern Ireland. The aim of my thesis is to investigate whether an exploration of these queer identities on stage, both theoretically and practically, can result in a new perspective on the performance of all post-conflict Northern Irish identities. The practical research portion of my thesis (40%) will be concerned with this queer identity in performance and will focus on the marginalised queer subject on stage as a locus for queering any fixed notion of the Troubles and the Peace Process here. My own position as a queer man and theatre practitioner growing up in West Belfast during the Troubles will be crucial to my approach and to both my theoretical and practical exploration of these queer identities in performance.

#### Biography

Belfast born Niall Rea is a professional theatre designer and director. He has worked with many theatre companies across the UK, Ireland, Europe and USA – including Tinderbox and The Lyric Theatre, Belfast; The Crucible Theatre, Sheffield; Fru Emilia, Iceland; Remote Control Productions, Amsterdam, and Puerto Rico National Ballet amongst others. He is artistic director of Theatreofpluck – the first publicly funded queer theatre company in Northern Ireland.