**Retelling Red Riding Hood: situated solidarities between Ireland and Uganda**

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**Abstract**

This paper explores the potential of storytelling as a mechanism for exploring situated solidarities between activists from Ireland and Uganda. I present a version of the story of Red Riding Hood told from an Irish perspective. I use this story as a springboard to explore parallels between Irish and Ugandan perspectives on women’s rights and sexuality. I engage with the story’s troubled history: where the oral tradition often celebrated Red’s sexuality and cunning, literary versions transform the tale into one in which a young girl is blamed for her own rape – or, in many feminist versions, where she fights back. Analogously, interventions to promote women’s rights tend to focus on protecting women from violence, but rarely celebrate the expression of female sexuality. Translocating the story into an Irish context and comparing this with Ugandan storytelling traditions highlights parallels between Ireland and Uganda especially in terms of obstacles to women’s political leadership, the repression of female sexuality and the ambivalence of caring responsibilities. By helping audiences to consider questions of culture, place and relationships, such an approach to storytelling provides an (imperfect) basis for shared political struggles. Telling and re-telling ambiguous stories like Red Riding Hood can create space to consider where we come from and what we desire – and how those desires might be engaged through or might influence relationships of solidarity. Such stories have the potential to do this at the same time as they prompt outrage on behalf of the other – and on behalf of ourselves.

**Bio**

Ruth Kelly is based at the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York. Her research looks at how storytelling can help activists in Uganda re-imagine development and human rights. Since 2016, Ruth has been part of a research network exploring art, archives and the political imagination with artists, activists, practitioners and academics from Bangladesh, Uganda and the UK.