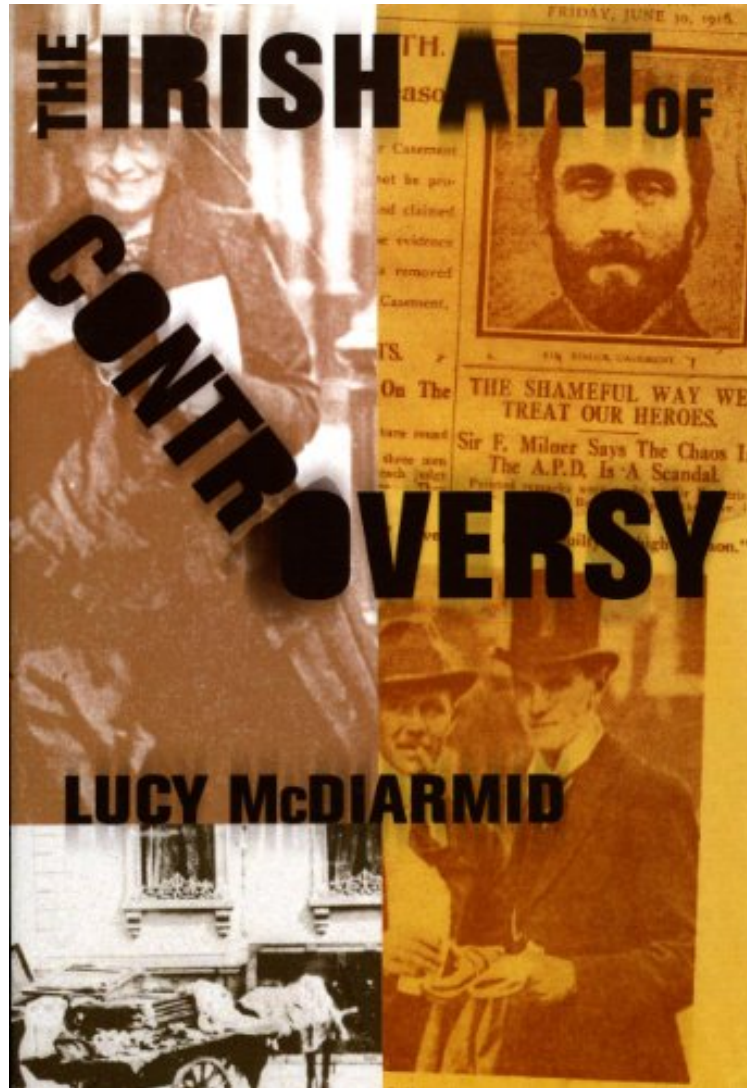


The Irish Art of Controversy

Lucy McDiarmid

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Lucy McDiarmid : The Irish Art of Controversy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Irish Art of Controversy:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A pleasure to read By Maud Gonne The Irish Art of Controversy provides a wonderfully vivid look at the intimacies of Irish politics by Lucy McDiarmid. With her usual wit and fastidious scholarship, she explains how public controversy determined what it meant to be Irish in the early 20th century. She evokes an extraordinary series of dramas played out by opposing factions on such issues as religion, sex, class values, the labor movement, censorship and civil rights. Issues that shaped the coming revolution and the nature of Irish government. In contrast to the romantic concept of recovering the poor old woman's four green fields, McDiarmid demonstrates how hotly contested was the question of what should be planted in those fields. During the

strike of some 25,000 Dublin workers in 1913, for example, a violent tug of war developed between Catholic clergy and labor sympathizers attempting to place starving children temporarily in the homes of English workers. The clergy largely defeated this plan by accusing Irish mothers of endangering the faith of their children by allowing them to be "kidnapped" by English Protestants, socialists and feminists. Archbishop Walsh proclaimed that "the Irish people would rather their children perish by the ditches than that they should be exposed to the risk of being perverted in their religion." Under such pressure, it is not surprising that of some 300 children initially enrolled, only 18 reached England. This episode reveals the unfortunate bigotry of the clergy, but also identifies cultural memories and beliefs (souperism, fairy abduction) that subconsciously, or otherwise, intensified the fears of Catholic parents. An equally fierce and lasting controversy emerged over Roger Casement. On trial for treason in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising, he was fatally compromised by discovery of the so-called Black Diaries containing graphic descriptions of homoerotic encounters. Both Irish and English opinion turned against him despite his patriotism and the humanitarian work for which he had been knighted. Casement was hanged, and his remains were not returned to Ireland until 1965. Even then, there was considerable uneasiness about enshrining a gay man in the pantheon of Irish heroes. With the growing secularization of Ireland, however, Casement became a pivotal figure in open debate about sexualities and civil rights. In fact, as McDiarmid demonstrates, it was the transgressive example of Casement that allowed such debate to be made public. In sum, an excellent book. A pleasure to read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "The Contention of the Bards," updated to the early 20c By John L Murphy A pleasure to read a book that, as with the original disputants who comprise the subjects of the five chapters, addresses the general public in clear, spirited, and engaging fashion. While the content's aimed at an academic reader, the prose flows more smoothly, and the author remains aware of the need for a personal perspective that keeps her in control of the mass of material she sifts through and organizes in support of the often dramatic, if self-consciously so, performers on the stages and streets of Dublin almost a century ago. Rather than (and Prof. McD acknowledges in her preface that she labored not to use "ludic") become embroiled in abstruse jargon and faddish theory, McDiarmid takes on the early debates that characterized cultural nationalist contentions that served as a synecdoche for the larger issues of Irish Ireland. These are covered in five thematic sections about public spats and private correspondence, and these do overlap slightly: Hugh Lane's bequeathed 39 paintings, Shaw's "The Shewing of Blanco Posnet" with Lady Gregory GBS for the Abbey Theatre squaring off against Dublin Castle, Fr. O'Hickey's defense of compulsory Irish, the "Dublin kiddies" vs. the socialists and philanthropists, and the "afterlife" which Roger Casement's diaries with their homosexual content represented for later 20c Irish discussion of sexuality and rebellion. Unlike later spectacles that entered the Irish arena, these riled up not only academics and writers, but the common people. It's a telling sign of the retreat from the "agora" in the past century that shows how willing many people are to leave to the intellectuals and literati what once might have been the dispute of many a dinner table-- think of the contention over Parnell in Joyce's "Portrait." The details of the book have been previewed on this site and by earlier respondents. Many illustrations, endnotes, and explanations carry along the text in more brisk fashion than one might expect from a professor. I might add that the notes document generously the assistance from many who assisted McDiarmid in her years of research. The book may betray a bit of the assembly from disparate pieces that many collections do when gathered from earlier talks and articles, but the introduction and conclusion tie together the threads efficiently. There's even a well-chosen Irish-language proverb that begins each chapter cleverly. Such details show the author's own personality in a study that abounds in spirited, strong-willed, and stubborn smart meetings and maulings of the minds.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Importance of Controversies in a Free Society By Douglas L. Saum I enjoyed Lucy McDiarmid's The Irish Art of Controversy on many levels. It helps me get into the spirit of several of W B Yeats's poems and, more importantly, reminds us all of the value of understanding our pervasive controversies. It is very educational to see how they operate over time. She's done us all a wonderful service through her lucid explanations of key controversies present in Ireland's successful struggle to achieve a national identity. If you are interested in Yeats, Ireland, or controversy this book is a must.

The Irish Art of Controversy is what serious scholarship should be: meticulously informed, lucid, original. I enjoyed every page.' - Samuel Hynes, Princeton University North American customers should order from Cornell University Press. 'Lucy McDiarmid brilliantly identifies five dramas of cultural change in Ireland in the years before independence, narrating them in all their complexity, tragedy, and comedy. Vividly original, written with verve, wit and meticulous scholarship, The Irish Art of Controversy will be essential reading for anyone who cares about the Irish history, literature, or politics of the last hundred years.' - Angela Bourke 'Lucy McDiarmid's studies of Yeats and Lady Gregory have already established her among the most illuminating interpreters of the turbulent Ireland of a century ago. Here she casts further light on the period through her riveting account of five major controversies that excited that extraordinary generation.' - J.J. Lee, New York University Controversies are high drama: in them people speak lines as colourful and passionate as any recited on stage. In the years before 1916, public battles were fought in Ireland over French paintings, Dublin slum children, and theatrical censorship. Controversy was 'popular,' wrote George Moore, especially 'when accompanied with the breaking of chairs'. In her new book, Lucy McDiarmid gives a lively account of these and other controversies. They offered to everyone direct or vicarious involvement in public life:

the question they articulated was not 'Irish Ireland or English Ireland' but whose 'Irish Ireland' would dominate when independence was finally achieved. The Irish Art of Controversy recovers the histories of 'the man who died for the language,' Father O'Hickey, who defied the bishops in his fight for the Irish language; Lady Gregory and Bernard Shaw's defence of the Abbey Theatre against Dublin Castle; the 1913 'Save the Dublin Kiddies' campaign, in which priests attacked socialists over custody of Catholic children; and the contested Hugh Lane Bequest to Dublin of thirty-nine Impressionist masterpieces. Roger Casement forms the subject of the last chapter, which offers the definitive commentary on the long-lasting controversy over his diaries. In its original treatment of what Yeats called 'intemperate speech', *The Irish Art of Controversy* suggests new ways of thinking about modern Ireland and about controversy's bluff, bravado and improvisational flair.

"Rather than tell a familiar political tale of oppressors and oppressed, McDiarmid focuses on the dramatic subtleties of the domestic fight for control of the discourse of nationality. . . . Written with an objectivity of approach that reflects extensive research, with a strong narrative line that is maintained by a personable and sometimes even exclamatory style, *The Irish Art of Controversy* is an excellent referee for those who already know something of these fights, as well as for those new to the Irish cultural ringside."?John Kenny, *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 and 30 December 2005"McDiarmid's book . . . delivers an enjoyable, readable account of five 20th-century Irish spats. . . . *The Irish Art of Controversy* is an impressively researched, admirably intelligent study."?Terry Eagleton, *Irish Times*, 25 June 2005"Some of Ireland's best-known national characters make appearances here?Lady Gregory, George Bernard Shaw, Hugh Lane, Patrick Pearse, W. B. Yeats?and the work brings fresh relevance to history by demonstrating the impact of these controversies on today's society. This work is a treasure trove for scholars of Irish history and a surprisingly lively read for the general reader."?Noreen Bowden, *Irish Emigrant Book*, 28 October 2005"McDiarmid's book is a masterly survey of one of the most complex periods of modern European history. The thoroughness and extent of the research is astonishing. . . . *The Irish Art of Controversy* has significant implications for the ways we think about language, power, interpretation, and culture in the period that gave rise to Gregory, Shaw, Yeats, Synge, Joyce, and O'Casey."?Marc C. Conner, *Irish Literary Supplement*, Fall 2005"In writing a book about Irish controversies, McDiarmid faced a daunting challenge in narrowing her selections to a manageable, representative set, given the preponderance of cultural and political battles to choose from during these years. Her choices are carefully balanced between revisiting well-known high literary affairs and introducing readers to cultural battles that deserve to be more widely studied. . . . McDiarmid brings to her investigation enviably deep, rich knowledge of the Irish Revival, building on her influential literary scholarship on Yeats, Gregory, and Casement. . . . In *The Irish Art of Controversy*, Lucy McDiarmid provides the sustained, masterful intellectual engagement that one would expect of a leading critic in Irish studies. She possesses the persuasive, illuminating power to reshape multiple debates about high cultural nationalism, language studies, sexuality, censorship, and socialism, to name but a few of the key topics studied here. As admirable, she has the narrative command and stylistic flourish to educate and edify non-specialists too. Very few scholars today attempt, let alone achieve, such balance."?Karen Steele, *H-Albion, H-Net*, April 2006"McDiarmid discovers the drama of national identity enacted on the 'small sites' of particular controversies. Her case, built on finely detailed examples that blend fieldwork and archival study, is extremely compelling. . . . The book transcends its putative subject matter, however, to take on the larger history of modern Irish identity, eventually finding 'the Ireland of Mary Robinson and Sinead O'Connor' in the pre-1916 Ireland of Casement, Yeats, and others. . . . The compact timeline of the controversies' origins, 1908ndash;1916, belies a project of far greater scope. In most cases, the controversy outlives the controversialist, and McDiarmid traces the posthumous history of each case right up to the present day. . . allowing new light to be shed on old arguments."?Julian Hanna, *Modernism/modernity*, September 2006"Lucy McDiarmid brilliantly identifies five dramas of cultural change in Ireland in the years before independence, narrating them in all their complexity, tragedy, and comedy. Vividly original, written with verve, wit, and meticulous scholarship, *The Irish Art of Controversy* will be essential reading for anyone who cares about the Irish history, literature, or politics of the last hundred years."?Angela Bourke"The Irish Art of Controversy is what serious scholarship should be: meticulously informed, lucid, original. I enjoyed every page."?Samuel Hynes, Princeton University"Lucy McDiarmid's studies of Yeats and Lady Gregory have already established her among the most illuminating interpreters of the turbulent Ireland of a century ago. Here she casts further light on the period through her riveting account of five major controversies, ranging from the row over the Hugh Lane Bequest to the bitter conflict over the reputation of Roger Casement, that excited that extraordinary generation."?J. J. Lee, New York University"From the Inside Flap"Lucy McDiarmid brilliantly identifies five dramas of cultural change in Ireland in the years before independence, narrating them in all their complexity, tragedy, and comedy. Vividly original, written with verve, wit, and meticulous scholarship, *The Irish Art of Controversy* will be essential reading for anyone who cares about the Irish history, literature, or politics of the last hundred years."mdash;Angela Bourke "The Irish Art of Controversy is what serious scholarship should be: meticulously informed, lucid, original. I enjoyed every page."mdash;Samuel Hynes, Princeton University "Lucy McDiarmid's studies of Yeats and Lady Gregory have already established her among the most illuminating interpreters of the turbulent Ireland of a century ago. Here she casts further light on the period through her riveting account of five

major controversies, ranging from the row over the Hugh Lane Bequest to the bitter conflict over the reputation of Roger Casement, that excited that extraordinary generation."mdash; J. J. Lee, New York University

About the Author Lucy McDiarmid is Professor of English at Villanova University. She has been the Carole and Gordon Segal Visiting Professor of Irish Literature at Northwestern University and Visiting Professor of English at Princeton. A former president of the American Conference for Irish Studies, McDiarmid is also author of *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot, and Auden Between the Wars* and *Auden's Apologies for Poetry*, and coeditor of *High and Low Moderns: Literature and Culture 1889ndash;1939* and *Lady Gregory: Selected Writings*.