***West Cork and The Writing of History***

**John M Regan**

**Dublin Review of Books**

**February 2013**

In a series of articles published in academic journals over the past five years I have developed a closely argued critique of the historiography of Irish state formation or the ‘revolutionary period’ (c. 1912-39), as it is sometimes known. My critique identifies tensions between scholarly historical research, public history, and what I term ‘ahistorical public histories’ – historical writing privileging the demands of popular consumption over historical method as applied to the evidence. Research produced by the late Professor Peter Hart, I argue, provides examples of ahistorical public history presented under the banner of historical research. Replying to my review of *Terror in Ireland* [David Fitzpatrick (ed)] in the *Dublin Review of Books*, Dr Eve Morrison calls my critique into question on top of my review where she describes them as a ‘postmodern joke’. This description may come as a surprise to historians as much as to comedians.

Dr Morrison’s quip comes toward the end of an otherwise sophisticated reply to my review, more particularly my critique of her chapter ‘Kilmichael Revisited: Tom Barry and the “False Surrender’’’. In it Dr Morrison attempts to vindicate Peter Hart’s scholarship on the eponymous West Cork ambush in late November 1920. Responding to Dr Morrison’s intervention in the debate surrounding Hart’s research there is the temptation to advance still more evidence in an attempt to clarify what has been said. To pile evidence upon evidence in support of one or other case at this juncture would lead to still more confusion. Recognising this let us put the evermore detailed arguments about false surrenders and sectarian massacres to one side, and focus not alone on what Dr Morrison says in her reply, but how she says it.

In my research and writing I am interested to know how historical interpretations are constructed, and how these interpretations sometimes can be used for purposes other than understanding the past. It is my contention some modern Irish historical writing is a cocktail of historical research, concerned to understand the past more-or-less on its own terms, and propaganda constructed to influence the reader toward one or other conclusion. Both approaches can be useful and productive ways to engage with history. Inevitably all historical writing contains elements of propaganda, where historians try to influence their readers toward a better – most often meaning the historian’s – interpretation or perhaps in support of an ideology like nationalism. Historians are entitled to lead their readers, but, arguably, they also have obligations to the evidence when writing under the flag of historical research. Alternatively, the flag of historical research can be flown over footnotes and other scholarly paraphernalia to endorse history, which in reality is nothing more than crude propaganda. When written with skill it is seldom immediately apparent where balanced historical writing ends, and where one sided, crude, propagandistic, writing begins. It is, nevertheless, useful to be aware that a distinction exists and that it can be identified. My argument about Hart’s writing (among others) is that sometimes it abandoned historical understanding for egregious propagandistic purposes, and that this shift was achieved by deft and what I argue are ahistorical manipulations of evidence. For those who read history as a ‘story’ these shifts often go unnoticed. But for those interested in the mechanics of historical writing, sometimes, and only sometimes, the shifts from dedicated research mode to dedicated propaganda mode can with great care be identified. After closely reading both the sources and the interpretations resting on them, it may even be possible to identify how these manoeuvres are achieved. But to do this it is vital not to be mesmerised by ‘the story’, and instead to ask elemental questions challenging the narrative. Persistently we need to query what is going on and to ponder the mechanics busily whirring beneath the still prose. To do any of these things demands mental effort, time, close reading and constant re-reading, checking of sources, and the critical application of historical method to examine the historicity – the historical qualities - of the end result. Even then, as may now be apparent, it is difficult to say anything with certainty about how historians arrive at their interpretations. But this observation should not preclude engaging intelligently with the product of their labours.

It has long been recognised there were problems with Hart’s treatment of sources. Among these his use of unverifiable evidence, notably anonymous oral interviews, and evidence selections excluding important information contradicting Hart’s favoured narratives. The methodological problems identified in Hart’s work are not confined to it, and these same problems now inform the present debate where they are replicated within the discussion.

This brings us back to Dr Morrison’s reply. In it I am reproved, perhaps quite properly, for misrepresenting her. It may be, as Eve Morrison suggests, that I do not follow my own advice, because my review of her chapter contains errors and horrible misrepresentations. Immediately, I concede, she has the better of me where she corrects my assumption that unidentified quotes cited by Hart referenced taped interviews conducted by Fr John Chisholm. Dr Morrison says in her reply: ‘The unidentified quotes were not cited by Hart as Chisholm interviews’. (It would now be useful to know what quotes are unidentified and to whom Hart attributed them as it is unclear from what Dr Morrison writes in her chapter.) Dr Morrison also notes, ‘Chisholm’s interviews were done in 1969’, not as I wrote the “1960s and 1970s”’. Chisholm’s interviews are not precisely dated. In her chapter Morrison cites them as, ‘c. 1969’ [p. 176, n. 12.]. Peter Hart dated them to ‘the late 1960s’. Dr Morrison is correct to identify that I misquoted her where I wrote ‘Barry’s story does not fit the generally agreed story’, not the ‘generally agreed narrative’ as in her chapter. While this is unforgivable (and embarrassing), I am not convinced it greatly misrepresents her meaning or my argument, that there is no and can be no ‘generally agreed narrative of the ambush’, as Dr Morrison insists. This is the nub of the debate over what happened at Kilmichael, but let us leave it aside and ask: what is going on here? Dr Morrison identifies some errors in my review (though most are minor and some are not errors at all), but behind her charge against me of sloppiness there is the laboured suggestion: ‘we all make mistakes’. So we do, and we will return to this later.

Offering another example of shoddy workmanship Morrison writes, ‘Regan also quotes me as saying that a ‘‘sub-set’ of veterans consistently contradicted’ Barry’. She continues: ‘What I actually wrote was that a ‘sub set of veterans consistently contradicted or ignored the false surrender story’. Here again the suggestion is that I grievously misrepresent Morrison. The substantive point I was making in my review is that Morrison presents no clear evidence of veterans contradicting the false surrender story and what evidence is presented – among it a phone call to Fr Chisholm in 2011– is both unconvincing and unverifiable. But let us revisit in detail what Morrison says about this in her reply:

Either way, to suggest that I present no “clear evidence” for this [that a “sub-set of Kilmichael veterans consistently contradicted or ignored the false surrender story], as Regan does, is nonsense. In a blatant instance of “elision”, Regan ignores evidence I cited that the Anvil Press was reluctant to publish *Towards Ireland Free* unless Barry approved it because of Paddy O’Brien’s Kilmichael account. Liam Deasy refused to change a word of it, saying that the details had been “corroborated by two living members of the column who also fought there. Perhaps if Pat [Lynch, the internal reviewer,] enquired more closely into the full details of the fight he might come to appreciate that I have been more discreet than he would seem to credit me.” This is not “weak induction”. This is “clear evidence” that O’Brien’s account was a deliberate counter to Barry’s. Deasy was also implying that O’Brien’s account was being kinder to Barry than he perhaps deserved.

Here Dr Morrison gets ahead of the evidence. Understandably there are differences between Barry’s account of the ambush and O’Brien’s account quoted by Deasy in his book. Among these discrepancies is Barry’s precise role at the commencement of the engagement. Nevertheless, I can find no specific query about the false surrender in Pat Lynch’s report or indeed Deasy’s lengthy reply to it or anywhere else in the file Morrison cites as her evidence.1 It may well be that Lynch was referring to the omission of the false surrender among other things in O’Brien’s brief account– but nowhere does he mention a false surrender or anything of its like. Any assumption that Lynch was referring to the omission of a false surrender is alone Dr Morrison’s. Replying to another of her reviewers, Niall Meehan, in *Reviews in History*, Dr Morrison writes even more emphatically: ‘Deasy’s papers contain correspondence with Dan Nolan of the Anvil Press about publishing *Towards Ireland Free*, which Nolan refused to do after his internal reviewer specifically queried the absence of any reference to the false surrender’.2 If this specific query exists Dr Morrison might properly have quoted it in support of her argument – but she does not. If clear evidence of any such query or a contradiction does exist Dr Morrison is at liberty to identify it.

In her reply to me Dr Morrison continues: ‘…every single statement from Kilmichael veterans given to the B[ureau] [of] M[ilitary] H[istory] (BMH) simply ignores the false surrender story’. In her chapter Morrison quotes Timothy Keohane disposing in his BMH witness statement:

…the surivors [sic] from the second lorry continued to fight for about 20/30 minutes. At this stage Tom Barry blew a blast on his whistle as a signal that all men should get on to the road. At the same time he moved with his section along the road from the east to take the survivors in the rear. Tom Barry then called on the enemy to surrender and some of them put up their hands, but when our party were moving on to the road the Auxiliaries again opened fire.

It is true that Keohane disagrees with Barry about who was shot and when in this incident, but what Keohane describes is something which can be fairly called a ‘false surrender’. Nor is he alone in this.

Over many decades no verifiable evidence has emerged that any veteran in public or in private said Barry lied about the false surrender to Chisholm or to Hart or to anyone else in a position to ask the veterans the obvious question: did it happen? Of itself this is inconclusive – the absence of evidence proves only that there is no evidence. But if Morrison is going to argue veterans contradicted Barry let us have evidence for this. Nevertheless, we are reminded Hart was emphatic that Barry lied in his 1949 memoir. Again, to be clear, Hart did not deny in his book there was a false surrender (he paraphrased one of the IRA ambushers he interviewed as saying ‘there was a sort of false surrender’3). Instead, Hart argued, that whatever happened at Kilmichael it did not conform to what he argued was Barry’s changing story. This game of ‘spotting the difference’ between Barry’s testimony and other witnesses forms too the substance of Dr Morrison’s approach in her chapter. Repeatedly she emphasises differences between Barry’s testimony and that of others, while dismissing similarities as with Keohane’s. No matter what other witnesses saw or said they saw, it is unlikely that any two statements will match exactly. And so in her chapter Morrison claims rather than corroborating Barry’s account Keohane undermines it. Unsurprisingly, he does both. Hart’s argument was subtle and in most respects it was highly ambiguous apart, that is, from calling Barry a liar. Morrison’s whole argument is constructed to prove Hart’s accusation right. So by the time Dr Morrison arrives at a conclusion in her chapter she is arguing: ‘The available testimony reveals that sometimes they [the Kilmichael veterans] also told the truth for the sake of their families, the fallen, and for each other’. Here ‘the truth’ is attributed only to those oral testimonies which are at odds with (but do not explicitly contradict) Barry’s account. It is this labelling as ‘truth’ one set of testimonies, which leads me to conclude Dr Morrison attempts to ‘arrive at a definitive account’, and further that she endorses Hart’s accusation that Barry misrepresented events in order to portray himself in a positive light – that is after all Dr Morrison’s conclusion. Morrison in her reply objects to this and says it ‘is a total distortion of my [Morrison’s] arguments and conclusions’. Rereading her I am far from satisfied it is.

Eve Morrison also comments on my critique of Peter Hart’s interpretation of the so called, ‘Bandon Valley massacre’, published in *History* in January 2012, because I compare her methodology with Hart’s. Again it is necessary to reread closely what I say about Hart’s interpretation of the massacre against Dr Morrison’s synopsis of my *History* article, which she begins with the dismissive phrase: ‘It goes something like this’. She continues: ‘In a footnote of his 1992 thesis, Hart suggested that Frank Busteed, a member of Cork [no.] I Brigade, might have been involved in the 1922 killings, but did not include this passage in his book, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*’. Having reduced my article to the reinterpretation of a single footnote Dr Morrison writes, ‘Regan argues that Hart excluded this reference to Busteed (an atheist with a Protestant grandparent) in order to enhance “his narrative of sectarian massacre”’. And further, Morrison queries my critique where she says: ‘Regan links the killing by the IRA of three British intelligence officers (and their driver) in Macroom on April 26th to the Dunmanway events using the British army’s secret report, Record of the Rebellion in Ireland 1920-1 (2 Volumes) [sic] [hereafter the Record], and an interview with Busteed carried out by Ernie O’Malley’.

Colleagues at University College Cork and elsewhere are uncovering much valuable information on West Cork in the 1920s, and some of them may well attempt new interpretations of the massacre; but historical reconstruction was never my concern. When I gave a paper on massacre at the Centre for Contemporary Irish History at Trinity College on 28 September 2011, I underlined repeatedly my concern was to critique Hart’s methodology. This distinction was overlooked by some present, just as it is now ignored by Eve Morrison. In my paper and subsequent article I argued the massacre in the Bandon Valley and the abduction and murder of three British Intelligence Officers along with their driver were truly exceptional events. Therefore, I was interested to know how and why Hart excludes the British Intelligence Officers (all non-Catholics) from his unambiguous narrative of sectarian massacre; more particularly when the counter-narrative to a sectarian inspired massacre argues that some Protestant victims had informed against the IRA.

Let us first re-examine the Record in relation to what I say. Hart quoted the Record, writing ‘in the south [of Ireland] the Protestants and those who supported the Government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, they had not got it to give’. Bandon Protestant loyalists, Hart said, followed precisely this pattern of behaviour. But following immediately the last quotation he did not cite the next two sentences:

An exception to this rule was in the Bandon area where there were many Protestant farmers who gave information. Although the Intelligence Officer of the area was exceptionally experienced and although the troops were most active it proved almost impossible to protect those brave men, many of whom were murdered while almost all the remainder suffered grave material loss.

The suggestion that this quotation from the Record was a reference to the April 1922 massacre is my innovation alone. It seemed to me that the Record suggested only the ‘possibility’ of a connection between the April massacre and British Intelligence. Nor in my article do I place undue weight on any connection the Record suggests. With a degree of circumspection I write, ‘the evidence linking events in Macroom to those West of Bandon is both ambiguous and circumstantial…[but] recognising any of this, properly, should have tempered the unambiguous sectarian narrative Hart reinvested in’.

British intelligence files declassified in the National Archives at Kew in May 2001, according to Dr Morrison, identify that the Record was ‘received in London on April 13th, 1922’ and ‘published’ before the massacre at the end of the month. The reference in the Record, Morrison states, likely refers to the shooting dead of several Protestant loyalists in early 1921. Dr Morrison refers to a specific declassified file (‘The Record of the Rebellion in Ireland’, WO 141/94), which I did not consult until December 2012. It identifies that volume I of the Record (4 volumes) was sent to the printers in mid-April 1922, and was corrected and amended before being circulated inside the British army in late June. The quotation I drew attention to is from volume II of the Record, dealing with ‘Intelligence’. This was printed around 21 June, post-dating the massacre. More importantly the foreword of volume II is dated May 1922 – therefore the quotation could not be easily dismissed as not having referred to the Bandon Valley massacre. While volume II was printed and circulated two months or more after the massacre earlier proofs including the ‘Original’ draft, do contain the disputed quotation. Almost certainly the undated ‘Original’ draft predates the massacre. Likely then Dr Morrison is correct that the quotation refers to early 1921, not April 1922. But this is impossible to ascertain other than through a close reading of the documents declassified in 2001. This chronology is important because my critique of Hart’s methodology can only be concerned with his use of historical information that was available in the 1990s. The inference I drew, that the quotation in Record (volume II) possibly referenced the April massacre, was not altogether unreasonable prior to seeing the declassified file. The same possibility should have occurred to Hart in the 1990s. But for reasons which should now be obvious, Hart could not cite the quotation referencing the Bandon informers and British intelligence (nor David Fitzpatrick’s references to it)4, without compromising his argument that Bandon Protestants were as uncooperative with Crown forces as reportedly their co-religionists were elsewhere in Southern Ireland.

Dr Morrison’s approach offers a variation on the ‘historian’s fallacy’. This logical fallacy imposes on explanations of decision making and other phenomena understanding gleaned from historical hindsight. The classic example of this fallacy is the assertion that the U.S.A. should have anticipated the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, because, some historians have argued, so much information was available pointing toward an attack beforehand. In this approach evidence indicating a Japanese attack is awarded significance retrospectively it could not have had before 7 December 1941. American decision-makers had no knowledge of future events or of their own historical context as later constructed by historians. Therefore, historians succumbing to this fallacy undervalue the confusion of contradictory evidence pointing toward the different outcomes an open future presented before the attack.

A variation of the historian’s fallacy is turned against historical writing where judgements on a given historiography’s value or its historicity rest on knowledge only available to hindsight. When archival material is released which contradicts earlier interpretations historians cannot be lambasted for having written ‘bad’ or ‘inaccurate’ history, where they came to conclusions disagreeing with information they could not have known about. Logically, it follows, historians who write history which is endorsed by historical information only subsequently becoming available cannot be said to have written ‘good’ or ‘accurate’ history where they are found to be in agreement with evidence originally unknown to them.

Dr Morrison’s attempts to vindicate Hart’s research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s on the Kilmichael ambush ‘in the light of newly available sources’, as similarly with the Bandon Valley massacre, carries teleological and ahistorical assumptions that new sources vindicate earlier interpretations. However, Hart’s scholarship should be evaluated in the context of the knowledge and understanding available to him at the time of writing. For example, had the BMH witness statements or any other sources released after 1998 said, ‘there was no false surrender’, or ‘Barry was a liar’ or the massacre victims ‘were killed because they were Protestants’, this would not alter any evaluation of Hart’s historical research per se published in 1998 or earlier. Neither does it reflect negatively on Hart’s scholarship that the BMH statements say none of these things. Dr Morrison’s approach to historiography may be summarised as a variation on the teleological construction: ‘‘X’ was right (or wrong) as later events (or sources) were to prove’.5 This reading of closed evidence backwards justifiably might be coined the ‘historiographer’s fallacy’.

Following Professor David Fitzpatrick’s lead in *History Ireland*, Morrison sets out to justify Hart’s decision to remove references appearing in his doctoral-thesis complicating his sectarian explanation of the massacre before publishing in 1998. Amongst these is an account of an interview where IRA Vice Commandant, Frank Busteed, is recorded saying:

Pikes house was burned by us Bowen Colthursts, of Dripsey house. They were loyalists and their houses were burned as a reprisal. (In the (C/W) we shot 4 or 5 locals – then we could move anywhere.) We shot 5 to 6 loyalists Protestant farmers as reprisals. We had continuous skirmishing with patrols.

I wrote in my article: ‘As with Busteed’s admission to Ernie O’Malley, it is difficult to identify any event other than the April [1922] massacre for which the Record’s description applies’. Coming to this conclusion I echoed Hart’s initial response to Busteed’s interview with O’Malley. Hart wrote in his doctoral-thesis: ‘As these killings [of loyalist Protestant farmers] certainly did not take place after July 1922, the only events which fit this description are those of April [1922]’7. Dr Morrison correctly says in her reply, ‘Busteed does not ever, anywhere, link this with the events in Dunmanway, nor did any other IRA veteran who spoke about the fate of the officers in Macroom’. In his doctoral-thesis Hart identified that on 26 April 1922, Busteed both executed the British Officers near Macroom and was involved in the massacre in the Bandon Valley. Having identified this, nevertheless, Hart glossed over the chronology in the main body of the doctoral thesis writing: ‘Besides the shooting of Din-Din O’Riordan, he [Busteed] was involved in that of Mrs Lindsey and her chauffeur in Coachford, the twelve off-duty soldiers mentioned above, three British officers in Macroom and a massacre of Protestants in the early months of 1922’.7 In her reply Morrison argues quite fairly: ‘The ‘5 or 6 loyalists’ might be a reference to the same individuals described in the Record of the Rebellion as having been killed by the IRA (during the War of Independence)’. Indeed they might, but the problem with this is that talking to O’Malley, Busteed identified the killing of four or five local Protestant loyalists: ‘In the (C/W)’. Understandably, Hart took ‘C/W’ to stand for ‘civil war’, and he accepted too the civil war in West Cork encompassed April 1922. The evidence is highly ambiguous, but Hart’s response to ambiguity is to excise it from the published book.

Just like every other historian, Hart had a perfect right to revise, correct, and refine his work ahead of publication. Taken in isolation the removal of those references connecting Busteed to both the British Officers and the massacre may not be seen as problematic. In the context of myriad editorial decisions, and alongside the other contradictory and anomalous sources which went unacknowledged, the criticism of Hart’s handling of Busteed and the complicating evidence mounts inexorably. My article addresses much more than one missing footnote and one reference in volume II of the Record. As I argue, Hart’s ahistorical methodology becomes still more noticeable where repeatedly mistakes and oversights point only in one direction, reinforcing a reductive narrative of sectarian inspired killing by ignoring or marginalising or excising the complicating evidence. It is the repetition of this procedure that rules out chance or the now familiar mantra of ‘we all make mistakes’ as plausible explanations.

 ‘Regan’, Morrison says in her reply, ‘does not produce a shred of credible evidence to link Busteed or the killing of the officers in Macroom to the events in Dunmanway’. Leaving aside Busteed, surely if the possibility the West Cork IRA carried out both the massacre between Bandon and Dunmanway and at the same time abducted and murdered the British Intelligence Officers and their driver near Macroom is accepted, the IRA itself is a common-denominator worthy of discussion. This connection can be discounted where the West Cork IRA is understood to be a factious, localised body, acting autonomously involved in ‘copy cat’ killings. Alternatively, the West Cork IRA was a disciplined and highly effective military organisation. That the IRA abandoned the truce in West Cork between 26-9 April during which time murders took place only then to resume it is another connection or at least another notable coincidence. If the massacre of Protestants was inspired by sectarian hatred, then the religion of the British soldiers is a further consideration which should not be dismissed. All of these issues query Hart’s marginalisation of the British Intelligence Officers – how he did this remains of interest to students of historical mechanics.

Apart from all of the above, in my article I identify that shortly before mid-day on 26th April the three British Intelligence Officers and their driver called at Farran near Ballygroman House, where they visited a retired British Officer. Many agree it was the shooting in the early hours of the morning of 26th of IRA Vice Commandant Michael O’Neill at Ballygroman House, which set in train the massacre. O’Neill was shot by another British ex-Officer, Captain Herbert Woods, and afterwards IRA Volunteers besieged Ballygroman House. Woods, Thomas Hornibrook JP, the owner of the house, and his son Samuel disappeared that morning never to be seen again. The arrival of three British Intelligence Officers at Farran later that morning may of course be another coincidence. Alternatively, events at Ballygroman prompted the British Intelligence Officers to risk their lives travelling to Farran, then on to Macroom. This suggests the murders of O’Neill, the Hornibrooks, and Woods, the massacre victims, and British Intelligence Officers and their driver, should be discussed collectively. Hart opted for another course in his chapter entitled, ‘Taking it out of the Protestants’; wherein he went far out of his way to exclude distractions.

The abridgement of the past is the besetting problem of the historian who, confronted with the totality of the evidence, must make selections. One course is to try and do the evidence justice and represent its complexities, whilst still arriving at a comprehensible narrative. This describes the attempt at historical interpretation. Another route is to make excessively prejudicial selections eliminating complexity for the sake of simplicity, clarity of argument, and easy reading. This describes the attempt to write crude propaganda or as sometimes ahistorical public histories. It may be that I too write propaganda, where I selectively quote Dr Morrison in the examples cited at the beginning of this response. But compare my distortions with Dr Morrison’s use of quotation: ‘Nonetheless, as even Regan acknowledged, what Hart wrote in relation to April 1922 “is of course valid, mostly it is factual”’. But my supposed endorsement of Hart’s writing is qualified by the unquoted clause in my sentence, ‘but what is now in doubt is whether it is historical’.

Identifying what is acceptably historical to historians is what the present controversy is about, and in this dispute Hart’s research has become a test case. Writing on Catholic-Protestant relations in West Cork, Hart wrote of one the IRA’s Protestant victims in 1921: ‘Mrs Lindsay was separated from her Catholic neighbours by class, creed, loyalty and a whole battery of myths and prejudices (including her own) which combined to form an insurmountable ethnic barrier’.8 Hart continued:

Frank Busteed revealed some of these when he told her: ‘Listen you bitch, you think that you are dealing with a bunch of farm labourers, the men who will touch their caps to you and say ‘yes Madam, and no madam’. Well, we’re no bunch of tame Catholics.

However, Hart omitted the next sentence: ‘My grandfather was a Protestant and my bloody cousins are Protestants all over West Cork. This is not a religious war we’re fighting. I don’t give a damn for any religion’. This omission, observes Cork local historian Barry Keane, ‘turns a nationalist rant into a sectarian rant’.9 A possible justification for Hart’s use of evidence is the extreme relativist position which says: evidence is open to any interpretation, any selection of evidence is permissible, and any and all interpretations are equally valid. That may be. Alternatively, not all interpretations are equally historical or indeed historical at all.

Some historians recognise procedures defining their endeavour as a discipline, even if these procedures cannot be codified comprehensively. (For an attempt see the American Historical Association’s (AHA) Statement of Standards of Professional Conduct 10). Instead professional and disciplinary standards are most often interpreted through precedent and practice, which are of course open to renegotiation. Hart’s research confronts the Irish historical community with the problem of identifying what is best practice, ethical, and acceptable in historical research, and what is not. In this respect the AHA’s Statement of Standards offers benchmarks to historians of Ireland who since 1970, have sometimes witnessed a purposeful reaction to the professionalization begun in the 1930s. But beyond professionalism the AHA’s Statement of Standards has something to say to historians of Ireland about scholarship, the importance of maintaining public trust, and basic principles of research:

Historians should document their findings and be prepared to make available their sources, evidence, and data, including any documentation they develop through interviews. Historians should not misrepresent their sources. They should report their findings as accurately as possible and not omit evidence that runs counter to their own interpretation.11

Absence of similar guidelines for Irish historians working outside the U.S.A. is a contributing factor to the unhappy predicament we now find ourselves in. The name-calling attaching to this controversy is a symptom of that predicament.12 These ad hominem arguments are substantial distractions from thinking hard about problems concerned with the philosophy of history, methodology, ethics, alongside professional standards. And in the end these problems confront us with dilemmas. Among them whether or not to endorse historical scholarship over and above the rope of sand that constitutes ahistorical public histories.

Footnotes

1. Liam Deasy papers, Ms 43,554/22, National Library of Ireland.

2. Eve Morrison’s response to Niall Meehan’s review of David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012). http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1303 (accessed: 6 January, 2013)

3. Peter Hart, ‘The Irish Republican Army and its Enemies 1917-23’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1993), p. 49, n. 55; Idem., The IRA and its enemies: violence and community in county Cork 1916-23 (Oxford, 1998), p. 35, n. 61.

4. David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life* (Dublin, 1977, 2nd ed. Cork 1998), p. 31.

5. Morrison, ‘Kilmichael revisited’, *Terror*, p. 160. See David Hackett Fischer, *Historian’s fallacies* (New York, 1970), pp 209-13.

6. Hart, ‘enemies’ (thesis, p. 377, n. 47.

7. Ibid., p. 118; cf Hart, enemies (book), p. 100.

8. Ibid., p. 418; Hart, enemies (book), p. 309, n. 124.

9. Matthew Reisz, ‘Between the lines of a tale of murder and motive’, *Times Higher Education* (Web edition, 24 May, 2012), Readers comments:   
http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=419986

10. AHA, Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct (Washington D.C., 2011).  
(http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm)

11. Ibid., p. 7.

12. See David Fitzpatrick, ‘Dr Regan & Mr Snide’, History Ireland, 20/3 (May-June, 2012), pp 12-3.Cf David Fitzpatrick, ‘Ethnic cleansing, ethical smearing, and Irish historians’, History, 98/329 (January, 2013), pp 135-44.

Read Eve Morrison <http://www.drb.ie/reviews/reply-to-john-regan>