**Sunday Independent**

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**Duped by 'historical porn'**

Madam – Last week, Eoghan Harris referred to the tip of an iceberg: the manipulation of the internet when it comes to Irish history in the War of Independence and Civil War period. He suggests that "internet political sites are infiltrated by a band of anonymous fanatical nationalists". A check through the 'Edits History' of the [Wikipedia](http://searchtopics.independent.ie/topic/Wikipedia) entry on the late historian, Peter Hart, to take but one example, confirms this. Every entry that attempts to be fair to Hart is immediately removed.

To make matters worse, if you correct factual errors in any of these ostensibly 'objective' web pages, your corrections will last only a few hours. Propagandists will reinsert the earlier distortions with a speed that suggests they either work shifts or spend all day on [Wikipedia](http://searchtopics.independent.ie/topic/Wikipedia). It is simply not possible for anything even vaguely resembling the truth to be carried on open-access web pages when it comes to the War of Independence or Civil War. This process is relentless, mean-spirited and one-sided.

Given this remorseless campaign, is it any wonder that young people – who take most of their information from the internet, and who soon will no longer be taught history at [Junior Cert](http://searchtopics.independent.ie/topic/Junior_Certificate) level – are sliding back into the kind of tribal prejudices recounted in the study by Heather Crawford that Mr Harris quotes?

Parents are worried that internet pornography is distorting young people's views of sexuality (Sunday Independent, October 20, 2013). Likewise, internet propaganda is distorting their view of Irish history. Our kids are being duped. Don't get me wrong: the internet is a wonderful tool. But it can also be used to sow deceit on a grand scale. It is time we recognised this for what it is: historical pornography – even if it usually comes complete with high-end web design.

[Gerard Murphy](http://searchtopics.independent.ie/topic/Gerard_Murphy_%28politician%29)

Dept of Science and Health,

Institute of Technology,

Carlow

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