

Statement of Purpose: Tabitha Wood

**From Behind the Curtain to the Front Line: Republican and Loyalist Paramilitary Women of the Northern Irish Troubles, 1968-1998**

The Troubles in Northern Ireland legally ended in April 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Many further issues have risen in Northern Ireland, with continued paramilitary actions, violence against police, the breakdown of the power sharing government in Stormont, and Brexit. Recently, these occurrences have pushed Northern Ireland and the Troubles to the front of discussions and international attention. While the Troubles is a well-studied topic, there is one subset of the population that is consistently missing from the narrative: women engaged in armed resistance and armed combat. As the British government declassifies more archival documents, the records increasingly show women playing an integral role, not only in the long peace process, but also in the paramilitary organizations that characterized the conflict.

The Troubles began out of a peaceful Catholic protest for equal civil rights in Northern Ireland. The Protestant community met this with rancor, as they perceived Catholicism to be synonymous with Irish nationalism. Violence erupted amid heightened tensions, which would continue to tear Northern Ireland apart for the next three decades. While it was a decidedly sectarian conflict, it is important to understand that national identity fueled both sides. Religion became synonymous with an individual's nationality: the Catholics were Irish, and the Protestants were British. The British Army entered Northern Ireland to help quell the violence that permeated its communities, but this instead caused more division and violence. Over 3,600 people, mostly civilians, died from 1968 to 1998—almost every person in Northern Ireland still feels the impact of the violence that gripped the country.

Historians have examined the causes of violence, the interworkings of different paramilitary organizations, the impacts of incarceration, and how the conflict changed and shaped the community. While all of this is instrumental to understanding the conflict, there is a large gap in the historical narrative of the Troubles. Women took an active part in the conflict, but their voice is often missing. This thesis seeks to show that without understanding paramilitary women's actions and experiences, we cannot fully understand the conflict. As historians, we must deal with this gap, as well as with an incomplete understanding of conflict and how it impacts society, in the sense of cultural understanding and gendered norms. This thesis is a comparative analysis of Republican and Loyalist paramilitary women. Why did women join paramilitary organizations? What type of actions did they carry out? How were they treated by their male counterparts? How did men in opposing organizations view them?

The Pharr-Buchenau Grant would allow me to visit Northern Ireland and understand how the conflict impacted their culture. It is still present in the society within wall murals visible in each town. I would be travelling during marching season, which is a Protestant celebration of the Battle of the Boyne which happens annually beginning July 15. Travelling at this time would give me a greater understanding of Protestant culture in Northern Ireland. With this grant, I would spend one week in Belfast, one week in Derry, and one week in Dublin. This would allow me a chance to visit multiple archives, including the Public Records of Northern Ireland, Queens University Belfast, Ulster University, Magee Campus, Coleraine Campus, Armagh Gaol, the CAIN archives, including the Malcom Sutton index of deaths, and the Bogside Artists, Trinity College, and the National Archives of Ireland. This research will make me a stronger PhD candidate, as well as give me firm footing in understanding both Irish history and women in conflict.

### Budget Justification

To complete my research for this thesis, I will travel from Charlotte to Boston, and from Boston to Belfast, because it cuts the cost of a plane ticket in half to fly out of Boston rather than Charlotte. I will stay in Belfast for one week, from July 18-25. While in Belfast, I will visit Queens University to examine the ARK archives, as well as going to the Public Records of Northern Ireland. I have already examined several collections that will be instrumental, including the Prison protest actions, Audio/visual recording of Armagh Gaol, and Father Denis Faul and Father Raymond Murray's papers. I will also spend time watching the Orange Order Parades for cultural understanding, and travel to East and North Belfast to see the murals and peace walls. On July 25, I will rent a car and drive to Derry, in County Londonderry, where I will stay from July 25-August 1. While in Derry, I will visit two of Ulster University's campuses, at Magee and Coleraine, where many of the archives for CAIN are housed, including the Malcom Sutton index of deaths, The Bogside Artists, and oral history archives. I will spend one day traveling to Armagh to understand the city and visit the Gaol where women were imprisoned. On August 1, I will drive to Dublin, where I will stay until August 7. While in Dublin I will visit Trinity College and intend to meet with several of the professors that focus on modern Irish History. I will also be using Trinity College for its expansive library. Further, I will also visit the National Archives of Ireland and the collections they house on the conflict in Northern Ireland. On August 7 I will drive back to Belfast, spend one night, and board a flight home on August 8.

Item	Cost USD	Total
Flight from Charlotte to Boston (roundtrip)	\$200	\$200
Flight from Boston to Belfast (roundtrip)	\$700	\$700
Weekly Rent in Belfast (renting an apartment)	\$175/week	\$175
Car Rental (starting July 25-Aug 8)	\$13/per day	\$284
Weekly Rent in Derry (renting an apartment)	\$160/week	\$160
Weekly Rent in Dublin (looking for more affordable lodgings)	\$95/per day	\$665
Meals/Grocery	\$25/per day	\$525
Total		\$2,709