

Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review, Vol 1, No 1 (2009)

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [LOGIN](#) [REGISTER](#) [SEARCH](#) [CURRENT](#) [ARCHIVES](#) [PHI ALPHA THETA](#)

Home > Vol 1, No 1 (2009) > Columbus

Bean na h-Éireann: Feminism and Nationalism in an Irish Journal, 1908-1911

Brittany Columbus

In the years before WWI^[1], the movement for a free Ireland was fought mainly in the pages of a small group of Irish publications hoping to build up the nation's morale, not militarily but culturally.^[2] Some women's groups were heavily involved in this literary development of a new Irish identity.^[3] In particular, one publication, *Bean na h-Éireann* (*Bean*), "Women of Ireland", is praised by scholars as being especially forward looking and even revolutionary. Margaret Ward, in her works *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* and *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism*, has argued that the "nationalist-feminist principles [of the paper] led to its complete separation from any other political current."^[4] Karen Steele has similarly argued that in *Bean*, "nationalist writers were strongly sympathetic to feminism,"^[5] and also asserted that *Bean* "attracted apolitical women to the cause of Ireland by enlisting the aid of the home-maker as a nation-maker."^[6] While *Bean* was certainly nationalist in its orientation, maybe even radically nationalist, Steel, Ward and most others writing on this subject have greatly overplayed the feminist thought of this newspaper. In fact, its occasional intense nationalism actually undermined the feminism that some of its editors espoused elsewhere.

Bean was founded as a literary extension of *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann* (*Inghinidhe*), the "Daughters of Erin." This organization was comprised mainly of upper class women who were financially independent. The group was formed by several young women who were looking for a way to contribute to society through the creation of a new nationalist ideology that stressed the importance of Irish life and a more prominent role for women in Irish society.^[7] *Inghinidhe* mainly focused on building a new Irish identity, one in which women were not solely seen as the mothers and wives. *Inghinidhe* members believed that the best method for spreading their ideas would be a newspaper directed towards the average Irish woman.^[8] It was a monthly publication and remained in circulation from late 1908 to 1911.

The newspaper *Bean na h-Éireann*, noted as the first nationalist-feminist publication in Ireland, addressed national and social questions with the primary aim of appealing to the average woman and was distributed without charge to all Irish men and women. *Bean* intended to serve as a venue for Irish writers to promote their causes, grievances and hopes for the new independent nation. Its writers believed whole heartedly that national independence could only be won with a united Irish identity, in terms of heritage, strength of heart, and aims.^[9]

Inghinidhe, one of the earliest women's societies, could not pay staff or contributors but still managed to attract a wide range of writers who felt a connection to the cause of *Bean na h-Éireann*.^[10] The writers felt that the newspaper was an element of the "bloodless guerilla war against the British Empire"^[11] and were willing to donate their time and ideas to such a cause. *Bean* also printed articles from prominent men in

Brittany Columbus

Ireland such as Count Markievicz, founder and leader of Sinn Fein; Arthur Griffith; and poet, Terence MacSwiney.^[12] Markievicz and other writers felt that the magazine's primary function was to bring attention to the issues of which all Irish women should be aware.^[13] The success of the independence movement relied on citizens being aware of ideals specific to the Irish identity. It was equally important for the average woman to be clear on where the Irish stood on a particular issue and how that stance differed from England. *Bean* did not take root with any one cause, but sought to cover a variety of topics in order to educate readers on the social, political and national issues of the time.

When *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann* launched *Bean na h-Éireann* in 1908, it was not the group's first attempt to contribute to the Irish struggle for independence. The members of *Inghinidhe* were known for their contributions to the Irish nationalist movement long before the paper emerged, first gaining recognition through their theater troupe which idealized ancient Ireland^[14] and created a sense of "Irishness."^[15] The group used short, simple pieces to attract attention and inspire the people of Ireland.^[16] When *Inghinidhe* members first launched their new publication, *Bean na h-Éireann*, they planned to use the same strategy in hopes that it would garner the same success.^[17]

None of the writers of the newspaper were paid, and it relied on member submissions to fill its pages. *Bean* writers believed that national independence could only be won by fashioning a united Irish identity. Constance Markievicz^[18], a prominent member in a variety of women's groups in Ireland, felt that the newspaper's primary function was to bring attention to the issues of which all Irish women should be aware:

Regard yourselves as Irish, believe in yourselves as Irish, as units of a nation distinct from England, your Conqueror, and as determined to maintain your distinctiveness and gain your deliverance. Arm yourselves with weapons to fight your nation's cause. Arm your souls with noble and free ideas. Arm your minds with the histories and memories of your country and her martyrs, her language and knowledge of her arms and her industries. May this aspiration towards life and freedom among Irish women free our nation!^[19]

This is undoubtedly the most radical formulation of the nationalist-feminist message to appear in the newspaper and it was not even written for the paper but was republished from speeches, mostly from Markievicz's book *Women, Ideals and the Nation*.^[20] In fact, *Bean's* general tone was quite prosaic. While writers of *Bean* did discuss Irish nationalism, their dominant focus was on more conventional women's issues. To put it plainly, it was for the most part a homemaker's magazine.

The general content of the paper was not avant-garde in the least. The majority of the articles were quite tame in comparison with the works of suffragists such as Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington and even to some of its contributors such as Constance Markievicz. In "Useful Hints," for instance, readers found various suggestions for avoiding the common cold. The author first suggested that wet clothes should be taken off immediately and dried with a rough towel, and then discussed the use of oatmeal as a fix for throat sores.^[21] The article closed by discussing casseroles as an alternative to the typical pot roast dish. Articles with similarly banal content filled its pages. "Cookery Notes" was a reoccurring column that offered readers advice on how to prepare a variety of meals. These meals were often typical Irish dishes which, in small measure, helped sow the seeds of nationalism. The recipes for kidney soup, forequarter of lamb and Tara's Trifle helped to promote Irish culture by focusing on Irish foods.^[22] The February 1909 issue of *Bean* used two pages of the newspaper to print recipes for the readers such as tapioca pudding, oatcake and celery

soup.[23] But in its first issue, Editor Helena Moloney[24] promised her readers that *Bean* would "always be as keen and enthusiastic an advocate for the cause of women than even the most extreme suffragette." [25] It generally fell short of this goal.

There was an abundance of space for less pressing issues. In February 1909, an entire page was devoted to "The Art of Brush Making." The article detailed the craft of brush making for a range of brushes such as the hairbrush, floor brush, or those used for cooking. "Ever since woman has had a home she must have had something to clean it with...many people use cocoa-nut shell for floors but in our stage of evolution, we have many different brushes." [26] This sort of content would not have been so problematic had the paper not claimed to represent the nationalist and feminist ideals of Irish Women.

The large majority of articles in each issue were quite ordinary and un-contentious. Among these was "A Note on Calendars," and stories such as "A Bunch of Violets" and "Cambella: The Tale of a Proud Princess." A recurrent column titled "Fashion Notes" normally filled one to two full pages. Originally titled "How Irish Women Should Dress," the column began with a "buy Irish," theme, and then evolved into a discussion of fashion trends. In April 1909, the writer of the column enthusiastically declared that "never had there been such a variety of materials and shades of fabric brought out." [27] The article continued to highlight the varieties of blue fabrics available to women. "From the peacock to the pale silver shades, lovers of blue can have an extensive choice." [28] A May 1909 column is typical:

Another of the changes in style is presented in the shape of the sleeveless jacket-indeed one example was shown with a short cape-like effect. It was quite loose fitting, split up each side of the waist line. [29]

These types of articles dominated the paper. "Short skirts are as popular as ever for morning, traveling and country wear. The long graceful skirt is strictly reserved for afternoon, visiting and race meetings. The Pleated skirt is like a blouse and will never retire!" [30] The following month, the author noted that the popularity of the hat was "on the wane." [31] The author refuted this accusation by showing how useful the hat actually was: "Such a thing as small as a hat is unknown, and the beehive still runs first favorite...black and white large hats are evidence...a pretty example was in chip with a small bow of white velvet finishing off a bunch of wheat. Wheat is very popular during August and makes a pretty hat finish" [32]

The newspaper was not limited to fashion articles and further extended into the domestic sphere. In "Household Hints," the author Dariana began her article about wallpaper and redecorating homes by stating that Irish women must not sit idly and bemoan the fate of their rooms if they are covered with dismal or dingy wallpaper. [33] In the article, which assured the reader that re-papering a room is a task that Irish women are especially capable of, Dariana used subtle statements to reassure women of their capabilities. "Don't be afraid of being too ambitious. Nothing venture, nothing win...you have no idea how becoming your own decorator adds to the joy of living." [34] While it was possible that Dariana was promoting this self-sufficient attitude towards home décor, it is more likely that this was social commentary on the potential for women to take their fate into their own hands. In this article she does not overtly promote action or involvement in a suffrage or nationalist group, but helps to add a sense of competence to the women of Ireland.

Brittany Columbus

.....

In a similar column, titled "Hints on Furnishing," the author discussed the interior design of a recently married couple. She detailed the furnishings in each room and included price break-downs as well. The author discussed everything from the Prussian blue carpet in the dining room to the lace curtains in the drawing rooms.^[35] Similarly mundane articles followed, for example, in "The Taxi-Cab," the author, Suar Leat, wrote passionately about the incompetence of the Dublin tax-cab system. "When I was in Dublin last month I availed myself of the opportunity of talking to many concerning the coming taxi invasion. What struck me most was the utter incompetence of the car-men...."^[36] In the first issue of the paper, the author of "The Woman of the House," advised single women what to do with their time while they wait for their future millionaire husband. "The independent woman, the bachelor girl, with the future opening out as we see it before her seems to hold in her slender hands in the future happiness...first advice...get another girl 'chum' with you, and you will find it better for soul and body."^[37] The author then explained that the chum will better the bachelorette, because she will have someone to keep her company while decorating her home.

In "Flower Culture in Ireland," the author used three pages to discuss gardening in the country. "Deep rooted in the soul of every Irishman there is an intense dislike of gardening as a pastime."^[38] The author discussed the various flowers and fruits in Ireland and even discussed the lack of pride in the Irish flower culture. The author suggested that the reason for this is because "gardening is an essentially lonely occupation, a fit employment for the philosophic thinker or for the man who does not think at all,"^[39] which is not the case for the men of Ireland.

In January 1909, an article titled "Christmas Thoughts on Feminism" discussed the joys of happy children at Christmas time, the innocence of a child at prayer and suggested that government salaries should be reduced to feed hungry children during the holiday.^[40] The ideas and suggestions of the article were consistent with the general aim of the paper to reduce poverty and severely lacked the feminist message suggested by the title. "Irishwomen and the University,"^[41] suggested that the author would address the substandard education for women or at least the status of Irish women in the educational system. Instead, it urged women to protest the lack of the Irish language in schools available to young boys. There is no mention of the inferior education available to women at all. The writer completely ignored this issue, though it was being widely discussed at the time throughout Europe and in America.

Even when *Bean* was at its most activist, as in the May 1910 issue which discussed labor, the inferiority of the female sex, and offered advice on street fighting, the majority of the paper, over nine pages, was devoted to less important topics, such as "St. Edna's School Pageant," "Flower Culture in Ireland," and "Crowds," where the writer discussed methods to handling crowded cities such as Dublin.^[42] One example of this is the article "Beauty Hints." This article advised women on how to use shampoo: "in massaging the hair, do not rub too hard if the head is sensitive...an occasional egg shampoo for women between thirty and forty is almost a necessity to keep away gray hairs."^[43] The article concluded by advising the reader on how to keep a curl. Beauty hints could be found in several *Bean* articles. In "For that Tired Look," the author explained how to treat droopy eyes. "Even among women who have sleep enough there are many whose eyes look tired and dingy...try a teaspoon of lemon juice in a glass full of water every morning before breakfast. Be sure to get outdoors enough!"^[44] This beauty hint is typical of *Bean* and thus illustrates the type of content often found in the paper.

.....
One month later, an article simply titled "Rain" discussed the problem with Irish weather and even advised on the proper time to use an umbrella. "We hate rain because we do not receive it in the right costume...the only rain which justifies our taking an umbrella is when the penetrating rain feels like a damp fleece."[\[45\]](#) This article, which outlined various grievances towards rain, continued for three pages. In "A Matter of Taste," readers were encouraged to restore good taste to the country. "It is the women of Ireland who must restore this lost quality."[\[46\]](#) This good taste is defined in the article as "an inherent instinct that makes its possessor see and appreciate the beautiful, the fitting and the true, as opposed to the ugly and the false."[\[47\]](#) The author reminded readers that this beauty could be found in design, language, and fashion. It is not surprising that articles with such content would appear in the early issues of *Bean*, as it was testing its audience and finding its limits in the journalistic world. Articles of this sort, however, continued until the very last issues.

Bean originally aimed to create a new Irish identity, especially for women, but could not while covering such mundane topics. Founders of the paper hoped to spread a new concept of nationalism in which they encouraged women to be more active in dedication to their country in terms of showing a stronger presence among groups that were planning and organizing the foundations for a revolution. The paper, however, did not fully embrace the concept created by the *Inghinidhe* founders. Instead, the articles were focused on a more traditional form of women's nationalism and were limited to Irish consumerism and culture in terms of food, dress and folklore.

The dominant focus of the paper was usually on more ordinary issues. At a time in Ireland when everything from the role of the English to the curriculum in schools was being challenged, *Bean* managed to remain unremarkable. Sinn Fein and other political groups were urging political confrontation and even revolution, and the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) tirelessly produced pamphlets rallying women to the suffragist cause. *Bean* on the other hand, focused on the conventional women's issues.

The newspapers that were published in the first year of publication lacked feminist sentiment. There were also very few articles that focused on national ideas of Irish independence. These early publications focused on traditional "women's issues" and only made some political statement in the form of editorials. In the first publication, released in November 1908, there was not a single article related to nationalist ideas or women's rights. The second issue in December of the same year produced eleven articles on issues surrounding dress, domestic tips or shopping suggestions.

The goal of the newspaper was to address and expose social issues in Ireland. A special column written by Anne Grianan was devoted exclusively to children[\[48\]](#) which is typically a cause taken up by women. Grianan aimed to not only expose children's issues, but also encouraged women to direct their time and energy to solving these problems. An issue close to both *Bean* and *Inghinidhe* was the problem of starving Irish school children. *Inghinidhe* aimed to "provide a hot midday Irish meal for the poor children in the Dublin schools,"[\[49\]](#) and used *Bean* to publicize their cause. This project was met with much opposition in its early days. After the children's column appeared and explained the issue of starving children, the mission gained support. Soon readers poured in as volunteer cooks and waitresses to provide hot Irish stew to the children at St. Audoen's. It wasn't long until *Bean* readers extended the generosity to nearby schools.[\[50\]](#) In "The Children Must be Fed," the author exposed the suffering of the hungry Irish school children. The author outlined the problem, saying that very few are healthy and many are too poor and therefore

Brittany Columbus

insufficiently fed. The author placed the responsibility to feed the children on the shoulders of the women of Ireland: "No mothers are tenderer than Irish mothers and it is absurd to suppose a mother would let her children go hungry."^[51] The author then moved on to include Irish nuns. "Many convents are doing great holy work in providing breakfast at their schools for children who need it...they are setting an example of wise charity."^[52]

The domestic sphere of women often concerned consumer behavior. Irish women were no exception and were told that they could help the Irish struggle for independence with their choices of purchase. *Bean* fully supported the notion that women could use their buying power to help Irish nationalism. This is evident by the volume of advertisements in the newspaper. The average page included two articles where a minimum one-third of the page is devoted to sales ads. Some issues go as far as printing entire pages of advertisements. In the first three issues, the advertisements were spread throughout the issue, taking up at least half of the page. Later issues of the paper had fewer advertisements per page, but overall still increased the amount of ads by including one to two full pages of them. Since *Bean* writers were unpaid and the paper was sold rather than distributed freely, it is clear that the justification for the amount of advertisements in the paper was not financially based. There was no need to pay writers and since the readers purchased the paper, advertisements had more purpose than to solely attract investors. The nature of the advertisements is also indicative of the motivations for printing them. Each advertisement emphasized products made by Irish manufacturers: "Irish art! Jewelry for the year...Irish jewelry under skilled supervision,"^[53] and "Where Irish linens are concerned, the Irish women have 'Belfast in Dublin' at The Belfast Linen and Damask Co."^[54] "Help to keep Irish markets for Irish goods by buying Irish sweets!"^[55] "Irish-made cutlery!"^[56] "Dickson's 'Hawlmak' Seeds: The best for Ireland."^[57] "Only Irish brains are used in Roe M'Mahon's Studios,"^[58] and finally, "we sell Irish goods only."^[59] It is clear that the marketing strategy in the newspaper was to promote goods produced by Irish manufacturers. The same advertisements appeared in several issues with slight variation; however the articles promoting Irish products did change over time.

In the first issues of the paper, *Bean* writers used their article space to promote a certain objective: buy Irish. The newspaper took the position that promoting Irish business was a useful way for women to participate in nationalistic efforts. This may have been true, but it is definitely a method which conforms to traditional roles of women. In "To Our Sisters," Moloney explained that "every woman has it in her own hands one simple and swift remedy, the support of Irish manufacturer. We cannot do better than to go a step further and reiterate the advice given in our first number: to give preference to those Irish firms, who pay their workers honestly...and give them opportunities to live decent healthy lives."^[60] Moloney's editorial explicitly provides advice on an approach for women in terms of nationalist involvement. There were more subtle articles throughout the paper. In "Christmas Gifts and Where to buy them," the author used two pages to discuss the state of the Irish economy and suggested where to buy gifts in order to help and included addresses for each suggested retailer. Discussions on home furnishings, cooking and even fashion focused on Irish-made goods. In "A Note on Calendars," the author suggested that Irish women buy Irish-made calendars. The author extended the request to buy as many Irish goods as possible, as if to prevent exporting those goods to other countries. The article assumes an attitude which advocates an 'Irish goods for Irish people approach': "I do not want her [Ireland] to follow in the vandalistic footsteps of England and America, who would croak out the wonders of their pills and the beauty of their beans...hang them [calendars] henceforth in their own travestied land."^[61] The logic both behind the messages to buy

Irish goods and to print numerous advertisements fit very well into the plans to encourage a sense of nationalism in Irish women. The method in which *Bean* writers chose to promote this nationalism was just another way in which the newspaper conformed to pre-existing roles of women, in terms of consumerism and rejected the notions of feminism which sought to break those previous molds and change the way in which women were allowed and expected to participate.

One thing was clear and recurrent throughout the publication: the emphasis on a moral force movement for Ireland. *Bean* describes their mission as the obligation of Irish citizens to "recognize their duty and devote themselves at last to the task of unifying and freeing the nation from the British Empire."^[62] It is not surprising that *Bean* would take on such an issue, as women were expected to be a moral compass for their husbands and children. Women were encouraged to help their mother Ireland by being good people and having pure hearts.

Margaret Ward described *Bean* as a revolutionary publication which addressed national and social questions with the primary aim of appealing to the "average" woman. The paper drifted away from its original goal to create a new Irish identity and consistently maintained the preexisting order where women were assigned the role of subordinates in the move for Irish independence and were discouraged from putting forward their own demands.^[63] Writers of the publication who put the nationalist agenda first avoided controversial issues regarding equality and women's status in Ireland. In its first year of publication, *Bean* covered issues such as "Christmas Gifts and Where to Buy Them," "How Irish Women Should Dress," and "A Note of Safety Pins." Articles such as these did not further any feminist agenda and instead kept Irish women in their pre-established realms of domesticity.

There was little effort to move women toward any cause that took them out of their traditional place. In its first year of publication, the ideas with small traces of nationalist action were written in respect to consumer goods. In "Christmas Gifts and Where to buy them," almost three pages are devoted to encouraging women to purchase goods from Irish manufactures. In fact, there is no mention as to why buying Irish is necessary to the nationalist cause. The article, from an anonymous author, stated that Irish people need to buy goods made in Ireland to show that they are a charitable people. The authors declared that buying Irish will "banish unemployment, poverty and beggary"^[64] from their midst. While these ideals are important to the quality of a society, it only passively addresses the issue of Irish identity which was very much an issue of the time. During this same time in 1909, Sinn Fein was actively fighting the acceptance of British rule with the Home Rule Bill. The British Parliament remained a strong force of oppression in Ireland but the paper ignored those issues. It may have been useful to know that Barrett & Co, 109 Grafton Street had "hat pins in several artistic designs"^[65] or that Kilkenny Woodworkers had hand-painted shamrock tables,^[66] however with pressing issues of Irish independence at hand, *Bean* only educated their readers on watered down women's issues.

The majority of the articles in the first year of publication sought to give legitimacy to traditional women's issues such as dress and limited professions rather than encourage women to address national issues. These articles further separated men and women, widening the gender divide by addressing issues solely pertaining to women. In one article titled "The Nursing Profession," Sister Anne gave her opinion on the title subject. Sister Anne acknowledged that this profession was underpaid and underappreciated, and insisted that the skills needed and the importance of the job is not for the lighthearted. Sister Anne stated that a

Brittany Columbus

good nurse must be "gentle, tactful, sympathetic, conscientious, and truthful and always have her feelings completely under control. A nurse also requires an infinite amount of intelligence for the variety of circumstances and conditions of the job."^[67] She discussed how this traditionally feminine profession required a variety of skills and discipline in an attempt to show the importance of the job; almost as if she is trying to comfort the women who are confined to "women's work," assuring them of the legitimacy of their existence and role in Ireland.

Each issue included at least one article printed in the Gaelic language. These articles, written with the *Clo Gaelach*^[68], were most likely inaccessible to the majority of the Anglo-Irish and especially the English residents in Ireland. This would appear to be the logical place in the paper for subversive messages or revolutionary rhetoric; however those messages are conspicuously absent. Instead, the writers of these Gaelic articles use the space for storytelling. These stories consistently promoted Irish heritage, family, and the beauty of the country. In "The Holiday," for instance the author used an entire column to describe a beautiful Irish scene. "I was on my holidays and we spent a bit of that time at the heart of county Wicklow. The weather there was typically fresh, crisp and simple. We were outside for nearly the whole day once we were free from our work."^[69] In similar stories, such as "Columcille and the Poor Man," the author admired the simple nature of Irish life and the generosity of Irish brotherhood:

Colmcille owned a town land. The spring time was very dry; he had a lot of fellow Irishmen helping him work. There was a very busy girl making bread for breakfast to give to the men. A poor person came in and asked for some charity. She gave him some charity and said to him make some bread with it.^[70]

This sort of nationalism was of the traditional form often associated with women among nationalists.

Steele does not focus solely on *Bean*, but explores writings of Irish revolutionaries such as Maude Gonne and Constance Markievicz, the first women's paper, *Shan Van Vocht*^[71], as well as newspapers directed toward men, such as *United Irishmen*. In her large scope of coverage, Steele praises *Bean* as being a piece which addressed feminist, nationalist and even socialist issues. In her extensive coverage of the significant papers of the times, Steele presents a thorough analysis of Irish newspapers. In her study of *The Irish Citizen*, an openly feminist paper, Steele explains that one column in particular, *Irish Women and the Home Language*, "attracted apolitical women to the cause of Ireland by enlisting the aid of the home-maker as a nation-maker."^[72] In her analysis of *The United Irishmen*, Steele explains that this was the most straightforward and direct source for the promotion of activism for women.^[73] In *Bean*, Steele focuses almost exclusively on what she deems to be a nationalist column; The "Women with a Garden" column written by Constance Markievicz, first appeared in the pages of *Bean* in February 1909 and was so detailed that it genuinely appears to be a column intended to be used for gardening advice. "In January you must be sure to finish pruning all your fruit trees, carefully washing the bark off with paraffin oil and soap suds or some other insecticide. If you still have an empty frame, it is a very good plan to sow lettuces in it."^[74] The column was introduced as something that would "give hints to the women who wish to make the most of the little bit of their land."^[75] In her analysis of the column, Steele insists that "Markievicz's allegory of the garden would be hard to miss given its ubiquity in nearly every gardening column she wrote."^[76] "April is with its hopes and suggestions of a glorious summer; its blue sky and soft warm showers driving us out into our garden to prune, to dig, to sow and do to the little we can to assist Dame Nature in this, the busiest city of the year."^[77]

10 Voces Novae, Vol 1, No 1 (2009)

.....
Markievicz may have intended for women to find the hidden meanings in her columns, but her messages were so well hidden that they were missed by the average reader: "the main crop of potatoes should be got in. Many other vegetables such as spinach, radishes, chicory, celery; pears for a late crop, should now be sown."^[78] Steele's conclusions about the content of the column are well founded based on her examples of Markievicz's writing:

It is very unpleasant work killing slugs and snails but let us not be daunted. A good nationalist should look upon killing slugs in a garden much in the same way as she looks on the English in Ireland, and only regret that she cannot crush the nation's enemy with such ease.^[79]

It is difficult to see hidden rebellious messages in her words: "Cabbage seedlings should be the first transplanted directly once the fourth leaf has made its appearance. For the best cabbage crop, transplant twice."^[80] The British slugs or Irish roses remain clearer symbols of what Markievicz may have meant, however the distractions of peas, potatoes, celery and beets help to sidetrack the reader's attention. According to Steele, Markievicz' mention of "Heavy frost" refers to the British Empire and "mature blossoms" refer to the blood of martyred Irish men.^[81] This is clearly a strong statement against the British presence in Ireland. However, since Markievicz does not use allegory to speak against the nation's enemy in this particular case and names the British explicitly, the readers had no reason to believe that the column had subversive meanings.

Although the column ended abruptly after issue seventeen, Steele asserts that it made quite an impact on readers. In the column's first appearance, there was no hint of rebellious symbolism and instead seems to be a page of real gardening notes. According to Steele, the "tender plants" and "poor wee bulbs" mentioned by Markievicz signified blossoming nationalism and youthful militancy. The "Irish rose" could very well be a symbol of strength and beauty in Ireland however most of Markievicz's statements are not as easy to decode: "Teas-hybrid teas must be very lightly pruned and may be left until the middle of the month, cut out all the dead wood cutting them to a more or less symmetrical shape."^[82] Steele describes the summer roses as Irish martyrs and snails, wasps and flies as the British soldiers. Steele admits that the allegory of Markievicz's *Women with a Garden* column has gone unnoticed by scholars due to the misunderstood style in which it was written.^[83] Markievicz may have intended for women to find the hidden meanings in her columns, but her messages were so well hidden, that they do not give any hint of subversion. The allegory is especially lost when Markievicz blatantly attacks the British or praises the Irish. When she speaks brazenly at one point, it's hard to believe that she would speak surreptitiously in other paragraphs. Markievicz does warn her readers to watch for slugs^[84] but quickly loses her main point by moving onto statements which inform her readers that "for the best cabbage crop, transplant twice."^[85] *Bean* aimed to reach the average Irish woman, but these types of messages appear to be real gardening notes, not hidden activist messages. Women who were already involved in the movement and who were looking for hidden messages in the gardening column may have understood that when Markievicz writes "it is far better to leave them alone than overdo pruning at this time of year,"^[86] however the average women may have needed more guidance. The column does not stand out in the newspaper, which, in the early days, filled the pages with columns of recipes, sales advertisements and notes on fashion.

Steele extols Markievicz for this column of courageous symbolism, but is it worth such praise? The newspaper as a whole may be scattered in focus and content, but no column is as unclear as "Woman with a

Brittany Columbus

Garden," which touches on nationalism, weather, and specific gardening instructions. The Irish rose, which Steel cites as a source of the clear allegory in the column actually makes few appearances in the entire run of the column. The column focused more on fruits and vegetables and only mentions the Irish rose sporadically. "Remember that Roses will flower far better if the flowers are constantly picked. You must watch your wall fruit trees well...strawberry beds for next year should be planted now. Cabbage should be sown early this month. A variety of carrots known as Early Morn may be sown early this month to be used in spring."^[87] Steele argues that Markievicz's column "allegorically described how readers could resist domesticity and imperialism through the most visible icon of the garden,"^[88] however these messages never surface through the gardening advice.

Steele acknowledges that the column was misunderstood due to the "facile theater of symbols."^[89] Steele's analysis of the reasoning behind the misunderstandings on the part of the reader is questionable however, because the symbols were not too simple. In fact, they were more ambiguous: "flower beds may be dug and manured this month to be ready for spring planting...beetroot should be ready to be lifted and stored in sand or dry soil in a shed."^[90] The symbolism may be present, but it is too imbedded in the gardening advice to reach readers. Steele also claims that Markievicz used the column to encourage readers to resist domesticity. Steele highlights an article written by Markievicz for the *United Irishmen* in which she states: "No lady is too delicate for the culinary preparation of casting bullets. No hand is too white to make up cartridges."^[91] This type of flagrant resistance of the domestic, or at the very least, encouragement for women to be more productive for their country, is not found in any of the "Woman with a Garden" articles.

In April 1910, *Woman with a Garden* made its last appearance in *Bean*. The column finished as all the others, with a small trace of something special followed by such confusion that the glimmer of activist statements pale in comparison. In her last column, Markievicz began by complaining about the "stuffy atmosphere, growing heavier and more unbearable with every hour."^[92] This statement clearly has some underlying meaning. The nationalistic symbolism here could be strong until the paragraph continues with the suggestion that the best way to rid the garden of the stuffy air is to leave handfuls of lavender around, followed by suggestions for different herbs based on different preferences.

Markievicz was known as a writer of nationalist material. The Irish women who were familiar with her writing may have recognized that a woman at this level in the nationalist movement would not spend her time writing about gardening tips. *Woman with a Garden*, however, was unsigned so there was no reason to look for the nationalist meanings behind this faceless column. It is important to note that even if the column had been signed, it still would have been difficult to make its mark. *Bean* aimed to attract the average women, who in Ireland were not a part of *Inghinidhe* or *Bean* or *Shan Van Vocht*. This column may have had the revolutionary undertones that it was praised for, but these were lost on the readers; it had no impact, and that nullifies any type of radical or ground-breaking statement.

Markievicz may have recognized the lack of impact her gardening column had on *Bean* readers, because in 1915, when she began writing permanently for the *United Irishmen*, her articles were filled with "impatient arguments and revisionist history to legitimate female militancy."^[93] Markievicz, along with many other *Bean* writers realized that their approach needed to evolve if they wanted to change the role of women in the nationalist movement.

Steele's contributions to the analysis and study of *Bean* are not limited to the *Woman with a Garden* column. Steele's examination of Ireland's female writers helped to expose the pen names which they used in their columns. A notable figure in *Bean* is John Brennan, who continuously wrote about the nursing professions in Ireland, exposing how this particular line of work was the most disrespected of all. Brennan complained that nursing, which was known as the most respected and lady-like of professions, received the least amount of respect.^[94] Nursing, he said, is actually the "least noble and most degrading of lives."^[95] Brennan continued to criticize the different expectations for different women's professions. Factory girls were not only allowed to, but expected to, let loose. Unlike the nurses, who were always restricted and expected to remain lady-like, factory women were allowed to go to the pubs in whatever dress they chose, but the nurses were legally confined to their uniforms anytime they were in public.

Brennan's complaints about the nursing professions lasted for five issues before he moved onto a new subject. It seemed as if the most passionate of complaints about the double standards faced by women found in the entire publication of *Bean* were made by a male; but Steele managed to reveal the source as Sidney Gifford^[96], another notable member of both the nationalist and women's movements. She reveals that Gifford wrote under the male penname to garner more respect for her message. The fact that a writer of *Bean* felt it necessary to use a masculine identity to command respect in a women's newspaper shows how ineffective the newspaper was as a feminist piece of work, even according to its own writers.

Nationalist oriented articles were a constant fixture in the newspaper, but feminist topics were more infrequent. While there were other feminist papers in existence such as *Shan Van Vocht*^[97], as well as *United Irishmen*, *Bean* proved to be less forward looking and instead, focused on stories, fashion ideas other similar topics. Helena Moloney, the outspoken editor of *Bean*, was not too shy to fault Ireland's male leaders for the problems in the government. She was not anti-male however, and also criticized the Irish Women's Franchise League. She addressed the complaints from the feminist group, which condemned *Bean* for its lack of support for the suffrage movement. Moloney defended the publication by explaining that the paper could not support the suffrage movement since they asked the British Parliament for the right to vote.^[98] Since she believed the British were the enemies and an illegitimate government, she refused to side with the suffragists.

The lack of feminist sentiment was not to appease the male population, but more to avoid further division of the country.^[99] There is no doubt that Moloney criticized Irish men and was unrestrained in her criticism. In her January of 1909 editorial, Moloney observed that men got little done because they were too busy trying to assert their personal importance within the government.^[100] However, every criticism of Irish men was balanced by some sort of compliment to prevent offending her Sinn Fein brothers. "The men in Ireland talk very big and act very little,"^[101] she complained, but quickly pointed out that "we believe that in Ireland there is too much preaching and too little practice...our desire to have a voice in the directing the affairs of Ireland is not based on a failure of men."^[102] Moloney was careful not to draw too many distinctions between Irish men and women believing that "there are too few Irish hearts aflame with pure and conscious love of mother Ireland to have them divided by such a barrier."^[103]

Bean claimed that it did not purposely avoid the issues of the suffragists. In February 1909, under the "Editorial Notes" column, Moloney once again defended the ideas of the paper. She wrote that there was no competition between the feminists and the nationalists. "We do not put nationality before sex or sex before

Brittany Columbus

nationality."^[104] She tried to convince her readers that the two ideas did not clash at all, but this was not the common view of the paper. On several occasions, *Bean* dismissed the arguments of the feminists.

Moloney provided one of the few sources of feminist sentiment found in the early issues of *Bean*. In a January of 1909 editorial titled "To our Sisters," the editor stated that the magazine's "raison d'être was to awaken Irishwomen to their national responsibilities and long neglected duties."^[105] Moloney's messages to her readers were mostly general statements of encouragement. She called for her readers to "come forward and prove their capacity"^[106] but reminded them that "behind every successful business, there were a woman's hands or brains."^[107] In January of 1909, Moloney suggested that women were better qualified to lead the country. She stated that women were more likely to rid the government of "sinful waste of time and money,"^[108] and would get more accomplished because of their calmer nature.^[109] But mostly, Moloney used her editorial space to inspire women to action rather than create a divide between the sexes in Ireland.

In *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*, Margaret Ward takes a closer look at *Bean* to explain how the paper came into existence. According to Ward, *Bean* was "the first women's paper ever to be produced in Ireland."^[110] Interestingly enough, there was already a women's paper in existence; *Shan Van Vocht*, which was created twelve years earlier in 1896.^[111] Ward uses her exhaustive research to trace the origins and history of the women's movement in Ireland. She does not focus solely on newspapers or the nationalist involvement; but rather examines the larger scope of women's contributions to Ireland. Ward studies early women's groups such as the *Ladies' Land League*, *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann*, and *Cumann na mBan* to show the evolution of the Irish woman. Ward clearly shows the progress of Irish women, in the social, political and even domestic realms of their lives.

In terms of their shared ideologies, these writers most closely aligned themselves with Sinn Féin. This was not true for the women's suffrage movement in Ireland, which had little support from the paper. The group was explicit in separating themselves from the suffrage movement, constantly reminding readers that "Ireland and her welfare must come first."^[112] *Bean* did not align closely, if at all, with other women's movements in Ireland. This is especially true of the Irish women's suffrage movement since the two organizations had fundamental differences. As Ward highlights in her research, *Bean* writers wrote too optimistically about women's involvement in the nationalist movement, "creating a ludicrously rosy picture"^[113] of their position. *Bean* writers encouraged women to join the Sinn Féin movement and similar groups, as if it was that simple; as if there were no gender barriers faced by women. It is important to note that the suffrage movement and feminist-nationalist movement had fundamental differences; which *Bean* pointed out at every chance. *Bean*'s denial of the realities of women both in their inequalities, the prejudices they faced, and their confinement to their domestic sphere "enraged the feminists and Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington,"^[114] co-founder of the 1908 Irish Women's Franchise League.^[115] Sheehy-Skeffington was critical of *Bean* and its alliance with Sinn Féin.

Unlike *Bean*, the Irish Women's Franchise League took the position that Sinn Féin was not a progressive political party and therefore helped to reinforce the domestic role of women. In April 1909, an article titled "On Franchise" defends the uncompromising nature of Sinn Féin, stating that the members were "uncompromising people, prepared to stick to their principles."^[116] *Bean* devoted a significant portion of space to advertisements as a form of income, but also allowed Sinn Féin to utilize ad space for promotional

purposes. In one advertisement, Sinn Fein's weekly policy publications were promoted. The title, a small synopsis of the upcoming article, as well as subscription prices were all detailed for the *Bean* reader.^[117] In a similar advertisement, the Sinn Fein publication "The Official Exponent"^[118] takes up a quarter page advertisement; which is a significant portion of a paper that only has about fifteen pages a month to spread its message. This clearly shows that *Bean* supported Sinn Fein ideologies and policies.

A principle disagreement between the suffragists and the writers of *Bean* was whether or not English suffragettes were useful to women in Ireland. The IWFL considered joining forces with the English women because of their mutual goals. *Bean* however was vehemently opposed to such an alliance and believed that any involvement with the English was inherently harmful to Irish independence. This argument was discussed in various issues of *Bean* which generally consisted of Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington explaining her position followed by two to three Sinn Feiners rebutting her argument.

Articles by guest writers known as "Sinn Feiners," are recurrent fixtures in the monthly issues. While they vary in content, they generally promote Sinn Fein policies and ideals. In January 1910, an "old fashioned nationalist" praised Sinn Fein for being the group which "did not consider women unworthy of notice in an essentially masculine movement."^[119] The old fashioned nationalist continues by commending Sinn Fein and criticizing the Irish Women's Franchise League; "A Sinn Feiner is one of those who aspire to lead the mind of the Irish womanhood towards a true ideal of freedom, let him prove to us that his ideal is a better and higher one than Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington's."^[120]

Bean writers aligned more closely with the ideas presented by Sinn Feiners, who often criticized the suffragists. A principle disagreement between the suffragists and the writers of *Bean* was whether or not the ideas of the English suffragettes were useful to women in Ireland. *Bean* however was vehemently opposed to the methods of the IWFL since they considered joining the English Suffragist movement. Sinn Feiners called Sheehy-Skeffington inaccurate, illogical and impractical. The very nature of the Sinn Feiner articles shows who *Bean* supported:

I maintain and am prepared to maintain, that by joining in this English Agitation, by fighting in conjunction with the English army of Suffragettes that not only are we doing the National cause harm but that it is extremely problematic if we shall even gain any practical benefits for ourselves.^[121]

The Sinn Feiner's arguments are well supported by other articles in the paper with similar messages which were consistent with the general message of *Bean*, that "in every bargain and deal that Ireland has made with England, she has been cheated."^[122] The nationalist perspective of Sinn Fein was much more appreciated than the views of the suffragists.

I would ask Mrs. Skeffington to regard the question from a broader standpoint, not from the standpoint of a woman scrambling for her mess of pottage, and willing to join with her county's conquerors and worst enemies to gain her end but from the view of an Irish.^[123]

It is clear that not only was *Bean* supportive of Sinn Fein, but also that its editors did not object to discrediting the Irish women's suffrage movement and its leaders, especially Sheehy-Skeffington. In the late issues of 1909 and the early issues of 1910, *Bean* writers moved further away from discussing fashion and

Brittany Columbus

attacking the feminists. They instead sought to challenge those with whom they disagreed, in an effort to stir up positive debate and action in Ireland. Sheehy-Skeffington, however, did watch idly as Sinn Feiners published their strong criticisms of her beliefs. In "Sinn Fein and Irish Women," Sheehy-Skeffington raises questions about the value of Irish women. Her tone is stern and provides one of the only instances in which feminism is put before nationalism:

Is the degradation of the average Irish woman less read, her education sacrificed to give her brothers ampler opportunities of having a good time loitering through their examinations in the capital, her marriage a matter of sordid bargaining, broken maybe because of an over-insistent prospective father-in-law demands a cow or a pig too much, her 'fortune' (the word is significant and the fortuneless had better never have been born) instead of being, in French fashion, sensibly settled on her and her children, handed over blindly to her husband to dispose as he may think fit...the Irish woman has far to go before achieving her destiny. [124]

Sheehy-Skeffington does not passively address the issue or put her message into codes or implications, instead she makes her case to the readers clearly. She even made the risky decision to include the defense of her work with the English Suffragettes. In the same article, Sheehy-Skeffington reminds readers that English women have not been Ireland's oppressors and are as oppressed in their country as the Irish people.

Sheehy-Skeffington's message may have been unpopular with Sinn Feiners and nationalists, but she did have some impact on the writers. In January of 1910, *Bean* writers started to ask the questions expected of a feminist-nationalist magazine, such as, "Ought Irishwomen Have Political Equality with Men?" The author addresses the needs for equal co-education in order to better the future of Ireland. The author also addresses the Irish Women's Franchise League:

Let them [IWFL] set to work to open an Irish school for girls...If the Irish Women's Franchise League brings such a school into existence, and convinced many doubtless amongst us that they are not mere bell-ringers calling our girls to the service of England's disfranchised women who are clamoring for the vote.[125]

Unlike previous articles directed towards the IWFL, this author asks the suffragettes to prove their capacity, and really do something to benefit the state of women in Ireland.

Ward suggests that *Bean* did not align itself with any political group, but that is difficult to believe when there are several articles that speak highly of Sinn Fein, its policies, and its actions. In August of 1909, a three-page article addresses the question of whether or not Sinn Fein could unite Ireland. There is no question; really, it is actually an article defending the position that Sinn Fein could unite Ireland. "Such a policy as this Sinn Fein appears as a set down in the 'Constitution' and 'Aims.' The object is simple and straightforward enough and appeals to all that is best in the Irish heart." [126] In October of 1909, a similar argument was made in support of Sinn Fein when the author stated that "Sinn Fein has always been the champion of the rights of Irishwomen." [127] Ward argues the *Bean* did not show allegiance to any one political party, but it is clear that Sinn Fein is portrayed favorably by the newspaper. Sinn Fein was fortunate enough to have the support of *Bean* writers, which led to endorsements of their policies, procedures, and actions.

When *Bean* was created, *Inghinidhe* members wanted to use the paper to help Irish women recognize their duty and devote themselves to the task of unifying and freeing the nation from the British Empire. They aspired to promote an active nationalism, meaning direct involvement in the struggle with groups such as Sinn Féin. *Bean* hoped that once women made their presence felt in the nationalist struggle, they would be freer to join in equally in other areas of society and not be restricted to the domestic sphere. However, its emphasis was always on the nationalist cause, sometimes to the detriment of the feminism that its editors often expressed in other forums. The newspaper should not be classified as feminist because in its early days, *Bean* articles often reinforced, rather than reduced, the limitations of women in Ireland.

Bean had a large number of critics. There were the obvious critics such as males who disapproved of women making feminist issues a priority at the wrong time; which they believed distracted from the greater Irish Independence agenda. Then, there were the strict feminist groups, like the Irish Women's Franchise League, who criticized the paper for shying away from the issue of women's suffrage; stating that to put the issue aside for the nationalist cause would be detrimental to the status of women in Ireland. An unsurprising critic was the Irish Catholic church, who condemned the paper for promoting social changes not supported by the church. [128] Archbishop McCabe of Dublin asserted that the ideas spread by *Inghinidhe* through its paper *Bean* allowed women to "forget the modesty of their sex and the dignity of womanhood" [129] The Catholic church, like many others who opposed the paper, was blind to its message which was clearly un-revolutionary in its early days. Aside from the fact that it was written and produced by women, much of the overall message of the paper kept women within their realm of domesticity, or at least did not promote the type of feminism that would encourage women to demand change for their sex. Issues of gardening, shopping and cooking take priority in during the early days of the paper.

Margaret Ward asserts that *Bean* focused on a variety of issues and "quickly established itself as being in full sympathy with socialist ideas" [130] Ward cites the recurring "Labour" column as proof of this assertion, however that column doesn't appear until after the fifteenth issue in January of 1910. *Bean* did not immediately establish itself with socialist ideas, and instead took over a year to do so. Ward explains how the editor of the paper was also the writer of the labour column, which provides a deep insight to her editorials. However there are few traces of socialist ideas in Moloney's writing since she does not appear to let her socialist sympathies sneak into her editorials which focus almost exclusively on young Irish women. At times, Moloney's editorials were the sole source of radical thought in the paper which was often covered in advertisements and household tips, but the socialist sentiment is not present.

The "Labour" column only made four appearances in *Bean's* run of twenty-five issues. This makes the socialist presence minor, at best. The column was first presented in issue number fifteen in January of 1910. Moloney did not speak of the content of the column in her editorial from that same issue, but did introduce it:

During the coming year we have arranged to give *Bean na h-Éireann* a domestic tinge...a special feature will be trade and labour news which will be contributed by a member of the Dublin Trades Council, and will discuss labour questions as they affect women. [131]

The column gave updates on when and where meetings were held but did not advance any socialist ideas or complaints until the last paragraph. There was also no mention of the issues as they pertain to women,

Brittany Columbus

which was something promised by Moloney in her editorial introducing the column. Instead, a common topic was the gap between the rich and poor:

Sir Horace Plunkett, speaking from the chair, said they often heard that there was one law for the poor and another for the rich. There was only one law but sometimes the rich had a great advantage over the poor... I would advise the trade's council to form sub-committees to study the working of the various legislative measures which have been.

Ward also credits *Bean* for covering such a large scope of issues. While *Bean* did cover several different topics, they continued with those same topics over the span of numerous months. Columns such as "Woman with a Garden," "How Irish Women Should Dress," "Sinn Fein and Irish Women" and "The Irish Hospital Nurse" continue for a minimum of five issues. Some, like "Woman with a Garden," lasted for the majority of the run of the publication and covered the same idea in each article. The ideas of each article rarely changed, and just continued on from the previous month. The editorials were similar, in that the same issue occupied Moloney for months. The topic of Indian patriot Madar Lal Dhingra was discussed for over a year in Moloney's editorials. This man was considered a martyr, who publicly committed suicide in protest of British control in India. Moloney found this story particularly inspiring and both discussed and eulogized Dhingra in numerous issues.

The most interesting portion of the paper was the correspondence section, which included letters in which IWFL and Sinn Fein advocates jostled with one another. One week Sinn Fein would be represented and the next week a member of the suffrage movement would respond. This type of dialogue would sometimes be the only source of nationalist or feminist content in the entire paper. And the correspondence columns ran for no longer than a one-page spread in a sixteen page issue.

Steele and Ward are not unfounded in their claims that the paper held radical content. The radical content however, was simply rare and appeared too late in the newspaper's lifespan. Also, the radical or stronger content paled in comparison to the bulk of the more mundane articles which were regularly featured. *Bean* began its last year with a new attitude. They would no longer shy away from the sort of content the founders and editor had originally intended on providing in 1908. In her January of 1910 editorial, Moloney stated that "another year has dawned for Ireland...we can only hope that the country generally will take a firmer and more determined step towards freedom than she has done yet."^[132] In terms of journalistic effort, *Bean* certainly did so. Throughout 1910, the writing in *Bean* evolved into something much more radical and took on a tone of urgency. Finally, writers offered advice to women on how they should more actively participate in the struggle against Ireland.

Oddly enough, this is one of the more tame forms of radical thought. In 1910, the writers of the paper began to strengthen their anti-British rhetoric as well as to increase their calls for militancy. In a special contribution to *Bean*, Arthur Griffith wrote that "the anti-enlisting movement is not a movement of sentiment, jealousy, or hatred. It is a movement of practical and sensible politics. A strong country oppresses a weak country. It is the business of the weak country to sap the strength of the strong country. Self-preservation is the first law of nations."^[133] One month later, Griffith wrote that "only a great love of country, a high sense of duty, and a great feeling of national responsibility will make a man choose starvation and the workhouse to enlisting."^[134] Griffith urges his countrymen and women to not only ignore, but obstruct the enlisting practices of the British Empire. A randomly placed disclaimer labeled

18 Voces Novae, Vol 1, No 1 (2009)

"Warning!" continues Griffith's message by reminding readers that "any Irishmen who joins the English Army or Navy or the R.I.C. enlists in the service of the enemies of Ireland. He is a traitor to his own people."^[135] These statements fit in naturally in a nationalist paper, but oddly enough, had never been present in the first two years of the paper.

Bean took on a more violent tone in the last year of publication. Though it was in small amounts, it was finally in the paper and that is worth noting. In "the Art of Street Fighting," an unnamed author declares that "there are no military tactics so interesting as the spontaneous tactics of a mob. Street fighting is an art."^[136] A recurrent column in 1910, titled "Physical Force," promoted militant tactics against the British and discussed the importance of such tactics,

You might try to imagine the world without one of the elements, airless, or waterless, as a nation or a section of a nation without physical force, and, as a man shut off from any one of the great forces of nature must die, so a nation or a movement if it loses the physical force element must cease to exist.^[137]

The harsh reality of Ireland's struggle was finally presented in the paper. No longer would buying Irish be the best solution to British control of Ireland. In September of 1910, the author declared that "physical force is here. Ireland is ruled by it, held by the throat strangled under its rough and relentless hands."^[138] What is most impressive about the "Physical Force" column is that the writer did not just present the problem but also presented advice for the readers. When *Bean* was first created, the founders of the paper sought to advise the average woman on how to play a more active role in Ireland's struggle. After two years of publication, they finally began to accomplish their goals from 1908: "Let them not delay to quarrel and argue with each other by the way, but let those who can start at once to collect, organize, and apply the forces of their country."^[139] One month later, the column featured a similar message: "Learn to discipline and be disciplined, learn to shoot, learn to march, learn to scout, learn to give up all for Ireland."^[140] It is disappointing that such strong content only appeared in the last issues of the paper. *Bean* took two years to build up the courage to print what it had promised.

A constant source of strongly nationalist and feminist content was, of course, Markievicz. From her very first contribution to *Bean*, Markievicz was always a reliable source for thought-provoking and inspiring material. Markievicz used her rhetoric to stir nationalist sentiment among the young women of Ireland. In "Love of Country," Markievicz wrote, "Ireland, though but a small country, a country oppressed and enslaved, has had more love lavished on her than many a larger and more prosperous nation."^[141] She pushes the patriotic buttons of her fellow Irish to motivate them to act on behalf of their country: "To the young Irish of today they say, do your duty to Ireland, bring her your lives, bring her all that is best in you. Make the sacrifice now when you are young and while you have much to give."^[142] Markievicz spoke and wrote constantly about duty to Ireland. She believed the call to duty would move every Irish person to act against the British Empire, regardless of their sex or economic status. In "the Police and the Nation," Markievicz wrote, "in every town and parish in Ireland in which there is some national spirit left, the act of fighting the police should be assiduously cultivated and perfected."^[143] While Markievicz was a regular source of nationalist sentiment, her militant messages were less common until the very late years of the paper's publication. In September of 1910, one issue before the paper ceased publication, Markievicz declared that: "We want nothing less than a campaign of exterminating the police. I don't mean that we should begin a

Brittany Columbus

wholesale massacre of them, say tomorrow. But we should lose no time in creating such a public opinion in Ireland that the man who joins the police may be branded a traitor for all time."[\[144\]](#)

Clearly, *Bean* was capable of publishing revolutionary nationalist and feminist content. They did not do so however, until the final months of the paper, and only did so sporadically. When the writers of *Bean* did publish their radical thoughts they were powerful, clear, and aggressive. Markievicz and Griffith naturally contributed their type of content, as they were expected to be some of the more intense nationalists, but a significant portion of the exciting content of the paper came from the normal writers- the average women. The paper ceased publication in October of 1911 but that cannot be blamed on the more radical content present in the latter months, since it was still quite infrequent. Since *Bean* was obviously capable of producing such strongly feminist-nationalist content, it makes the rest of the paper even more unexplainable and difficult to understand.

When *Bean* ceased publication in 1911, the writers of the newspaper did not disappear from the Irish struggle for independence. In fact, they joined what would become a militant group that supported the violent Irish Republican Army and furthered the involvement of women in the revolution. This however, was more out of necessity than choice. When *Bean* ended its run, its writers knew that the ideas of the paper were out of date. If the writers wanted to continue their involvement in the struggle for Ireland, they would have to evolve. In the manifesto of the Irish Volunteers, *Inghinidhe*, who's ideas were at the core of *Bean*, was very obviously left out of the plans for the future of the movement, as there was no mention of the group. Ward states that *Bean* had been "written out of history."[\[145\]](#)

Not long after *Bean* ceased publication, *Cumann na mBan*[\[146\]](#), a militant female counter-part to the Irish Republican Army was created. Many of the founding members of the women's group had roots in the newspaper, such as Constance Markievicz. It would be interesting to see which writers of *Bean* moved from the newspaper to the aggressive *Cumann na mBan* as well as how the ideas they expressed in the intensified during their involvement in the violent aspects of the Irish struggle for independence.

The next line of research could go in two important directions. First, *Cumann na mBan*, a group which formed immediately after the *Bean* ceased publication, wrote their own newspaper which they deemed to hold feminist rhetoric. The group was called *Cumann na mBan*, meaning Irish Women's Council and unlike the target audience of *Bean*, *Cumann* sought women who had the time to devote to the organization-those who did not need to work. At first, the idea of participating directly in the defense of Ireland was completely dismissed by founding members such as Agnes O'Farrelly. The founders sought to take on a more background and supportive role of the Irish Volunteers.[\[147\]](#) In their constitution, the founding members declared their aims:

1. To Advance the cause of Irish liberty.
2. To organize Irishwomen in furtherance of this object.
3. To assist in the arming and equipping a body of Irishmen for the defense of Ireland.
4. To form a fund for these purposes to be called the "Defense of Ireland Fund" [\[148\]](#)

Since the group attracted many *Bean* writers and followers, it would be interesting to look at the *Cumann na mBan* newspaper and conduct a comparative study to examine what the two had in common as well as how they differed. It would be interesting to see which writers contributed to both papers and what they wrote in each. There would also need to be some study into the evolution of the Irish Revolution as a whole to examine whether the environment of revolution influenced *Cumann na mBan* writers into demanding change, if they did at all.

Cumann na mBan had similar beginnings to *Bean* in terms of their relationship to men during the Irish struggle. The women of *Cumann na mBan* did not really begin to push for their rights until the Easter Rising in 1916 when Markievicz took over leadership of the group.

Markievicz harshly criticized the Volunteers and *Cumann na mBan* in their earlier years:

Today the women attached to national movements are there chiefly to collect funds for the men to spend. These Ladies' Auxiliaries demoralize women, set them up in separate camps, and deprive them of all initiative and independence...take up your responsibilities and be prepared to go your own way depending for safety on your own courage, your own truth, and your own common sense. [149]

It would be interesting to see how the group started as a support for the men of Ireland and then evolved into what they are remembered for: gun carrying women in mini-skirts. *Cumann na mBan* members eventually learned how to use their femininity to contribute to their nation's cause in a violent way. It would be interesting to examine their newspaper and trace the progression and evolution into violence that *Bean* never reached.

Another interesting topic of research would examine the larger scope of the women's movement in Ireland to see what, if any, impact *Bean* had on the liberation movement as a whole. There was a resurgence of women's rights groups in the latter 20th century, and like the Second Wave of Feminism in the U.S., Ireland had a new wave of liberation. It would be interesting to trace the *Bean* writers and see what they did after their days of writing to see if they continued to play a role in the struggle for independence as well as for women. It would also be worth while to study the impact of this seemingly weak paper to see if something about it struck a chord with Irish women, even though its feminism seems diluted and ineffective.

Bean was revolutionary in the very nature of what it was: a publication produced completely for and by women. The paper, however, was more nationalist than feminist and completely avoided commentary in favor of the women's movement, doing more to hinder the women's agenda by conforming to the preexisting ideas of women's issues such as clothing, consumerism, household duties and childcare. The stronger feminist ideas such those promoted by Sheehy-Skeffington were not widely embraced. *Bean* writers may have toned down the feminist rhetoric to appeal to what was still a largely conservative population. The Irish independence movement itself did not seek changes in the social structure of the country and the fight for a change in the role of women was a completely separate issue. There is no question that *Bean* was interesting and well organized. It was a newspaper published for and by women and it sustained itself for over two years completely under the supervision of women. That alone is no small feat.

[1] The years prior to WWI galvanized the nationalist movement in Ireland. These years provided a distraction for England, so much so that Ireland became a less pressing issue for the Empire. England lost some ability to govern effectively in Ireland which helped the Irish to imagine new possibilities of independence. The defense of the honor of Irish women was used as a motivational and propaganda tool for the nationalists. Nationalists spread stories about English men raping Irish women and called for men to regain their manliness and defend their women. They also spread their message with urgency by convincing Irish men that if they did not act before the beginning of the war, they'd be called to conscription by England which would lead to deaths and mass rapes which are "inevitable during wartime."

Sarah Benton. *Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland, 1913-1923. The Feminist Review: The Irish Issue* (1995): 148-172. <http://jstor.org/stable/1395497>.

[2] Karen Steele. *Women, Press, and Politics during the Irish Revival*. (New York: Syracuse University Press 2007), 11.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Margaret Ward. *Unimaginable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*. (Dublin, Ireland: Pluto Press, 1989), 69.

[5] Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 73 .

[6] Ibid. 74.

[7] Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 74

[8] Ibid.

[9] Sydney Gifford Czira. *The Years Flew By*. 49

[10] Sydney Gifford Czira. *The Years Flew By*. 52

[11] Ibid. 52

[12] Czira, 51.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Alan Hayes, ed., *The Years Flew By: Recollections of Madam Sidney Gifford Czaira*, (1974; Reprint, Galway: Arlen House, 2000), 43.

[15] Ibid. 43.

[16] The goal of Irish theater was to spread an idealized Irish identity to the masses. The short plays centered around nationalist men and women. The Celtic Literary Revival served as a new era for nationalist ideology that stressed the importance of Irish Life; the literary intellectuals created the ideas but the theater troupes spread them to the public. *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann*, in conjunction with groups like the Gaelic League leads the way in defining the concept of "Irishness". *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann* was especially important in defining the roles of women in the nationalist struggle and used theater to spread their new ideas.

[17] Karen Steele. *Women, Press, and Politics during the Irish Revival*. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 11.

[18] Constance Markievicz first became involved in the Irish struggle in 1908 when she joined *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann*. Although she came from a wealthy Anglo-Irish family and was born in London, Markievicz became particularly interested in her Irish heritage while traveling in the country where she was exposed to poor Irish girls her age. Markievicz was known for her beauty in both England and Ireland, and was even praised by Queen Victoria for being "the" Irish beauty. Constance was the second wife of the Polish-born Count Markievicz and used her wealth to help those in need. She was an advocate for Irish women and fought for their cause by writing for various papers such as *Bean* and *United Irishmen* as well as traveling around giving speeches. Markievicz went beyond words after 1916 when she took a leading role in *Cumann na mBan*, a militant female counterpart to the I.R.A. <http://www.thewildgeese.com/pages/ireland.html>

[19] Constance de Markievicz. "Editorial Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* July 1909, 8.

[20] This lecture titled "Women, Ideals and the Nation" debuted to the Student's National Literary Society. Markievicz spoke to an almost exclusively female audience where she urged them to pick up arms and join the armed struggle of Ireland. Markievicz was met with opposition by notable Irish nationalist such as Arthur Griffith, who aimed to create a less hostile environment.

[21] "Useful Hints" *Bean na h-Éireann* February 1909, 2.

[22] "The Woman of the House" *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909, 7.

[23] "Cookery Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann*. February 1909, 4.

[24] Helena Moloney first joined *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann* in 1903 after hearing Maude Gonne speak about Irish feminism. Five years later, Moloney became the *Bean* editor and concentrated all her efforts on creating a new Irish woman. Moloney was originally an actress who used her talent to spread the tales of Irish heritage in an effort to

Brittany Columbus

solidify the nationalist sentiment in Ireland. In 1911, she was jailed after partaking in protest of a royal visit. After her days working for *Bean* ended, Moloney joined the Citizen's Army where she was arrested for the second time in 1916.

[25] "Editorial Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann*. February 1909, 1.

[26] "The Art of Brush Making" *Bean na h-Éireann*. February 1909, 5.

[27] "Fashion Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann*. April 1909, 12.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] "Fashion Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* May 1909, 12.

[30] "Fashion Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* July 1909, 13 .

[31] "Fashion Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909 13.

[32] "Fashion Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909 13.

[33] *Bean na h-Éireann* "Household Living" January 1909.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] "Hints on Furnishing" *Bean na h-Éireann* (February 1909) 4.

[36] "The Taxi-Cab." *Bean na h-Éireann* (July 1910) 15.

[37] "The Woman of the House." *Bean na h-Éireann* (December 1908) 2.

[38] "Flower Culture in Ireland." *Bean na h-Éireann* (September 1910) 13.

[39] *Ibid.* 14.

[40] "Christmas Thoughts on Feminism." *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1909, 9.

[41] *Ibid.* 9.

[42] "Crowds" *Bean na h-Éireann* (November 1910), 11.

[43] "Beauty Hints" *Bean na h-Éireann*. (April 1910), 14.

[44] "For that Tired Look." *Bean na h-Éireann* (April 1910) 13.

24 Voces Novae, Vol 1, No 1 (2009)

- [45] "Rain" *Bean na h-Éireann* (June 1910), 12.
- [46] "A Matter of Taste" *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909, 10.
- [47] Ibid.
- [48] Sydney Gifford Czira. *The Years Flew By*, 53.
- [49] Ibid.
- [50] Ibid.
- [51] "The Children Must be Fed." *Bean na h-Éireann* (June 1910) 6-7.
- [52] Ibid. 7.
- [53] *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909, 13.
- [54] Ibid.
- [55] Ibid, 16.
- [56] *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1909, 11.
- [57] *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1909, 12.
- [58] *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1910, 16.
- [59] *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1909, 2.
- [60] "To Our Sisters" *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1909, 1.
- [61] "A Note on Calendars," *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909, 5.
- [62] Anonymous. "Physical Force" *Bean na h-Éireann* September 1909.
- [63] Margaret Ward. *Unimaginable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*, 2.
- [64] *Bean na h-Éireann* "Christmas Gifts and Where to Buy Them." December 1908, 6
- [65] Ibid.

Brittany Columbus

[66] Ibid, 7

[67] *Bean na h-Éireann* "The Nursing Profession" December 1908

[68] David Stifter. *Sengoidelc*. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 13.

[69] maintáin ba bhreágh an aimrir a bhí ann ó n-aoline an chéarda nó go luain cárga agus bhíor amuigh ar riubhal ra ngortaibh nó ra ngortaibh nóra gcoilltibg ar feadh an lae bea gnach nach maith an rud é an traoirre agus ndiaidh na h-oibre.

"Columcille agus an Dune Bocht" *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1909, 7.

[70] Bhí baile talaimh ag columcille. Tháinig earrach an-tirm, ir bhí mórán fear aige ag cur uirge ar an arbhar a bhí d'a churaige, ar eagla go dtriomóchadh ré barraidgeacht. Bhi an cailin an-gnnai theach ag déanamh aráin le n-a mbricfearta thabairt do na fearaibh. tháinig duine bocht irteach agus d'iarr ré déirce.

Ibid.

[71] *Shan Van Vocht*, meaning "poor old woman," was a monthly newspaper written in Belfast from January 1896 to April 1899. *Shan Van Vocht* focused on nationalist ideas as well as cultural and economic self reliance. The paper was written and edited by two women from Belfast, but served as a platform for early Irish socialist movement leaders. Although the paper is criticized for being too indirect and generic, Steele asserts that the paper was, at the time, the most powerful showcase of the flourishing cultural revival in Ireland.

[72] Karen Steele. *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival*. (New York, 2007), Pp. 74

[73] Ibid. Pp. 75

[74] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1910, 7

[75] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* February 1909, 3

[76] Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 117.

[77] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909, 10.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Steele, 117.

[80] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1909, 11.

[81] Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 117.

[82] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909, 10.

[83] *Ibid.* Pp. 116, 119.

[84] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* May 1909, 9.

[85] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* June 1909, 12.

[86] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* May 1909, 9.

[87] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909, 6-7.

[88] Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival*, 117.

[89] *Ibid.*

[90] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* October 1909, 12.

[91] Steele, 119.

[92] "Woman with a Garden" *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1910, 14.

[93] Steele, 125

[94] *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909 Pp. 13

[95] *Ibid.* Pp. 13

[96] Karen Steele. *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival*. (New York, 2007), Pp. 110.

[97] *Shan Van Vocht*, meaning "poor old woman," was a monthly newspaper written in Belfast from January 1896 to April 1899. *Shan Van Vocht* focused on nationalist ideas as well as cultural and economic self reliance. The paper was written and edited by two women from Belfast, but served as a platform for early Irish socialist movement leaders. Although the paper is criticized for being too indirect and generic, Steele asserts that the paper was, at the time, the most powerful showcase of the flourishing cultural revival in Ireland.

[98] "To Our Critics" *Bean na h-Éireann* December 1908, 1.

[99] Irish women used the French suffrage movement as a guide on how to further their own causes. French women during 1909 were involved in the business of their husbands and understood their financial and business affairs. The

Brittany Columbus

women of *Bean na h-Éireann* believed that they should model themselves after French women and try to show that they were equal in their capabilities to the men. *Bean na h-Éireann* members differed from the Irish Women's Franchise league in their disapproval of the actions of the English suffragettes, whose actions widened the divide between men and women.

[100] "To Our Sisters" *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1909, 1.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] "Editorial Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* February 1909.

[105] Ibid.

[106] "To Our Critics" *Bean na h-Éireann* December 1908, 1.

[107] Ibid.

[108] "To Our Sisters" *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1909, 1.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Margaret Ward. Unimaginable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism. 67.

[111] Ibid, 45.

[112] Margaret Ward. *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Dublin, Ireland Attic Press, 1980), 26

[113] Ibid, 69.

[114] Ibid. 71.

[115] The Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL) was founded in 1908 by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffinton and Margaret Cousins to bring a militant feminist presence to Ireland. The IWFL marched in protests, heckled politicians and resorted to violent acts such as stone throwing and shattering windows around Ireland to rally attention for their cause. This group was publicly critical of Sinn Fein and even other women's groups such as *Inghinidhe na h-Éireann*. They felt that putting women's franchise behind nationalist aims only further hindered the equality of Irish women.

[116] *Bean na h-Éireann* April 1909.

[117] *Bean na h-Éireann* July 1909, 8.

[118] *Bean na h-Éireann* August 1909, 13.

[119] "Sinn Fein and Irishwomen" *Bean na h-Éireann* January 1910, 12.

[120] "Sinn Fein and Irishwomen" *Bean na h-Éireann* December 1909, 13.

[121] "Sinn Fein and Irishwomen" *Bean na h-Éireann* December 1909, 13.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] "Sinn Fein and Irish Women" *Bean na h-Éireann* (November 1909) 5-6.

[125] "Ought Irishwomen Have Political Equality with Men?" *Bean na h-Éireann* (January 1910) 10.

[126] "Could Sinn Fein Unite Ireland" *Bean na h-Éireann* (August 1909) 12.

[127] "The Irish Hospital Nurse" *Bean na h-Éireann* (October 1909), 7.

[128] The Catholic Church at this time opposed a variety of nationalist groups, not necessarily for their message; but for their lack of propriety in the eyes of the church. During the nationalist meetings and gatherings various groups such as Inghinidhe na h-Éireann, The Gaelic Athletic Association, Cumann na mBan, the Gaelic League and even The Ladies' Land League who sought to house those who could not afford their rent; allowed men and women to meet as equals in the same halls which was unacceptable to the clergy. The Catholic Church reacted against such innovations by forcing Catholics to withdraw their membership from such groups. This anti-women's movement sentiment was one of the only factors that unified the Catholic and Protestant churches, 3.

[129] Margaret Ward. Unimaginable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism, 23.

[130] Ibid, 69.

[131] "Editorial Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* (January 1910), 8.

[132] "Editorial Notes" *Bean na h-Éireann* (January 1910), 8.

[133] "The Anti-Enlisting Movement." *Bean na h-Éireann* (July 1910), 5.

Brittany Columbus

[134] "The Ethics of Anti-Enlisting." *Bean na h-Éireann* (August 1910), 5.

[135] "Warning!" *Bean na h-Éireann* (July 1910), 14.

[136] "the Art of Street Fighting." *Bean na h-Éireann* (May 1910), 6.

[137] "Physical Force." *Bean na h-Éireann* (September 1909), 3.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid, 4.

[140] Physical Force." *Bean na h-Éireann* (October 1909), 4.

[141] "Love of Country." *Bean na h-Éireann* (June 1910), 8.

[142] Ibid, 9.

[143] "The Police and the Nation." *Bean na h-Éireann* (September 1910), 5.

[144] Ibid, 6.

[145] Margaret Ward. *Unimaginable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*, 92.

[146] *Cumann na mBan* was a nationalist group comprised exclusively of young women. The group, which was formed on 25 November 1913, made substantial contributions to the Irish Republican Army and the Irish Revolutionary movement as a whole. The group primarily aimed to overthrow the British establishment, and was subsequently outlawed in 1919. Despite this law, the group continued to actively fight British soldiers, often hiding their guns under their mini-skirts.

Cal McCarthy. *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, Ireland: Collins Press, 2007).

[147] The Irish Volunteers was formed in November of 1913, mostly because of the Irish Republican Brotherhood who set up the founding meeting. The IRB saw the Volunteers as an organization they could use to manipulate and control in their quest to develop an Irish Republic. They accepted women as a source of support but not as members.

[148] McCarthy, 17.

[149] McCarthy, 17.