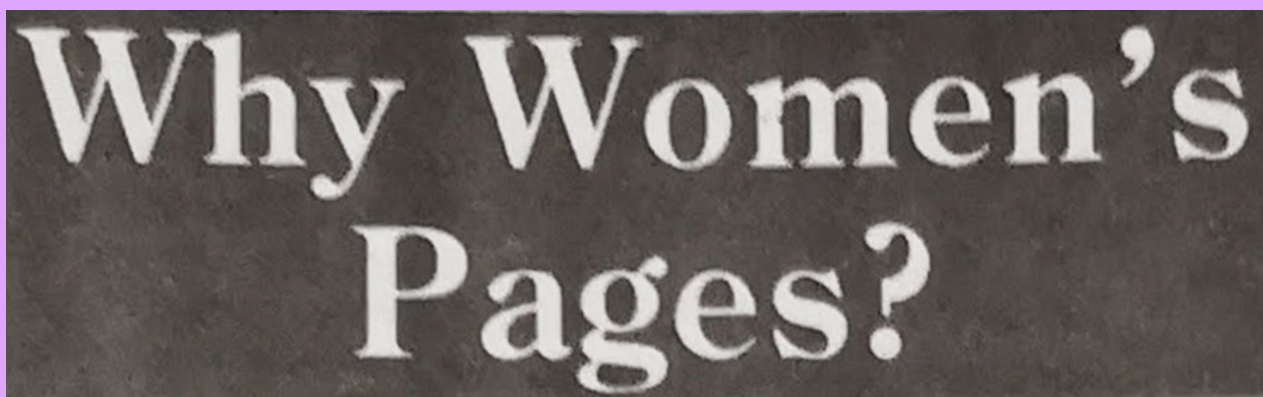


GCN Lesbian Pages, 1994



A poem titled *Bad Lesbian Sex* appeared in the centre of page 6 in issue 60 of GCN (March 1994). In the upper left corner of the same page, a bold black block asked the question, *Why Women's Pages?* Next to this read the heading, *Lesbian Lives in Ireland*. And so it was that the *Lesbian Pages* were born. The *Why Women's Pages?* article outlined GCN's decision to include a new two-page regular feature dedicated to women-only content. The article explained that the decision had been made, not in order to create division in its readership, but conversely to encourage new readership and contribution from women. As part of the new feature, GCN appointed Deborah Ballard as the dedicated editor of the pages (she would go on to become the magazine's chief editor from 1997–1999). In spite of these assurances, the new feature came under fire, as demonstrated by several letters to the editor in the April issue.

The pages came about following consultation between GCN, NLGF (National Lesbian and Gay Federation), and LOT (Lesbians Organising Together). As a result, one of the regular features was *LOT News*, which continued to appear monthly until 1997. Other content from these early days ranged from poetry, to an article series highlighting notable lesbians throughout history, to comics by Margaret Lonergan. As the pages became more established, they often featured full-page interviews with writers, musicians, and other celebrated Irish lesbians. Social and educational events were highlighted, such as the Cork Women's Fun Weekends, the annual Women's Camp, and the Lesbian Lives Conferences. The pages were also strongly committed to expanding the focus beyond Dublin and regularly highlighted activities by regional organisations.

In issue 90, November 1996, the pages rebranded to *Lesbian Lives*. They continued to focus on women-only content and often extended to three pages from two. As well as the pages, the number of women-related articles in the magazine's general content had increased in quantity and frequency. By 1999, this integration meant that the pages began to be phased out. There was little objection, with the original aim of increasing female readership and contribution achieved.

Bad Lesbian Sex

Shhhh
don't talk about it

don't talk about the time
on the first night
a lover tore your hand away from
her clit
turned her back on you

or the time she didn't want to
you rubbed up anyway
she said she felt raped

don't tell that sometimes sex is a
chore
an exchange of goods
a way to end a fight

don't mention
how often you found her dry
how often you faked coming
so sex would stop

don't for heaven's sake
count the times you fucked unsafely
didn't ask how many men she'd
fucked
and how recently
lapped menstrual blood
without a question
shared vag juices with yeast
infection
kissed with herpes on its way

don't say
how many of us are abused
by family, by strangers
how we carry this with us
like fingerprints

don't write a poem
about stopping your lover mid-
rhythm
it reminded you of being raped
years before

don't say how many of us need to
be drunk
to be sexual
need to shoot up before making a
move

don't tell a soul
about the time you saw
one dyke bend her chick backward
over the bar like a rag doll

don't tell
about your one night stand
who flew from the bed in the
morning
as if on fire
and though you saw her many
times after
you never mentioned 'it' again

don't let others know
that for three years with a lover
you never showed each other how
until sex hung between you like a
bad joke

don't remember
how many lesbian lovers
compare you to men:
you fuck like a man
only a man would do that
it was better with men

don't say
how many times you wanted to
come
and couldn't
how many times your hand went
numb
saliva dried up

don't say
how many dykes you avoid in public
because you've fucked
how many friendships ended with
sex

don't
don't
say

shhhh

From *Lesbians Ignited*, by
Carolyn Gammon
Gynergy Books

Bad Lesbian Sex by Carolyn Gammon. GCN, issue 60, March 1994
Courtesy of GCN magazine

Why Women's Pages?

Starting this issue, these two pages of *GCN* are being allocated to contributions by lesbians. This, together with the appointment of a lesbian editor, is part of *GCN*'s commitment to encouraging more women to contribute to the paper and arose from discussions between *GCN*, *LOT* and *NLGF* over the past months.

We want to encourage lesbian input into *GCN*, and not just these pages. *GCN* now has editors for the arts, health, features and news sections who will continue to publish articles and reviews by and of interest to women, and *Dykes' Forum* will continue in the general pages. Our intentions are not separatist- we think that what unites gay men and women is as important as the differences between us, and hope that gay men will read these pages and that more lesbians will start reading the paper.

We're committed to giving a voice to the Irish gay woman in her infinite variety, whether she calls herself a lesbian, a dyke, bisexual or queer, whether living in the north, the south or abroad. We want the pages to reflect a wide range of opinions, to be lively and contentious and fun. Please use them!

Submissions should be sent to the lesbian editor at *GCN*. Articles should normally be between 200 and 600 words and typed (double-spaced) with a note of the total number of words - please keep a copy as we can't return scripts. Contributors should be aware that articles may be cut or otherwise edited. Please let us have your address and phone number if possible, and tell us if you don't want your name to appear.

Why Women's Pages? *GCN*, issue 60, March 1994
Courtesy of *GCN* magazine