

Sex And Pleasure, Art And Politics, And Trying To Get Some Rest

An Interview with Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, Performance Artists

Susan Heald

INTRODUCTION

Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan are Winnipeg, Manitoba-based performance artists who have worked and toured extensively in Canada and internationally. Their best-known work is probably *We're Talking Vulva* [editors' note: a photo from which graces the cover of this issue], a performance piece later made into a video, in which Dempsey gives a funny and informative rap about female anatomy and sexuality, dressed in a vulva costume. Much of the work is costume-based, as in, for example, *Arborite Housedress*, which explores how women are trapped by and in domestic roles and right-wing values. Dempsey wears a "dress" made of arborite and looks for all the world like a house. Recently Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan have added to their "Dress Series" by creating a clear vinyl wedding gown for *Plastic Bride*. The performance focuses on the correlation between fashion and gender roles, and the absurd difficulties in "fitting." This piece, along with the other "dress" performances, has toured extensively in Canada, and was presented in Lisbon and O Porto, Portugal, in the fall of 1996.

New work in other media includes the videotape *A Day In The Life of A Bull-Dyke*, which was awarded second prize at the 1996 United States Super 8 Film and Video Festival in New Brunswick, New Jersey, second prize at the 1997 University of Oregon Gay/Lesbian Festival in Portland, and "Best Experimental" at Manitoba's 1997 Blizzard awards. It is a companion piece to their mock "LIFE" magazine, *In The LIFE*, self-published in an edition of 2000. *In The LIFE* was included in "Gender Fucked," a show curated

by Harmony Hammond and Catherine Lord for the Centre on Contemporary Art in Seattle. The *In The LIFE* project follows Sal (played by Lorri Millan), a butch butcher who "sure gets a lot done in a day!"

Dempsey and Millan's half-hour film, a twisted cliff-hanger mystery, *Good Citizen: Betty Baker* premiered in November 1996 at Image et Nation, Montreal's Gay/Lesbian Film and Video Festival. Since that time it has toured festivals in Canada and the US, and was part of the Dempsey and Millan retrospective at the Out on Screen Festival, Vancouver, 1997. The film features Dempsey as Betty, a busy body housewife who inhabits a 2-D world.

Other activity includes the creation of a bi-lingual performance (English/Japanese) which toured Japan as part of the five-venue "Distant Skinship" project (1995), and a two-month residency at The Headlands Arts Centre, California through a Canada/Mexico/US tri-national arts initiative (1996). They also spent the month of July 1997 in Banff National Park, patrolling and accessing the environment as rangers with the self-created Lesbian National Parks and Services.

At present Dempsey and Millan are continuing their efforts to have their tourism campaign, *Winnipeg! One Gay City!*, installed in their home town's bus shelter ad space. In the first four months of 1998, they completed two videos, *The Headless Woman* and *Homogeneity*, while in residence at Hallwalls Centre for Contemporary Art (Buffalo, New York) and The Western Front Media Centre (Vancouver). They also began work on a new performance which draws upon the tradition of *tableau vivant* to create a living page from the Eaton's Catalogue.

All of their considerable body of work can be said to fall within the broad heading "Sexualities and Feminisms," and in many ways they appear to be asking the same kinds of questions - though very differently - that feminist scholars are asking. Making art about feminist politics, about sex and pleasure and marginalization is, they say, a political project: "We wanna change the world." What follows is an edited transcript of our conversation in late October, 1997.

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Shawna Dempsey (SD)

I think that sexuality is a growth market right now; people are making a lot of money on sexual images and there's an even newer libertine attitude towards sexuality. Increasingly we find, in our work, that the lesbianism is much more embraceable by a general audience than the feminism, because lesbianism just *is* - or it can be anyway - and it's kind of cool, whereas feminism is a philosophy that demands change.

Lorri Millan (LM)

I think the key there is that, well, sex is fine; young people anyway seem to be quite cool about various sorts of sexual practice but they're not so hip when it comes to the *politics* of sexual practice. I think that's where it gets a little sticky: lesbianism is all right, it's fine, as long as it means you're just like everyone else. But the larger politic of feminism is more threatening, because it talks about everything from sex to wages.

Susan Heald (SH)

In my work, I'm trying to challenge the notion that lesbianism "just is." Many do come to class with the idea lesbianism is okay, they're just like everyone else, but if you start actually suggesting that we're *not* just like everybody else, and maybe there are multiple ways to be a lesbian, or maybe the rules we have about sexuality really aren't good enough...

SD

Or even the idea that there's a lesbian culture, and a politic born of that practice...

SH

It seems to me that some of your work does try to push those categories. Another way of looking at it is the question of whether lesbianism is an identity that we can hang onto and solidify into, or whether there's much more fluidity and play, or the whole notion of performance...

LM

Yeah, performing lesbianism.

SH

Subject/Object of Desire for example seems to me to challenge those categories inasmuch as it's not always clear for whom or what the character wants to be the subject/object of desire. On the other hand, *Good Citizen: Betty Baker* for instance, says that lesbianism is and it's fine and you can play with it, but maybe doesn't challenge...

SD

I think in *Betty Baker*, lesbianism is a choice, an option, for Betty Baker, and in a lot of our work we talk about choice. To approach something from a position of choice is part of our politic, to say that we have free will about this, that we can create our own destinies, that we can create better lives for ourselves.

LM

And that we can choose to be lesbian. And therefore choose other identities also, or beyond that.

SH

What about *A Day In The Life of A Bull-Dyke*?...I mean, I like both of these works! [laughter] Does *A Day In The Life* say "Lesbianism IS?" My line in my class is always that we should get beyond "we should be nice to gay people," that we want to challenge heterosexuality not just say "you're okay too."

SD

Not all of our work says the same thing, and hopefully all of our work says more than one thing. *A Day In The Life of A Bull-Dyke* in many ways deals with the complexity of our day-to-day existences and our history as gay people - because

there's a very strong historical thread there - and both the love and the pain, the joy and the pain. It's not as simple as saying "It's great to be gay."

LM

I think maybe what we do - it's about strategies. I think that we come up with ideas and then we strategize about the best way to talk about them. In *Bull Dyke* we talked with her voice. It's unusual relative to our other work in the sense that we create a very strong character. Sal is a characterization that's very real, or what we have come to think of as real in terms of movies and television...

SD

And that goes with the sort of "faux documentary" form.

LM

It's also a bit B-movie - that feeling to it, too. By using that first person narration...We wanted to draw people in. We were definitely trying to create an anti-hero in that B-movie sense, and thereby create a great lesbian hero. That was a strategy on our part for that particular project. Whereas the other ones you listed, I think we had different strategies, so we picked different genres to exploit as part of that strategy. So I think you're right in a sense that in *Bull-Dyke* there is that feeling that "we are, and that's great," and you can read it in that way and accept it at that level, but it was a strategy for making this unacceptable monstrous character acceptable. That was our primary strategy; what we were thinking about in that piece was monstrous women. We thought of historical monsters, and then we thought, "Well, what's a contemporary monstrous female?" And one of the most monstrous we could imagine - except for Maggie Thatcher -

SD

Was Lorri Millan! [laughter]

LM

Was me, you know, a bull-dyke, a big, out-on-the-street mannish woman. So those were the issues that we first started with. But I think that's what you're detecting, our different

approaches to lesbianism in our work, different presentations.

SH

And reasonable enough, you don't want them all to be the same.

SD

Different formats and different media for different audiences. For example, *What Does a Lesbian Look Like?* was specifically created for teenagers, to talk about stereotypes. And it had to fit a very specific format, one minute on television.

LM

And we knew they could edit it!

SH

So in that case, there was a specific task handed to you. Is most of your work an assignment like that?

SD

Most of it is self-directed. We always begin with a visual image. In the case of the *Bull-Dyke* it was old *Life* magazines from 50s and 60s: photo-journalism. In the case of *Good Citizen Betty Baker* it was 60s after-school television and serialized murder mysteries. So we always start with a visual concept and we put it together with something that's been bothering us, a puzzle or problem.

LM

Something that we're pissed about.

SH

So is that where your inspiration comes from, things you're "pissed about"?

LM

For the most part, yes, though I would say the first inspiration is usually visual. We have these costume ideas or filmic ideas - we really do have more of a visual arts process in that respect. We often have to live with those visual ideas first. For example we might construct a costume and live with it for a year before writing any text. We decipher it like you would an object in a dream: What does it do, what can it do, what can we make it do that would be

more interesting than the obvious, etc. Or sometimes it's such an unusual object, like the *Arborite Housedress* for instance, that it seems to have some sort of meaning...

SD
Innately.

LM
Innately, in the materials and the construction and the actual object or the shape of the object. And then it's usually a little ways down the road that we actually put words to it, create text for a performance or a script for a video. Sometimes Shawna has little bits of text floating around with no place to live, but usually it's fresh material and almost inevitably it comes from this conversation that Shawna and I have been having now for nine years. (We're in our ninth year of working together.) And those are political concerns for us, and things we're considering for ourselves. Sure, sometimes you get more interested in telling stories. I think our formal interests vary, I guess is what I'm trying to say, but the mainstay is the politics.

SD
Well, narrative isn't neutral. Narrative is always imparting a code or an ethic or a *moré*, and we do in our work as well.

SH
So are you reading feminist texts?

SD
Almost never. [laughter]

LM
Just out there doing it, you know. Well, sometimes we do, bits and pieces, but I wouldn't say we rush out and buy all the newest publications or anything.¹

SD
We don't have a lot of time to read. It's great doing what we do because we meet a lot of people and inevitably someone will say, "Oh, you must read this," and so we do. Or we'll hear a great speaker speak.

LM
I think we're more influenced by other artists and writers of fiction.

SD
I think the greatest inspiration is friendship, and conversations with people and people's experiences.

LM
In other words, we steal from people mercilessly. [laughter]

SH
And I bet they're glad you do. So, I guess one of the advantages then of travelling around or doing resident stints is that you do get to talk to people and find out their thoughts not only about your work but about other things.

SD
So many people. Everyone from students to teachers to other artists, to people in the audience.

LM
We're plugged into this community from coast to coast that's really quite fascinating.

SD
We also have quite a few friends who began as audience members. It's always an interesting thing to me - people come to see our work and then a friendship develops through that very particular relationship.

LM
There's some very smart, inspiring people out there, just sitting in our audiences, and then they come to chat with us afterwards. It's great.

SH
So, over these nine years, have your politics changed?

SD
Oh, I think they're changing every day. But that's as it should be, it's a living thing.

LM

Definitely it's changed. Probably not in an extraordinary way, just reflecting the changes in the last ten years in the lesbian world and the feminist world.

SD

I think sometimes we're braver in our work than we are in our lives. We've worked out ideas in our work that we're not yet ready to live.

SH

Some might say that's the purpose of culture.

LM

Some might say.

SD

Yes, to lead us...

LM

...to what's coming.

SH

One of the things I struggled with in the Feminist Cultural Studies class, that you came to, was trying to move them away from a kind of "positive images of women" perspective...

SD

Photos without heads: bad. Working women: good...

SH

Soft and gentle: good. Naked: bad. People aren't exposed to different kinds of reading strategies. It seems it must be limiting for artists, especially artists who want to be accessible without reproducing that kind of very narrow view of what acceptable images are. Do you struggle with that at all?

LM

We avoid putting it in those terms for ourselves.

SD

We're each other's first audience, so when we're developing a piece, we're doing it for each other. And if it makes sense to each other, then we put it

on its feet and then see how it goes with different people. I think, like all artists do, we pretty much do it for ourselves first off.

LM

I think the only way to challenge is just to go out there and put ourselves on the line. Because we work together - and that's unusual, most artists work primarily alone - we can call each other on stuff. When it seems to go too far, or when something feels uncomfortable for either of us, then we try to figure out why that might be. But I think we do want to push popular representations of, say, lesbians, or of women. So we do want to present sexual images, we do want to talk about different kinds of lesbian lifestyle, for instance. So, in a sense it's part of our lives, that challenge: how do we talk and be understood? How do we say what we want to say without having people say, "Oh that's boring" or "That's too radical"? Where's the middle ground? And yet, those exact words don't come up between us; we have to find a way to create that's more interesting. Otherwise it would just become a mathematic.

SD

Instead, when we're talking to each other, we say, "That works", or "That doesn't work", or "I like it." It's a different vocabulary.

SH

So when you talk about the politics being front and centre, there's a way in which the art is...

LM

Also front and centre. Absolutely. It might be fair to say that the art is a little more front and centre, because we're not politicians, we're artists. Otherwise we would do something else. My passion has always been to be an artist. My burgeoning feminism was there as a child but I didn't articulate it until much later. But I always knew I wanted to be an artist as a child. So I guess what I'm saying is that being an artist is a way of perceiving the world; I think visually, for example, and metaphorically. It's fairly innate in that respect.

SD

It's our way of giving information. And that's very different from a politician's way or an academic's way or an organizer's way.

SH

Is it fair to say that traditionally - if you can talk about a tradition of performance art - there is a kind of, what tends to be more obscure or challenging...

SD

There's a huge spectrum of performance activity. People have been creating performance work outside of theatrical models since the turn of the century, and performance art for the past 40 years. Within that there's a huge range. Some of it is much more didactic than our work; some is much more metaphorical or veiled than our work.

SH

Amongst the people who are doing sexualities with a feminist politics...How would you lay out that spectrum?

SD

In the States there's people like Holly Hughes who's doing a very traditional form of one-woman show, stand-up, very much on the theatrical end of the spectrum. Then there are people like Suzanne Lacey and other American artists, who were well-known for their very agit-prop work in the seventies, which was very political-action based, street-work, very clear and therefore simple, in the sense of a plot. That would be on the agit-prop/propaganda/didacticism end of the spectrum. It's not like the spectrum is a line, it's a web of activity.

LM

And in Canada there's people like Judy Radul who's a performance poet - I'm not sure what she calls herself these days - who does real world performances as well as more theatrical, poetic kind of pieces. There's Lori Weidenhammer, who lived here for a while, who is doing very broad comedy - sort of the Lucille Ball of feminist performance. There are people who are doing things involving music such as Meryn Cadell who began as a performance artist. There's really quite a range.

There just seems to be a huge number of women doing performance, but there's also people doing stuff on video that is performative.

SD

There's kind of main genres. There's the autobiographical, first person narrative; there's the ritual work: many women have created and enacted their own rituals, or used rituals in performance; there's satire and comedy, which we kind of fit into; there's agit-prop work...And all of them could be used to talk about sexuality.

SH

And all of them *are* being used to talk about sexuality.

LM

Yeah, I can't think of a lot of people who aren't. Most women out there are, some way or another, talking about sexuality. Lesbians definitely are: we just came from a lesbian and gay film festival, and there's no shortage of films and videos about sexuality. It's very much a common interest for women right now.

SD

And for this brief moment, the world is listening. That's another thing about all art, there's fashions. And lesbians and sexuality are in fashion right now.

LM

But who's listening? It's not like the mainstream is listening to us talk about sexuality, they're listening to...

SD

They're listening to Ellen.

LM

They're listening to Ellen, but she's not talking about sex. Are we talking about sexuality or sex? That's the problem.

SH

Can you say more about that?

LM

The mainstream right now is full of lesbians. I mean every sitcom seems to have a lesbian on it, every drama has a beautiful skinny couple who kiss, and that's it. And I think it goes back to an earlier point, that it's very digestible, this idea of seeing lesbians, because it makes all the little liberals within feel real good about thinking that that's fine. But as soon as any sort of politics or real sexual practice enters the picture... Well, it doesn't. The point is, it *doesn't* enter the picture, it's just not acceptable. So to say that the world is listening is only partially true. I think lesbians are listening, and I think there are certain feminists who are listening, because there is feminist erotica that's happening. But I don't know who else is listening. Like I said, the gay and lesbian film festival circuit does reflect that there's a whole hungry audience out there wanting to tackle that stuff.

SD

Maybe there's just more listening going on right now than ever before.

LM

More lesbians than ever before! Or something...

SH

When you talk about the difference between sexuality and sex; where is your work, mainly?

LM

Well, I hope that we have sex in our sexuality.

SD

It depends on the piece, and what it is we're trying to say.

LM

I think lately we have been more interested in talking about sex, though. In making sure that when we present a lesbian, that she's a character who's...

SD

That she's not neutred...

LM

...because of what we see happening in the mainstream. I think it is on our minds more, don't

you, Shawna?

SD

Well, I think it really depends on the piece.

LM

Sexuality contains politics in my mind. Being a lesbian is a political act in my mind. And sex is also a political act. I hope that they all live together in the work. That there isn't that neutred thing going on.

SD

I think we try to present a complex picture. I think we've done an awful lot of work, and each year we do a lot of work.

LM

I think it's also fair to say that we avoid gratuitous representation. We wouldn't throw sex in just to have sex, or nudity, or even a joke: we wouldn't throw a joke in just to have a joke there. Every single thing, in the end, in the work that we present, has to somehow support the basic ideas of that particular piece. So, for instance, we often cut the best jokes in the piece because people might laugh their guts out but the humour doesn't effectively support whatever the content might be, so we cut it. If we use nudity it has to seriously support what we're after, because it's so loaded.

SD

And that would be true of sex, too, it would be there for a reason.

SH

Is there a direction to your moving amongst video and performance?

LM

We don't know yet.

SD

When we started making video in 1992, we never dreamt that it would become a regular medium for us. We began by doing just performance, but that's really changed. Now our choice of form is almost always determined by the content. We come up

with an idea, and ask, "What's the best form to say this?" And sometimes, it's a performance. Sometimes it's a poster, a book, a video, a film. We're not committed to a medium. But having said that, our own physical bodies are almost always present - either represented in the work or live. I think that means we have to be very committed to what we're saying, to use our bodies to say it. There's a greater vulnerability when our specific bodies are representing the ideas.

LM

It means they blame us personally!

SH

Is that something you're committed to keep there, then, as a way of kind of keeping yourself honest?

LM

I can't imagine that that will change, but I can't really say that for a fact. I think it really is still about the ideas: if we needed a completely different kind of woman to embody it, or if we need to remove people from the scene altogether for whatever purpose, we would do that.

SD

It's not so much a strategy as it is the truth up to this point. Because if I'm performing to a room of 300 people, I have to believe in what I'm doing...

LM

Nobody else will work this cheap.

SH

Should we talk about the economics of performing sex?

SD

I don't think it's very interesting.

LM

There's no economics, is the sad case. I don't think we avoid talking about it, it's just that it's a struggle.

SH

In some ways that's surprising, because I think if someone were to say, "Who in Canada are

successful performance artists talking about sexuality?," your names might be the only ones up there.

LM

[laughs] Yeah, it's a pretty short list.

SH

And so I think that naive people like me don't know that "there is no economics of it" or that there's a constant struggle to do this kind of work. It looks from the outside like a very successful career, you get invited here and there, you do a lot of work, and most people would think that means you're making money.

LM

Yes, we are successful, we fit that description, and we do have great lives, but we don't make any money, really. We get by, and we're in this great position of being full-time artists which other people are rightly envious of, because it is a good way to live and we're doing what we want to do, but the economic reality is very unfortunate.

SD

Our culture doesn't value art, so it's true for performance artists, it's true for musicians. Here we are at the top of our field. Last year we each made \$13,000; that was our best year ever. And it was an awful lot of work.

LM

We're very tired. I guess you've caught us at a time right now where, really, we haven't had a break in nine years. We're having to come to terms with that, and yet we haven't made enough money to save enough money to take that six months off that we really need to do. It's a difficult situation; it's taken us a lot of time to stop apologizing for not making any money. Because our audiences have no money either. We're constantly having to say, "OK we'll do that for x amount of dollars, I know that's all you can afford." And have a sliding scale at the door...There's a constant negotiation in which we take into account everyone's difficult economic situation. But for us, the reality is that we work six or seven days a week, and have done that for nine

years, and so we're having to strategize about how to change that.

SD

And even whether to continue.

SH

Really?

LM

We're very much faced with that. The other day we were daydreaming and saying to each other, "Remember when we were poor and we had more time? Let's be poor and have more time." But how do you change that, the phone still rings, and I think we're both still very passionate about being artists and working together. We've had this conversation with so many other people. So many other artists - women artists in particular - are faced with this problem, and things seem to be getting harder. Institutions have less money, or say they have less money, or are making performance less of a priority. Whatever their rationalization is around shrinking arts funding, it's definitely a struggle.

SD

Well, and I think TV hurts us all, all of us live performers. People are staying home...

LM

It's hard to make people spend \$12 or \$15 or \$20 to come to see a Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan performance. And I think that's very much where we're headed. People have seen us in a very subsidized world up until now: people have managed to scrape together artists' fees and then used it as a fund-raiser and charged \$5 at the door, or we've played art galleries where, because of the institution it's been free. We've received an artists' fee and they've charged little or nothing at the door. Those days are simply gone and yet I don't know if people will pay real money to see us. Maybe it is the television game, or maybe they're waiting for us to make a feature so they can spend \$8 and see us. Of course, that's a whole other thing that will kill us, making features.

SH

Will it?

SD

It's so expensive.

LM

It's very, very expensive, you have to raise up so much money, and it's a whole other world, the film world. It's not that we won't make a feature, we may or may not, it's just that getting involved in the film world...I think we'd like to create differently than that world would like us to create.

SH

I'm wondering where you're going, and what the next thing is you have to tell feminists about sexuality. Do you want to talk about what your next work is or where you want to be nine years from now, or where you think the relation between sex and feminism is going?

SD

In terms of performance, the most challenging work being done now is trans-gendered work.

LM

As far as our work goes, the question of where we'll be in nine years is exactly what we're thinking about these days. But in the meantime, we're working on a new performance piece this spring...

SD

A new cabaret piece this fall...

LM

And a video...

SD

And our bus shelter project will hopefully go up sometime this...

LM

Year...

SD

This universe...

LM

If it drags on much longer I guess it might become a larger battle. Everyone's just dragging their feet, the City, MediaCom...

SH

They're not up because of political hassles?

LM & SD

Yeah.

SH

Yet these are - from the description, they're fairly...

LM

Tame? Yeah, they're very slick advertising images. Wholesome, even.

SD

But the unifying tag line on all of them is "Winnipeg, One Gay City."

SH

Which is a take-off on "Winnipeg, One Great City" [the City of Winnipeg's tourism ad campaign].

LM

I guess they incite a little more in the sense that, there's three images and they each have another little piece of text, which I suppose might get people up in arms a little bit, but for the most part, they're very...

SD

Celebratory.

LM

Very celebratory, very straightforward, but I guess the city is taking exception...But right now, it's not even at that stage. There have been complaints to MediaCom, the company that would put them up, so they've hemmed and hawed, and their head office is hemming and hawing, and the advertising review committee is saying, "Well, it's art, we have no jurisdiction." Anyway, it's in limbo at the moment. The problem was that it was part of a festival that's ended now, at the Floating Gallery, and the advertising for that festival went out on time, but our project did not get up on time because

of printing problems. So they received media coverage before they put them up. They would have been happy to put them up, without a second look, but as soon as they got complaints they got nervous. They've been very careful not to say anything reprehensible, they're just going: "Well, if it's art, we don't put up art, we put up advertising." And the advertising people are saying: "That's not advertising, that's art." And the City's going: "Well, I don't know..."

SD

"It's nothing to do with us..."

LM

So anyway, if it goes on much longer we might have to go to the Human Rights Commission to push them along...

SH

So, four major projects in...

LM

Yeah, hopefully by June.

SD

And it's kind of a light year, actually.

LM

That is for us, yeah. Some of them are in process, but we have a fairly full winter ahead of us. So people laugh when we say, "Oh yeah, we're only doing these things, we're trying to make more time for friends, and sleep..."

SH

And the next one is a woman with two heads, or no head?

SD & LM

Headless.

LM

It's called *The Headless Woman*, and that's the video. Theoretically, it's part of a performance piece, too.

SH

And the politics behind that are...?

SD

Well, we can't say yet, because we're not done, we're still in the dream...

LM

I think the politics are almost always the same for us. [laughter] I mean, we talk about a lot of the same things, just from different angles. The content won't shock you, but hopefully we can talk about it in a way that's new and interesting again.

SD

In our *Mary Medusa* project, she asks the question: "Is a woman without a body in fact a woman? Does a woman without a body in fact exist?" *The Headless Woman* is the inverse of that.

SH

Well, I'll look forward to it. Thank you very much.

For more information about the work of Dempsey and Millan, or to purchase publications or videotapes contact:

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ENDNOTE

1. This surprised me. Is my surprise academic hubris? I'd like to think not, but I do think those of us who work within an academic context, no matter how much we also like to think of ourselves as engaged with community and with women working in other media, need to think more about how it is possible for similar ideas to emerge in very different contexts. At one level, we've always known this; at another level I, at least, find myself caught up in a conviction that it is only through reading and writing that women can develop the complex analyses feminism needs. These issues arise in teaching women's studies, too, as we wonder how far to push the standard forms of course content and student assignments, and how to evaluate what we get. Talking to Dempsey and Millan reminded me that important images and ideas are emerging in a variety of different places.