

Ode to a Body in Four Parts (with Remnants)

by Kimberly Bartosik

1. Today I discussed the work of a friend and choreographer with an experimental composer I hadn't seen in over a year. After a few minutes, he raised an eyebrow and said, "You sound just like an arts administrator."

I flinched, cringed, gasped, threw up, ran away, ran back, socked him in the mouth—all in a split second of my imagination-time. In real time, I smiled politely, fists clenched, and explained how I was just finishing up graduate school where I had learned a 'new' language. "It's great," I said. "I've been studying art history and criticism and now I can...political...intent..."

blah blah blah

My heart sunk below my stomach; I lied.

Have I been sleeping with the devil?

2. I came to graduate school after twelve years as a professional performing artist, a rich yet isolating life which had left me feeling bereft of a political language. My conscience hungry, I craved filling my head and mouth with a new vocabulary, one full of political force because my artist's tool, my body,

just couldn't "say" enough. After all, it couldn't express discontent at the nightmare of an impending war or the imbalance of power between men and women. It couldn't articulate the atrocities committed in the 20th century. It froze in the wake of September 11th. A body's voice didn't seem to matter in a world darkened by war and destruction, and I knew academia would offer me a chance to exercise my mind in the ways of the world. Tucked in a shadowy corner of my consciousness, however, was the devilish suspicion that this knowledge might kill my artist self.

Now, words like *dialectic*, *commodity*, *Hegelian*, *proletariat*, *modernity*, *simulacrum*, and even (sometimes) *Adorno* roll out of my mouth the way steps used to flow from my body. I've learned a political language, and I can piece ideas together so peo-

