

Accommodations or, Advice for the Disingenuous

By Craig Kurtz

The point of view is up to you,
there's many choices to peruse;
stoic, nihilist, sensualist,
pragmatic, pious, Socratic.
Try Hegel, Nietzsche or Lacan,
a side of Kierkegaard and Kant —
whatever rationale you seek,
some august school of thought will fit.

In life, all motives start somewhere —
the stomach, loins and Id contend;
there's glory, wealth, sex and control
or, failing these, sweet old revenge.
But "doing what the hell I want" seems crass
without some valorizing clause;
the trick, my friend, is to qualify
your not-so-disinterested aims.

If it rankles your conscience
to backbite, plot or cheat outright,
all this weltschmerz can be allayed
by ageless sophistries, waylaid.
Knives in the back — it's relative;
pig-headed graft — jesuitical;
there is no metanarrative on earth
casuistry cannot improve.

Discrepancies abound amply
in tomes' endnotes and translations;
one can justify most crimes
with axioms without context
and ideologies remixed
by academics and pundits
who accommodate most any scheme
with theorems, postulates and cant.

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So! The point of view's all yours,
weltanschauung is versatile:
the timeless texts in athenaeum
await your nimble apothegm.
There is no stance you can't posit
with citations and a filched wit;
all that counts is your defense
confounds ethos, and common sense.

Lackeys

By Craig Kurtz

Bemoaning these contemp'ry times,
society is in decline;
the problem, as it seems to me,
stems from the lacking of lackeys.

Way back in antiquity
when social classes were express,
there was an office solicited
to able cosmopolitans.
Here was a chance for rural lads
to escape their lowly provinces
and be among the finer set,
albeit rendering service.
"My man," "valet," or "the lackey,"
whatever eponym was used,
it was a field ubiquitous
to aid the commerce of gallants.
Imagine half of Shakespeare's plots
would go awry without relief
of fires stoked and missives sent
and knightly errands put to test.
Please perpend Molière's best plays
without the craft, or at least the laughs,
of lackeys who outwit the swells
with jumbled acts of justice dished.
No doubt the job had its demands —
awake at dawn to polish boots,
late at night to feed the horse,
not to mention the mild slight
of "lackey" being your first name.
And, certes, there were wicked lords
with gambling debts, and duels, and vice
and sneaky stratagems to fleece
all decency with vile intrigues —
and these deeds had your fingerprints.
But! Better than a serf's bland life
of milking cows and herding sheep,

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of dim small towns with toothless dolts;
to be a lackey meant grand clothes,
carriages and theaters,
and leftovers from regal feasts.
Excitement, glamour and drama,
a chance to mix with la beau monde —
better than l'peonage!
And if you think 'tis better yet
democracy has freed the liege,
then behold the cash machine
where subsistence wages
are sovereign.

Bedamning these inhuman days,
society is ruinous;
it seems to me, the quandary
is lacking lackey opportunities.

Ode to Anni

By Craig Kurtz

How shall I invoke thee
when poets of posterity
have, with brains of magic flame,
said it all, except your name?

Dare I challenge men of wit
who versified so exquisite,
their metaphors are analyzed
by scholars now left unsurprised?

How could I not humbly acknowledge
Jonson, Dryden and Coleridge
indited stanzas so peerless
my own attempt's impetuous?

And when I stop to reconsider
lines by Shakespeare, Pope and Spenser,
I abjure my surquedry
and forswear bids of prosody.

But if it is unimaginable
to rival towards such pinnacle,
I do savor your amity
which surpasses all known poetry.

Craig Kurtz bio: Craig Kurtz resides at Twin Oaks Intentional Community where he writes poetry while simultaneously surviving the dream. Recent work has appeared in Aerie Literary Journal, Burningword Literary Journal, Conclave: A Journal of Character, The Criterion: An International Journal in English, Danse Macabre, Festival Writer, Penumbra, Poetry Quarterly, Red Fez and The Road Not Taken: A Journal of Formal Poetry.