

# discrete

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R Conway



# discrete

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## Table of Contents

	page #
On Pamphleteering and Puberty - demon knight . . . . .	2
Four Poems - Robert W. Lowmides . . . . .	3
Breed of the Dark Mood - I Basil and the Lion - V. K. Emden . . . .	4
Two Poems - Sara Conquest . . . . .	7
Gloomy Sunday - DAW (reprint) . . . . .	7
Three more into the fleshpots! - demon knight (reprint) . . . . .	8
Sonnet for a Blue Breakfast - Annette Blackstone . . . . .	8
In Discretions . . . . .	9

Cover by Conway.

## Editorial

D i s c r e t e (dis-krēt'; dis'krēt), adj. [see discreet], 1, separate from others; 2, not continuous; composed of distinct units; Philos., not concrete. (Winston)

From the inception of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association I have eagerly watched its progress, applauding its triumphs and shuddering at its errors, almost as if I were an active member. . . instead of having been represented only once in the initial mailing, and then not to my satisfaction. For that matter, Heeling Error's appearance drew forth some of my most heartfelt shudders. I hope Discrete will be more legible, but I no longer have the same confidence in my stencil-cutting ability, and I make no promises.

This first issue of Discrete inaugurates my career as an active member, and is intended to carry material of general interest. Should I have another fit of fan activity, there may be a second issue of Heeling Error, but until that time the former Emden publication is suspended.

Discrete's columns are open for material of any nature, so long as it is, in my opinion, well-done. Copyright will be released upon request of contributor.

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Some months ago, in a column over the name of The Apostate, I rashly offered to send the book of his choice to him who first identified me. God knows why, but I did. Willie Watson is disqualified, inasmuch as Judy Zissman unwittingly mentioned me by name in letters to him - we have the carbons, Willie; sorry - and so the blue ribbon, palms and any nice inexpensive book of his choice go to Norm Stanley. Name it, Mr. Stanley, and it shall be yours by return mail, if in print.

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## ON PAMPHLETEERING AND PUBERTY

I have recently seen an essay on pamphleteering by Jim Blish, which, if valid, justifies the existence of amateur publishing groups as ends-in-themselves. Jim's major premise is that pamphleteering as an art wields a power out of all proportion to the expenditure required; that it is therefore the ideal medium of expression for an independent writer who wishes to make his opinions known quickly and without censorship.

His minor premise is that apa activity is, or can be, pamphleteering. I believe this to be untrue. The virtue of pamphleteering, as I understand the term, is that it reaches an audience at least commensurable with that of profit publishing while permitting operation on a much lower margin. It is the rebel artist's weapon and safeguard against vested interests in art. In short, pamphleteering is an instrument for influencing opinion, and its value must be computed on the basis of the size of audience reached. When this audience dwindles to fifty, in my opinion that value diminishes to the vanishing point, and the work must be considered in another category altogether.

Obviously, a published work which is designed to influence opinion must reach the largest possible audience. Fan publications are restricted, sometimes to as few as thirty readers: yet they continue. Other motives sustain them. Of these, I think the chief ones are experiment -- the initial trying-out of abilities which are felt to be too little developed to be worthy of a wider medium -- and gratification of ego. Both, in my view, are valuable; neither has any place beyond immaturity.

I consider amateur publishing, then, as a means and not as an end. For me, its usefulness as such has long since ceased; but I would not on that account urge anyone else to eschew it. For those in whom fan publishing has become an addiction well into what would normally be their maturity, there is no help. Those who are not doomed to perpetual adolescence need no objurgation. But I would urge a realistic attitude toward fan publishing among those who are still capable of regarding it as other than a fetish. Let us, at any rate, not mistake our popguns for cannon.

-- damon knight

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New York Times (June 29, 1945)

"Mr. Bilbo read editorials from Negro newspapers and an extract from The Daily Worker, but explained he was not a Communist."

-- That's a relief, Senator; you had us worried for a moment!

(courtesy Lowndes)

Romance

Crystal chimetinkle,  
moonsplashed shore-undertone,  
dragonfly wingflash.  
Spark-light our hearts; we dwelt in dewmist worlds,  
And dipped our hands in dusk and drew pastels upon  
the night.

Then:  
thunderflame,  
wateroarush,  
world-dissolvment.  
Too soon?  
Not;  
Shadowlovers?  
No.

Unlocked we fatedoors unafraid, and Eros came  
To look upon this aftermath of wind and flame.

Afterglow

Lethe-released upon the rim of  
timelessness,  
A small, arresting murmur comes  
Mist-tendrilling, elfinlight.

Halfdrowned, wavering,  
Yearning for you grows again  
And brushes me in delicate caress.

Interlude

Relate the bitterness:  
For all the vows and sweetsoft murmurings,  
There is no image of you  
Outstanding.

The balance sheet shows glances, furtive tears,  
Hairscent, ringflash, etc.,  
And all the foolish things that made you smile.  
(Love deposited; love withdrawn.)

Spent desire maskparades  
And memory repeats childwise the petulant question.

####

Memo to the local god

Pencilsketched,  
We ask but  
Bolder outlines on  
the shapelessness.

-- Robert W. Lowndes

B R O O D    O F    T H E  
D A R K    M O O D    - -    Reminiscences

I - Basil and the Lion

(Note: As a result of the prominence today of the surgeons in question, I must falsify names and locations. This is not a fantasy, bears no relation to fantasy, and is not meant to be read as such. It is a factual account of a little-known and to my knowledge never-recorded event in medical history, and is as accurate as my memory allows. - vke)

Langley Hospital has been the cradle and nurturing-ground of surgeons eminent in every field. A glance today at the list of internes making up the original staff of Barnard Clinic in the year 192- would be sufficient to cause the most affluent sufferer from any of a thousand ailments to pale markedly and clutch at his wallet.

Basil Harms, now rated one of the three best brain men in the world, was then just one more recent graduate from medical school, and was serving out an apprenticeship marked by an undue number of mishaps. It was at that time the considered opinion of George Barnard (who had become somewhat testy with the years) that young Harms would never make a surgeon. "Hasn't it in him, by God," is reported to have been Barnard's comment.

It is believed to have been Basil who, while still a new student, turned in that well-known report on one of Barnard's operations. In typing the routine opening phrase, "The patient was arranged and draped in the usual fashion," the student had inadvertently omitted an essential 2d2, and it is possible that Dr. Barnard felt this to have been done deliberately.

In any event the incident about to be related is one of the most damaging proofs Basil ever unwillingly afforded his superior.

The amphitheatre in which the operation took place was in a building which the passage of years and the construction of newer units had caused to become completely outmoded. In fact, this obsolete amphitheatre was no longer used for surgery, but functioned only as a lecture and demonstration room. It was, however, large and in excellent repair, although it had been passed by when air conditioning was installed in the rest of the hospital buildings. There were several large and antiquated electric fans, but Dr. Barnard had not ordered them to be turned on, and so great was the awe in which the chief was held that none of the tyros had dared depress one switch.

This lack of air conditioning rendered the operation doubly difficult for the men involved, as they were accustomed to working in perfect comfort, in spite of climatic conditions out of doors.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the lion fell sick at the height of a period of hot weather unparalleled in the city's history. If he had chosen winter, the story would not be such that it can even now be used for genteel blackmail of the eminent Dr. Harms by his friends. But mid-August it was, and on sultry summer

evenings, guests at the Harms residence cause Basil untold misery by a gentle leering reference to the night Dr. Barnard operated on the lion. He has been known, in sheer despair, to break out a case of long-hearded Haig & Haig in a vain attempt to avert the reminiscence.

It may seem strange that Barnard, who, even at that time, performed only the most rare and exacting operations, leaving routine cases to his subordinates, chose this somewhat bizarre case. But, as has been mentioned, he was a testy individual and a man of strong will, and when the original desperate call came from the keeper of the municipal Zoo, he astonished everyone by accepting the case and instructing his secretary to post the unprecedented operation for the following evening, himself officiating, assisted by the entire staff of the Clinic.

"Why shouldn't I do it, by God? Event of distinct moment, for Christ's sake, is reported to have been his comment when remonstrated with.

The lion was, after all, a valuable animal, and his death would cause a heavy financial loss to the city. A diagnosis of intestinal stoppage had been made, and the animal was certainly acutely ill, from whatever cause. There is some question as to just how the diagnosis had been made, as the beast had allowed no one to approach him, and had indeed severely mauled an incautious attendant. Be that as it may, an exploratory had been posted for this sultry August evening, and was to take place in the largest dis-used amphitheatre as a precautionary measure in case the patient should prove intractable or destructive.

It is hard to say what was foremost in the minds of the men present outside of Dr. Barnard. There is little doubt that he looked forward to the operation with keen interest, as he was heard to mumble once or twice, "Make medical history, by God," as he scrubbed up and held out his arms for the gown extended by a youth who is today one of our foremost urologists. (Internes took the place of nurses and technicians, owing to the nature of the patient.)

The operating team, however, on which Basil had been assigned to the humble post of "instrument-passer", was less concerned with the historical aspect than with the immediate annoyance of the well-nigh unbearable heat, aggravated by extreme humidity, and the prospect of plying their trade upon a reputedly savage animal.

Basil swore under his breath as small drops of perspiration rolled from his face and plopped audibly on the instruments arrayed before him. The instrument-passer's table bears some relation to the keyboard of a piano spread before a musician. Each tool has its assigned place as immutably as middle C, and the gleaming array of instruments is as pretty a sight to a proper medical man as a concert grand to Hoffman. This particular set of instruments was Dr. Barnard's own, rather than the hospital's, and the old man took the greatest pride in them.

Swiftly Basil re-sterilized the affected instruments and stood a safer distance away from the table.

A growl was heard, an agonizing, heart-rending sound. The small hairs on Basil's neck stood erect, and he barely stifled a sympathetic moan.

The animal was wheeled in, manacled by an awe-inspiring display of chains and ropes. The zoo attendants who had ef-







occurred as a result of an overdose of morphine.

Dr. Barnard eventually moderated his animosity toward Basil, and is even believed to have murmured, "The boy shows some vague sort of promise, by God," shortly before his death, but Basil himself has never been able to rid himself of the vivid memory of that eventful night, and it is really a kindness not to mention it in his presence.

###

### Motley, Worn with Grace

She said,  
I do not wish to love again,  
I do not choose  
To feel a final ecstasy  
If I must lose  
Again. First loneliness past,  
First despair  
Washed out by tears. . . I shall not then  
Once more be fool enough to care,  
She said.

But still she loves, and loves to love. . . She is a fool  
In every hand, and finds it good enough to play the fool.

####

### "Discretion is the Better Part of . . ."

Valiantly I cry -  
I'll take no half a loaf,  
I'd rather starve!  
But hungrily wolf the crumbs,  
The while I cry . . .  
Not valiantly.

-- Sara Conquest

#### Gloomy Sunday -

reprinted from one of  
the earliest Agenbites  
(without, as yet, RWL's  
permission) for the dele-  
tation of all and sundry.  
Recorded by the Futurian  
Sympathy Orchestra, with  
Lousovsky conducting. No  
longer available.

Lyrics, of course, are by DAW.

(Scored for one musical saw, two  
bicycle pumps, one rain machine,  
a cyclone, a symphony orchestra,  
and a Colt .45.)

Sunday is gloomy  
And Monday is gloomier;  
Tuesday is ghastly  
And Wednesday is horrible;  
Thursday is eldritch  
And Friday is terrible;  
Saturday we sit around  
Waiting for Sunday. . .

Reprinted from  
Futurian Home Journal  
Volume I, No. 8

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"He was a good fan, until the Futurians corrupted him."

-- J. Unger

Three more into the fleshpots!  
Zissman, like a maddened Buddha,  
Probing her umbilicus;  
Emden, meditating orgies  
Behind a housecat's smile;  
Shaw, a pipe and spectacles  
Inhabited by vileness.

The Triumvirs anoint their swollen lips;  
Michel, a slow-fused pistol at his head;  
The turgid Lowndes, extinguishing in flesh;  
And Wollheim, on a round-trip ticket to  
The womb. They chant their scatoliturgies,  
Defy the gods (with backsides shielded), and  
The thing is done -- the Innocents are doomed!

-- damon knight

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### Sonnet for a Blue Breakfast

. . . rumor of light, pale aftermath of dawn  
Falls like something slain across the rug.  
"The war -- " you say . . . an imminence of yawn  
Suspends the phrase. The war, the coffee mug  
Attend the consummation of this littler  
Dawn. You turn the page, discover Saks  
Is giving ties away. We talk of Hitler . . .  
Wisely . . . uninhibited by facts.

And once your fingers vocal on my cheek  
Told worlds away; your silences were breathless --  
Breathless words you shaped but did not speak . . .  
The coffee, rhythmic, murmurs "deathless" . . .  
deathless! . . .  
noiseless as time the maid moves, swift, unhurried;  
And death between us -- with nothing to be buried.

-- Annette Blackstone

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Headline in Foreign Commerce Weekly, March 31, 1945 --

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"RUG WEARING RESUMED IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS, U.S.S.R."  
(Courtesy Shaw)

IN DISCRETIONS 1. - Vagrant Thoughts and Random Quotations

The rewarding hours spent in preparing the translation of the Pound essay on Joyce and Flaubert for Renaissance gave rise to one or two minor items for this column.

The first is something of a footnote to the footnote on Sainte-Beuve. The culmination of this (to me) typically Poundian eruption is lost unless one has some idea of the identity of Bossuet, a French bishop and clergyman, noted for his "eloquence"; his bishopric was named Meaux. Pound's sputtering reference to the man as the Eagle of Meaux takes on new significance, I think.

Although I was assured by the editors that space limitations prevented it in this particular instance, I suggested and continue to advocate the presentation of the original material side by side, or at least in the same issue, with the translation. This practice easily doubles the pleasure of the bi-lingual reader.

Judy Zissman, who is a well-known Political Thinker hereabouts, snorted on seeing the phrase, "all the pseudo-intellectual bouillabaisse of the proletariat". She remarked (with considerable detachment, considering), "It would be more accurate if it were 'all the pseudo-proletarian bouillabaisse of the intellectuals'".

Cover artist for this issue, Ritter Conway, somewhat bitterly rejected the usual waxy carbon sheets which come with my stencils. "A cushion sheet I want," he said. "It looks like sublimated toilet paper - you know, a cushion sheet." None was forthcoming, so I cheerfully assume the blame for any tears, rips, or gashes in the discrete abstraction he so nobly provided.

A hitherto unfamiliar aspect of music has been brought home to me lately. I had always accepted a blanket definition of music as "creative work". I find however that some of the best (and for me most impressive) of modern musicians occupy themselves with a re-interpretation of values and forms, cast in the shape of a somewhat acid commentary on the times in which they move and (if I may be allowed the pun) have their movements. It is criticism, rather than creation; I insist on the differentiation, but find the former entirely valid, and very good listening.

## 2. - Excerpt from a letter written May 29th, by Bill Danner:

"I disagree most violently with most of the criticisms in the V-R Record Review, interesting as I find it otherwise. Without going into too much detail, I have the new Columbia recordings of the Beethoven 7th and the Pathetique. Both of them, and particularly the latter, are something I never expected to hear on discs -- a very near approach to FM quality. Their realism is something that must be heard -- and that means as played on a strictly high-fidelity rig -- to be appreciated. I have an arrangement with a local record store whereby I may bring records home to try them, and I tried Victor's hashy recording of the excellent performance of Harold in Italy, of which I would like to have a recording. I was able to stand only three sides, after which I returned it to the store as quickly as possible. It is the worst recording I have heard for at least ten years, and probably longer. The recordings made by Victor just before the ban are much,

much better, but not nearly so good as the two Columbia albums I mentioned. The new Columbia set of the Brahms Fourth, on the other hand, is recorded at too high a level with considerable distortion as a result. I brought the Jupiter home yesterday, but I'm not quite decided. It's better than the Brahms, but not so good as the other two.

"That is why I believe all record reviewers should mention the sort of equipment by which they judge records. This is almost never done, and to judge by the reviews I have read, most critics must use a small table model phonograph with an overall distortion of about 25% and a frequency range of about 200 to 3500 cycles.

". . . as you can see I'm more interested in realistic recording than in the ultimate in performances, though the latter are important, too. And now that I know what realistic quality the recording companies can turn out, I certainly won't accept the sort of junk Victor is making now. A friend, by the way, just got the same razz, mushy sort of featureless recording as Harold. There's another possibility, of course. Maybe Victor is sending all their rejects, (if they ever reject any,) to Pgh. Certainly if their recording is as good as most of the critics say, they are releasing a great many discs made from worn-out stampers, which Columbia does not do. I understand they test every 50th disc from a pair of stampers, and if it is bad, reject the entire previous fifty."

### 3. - Through Vanguard with Gun and Camera

While it hardly needs restating that the first mailing, as a whole, was up to no one's expectations, there were several excellent publications to be found in the midst of the drunken, run-of-the-mill, inept, and what-have-you attempts.

Tumbrils is without question the best item I have ever seen in this or any other mailing. The widespread non-comprehension of Jim's basic intent however gives rise to an interesting speculation. Is there some lack of coherence, or of specificity, in this essay, which obscures the argument? Or is there a pronounced politico-mental rigidity throughout his audience which causes most of his readers to go through certain reflex actions? It seems to me that they see the word "usury" and shout in chorus, "anti-semitism", see the word "Pound", and hiss "fascist". The bias Jim held at that time - or which held him - is of course evident, but it has nothing to do with the point he was making - a point which I am quite certain every Vanguard member agrees with wholeheartedly. Where does the fault lie - in Jim's polemic, or in reader emotionalism? Why should a simple and basic question of jurisprudence start the witch hunt that followed immediately upon EPode's publication?

The delightful Lowndesback editorial is as clever as Free and Unequal is foolish, in agenbite. It seems evident from this almost-new and almost-sober Lowndes publication, that Bob is feeling around for a new manner of expression. Unfortunately, he is still between styles. When he burlesques the pompous Gernsback, he is nel groovo, but when

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# - omission: insert "got Victor's single of the selections from Oklahoma! and it is just the"

he turns pompous himself, the results are not pleasing. In all good will and friendship, I would advise Bob to bring more facts, fewer unsubstantiated opinions, and all of his wonderful sense of humor to bear, the next time he attempts to handle authoritatively so highly controversial a question.

V-R Record Review offers no opportunity for comment of my own, other than to say it is excellent. The excerpt from Danner's letter, however, raises a question of some interest. How many Vanguardists are satisfied with nothing less than technical excellence, and how many are willing to wince through a set that sounds as if it was recorded in a barrel for the sake of the music that is there, even though abominably reproduced? My own machine (and I say that inadvisedly) is the usual combination, table model; reproduction is only average. I should hate to sacrifice the listening pleasure obtainable from this set for perfect reproduction which would simply rule out all but a handful of albums.

Having seen remarkably little of Wellheim's amateur publishing activities, I am still reserving judgment on the material he is presenting in Vanguard. A comment in passing, however, is that while I enjoyed SEITZ thoroughly, I am often puzzled, sometimes bored, and occasionally annoyed at what has to say (or reprint) in K'tadgm-m.

I object strongly to the wording of the lines beginning "but shall be restricted to" and ending "of the association" in the first paragraph of article 4 of the Constitution. Just how is such "addiction" to be defined? This seems to me to be a loophole through which personal prejudice can operate to exclude members (potential members, that is), and perhaps already has. Granted, this is not a democratic organization, but leave us not be tyrannical, either! I should like to see the opinion of the membership on this question of matters of policy incorporated in the Constitution, which should be a document containing only specific and intelligible rules for the functioning of the organization. Granted there is an old grievance; must we eat worms publicly, and immortalize them (or it, depending on what you take my referent to be)?

Michel's pyrotechnics interfere somewhat with my accepting his dicta. The performance is too spectacular to be convincing; one feels that there must be some basic flaw in the reasoning of a man who must put on such a frenzied show for his audience. If there is such a flaw, with reference to the Bok essay it is comprised in the personal animosity which suffuses this criticism, and in the bombastic statement that "art must serve the needs of the people". I can find no flaw in Vantage Point #1, except that again, Michel overwhelms me without convincing me. I know that fireworks are your forte, Johnny, and I enjoy invective - up to a point. Both essays in the first mailing (with the specific objections already noted to "A Window on Bok") were among your best. My intention is not to carp, but to give voice to my sincere interest in where your literary style is going to take you. I should like to see you improving steadily, but such hysterical outbursts as Vantage Point #2 puzzle me, fails utterly to convince me of anything, and rather worries me.

Watson's half of the Watson-Ebey effort in the second mailing was very satisfactory, but I was embarrassed to discover that George had bitten off

MUCH MORE THAN HE COULD MANAGE. The caps were unintentional, but since they convey my horror at this atrocity much better than any further belaboring of the question could, I shall let it stand.

E1

Hanyf was enjoyable. This is Lowndes at pretty near his best.

The general high standard of Tumbrils is maintained in the second mailing, but this issue is nevertheless far from satisfactory. The poor reproduction is a drawback throughout (as you no doubt noticed for yourself, Jim - am I heaping coals of fire?) but in the case of "The Folded and the Quiet", it is a crime. I seem to be somewhat overstocked with coals of fire for heaping purposes since the first mailing. . . "FAPA and the Pamphleteers" is treated elsewhere in the issue by a contributor; I should like to register the objection that in your treatment of this subject you have wobbled back and forth between a broad consideration of pamphleteering in its historical aspects, and the somewhat pettish indignation you feel against those members of FAPA who are simply riding a hobby and are out to have fun, rather than to publish Little Magazines.

It is a joy to see Norman Stanley represented in the mailing - even with only something over a page devoted to Vanguard, the gentleman is still a most welcome addition. I have had the highest respect for Fan-Tods from first acquaintance with it - Revista is one of the main reasons why I have so vigorously defended review columns for lo, these many months.

Temper shows a 100% improvement over the first magazine, 2-1-1. I live with Zissman, and even though I know the handicaps under which she is operating, since I share them - insufficient time and a little too much baby - I can't understand why she doesn't display more of her talents to Temper's audience. It's far too short.

Cry in the Night is beautifully executed. Larry is to be congratulated for his pains; from cover to reproduction, everything about this publication typifies what I should most like to see in the mailings. Nothing can be said about the song itself until I hear it - although from what I can read of it, I don't think there is much doubt as to its excellence.

Taken as one whole, or as two wholes, the mailings to date have not been up to anyone's expectations. But there was a definite improvement in general quality in the second, and I have high hopes for the third mailing.

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DISCRETE

Am. Fifth Hour Publication.

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