“From Everyone to Everyone” – The Countercultural Little Magazine *Dikt & datt*

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**Abstract**

In the early 1970s several small publishers and a significant number of little magazines emerged in Norway. One of the purely literary journals in this period was *Dikt & datt*, which published its first issue in 1972. The journal featured poetry by, among others, Jón Sveinbjørn Jónsson and Tor Ulven and gradually included critical contributions to the discussion of counterculture. In its first editorial *Dikt & datt* presented itself as “one of several organs for counterculture”, and the slogan “from everyone to everyone” demonstrated the most appealing aspect of counterculture, its view of art as including everyone.

In the early 1970s several small publishers and a significant number of little magazines saw the light of day in Norway. Several of them were affiliated to the radical circle in Hjelms gate 3, which operated its own book café serving biodynamic vegan food, and with Forsøkgymnasiet (the Experimental High School), a radical school with experimental pedagogics. The political ideas of the day – democracy based on open meetings, critical-spiritual liberation, environmental awareness, revolutionary practice and an active resistance to capitalism – influenced this literary underground movement.

Among the Xeroxed underground magazines, the psychedelia-inspired, anti-authoritarian journal *Vibra*, which folded after just one issue, and *Gateavisa* (Street News) were both associated with the working collective in Hjelms gate. *Magasinfrosk* (Magazine Frog) was published in Horten, while *Vannbæreren* (The Water Carrier) was published by Regnbuetrykk on Karlsøy in Troms. *Dikt & datt* (literally Poetry and That, a pun on *ditt og datt*, meaning “this” and “that”), however, was published by students at Forsøkgymnasiet in Oslo, where a very active poetry scene had been in place since its inception in 1968. Many of these alternative scenes also established their own, independent small presses.1

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1 Dikt & Datt Forlag and Forlaget Frustra, for instance, published poetry collections by Jón Sveinbjørn Jónsson (*Manus*, 1973) and Lasse Tømte (*Ugress*, 1973), while Lars Saabye Christensen...
Many of the small publishers and journals from the politicised 1970s found common ground in defining themselves as the counterculture. In doing so, they carried on a tradition found in many journals closely associated with what we might call a critical avant-garde movement. One example is *Dølen* (1858–1870), edited by Aasmund Olavsson Vinje, which opposed the contemporary establishment, both politically and in terms of language. If we establish two terms representing the extremes of the critical avant-garde – avant-garde as formal rupture and avant-garde as social activism – the counterculture of the 1970s continued the social activism of the art of the 1960s, which rejected the art institution’s idea of the autonomous work by challenging the division between contemplation of and participation in art, or through intermedial transgressions mixing text, time and image, as in the many word movies made by the Fluxus movement. The concept of counterculture enabled the critical avant-garde of the 1970s to cultivate the social or political dimensions of the idea of the new. This was seen first and foremost in the challenge to the literary institutions, the autonomy of the work of art and its bourgeois set of values. It is this dimension of the avant-garde that the Norwegian counterculture articulates, and it is here that a significant aspect of what we today think of as the performative nature of art was taking shape within a fundamentally political context.

Eventually, several of these underground activities joined forces in a collaborative effort of counterculture journals known as *Muldvarpkretsen* (The Mole Circle), which turned against the dominant bourgeois culture, capitalism and the elite while appealing to the people. This undergrowth of critical publications is one of the most active examples of aesthetic–political struggles in the history of literary journals in Norway. It also shows up the shortcomings of the utopian dream of synthesising aesthetics and politics. The countercultural movement sought to combine the symbolic capital of literature and the political capital of social activism, preferably with a revolutionary direction. This era is pervaded by critical, defiant and rebellious journals with a strong conviction that political commitment, enlightenment and upheaval were possible. One of the purely literary journals in this period had the deliberately unpretentious, egalitarian and down-to-earth title *Dikt & datt*. The journal, which sprang from

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*published the collections* Grønt lys and *Syklus* himself around 1972 and 1973. Saabye Christensen, one of Norway’s best-selling writers today, recently completed a trilogy with the novel *Bisettelsen* (The Funeral); the second instalment, *Bly* (Lead, 1990), describes this alternative scene.