**Højholt, Per (1928-2004)**

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Per Højholt was one of the most productive and influential Danish writers of the 20th century. Højholt was born on 22 July 1928 and died on 15 October 2004. A trained librarian, he worked in that capacity until 1966, subsequently devoting himself to his artistic endeavour until the time of his death. He was awarded the Danish Academy’s Grand Prize in 1982.

Højholt made his debut in 1948 at the age of twenty, when the modernist journal *Heretica* published his cycle of poems *De nøgne*. Højholt proceeded to elaborate his own form of radical modernism — rooted in the work of, for example, Stéphane Mallarmé — with his first collection of poetry, *Poetens hoved* (1963). Whereas in the work of Mallarmé the suggestiveness of the language is intended to reach towards a more elevated (truer) form of reality, Højholt’s poetry is postmodern play with language. His oeuvre spans widely, ranging from collections of poems, short prose and essays, to the novel *Auricula* (2001) and the posthumous fragment *Hans Henrik Mattesen – En monografi* (2007). Højholt by no means confined himself to the writing desk and the written page. A large part of his work comprised performance and artistic expression in other media: radio readings of poetry, radio montage, radio plays, as well as a variety of public happenings.

Højholt probably began working on his highly imaginative and challenging novel *Auricula* as early as 1978, though it did not appear in published form until twenty-three years later, in 2001. “Auricula” means “ear” in Latin. At the beginning of the book the reader learns that on 15 September 1915, during the First World War, a brief, imperceptible silence descends upon Europe. During this lull, a number of ears are conceived, to be born nine months later. The ears strike out into the world, journeying through the twentieth century and experiencing many and varied events. The novel is, as Højholt himself commented, “without protagonist, without plot, without dramatic occurrence, vulgar and monstrous.”

The collection of poems *Turbo* (1968) appeared as an LP record with the title *Turbo – En space-fiction* (1969). It was a pioneering work within its genre in Denmark: poetry as sound art. Beyond the prankish, free-wheeling aspect of Højholt’s work, in which musicality of language often takes precedence over content, the reader will discover recurring philosophical and poetological considerations concerning the relationship between language and reality or truth and fiction, as well as a more general demonstration of the arbitrariness of all things. With his *Gitte-monologer* (1984), the often less-than-accessible Højholt achieved a popular breakthrough.

**Højholt Online – Film, Performance, Radio**

Video and sound files featuring Højholt may be accessed at the website of the National Library of Denmark:

Højholts performing one of his famous *Gitte-monologer*:

<http://img.kb.dk/video/hoejholt/gitte1.html>

*Dette tab af sted jeg rejser i* (1987) – Video, Performance, Reading:

<http://img.kb.dk/video/hoejholt/tabAfSted.html>

Facsimiles of Højholt’s handwritten drafts may be viewed in the same archive at:

**Chronology of Selected Works:**

Novels

*6512* (1969)

*Auricula* (2001)

*Hans Henrik Mattesen. En monografi* (2007)

Short Stories and other Prose

*Praksis, 3: Den fireogtresindstyvende frokost i det grønne* (1979)

*Praksis, 4: Lynmuseet og andre blindgyder* (1982)

*Praksis, 8: Album, tumult* (1989)

*Praksis, 12: Anekdoter* (1996)

Poems

*Hesten og solen* (1949)

*Poetens hoved* (1963)

Other Media (Music, Radio, TV, Text-Photo)

*Turbo. En space-fiction* (1969): LP (with Peter Kristiansen og Clemens Johansen)

*Omkring, rundt* (1970): A work for radio

*Gittes monologer* (1982): LP

*English Translations*

Per Højholt, from *Praxis, 8: Album, tumult*. Translated by Martin Aitken, *Calque* #5 (2009): 300-333

A small selection of further translations may be found here: http://calquezine.blogspot.com/2008/09/from-praxis-8-album-tumult-by-per.html

**Further Reading**

Kjerkegaard, S. (2009) *Hørbylundemanden – Introduktion til Per Højholts forfatterskab*, Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag

Kreutzfelt, J. et. al. (ed.) (2004), *Mellem ørerne - PerFormer Højholt : mediekunst 1967*, Copenhagen: Informations Forlag.

Madsen C., *Poesi, tanke & natur. Per Højholts filosofi og digtning* (2004), Aarhus: Klim