

## J. Hope Stein Book Review

by Matt Fowler

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*Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* by J. Hope Stein, Poet Republik. 24 pp. \$15.00

### J. Hope Stein's Newest Book of Poems is an Imagistic Insight into Modern Love and Politics

It's not often that a book of poems comes along, carrying with it the ability to rattle the mind from insidious tedium, but alas J. Hope Stein's *Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* does the trick. In a society that favors economic progress over all else while simultaneously diminishing the role of human as anything other than pseudo-mechanistic means of production, Stein molds a world that blurs the lines. The first poem in the collection also titled, *Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* is a comical piece of prose that breathes spontaneity and sexuality back into the worker in the form of an office liaison. Stein titillates the reader with imagery;

*Me straddling  
your lap, your bare ass in my desk chair, shapes  
suctioning  
into each other— We would continue to make the sounds  
of  
good business. A conference call with Coca-Cola, an  
email  
to Citibank, a spreadsheet of year-over-year gross  
profits.*

Passages like these are what make Stein's newest book so engaging. She is able to mix the mundane with

the anarchic seamlessly, allowing the reader to join in on the fun. In the section of Stein's book titled *Husband Poems*, there exists an unconventional, intimate peek into the life of two lovers amid a landscape of artful imagery and tenderness. In the poem *Just Married*, Stein writes;

*Husband is food. I mean good  
or roof.*

Going on to write;

*Husband wakes me  
with licking cheeks. I make pillow  
of husband's shoulder & husband.*

Stein's images masterfully craft moments in which the familiar is paired with the strange while retaining a mood of comfortability. Her writing blends the characteristics of the depersonalized public performance with the closeness of two honeymooners. In other words, her poems are resoundingly human. The end of *Just Married* closes with a stanza that makes *Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* so endearing;

*In the earth of blankets,  
I gladden husband  
by the glow of candlelight through the sheets.  
(Where is my underwear?) The sky  
drolls sweetly to the ear,  
the purring animals in our bed.  
Light snore, the seashore at night.*

In the latter half of *Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose*, Stein shifts her biting gaze to the

political predicament with which the world is now faced in a poem titled; *DONALD J. TRUMP SUCKS THE COLD COCK OF AN ICE SCULPTURE* (as mouths congratulate each other for the century). This humorous piece doubles as a scathing critique of present day neo-fascist and world-class bumbling, talking-head, Donald J. Trump. Stein's first stanza paints an accurate portrait of his rise to power;

*The men who invented wealth.  
The men who invented how you think.  
The broadcasters. The pussy-grabbers. Cable & socket men.  
The men in charge of machinery. The men who decided what you like to eat.  
The steel men. The financiers. The patrons of the petroleum arts. Soot & crumb men.  
Con men. The dinner of the nation burning in the oven.*

The tenderness of Stein's imagery is sequestered in this piece and instead replaced with cold, calculating language that explains the truths of a current political climate. Stein's ability to cut straight into the meat of an argument is what makes this poem unceasingly relevant. Near the end of the poem Stein writes;

*Men who carry their brains in slings.  
Men who invented slavery instead of motors.*

Stein's observations are uniquely raw, they can take the form of a young otter gently nuzzling its mother, or a cold trench of skeletons in the desert as the sun sets. The juxtaposition that Stein weaves throughout *Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* is captivating from cover to cover.

*Occasionally, I remove your brain through your nose* is  
available now from Poet Republik Ltd.

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by: Matt Fowler, Hostile Sphere Press