

# FRONT PORCH

## Yes, Master

Michael Earl Craig, *Yes, Master*

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**M**ichael Craig's poems are not what you would expect from a farrier in Montana who writes about, among other things, horses. He creates a world in which a therapist cries at every session while the patient does not. *Yes, Master*, Craig's second book of poetry, expresses sadness through his subjects—among them, a pitiful anchor and a pair of homosexual donkeys. The speaker drifts throughout like a seahorse who is left with his "throat slit, / leaking a dark scarf across / his moonlit coral homeland," after having laughed himself to the floor at the news of Sonny Bono's death. This is a strange poetry.

This is poetry in which objects and animals are personified for more than the sake of metaphor; the seahorse, and even cashews, in his poems bear the speaker's sadness. With his subjects, whether an anvil or an aged horse seen only from a distance, the speaker feels a kinship, an intimacy of spirit. The book's best poems, often beginning in a light-hearted tone or a morbid humor, are made vivid with beautiful, surreal images and end with solemn reverence.

In "My Situation; A Confession; Some Hopes that I Have," the speaker declares, after telling us about the clean shoe box he keeps for his pet turtle, that his hope is to peel his own face—an otherwise cliché expression of angst. But then he confesses this peeling would reveal the Tuscan sun with which he wishes to warm his pet. And while not every poem in *Yes, Master* is a success (some of the shorter poems seem to rely, ineffectively, on his wit or imagery), this book is energized with the juxtaposition of enough absurdity and sympathy to keep us reading.

—Estella Ramirez