



## WHITE GHOSTS

by Katie Hale

*White Ghosts*, the debut collection by poet and novelist Katie Hale, traces maternal lines, and the legacies of slavery and whiteness interwoven into the fabric of America, through revealing, unflinching poems. Travelling deep into an intimate history that spans both sides of the Atlantic, *White Ghosts* unravels the narratives we choose to tell in official versions—through museum labels and civic statues—and in handed-down stories.

Transformational and challenging, these sharply-detailed poems interrogate the bare bones of silence, complicity, difficult inheritances and racial constructs. Via wagon routes or interstates, on deserted highways or in the landscapes of northern England, through nature and through human culture, questions of ownership and power are writ into the journey.

Through four centuries of female migration, the poems use art, music, and lyrical reworking of the curated space, to address white guilt: what is lost through generations, and what is passed on?

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the book is called *White Ghosts*?
2. Is there a poem that stands out, or which speaks to you more than the others? Why do you think that is?
3. Do you think the collection is more of a commentary on contemporary female experiences, or on historical female experiences?
4. There's a lot of biblical language in *White Ghosts*. Why do you think that is, and what effect does it have?
5. Why do you think *White Ghosts* has been written as poetry? Would the subject matter work as well as a novel?
6. What is the book saying about the position of white women historically? In what ways does it place them as downtrodden, and in what ways does it place them in a position of privilege?
7. What kind of picture do the poems paint of contemporary US society? Do you feel it's accurate?
8. History is as much about what is omitted as it is about what is included. How does *White Ghosts* explore that, and do you think it does it effectively?
9. In *White Ghosts*, what do the women carry with them through the generations, and what is left behind?
10. What emotions are you left with at the end of the collection?



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