

OLIVIA METTLER

The Whiteness of —
from Moby-Dick

what remains unsaid
robes given to redeem
a thousand small-headed monarchs
statues eyeless in the soul
a forest of horrors
the sunniest day
a lie
the nameless thing
appeals to power
the heartless void
a church-yard grinning upon crosses

ABOUT THE POEM

“The Whiteness of —” was created from *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville (1851). About the poem and the process of composing it, Olivia Mettler writes:

I wanted to write a poem using only language from Chapter 42 in *Moby-Dick*, which is called “The Whiteness of the Whale,” and to have the title of the poem be made from the title of the chapter. The idea is that the poem can be read starting from the title and reading normally without anything additional, but that each line of the poem can also be read with “The Whiteness of” coming before it. In this way the poem has two different ways to be experienced and read, both giving a similar tone to the poem but resulting in a different rhythm or flow of the poem and some change in meaning.

