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Interpretations of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* in the Field of Visual Arts

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by

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Abstract:

Artistic adaptations of literary classics allow readers to visualize and contextualize some of the most important themes, motifs, scenes, and images in a story that may be difficult to grasp through verbal text alone. From these adaptations, one can analyze the stylistic and thematic similarities or differences in the way an artist portrays elements of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Through their varying artistic styles and media, abstract impressionist Frank Stella, self-taught artist Matt Kish, and award-winning children's book illustrator Allan Drummond express how Melville's novel can manifest itself in a multitude of contexts: emotional, literal, and theoretical. By analyzing the way in which these artists construct renditions surrounding the same scenes and general thematic notions in *Moby-Dick*, readers and artistic audiences gain insight into new generations of the classic text.

Keywords: Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, visual arts, Frank Stella, Matt Kish, Allan Drummond

Artistic adaptations of literary classics like *Moby-Dick* allow readers to visualize and contextualize some of the most important themes, motifs, scenes and images existent in the story that may be difficult to grasp through verbal text alone. The sphere of visual arts authorizes artists to take liberty in their own interpretations of the narrative and express their ideas through abstract or concrete imagery and symbolism. From these adaptations, one can analyze the stylistic and thematic similarities or differences that exist in the way an artist portrays elements of Melville's profound classic, *Moby-Dick*. Many artists have taken on the task of adapting this novel into works of art in the forms of illustrated children's books, paintings, prints, and sculptures. To do so successfully requires long studies of the text itself and of Melville's linguistic techniques.

In his essay on adaptation studies, John Bryant of the Melville Electronic Library explains that "adaptors generate new versions of the text and thereby re-author the work, giving it new meaning in new contexts, and in some degree drawing out in sharper delineations the originating author's original intentions" (Bryant 48). Many artists do so by interpreting the text literally, focusing on evoking a specific mood that the narrative explored, or creating an entirely new adaptation that reinvents the story, yet maintains major themes. Bryant's statement of regeneration applies to literary adaptations of text and also extends to the domain of visual arts; it is the responsibility of an artist to maintain the textual identity of the original referenced work while exploring the imagery and emotions associated with the author's writing and stylistic elements in conjunction with their own imaginative aims.

Abstract impressionist Frank Stella, self-taught artist Matt Kish, and award winning children's book illustrator Allan Drummond each offer thought provoking perspectives on creating adaptations of *Moby-Dick* through their varying artistic styles and media. The aesthetic differences of each artist expose the depth and complexity involved in interpreting Melville's Great American novel in different creative forms. Stella translates scenes on the *Pequod* by way of modern, abstract conceptualization, playing with shapes and color to explore emotion. Drummond creates a more literal display of events and presents important thematic concepts through naive, understandable imagery that is approachable to a multitude of ages and readers. Kish, as somewhat of a midway between the two, incorporates abstract elements in his work, but also presents familiar, approachable images that pay homage to authenticity of the story.

The works of these three artists provide insight into the wide range of approaches and responses evident in visual interpretations and adaptations of the beloved novel *Moby-Dick*. In each of their individual artistic styles, Stella, Drummond, and Kish expand upon the original intentions of Melville by expressing how the novel can manifest itself in a multitude of contexts, emotional, literal, and theoretical. By analyzing the way in which these artists construct renditions surrounding the same scenes and general thematic notions existing in the text of *Moby-Dick*, both readers and artistic audiences gain insight into new generations of the classic text.

Frank Stella: "What You See is What You See"

Beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the early twenty-first century, American artist and popular abstract impressionist printmaker Frank Stella began a long project of creating a series of two hundred and sixty-six screen prints, lithographs, paintings, and sculptures surrounding imagery and themes depicted in *Moby-Dick*, as well as the life of Herman Melville. When asked why he turned to Melville's novel for inspiration, Stella replied that the book was essentially about the "menace and danger of being alive," and the image of the great white whale "was to address abstraction's inability to tell a story" (quoted in Gilmour 418). It is in the mystery of the sea and the great legend of *Moby-Dick* that Stella took inspiration. He uses the images conjured in Melville's narrative to construct evocative pieces of art that produce an impression relating to the text; his style provokes audiences to think critically about why those emotions or thoughts arrived into one's consciousness and how it relates to their reading of the narrative.

In my own evaluation of his work, Stella's abstract style is comprised of vivid colors, geometricity, dimensionality and stark contrasts between irregular forms and fluidity. The piece titled *Giufà, la luna, i ladri e le guardie 4x*, which is



unaffiliated with his studies of *Moby-Dick*, is a clear representation of all things Stella (Figure 1). Distinctive of his style, this mixed media collage blends canvas, aluminum, hand painting, fiberglass, and etching into a three-dimensional piece that

exemplifies Stella's use of bold color, gestural brush strokes, geometric shapes, and the juxtaposition of soft versus strict forms. The bright, primary colors of yellow, red, green and blue are appealing to one's eye but the symmetrical cylinders and columns that are etched with precise lines are aggravated by shapeless forms, covered with chaotic painted designs; thus, *Giufà, la luna, i ladri e le guardie 4x* is an archetypal work representing Stella's unrestricted aesthetic.

Figure 1 <http://www.wikiart.org>

As an abstract impressionist, Stella produces works that are enhanced through a sort of minimalism, placing focus on the innate nature of a shape and the simplicity in a line. Even though his color work is loud, there is very little blending, shading, and shadowing, which typically give pieces depth; however, as many of his works are three-dimensional, the curvature of his paintings forms natural shadows and uses lighting to enhance the composition.

His collaged images suggest themes from *Moby-Dick* by means of visceral reaction, rather than concrete imagery. His works typically contain geometric patterns that contrast elements of freehanded lines and wild color combinations, and these elements work together to create a rhythmic flow as well as a sense of rigidity. It is in this combination of components that are both tense and free-formed that his pieces succeed in imitating and illustrating the Great White Whale and the events upon the *Pequod*.



Stella's work holds shocking symbolic clarity as an adaptation in his ability to evoke similar emotions within the viewer that Melville's text also arouses.

One of the most popular collections, titled 'The Waves,' is a series of works titled after thirty-nine of the chapter heads in the novel, such as *The Squid* (Figure 2) and *The Quarter-Deck* (Figure 3). In a review of this collection, Aileen Callahan of John Hopkins University explains that "both figurative and non-figurative allusions and connections" can be made in regards to his pieces as well as Melville's text and

that Stella's work represents an "associational abstraction" of the images, themes, relationships and ideas examined in the novel (Callahan 87-88). In an interview with Stella McCartney of *Interview Magazine* Frank Stella commented upon the narrative capacity of his pieces pertaining to 'The Waves' collection by saying that to him, "[a]bstraction didn't have to be limited to a kind of rectilinear geometry or even a



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Figure 3 <http://www.artnet.com>

simple curve geometry. It could have a geometry that had a narrative impact. In other words, you could tell a story with the shapes. It wouldn't be a literal story, but the shapes and the interaction of the shapes and colors would give you a narrative sense. You could have a sense of an abstract piece flowing along and being part of an action or activity" (quoted in McCartney).

The passage that influenced the creation of one of his most popular prints, *The Squid*, appears in Chapter 59, where the crew believes they are in pursuit of the white whale--only to come across a "vast pulpy mass, furlongs in length and

breadth...with innumerably long arms radiating from its centre, curling and twisting like a nest of anacondas”(Melville 226). Melville’s imagery in this passage describes an iridescent, serpent-like creature that is the giant, mysterious squid. During the crew’s spotting of the squid, curiosity and bewilderment in Ishmael and the other sailors are evident as they ponder the animal and its resemblance to a ghostly apparition. Stella utilizes this feeling of anxiety and tension onboard after the sighting by creating a chaotic, nonsensical composition in the piece and incorporating multiple harsh and edgy shapes.

In *The Squid*, Stella integrates forty-two different colors and collages many media, such as lithography, hand coloring, screen-printing, and linocuts to create complex layers and dimensions in the piece. Stella’s multifaceted, labor intensive pieces of art can be compared to the text of *Moby-Dick* in the sense that Melville collages many genres of literary style such as autobiography, fiction, epic, and travel narrative to also create a “mixed-media” work of literary art.

Stella reinterprets the archetypal squid portrayed in Chapter 59 through use of geometric shapes, bold color, and tumultuous composition; his piece contradicts the fluid anaconda-like imagery, pulpy whiteness, and effortless motion of the sea that Melville has offered. Stella’s non-linear interpretation places a greater focus on emotion, mood, and feel associated with the text rather than literally developing chapter-specific and textually accurate representations. Callahan explains that “Stella honors Melville’s novel not by illustrating its action, but by recreating its spirit. He has inhabited its fictional structure with his own pictorial art, creating 138 independent yet interrelated designs” (Callahan 87). It is in his piece *The Squid* that

this independent, yet interrelatedness is explored through his use of color and shape to capture a certain essence of the scene.

The primary color seen in the piece is a bright red. This color can possibly represent blood, relating to the bloodshed of the whaling industry, as well as power, like that of Captain Ahab. The “mass” of the squid and its “innumerable long arms” can possibly be interpreted as the repeated symmetrical triangles stemming out from a white center, creating a focal point in the piece. Even though a figurative squid may not even be present in the piece, in the use of bold color, jutting edges and asymmetry, Stella invites the eyes to scramble to make meaning of the display, possibly connecting to the way the whalemens are challenged to discern what the “white mass” is before them--whale or squid?

In a review of the work published in the journal *Print Quarterly*, art critic Pat Gilmour explains, “[i]n his interpretation of this spectacle, Stella made use of delicate marbling in water-colour, plus a wild assortment of reds, bluish whites, and purples, tinged darkly at the lower edge to suggest the squid’s ink” (421). Through this explanation, the process of how an artist depicts and adapts Melville’s literary imagery and text into a piece of abstract visual art is illuminated; each aspect of the work, including colors, imagery, placement and line work, influences the way the piece is interpreted and analyzed in regards to the original work of text.

Stella encourages his audience to explore their own investigation of the scene with awareness on their prior perceptions formed while reading the pertinent chapter, as well as how the image may or may not affect their current understanding of the scene on emotional and visual levels. The connection to Melville and his novel

is visible in Stella's pieces but contrasted through his abstract impressionistic style. By placing importance on creating deep and complex responses in the viewer and strategically setting a mood in each piece, Stella's study of *Moby-Dick* profoundly harnesses the feeling that Melville intended to create in his text.

Matt Kish: *Moby-Dick* Page-by-Page

Another artist, Matt Kish, uses the physical pages of *Moby-Dick* as the vehicle in his series of interpretive illustrations published in his book *Moby-Dick in Pictures: One Drawing for Every Page* (2011). Beginning in August 2009, Kish embarked on a two-year project of providing supplementary images on each of the five hundred and fifty two pages of the Signet Classic edition of the novel. The self-taught artist continues to create and publish works inspired by Melville on his personal blog but also explores illustrating other great novels, like Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*.

Like Frank Stella, Kish also uses Melville's text as a primary resource for his work. Kish's style incorporates abstract imagery and symbolism to construct an artistic adaptation of the story. However, unlike Stella where the connection to the story is indiscernible without the title or prior knowledge of his studies on Melville, Kish's art uses the physical book and its pages to bring awareness to the textual importance and language in *Moby-Dick*.

Kish chose to study the story of the White Whale because “it carries within its pages nearly everything a reader needs to know about life, death, love, hate, God, the world, good, evil, morality, spirituality, sexuality, ethics, truth, falsehood and finding meaning... [T]hese illustrations, humble and rough as they are, contribute at least a bit of something to the greater body of research and discussion about this amazing novel” (Kish).

Kish titles his works with specific passages from the original text, which the illustrations either explicitly or abstractly depict. By doing so, Kish makes it easier for the audience to interpret the scene on display in the work. For



example Kish titles one piece “...thus to and fro pacing, beneath his slouched hat, at every turn he passed his own wrecked boat, which had been dropped upon the quarter-deck, and lay there reversed; broken bow to shattered stern. At last he paused before it; and as in an already over-clouded sky fresh troops of clouds will sometimes sail across, so over the old man's face there now stole some such added gloom as this” (Figure 4). The illustration is a clear

Figure 4
<http://everypageofmobydick.blogspot.com>

portrayal of the monomaniac captain Ahab and perfectly accompanies Melville's original passage.

In this piece, Kish uses Melville's imagery as inspiration to fuel his own creation of Ahab's likeness and stature. In the text, Ishmael depicts the “unknown captain” as a mysterious recluse who “stood before them with a crucifixion in his face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe,” and Kish maintains this clandestine aura through his minimalistic detail and sinister coloring

(Melville 108-109). At the same time, Kish also takes on a more stylistic, abstract approach in this piece, taking liberty to interpret his own Ahab. He visually captures the dark mood and suppressed rage of his character by using an all-black color palette with limited accents of red. The focal center of the piece is an overlying image of a raven with Ahab's recognizable peg leg attached. Kish's addition of the bird pays homage to the original scene when a bird grabs and flies off with Ahab's hat, which is seen as bad omen but fails to intimidate the Captain.

The posture of Kish's Ahab-bird is strong, puffed-up, and evokes the sense of power and fearlessness; the captain provokes similar emotions among the *Pequod's* crew in the text, for they fear him and wonder at the mysterious air that he holds. This rendition of Ahab has the appearance of a shadow with little facial and bodily detail, possibly representing the way he gives off a ghostly, almost invisible ever-presence on board the *Pequod*. However, Kish does illustrate one important facial detail, which is the scar that runs the length of Ahab's body. This is represented in the lightning bolt that masks the bird's face and directly correlates to the passage where Melville describes his scar as resembling "that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive, but branded" (Melville 108-109).

Another work of Kish's that is based on Chapter 59, takes inspiration from the same passage that Stella's print *The Squid* is centered on. This piece is titled "*The four boats were soon on the water; Ahab's in advance, and all swiftly pulling towards their prey. Soon it went down, and while, with oars suspended, we were awaiting its reappearance, lo! in the same spot where it sank, once more it slowly rose. Almost forgetting for the moment all thoughts of Moby Dick, we now gazed at the most wondrous phenomenon which the secret seas have hitherto revealed to mankind. A vast pulpy mass, furlongs in length and breadth, of a glancing cream-color, lay floating on the water, innumerable long arms radiating from its centre, and curling and twisting like a nest of anacondas, as if blindly to clutch at any hapless object within reach. No perceptible face or front did it have; no conceivable token of either sensation or instinct; but undulated there on the billows, an unearthly, formless, chance-like apparition of life*" (Figure 5). In



Figure 5 <http://everypageofmobydick.blogspot.com>

the illustration, one can see the similarities and differences in the way Stella and Kish chose to represent, explore, and illustrate the same piece of text through visual artistic adaptation. In contrast to Stella, who takes a more symbolic approach in constructing a representation of the squid, Kish relies on the imagery Melville provides through the language of the novel, including references to color and adjectives like "twisting" and "curling".

Kish's conception of the squid holds clear connections with Melville's text in his strategic use of color. His use of bright white coloring and the juxtaposition with

the whitewashed and grey tentacles display a sense of pulpiness in the squid's form, directly referring to the textual description. The use of the blinding whiteness in the body of the squid may also be correlated to Ishmael's constant infatuation with the color and representational quality of 'whiteness', which is examined in depth in Chapter 42, titled *The Whiteness of The Whale*.

The background of the piece, a blend of watery turquoise and blue hues that is translucent enough to allow the actual text of the page to show through, literally correlates to the setting of Chapter 59's scene, a "transparent blue morning" (225). Kish incorporates the phrase "tricks and teasers" in the illustration to explicitly reference the squid's capability of fooling Daggoo into thinking it was the White Whale. Kish also draws four boats that are drastically smaller than the squid to show the creature's great "vastness" in comparison to the men and their miniscule vessels.

The point of view explored in this piece is particularly interesting because the entire scene is seen from an aerial perspective. In the original text, Melville describes whaleman Daggoo spotting what he believes to be the White Whale from his stationed position up in the masts. By depicting the scene from this point of view, the audience is able to see through the eyes of Daggoo and is instantly placed within the action of the novel. Also, this angle of sight relays the enormous size of the squid in comparison to the sailors and their boats, creating a sense of miniscularity in relation to the infinite sea.

Kish explains his attraction to the scene of the squid in Chapter 59 as being an "absolutely eerie and a wonderful foreshadowing of what is to come...[he] could

so perfectly see in [his] mind the men in their tiny wooden boats nearing the squid, peering down into the water at the blindly clutching tentacles, and staring in both wonder and terror. It's a quiet scene, but full of strangeness" (Kish). Though this piece is a clearer representation of the scene than Stella's, we get a similar emotional response towards his appeal to artistic aspects such as point of view, dimensional relations, sensation of smallness, and strategic use of color.

Overall, Matt Kish's work intricately intertwines aspects of abstraction, literal interpretation, and emotional appeal as he interprets, adapts and reworks *Moby-Dick*. Mimicking the ebb and flow of life upon the *Pequod*, some pages are modest and simple, while others are intricately crafted and filled with detail. Similar to the monomania of captain Ahab, *Moby-Dick in Pictures: One Drawing for Every Page* provides "the opportunity to share in one man's literary obsession and to see, through his eyes, how a story written over 150 years ago can still resonate" (Cable). As Kish shares his own journey of *Moby-Dick* through imagery, his audience is invited to use his works in deepening their own visual interpretation of the text as well.

Allan Drummond: Approachable Adventures at Sea

The multifaceted intricacy involved in the storyline and composition of *Moby-Dick* compels readers to define the novel as a Great American classic; however, due to the vast expository passages, challenging language, and troubling subject matter, Melville's writing is not suitable for all audiences. Thus, abbreviated and revised

editions of *Moby-Dick* exist in order to introduce young readers to the thematic and cultural importance of the novel, as well as encourage them to pursue literary interests. Because abstract art, like Melville's text, may be difficult for young children to approach and grasp, simple illustrated adaptations with supplementary textual abridgements of *Moby-Dick* and other literary classics are increasingly being made available. Contemporary author, illustrator, and graphic artist Allan Drummond uses the platform of visual arts to present the profound and complex story of *Moby-Dick* to younger audiences through his picture-book adaptation of Melville's narrative.

Totaling thirty-two pages, Drummond's inviting adaptation successfully relays a kid-friendly story of Ishmael, the White Whale, and captain Ahab's revenge through colorful, approachable illustrations and easy-to-read bubbles of dialogue. His book seems to have an "entirely different agenda of revising the original, for whatever social or aesthetic end" and through his adaptation, Drummond "reposition[s] the originating text in a new cultural context" (Bryant 54). Drummond's appeal to an adolescent audience compels a shift in illustrative and narrative modes to fit the mindset of a young-adult reader.

Drummond drastically edits the story to make it more palatable to these adolescent audiences, creating a retelling of the narrative, rather than an interpretation. In addition to simplifying the language, Drummond omits troubling scenes such as Queequeg building his own coffin and images of the gore associated with whaling. His imagery chronicles the basic plot of *Moby-Dick* while utilizing directness in his pictures to convey essential meaning, rather than evoke complex

emotion. For these reasons, Drummond's illustrated adaptation can be seen as a successful reworking of the tale, rather than an artistic, visual interpretation.

Since his imagery does not hold the same power to evoke abstract thought or emotion as that of Kish and Stella, nor does it intend to, Drummond employs small excerpts of text to further explain the plot and climactic action. Together, the small textual abridgements and recognizable illustrations create an understandable version of *Moby-Dick* that is suitable for the very young. Drummond uses this simplicity and clarity to his advantage in his watercolor and ink images to facilitate the depiction of the major themes and intricate passages of the novel in a lighthearted way without challenging the reader.

Because this adaptation is specifically designed for early readers and even pre-readers who solely rely on the images to tell the story, Drummond's portrayal of major characters and ideas shies away from exact representations of Melville's text.

Drummond's Ahab is substantially less unnerving, Queequeg's rugged tattoos that were alarming in the novel were altered to resemble beautiful henna designs, and the whale is explicitly colored a brilliant white sans the multiple harpoons stemming from its wounded sides and its gaping

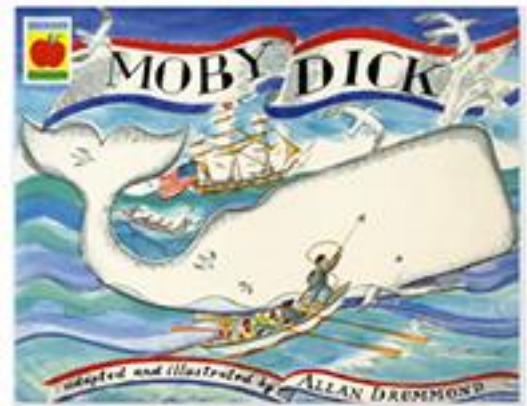


Figure 6 <http://allandrummond.com/>

jaw full of enormous teeth (Figure 6). Rhetorically appealing to the pathos of a younger demographic, Drummond purposely constructs his adaptation to avoid addressing the more "adult" issues that Melville's text includes such as animal cruelty, psychosis, and race relations on board. Thus, the naivety of Drummond's

aesthetic allows for a representational reading of Melville's text suitable for the sole purpose of storytelling. In its simplest form, Drummond's narrative is that of maritime adventure, one man's quest for a whale, and some rudimentary details on the business of whaling.

In Drummond's illustration of the scene concerning the squid, the animal's appearance is bright green with whimsical tentacles suctioning onto the *Pequod's* port and starboard sides. Drummond's rendition provides an easily identifiable, cartoon-like depiction of the creature (Figure 7). Unlike the tension in Stella's squid, Drummond's gentle washes of primary color appeal to the youthful eye, and the lack of structured, bold line work suggests a tone of ease and tranquility. In opposition to the original intentions of Melville's description of the squid as cream-colored and an



Figure 7 <http://allandrummond.com>

“unearthly, formless” being, Drummond's illustration is visually appealing, lighthearted, and avoids any connotation of eeriness or evocation of fear.

The image is accompanied by the line “[s]o weeks and months passed by on the magnificent and mysterious sea...” and when one sailor asks “what is it sir?” Ahab replies “the great squid!” (Drummond 14). Even though the image is not authentic to that of Melville's description, Drummond's text enhances the image by creating an overall feeling that pervades the scene; the phrase illustrates the vast magnificence of the sea, while the speech bubbles explain the sailor's curiosity towards the never-before-seen marine cephalopod.

The four sailors aboard are depicted glancing inquisitively down into the water at the squid with smiles on their faces. This portrayal also contradicts Melville and departs from the initial response the crew has upon sighting the animal. In opposition to Drummond's representation of the four curious men peering into the sea, the original text shows Starbuck's reaction to the squid in his exclamation, "[a]lmost rather had I seen Moby Dick and fought him, than to have seen thee, thou white ghost!" (Melville 226). Drummond utilizes his stylistic license in this illustration as he goes beyond interpretation and revises concrete details of the original text of *Moby-Dick* in order to display a certain artistic, rhetorical or pedagogical purpose.

Drummond leaves little to the imagination in this child-friendly version of the classic; however, when taking into consideration this targeted audience, his illustrations succeed in telling a more accessible, bare-boned, version of Melville's complex story. As both a textual and visual abridgement of the original, Drummond's book delineates from Melville's with the goal of placing the classic in a reinvented, youthful context. By placing focus on telling the tale in a more accessible light, Allan Drummond embarks on an incredibly difficult task of revising and reimagining *Moby-Dick* through a very specialized revisionary lens.

Conclusion

Stylistically, Melville does not heed to any one literary genre and in doing so, opens the doors to allow many types of adaptations of his novel, whether abstract or literal. The point of departure from interpreting Melville's text is different for Kish, Stella and Drummond. In regards to the audience's reception, some may find Drummond's or Stella's work too detached from Melville's text; however, "[a]daptation is both a transgression of the originating work and a liberation. And like any form of liberation, the adaptor's sense of empowerment can infuriate or delight" (Bryant 50). It is this open possibility for interpretation, retelling, and reimagining that gives *Moby-Dick* the status of being such a stimulating and complex narrative to readers and continuing to invigorate the creative minds of artists alike.

Drummond's demonstrative, minimalistic retelling of the story depicts the literal elements in *Moby-Dick* but also succeeds in creating a new textual identity of the story as a pre-adolescent version of the narrative. Drummond reimagines the tale from a youthful eye, and while certain contradictions may exist between Melville's text and his adaptation, he takes liberty in expressing his own love for the narrative and constructs the world of Ishmael, Ahab, and the whale into a colorful, approachable, animated story of adventure.

On the other hand, Frank Stella's and Matt Kish's adaptations focus more on the conscious effect *Moby-Dick* has on its readers, and both strive to communicate that sense through their artwork. Kish, aroused by the emotional element that Melville achieves through text alone, uses the physical book as the platform for his illustrations to highlight the author's narrative power and ultimate mastery of language. Kish's work plays with abstraction and authenticity to depict the novel as

a visual journey, allowing each page to exhibit a theme, concrete image, feeling, or personal exploration of the words that line the page.

Lastly, Stella, whose work can be considered the most abstract and philosophical of the three, transcends traditional methods of adaptation by creating impressionistic pieces of art that focus on the sole manifestation and evocation of emotion within the audience. Stella's experimental approach to depicting *Moby-Dick* illuminates how shapes, colors, and compositions can be inspired by text and influence the artistic process. Stella's work in 'The Waves' collection can be accurately defined by his own personal maxim, "you see what you see"; Stella's work may not outwardly portray a great white whale or a spiteful peg-legged captain, but he succeeds in capturing the essence of the *Pequod* and the journey Ishmael embarks upon.

The cultural phenomenon associated with *Moby-Dick* precedes the time of these three modern artists, Stella, Kish, and Drummond; however, as readers of Melville, they "show their love of [the] work by changing it, remaking it, retelling it, adapting it" (Bryant 50). Their stylistic adaptations of the novel, created under new contexts of literary and artistic times, infuse the age-old story with newfound images and emotions that were never before conceptualized in relation to the original text. In these revisionary and interpretive works of art fueled by both abstract and literal imagery, *Moby-Dick* and Melville's literary genius continues to be recognized and explored through the work of visual adaptation.

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