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For my final project I am making a comic based on one chapter of *Moby Dick*. I knew I wanted to do a comic but also had to start earlier in the term, so the chapter I chose was “36: The Quarter Deck”. This chapter stood out because it has one of the most quoted speeches in the book, with the line “I’d shoot the sun if it insulted me”, and for its general sense of foreboding. Like we discussed in class, this is a major diva moment for Ahab. I was already interested in comic adaptations, and *Moby Dick* is notoriously difficult to make into a comic because of its scope and ping-ponging between narrow character study and the wider whaling industry. While I don’t wholly agree with the criticism of Eisner’s comic process in ‘This Elusive Quality’, I see why adapting *Moby Dick* is so difficult. I think a large problem with Eisner’s *Moby Dick* is that it was marketed as a condensed adaptation, rather than a work of art in its own right. I am of the opinion that Eisner and Kish accomplished very similar projects, albeit with different approaches. ‘This Elusive Quality’ thinks that Eisner’s *Moby Dick* is bare because it stays within the comic panels, but Eisner explained that he saw *Moby Dick* as a series of “motion-dominated sequence” in an interview. Kish similarly broke down the book into one quote a page, narrowing the book’s scope to an easily digestible art piece. And yet each art piece took him hours. He thought about quitting constantly. He didn’t eat, he lost sleep, and it was only by looking back at the bulk of the work he’d done already that motivated him to finish. While I think we have very different artistic styles, I saw myself in his artistic process. It isn’t often that artists talk candidly about obsession in conversation with burnout. You want to stop, but you can’t. Like Kish, I also don’t see art

as a profession. I didn't like art classes when I was little. I didn't even like compiling my art portfolio when I was applying to Dartmouth. This means that each project is deeply personal to me, and I won't stop working until it's done. The process of making a comic therefore has to be broken down one page at a time so I don't keel over working for a week straight.

When I adapt *Moby Dick* on the comic page, I would want each page to be considered an art piece, so that the whole book is kind of like a gallery of paintings. Like Kish and Eisner, I also spend hours sketching, outlining, and editing each page. In the process, I have begun to believe that 'the elusive quality' of *Moby Dick* adaptations is that readers do not fully digest or have not read the book, so they believe the comic is a gateway, rather than an expansion. Luckily, this comic is made for a class that is a term-long obsession with *Moby Dick*, so I am hoping that this audience is more receptive.

During this process, I've sketched out what each page will roughly look like.

Here's an example:

Page 3

At every uniform turn he made, you could almost see that thought possessing him. Indeed, it all but seemed the inward mould of every outer movement.

- Bird's eye view of Ahab's trail — concentric circles narrowing, him at the center. Two corner slots at either side for Flask and Stubb, who are looking at each other uneasily. Stubb is speaking, so he is on the left.
- **Stubb: D'ye mark him Flask?**
- **Stubb: The chick that's in him pecks the shell. 'Twill soon be out.**



The blank box is for a rough sketch of what I want when printed out. I've done this for about 25 pages. I am aiming to finish the art early so that I can print it on nice paper and bind it for final presentations.

So far, I've heavily referenced a few works and concepts that reminded me of *Moby Dick*. Some of these are:

Will Eisner's *Moby Dick* (haters be damned, I like it)

Charles Burns's *Black Hole* (really good body horror, inspired a lot of the imagery in the later pages I am planning)

Jean-Yves Delitte's *Le Neptune* (ship art. I've googled a lot of it)

Junji Ito's *Gyo* (fish!)

Koji Suzuki's *Dark Water* (water horror)

'Bad Travelling' from Love, Death, and Robots (men fighting a sea monster)

Along with the sources provided to me:

This Elusive Quality: Moby Dick on the Comics Page

Matt Kish's illustrations of Moby Dick

I'm hoping the final product will be a surprise. I really want it to be presented all at once, so I won't attach anything here. I am about 10 pages in for an idea of progress.