

# *Moby-Dick*

ECL 522: American Lit 1800-1860  
Professor Jessica Pressman  
Fall 2025

Day 25: Adaptations

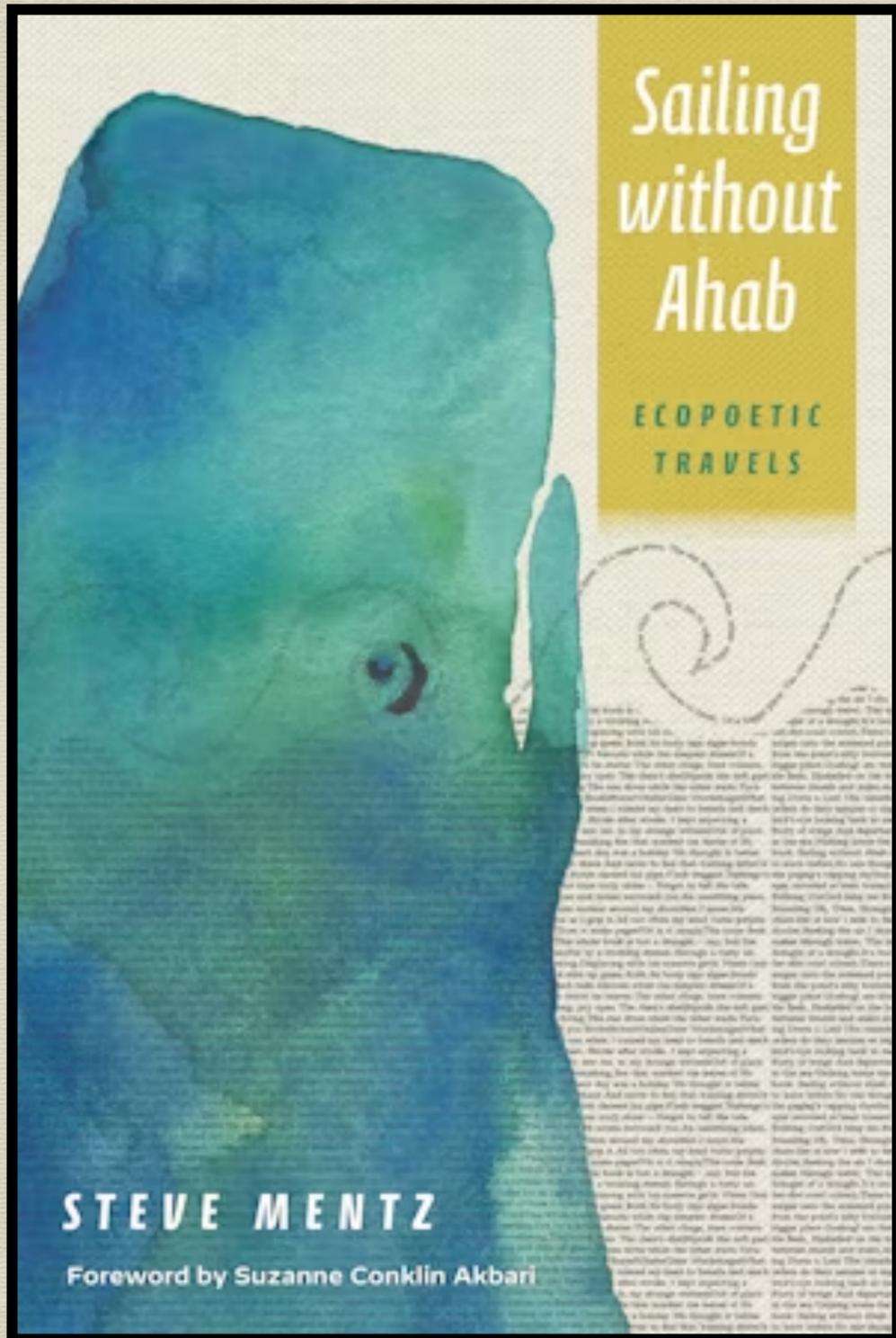
# ADMIN

- QUESTION: Tuesday— class workshop or office hours?

# Discussion

- What did you learn about *Moby Dick* by reading/viewing adaptations?
- What adaptation (or part of one) do you want to discuss?

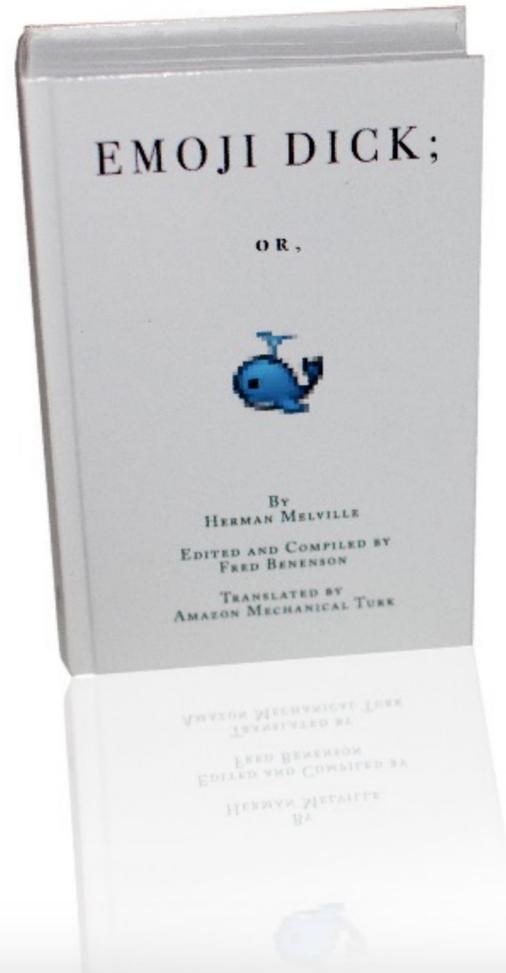
# Steve Mentz, *Sailing without Ahab: Ecopoetic Travels* (2024)



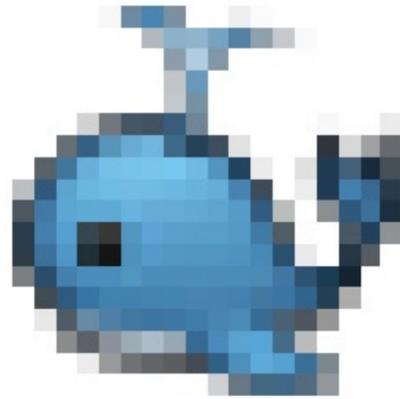
# From your blogs— Mentz's "The Chart"

- OMAR: The poem suggests a different way to move through the ocean, one that relies more on paying attention than on being certain. Sailing "without" the chart does not mean rejecting knowledge, but recognizing its limits. It means staying open to the sea's "comingling and flow" and letting experience lead, instead of forcing things to fit a set plan. In the end, when the chart is said to "emulate" the world only "in parts," the poem makes its main point: our attempts to represent the world are always incomplete, but that is not a failure. Instead, it shows the world's richness. "The Chart" encourages us to value what we cannot fully capture and to approach the ocean, and any complex reality, with humility instead of control.

# EMOJI DICK;



O R



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## About Emoji Dick

Emoji Dick is a crowd sourced and crowd funded translation of Herman Melville's Moby Dick into Japanese emoticons called **emoji**.

Each of the book's approximately 10,000 sentences has been translated three times by a Amazon Mechanical Turk worker. These results have been voted upon by another set of workers, and the most popular version of each sentence has been selected for inclusion in this book.

In total, over eight hundred people spent approximately 3,795,980 seconds working to create this book. Each worker was paid five cents per translation and two cents per vote per translation.

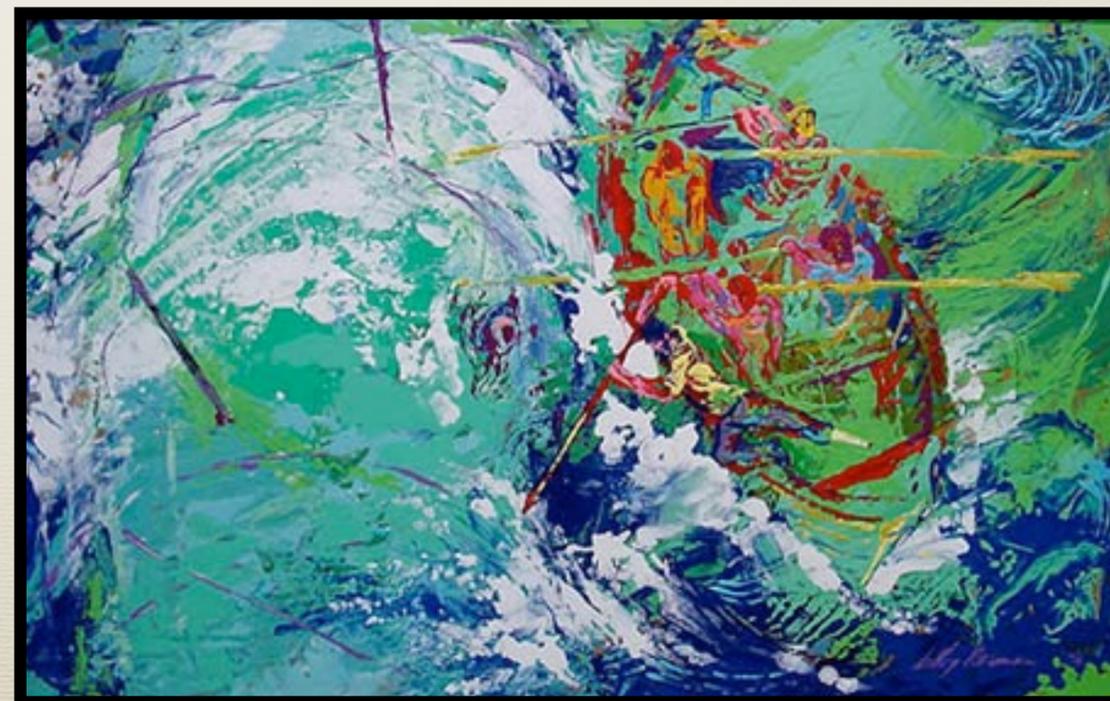
The funds to pay the Amazon Turk workers and print the initial run of this book were raised from eighty three people over the course of thirty days **using the funding platform Kickstarter**.

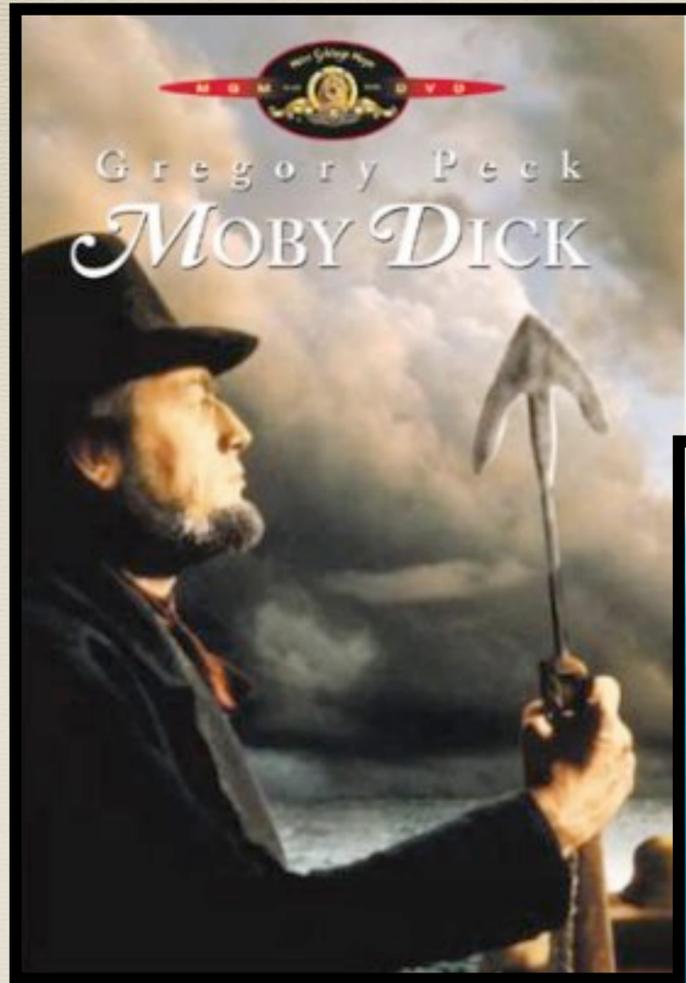
# Adaptations



**Jackson Pollock, "Blue (Moby Dick)" 1943**

Leroy Neiman, *Moby Dick Suite*  
(1977)

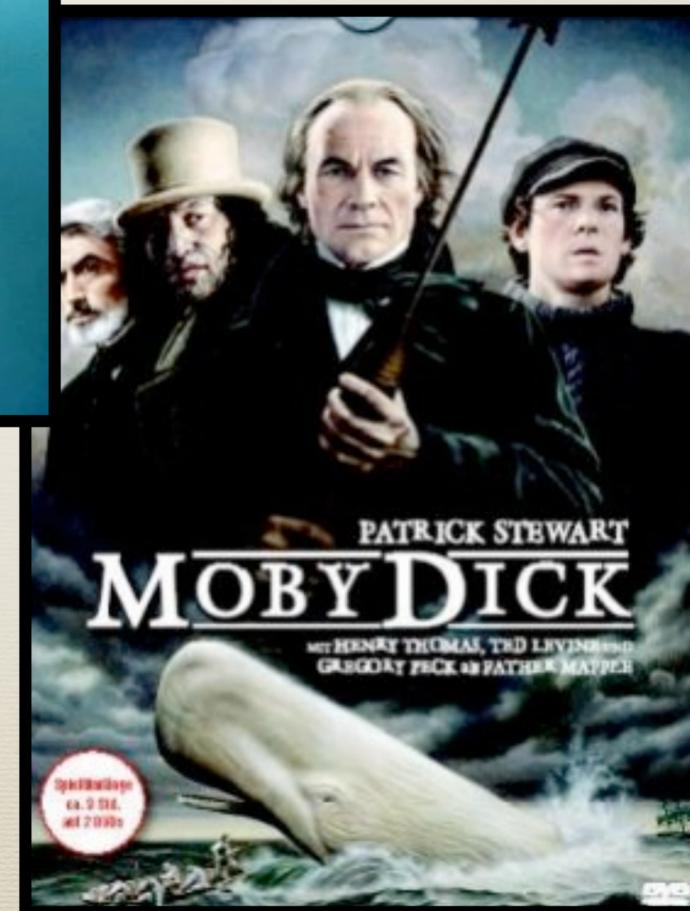


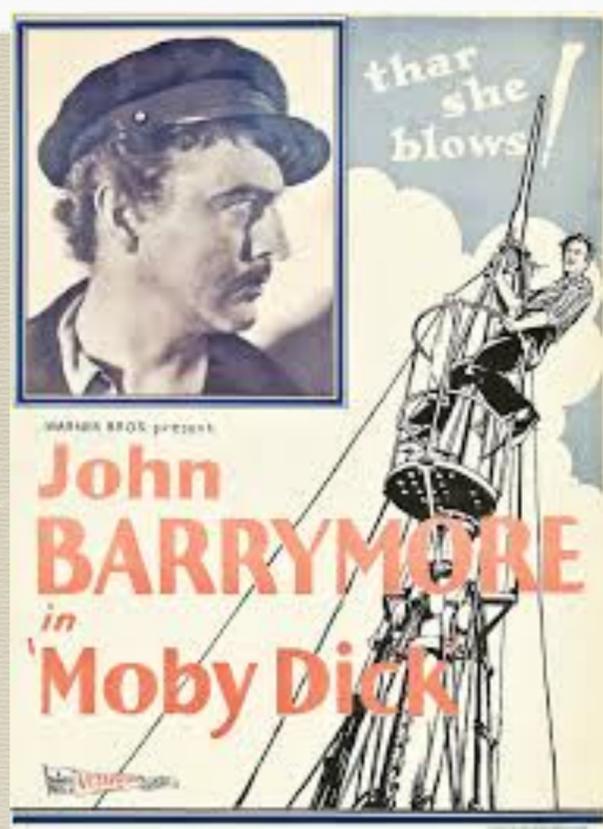


Dir. John Huston (1956)



Dir. Francis Ford Coppola (1998)

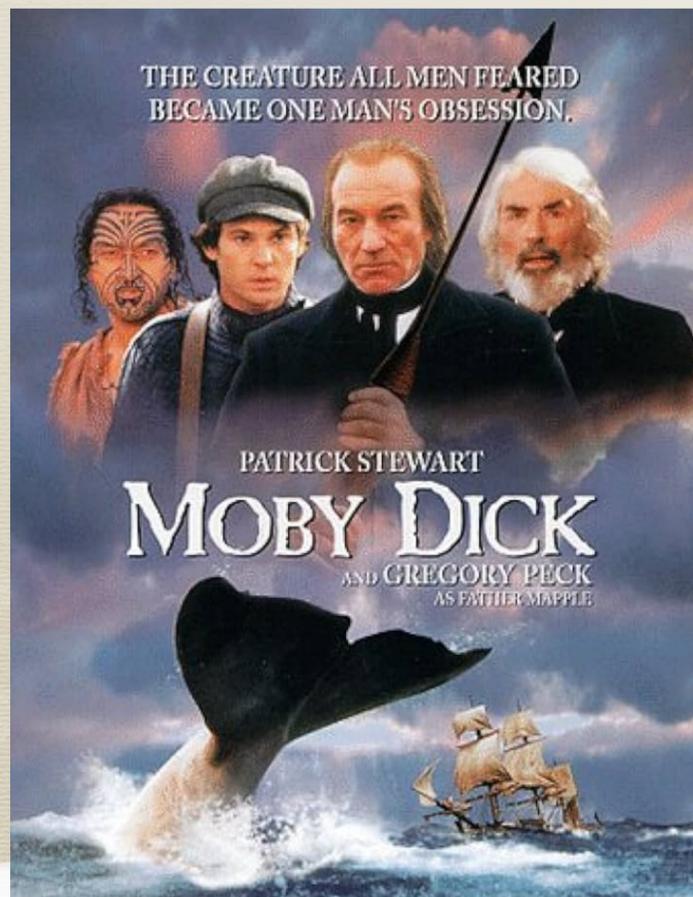




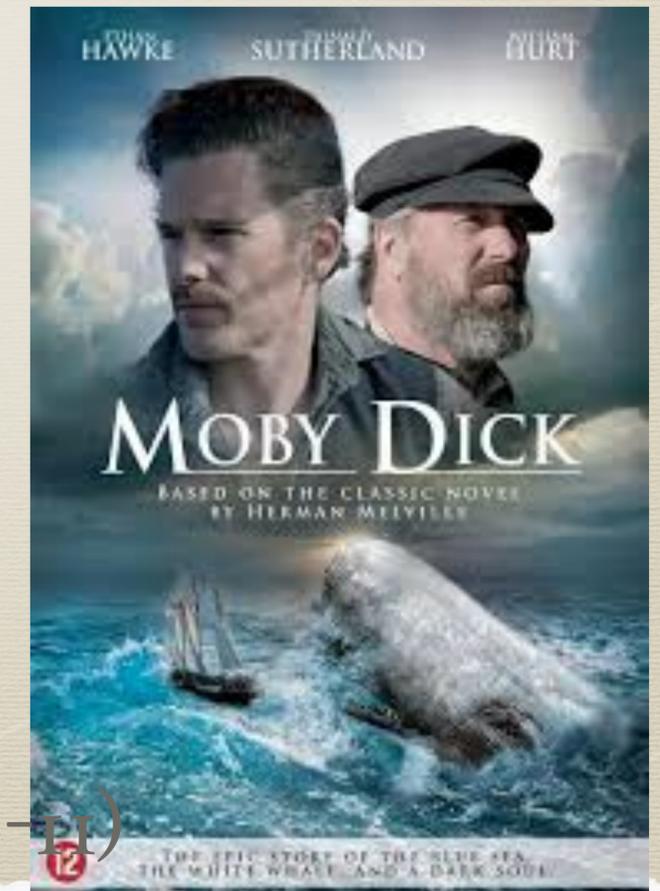
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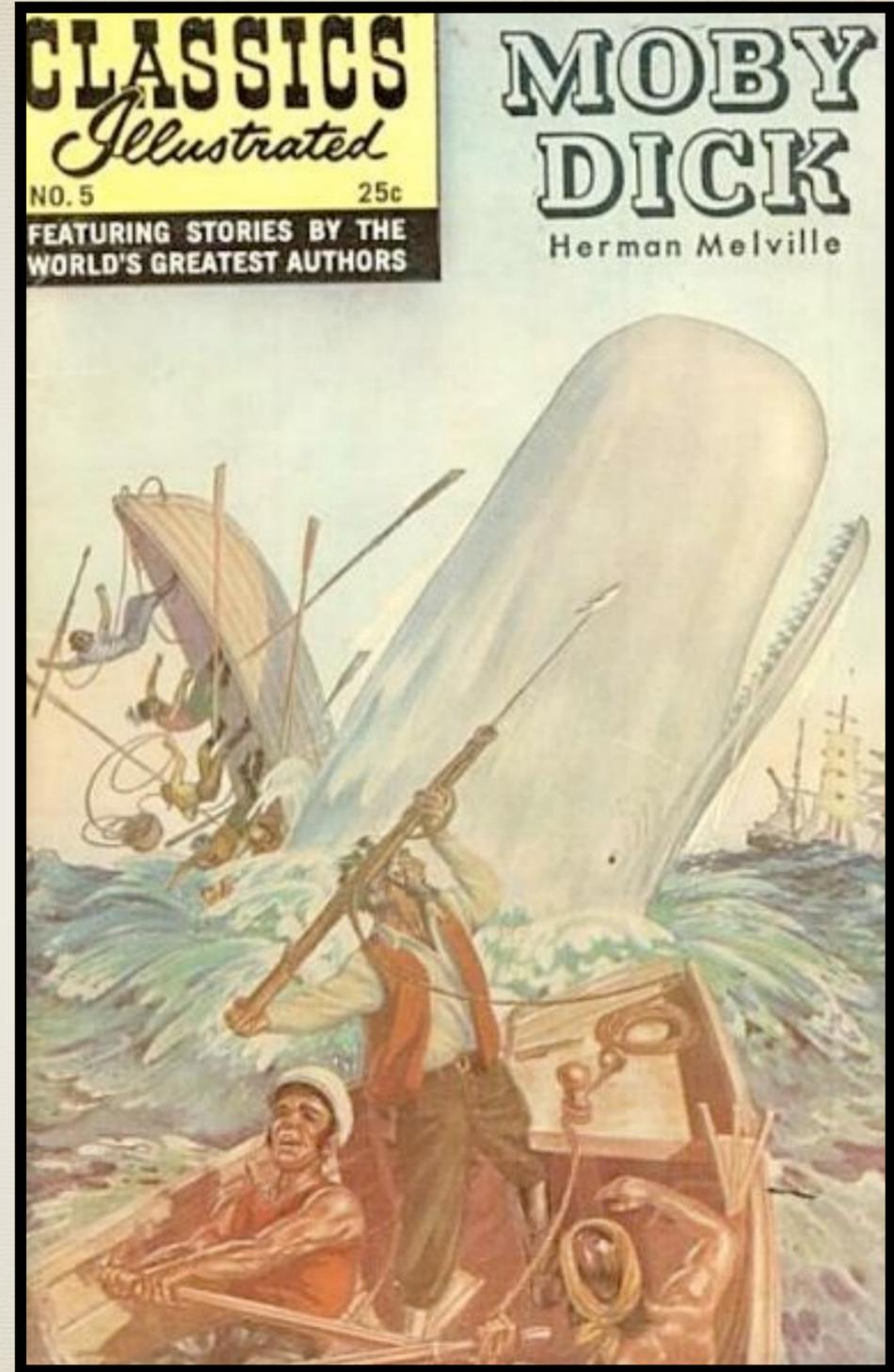
Dir. John Huston (1956)



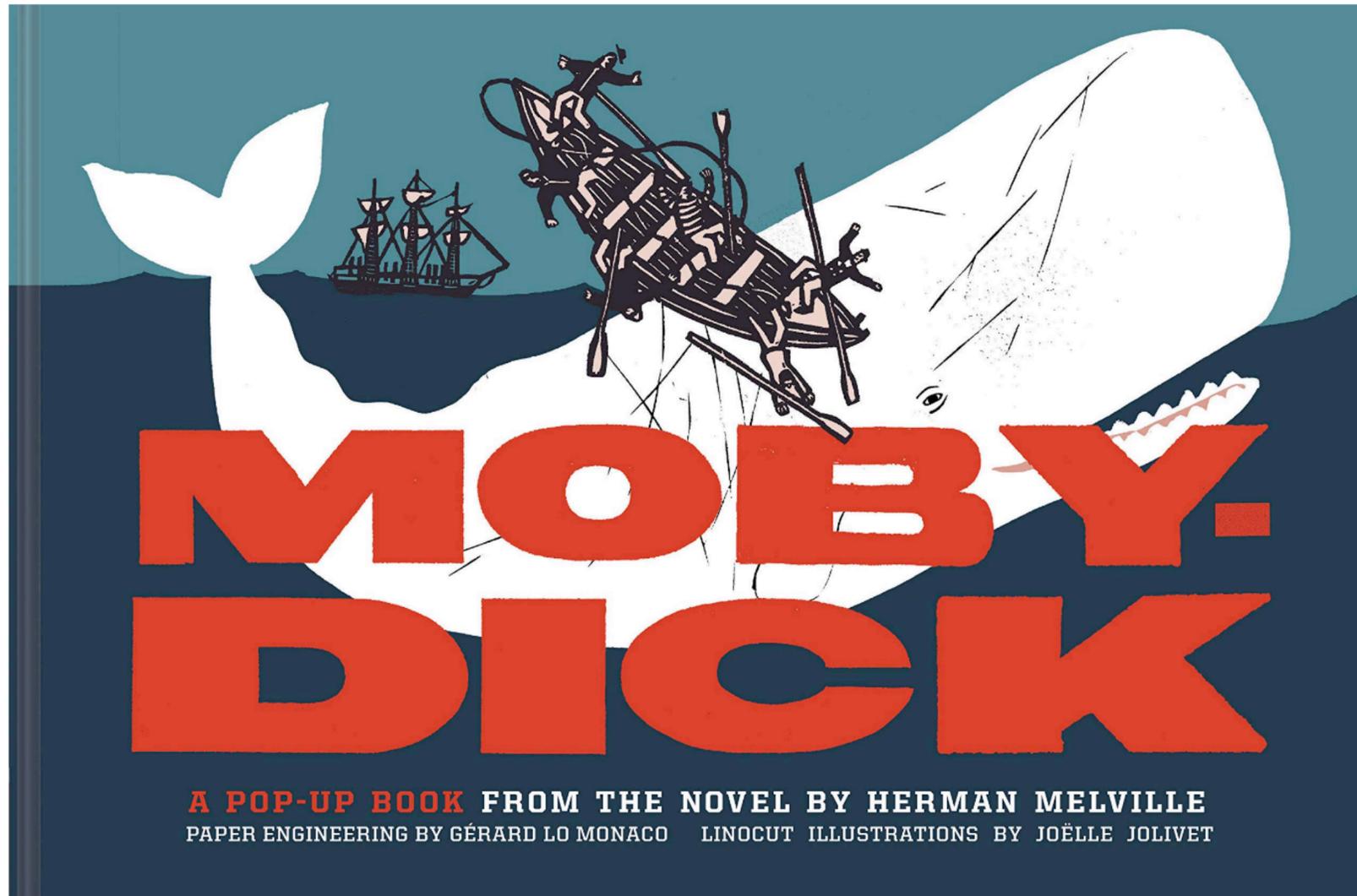
Dir. Francis Ford Coppola (1998)



Dir. Mark Barker (2010-11)



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# Creative hacks of *Moby Dick*

The image shows a screenshot of the Twitter profile for the bot 'Moby Dick' (@MobyDickatSea). The profile picture is a circular illustration of a whale's tail. The bio states: 'Over 2,000 lines handpicked from Moby Dick. This bot tweets them one at a time in random order, once every two hours.' The location is 'The South Seas' and it was joined in June 2013. The profile has 20.7K tweets and 54.4K followers. A 'Follow' button is visible. The main content area shows two tweets: a pinned tweet from Jan 12 with 2 replies, 44 retweets, and 190 likes; and a tweet from 23h with 1 reply, 25 retweets, and 73 likes. On the right, there is a promotional banner for Twitter features with 'Log in' and 'Sign up' buttons.

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Tweets 20.7K Followers 54.4K Follow

**Moby Dick**  
@MobyDickatSea

Over 2,000 lines handpicked from Moby Dick. This bot tweets them one at a time in random order, once every two hours.

The South Seas  
Joined June 2013

**Tweets** Tweets & replies

See 11 new Tweets

Pinned Tweet

**Moby Dick** @MobyDickatSea · Jan 12  
Many are the men, small and great, old and new, landsmen and seamen, who have at large or in little, written of the whale.  
2 44 190

**Moby Dick** @MobyDickatSea · 23h  
we are sown in dishonour, but raised in glory  
1 25 73

Want to take advantage of all the new Twitter features?  
It's simple – just log in.  
Log in  
Sign up





# Discussion

- What did you learn about *Moby Dick* by reading/viewing adaptations?
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# Close Reading, Explication

\*“a peculiar quality of making and unmaking itself as it goes”  
(Norton 656)

**“For the good reader the experience of Moby Dick is a participation in the act of creation.** Find a key work or metaphor, start to pick it as you would a wild flower, and you will find yourself ripping up the whole forest floor. Rhetoric grows into symbolism and symbolism into structure; then all falls away and begins over again”

—Walter E. Bezanson, “Moby Dick: Work of Art’ (1953)

# Encyclopedic Narrative

**E**NCYCLOPEDIC NARRATIVE: FROM DANTE TO PYNCHON ✎ EDWARD MENDELSON ✎ I want to use the term *encyclopedic narrative* to identify a genre that is of central importance in western literature, but one that has not yet fully been recognized. The genre of encyclopedic narrative has caught the attention of neither historical nor formalist criticism, partly because it can only be identified in terms that are *both* historical and formal. Encyclopedic narratives occupy

- Edward Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon." *MLN* 91.6 (1976): 1267-1275.

# encyclopedic novel

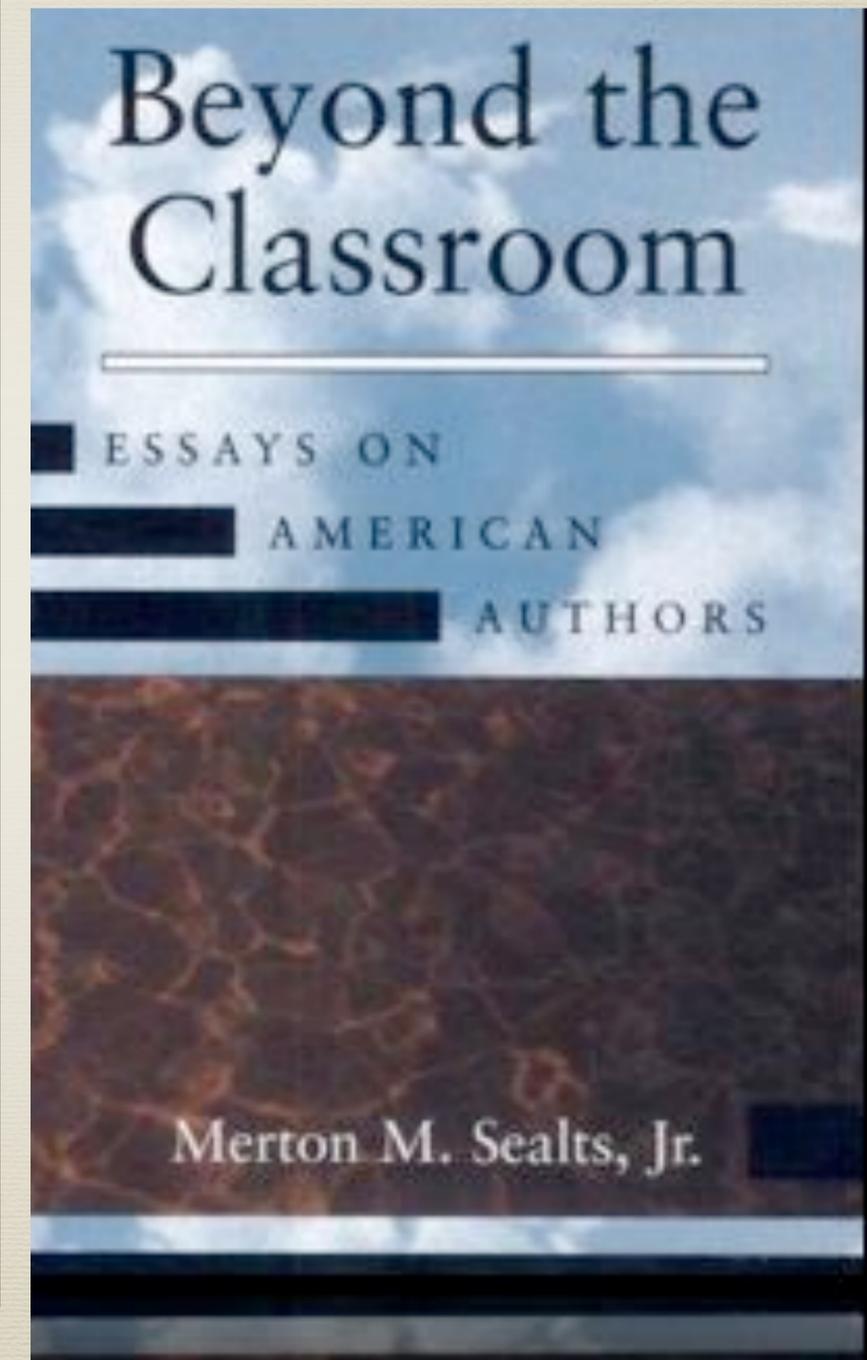
EDWARD MENDELSON (1976):

Encyclopedic novels "attempt to render the full range of knowledge and beliefs of a national culture, while identifying the ideological perspectives from which that culture shapes and interprets its knowledge"

They are "products of an epic in which the world's knowledge is larger than any one person can encompass"

# Who is the Central Character?

Whose book, then, is *Moby-Dick*? Should we award it to the title character, the invincible whale himself? or to Captain Ahab, who dooms his ship and crew in his desperate quest to slay the monster who had reaped away his leg? or to narrator Ishmael, the one human survivor of the inevitable catastrophe, who alone escapes to tell the story? Since the book was first published in 1851 the question has been posed repeatedly, but the answers to it, as we shall see, have been various indeed. For the entire book is like that gold doubloon, the coin of great value that Ahab nailed to his ship's mainmast, promising it as a reward to the first man who should sight the White Whale. Witness these words of Ahab: "this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self" (chap. 99, "The Doubloon," 431). So with the book—and so too with its principal characters. All of them mirror back the reader and whatever he or she has brought to the experience of reading.



# Take Aways?