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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Book Roundup -- Abundance, Raven's Gate and The Gallery

Plowed through some books in the last few weeks.

Abundance: A Novel Of Marie Antoinette by Sena Jeter Naslund -- Naslund made waves with her bestseller "Ahab's Wife," which cheekily told a backstory from "Moby Dick." After a contemporary novel that came and went, Naslund has returned to a historical setting, this time to tell the story of Marie Antoinette. She owes a great debt to Antonia Fraser's bio "Marie Antoinette: The Journey." (It's mentioned first in the acknowledgments.) Both are very sympathetic to Antoinette, with Naslund deftly working in some awareness of Marie's blindness to her actions. The chapters are short and brief, much like Marie's nimble but easily distracted mind. It does deepen a bit towards the end as the French Revolution takes over, but not so much as one might want. The book is ultimately a bit superficial, but pretty and distracting.

Raven's Gate by Anthony Horowitz -- Horowitz is the creator of my favorite TV mystery show, "Foyle's War" and the best-selling kids books "Alex Rider" (think a teenage James Bond.) "Raven's Gate" starts a new five book series about another 14 year old boy with huge responsibilities: this time, to save the world from the Old Ones, the evil that has been lurking behind closed Gates for millennia. Not much character development to sink your teeth into, though the series picks up quite a bit in book two (which I've just started). Still, there's a nice horror movie feel to the setting, with our hero in an odd little British village where everyone is naturally up to their necks in witchcraft. It's like an episode of "The Avengers" or one of those Seventies British horror films where menace can be found in placid country life.

The Gallery by John Horne Burns -- this is a keeper. It's a novel about life in Naples in 1944, published just a few years after WW II was over. I don't know what prompted me to pick it up (maybe the reference to a

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