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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Synchronicity (Plus A Book Review)

The IRS better not ever question me when I write off anything and everything in pop culture as part of my job. I don't care if it's a 100 year old mystery novel or an avant gard opera -- everything is connected. Case in point: I just finished reading a terrific novel called "Giraffe" by J.M. Ledgard. It's certainly one of the best novels of the year. Based on a real incident, it tells the story of giraffes captured in the wild and transported en masse to a zoo in Czechoslovakia in the early 70s. Later, all the giraffes are slaughtered and everyone knows never to mention the incident or wonder why. Ledgard, a Scottish reporter, begins the novel rather flashily from the point of view of one of the giraffes. Then the book skips from narrator to narrator: a young specialist who studies the flow of blood (important for the burgeoning space race movement) and is especially fascinated by giraffes. He finds himself assigned to overseeing the transport of the giraffes. There's a young female worker in a factory that makes Christmas ornaments. She sleepwalks at night and -- happily -- this is clearly recognized as the natural state of things for people in a totalitarian state, so somehow the metaphor is unforced for being stated so bluntly. There's a woodsman and various other apparatchiks and all of it climaxes in the bloody, terrible slaughter of the animals in a heart-rending but not sentimental tour de force. The obvious comparison is Milan Kundera, since no one since him has captured so well the mindset of living under the thumb of such self-oppression quite so vividly as Ledgard does here. The odd but compelling impression is of a book that has been translated from another language -- not because it is stiff or awkward in its style but simply because of its otherness. It is a terrific reading group book as long as no one is too sensitive about animals.

And onto synchronicity. Just before "Giraffe" I finished the classic mystery tale "The Moonstone." I've read perhaps thousands of books and "The Moonstone" by Wilkie Collins is the first one I recall where a character has used a book (in his case "Robinson Crusoe") the way

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