

# The Horizon of Our Totality

Zizek

**Bill Knight**, journalist and professor in English and Journalism, says he enjoyed Star Trek (“the only remake, sequel or prequel I’ve liked in a while”), but is mostly watching F/X’s rekindled *Rescue Me* series and Stephen Colbert’s USO show in Baghdad while he waits for Michael Mann’s *Public Enemies* in July. After reading the eight novels by an ex-San Francisco Chronicle reporter, the late Jack Lynch, last summer, Knight’s again escaping into fiction by one-time journalists, including Robert Masello’s *Blood and Ice* (about a journalist in Antarctica, “sort of Michael Crichton crossed with Seymour Hersh, with a bit of Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Tenyson’s *Charge of the Light Brigade* thrown in for fun,” he says). Knight is rediscovering old rock faves, too, listening to recent CDs by Jackson Brown (*Time the Conqueror*), musicians from NRBQ (Big Al Anderson’s *After Hours*, Terry Adams’ *Holy Tweet* and NRBQ’s *Dummy*), and two tributes: *Join the Band* from Little Feat and Friends (including Dave Matthews, Bela Fleck, Jimmy Buffet, Vince Gill, Bob Seger and Brooks & Dunn) and *Keep Your Soul: A Tribute to Doug Sahm* (with Los Lobos, Delbert McClinton, Jimmie Vaughn and Dave Alvin, among others). “She’s about a mover!” Knight adds. **Cathy Null** (College of Fine Arts) reports that she is reading Richard Russo’s *Straight Man*, a satirical look (is there any other kind possible?) at academic life. Cathy is also watching *Expedition Africa* on the History channel. Cathy writes, “The show is a reality type reliving of Stanley’s trek to find Livingstone. The show contains first hand looks at



It’s Wet Now

Africa which makes us feel a bit closer to our youngest daughter, Syd, who is in the Peace Corps in Zambia. Cathy is listening to The Kings of Leon, “I feel like a teenager, but I absolutely adore them.” The cd in question is called *Only By The Night*. Cathy’s favorites are the songs *Sex on Fire*, *17*, and *Use Somebody*. “They are, Cathy says, incredibly gifted musicians--cousin Mathew Followill on lead guitar is incredible and lead singer Caleb Followill has the kind of blues voice that you can’t get enough of. And they are smart in their hillbilly way. Chris Martin has said they will be bigger than U2 or Coldplay.” {What about bigger than the Beatles?} We asked what Cathy’s been eating, and she answered, “Anything we get from the Barefoot Gardens CSA. Have you tried garlic scapes on the grill and then cut up in a salad? If your answer is no, then get some scapes. I hear they make a mean pesto as well.” When asked where she’s travelling now, Cathy responded, “Baltimore, MA and Hermosa Beach, CA. Ned calls these trips obligations instead of vacations but we usually have a lot of fun. Hoping to eat ice cream at Woodside Farm in Hockessin, DE ala Jane and Michael Stern via *Splendid Table* and visit the Getty modern in LA. **Jacque Wilson Jordan** (English Department) reports, “My recent musical energies have been devoted to preparing to play and sing for a forty-year anniversary celebration of Woodstock organized by Bill Maakestad. Web-research-on-the-fly (shout out for youtube!) allowed for a crash course in Jackie De-

Shannon’s “Put a Little Love in Your Heart,” and Joan Baez’s Woodstock performance of “Joe Hill.” Friends Jeannie, Randy and I worked up these up for a wonderful day that began at New Copperfield’s and ended at the Wine Sellers. BTW, who knew that the #1 song of 1969 was the Archies’ “Sugar, Sugar?”

I was six at the time. And I (like at least one other person who attended the celebration) remember cutting the 45 out of the back of the Super Sugar Crisps box and playing it on my record player. I have been reading David Foster Wallace’s *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays* as well as a March, 2009 New Yorker article by D.T. Max, “*The Unfinished*,” about Wallace’s life, work, mental decline, and eventual suicide. I am also reading Gillian Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. My husband Marhsal had knee surgery in early June, so travel is out, except for a July 4 family reunion in Bonaparte, Iowa. Woo-hoo!



**Stephanie Sellers** (WIU Libraries) attended a conference on charitable planned giving in Salt Lake City and finally finished reading *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* on her i-touch and painted her kitchen a happy yellow. She plans to start *The Poisonwood Bible* and finish Dexter Filkins *The Forever War*, a NY Times reporter's gritty but realistic report on the war in Iraq. A new season of *True Blood* just started on HBO and I am addicted. It's vampire carnality at it's best! I am listening to the Black Eyed Peas new one, *The E.N.D. (The Energy Never Dies)*. As far as movies I am waiting to see *Away We Go*, a critically acclaimed film starring Maya Rudolph as an expecting wife/mother. The SNL actress/comedian travels cross country with her husband on a journey of self-discovery before adding a child to their family. **Margaret Hathaway** (Cedar Rapids Library) writes, "Recently, I read *The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt on the strength of an urgent recommendation from a friend, and enjoyed it quite a bit. It's a Newbery Honor Book, the story of an unlikely friendship between a hound dog and a cat with kittens intertwined with some folk tales from a thousand years earlier, beautifully written and compulsively readable. It begs to be read aloud, much like the *Just So Stories*, but the problem is, I would never read it to a child. I would not even read it to my husband. It's far too dark and filled with tragedy and bereavement." Bill Thompson (WIU Libraries) writes, "I am still swimming in the Duc de Saint-Simon's *Memoirs*, an instructive catalog of debauchery, avarice, and all the other things that make life worth reading about (if not living). And I am still reading Zizek's *Sublime Object of Ideology*, also filled with debauchery, avarice, etc. albeit of a (mostly) rhetorical kind. Meantime, I have read Laura Jacob's 2002 *Women About Town*, which contained no debauchery and only a little avarice, but was quite well done, a tale of love and ambition and looming middle age. At the moment I am reading the debauchery and vice filled *How To Sell* by Clancy

Martin, which begins with a boy's theft of his mother's wedding ring and goes merrily, and morally, downhill from there to chronicle a life in the retail jewelry trade. I also read the divine Georgette Heyer's classic, *Regency Buck*. People, especially Janenites, can get sniffy about Heyer, but the woman knew how to write a sentence and tell a story, even if it was the same story over and over. *Regency Buck*, aside from the usual brooding Darcy-like hero, also features an epigrammatic Beau Brummel and left me wanting to know more about the famous tastemaker. I am reading the poetry of Ange Mlinko. Her first book, *Matinees*, was so good I had to get the second one, *Starred Wire*. On order are books by Cal Bedient (*Days of Unwilling*) and Lucia Perillo's provocatively titled, *Inseminating the Elephant*. In a different register, I am making my way through Henri Nouen's *Compassion*. Music for me, now, it's about electropop: Hot Chip's *Bugged Out / Bugged In* Movies: *Up* was a delight. **Jeffery Darenbourg** (WIU Libraries) admonishes, "Occasionally emerging from the piles of chess books strewn about my house, I am finding that my summer reading has steered towards rather predictable paths for me, viz., Judaica and "thinking about thinking." Michael Wex's *Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of Its Moods* (Harper, 2006) is a witty tour of a language I haven't heard much since my study abroad days in Jerusalem. An eye-opener for me has been the attention paid to the extent of the complaining in the Hebrew Bible, especially in its central narrative, the Exodus from Egypt. I like the book but not as much as I like Leo Rosten's classic *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968), which I read a decade ago. The other main, non-chess-related, volume in which I am engrossed this summer is Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (Random House, 2007). Taleb, an academician by training and sometime Wall Street quant, explores the erroneous ways people think about probability in their daily lives, including, and especially, those such as financial traders who should know better. This book, I think, would have save a great many people a good bit of trouble if its advice had been heeded several months ago. It is a rather mentally-stimulating read, with pervasive humor and anecdote. He and I also share an all-too-rare fondness for the philosopher Sextus Empiricus. I had hoped to finish Neal Stephenson's *Baroque Trilogy* this summer but I'm bogged down about 2,500 pages in. As for listening, the only notable new addition to my regular rotation is James McMurtry's 2002 album *Saint Mary of the Woods*, one song of which, the epic *Choctaw Bingo* has been proposed as an alternative to the current national anthem (see here: [www.slate.com/id/2213709/](http://www.slate.com/id/2213709/)).



Brian Powell discussing Zizek

# Electronica

**Dale Hample** (University of Maryland, formerly of WIU) pointed us to the very cool *National Digital Newspaper* program, a searchable database of nineteenth and early twentieth century newspapers. Google is soon to be operating a telephone service, *Google Voice*, that looks yummy. But, then read [this](#), to see what might be up their sleeve. Many appealing open source applications can be found at MIT's *Simile* site. Take a gander and download a couple. Online dictionaries are a dime a dozen, but check out *Wordnik*. It's cool and could be useful if you teach (or take (or write)) English. If you are an XML aficionado, see the University of Victoria's *Image Markup Tool*. If data mining is something you are thinking about (and many scholars in the humanities are these days), see the *Mandala Rich Prospect Browser*. HTML 5 is out. Check out the video tag. **Janna Deitz** advises that *Voices of Civil Rights* is an inspiring, and useful, site for persons interested in the civil rights movement. *Flock*, the social web browser, released version 2.5.