

Week in Review 4-3-16

Wrath /ræθ/

noun

1: strong vengeful anger or indignation
(chiefly used for humorous or rhetorical effect)

2: retributory punishment for an offense or a crime: divine chastisement

On WBT

[Michael Carson on Hamlet and History](#)



WBT Friends:

One of our own editors, Matthew Hefti, wrote a novel called [A Hard and Heavy Thing](#), which is structured as a fictional suicide letter. If you haven't read it yet, you're missing out.

Novelist, MFA Professor, and sometimes blues musician Garry Craig Powell with [a very fascinating broad survey](#) of how

famous writers have incorporated philosophy into their fiction, and a comparison of American and British writers.

Editor's Recommendations

Criticism

On *Literary Hub* this last week, Dustin Illingsworth [wrote a risky essay](#) about actual suicide letters as a literary genre to be analyzed, studied, and even enjoyed. Is he bold and ultimately correct? Or does the essay go too far in its voyeurism and exploitation of writers who suffered from depression or mental illness?

[An excellent review](#) of what appears to be another great book on the burgeoning zeitgeist field of the intersection between capitalism, human extinction, and the Anthropocene, with mentions of similar books by Naomi Klein, Elizabeth Kolbert, and Roy Scranton, and the obligatory Gilgamesh reference.

Politics

What if the presidential primary were a [history exam](#)?

Mohamed Amin Chaib is a Belgian, and he also happens to come from a moderate Muslim family. Growing up, his older brother was always there for him and “wouldn’t hurt a fly.” Now, if Mohamed wants to see his older brother, his only chance is to watch horrifying propaganda videos of his older brother brutally murdering innocent people for ISIS or praising the recent terrorist attacks in Belgium. Mohamed can’t bring himself to watch the videos, but he can bring himself [to publicly denounce](#) a member of his own family and the radical beliefs his brother has embraced.

Advocacy

Just last week, the United States 5th Circuit Court of Appeals granted a last-minute stay of execution to John Battaglia,

whose attorney had abandoned him on competency claims. The federal court of appeals ruled that all the Texas courts were wrong in denying Battaglia relief, and that he is entitled to new counsel and a hearing to evaluate what the federal court called “colorable claims of incompetency.” With its ruling coming after Battaglia had exhausted appeals in Texas and all petitions for pardon or clemency, [Battaglia’s eleventh-hour reprieve demonstrates](#) we’re still all-too-ready to execute the mentally ill without providing them adequate representation.

The ACLU is currently suing the Louisiana Public Defender’s Office for failing to provide adequate representation to indigent defendants, and the Louisiana Public Defender’s Office is welcoming and assisting with the lawsuit brought against them. As Louisiana continues to abdicate its responsibility to protect its citizens’ Sixth Amendment rights under the Constitution, they continue to try to execute those same citizens. The whole system is in a crisis. Since 2000, 54 new inmates have been sentenced to death row, but 58 inmates have had their cases overturned. When more people have been freed from death row because of wrongful convictions or sentences than have been put on, [it’s time to acknowledge](#) our obsession with death results in anything but justice.

Fiction

R.I.P. Jim Harrison, a unique American storyteller. Here's a great interview with him in [the Paris Review](#).

Baseball

With Opening Day (yes THE Opening Day) arriving this week (FINALLY!), *The Isthmus* out of Madison, [WI profiled](#) Commissioner Emeritus Bud Selig, who has returned to his home state of to teach some lucky students at the University of Wisconsin’s flagship campus.