Off the Shelf
Recent books with Harvard connections

Why I Read, by Wendy Lesser '73 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $25). The founding editor of The Three Penny Review, addressing "the serious pleasure of books" (the subtitle), explains why engaging with literature is "a compulsion" yielding rewards that "tend toward the intangible, and sometimes the inexpressible." With a list of 100 favorites, from Ackerley to Zola.

Splendor of Heart: Walter Jackson Bate and the Teaching of Literature, by Robert D. Richardson '56, Ph.D. '61 (Godine, $19.95). A loving tribute to a towering mentor, "our present, concrete, living example of greatness," by a biographer and literary historian. With the transcript of a 1986 interview by John Paul Russo '65, Ph.D. '69, professor of English and classics at the University of Miami, who learned how to lecture as an assistant in Bate's criticism course.

Bernard Berenson: A Life in the Picture Trade, by Rachel Cohen '94 (Yale, $25). A brisk modern biography, in the publisher's Jewish Lives series, captures the Lithuanian Jewish origins of the art connoisseur, whose Villa I Tatti is now Harvard's Renaissance-studies center. Cohen usefully characterizes her subject as "one of the leading figures in a new generation of seeing" the art he loved.

Capital Culture, by Neil Harris, Ph.D. '65 (University of Chicago, $35). An emeritus historian at Chicago explores a modern Berenson equivalent (who apprenticed with the master for a year in Italy), in the institutional context of the later twentieth century: the late J. Carter Brown '56, M.B.A. '58, who perfected the craft of museum showmanship as director of the National Gallery of Art from 1969 to 1992.

The Selected Letters of Bernard DeVoto and Katherine Sterne, edited by Mark DeVoto '61 (University of Utah, $29.95). A portion of the correspondence (the rest is online) from 1933 to 1944 between the writer, editor, and historian Bernard DeVoto '18, and a young fan hospitalized for tuberculosis. Perhaps because they never met, the letters are both an intellectual chronicle of the time and charmingly personal—and mutually witty.

The Empire Trap, by Noel Maurer, associate professor of business administration (Princeton, $39.50). The U.S. government often projects power to protect American investments. Through that lens, Maurer traces the pattern of conduct, from small initial steps through the modern era—what the subtitle labels "the rise and fall of U.S. intervention to protect American property overseas, 1893-2013."

Neutrino Hunters, by Ray Jayawardhana, Ph.D. '00, RI '12 (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $27). The author, a University of Toronto astrophysicist, writes popularly. Who knew? One result of combining the profit motive with musicals: an American-Standard product tribute in song...
Rafael Campo writes clear, inviting, open-hearted poems about the most difficult, most troubling, and—for readers unused to them—most private and least traditional of subjects. He is an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and practices at Beth Israel-Deaconess Medical Center. He treats—and writes about treating—people living with serious illness, especially HIV and AIDS. That enterprise informs all his six books of verse, but in his latest, *Alternative Medicine* (Duke University Press), his work as a doctor becomes, literally, central. The book's three parts concern, in turn, Campo's early years as a Cuban-American child of immigrants; his professional work, both clinical (“The Third Step in Obtaining an Arterial Blood Gas”) and interpersonal; and the rest of his life, as teacher of poets, traveler, gay man, lover, beloved, and citizen. The volume concludes with warm love poems (“You're the heaven I'm still rising towards”), but its power rests with its patients and their troubles—in the repeated worry of the phrase “I'm not a real doc without my white coat,” with the hospitalized audience for “Wish Bone the cancer clown.”

By the time he entered Amherst College in the early 1980s, Campo knew he would be a doctor. He came to take poetry seriously thanks in part to his teacher Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who later helped create the field called queer theory. Her class, he says, let him “transgress into the realm of the literary” and “put on the drag of science in my poems.” “Part of my own impulse to write poems had to do with my queerness,” he continues, “wanting to be out, to have a voice.” Another impulse was humanistic, pushing back against “the impersonal norms...of a strictly biomedical paradigm” for pre-med and medical training.

Both impulses flourish in *Alternative Medicine*, which celebrates Campo’s erotic commitments in love poems (“Shared,” “Love Song for Love Songs”) and also speaks to his work in humanistic medicine, training other doctors to see their patients as whole people. A vigorous man-

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“when I get the angle right, I know it.”

Love for the plants surely helps. “I don’t notice a movie star walking by,” she says, describing her West Hollywood neighborhood. “But I will cross the street to smell a night-blooming jasmine or see a bougainvillea.”

—Craig Lambert