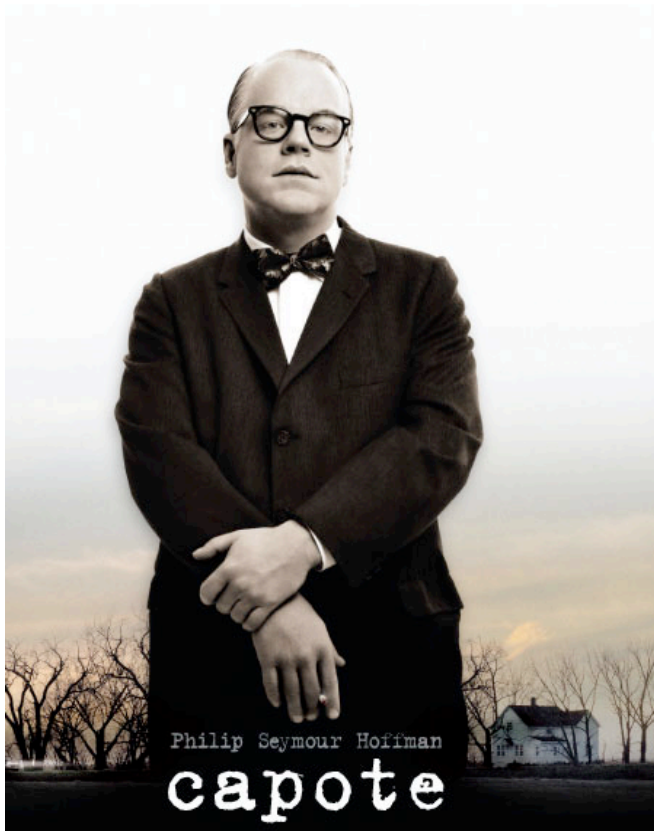


New England
WRITERS
CENTRE
For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
May – July 2006



OPENING NIGHT AT THE BELGRAVE

We're hosting the opening night of *Capote*, one of the most acclaimed films this year, on Thursday, May 11, at the Belgrave. This is a fundraising event and so we hope members will come.

There will be wine & cheese in the cinema at 6.30pm, followed by the movie at 7pm. Tickets, including wine and cheese, are \$12, available only

from NEWC (phone us or call in during opening hours). This film has been winning huge audiences, so don't leave it to the last minute if you want to be sure of a ticket! See page 2 for more details about the film.

WRITING FOR PROFIT

Learn how to write about your interests, for newspapers and magazines, and make money. Freelance journalist, Lesley Sly, will cover creating story ideas, pitching stories to editors, writing in different styles, sub-editing your work, syndicating (selling the same story more than once), and much more.

Lesley's work has appeared in many national, international and state newspapers and magazines including *The Bulletin*, *Rolling Stone*, *JMag*, *Dynamic Small Business*, *Limelight*, *Good Weekend*, and she has been an editor, and a subeditor for the *Financial Review*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *AAP*, and is author of the book, *The Power & The Passion, A guide to the Australian music industry*.

*Workshop, Saturday, May 6, 10am to 4pm. \$45/\$35.

DOUBLE BOOK LAUNCH

In May, member, Steve Harris, will be launching the book he wrote as writer in residence at NEWC - *Gore Vidal's Historical Novels and the Shaping of the American Political Consciousness*, published by The Edwin Mellen Press, NY.

The event at Neram will be a double celebration with Neil Rattigan, who will be launching his new book, *Simply Ballroom: A Film for Our Time*, published by Centre for Australian Literary, Theatre and Screen Studies, University of New England. The date of the event had not been announced as we went to press but it was expected to be mid to late May. Contact NERAM 6772 5255 for details.

WORKSHOPS coming up later in the year: Writing History, Editing Structure, Poetics: Theories on How to Write. Details in next newsletter. See page 2 for workshops in July and August.

ADVANCED WRITERS - JULY

Anyone who has had work published in some form or who has completed any of Wendy James' beginner workshops can attend her one-day Advanced Writers workshop on Saturday, July 29. \$50/\$40 members.

WORKSHOP – AUGUST

Why you need to write well to write well

On Saturday August 12, Michael Sharkey will conduct a one-day workshop on style in writing. The workshop will focus on the need for writers to be in control of their English expression, including punctuation, in professional writing. The areas covered in three 90-minute sessions are fiction and non-fiction, journalism and poetry.

Times for the sessions are 10–11.30 (prose fiction and non-fiction); 1–2.30pm (journalism); 3–4.30pm (poetry). Charges are: \$20 per session (\$16 for members) or \$55 for all three (\$45 members).

The rationale for this workshop includes:

- * few publishers employ in-house editors, so authors are expected to do their own editing
- * manuscript-assessment consultants don't do your editing for you; it costs a lot to get someone else to check your spelling, grammar and other points of style
- * manuscripts have to be sound before agents take on representing the work, and they can charge higher fees to work on poorly-presented manuscripts
- * journalists and other writers have to present their writing in camera-ready format.

People who want to attend the workshop should bring short examples of their own work (for example, two or three pages of each genre they work in) to the sessions. Practical work will involve editing, proof-reading and analysis of writing for publication.

- * You will need 8 copies of your examples. These can be copied free of charge at NEWC during opening hours in the week previous to the workshop. Or bring your own.

CAPOTE – the film.

** This extract is from a review in the Hollywood Reporter:*

Just as Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood" represented something entirely new in American literature - a non-fiction novel, as Capote correctly called it - the movie "Capote" represents something unique in cinema. It's a hybrid that borrows from bio-pics, docu-dramas and the kind of true-life stories that turn up on television as MOWs. Unlike Capote's book, this film cannot claim to have invented a new genre. But "Capote" certainly expands the possibilities and extends the reach of cinema into the private creative and emotional lives of real people, both living and dead.

Most eye-catching is Philip Seymour Hoffman's brilliant metamorphosis into the persona of the late author. Capote is a man easily imitated, yet hard to pin down, a slippery devil who took one guise after another to cover up the loneliness of his personal nature and his genius. Hoffman gets it all.

Sony Pictures Classics will rightfully hitch the film's marketing to this remarkable performance. Yet "Capote" is a team effort, involving an exceptional screenplay by Dan Futterman and a director, Bennett Miller, willing to move at a painstaking pace to make certain all the nuances, conflicts and contradictions get fully explored.

"Capote" is based on Gerald Clarke's biography of the writer, but the focus is deliberately narrow: the period of time covered is from 1959, when Truman notices a story about the murders of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas, in the New York Times, to the execution of the killers in 1965. The publication of his book about the killings makes Capote the most famous author in America. This is a time when writers matter and bestsellers are not always self-help tomes or thrillers looking for movie sales.

This is a meticulous production where Jess Gonchor's set design tells us much about the people who inhabit these places and environments hauntingly photographed by Adam Kimmel have a powerful effect on people. Mychael Danna's muted score, relying heavily on piano, never intrudes but only amplifies the dramatic content.

"Capote" is one gutsy film.

MONTHLY EVENTS

DROP-IN WORKSHOP

January to November

On the last Thursday of each month from 1.30 – 3.30 pm at NEWC. You can drop in to read your work in progress and get feedback, or listen to and support others. Any style of writing is welcome – poetry, prose, drama – literary or genre. This event is free to members, \$5 per visit to non-members.

New England Credit Union Ltd

A different kind of banking

Proud Sponsors of the

NEW ENGLAND WRITERS' CENTRE

Phone: 132067
Fax: (02) 6776 0430
204 Beardy Street, Armidale 2350
(near Woolworths)

WORKSPACE

Congratulations

- Susan McMichael and
- Jim Vicars

Awarded a one-week LitLink Fellowship at Varuna.

Information required

Does anybody have any information or experience with translations (in my case, from German into English), and/or e-books and web-

publishing. Specifically I am interested in the kinds of contracts that are customary, percentages, royalties etc. My contact details: Karla Meyer, email kmeyer2au@yahoo.com.au; phone 02 6772 6934.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PUBLISHING

By Ian Irvine

The biggest problem for beginning writers is not knowing how the system works, so here, distilled from my experiences with a dozen publishers and many writers, is the truth about fiction publishing. Publishers have to make a profit, so if you write books that sell, they'll love you. If you don't, it's goodbye.

If you're just writing for the money or the glamour, you're in for an awful surprise. Read *Mortification: Writers' Stories of their Public Shame* (Ed. Robin Robertson), then reconsider whether you *really* want to be a writer.

Writing your best

Most people who write a book never get it published, half the writers who are published won't see a second book in print, and most books published are never reprinted. What's more, half the titles in any given bookshop won't sell a single copy there, and most writers won't earn anything from their book apart from the advance. So don't *expect* anything from your writing apart from the achievement of creating a new work. By all means *hope* to get published, and *dream* of having a bestseller. But writing talent isn't enough; thousands of people have it. To succeed, you have to write the best story you possibly can for the genre you're writing in, and be professional in every other way. It's the writers who work hardest at every aspect of their craft, and *never give up*, who get there.

Getting out of the slush pile

The big publishers receive 4-5,000 unsolicited fiction manuscripts a year. If they look at any, it will only be the professionally presented ones – perhaps half the total. Of those, 90% will be rejected on the first page and 98% by the end of the first chapter. The 30-50 manuscripts left are the only ones to be considered seriously. In a good year, 10 of those might be published. In a bad year, less than five. Agents have to be just as selective.

To have a chance, your story has to start in the *first paragraph*, with an interesting character

facing some kind of problem that captures the reader's interest or concern, and your very best writing has to be up front. Rewrite it 100 times, if necessary. I did.

First contract

If a respectable publisher offers you a book contract, *sign it*. The chance may not come again. And once you've got an agent, *never* talk directly to your editor about contractual matters. Why not? Your agent is negotiating hard for \$20,000 and you've just told your editor you'd be happy with \$10,000. Bad move! Every new book represents a risk to the publisher, who is gambling tens of thousands of dollars that it will earn a profit. Most books barely cover their costs, especially those by unknown authors, so publishers offer small advances. *Most* are less than \$10,000. For literary fiction, which rarely sells well, your advance may be only \$1,000 – \$3,000. When you get it, don't waste it on food, clothing or rent. Save every penny to promote your book, because chances are no one else will. Don't believe that nonsense about books not being edited any more. Your experienced editor will put weeks of work into your book. Listen to her advice. Editors are usually right. Where you reject an editorial suggestion, make sure there's a good reason for it. If you're rejecting most of them, *you've* got a problem.

Publication

Print runs are surprisingly low, typically 3,000 – 8,000 copies (for literary fiction, as low as 1,000). And don't expect your book to be stocked by every bookshop, much less displayed prominently. There's a good chance it'll be shelved spine-out, practically invisible. If you have a book launch or signing, don't expect many people to come unless you round up your friends. The average number at a book signing is four, but they're still worth doing for the window display and publicity. Don't be surprised if there's no promotion – the publisher may have no money for it. Do it yourself. No one knows more about your work than you. Spend your advance wisely, but quickly. To have a chance of succeeding, your book must sell a critical mass of copies *in the first two months*, to ensure that:

- bookshops will be re-ordering and there'll be a positive buzz in the industry, rather than returning it with negative feelings; and
- hopefully, word-of-mouth from satisfied readers will keep your sales going.

Don't expect reviews; most books *never* get them. The good news is that one review, even a great one, won't make much difference to your sales (neither will a really bad review).

Sales and after

Most books sell less than 2,000 copies. Bookshop returns average 35%, so if yours are lower you're doing well. If above, your publisher will be worried. Suppose your book had great reviews and won an award, but only sold 1,200 copies and now it's out of print. What went wrong? Award judges look for literary qualities, originality and interesting themes. Such qualities rarely appeal to ordinary readers. It takes years to become an overnight success, building sales by word-of-mouth from satisfied readers, so don't expect it to happen with your first novel. But if you can write a compelling series of books, each new title should build sales of your backlist. You've got to be productive, though. Write at least a book a year. New titles keep your backlist sales going and without them you'll soon go out of print. Tastes change and styles date. What's quaint and quirky or dazzlingly original one year will be passé the next. Even genres boom and bust. Luckily, one kind of writing never goes out of fashion – a good story well told, with carefully drawn characters that the reader can identify with.

Anyone who *can* be discouraged from writing should be

If this is so disheartening that you plan to give up, you weren't meant to be a writer – you don't want it enough. However, if it's only made you all the more determined, you've got a good chance of making it. It's the writers who refuse to give up their dream that succeed.

*Ian Irvine is an environmental scientist and author of 10 fantasy novels and 3 eco-thrillers. His *The View from the Mirror* fantasy quartet has over half a million copies in print and is being published in 11 countries. His latest book is *Runcible Jones The Gate to Nowhere*, the first of a quintet for younger readers. The full *The Truth about Publishing* article can be found at www.ian-irvine.com.

NEWS & INFORMATION

**Payments* to Australian Creators and Publishers - 2006-07 PLR & ELR Programs. If you are an Australian book creator (author, editor,

illustrator, compiler, translator) or an Australian publisher, you may be eligible for a payment under the Public Lending Right (PLR) and/or Educational Lending Right (ELR) schemes. The PLR scheme makes payments to eligible Australian creators and publishers on the basis that income is lost from the availability of their books for use in public lending libraries. Contact: www.dcita.gov.au/lendingrights, (02) 62711650 or toll free 1800 672842, Fax: (02) 62711651, plr.mail@dcita.gov.au or elr.mail@dcita.gov.au Lending Rights, GPO Box 3241, Canberra ACT 2601. **DEADLINE: June 30, 2006**

**Varuna's* creative director, Peter Bishop, will be travelling to each writers centre in NSW to give 2-3 days of consultations between July and November 2006. Through NSW LitLink, a further six one-week LitLink Fellowships will be offered at the end of the year.

**Skive Book: You are Going Awal* discounted to \$6.50, including postage. Contact Mockfrog Publishing PO Box #2 Newcastle Univ. Union, Callaghan NSW.2308 or webmaster@mockfrog.com.au. Details: <http://www.skivemagazine.com/skivessprize/skivessprize.html>.

**The Australian Society of Authors* is offering new members a complementary copy of *Between the Lines: A Legal Guide for Writers and Illustrators* by Lynne Spender. It offers up-to-date information on every legal aspect of publishing. You also get three copies of *Australian Author* magazine per year, regular newsletters, free phone and email advice and a subsidised contract advisory service. If you are not a member the cost is \$38.50 or for existing members \$26.95 + \$5.50 p/h. Contact: Cathy Perkins, communications officer, Australian Society of Authors, PO Box 1566, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012, (02) 9318 0877, fax: (02) 9318 0530, or cathy@asauthors.org or www.asauthors.org.

COMPETITIONS

28 April: *Unhinged Inc.* the Illawarra's short play festival is seeking submissions for the Illawarra's premier short theatre competition. Pieces must be a maximum of 10 minutes long; theme *A Tree*. Contact: Katrina Rautenberg, katrina@unhinged.org.au or www.unhinged.org.au.

26 May: Fellowship of Australian Writers Shoalhaven biennial Shoalhaven literary award for poetry; open theme, prize pool \$1,800, plus two-week residential at the Arthur Body Bundanoon Centre. Contact: www.arts.shoalhaven.net.au or Shoalhaven City Council – Arts development manager, (02) 4429 3541 – fax (02) 4429 3166. or baptist@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au.

31 May: Taralla Short Story and Poetry Competition 2006. Total prize pool: \$1,200 Contact: Tarrakka Competition, PO Box 630, Croydon, Vic. 3136, or www.netbay.com.au/~tarralla or (03) 9751 1078.

2 June: Survival Writing Competition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders on the theme *Survival*. Details: www.nswwriterscentre.org.au. Irina Dunn, executive director, NSW Writers' Centre, PO Box 1056, Rozelle, NSW 2039, (02) 9555 9757.

30 June The Margaret Reid Prize for Traditional Verse, cash prizes total \$300. <http://poetrycontests.exactpages.com> or <http://www.geocities.com/rastar330>.

30 June: Newcastle Poetry Prize 2006. Total prize money \$12,500. Details: www.hwcentre.com or SSAE to Hunter Writers Centre, PO Box 71, Hamilton 2303.

31 July: North ArmCove Fellowship of Australian Writers' second literary competition: Categories: 1 Short Story – open theme to 300 words, 2 Poem (traditional rhyming only) maximum 80 lines. Prizes: \$100, \$50 and \$25 in both categories. Contact: 22 Promontory Way, North Arm Cove.

31 July: The Australian Book Review and Copyright Agency Ltd *Calibre Prize*, worth \$10,000, for an outstanding essay. Details: Peter Rose, ABR (03) 9429 6700 or Renee Williams, CAL (02) 9394 7684.

1 September: The Coves inaugural historical competition, presented by NSW Writers' Centre and the Lane Cove Historical Society. Contact: (02) 9555 9757, www.nswwriterscentre.org.au.

29 September: Fellowship of Australian Writers, three competitions: Jean Stone poetry award: \$500 prize for a poem or group of poems, maximum 60 lines.

Walter Stone award, biography, monograph or bibliography on some aspect of Australian literature, maximum of 40,000 words.

Hilarie Lindsay young writers' award. Section 1, Years 10,11 & 12, length 60 lines maximum, prize \$150; Section 2, years 7, 8 & 9, length 40 lines maximum, prize \$100; Section 4, year 4 and under, length 20 lines maximum, prize \$50.

Contact: Barbara Snel, competition secretary, Fellowship of Australian Writers NSW Inc, PO BOX 488, Rozelle, NSW, 2039. phone/fax: (02) 9810 1307, faw/1@bigpond.com; www.fawnsw.org.au.

30 September: The Tom Howard Poetry Contest, cash prizes total \$3500. Details: <http://tomhowardpoetry.bravepages.com> or <http://writeway.exactpages.com>.

27 October: NSW Writers' Centre 2006 Prize for best self-published Australian Book. Details: www.nswwriterscentre.org.au, Irina Dunn, executive director, NSW Writers' Centre, PO Box 1056, Rozelle, NSW 2039, (02) 9555 9757.

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

The Macquarie Bank Foundation Longlines Program: All writers working in the regional areas of New South Wales are eligible to apply for the Macquarie Bank Foundation Longlines Fellowship and Masterclasses. The fellowship gives a regional NSW writer two weeks at Varuna, and there are 15 places available for writers from the less populous states and territories and from regional areas in the annual one-week masterclasses. Information www.varuna.com.au. **Deadline April 30.**

ABC TV and the *Australian Film Commission* are calling for proposals from emerging filmmakers who are 35 years and younger for their jtv docs initiative. They are seeking fresh approaches to half and one-hour documentaries that explore music, ideas, culture and contemporary issues through the eyes of generations X, Y and Z. Visit: www.afc.gov.au/funding/fd/docos/fund_75.aspx.

The Sleepers Almanac 2007 is calling for submissions to its third anthology of short fiction open to all writers. The theme is *The Family Affair*. Submissions must be in hard copy.

Contact: www.sleeperspublishing.com.

Deadline: June. 2

Booranga Writers Centre' annual anthology of poetry and prose, *fourW*, is calling for submissions. A new \$250 prize for the best poem and best story is now also on offer. Submissions: via email or CD with a maximum of three stories or six poems per writer. Contact: Booranga, (02) 6933 2688, booranga@csu.edu.au. **Deadline: June 30.**

Metro Magazine and *Screen Education Magazine* are calling for articles for their 2006 editions. For information and style guide contact: metroase@netSPACE.net.au or www.metroMagazine.com.au.

Lip Magazine is seeking submissions from young women aged 13 to 30 of any form of visual work that can be reproduced in their glossy magazine. All work earns the creator a free copy of the issue in which their work appears. Contact: michelle@lipmag.com or editor@lipmag.com or www.lipmag.com.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS/ FESTIVALS

Wordstorm, Northern Territory Writers' Festival, May 18 – 21, Contact: (08) 8941 2651.

Sydney Writers' Festival, May 22 – 28, information: (02) 9252 7729 or www.swf.org.au.

Voices on the Coast literary festival, May 29 – June 3. Maroochydore, Qld. Details: voices@immanuel.qld.edu.au.

Workshops at the NSW Writers' Centre:
June 3: Structural editing.
July 1: Writing reports, letters and emails.
August 5, Editing corporate documents
September 2, Editing fiction. Full list of workshops and details: NSW Writers' Centre, PO Box 1056, Rozelle, NSW 2039, (02) 9555 9757, Fax (02) 9818 1327, nsw@nswwriterscentre.org.au, or www.nswwriterscentre.org.au.

Conflux: a convention of fantastic worlds (sci-fi). June 9–12, Canberra. Details: (02) 6241 3211 or www.conflux.org.au.

Sydney Film Festival, June 9–25 Details: www.sydneyfilmfestival.org.

Dreaming Festival, June 10–13, Maleny, Qld.
(07) 5496 or www.thedreamingfestival.com.

Kimberley Writers Festival, June 16–18. Details:
www.kcl.org.au/writers.

Forty-eight hours of visual arts (FEHVA), June
23–25, Byron Bay, with special guest sponsored
by the Byron Bay Writers' Festival. Details:
www.fehva.com.

Australian National Playwrights' conference:
July 2 – 15, Perth. (02) 9555 9377 or info@anpc.org.au.

The 14th International Oral History Conference is
to be held in Sydney, July 12, for details: Janis
Wilton, School of Classics, History and Religion,
UNE, Armidale, 2351 or jwilton@une.edu.au, or
<http://www.une.edu.au/ioha2006>.

Brisbane Festival, July 14 – 30. Contact: (07)
3228 2500 or www.brisbanefestival.com.au.

Byron Bay Writers' Festival, August 3 – 6, with
workshops from July 31. Full program available
June 8. Contact: Jetset Byron Bay (02) 6685 6262
or (02) 6685 6554 or [www.byronbaywriters
festival.com](http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com).

The Poets Union 5th Australian Poetry Festival:
Between, in partnership with 2006 National
Poetry Week, September 1 – 10. Go to
www.nationalpoetryweek.com or contact: Liz
Murphy, NSW Poetry Development Officer, PO
Binalong, NSW 2584. (02) 6227 4393 or 0428
237 882.

The Ourimbah Campus Festival of Literature,
November 10 & 11, Ourimbah, Central Coast,
NSW. Earlybird registration September 29.
Details: www.folit.info or tulips@pco.com.au or
Jane Yeaman, festival secretariat, Tulips
Meetings Management, PO Box 116 Salamander
Bay, NSW, 2317. (02) 4984 2554, fax: (02) 4984
2755.

Charles Sturt University, Murrumbidgee School
of Creative Arts winter school, July 2-7. Writing
for publication: the secret handshake, beginner –
intermediate, wleader, Kerri Lane. Telling
stories: an introduction to the craft of
screenwriting, workshop leader, Seán Damer.

Contact: program co-ordinator, Murrumbidgee
School of Creative Arts, Charles Sturt University,
Boorooma Street, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2650.
(02) 6933 2064, fax (02) 6933 2764,
ltillman@csu.edu.au, [www.csu.edu.au/student/
community-ed](http://www.csu.edu.au/student/community-ed).

Northern Rivers Writers' Centre workshops: A
fine balance – short story writing with Dandida
Baker, May 27, Anglican Church Hall,
Bangalow. NRWC Annual Residential
Mentorship, May 29 – June 2; Young writers
workshop with Carmel Bird, June 17; teaching
writing workshop with Carmel Bird, June 18.
Contact: Northern Rivers Writers Centre, 6685
5115 or Susie@nrwc.org.au.

WHAT WE DID LAST YEAR

Directed three shows: Short and Sweet Festival in
Sydney – directed Bette Buy's *Solemates*;
German Festival – directed *Woyzeck* at the Arts
Theatre, UNE; for Armidale Playhouse – co-
directed *Cabaret* at the Armidale Showground.

Barbara Albury

Last year's major event was my first visit back
to Germany for 25 years. While there, I made
contact with a very prolific author and TV and
seminar presenter whose work focuses on brain-
friendly thinking and learning. We struck an
agreement for me to do some translations for her.
I am very excited about this, as the books are
very interesting and I would like to see them
published in English. My writing last year was,
once again, mostly limited to journal writing, and
some drafts on self-help resources. On the
reading side: The most exciting book by far was
'How Yoga Works' by Geshe Michael Roach and
Christie McNally. It is a delightful and very
suspenseful story set in India in 1100, about a 17-
year-old Tibetan girl who happens to be a yoga
student and gets to influence the life of a small
Indian village by teaching yoga to the local chief
of police. As the story unfolds, not only does she
explain the spiritual foundations of yoga, but also
the mechanics of karma, and how to work with it
(very useful to know). In case you are interested,
I've donated one to the library, don't know
whether it's on the shelf yet.

Karla Meyer