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proposals to change the gender order. Who shares the housework with highly-paid professional women? Their husbands or other women whom they now have the money to employ? Do all women benefit equally from equal opportunity policies? If housework is seen as 'real' work, how should its value be calculated?

_Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats_ takes up in more detail some of these issues, dealing with topics such as administrative reform, the role of femocrats, restructuring, and the crisis of the welfare state, essays which promise to make a major contribution to theories of the state.

You might not always agree with the book’s important and original ideas but they certainly make you think. For example, Yeatman argues, using a variant of the ‘contradictory class location theory’, that femocrats are a class of their own, and in a double sense.

First, their adherence to feminist ideology is crucial to keeping their jobs as femocrats, a relatively privileged individualised economic class position. Second, they neither share the gender-class privileges of men, nor the gender-class position of most women, who are dependent on patriarchal economic support.

This does not make femocrats public enemies, but complicates appreciably any calculations they might make about the best policies to benefit Australian women. Yeatman’s book concludes with an exciting chapter on the politics of discourse, a long way away from four-year-olds and their understanding of feminist fairy tales, but using a similar theoretical perspective and crucial to any project of creating a better world for them.

You now hopefully have some sense of the scope and complexity of contemporary feminist analysis in Australia. But does all this mean that you will need a degree in women’s studies to bring up your kids or join a pressure group?

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**A Cure for Enthusiasts**


The most serious virus which infects the world of computers is enthusiasm. It affects people, predominantly writers, rather than the machines themselves and produces a number of distressing symptoms.

Consider this, the first sentence from _Inside the IBM-PC_ by Peter Norton: “This is the beginning of a marvellous voyage of discovery into the secrets, wonders, and mysteries of the IBM Personal Computer”. The use of words like ‘secrets’, ‘wonders’ and ‘mysteries’ are all certain symptoms of galloping enthusiasm.

Later on the same page Norton, who’s one of the world’s leading experts on the IBM-PC, says: “In this book, we - you and I - will set off to discover the mysteries and wonders of what the PC is and what marvels it can perform. I am excited and enthused about the PC and the PC family, and I want to lead you into understanding the workings of this marvel and sharing with me the excitement of knowing what it is, how it works, and what it does.”

By this stage normal (ie. non-enthusiast) readers will have put the book down. Like tourists who’ve stepped into an Indian restaurant only to find themselves surrounded by shaven-headed people in saffron robes chanting ‘Hare Krishna’, normal readers will realise that they’ve inadvertently got mixed up with a bizarre cult, whose mysteries they have no desire to share.

Enthusiasts, with their wide-staring eyes (from having stared at the screen too long), their extraordinary prose style (from having read nothing but computer manuals for the last ten years), and their almost complete inability to speak anything that resembles normal English, are the biggest problem confronting computing.

Computing enthusiasts infest all computer magazines, they write all the instructions for computers and their programs, and they run all the businesses that make and sell computers. Walk into the local computer shop and ask a simple question, like ‘What could I do with a computer’. You will get the same sort of reception as if you’d tried to buy a condom in the Vatican City.

If you have computers at work you will almost certainly have an enthusiast who hovers around the machines, like an anxious mother hen. Ask your resident enthusiast a simple question, like ‘why does it bleep when I do that?’, and you will be overwhelmed by details of CPU speeds, register stacks and hardware interrupts.

Yet most of us don’t want to know about Mhz, Mb, or MIPS, nor about RAMs, ROMs or EPROMs; most of us would prefer to know what the machine does and what threats to ourselves, our jobs and the ways we live it offers. _Computers in the Human Context_ will tell you.

It’s a collection of more than forty essays whose topics range from “Computers and gender” to “The dangers of information control”, from “Brazil’s independent computer strategy” to “Why computers may never think like people”. Some essays are written by enthusiasts who extol the virtues of Information Technology (IT) and explain how new technologies will revolutionise everything from the ways we work and play, to the ways we vote and educate our children.

But the ‘enthusiast’ essays are fol-
Irrted by debunking ones which examine the hopeful hi-tech predictions in greater detail. The debunkers both pull-apart the enthusiasts' predictions, looking for alternative 'facts' that imply different futures, and look for the darker side to IT.

The 'information revolution' does, for example, offer the possibility of easy access to unlimited sources of knowledge and information and, in theory, that could mean a far better-informed citizenry. But it's far more likely that the new technologies will lead to far greater centralisation of knowledge and information, and thus greater control over it.

We all know how the junk mail industry has boomed as a result of the growth of computer lists of names and addresses; the same technology allows everyone from ASIO to market research companies to keep more and more detailed files on more and more of us. For example, by the time the Baader-Meinhof gang's attacks came to an end, the West German police computers had a list of possible suspects and sympathisers with over ten million names on it. The Baader-Meinhof propaganda that

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★ Post-Fordism: John Mathews responds.