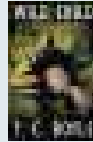


NEW FICTION



Wild Child
by **T.C. Boyle**
Bloomsbury £16.99
☎ £15.29 inc p&p
★★★★★

There are not many normal characters in the fiction of T.C. Boyle. One of the funniest stories in this collection features a couple who are so devoted to their dog that, when it dies, they pay \$250,000 for a cloned puppy, then try to rear the second dog using identical methods. Elsewhere, we meet a teenager with a petrol fixation, a lonely widower who surrounds himself with rats, and a Latino boy who, to the bemusement of his doctors, feels no physical pain. In lesser hands, the book would be little more than a freak show, but Boyle is such an inventive storyteller that it exerts a hypnotic power.



The Other Family
by **Joanna Trollope**
Doubleday £18.99
☎ £17.09 inc p&p
★★★★★

When the man with whom she has lived for 20 years dies suddenly, London mother-of-three Chrissie is left with some loose emotional ends. Why did her lover never offer to marry her? Why did he never divorce his first wife in Newcastle? Then the will is opened. Fans of Joanna Trollope will find all her hallmark qualities in this deft, agreeable novel. It is easy to identify with Chrissie in her shock; easy to identify with Margaret, the deserted wife; easiest of all to identify with the children caught up in the game of piggy-in-the-middle. The characterisation may lack

emotional depth, but the vignettes of family life, in good times and bad, are well-drawn and convincing.



36 Arguments For The Existence Of God
by **Rebecca Goldstein**
Atlantic £12.99
☎ £11.69 inc p&p
★★★★★

When a writer is as clever as Goldstein, it does not seem fair that she should also write with charm, humour and emotional acuity. But that is the package on offer in this ingenious and heart-warming novel. Cass Seltzer, the hero, is an American-Jewish intellectual who seems to have the lot: an alpha-female girlfriend, a job offer from Harvard and a celebrity reputation as 'the atheist with soul', an elegant debunker of religion. It is just a shame that, where women are concerned, his 'mate-selection module' is on the blink. Some of the writing is too clever by half, but overall it is a delightful novel, which could be one of the literary hits of the year.

Max Davidson

