

the discourse within *Ulysses*, Benstock freely draws upon a range of sometimes mutually contradictory theoretical models. Suggesting, without prescribing, how one can use these methods, he invites his readers to reconsider traditional responses to various elements within the work.

Benstock's heuristics stand out as equally nontraditional and strikingly effective. In pursuing his investigations time and again his essays concentrate on the same chapters and even on the same specific passages to underscore the range of alternative responses inherent in the constitution of its discourse. These reconsiderations of familiar selections produce a dual effect. Such close scrutiny directly confronts the primacy of interpretations offered by other readers, and the repetition also subtly calls into question Benstock's own readings from other chapters. The result does not so much undermine his credibility as enforce the concept of multiplicity, suggesting that the ideal reading does not produce a single privileged interpretation of the work but rather lays out options for a range of potential responses open to the reader.

In successive chapters Benstock explores the possibilities inherent in compositional features like free indirect discourse, topological evocation, parallaxic perspectives, and indeterminate allusiveness. While dealing with each of these factors of the narrative in a highly sophisticated fashion, he eschews the heavy-handed invocation of jargon that lesser critics deploy to render even the most obvious conclusions opaque. Instead, Benstock encourages his readers to extrapolate from the observations that he offers them. While clearly delineating alternatives, he refuses to succumb to the hobgoblin of logical consistency to produce a reductive response of his own.

Overall, Benstock's *Narrative Con/Texts in Ulysses* reminds readers of the importance of close reading without foreclosing options available through nonlinear interpretative thinking. His book combines the best features of the critical heritage of interpretations of *Ulysses* with the fresh insights that accrue from imaginative applications of nontraditional methodologies. For both readers new to Joyce's canon and those intimately familiar with the primary and secondary sources, this work will offer a range of opportunity for increased aesthetic pleasure.

W.P. Kinsella

Box Socials

Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991. Pp. 222. \$24.95

Reviewed by Don Murray

W.P. Kinsella's new novel, *Box Socials* (1991), celebrates rural community life in Alberta during the depression and the early years of the Second World War. *Box Socials* does for the farmers (most are descendants of Scandinavians and Ukrainians) of the Six Towns, west of Edmonton, what *Moccasin Telegraph*

(1983) did for the Ermineskin Indians (who remotely resemble the real Cree) of Hobbema and Wetaskiwin, south of Edmonton. Kinsella puts his imaginary characters into a real region with "the good old freeze-the-balls-off-a-brass-monkey Alberta blizzard" (109). The narrative is "part memory and part imagination" by someone who has had "many years, and many miles, to distance [himself] from the events [he has] written about" (221). When Kinsella wrote his entry for *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series* (Vol. 7, 1988), he supplied a photograph of himself at the log cabin near Darwell, Alberta, where he lived with his parents from 1935 to 1945. Those were hard years indeed. *Box Socials* is about trying to live happily in straitened economic circumstances. What is nearly absent from the new book is the coercive law (Indian Affairs, RCMP) and the soul-battering Bible Belters who play the devil in the earlier Indian Books.

Box Socials is a loquacious novel full of wives who gather in kitchens to gossip while husbands repair to the living room to talk farm prices, tell broad stories, and drink "Heathen's Rapture, or good old bring-on-blindness, logging-boot-to-the-side-of-the-head home-brew" (30). To every given name is affixed an epithet or a genealogy of some sort (Jamie O'Day, the narrator, is "James Oliver Curwood O'Day, named for a man who wrote a book called *The Valley of Silent Men*" 75). Everyone is fond of making prolix distinctions, as between "a disagreement, a shoving match, an altercation, a fist fight, and a brouhaha" (3), matters to which they give much "speculation, pondering, and rumination" (80), doubtless after "vexation, rankling, smarting, and downright annoyance" (215). Words and more words.

Aside from a new setting, this is the familiar world of Kinsella the teller of tall tales, endlessly permuting the formulas of his comic situations. although *Box Socials* abounds in conviviality, it is not all laughs. There is the impressive social reality of how Jamie discovers the shame of taking *relief* ("no crime in being poor" 81). There is a funeral as well as a wedding. Very moving is Jamie's discovering the death of Bertha Sigurdson, a starved child he is fond of—"I stopped at the very edge of the grave" (197), like Kinsella at the brink of sentimentality. *Box Socials* even has the pathos of the failed local baseball hero, who (like Archie Graham in *Shoeless Joe*) gets to face a major league pitcher only once. But, then, not everyone gets whiffed at the plate by Bob Feller. All told, *Box Socials* has something for all Kinsella's fans.