

réalisés par Bélanger honorent les paroles échangées, transformant les visages en une cartographie vivante du territoire défendu. La dynamique des images, saisissante et jamais lassante, permet d'activer la temporalité de l'action, avec ses déroulés, ses sauts, ses souvenirs, ses aspirations.

D'ailleurs, il faut souligner que la générosité du coup de crayon et de pinceau de Bélanger est en grande partie responsable de la réussite du projet porté par la bande dessinée : raconter l'utopie et la dystopie de notre monde, mettre en dialogue des idées et des personnes, rêver en couleur, les yeux bien ouverts.

Les notes de fin d'ouvrage sont importantes pour approfondir la compréhension de la démarche de l'auteur et de l'artiste. On peut trouver dommage que tous les exemples, références et retours réflexifs qui se déploient dans les notes aient été placés à l'écart du récit central, puisqu'ils dévoilent la profondeur d'un propos qui reste parfois superficiel sur les planches. Toutefois, les parcourir permet de revisiter la bande dessinée et incite à poursuivre notre immersion dans les littératures de l'utopie.

Finalement, militant moi-même au terrain vague d'Hochelaga, je veux souligner le plaisir qu'il y a à reconnaître les lieux, les personnes et les événements superbement racontés par Chénier et illustrés par Bélanger. L'œuvre offre une plongée dans les souvenirs d'une communauté en lutte, dans ces paysages féroce-ment aimés et défendus par leurs habitant.e.s.

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Michael Boudreau and Bonnie Huskins, *Just the Usual Work: The Social Worlds of Ida Martin, Working-Class Diarist* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 2021)

BORN IN 1907, Ida Martin became a dedicated diarist who kept a daily, if succinct, record of her life in Saint John New Brunswick for 47 years beginning in 1945. As Boudreau and Huskins explain, Martin's journals belong to the tradition of "account book diaries," a form that privileges brief records of happenings rather than extensive introspection. The book's title, for example, is drawn from a typical entry, dated 1 May 1946, "Washed & ironed and just the usual work."¹⁶ Nevertheless, the patterns formed by decades of these "terse, yet illuminating, accounts of the daily rhythms of work, family, and community," supplemented by interviews with family members and an array of contextual scholarship, allow the authors to use Martin's diaries to illustrate broader trends in postwar working-class family life and gender identity (13).

The context of this particular family is one that Huskins knows intimately as Ida Martin was her grandmother. The authors discuss the advantages of this insider status in the introduction and frame the project as an example of intergenerational "life writing." Ida, the diarist, is obviously a key contributor, but so is her daughter Barbara – who assisted her mother writing entries in later decades – and granddaughter Bonnie who co-authors this contextual study of the diaries. Boudreau, the authors write, offers "social distance" and historiographical breadth in the analytical authorial partnership.

Reminiscent of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A Midwife's Tale* (1990), each chapter of *The Usual Work* opens with a series of extracts from Martin's diary

introducing an analytical essay that connects the patterns found in the diary to a particular theme in postwar life in Saint John. The authors are attentive to the strengths and limitations of the form of the diary as a source and, drawing upon Gail Campbell's study of 19th-century New Brunswick, they carefully analyse the literary construction of Martin's entries: her particular methods of indicating emphasis, her euphemisms, and instances of self-censorship. What she chose *not* to write about has significance, too, alongside what she chose to record.

There are good reasons for considering Martin a fairly typical representative of her place, time, and class. As was the case for many, economic hardship curtailed her formal education in the interwar period. Having moved to Boston to study nursing in 1929, her inability to pay for her uniform and supplies prompted her return to depression-era Saint John where she was able to find work as a telephone operator. Four years after her 1932 marriage to Allan "AR" Martin, her daughter Barbara was born in 1936. It was nearly a decade after that when Ida received a five-year diary for her 38th birthday and so her youth and young motherhood does not feature much in her life writing project that commenced as World War II ended and her midlife decades began.

Work is a consistent theme in the Martin diary. Like other working-class families of this and earlier eras, the Martins made ends meet through participation in the formal and informal economies, both within and beyond their home. AR's principal occupation was as a longshoreman but this work was both seasonal and casual, so he took up other work, mainly trucking, as well as contributing to the family economy through house and car repairs, fishing and hunting. Ida continued her employment as a telephone operator after her marriage

and, sporadically, after the birth of her child. Ida also gained income within the home, sewing piecework, taking in boarders, renting out a part of their house, and hairdressing (though this latter seems to have been largely *pro bono*). Domestic labour occupied much of Ida's time, and she contributed to and drew upon a network of kin, friends, and neighbours who provided mutual aid in myriad ways.

Ida was the main household financial manager and her efforts allowed the family to "get by," despite AR's drinking sprees and inconsistent income. The Martins were slow adopters of postwar consumerist trends, buying older and used models of both appliances and automobiles. Cars were a particularly significant possession for them for both work and leisure, and Boudreau and Huskins focus one chapter upon the automotive culture of postwar working-class families.

Apart from automobiles, much of the pattern described here is consistent with long established patterns of working-class household economy in Canada – as those familiar with the work of Bettina Bradbury or Denyse Baillargeon among others will clearly recognize. Yet, there were significant postwar developments that made the Martins' lives somewhat more stable than those of families a century or even a generation earlier. State welfare was certainly one of these: though AR's work was seasonal, he nevertheless was eligible for unemployment insurance and, when injured, workers' compensation. Family allowance, medical insurance, and later Old Age Security were all supports the Martins received over Ida's lifetime, and AR's union, the International Longshoreman's Association (ILA) also won a variety of insurance benefits and a modest pension that Ida would continue to receive even after AR's death. As Boudreau and Huskins point out, these largely-state-funded supports did not fundamentally

alter the way working-class families such as the Martins engaged in the formal and informal economy, but they did “help them through particularly difficult periods” and allowed them to “maintain and enjoy a modest working-class lifestyle” (35, 45).

Life was not always easy for Ida Martin. Boudreau and Huskins explore the distress she expresses in her diary in response AR’s drinking, carousing, and occasional idleness. The subheading of the chapter focusing on this pattern, “A Working-Class Woman’s Perspectives on Working-Class Masculinities,” is apt since the reader gets only a partial sense of AR’s understanding of his life and work, in spite of the authors’ efforts to contextualize the physical demands and hazards of his labour process, the struggles led by and within his union, and the culture of “rough” sociability typical of waterfront labourers.

AR and Ida were clearly quite attuned to and involved in union politics of ILA local 273 – Ida’s diary records AR’s service as returning officer in union elections – but the ideological character of this relationship is unclear. Boudreau and Huskins portray the union as a conservative social force, trying to encourage abstemiousness and respectability upon workers who often expressed their “radical manhood” through drunk and disorderly behaviour, vociferous anger, and direct action against their employers. A few work stoppages are contextualized – presumably the ones that got most notice in Ida’s diary – but the case that these were expressions of “radical manhood” atypical of postwar labour disputes more generally is not entirely convincing.

Not discussed is the most violent postwar confrontation on the Saint John waterfront during AR’s career. ILA local 273 played a crucial role in the Canadian Seaman’s Union strike of 1949: spending weeks refusing to cross the CSU picket

line before being forced to do so as a result of draconian threats made against them by their own union’s international leadership. This conflict was, apparently, among the lacunae in Ida’s diary and this seems to have been the case for events associated with the Cold War more generally.

Elsewhere in the diary politics feature significantly. Ida’s record of federal and provincial elections and political happenings seem to have increased when Ida entered her fifties. It could be that her stage of life might have given her greater available time to follow political happenings, but Huskins and Boudreau, following Gerald Friesen, point to communications technology and, particularly, to the spread of television as a contributing factor.

The content of Ida’s political ideas, though, is not much explored. It is relatively late in the book (page 100 of 130 of the text) that we learn that both Ida and AR were Progressive Conservative supporters and that the latter was an active volunteer with the party. On the same page we learn of Ida’s antipathy to Louis Robichaud – who she calls the “French premier” – and her willingness to sign a petition to publicly signal her opposition to his government. While Huskins and Boudreau are quite correct to note that this anglocentric attitude was typical in Saint John in this era, they link it perhaps too easily to notions of Ida’s “Britishness,” characterised by enthusiasm for Royal happenings and United Empire Loyalist descent. Unpacking Ida’s ideas about linguistic and ethnic others is not something, perhaps, that the source material of an account book diary makes possible.

The diary clearly provided a great deal of evidence of what and when, but the reader – and no doubt the authors – would sometimes like to know a bit more about why and how. We learn, for example, that Ida followed the constitutional

debates of the late 1970s and early 1980s closely and that she felt strongly enough in 1979 to write a letter to each of the premiers, but about what that letter might have said the reader can only speculate. As for religion, it is evident that Ida devoted considerable time to the activities of the Baptist church and that it was a key part of her social world. As to her theological ideas though, insofar as they may have been distinct from Maritime Baptists in general, the diary seems to have been silent. There are exceptions: clearly, she was not impressed with the Pentecostal services she attended after AR joined that denomination later in life (85-86), but what he found appealing about this faith (or why he developed an interest in church at all after showing no inclination to do so earlier in his married life) remains elusive.

On the events and happenings of Ida's life, though, the diaries are a remarkable record, and the authors nicely illuminate the patterns of sociability, of leisure activities, of relationships within and across generations to give the reader an insight into working-class family life in the postwar decades. The final substantive chapter that focuses on Ida's widowhood and old age is particularly insightful as the diary is mined for what it can tell us about how people like Ida navigated life without their spouse, contending with ill health and physical limitations, and how they developed new and different relationships both with their own family members and with other kinds of caregivers.

This book, on the whole, is a pleasure to read and through its pages one comes to care about Ida Martin and to appreciate the significance of the record she kept of what was, in many ways, an ordinary working-class life. The chapters are concise, as is the book, and this as well as the thematic organization make it an excellent potential text for undergraduate teaching in social, gender, and

20th-century history courses. If, unlike *The Midwife's Tale*, *The Usual Work* does not require a fundamental rethinking of much of the historiography of its period of study, it is nevertheless a useful supplement and a reminder that many patterns of working-class life were continuous with earlier eras amidst the considerable technological, economic, and social changes of the postwar decades.

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Kim Kelly, *Fight Like Hell: The Untold Story of American Labor* (New York: One Signal Publishers/Atria, 2022)

WE DEFINITELY NEED more books like Kim Kelly's lively *Fight Like Hell: The Untold Story of American Labor* circulating in the public sphere as both information and inspiration. At the same time, we also need critical discussion of the presentation and interpretation of labour history in popular, journalistic sites like her monograph.

Kelly, an American journalist and organizer, came to this project an experienced reporter of contemporary labour issues: she has written pro-union movement stories focused on the United States in both the online and print press. Her magazine writing in *Teen Vogue*, for instance, is a refreshing appeal to younger readers that dives into everything from 'union friendly' Christmas gifts to industrial disasters. This book goes far beyond her existing writing, offering an overview of US labour movement history in a readable, engaging, and compelling manner. Kelly makes good on efforts to favour labour movement rather than trade union history, and to eschew stories that privilege white men. The book thoroughly integrates, indeed often gives priority to, women, racialized and gender non-conforming workers as well as