

*Hooligan* is an enjoyable read, but I found myself wishing that Thayer had not so firmly avoided drawing upon the techniques of fiction in his autobiographical account. The long lists give a solidity of specification to the represented world; but in some instances, this effect could have been more effectively achieved by one or two selected, evocative details that could create a mood or set a scene. We learn a great deal about the author's activities as a child but gain only a superficial insight into his thoughts and emotions. The word "sin" appears many times, but there is almost no sense of sinfulness or of struggling against personal imperfection. Nor, on the other hand, do we get much feeling for the spiritual or emotional content of the Church activities described. The others in the author's remembered world—his parents, brothers and sisters, adult leaders, friends—are sketchy figures, without much human substance. It would be interesting to have more fully developed portraits of the author's parents: the aged, one-eyed father, who lives in a furnished room in back of a pool hall and who had offered to give the author a prized fishing rod if he would stay with him when the family broke up; even more, the crippled, tireless, no-nonsense mother who supports her family through the Depression by working as a cleaning woman in the homes of more prosperous Provo residents, maintaining her dignity through such small rituals as insisting that her employers provide a cup of tea in the afternoon. The memoir Thayer has given us is well worth the reading, but it makes us wish for the autobiographical novel he has chosen not to provide.

## The Kind of Woman Future Historians Will Study

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History*. New York City: Knopf, 2007. 320 pp., cloth, \$24.00.

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What happens when a quotation becomes a pop culture slogan—appearing on bumper stickers and coffee mugs and even thong panties? “Well-behaved women seldom make history,” wrote Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in a 1976 academic essay about pious women in colonial America. So how did

her simple phrase evolve into a trendy T-shirt logo? And what does this Mormon housewife turned Pulitzer-prize-winning historian think about it?

Ulrich answers these and related questions in her latest book—aptly titled with her now-famous phrase—in which she discusses “how and under what circumstances women have made history” (xxxiii). Moving across time and space, Ulrich explores how women create history through writing the stories of their lives. She also shows how women’s histories are appropriated in varied ways to buttress the worldviews of later generations. Free of scholarly jargon and all formalities, this book will appeal both to the lay reader and those with an academic bent.

A departure from her previous research on colonial America, *Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History* reads like a primer of women’s world history. With an emphasis on storytelling rather than on continuity, Ulrich moves from point to point with transitions so seamless that the reader nearly loses herself in the flow of the narrative. As an example, she recalls tales of mythical Amazon warriors, then recounts a modern-day battle between an independent feminist bookshop of the same name with the gigantic internet-based bookseller Amazon.com.

Though her forays into history leads her to engage with a wide variety of sources, she focuses on the writings of three famous women: Christine de Pizan (author of *Book of the City of Ladies*), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (the American champion of female equality), and Virginia Woolf. She chooses these feminist authors because “they are important to my generation of scholars” and all three “turned to history as a way of making sense of their own lives” (xxxiv).

Following the lead of Virginia Woolf’s well-known musings about the dismal fate of Shakespeare’s sister, Ulrich describes Elizabethan England and some women who were the playwright’s contemporaries. She finds that there were successful female artists in this era such as Aemilia Lanyer, Elizabeth Cary, and Artemisia Gentileschi—their works rediscovered in the past three decades. Like Woolf’s imaginings about Judith Shakespeare’s fate, these women experienced the vulnerabilities of female oppression. Ulrich shows that the details of their often-scandalous lives can be reconstructed through their art and through such written sources as court documents. At the same time, she laments that we know so little about most of the women of this era, such as Shakespeare’s wife or daughters, because they were among the well-behaved women who “did not

make history” (104). Speaking of such women, she writes, “If history is to enlarge our understanding of human experience, it must include stories that dismay as well as inspire. It must also include the lives of those whose presumed good behavior prevents us from taking them seriously. If well-behaved women seldom make history, it is not only because gender norms have constrained the range of female activity but because history hasn’t been very good at capturing the lives of those whose contributions have been local and domestic” (227).

Ulrich’s chapter, “Slaves in the Attic,” traces the stories of four women with the same first name: Harriet Powell, Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Harriet Tubman, and offers a well-wrought analysis of feminism and abolitionism in nineteenth century America. Though a story that is familiar to many American readers already, the compelling and humorous anecdotes offered through this section make it a must-read. Again, Ulrich shows herself a masterful historian and storyteller as she forges connections between people and events in a manner that will certainly be duplicated by other scholars.

Many LDS readers of Ulrich’s book will find themselves wondering where she places the Church in her schematic of women’s history and whether she discuss her own prominent role in Mormon feminism. Such readers will already know that Ulrich was a member of the Boston circle that authored *Mormon Sisters* and founded the *Exponent II* magazine. She discusses these efforts in the context of second-wave feminism, where “the past became a guide to the future,” though Ulrich does not delve into the then-radical nature of her cohort and their hopes of changing the Church (218). Rather, she transitions to discussing the failures of an activism “that didn’t provide answers” even as she addresses a younger generation of women that are not appreciative of the freedoms bought by feminist foremothers. Yet Ulrich’s own foray into being an “outrageous,” even “naughty,” feminist is passed over lightly as she explains her choice to study colonial women to distance herself from her “own [Mormon] life and culture” (xxix-xxx).

Throughout the text, Ulrich muses about how women’s history is remembered: “As we have seen over and over again in this book, historical icons can be appropriated for contradictory causes. . . . Confronting these shifting meanings, some people wonder whether history has any value at all. At any given moment it is hard to know whom to believe or what to trust. That’s why details matter. . . . Details keep us from falling into the

twin snares of 'victim history' and 'hero history.' Details let us out of boxes created by slogans" (226).

To close her book, Ulrich explains that women who make history matter only "when later generations care" (229). Certainly today's women do care, as evidenced by the popularity of the merchandise bearing Ulrich's quotation. For each time a girl writes in her diary that has "Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History" embossed on the cover, she is telling her own stories of being outstanding, exemplary, and even a wee bit misbehaved. In doing so, she'll be the kind of woman that future generations of historians will come to study.