

that Enid as a person is a work in progress. Panels overlap each other, and the handwritten text is scrawled wherever it fits. These non-traditional stylistic choices offer readers a unique look at Enid's personality.

The Garden of Enid: Adventures of a Weird Mormon Girl is exclusively for a Mormon audience, and lifelong Mormons especially. Readers may have a hard time navigating the narrative without knowing Primary song lyrics and what EFY is like and how tortuous a "thanktimony" can be to listen to. Most Mormons will be able to relate to Enid very well, and to everyone else, she'll just be a weird Mormon girl.



Laughter, Depth, and Insight: Enid Rocks Them All

Scott Hales. *The Garden of Enid: Adventures of a Weird Mormon Girl. Parts One and Two*. Kofford Books. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016. 169 pp. Paperback: \$22.95. ISBN 9781589585638

Reviewed by Steven L. Peck

When I was growing up, comic strips provided part of the ontology of my world. I devoured regular comic books, graphic novels, and other bubble-voiced media, but comic strips played a different and more important role than these other closely related forms. It was in the four-paneled strip that I was first introduced to philosophical thought, political commentary, satire, and the exploration of questions rather than the explication of information toward an answer. Plus they made me laugh. There was a point being made. About life. And often about

my place in it. Comic strips were my first introduction into a weird form of deep psychology that let me explore what it meant to be me. The sign on Lucy's famous wooden stand in *Peanuts*, offering, instead of lemonade, "Psychiatric Help: 5¢: The Doctor is IN" does not seem an inappropriate way to express one of the functions these comic strips played in my life. I suppose given my age it is not surprising that it was Charles Schultz's famous comic that proved the gateway drug to my infatuation with the medium.

The form has its roots in French and German political commentary, from men like the Swiss Rudolphe Töpffer, and French caricaturists like Charles Amédée de Noé (a.k.a Cham) and Honoré-Victorin Daumier. The art form of the four-panel cartoon seems to have reached its modern embodiment in the early part of the twentieth century in America with *Pogo*, *Blondie*, *Li'l Abner* and a host of others, reaching popular audiences through syndication in newspapers. It is now a well-established form of art and entertainment.

By my lights, no one did it better than Bill Watterson in his classic comic *Calvin and Hobbes* (I am convinced that a thousand years from now, people will be learning twentieth-century English just so they can read this comic in its original language—that and watch the various *Star Trek* instantiations). Watterson spoke to universals of a moment in time and beyond. My kids love it as much as I did.

Recently, webcomics have become a noteworthy addition to the comic tradition, exemplified by *Hyperbole and a Half*, *Existential Comics*, and my personal favorite, *xkcd*.

When LDS writer and critic Scott Hales started his webcomic *Enid*, I was a fan from the beginning. Phyllis Barber in the opening of the 2017 Association of Mormon Letters conference address said, "moral and ethical values can and should be expressed in art. They appeal to our common humanity, and the more universal they are, the more we share them with Mormons and non-Mormons alike. I once asked Chaim Potok, author of *My Name is Asher Lev*, how one could write great

Mormon literature, as I thought he'd written fine literature dealing with Jewishness and its challenges. He replied simply: 'Go for the universals.'"

This is what Hales has done so superbly. *Enid* is not just about a sixteen-year-old girl, any more than *Calvin and Hobbs* was just about six-year-olds and their stuffed animals. Both turned out to be about Steve Peck and his struggles with trying to make sense of change and uncertainty. I suspect they will be about you, too. Just as *Calvin and Hobbs*, *Peanuts*, and other influential comics captured a moment of societal concerns that reaches beyond the brackets of those times, *Enid* captures something essential about Mormonism in the early twenty-first century.

Like all good comics, *Enid* plays with both shadows and light. I'm not just talking about the way it is drawn (messy, bold, sparse, and evocative). I'm talking about the way it playfully explores the quandaries and foibles of modern Mormon concerns, juxtaposed with deep questions about life's darker dimensions. For example, Enid's interaction with her mother typifies one of the most poignant explorations in the strip. Enid's mother is bedridden, depressed, and cannot function as an adult, let alone a parent. As Enid struggles with how to respond, we observe how the church in her world responds (both well and poorly). We get into some of Mormonism's current challenges, such as single parenthood, repentance, forgiveness, doubt, and the richness of its lived humanness. I don't want to give spoilers, but I remember, at the end of this particular sequence involving Enid's mother, when Hales posted these final panels online there was genuine mourning and shock expressed on social media. I was affected. This is the power of a master—of what? A keen observer of Mormon culture? Philosopher? Humorist? Satirist? Storyteller? All seem to fit. *Enid* is a powerful exploration of and comment on modern Mormonism. It is chock-full of subtle side jokes, allusions to current and historical people and events, and the cultural icons of our day. To miss it is to miss a bit of what I predict will turn out to be a vital contribution in the ongoing history of Mormon art and literature. Kofford Books has blessed us as a community by collecting these into

two volumes. I hope to see further volumes of Hales's comic so that I can continue to enjoy the insight and entertainment they bring. Plus, Enid is just so cool.



Baring Imperfect Human Truths

Holly Welker, ed. *Baring Witness: 36 Mormon Women Talk Candidly about Love, Sex, and Marriage*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016. 296 pp. Paperback: \$19.95. ISBN: 9780252081781.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Ostler

We all know the Sunday School answers, but life rarely, if ever, plays out like a seminary video. So what do love, sex, and marriage look like in the lived experience of Mormon women?

Journalist, poet, and “spinster who thinks and writes a great deal about marriage” (1) Holly Welker has compiled a collection of essays that unapologetically reveals the intersection of Mormon theology, culture, individuality, and relational living in her latest book, *Baring Witness: 36 Mormon Women Talk Candidly about Love, Sex, and Marriage*.

Welker guides the reader through the complexities of relational living thematically by dividing *Baring Witness* into five parts: For Better or For Worse; Complicated Paths to the Temple (or Not Getting There at All); Divorce and Other Endings; Second Chances; and Expectations: Met, Unmet, or Exceeded. It's clear that Welker's expected readers are Mormon, but she provides enough background in the introduction and a glossary to help non-Mormons contextualize stories and decipher Mormon lingo.