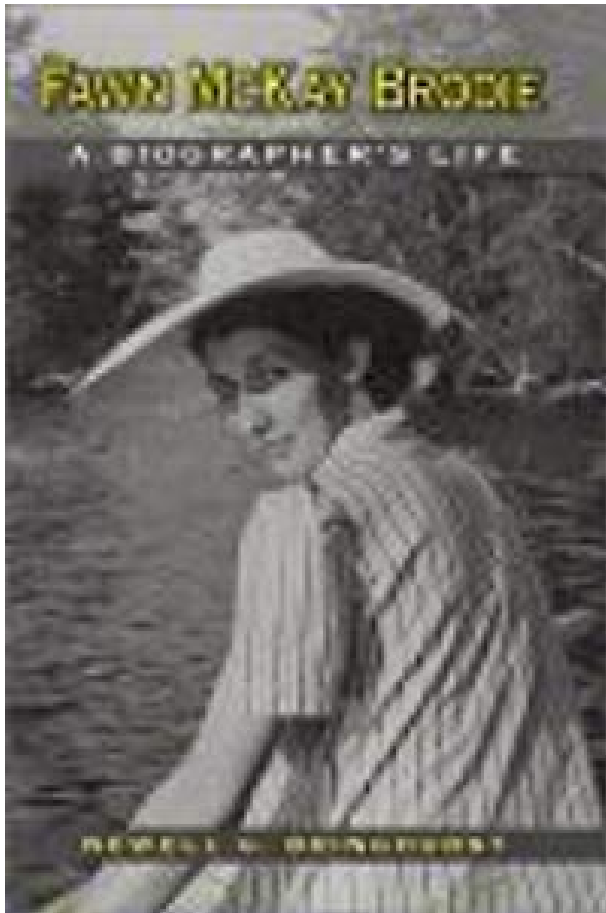


Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life



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In this much-awaited biography, Newell G. Bringhurst portrays the life and career of Fawn McKay Brodie, author of some of the most widely read biographies of the twentieth century. Brodie's best-known work, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*, was the first scholarly treatment of Jefferson's relationship with his slave Sally Hemings, with whom he allegedly fathered children. Recent publication of DNA studies substantiating Brodie's claim have drawn renewed attention to her careful, if controversial, use of psychobiography to probe the intimate details of her subjects' lives. Born into a prominent Utah family (her uncle David O. McKay would one day be president of the Mormon Church), Brodie abandoned her childhood faith at the same time she pursued an education away from home. Her first biography, a candid portrait of Mormonism's founder Joseph Smith, led to her excommunication from the church. Brodie was not a rebel in her personal life, however; she willingly assumed the traditional roles of housewife and mother, sacrificing career opportunities in order to be home with her children. Bringhurst bases his account of Brodie's life on interviews with more than seventy family members and friends as well as volumes of correspondence. A richly drawn portrait of a woman whose life was full of conflict and controversy, the book also sheds light on the craft of modern biography as it emerged during the course of this century.