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Author(s) Louis Midgley

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Abstract Review of *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life* (1999),
by Newell G. Bringhurst.

THE LEGEND AND LEGACY OF FAWN BRODIE

Louis Midgley

Does anyone hear the sound of axes grinding? If so, don't fret. There ain't nobody here but us psycho-historians.

Jack Chatfield¹

Though Fawn McKay Brodie² forged a reputation as a controversial psychohistorian, it is her 1945 biography of Joseph Smith³ for which she has always been known among Latter-day Saints. She thought of herself, and has been portrayed by cultural Mormons, as an "objective" historian⁴ who had taken the measure of "the Mormon

1. Jack Chatfield, "No Ma'am, That's Not History," *National Review* 34/1 (22 January 1982): 52, a review of Fawn Brodie, *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character* (New York: Norton, 1982).

2. Fawn McKay Brodie was President David O. McKay's niece.

3. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1945). A second edition, which was revised and enlarged, was published in 1971 and issued in paperback in 1995.

4. The claim that there is or can be an "objective" (or detached, neutral, balanced, disinterested) history or that historians can or should be "objective" has been shown to function as a myth often employed by partisans to warrant their own (while discrediting competing) accounts. See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Review of Newell G. Bringham. *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999. xviii + 350 pp., with bibliographies and index. \$29.95.

prophet." Her death on 10 January 1981 was followed by tributes in which she was depicted as a heroic figure who had courageously liberated herself from bondage to the mind-numbing religious orthodoxy of her parochial childhood and who had thereby set in place among Latter-day Saints what one of her admirers called "a new climate of liberation."⁵ *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer's Life*—the latest and most comprehensive of these tributes to Brodie—constitutes a substantial addition to the tiny academic specialty that might be called "Brodie studies."

Newell Bringhurst⁶ confesses to having had what he describes as a "literary affair with Fawn M. Brodie" (p. xiv). His interest in Brodie, as he emphasizes, is driven by his own personal identification with her. He sees "clear parallels between [his] own life and hers" (p. xiv), which he spells out in some detail. He describes the matter in the following way:

As teenagers, both Fawn McKay [Brodie] and I questioned basic Mormon beliefs. Both of us married outside the Mormon faith. Our basic disbelief was reinforced as a result of careful research into certain disturbing aspects of Mormonism's historical past. In Brodie's case, this involved meticulous research over a period of some seven years into the life of Joseph Smith, which caused her to conclude that Mormonism's founder was a "conscious imposter," a fraud. (p. xiv)

Bringhurst does not maintain that Brodie's disbelief was *caused* by "research" on the Mormon past, merely that it was thereby "reinforced." Instead, he traces the roots of Brodie's alienation from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints back to her childhood.

Neither the content nor the style of Bringhurst's writing betrays his own "sense of moral outrage" toward the faith in which he was

5. Sterling M. McMurrin, "A New Climate of Liberation: A Tribute to Fawn McKay Brodie," *Dialogue* 14/1 (1981): 73–76. For other similar plaudits, see George D. Smith Jr., "Memories of Brodie," *Dialogue* 14/4 (1981): 7–8; and Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Fawn Brodie: The Woman and Her History," *Sunstone*, July–August 1982, 32–37.

6. Bringhurst is an instructor in political science and history at the College of the Sequoias, Visalia, California.

raised (see p. xiv). His obsession with Brodie is with the person he once described as the “quintessential critic of Mormondom.”⁷ The other aspects of Brodie’s career are merely accessories to (and the occasion for) the story he strives to tell about her struggle to free herself from bondage to what she pictured as a dreadfully constraining, parochial Mormon environment. Though his sympathy for Brodie is never far from the surface and is obviously a controlling bias, Bringhurst is cautious in describing her life and times. As he moves beyond his introductory remarks, he seems rather dispassionate about his subject. He boasts that, despite his “close, intense relationship with Fawn Brodie,” he has striven “to deal with her life in a comprehensive and objective, yet sensitive, manner” (p. xv). If we ignore his appeal to objectivity, which remains part of the mythology of some historians but is now widely recognized as not of genuine cognitive significance or logical coherence,⁸ we find that he does seem to have been both sensitive and quite comprehensive in his treatment of Brodie.

For thirteen years Bringhurst has been deeply involved in the study of Brodie’s life and times. His passion has led to the publication of eleven essays.⁹ He carries much of what he has previously

7. Newell G. Bringhurst, “Fawn McKay Brodie: Dissident Historian and Quintessential Critic of Mormondom,” in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 295.

8. Critics tend to assert, when dealing with prophetic truth claims, that only secular, naturalistic explanations approach what they label “objectivity.” Such claims amount to propaganda employed to discredit competing accounts, and they often underpin question-begging that takes the place of argument, careful marshaling of evidences, and testing of conjectures.

9. Bringhurst’s interest in Brodie has yielded the following essays: “Fawn Brodie and Her Quest for Independence,” *Dialogue* 22/2 (1989): 79–95; “Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence—Varied Responses to Fawn M. Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History*,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57/1 (1989): 46–63; “Fawn M. Brodie—Her Biographies as Autobiography,” *Pacific Historical Review* 59/2 (1990): 203–29; “Fawn M. Brodie, ‘Mormondom’s Lost Generation,’ and *No Man Knows My History*,” *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 11–23; “Fawn M. Brodie as a Critic of Mormonism’s Policy toward Blacks—A Historiographical Reassessment,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 11 (1991): 34–46; “Fawn Brodie’s Richard Nixon: The Making of a Controversial Biography,” *California History* 70/4 (1991–92): 378–91; “‘The Renegade’ and the ‘Reorganites’: Fawn M.

written into his biography of Brodie, with editorial polishing.¹⁰ However, those familiar with Bringhurst's earlier work will find new information in *A Biographer's Life*. And, whatever its limitations, I am confident that the book will become a standard source for information on Brodie. It also provides a useful window into a segment of cultural Mormonism.

Mining the Sources

Bringhurst has assembled his account of Brodie's life from what is currently available in collections deposited in several archives. He supplements these by many interviews and conversations with her family and her close associates. His research has been extensive, and his account of Brodie yields an austere version of the legend that has come to surround her name. Unfortunately, he did not interview Brodie's critics—he ignores or barely mentions some of the recent literature critical of her Mormon history¹¹—and he apparently made little effort to consult their papers (or published accounts). But he discloses her quirks and ambitions; something of her vanity, inflexibility, and emotional problems; her passion for accumulating wealth;

Brodie and Her Varied Encounters with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 12 (1992): 16–30; "Fawn Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: The Making of a Popular and Controversial Biography*," *Pacific Historical Review* 62/4 (November 1993): 433–54; "Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie—Sisters in Mormon Dissent," *Dialogue* 27/2 (1994): 105–27; "Fawn McKay Brodie: Dissident Historian," 279–300; "Fawn M. Brodie and Deborah Laake: Two Perspectives on Mormon Feminist Dissent," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 17 (1997): 95–112.

10. "Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence," for example, is more or less reproduced in *A Biographer's Life*.

11. For example, when Bringhurst tells the story of the recovery of some of the Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, he allows Brodie to vent her spleen about how the church would, if and when it got hold of them, suppress those texts (pp. 188–89). He neglects to mention that John Gee has shown, in "The Suppression of the Joseph Smith Papyri," a paper delivered to the Mormon History Association, Park City, Utah, 1994, that for fourteen years Brodie and her friends had known the whereabouts of those items and were within a letter or phone call of having access to them. Instead, Bringhurst says in a note that Gee "discusses the ebb and flow of Brodie's interest in this issue during the 1950s and 1960s" (p. 303 n. 11).

her love of controversy; and her troubled family. These do not yield an especially heroic portrait.

Despite his admiration for Brodie, Bringhurst does not mimic her way of telling a story. He is not inclined to speculate about her motivations nor does he try to delve into her inner life—he has not fashioned a psychobiography. Instead, he has provided a chronicle of events, told essentially from Brodie's perspective. He has not written a mere apologia. He reveals things about her that I wonder if we need to know. I must admit that I did not want to know what the young Brodie presumably told her sister about how she managed to “keep [her] hands away from [her] privates” or of her mother's alleged response to such things (p. 34). But because Bringhurst mentions Brodie's later problem with her own sexuality, which plagued her marriage and sent her to a psychoanalyst for therapy, I suppose this information was relevant to the story he wanted to tell, even if Bringhurst does not connect these bits of information into a coherent pattern or explanation. From my perspective, Bringhurst should have concentrated more on Brodie's intellectual endeavors, since it is these that make her interesting.

Unlike Brodie, Bringhurst subscribes to the notion that where there is no text (or text analogue), there can be no genuine history, only mere fiction. He does not just invent his history on the basis of a theory he has fashioned. And his account is not often built around what he imagines must have happened or on what he thinks Brodie or someone else may have reasoned or felt. Moreover, unlike Brodie's biographies, Bringhurst's account of her life refrains from literary embellishment.

Bringhurst's bias is manifested in the way he reports some incidents, however. For example, when he claims that certain members of the History Department at UCLA mistreated Brodie, he adopts her own assessment of the situation. But I wonder if Bringhurst is entirely correct in this matter. Some in that department doubted both the significance and the quality of her biographies. In any case, that story, much like everything else about her, is told from her perspective. Perhaps this is proper, since Bringhurst is intent on telling her story her way. But the reader might have been alerted to other and perhaps superior viewpoints.

Regarding Brodie's personal life, Bringhurst reports near the end of *A Biographer's Life* that

throughout her life Brodie was given to moods of depression. She was "inclined to fall into moments of bleak despair," she told one newspaper reporter in 1974, noting, "There's a melancholy that always comes through in pictures of me." Such moods were a major factor—along with problems in sexuality—that had sent her into psychoanalysis in the 1950s, with the treatment continuing into the 1960s. (p. 268)

He has thus chosen to reveal many details about Brodie, her husband, her children, and her extended family. However, he has done this in a judicious manner, without sensationalizing his discoveries.

Bringhurst has made no effort to link Brodie's bouts of depression to her mother's psychotic episodes, her mother's treatment with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and various (eventually successful) attempts at suicide, or the similar problems that afflicted her grandfather George Brimhall. Nor does Bringhurst notice that Brodie's hostility to ECT for her mother (who apparently suffered from bipolar disorder) and her insistence on psychoanalyzing her mother seem to have been grounded on an erroneous diagnosis of what was a very real problem. He is, however, somewhat less reticent about describing the immediate and extended McKay family.

Bringhurst describes the peculiar McKay family home and the curious culture of Huntsville, the Mormon village in which Brodie was raised. He also describes Brodie's somewhat dysfunctional immediate family while celebrating her struggle for what her friend Dale L. Morgan described as a "liberation from the oppressions of Mormon orthodoxy."¹² Even though Bringhurst identifies with Brodie, he has provided a comprehensive, if not particularly critical or analytical, description of the life and times of one of the chief icons of cultural Mormonism. And hence those who share my interest in an-

12. Dale Morgan, letter to Fawn Brodie, 1946, in *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History*, ed. John Phillip Walker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 121.

tagonists who were nurtured in Mormon surroundings will find some enthralling information in *A Biographer's Life*.

Attacking the Church

Bringhurst traces Brodie's early development as she moved at age fifteen from Huntsville to Weber College (then operated by the Church of Jesus Christ); to the University of Utah (see pp. 36–54); back to Weber College, where she taught English for a year when only nineteen (see pp. 54–57); and then on to the University of Chicago for a master's degree in English literature, which she completed by the time she was twenty (see p. 59). While she worked on this degree, which Bringhurst claims gave her "excellent training in historical methodology" (p. 59), she met Bernard Brodie, an expert on military tactics, who was a charming, bright, articulate, passionate, assimilated Jew.¹³ Seemingly out of consideration for her mother, Fawn and Bernard were married in August 1936 in a ward meetinghouse in Chicago (see pp. 59, 63), though both were alienated from their religious roots. The wedding took place without Bernard's estranged family putting in an appearance (see pp. 63–64).

Soon after her marriage, Brodie fashioned a criticism of the Church of Jesus Christ that took the form of an essay assailing what is currently called the church welfare program (see pp. 65–67). This brief item was published in 1938 under the pseudonym "Martha Emery."¹⁴ Brodie fleshed out opinions that I believe were more or less previously sketched by Dean Brimhall, her "favorite uncle" (p. 67), who was known as a critic of the church, particularly of the welfare system.

Later in 1938, Brodie set out to explain what she imagined were the sources for the Book of Mormon (see p. 71). And this undertaking

13. From Bringhurst's discussion, it appears that Bernard Brodie came from a dysfunctional family. His estranged parents "rejected all aspects of Jewish religious belief and practice" (p. 60). His father insisted that "all religions" are "based on fraud and designed to gouge money out of people" (p. 60). Yet the Brody family—Bernard changed his name to Brodie to sever links with Judaism—"shopped in Jewish-run stores and even ate kosher meat, thus remaining at least culturally Jewish" (p. 61).

14. "Mormon 'Security,'" *Nation* 146 (12 February 1938): 182–83.

soon required her to explain Joseph Smith. She was eventually duly excommunicated for apostasy. Bringhurst tries to sort out what led Brodie into fashioning a naturalistic account of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims. He also describes her other literary efforts, her brief academic career in the history department at UCLA, and her eventual death from cancer. But what concerns Bringhurst is not her career as a controversial biographer but her role as a critic of Mormon matters.

Bringhurst demonstrates that, by the time she was married, Brodie was already "alienated from the Mormon Church" (p. 63),¹⁵ thus confounding rumors that Bernard Brodie was the source of his wife's hostilities toward the church. If anything, Bernard Brodie might have toned down some of the rhetoric in her account of Joseph Smith (see especially p. 289 n. 115; cf. pp. 149, 151, 172, 238). Bringhurst sees signs of Brodie's disaffection during her childhood in Huntsville. Be that as it may, it turns out that her estrangement from the Church of Jesus Christ matched her husband's own alienation from Judaism—neither caused the other.

A more likely source of Brodie's alienation from the church was the immediate influence of her emotionally troubled mother, whom she once described as a "quiet heretic" (p. 20). One can also see the influence on Brodie of Dean Brimhall, her derisive, opinionated uncle. Some branches of the Brimhall family seem to have been full of resentment over real or imagined slights by the Brethren and were just itching for a fight with the church. Bringhurst shows that some (but not all) of this domestic hostility to the church was focused on conditions in which the immediate family lived while in Huntsville, as well as on what they seem to have considered the injustice of having to live as McKays in what he calls "genteel poverty" (pp. 24, 31–33). Not having money to go with the vaunted McKay name troubled Brodie and her sisters, who also ended up at odds with the church. They blamed David O. McKay (and the church) for their financial

15. Bringhurst always refers to the "Mormon Church" and never to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

and prestige problems. Only Brodie's brother seems not to have gone down this road. When attempting to understand what took Brodie out of the church, one must not, of course, overlook the influences of her mother (pp. 20–21) and also of other members of her immediate family, who were apparently steeped in resentments that were more or less focused in subtle ways on Mormon things.

Targeting the Book of Mormon

What seems to have drawn Brodie's attention to the Book of Mormon? Bringhurst has assembled the clues with which one can begin to answer this question. First, he reports that in 1981 Brodie described a conversation she had with a girl from Price, Utah, which presumably took place between 1932 and 1934. This girl was, according to Brodie, "the first non-Mormon that she had known" (p. 51). From this girl, according to Brodie's recollection nearly fifty years later, she learned that "the American Indians were Mongoloid in origin, [and] that scholars universally rejected the Mormon claim that Native Americans were 'descended from migrants from ancient Palestine'" (p. 51).¹⁶ This led to what Brodie described as her "earliest shock of the intellect" (p. 51). From this and other Brodie reminiscences, Bringhurst surmises that "the seeds of Fawn's doubts were subtly being planted, although the full flowering of her skepticism would burst forth only after research into American Indian origins years later" (p. 51).

Bringhurst relates a story told him by Brodie's daughter, Pamela, describing her mother's arrival at the University of Chicago. "One of her roommates," who was not a Latter-day Saint, did something that brought to her attention the "truth" about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. When Brodie tried to explain the Book of Mormon to her gentile roommate, the girl challenged her account of the "golden plates" by asking what happened to them. When Brodie, according to

16. In 1981, Brodie found nothing problematic with what she recalled being told about both Latter-day Saint beliefs and scholarly opinions nearly fifty years earlier. Her remarks are taken from "It All Happened Very Quietly," in *Remembering, the University of Utah*, ed. Elizabeth Haglund (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981), 86.

this account, explained that the plates had been taken away by an angel, “the roommate rolled her eyes, and Fawn, suddenly realizing the preposterous nature of the story, experienced what she later described as a moment of truth” (p. 63). We might conclude that Brodie suffered from a latent form of Mormon self-hate and hence was vulnerable to the corrosive influence of gentile mockery.

According to Bringhurst, Brodie’s “second epiphany came as a result of her own investigation of American Indian origins. Up to this time,” he claims, “Fawn believed—in conformity with Latter-day Saint doctrine—that Native Americans were remnants of one of the tribes of Israel, a view asserted within the *Book of Mormon*” (p. 63). It is, however, not asserted “within the Book of Mormon” that *all* Native Americans—from Alaska to Newfoundland and on to Brazil and Chile and so forth—came from the migrations described in that book. Likewise, it is questionable to claim that “Latter-day Saint doctrine” is that all Native Americans are solely the “remnants of one of the tribes of Israel.” Brodie may have believed such things, as does Bringhurst and possibly as do some of the Saints, but much more could and should have been said about these dubious claims.

Does the Book of Mormon, as Brodie believed, claim to provide an account of the so-called lost tribes or even “one of the tribes of Israel”? Put another way, we can ask if Brodie criticized the Book of Mormon on the basis of a primitive and confused understanding of its contents. Unfortunately, Bringhurst does not confront such issues.

One way to test Brodie’s understanding of the Book of Mormon, which seems to have been naive and rudimentary, is to look for signs of how she read it or what she saw or read into it. This is to some extent possible, since she commented on the Book of Mormon in *No Man Knows*. Additionally, her marked copy of the Book of Mormon is available for inspection.¹⁷ If Bringhurst examined it, he fails to mention having done so. Her marginal notations provide additional evidence of a superficial reading of the book. What she saw in the

17. In the Papers of Fawn McKay Brodie (1915–1981), Manuscripts Division, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Book of Mormon were Indians (those Mound Builders), Masons, quarrelling sectarian Protestants, and so forth. Perhaps one should not fault her for having held these opinions from 1938 to 1945 when scholarly, Latter-day Saint interest in the Book of Mormon was low, although she had received some instruction that might have helped her avoid some of her opining.¹⁸ Be that as it may, in light of the scholarly literature on the Book of Mormon published after *No Man Knows* appeared in print—some of which was readily available while she was alive—Brodie's reading of the Book of Mormon becomes problematic for those who want to use her opinions as a peg on which to hang their unbelief or for those who see her as having dealt crushing blows to the Book of Mormon.

It did not, apparently, occur to Brodie that the Book of Mormon could contain a complex and subtle account of a world quite unlike the one she had imagined, one unlike what both the Saints and their critics often attribute to it. Both groups have tended to see things in the Book of Mormon that, in Richard Bushman's words, "are not there,"¹⁹ and, unfortunately, both have sometimes failed to see things that are there. Much of what one finds in a text is influenced, if not determined, by the assumptions and expectations the reader brings to it. Hence, if one is so inclined, it is possible to find in the Book of Mormon a tale about Mound Builders or the lost tribes of Israel, an autobiographical account (or accounts) of Joseph Smith and his own family, or even the theological quarrels going on in western New York in the 1820s. Brodie tried to account for the Book of Mormon by reading it in these ways, and she did this because she assumed that the book was fraudulent. She thus read the book through the lens provided by her dogmatic secular bias. That she was a gifted writer simply obscures the fact that she was not, as she imagined, letting the sources speak their truth through her as a kind of neutral and hence

18. Bringhurst reports that Brodie studied the Book of Mormon at Weber College with Leland H. Monson. She was fond of Monson (see pp. 38–39). For an idea of what he may have taught in this course, see his *Life in Ancient America: A Study of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1946).

19. Richard A. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 133.

objective observer. Brodie blasted away at believers because she noticed that they have biases, never sensing that she had her own set of controlling assumptions.²⁰

Brodie assumed that the Book of Mormon was merely Joseph Smith's effort to invent a history of the origin of Native Americans—all of them.²¹ If one begins with this assumption, of course, anything indicating that any Native American is not a descendent of a "lost tribe" from Palestine demolishes the Book of Mormon. She does not appear to have questioned her hypothesis either before or after publication of her biography of Joseph Smith. What "research" did she conduct in the late 1930s on the origins of Native Americans that convinced her that the book was fraudulent? Can we now explain why she thought she had discovered that the Book of Mormon was mere "frontier fiction"? Or can we determine why she thought she could find all its sources in Joseph Smith's environment?

Unfortunately, we have only hints about the "research" Brodie may have conducted that convinced her that the Book of Mormon was untrue. We do not know more because she destroyed *all* the notes, papers, and drafts for her biography of Joseph Smith.²² She sanitized her files. She claimed she did this before she realized that these materials would be valuable for future scholarly purposes.²³ But I wonder if this is true. She retained every scrap of paper related to

20. For an analysis of Brodie's treatment of what she called "the manipulation of history" by believers, see Louis Midgley, "F. M. Brodie—"The Fasting Hermit and Very Saint of Ignorance": A Biographer and Her Legend," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 171–75 (hereafter cited as "A Biographer and Her Legend"). She clearly did not recognize that her own biases were grounded in trendy secular fundamentalism, which still functions as the profane "religion" of the fashionably elite culture.

21. According to Brodie, only after the loss of the 116 pages were religious materials incorporated into the narrative structure of the Book of Mormon. See *No Man Knows My History*, 55–56.

22. Bringham does not mention Brodie's destruction of evidence.

23. Brodie explained to Jan Shipps that she had "made the mistake a long time ago of throwing away [her] notes" on Mormon matters. Brodie to Shipps, 18 November 1961, located in the Brodie Papers, MS 360, box 10, folder 10. See also Brodie's remarks to Monsignor Jerome Stoffel, 3 November 1967, located in the Brodie Papers, box 9, folder 3, where she reports that she had thrown away all her notes for her biography of Joseph Smith.

her non-Mormon publishing ventures; most of these materials are now deposited at the University of Utah. Her explanation for destroying her research notes and drafts of *No Man Knows* is questionable in light of the fact that she also destroyed the notes and drafts for the revisions she made to *No Man Knows* in 1971, when she knew that these items would be of interest to future scholars.

One possible, although quite unlikely, explanation for Brodie sanitizing her files was that she had help from people who did not want to be identified. These include Claire Noall (see pp. 88–89); Vesta Crawford, who for a time was editorial secretary and associate editor of the LDS *Relief Society Magazine* (see p. 88);²⁴ Juanita Brooks, who was always a believer but was friendly with various cultural Mormons (see pp. 89–90); and Wilford Poulson, who taught psychology at Brigham Young University (see pp. 90–91) but was known to be a critic of the foundations of the faith. Poulson did not want Brodie to mention his having provided her with help on *No Man Knows*. Though he seems to have been in fundamental agreement with Brodie, he offered what Bringhurst calls “severe” criticism of her manuscript (see p. 90). Bringhurst maintains that Brodie borrowed from Poulson the idea “that Joseph Smith wrote the *Book of Mormon* to make money” (p. 90). Certain things hint that Brodie (and Dale Morgan) did not entirely trust Poulson. They suspected that he still had some emotional links with the faith.²⁵ But none of this would help explain why Brodie trashed the drafts and page proofs of *No Man Knows* or other similar materials related to its production.

If we do not have Brodie’s notes, papers, and drafts, what is left to indicate the “research” she may have conducted on the origin of Native Americans? Bringhurst was told by Monroe McKay, Brodie’s second cousin, that when Brodie went to Chicago, she interacted “for the first time with a significant number of American Indians” and “saw their clearly Oriental features. She came to the conclusion ‘that

24. Crawford and Noall provided Brodie with information on polygamy.

25. See Dale Morgan to Madeline McQuown, 8 December 1944, in *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism*, 72.

the whole *Book of Mormon* story was false” (p. 63).²⁶ Bringhurst does not indicate how Monroe came to know these things. Her cousin also indicated that Brodie’s discovery that the Book of Mormon was false “brought ‘great bitterness’ over the deceit of her childhood” (p. 63). Could Brodie’s “research” have consisted of a glance at some Native Americans, from which she then drew a conclusion about the truth of the Book of Mormon?

Bringhurst pictures Brodie’s eventual disbelief as the result of a gradual process of “liberation” that included sudden insights or moments of liberating “truth.” I think he is right on both counts. It seems that she had been gradually prepared for emotionally intense reactions against the faith of the Saints. Bringhurst seems to have identified these intense emotional experiences as well as can be done. He has not, however, attempted to link these reactions to her own emotional disposition. Nor has he described the secular ideology she adopted when she made the final break with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.²⁷

Bringhurst has had to work with some fragmentary and dubious sources as he tries to explain what started Brodie in her attempt to provide a naturalistic account of the Book of Mormon. The explana-

26. Bringhurst also indicates that Brodie told Nephi Jensen (in a letter dated 15 February 1946) that her “study of the anthropology of the American Indians convinced [her] that they were of Mongoloid rather than Hebraic origin” (see p. 281 n. 56). The way Bringhurst cites sources is frustrating. It is unfortunate that he did not identify the archive, collection, box, and folder for the items he cites. The University of Utah, as a condition for use of its materials, requires that the name of the papers be identified, as well as the box and folder number. I wonder if Oklahoma University Press was aware of the format for citations that the University of Utah tries to impose on authors for the use of materials in its collections.

27. Bringhurst has, however, addressed the question of the significance of a request for a priesthood blessing from her brother that she made shortly before she passed away from cancer (see pp. 255–57). But he has not explained why Brodie thought it necessary to issue a statement about this essentially private matter that presumably was neither understood nor witnessed by her children. Did they, I wonder, somehow hear of the incident and jump to the erroneous conclusion that their mother was returning to the church? My feeling is that Brodie was impulsive and a kind of chameleon and that at times—when under pressure—she toyed with the faint outlines of faith but never for long or seriously, rather as a kind of latent superstition.

tion that he has fashioned seems to fit what Brodie wrote about the Book of Mormon. It is also consistent with her own later reminiscences. Bringhurst has had available to him a nicely embroidered tale told by Brodie about an incident almost fifty years in her past.²⁸ And he has picked up lore circulating within her immediate family about how she came to form her opinion of the Book of Mormon. Bringhurst has thus located, if not in exact detail, what events got Brodie started as a critic of the book. And this is, I believe, a significant contribution to understanding her later polished explanation of the book. It is not, however, the sort of stuff out of which a portrait of a scholarly hero can be fashioned.

Bringhurst has not linked these pieces of “evidence,” if that is their proper designation, to the actual explanation of the Book of Mormon that Brodie set forth in 1945. From some initial formative experiences, which for her demonstrated that the Book of Mormon was “frontier fiction,” she eventually argued that Joseph Smith fashioned it as a way of making money, as a story about Mound Builders, who were then eventually linked to the lost tribes of Israel, and so forth. Brodie treats the religious content of the Book of Mormon as an afterthought, as though Joseph Smith somehow presumably came to more or less believe the story he had fashioned. Once her explanation was in place, she brushed aside criticisms of her speculations as the reactions of those somehow “emotionally trapped” in a complicated web of deceit fabricated initially by Joseph Smith, whom she pictured as intentionally promoting a hoax.

When Latter-day Saint historians criticized Brodie’s work, she reacted with anger. For example, Bringhurst reports that in 1966

her work [was] under attack from Leonard J. Arrington, a leading exponent of the so-called new Mormon history by virtue of his highly regarded *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints*. In an essay, “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century,” published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Arrington was critical

28. See n. 16 above.

of *No Man Knows My History*. Brodie declined a formal reply to Arrington's critique, dismissing the Mormon author with the curt observation that he was of the school that was "so emotionally committed to the church that the truth will always elude [them]." (p. 179)²⁹

In a letter to a friend, Brodie mentioned that she had received a letter critical of her explanation of the Book of Mormon from G. Homer Durham, who became, among other things, a prominent political scientist, founder of the Western Political Science Association, a vice president at the University of Utah, then president of Arizona State University, and eventually a General Authority and church historian. Brodie granted that "Durham is no fool." But she complained that he "is either shamefully ignorant of the whole field of American Indian anthropology and archaeology and ethnology, or else has blockaded himself behind a lot of emotional barriers."³⁰ Did Brodie assume that she had mastered "the whole field of American Indian anthropology and archaeology and ethnology"? It is not clear what she knew about ethnology, anthropology, and archaeology at any point in her career. Her papers provide little evidence of the kind of concentrated study that would have been necessary to master and keep up on the literature in the fields she mentions.

Brodie was also aware of Hugh Nibley's various criticisms of her work (and also of his subsequent defense of the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon). In 1978, in a letter to a friend, Brodie granted that Nibley "surely had a touch of genius, and a great linguis-

29. Bringhurst apparently takes Brodie's language from a letter that she wrote to Dean Brimhall, dated 18 November 1967 (see p. 301 n. 80). Brodie was reluctant to respond to substantive criticisms of her work on Mormon origins. In this letter, she told Brimhall that Leonard Arrington's "remarks about my own book will amuse you. I really don't think there is any point in making a formal reply" to the prepublication copy Arrington had sent Brodie of his essay. "Either you are so emotionally committed to the church that the truth will always alude [sic] you—or you are not. And he belongs to the former group."

30. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 12 May 1946, Dale L. Morgan Papers, microfilm of the Bancroft holdings, manuscript roll 10, frame 150, p. 1, Manuscripts Division, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

tic talent. What a pity that he was emotionally trapped by his allegiance to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.” Then she added: “What a pity we never sat down and talked to each other.”³¹ In 1978 it would have been easy for such a conversation to have taken place.

Instead of seeking productive conversations with others in which arguments and evidences were set forth and assessed, Brodie brushed aside her critics with sarcasm coupled to psychological explanations of their supposed inability to free themselves from untruth, even or especially when she recognized that they were not fools. She savaged the critics of her book on Joseph Smith.³²

Bringhurst acknowledges that Brodie was stubborn in defending her opinions. But some of her mistakes were so obvious that even she could not ignore them. In the initial printing of *No Man Knows*, Brodie reports that the Lehi colony started their journey to America in A.D. 600. No one who read her manuscript for her (or for her publisher) caught this (and numerous other) mistakes. Those who reviewed her manuscript prior to publication included Wilford Poulson, who was asked by Brodie to read it (see p. 90), and Dale Morgan (see pp. 94–96), who read it twice.³³ Her publisher had Milo M. Quaife, who was somewhat knowledgeable about Mormon things (see p. 96), and Wilson Follett, whom Bringhurst identifies as “an in-house editor for Knopf” (p. 96) and who knew nothing about Mormon history, review her manuscript. Brodie herself later silently corrected this 1,200-year error.

But Brodie brushed aside most criticisms if they involved how one reads a text, what one counts as evidence, or how theories point to what might constitute evidences, often seeing criticism as the work of those who simply cannot grant her truth or as invalid because of bias (see p. 179 for one example, but cf. p. 212). Bringhurst sees evidence that this “stubborn, inflexible side” of Brodie’s psyche turned up in her youth (p. 23). He correctly notes that “such stubbornness

31. Brodie to Everett Cooley, 23 August 1978, Brodie Papers, box 4, folder 6B.

32. For some details, see Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 196–97.

33. I am not sure whether Morgan had been asked by Brodie or by her publisher (or by both) to give her manuscript a second reading.

would manifest itself later as a methodological weakness in Brodie's research and writing" (p. 23). He might be right, but I am not convinced that linking some episode (or episodes) in her youth to her later intellectual proclivities is warranted. Bringhurst is correct, however, in noting that her editors, publishers, and critics, both Latter-day Saint and otherwise, saw her stubbornness as a key to some of the flaws in her writings.

Given Brodie's experience with *No Man Knows* and ignoring her venture into writing brief partisan political essays, we might conclude that she (and her publishers) realized that being controversial was an asset, since it helps to sell books.³⁴ Provocative, controversial books tend to do well; hence, self-interest may have been the source of some of the controversy that marked Brodie's literary career. This theory may also explain why some of her colleagues at UCLA questioned the scholarly value of her biographies.

Bringhurst seems eager to understand why Brodie often became embroiled in controversies. Several possible answers to this question, either alone or in some combination, might provide a seemingly plausible solution. He mentions some of these, including the alternating episodes of depression and elation, coupled with anxiety about marital sex, which seem to have sent her into psychoanalysis, but they are never drawn together and assessed in *A Biographer's Life*. Bringhurst might have ignored the question of why she got into fights with scholars and instead examined how well she formulated arguments, found ways to test theories, and so forth. He engages in little of this kind of analysis. Sufficient textual material is available to allow an assessment of the soundness of her approach to the Mormon past. On this issue, he just scratches the surface.

A Minor Scholarly Focus

After a brief encounter with *No Man Knows* in the early fifties, I gave Brodie no attention until 1979, when I made a minor "con-

34. Bringhurst provides evidence to support this hypothesis (for example, see pp. 212–13).

tribution”—if that is the right word—to “Brodie studies.” She had published in 1974 a biography of Thomas Jefferson.³⁵ Some historians had been critical of this book, and some of their criticisms seemed to me to resemble what Latter-day Saints had written about *No Man Knows*. (It turned out that the language used by these critics was scathing when compared to that employed by the Saints.) My argument was simple—I set out some of the complaints that some distinguished historians had made about her history and suggested that, given the controversy surrounding her work, it might be appropriate for non-LDS historians to take another look at her treatment of Joseph Smith,³⁶ which I believed non-Mormon historians had viewed favorably.

Then in the mid-eighties I undertook an inquiry into the shifts that had taken place since World War II in accounts of the Mormon past. I needed a benchmark against which to assess changes. Since some authors claim that *No Man Knows* constitutes a watershed or bridge between older and newer ways of writing about the Mormon past,³⁷ Brodie seemed a good place to start my inquiry. I consulted the Brodie Papers (and other relevant archival materials) housed in the Manuscripts Division of the Marriott Library at the University of Utah. I tried to discover (1) why Brodie felt compelled to abandon her faith and then to write a book attacking its foundations, (2) how she saw (and was seen by) LDS and other scholars, (3) who and what influenced her, and (4) how she fashioned her work. I was also interested in what Brodie thought of criticisms of her explanation of

35. Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: Norton, 1974), issued in paperback by Bantam Books in 1975.

36. Louis Midgley, “The Brodie Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies* 20/1 (1979): 59–67, which was a brief analysis of a small sample of the reviews of Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson*. Some silly mistakes occur in this essay. I claimed that *No Man Knows* was published in 1946. I did this because the second printing of her book carries this date. And a copy editor turned Eyre Methuen—the English publisher of *Thomas Jefferson*—into the “author” of an unsigned review that appeared in the *Economist* 255 (24 May 1975): 104. See Midgley, “The Brodie Connection,” 62 n. 12.

37. See, for example, Robert Flanders, “Some Reflections on the New Mormon History,” *Dialogue* 9/1 (1974): 34–41.

Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and how she responded to accounts that differed from her own understanding of the Mormon past—accounts that implicitly challenged her background assumptions and conclusions. I also wanted to know if she had formulated responses to the increasingly sophisticated studies of the Book of Mormon. I wondered if she could articulate and defend her naturalistic perspective and bias. This was the first time that I had given Brodie more than cursory attention.

I was both pleased with and disappointed in what I discovered. I learned that Brodie had much in common with the cultural Mormons I met at the University of Utah in the late forties and early fifties. They shared the broad outlines of a regnant secular fundamentalism that had its roots in a positivism that dogmatically excluded serious attention to divine things, except as instances of illusion or delusion. I discovered that her secular biases were linked to her acceptance of a mythology that controlled large portions of the history profession after World War II. I was aware that the leading cultural Mormons ignored or brushed aside arguments that did not fit their secular biases. Brodie did the same thing for essentially the same reasons. I also discovered that during the sixties and seventies I shared with Brodie a number of opinions on issues unrelated to Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims. Though I viewed the Book of Mormon and the church differently than she did, I grew fond of her.

In 1972, Sydney E. Ahlstrom mentioned *No Man Knows* in his monumental *A Religious History of the American People*. He described Brodie's treatment of Joseph Smith as "unequaled" and as "sympathetic and insightful." Ahlstrom's work obviously depended on a judicious assessment of an array of secondary literature. When he briefly mentioned Latter-day Saints, he borrowed from Brodie's well-written naturalistic account of Joseph Smith and ignored competing sectarian and secular treatments of Latter-day Saint founding events and texts.³⁸ When I first published on Brodie, I accepted Marvin

38. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 504; paperback edition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 1:608.

Hill's claim that "evidence of the respect" that *No Man Knows* "still commands is provided by Sidney [*sic*] Ahlstrom."³⁹ Thus in 1979 I accepted Hill's opinion that the "plaudits" for *No Man Knows* came "generously from professionals in the field of American history."⁴⁰ I was in thrall to part of what I call the "Brodie legend."

I had not suspected in 1979, when I first published on Brodie, that any non-LDS historians had been critical of *No Man Knows*. But when I examined her papers, I discovered that Hill was mistaken on this point and, with a few exceptions, that the historians who reviewed *No Man Knows* had not been entirely laudatory. And I was also not aware that, with one or two exceptions, the praise she received for *No Man Knows* came from writers who did not appear qualified to judge the scholarly merits of her book.⁴¹ And, of course, I was also not aware that objections to *No Man Knows* perturbed Brodie.⁴² I did not realize how sensitive she was to criticism and how much she courted praise. Nor did I realize how stubborn she was nor how she longed for the commercial success of her literary ventures.

Bringhurst reports that the *Saturday Review of Literature* invited Dale Morgan to review *No Man Knows* "despite his central role in the biography's production" (p. 107). "Inexplicably, [Morgan] accepted," and "not surprisingly" he was unstinting in his praise for his close friend's work, with which he had assisted (p. 107).⁴³ Morgan's review, the second of more than forty to appear in print, effectively launched the Brodie legend. Bringhurst mentions six other favorable reviews. One by historian Herbert O. Brayer was published in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, while the others appeared in the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*, as well as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and

39. Marvin S. Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*," *Church History* 43/1 (March 1974): 78.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 190–97.

42. *Ibid.*, 197–210.

43. Dale L. Morgan, "A Prophet and His Legend," *Saturday Review of Literature* (24 November 1945): 7–8.

Chicago Sun (see pp. 104–5, 107, 287 n. 100).⁴⁴ Bringhurst also mentions the somewhat mixed reviews by Vardis Fisher (see p. 105) and Bernard DeVoto (see p. 106) as well as the still more ambivalent reviews by Ralph H. Gabriel and James Burnett, both of whom were professional historians (see p. 105). These writers were better qualified to comment on the book than those who lavished praise on *No Man Knows*. Bringhurst notes that “these various mixed reviews frustrated Brodie” (p. 105).⁴⁵

Bringhurst also mentions criticisms of Brodie’s book by Hugh Nibley, John A. Widtsoe, Albert E. Bowen, and Francis W. Kirkham (see pp. 108–11, 120). He reports that Brodie was annoyed when, in 1966, she “found her work under attack by Leonard J. Arrington” (p. 179).⁴⁶ Arrington had sent Brodie a draft of an essay surveying some literature on the Mormon past that contained a casual remark critical of Brodie. She had declined to respond (see p. 179). This was also true of the criticisms of *No Man Knows*, except those by Bernard DeVoto, but the primary complaints about his criticisms were written by Dale Morgan rather than Brodie.⁴⁷

Bringhurst indicates that in 1967 F. L. Stewart (Lori Donigan) had taken Brodie’s “scholarship to task,” having found, in Stewart’s own words, “some real errors and plenty of things she chose to call errors” (p. 179).⁴⁸ He also mentions Kirkham’s commentary on

44. Bringhurst also draws upon the praise given to Brodie in a review published in the *Ogden Standard-Examiner*. See Newell G. Bringhurst, ed., *Reconsidering No Man Knows My History: Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996), 41. This review was not mentioned in *A Biographer’s Life*.

45. For details on Brodie’s “frustration” at being faulted by historians, see Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 196–97.

46. See Leonard J. Arrington, “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century,” *Dialogue* 1/1 (1966): 24–25.

47. For details, see Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 156–57.

48. F. L. Stewart, *Exploding the Myth about Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet* (New York: House of Stewart Publications, 1967). Some of the sixty-three arguments Stewart set forth were wrong, but she generally got things right. See Max H. Parkin, “Mrs. Brodie and Joseph Smith,” *Dialogue* 3/3 (1968): 328–29; and Richard L. Anderson, review of *Exploding the Myth about Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, by F. L. Stewart, *BYU Studies* 8/2 (1968): 231–36.

Brodie's treatment of Joseph Smith (see p. 289 n. 115), as well as Marvin Hill's mildly critical evaluations of the revised edition of *No Man Knows* (see p. 303 n. 20).⁴⁹ Unfortunately Bringhurst does not set out the details of the objections to *No Man Knows* but merely indicates that her book was "criticized," "attacked," or "assailed" by the Saints and that these complaints annoyed her.⁵⁰

A closer look at Bringhurst's selection of commentary on *No Man Knows* reveals little of the actual content of these reviews. While the reviews he treats as mixed or critical of *No Man Knows* came from people more or less qualified to express opinions about Joseph Smith, the favorable reviews, except for those by Morgan and perhaps Brayer, came from those who must be considered essentially unqualified.⁵¹ This seems to call into question his claim that Brodie's book "enjoyed favorable reviews . . . from non-Mormon professionals in the field of American history,"⁵² which merely echoes Marvin Hill's earlier inaccurate claim that "professionals in the field of American history" gave "plaudits" to *No Man Knows*.⁵³ If the reviews are an indication, Brodie had little support from professional historians when her book on Joseph Smith was first published. So it turns out that Bringhurst is wrong in his claims. Most of the historians who reviewed the book tended to be at least ambivalent about it, though it

49. In 1996, Bringhurst cited Marvin S. Hill's "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue* 7/4 (1972): 72–85 (which was Hill's initial review essay of the revised edition of *No Man Knows*). But in *A Biographer's Life*, only Hill's "Secular or Sectarian History?" (1974)—which was republished by Bringhurst in *Reconsidering* (see pp. 60–93)—was mentioned and, oddly, neither of these essays appears in the bibliography for *A Biographer's Life*.

50. I invite the reader to compare Bringhurst's spotty treatment of the reviews of *No Man Knows* (see pp. 101–11) with the more thorough examination I provide in my "A Biographer and Her Legend," 148–59, 176–78, 186–221. Bringhurst simply ignores my essay.

51. These reviews often attribute silly things to Brodie, Latter-day Saints, and Joseph Smith. One cannot imagine Brodie being thrilled by such favorable reviews, since they are larded with nonsense. But if we discount the silliness, not much remains that is entirely favorable and solidly grounded, other than the review by Dale Morgan, who was her close friend and who had helped her write *No Man Knows*.

52. Bringhurst, introduction to *Reconsidering*, 1.

53. Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History," in *Reconsidering*, 60.

received “applause” from those who were not historians and who were not in a position to evaluate her scholarship.⁵⁴

In 1996, I surveyed the literature generated by the publication of *No Man Knows*.⁵⁵ I discovered that in 1989 Bringhurst neither addressed all the responses to her book⁵⁶ nor dealt with even those he mentioned in sufficient detail or with sufficient accuracy, and he did not take into consideration that much of what he described as “applause” for her book came from writers not qualified to assess its scholarly merits.⁵⁷ When I published “A Biographer and Her Legend” in 1996, I was not aware of the collection of essays Bringhurst edited entitled *Reconsidering No Man Knows My History*, which was published around the same time. Bringhurst likewise was unaware of my concurrent work on the debate over *No Man Knows*, which was written in part to supplement and challenge his earlier treatment of this same issue. I had hoped that Bringhurst would eventually address the issues I raised and the evidence I presented in 1996. But he makes no mention in *A Biographer’s Life*⁵⁸ of my analysis of the debate over the soundness of *No Man Knows*.⁵⁹ Instead, he has essentially repeated

54. See Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 190–210.

55. *Ibid.*, 190. I examined the relevant correspondence, as well as what I believe are all (and not merely a selection) of the reviews of *No Man Knows*. I also described recent efforts to rekindle the Brodie legend. Having already examined many of the same sources that Bringhurst drew on, I discovered some interesting facts about the production and promotion of *No Man Knows*. For some of the details, see Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 148–59, 183–210. This second venture into “Brodie studies” was cast in the form of a response to the 1995 publication of the paperback edition of *No Man Knows* and included, among other things, a detailed survey of the reviews and ensuing scholarly treatments of *No Man Knows*. I cited but purposely did not spell out the Latter-day Saint criticisms of *No Man Knows*. I assumed that, for an LDS audience, these were either well-known or easily accessible.

56. *Ibid.*, 190 n. 143.

57. *Ibid.*, 190–98. Portions of *A Biographer’s Life* are only slightly edited reproductions of Bringhurst’s earlier essays, some of which could have been substantially modified or refashioned.

58. Omissions in Bringhurst’s bibliography are common. See, for example, n. 49 above. Perhaps this is because the items included in “Books and Articles” (see pp. 328–38) are really a listing of works cited, even though they appear under the general heading of “Selected Bibliography” (see pp. 321–40).

59. See Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 147–230.

what he originally offered back in 1989 (see pp. 104–7),⁶⁰ without noting that his assessment has been challenged and, I believe, superseded. Bringhurst may believe that a biography is not the place to confront such matters. But he has drawn much of his treatment of the publication of *No Man Knows* directly from his previously published remarks. He could at least have alerted his readers to an assessment differing substantially from his own.⁶¹

Some aspects of Bringhurst's account of the reception of *No Man Knows* are puzzling. For example, he makes much of the fact that responses to *No Man Knows* from Latter-day Saints were slower in coming than accolades for her book from literary writers. Hence the following:

Latter-day Saint spokesmen, official and otherwise, were extremely slow to comment publicly on *No Man Knows My History*. Various Mormon publications, most prominently the *Deseret News*, the Salt Lake City-based daily newspaper owned and operated by the Mormon Church, declined to review, or even to acknowledge the book's existence for months after its release. In the meantime, Brodie's biography was being noted and/or reviewed in dozens of newspapers and periodicals across the United States. (p. 107)⁶²

But Knopf, Brodie's publisher, had not sent a review copy of *No Man Knows* to the *Deseret News*,⁶³ which is what is usually done when a publisher would like a review. In addition, serious reviews demand

60. See Bringhurst, "Applause, Attack, and Ambivalence," 46–63.

61. Bringhurst also ignored my analysis of Brodie's basic shift in the 1971 revised edition of *No Man Knows* toward a psychological explanation and hence away from her earlier claim that Joseph Smith was a conscious fraud. See Louis Midgley, "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Critics and Their Theories," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 113–20.

62. As is common with trade books, prepublication copies of *No Man Knows* were sent for review to newspapers and magazines, accompanied, I suspect, by boilerplate indicating what might be included in a review.

63. See Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 149.

careful reading of a book and require substantial research and, hence, take time. Why would one expect Latter-day Saints to immediately voice opinions based on a glance at Brodie's book? And were not the reviews published in historical journals also slow in coming for exactly the same reasons it took Latter-day Saints a few months to prepare responses?

On this issue Bringhurst is following what he found in Brodie's correspondence. She seems to have expected or wanted church "officials" to quickly denounce her book. Did she hope that controversy would help sell her book? Instead of looking into this and other possibilities, Bringhurst refers to "*deliberate* church silence" (p. 108, emphasis added). The choice of the word *deliberate* seems to indicate that Bringhurst imagines that the Brethren should have rushed to bombard her. Instead, they took their time, and the responses of Elders Widtsoe and Bowen were moderate, given the provocation and the immediately favorable publicity her publisher managed to generate in newspapers and popular magazines.

Bringhurst sees things differently. He describes the eventual LDS commentary on *No Man Knows* as an "attack" (p. 108) or "attacks" (p. 110), or as a "denunciation" (p. 108) or "denunciations" (p. 109). She was "assailed" (p. 109) by Latter-day Saints. Of course, he is writing his account from her perspective; he strives to tell her story through her eyes. But there are other ways of seeing these events. Bringhurst also mentions what he calls "the official position of the Mormon Church" on Brodie's book (p. 110). Is the reader to imagine the Brethren working out an "official" position on her book? Or is Bringhurst merely talking about an opinion of some LDS "official"?

When Bringhurst mentions Hugh Nibley's response to *No Man Knows*, he insists that it was "produced under the apparent direction, or at least with the encouragement, of Mormon Church leaders" (p. 110).⁶⁴ When I first read this remark, I said to myself—"so what?"

64. Bringhurst's supporting note includes the following: "Also attacking Brodie and her work with the apparent approval of Mormon Church leaders" was a review written by Milton R. Hunter (p. 289 n. 115). This remark is then followed by the citation to Hunter's review in the *Pacific Historical Review* 15/2 (June 1946): 226–28. However, Bringhurst

But when I looked for evidence supporting this assertion, Bringhurst offers only a reference to a letter by Brodie. He merely repeats Brodie's hunch. How could she have known whether the Brethren asked Nibley to write his pamphlet? Brodie's opinion on such matters, unless otherwise corroborated, amounts to speculation and should be treated as such. Unfortunately, Bringhurst tends to accept her guesses, or the hunches attributed to her by her friends, as solid fact.⁶⁵

We have no evidence that Brodie fashioned responses to the LDS criticisms of *No Man Knows* nor that Brodie and Latter-day Saint scholars conversed, although she was frequently in touch with various cultural Mormons and even anti-Mormon publicists (see pp. 171, 177–79, 240–43, 301 n. 79, 314 n. 63, and so forth). *A Biographer's Life* does not indicate what Latter-day Saints found objectionable in *No Man Knows*. Instead, Bringhurst mentions, for example, that Nibley's pamphlet was to become "the most famous of all Mormon Church-sanctioned publications"—there we go again—"refuting Brodie's biography. It sold briskly, thanks to its clever, readable style and to strong advertising" (p. 111). Calling it "Mormon Church-sanctioned" is gratuitous. And there is no evidence that Nibley's pamphlet received "strong advertising." Whatever advertising it received had to be minimal compared to the national publicity campaign mounted by Knopf to promote the sale of Brodie's book. And if having a "clever, readable style" is a fault, then Bringhurst has located a major weakness in all of Brodie's biographies. Bringhurst notes that Brodie "had nothing but contempt for Nibley's *No, Ma'am, That's Not History*, dismissing it as a 'flippant and shallow piece'" (p. 111). But this remark turns out to be typical of her responses to subsequent critics, as Bringhurst demonstrates (see pp. 211–12, for example).

neglects to mention that one of Brodie's friends (Austin Fife, a folklorist) tried to bully the editor of this journal into not including Hunter's review and into substituting instead his own highly favorable review. But the editor simply would not yield to such unconscionable pressure. This story can be pieced together from evidences available in the Brodie Papers. For some of the details, see Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 196 n. 175.

65. Bringhurst could have easily contacted Hugh Nibley and found out whether Brodie's speculation about *No, Ma'am, That's Not History* was accurate.

Branding Nibley's pamphlet as "flippant" seems to have become the approved way of dismissing it without analysis or argument. For example, RLDS historian Roger Launius recently claimed that Nibley's response to *No Man Knows* was "the *earliest*, and by far the most *flippant* and easily dismissed."⁶⁶ If flippancy were the kind of fault that Launius makes it out to be, what should we think of his own remark that Brodie had contended "that the beloved first vision was the result of a bad pickle or outright lies"?⁶⁷

Latter-day Saint scholars eventually paid some attention to *No Man Knows*. And this led to a more solid scholarly treatment of both Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. But it is wrong to imagine that the Saints were thrown into a panic by Brodie's book and hence were pouring their energies into responses to it. I have discovered five items written by Latter-day Saints (Widtsoe, Bowen, Hunter, Nibley, and Kirkham) responding directly to her book that were published between 1946 and 1947. This is five out of a total of forty or more essays dealing with Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith that were published between 1945 and 1947. It was 1961 before Nibley bothered to mention her again, and then only in the context of a much larger survey of anti-Mormon literature generally.⁶⁸

As mentioned, Brodie seems to have wanted criticism of *No Man Knows* from church leaders (see p. 107). When this did not happen instantly, she was annoyed. And it should not have (and probably did not) come as a surprise to Brodie when she was excommunicated for apostasy. She wanted nothing to do with the church; she despised it. Bringhurst notes "that Brodie was directed to a local church court in

66. Roger D. Launius, "From Old to New Mormon History: Fawn Brodie and the Legacy of Scholarly Analysis of Mormonism," in *Reconsidering*, 221 n. 7, emphasis supplied. I wonder if Nibley's pamphlet was the earliest LDS response to Brodie, as Launius claims. Is Launius certain that Widtsoe, Bowen, and Hunter had not already published their reviews before Nibley's pamphlet appeared in print? I think that Bringhurst has sequenced the LDS responses to Brodie's book correctly (see pp. 107–11).

67. Launius, "From Old to New Mormon History," 199. Cultural Mormons have often thought it within their prerogative to be scornful or sarcastic, but they object to any sign of impishness among the faithful, since the faithful are stereotyped as dull, mindless anti-intellectuals and hence are supposed to be stodgy.

68. Nibley, *The Myth Makers* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961).

Cambridge and," he adds, "not summoned directly to Mormon Church headquarters in Salt Lake City [which] might appear puzzling." But puzzling only to those unfamiliar with the way church discipline is routinely handled. He also refers to what he thinks is "compelling evidence," which he indicates came from his "oral interviews with various family members," "that orders to excommunicate the errant author originated at the highest levels of the Mormon Church" (p. 289 n. 117). These "family members," whoever they were, seem inclined to speculate. Hence the following: "One family member suggested that the formal excommunication of Brodie, while orchestrated from church headquarters in Salt Lake, was handled within the confines of the New England Mission in order to mask the involvement of David O. McKay in the matter" (p. 289 n. 117). One would have expected Bringhurst not to have been taken in by this sort of opining.

After Brodie published her biography of Joseph Smith, she eventually wrote on Thaddeus Stevens. This work seems to have been well received. Her subsequent biography of Sir Richard Burton drew some criticism from historians (see p. 175). Her biographies of Thomas Jefferson and Richard Nixon were, for several reasons, the most controversial of her books. Somewhat like her treatment of Joseph Smith, her book on Jefferson was admired by literary critics (see pp. 185, 215, 217–18) and criticized by some, but not all, professional historians (see pp. 218–19). She was faulted by those skeptical of her use of Freudian psychoanalysis and even by some historians sympathetic with psychohistory or psychobiography.

From the perspective of some professional historians, at least part of the problem with Brodie's approach was her fascination with sexual matters, which appears to me to have deepened somewhat as she both underwent and learned more about psychoanalysis. She sought and found hints in what she read that she linked to explanations more or less resting on psychoanalytic speculation, and these were often focused on "intimate" or sexual matters. Bringhurst does not entirely shy away from these facts about Brodie nor does he entirely avoid mentioning her "fascination" with sexual matters in the lives of others. He does not link her obsession with sexual matters in

her biographies, the sexual problems in her own marriage, and her emotional difficulties, even though these matters are all mentioned here and there in *A Biographer's Life*.

Bringhurst published an essay by Roger Launius in *Reconsidering* in which Launius complains about Brodie's obsession with sexual matters.⁶⁹ When I saw this issue raised in *A Biographer's Life*, I thought of the title of David H. Donald's review of Brodie's book on Jefferson—"By Sex Obsessed."⁷⁰ And I wonder if Mario DePillis may not have been right when he claimed that Brodie had early on absorbed a fascination with vague Freudian categories and explanations common in her environment among those who had not actually studied Sigmund Freud.⁷¹ Could something like this explain her penchant for speculation on sexual matters? Did some deep inner distress drive her interest in such things? Or a combination of both? Fascination with the bedroom is manifested in her books and seems to be a common theme that spans many years. Perhaps this fascination was a product of her own highly secularized world. Bringhurst tends to skirt such issues, though what he has discovered about her mother's problems with sexuality and Brodie's own similar or related problems could at least suggest some possible answers. I admit that I have no explanation for what seems to be a pattern, but neither does Bringhurst.

Managing Appearances

Bringhurst describes the efforts made by Brodie and by Norton, her publisher, to secure favorable reviews of *Thomas Jefferson*. Here

69. See the long note by Launius, "From Old to New Mormon History," 229 n. 59. Launius makes a fuss about some of the books and essays that contain responses to Brodie's speculation about Jefferson. He also includes some wry comments about her being "fascinated by the sexual escapades of Sir Richard Burton, who himself was fascinated by unusual sexual practices," and so forth. Likewise, he draws attention to Brodie's effort to explain Richard Nixon, whom she despised, with the idea that he was involved in what she imagined must have been a vile, disgusting homosexual relationship with Bebe Rebozo (see *A Biographer's Life*, 224, 231–32, 245, 310 n. 6).

70. See David H. Donald, "By Sex Obsessed," *Commentary* 58/1 (July 1974): 96–98.

71. See Mario S. DePillis, "Fawn McKay Brodie: At the Intersection of Secularism and Personal Alienation," in *Reconsidering*, 95, 110–13.

we glimpse the politics of publishing, which are found especially in the academic world. "Brodie did what she could," according to Bringhurst, "to ensure an enthusiastic response to her book insofar as potential reviewers were concerned" (p. 213). She dreaded having Dumas Malone, Merrill Peterson, and Julian Boyd, the widely recognized experts on Jefferson (see p. 213), review her book. And, unlike Latter-day Saint critics, this so-called "Jefferson establishment" could reach a national audience. She realized that their command of the Jefferson materials was superior to her own, and she respected, feared, and disliked them and did what she could to discredit them.

Bringhurst uncovered an internal memo in which Brodie's publisher discussed how to manage the reviews in newspapers, magazines, and academic journals of her biography of Jefferson (see pp. 213–14). Brodie's publisher, this memo shows, would do what he could to have the experts on Jefferson "waived off as reviewers" (p. 214, quoting the internal memo). And those that the publisher and Brodie thought would respond favorably to her work would be recommended (see p. 214). One of the little secrets about the academic world is that reviews of books do not just happen and that academic reputations are not spontaneous events. Be that as it may, even some academic types who were her friends ended up writing negative reviews of *Thomas Jefferson*. Brodie and her publisher were right that those most favorable to her book would be literary critics (see pp. 217–18).

After mentioning a few of the problems that historians found in Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson*, Bringhurst notes that Jerry Knudsen and I⁷² had offered "two somewhat different appraisals of the varied overall reaction to Brodie's biography" of Jefferson (see p. 309 n. 95). I am not sure whether Bringhurst means that Knudsen and I differed or that we both differed from him in our assessment of the reception

72. Jerry Knudsen, "Jefferson the Father of Slave Children? One View of the Book Reviewers," *Journalism History* 3/2 (1976): 56–58. Cf. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection." See also the analysis of the reviews of *Thomas Jefferson* in Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 159–75. See further Louis Midgley's discussion of Thomas Jefferson in his review of "A Hard Day for Professor Midgley: An Essay for Fawn McKay Brodie," by Glen J. Hettinger, in this issue, pp. 108–16.

given to Brodie's book on Jefferson. My assessment independently supports the analysis offered by Knudsen, so Bringhurst must mean that he provided an account that differs from ours, but he does not indicate how or why. And he neglects to mention that Brodie had written a response to Knudsen⁷³ in which she tried to defend herself against his evidences and conclusions. She did this in part by claiming that the favorable reviews of her *Thomas Jefferson* outnumbered the unfavorable by 19 to 1.⁷⁴ This claim is simply preposterous. My analysis of the reviews found *in her own files* showed that 74 of the 154 reviews are essentially favorable and 80 are in some degree unfavorable. The bulk of the unfavorable reviews came from historians, while the bulk of the favorable reviews came from literary critics.⁷⁵ This was essentially the point made by Knudsen on the basis of a smaller sample. Brodie's inaccurate response to Knudsen provides an indication of how she viewed and conducted scholarly conversations. The fact is that, in an effort to score some points against Knudsen, Brodie dissembled. Unfortunately, Bringhurst ignores her revealing exchange with Knudsen.

Bringhurst is not unaware of the complaint that Brodie substituted rhetoric for carefully crafted arguments or that she employed the techniques of the novelist to enhance her biographies. Bringhurst's collection of essays evaluating *No Man Knows* contains one piece identifying what competent historians, both Latter-day Saint and otherwise, have believed about her work: Brodie writes well, but her techniques are those of the novelist (and amateur psychoanalyst) rather than those normally employed by historians. Competent reviewers of *No Man Knows* sensed this point, whether they accepted her account or not. Brodie's fine style—her literary technique—seems to me to have provided her with a substitute for carefully articulated argument and for the proper if unspectacular assessment and use of textual sources. Apparently Lavina Anderson agrees with this judgment. She is impressed that while Leonard Arrington once

73. See Fawn M. Brodie, "Professor Brodie Replies," *Journalism History* 3/2 (1976): 59.

74. Ibid.

75. See Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 166–68.

noted “the charming imagery” employed by Brodie, he also “expressed serious misgivings about her methodology.”⁷⁶ She concludes her analysis by quoting with approval some (but not all) Latter-day Saint scholars who have indicated that *No Man Knows* ought to be read as a novel and not as genuine history.⁷⁷ She then concludes that Brodie’s use of “literary devices . . . undercut the historical effect,”⁷⁸ even though she explains that she is not examining the soundness of Brodie’s choice of a naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon or attempting to deal with “the historical accuracy of Brodie’s biography.”⁷⁹

Anderson also insists that the “assessment” of Brodie’s literary output must depend on “how accurately she used the sources available to her, how limited her history was by its sources, and the extent to which she transgressed beyond their boundaries in her conclusions.”⁸⁰ She could also have mentioned that Brodie’s work has been assessed in terms of the soundness of her fundamental assumptions. Brodie clearly fashioned “skillful prose,”⁸¹ and her work was “gracefully written with a compelling momentum,”⁸² but these qualities, while admirable in themselves, do not guarantee sound history.

It seems that Brodie longed to produce enthralling literature. She did not understand that “intuition” (coupled with skill as a writer) was not a substitute for grounding accounts solidly in the available

76. Lavina F. Anderson, “Literary Style in *No Man Knows My History*: An Analysis,” in *Reconsidering*, 127, 152 n. 5. Anderson cites Arrington, “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism,” 24.

77. Anderson, “Literary Style,” 148, quoting Edward Geary, Eugene England, Vardis Fisher, and an unidentified author. The list of those who more or less share Anderson’s opinion could have been extended beyond these few names.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, 128. Anderson refers to Brodie’s “naturalistic method” (p. 128) and “naturalistic premise” (p. 129), which she indicates she does not accept though she does not explain why.

80. *Ibid.*, 147.

81. *Ibid.*, 127, citing D. Michael Quinn (see *ibid.*, 153 n. 6). Anderson, however, skirts the thorny issue of how much Quinn, a historian and former Mormon who still writes on Mormon issues, depends upon Brodie. For a treatment of this issue, see Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 225–29.

82. Anderson, “Literary Style,” 127, citing Davis Bitton (see *ibid.*, 153 n. 6).

textual sources or for dealing critically with those sources. Brodie's reliance on intuition seems to have been constant during her literary career. Dale Morgan, her early mentor and role model, was like her in this respect, though he was also more clearly aware that his stories had to be grounded on textual evidences and not merely based on intuition. He warned Brodie about the dangers of merely following her hunches. Others have noticed this penchant on her part, and it led some of those friendly to her endeavors to see her as a fine writer, a kind of frustrated novelist, but as a less than genuinely competent historian.

Sorting Out Intellectual Issues

A Biographer's Life does not contain a careful, critical examination of Brodie's explanation in *No Man Knows* for the Book of Mormon or for Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims. Whatever else it might be and however closely it sticks to sources, *A Biographer's Life* is not an intellectual biography. Bringhurst may have felt that insufficient textual materials were available with which to write an intellectual history, but this is not the case.

It is not surprising to find that Bringhurst neglects to consider the question of whether a coherent, naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon would require or could survive attempts to explain Joseph Smith using the categories of abnormal psychology.⁸³ Bernard DeVoto's review of *No Man Knows*, which more or less pleased Brodie, angered Morgan, and the two fought it out in an exchange of letters. By not giving attention to this interesting conversation, Bringhurst brushes aside the shift that takes place in the "supplement" to the revised edition of *No Man Knows*, in which Brodie invokes an explanation drawn from the literature of abnormal psychology in an attempt to explain Joseph Smith (see p. 192). Morgan appears to have convinced Brodie in 1945 that a psychological explanation of Joseph Smith that fundamentally compromised the idea that he was a con-

83. For a full listing of these sources, see Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 156–57 n. 31.

scious fraud would not account for what can be found in the textual evidences (if one begins with the assumption that the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be).

Bringhurst reports that Brodie described the 1971 revision of *No Man Knows* as involving “numerous changes in the text” (p. 192, quoting Brodie). But he claims that “such changes were minimal” because the pagination was not altered (p. 192). He also recognizes that “she backed away somewhat from her original contention that Joseph Smith was a conscious imposter” (p. 192). That is not to say that in 1971 she viewed the Book of Mormon as anything but a fraud. In 1945, following Morgan’s lead, Brodie maintained that Joseph Smith was entirely aware that the Book of Mormon was fraudulent. By 1971 Brodie had shifted to the notion that Joseph Smith, in Bringhurst’s words, suffered from “a complex, interrelated ‘identity problem’” (p. 192). But exactly how does an “identity problem” explain the Book of Mormon? Was Joseph Smith aware that he was promoting fraud? How did Brodie understand this supposed “identity problem”? And how did she think that postulating an “identity problem” could explain how Joseph Smith was able to dictate a long, complex book to scribes in a very short time? Bringhurst does not address such questions.

As Brodie moved beyond the influence of Dale Morgan and began toying with a psychological explanation for Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, she began to picture Joseph Smith as an “impostor,” that is, as deeply psychotic. This new explanation was not, however, intended to entirely replace, but rather to supplement, her earlier notion that he at least started out consciously fabricating a hoax. Are there good reasons for linking Joseph Smith with the “impostors” described by Phyllis Greenacre, the current authority on what is called the “imposter syndrome”?⁸⁴ This question deserves a competent answer.

84. See Phyllis Greenacre, “The Impostor,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 27 (1958): 359–82. Bringhurst does not indicate Brodie’s reliance on this study, nor does he mention that Brodie was involved in meetings of the Los Angeles Interdisciplinary Psychoanalytic Study Group, with whom she discussed her notion that Joseph Smith more or less fits the syndrome described by Greenacre. See Brodie’s notes on these meetings entitled “Joseph Smith—(first meeting)” and “Original Notes First J.S [Joseph Smith] Meeting and

Is it not also worthwhile to ask how Brodie thought that she could salvage her original theory that Joseph Smith was a “conscious fraud” once she had turned to an explanation that pictured him as dissociative? And what happened to the arguments—and they were arguments and not bald assertions—that Morgan (and Brodie) worked out in opposition to the position advanced by DeVoto? Did not Morgan and Brodie believe they had shown that, no matter how much one might be tempted to explain Joseph Smith as suffering from some psychosis, the existence of the Book of Mormon stood in the way of such an account? As much as Brodie dabbled in Freudian explanations, Morgan had persuaded her that no psychological explanation of Joseph Smith would work if it basically compromised what they both were convinced was a fact—that he knew from the start he was presenting a hoax to the world.

The shift in Brodie’s explanation of the Book of Mormon and of Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims came, it seems, only after she had outgrown Morgan’s earlier influence and also after she had become somewhat more familiar with psychoanalytic literature and had undergone analysis herself.⁸⁵ Bringhurst is right, of course, when he argues that in the 1971 version of *No Man Knows* Brodie retained “her basic contention that the *Book of Mormon* was . . . of an ‘unmistakable fraudulent nature’” (p. 192). The problem comes when Bringhurst indicates that he is satisfied that in her revised account of Joseph Smith, Brodie “stood steadfastly by her original thesis, asserting that Joseph Smith had emerged as a religious leader through an ‘evolutionary process’” (p. 192). This “original thesis” was merely a detail within her original explanation.

The premise of Brodie’s original explanation was that Joseph Smith was a “conscious fraud” (p. 5) and that he knew right from the

Greenacre,” and also an item simply entitled “The Impostor.” These can be found in the Brodie Papers, MS 360, box 8, folders 1 and 2. Though Bringhurst seems to have interviewed at least some of those involved with this interesting group, there is no indication that he inquired into their view of the quality of her new effort to explain Joseph Smith.

85. For a treatment of this shift in explanations, see Midgley, “Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?” 113–20.

beginning that he was advancing a hoax. She also claimed that Joseph Smith started out with no religious motivations and merely wandered into the pretense that he could provide access to the mind and will of God. It is in this sense that Brodie thought he “evolved” into a “prophet.” She originally believed that Joseph Smith was a clever charlatan.

Bringhurst does not cite the discussion of this issue that took place when DeVoto insisted that a psychological explanation was needed to account for Joseph Smith. Morgan (with Brodie seemingly in agreement) objected to DeVoto’s view. Elsewhere I have dealt with this debate, citing some of the relevant source materials that Bringhurst appears to have overlooked;⁸⁶ rather, he quotes language from an interview Brodie gave in 1975 after she had turned to Greenacre’s description of “impostors” for a portion of her revised explanation of Joseph Smith. Are Greenacre’s imposters conscious that they are phonies?⁸⁷ If not, then they are not, strictly speaking, conscious of their fraud. Is it possible that Brodie’s use of the label “conscious imposter” (see p. xiv) rather than “fraud” is an indication that she had not sorted out or was struggling with the implications of her original thesis when she tried to turn to an explanation that makes Joseph Smith an *unconscious* fraud—that is, an “impostor” in Greenacre’s terms? Morgan and Brodie were convinced, and for good reasons, that it is not plausible for Joseph Smith to have dictated a five-hundred-page book without really knowing that it was not what it and he claimed it to be. And reinforcing this argument was Brodie’s own insistence that Joseph Smith had started out merely to write a book about Mound Builders and only later stuck in some religious content. She describes a person driven by greed and not one controlled by some overpowering psychosis.

86. See Midgley, “A Biographer and Her Legend,” 156–57.

87. Greenacre does not seem to be describing self-deception. Those involved in “bad faith” or “self-deception” always know exactly what they are doing; they never really fool themselves—they cannot afford to do so because they are in the business of striving to manipulate others by lying (that is, by consciously managing appearances).

Bringhurst does not assess how well Brodie had mastered psychoanalytic literature. That she was familiar with a stratum of prominent psychoanalysts in the Los Angeles area and had also undergone analysis herself (see p. 268) is not evidence that she had mastered the relevant literature. She shied away from using what she called the "clinical language" employed by psychoanalysts. Instead, she claims merely to have borrowed "insights" from the literature of abnormal psychology. What she produced amounts to amateur analysis often focused on sexual matters. She might, of course, have avoided the jargon of professional psychology in an effort to make her work accessible to a general reading public. Or she might have done this because she was not capable of working out an account that really used "clinical language" in a competent manner. But even among some of those sympathetic with psychohistory, Brodie did not always garner the kind of support she desired for her efforts at psychobiography. Bringhurst mentions evidence supporting this judgment (see p. 218 for Winthrop Jordan's critical review of one of her books), but he does not look into how it bears on the question of the coherence of her revised account of Joseph Smith.

Bringhurst has provided a synopsis of the details surrounding the writing and publication of Brodie's biographies and a few of her other occasional essays. However, he has not confronted a number of the thorny intellectual issues concerning her biases, background assumptions, and methods, as well as the resulting contents and style of her books. Instead, he has striven to assess, from within the limitations imposed by an unwillingness to engage in intellectual history, what he calls "her frailties, frustrations, and failures" (p. xv). Bringhurst does not address questions about the soundness of her arguments, that is, about the theories, sources, and manner in which she marshaled what she considered evidences to support her treatment of the Mormon past.

Bringhurst has, however, sorted out what can be known (or at least plausibly surmised) about what actually led Brodie into this or that quarrel or controversy as well as how she came to resent those who disagreed with her. He does not seem interested in her arguments or in the content of the essays she published. I would have

preferred a careful and critical investigation of the fruit of her initial decision to turn to a naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon.

In telling Brodie's story from her perspective, Bringhurst builds on several of her reminiscences. These occasional interviews or reminiscences seem to me to be calculated as much to obscure as to inform. It is unfortunate that Brodie destroyed the materials she used when she wrote *No Man Knows*. Bringhurst has had to engage in some detective work, as well as to depend on her recollections and secondhand sources, in his effort to explain what took her out of the church. But he also seems to have plumbed the available sources about her early life and thereby exposed most of what can now be recovered or fashioned.

Brodie's story can, however, be told in other ways because the stories we tell are not strictly determined by nor drawn from the sources. The historian fashions the plot and constructs the narrative; the story does not mechanically flow from the sources into the heart and mind of the presumably "objective" historian, but it is more or less imposed on or adjusted to fit those often highly selected sources. What counts as evidence in a historical account is at least partially determined by the theory (that is, by the plot) employed by the historian or narrator. All historians thus necessarily make assumptions and have biases, and therefore no single "objective" account exists of what really happened. But unlike fiction, history is at least to some degree regulated by the contents of the texts (or text analogues) for which it attempts to provide more or less adequate or plausible accounts.

In his 1996 collection of miscellaneous essays on Brodie, Bringhurst seeks to justify another round of appraisals of Brodie's book by arguing, among other things, that *No Man Knows* has stayed in print continuously since 1945 for four reasons: (1) it "quickly established itself as an extremely controversial work," (2) it "is well written," (3) it rests on "an analytical framework 'explicitly psychoanalytical,'" which he claims endows it with "its engaging methodological approach," and (4) it has an "unquestioned status as a seminal work."⁸⁸

88. Bringhurst, introduction to *Reconsidering*, 1–2.

He neglects, unfortunately, to examine the extent to which *No Man Knows* has been kept in print by the marketing ventures of evangelical anti-Mormon “ministries,” many of which are eager to promote Brodie for their own polemical purposes.

Bringham is right that *No Man Knows* was controversial. However, it was not controversial because it was laced with the kind of malice that makes much anti-Mormon literature objectionable. And no one doubts that Brodie was a fine writer. It was precisely because she used her literary gifts to set out an enthralling naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon and of Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims—without the usual rancor that went with many previous and subsequent accounts—that it seemed to some Latter-day Saints that her book was worthy of at least some critical attention.

Brodie liked to guess about motivations, and she tended to speculate on what various people must have thought. Both her apologists and her critics have noted these features of *No Man Knows*. Bringham seems to have seen such features as indications, even in 1945, of an “explicitly psychoanalytical” methodology. Some have also seen Brodie’s penchant for “mind-reading” and other similar proclivities as an outgrowth of (or at least related to) a craving on her part to write fiction. Bringham supplies some additional evidence of Brodie’s longing to write fiction (see pp. 122–23, 153, 166),⁸⁹ just as he also links *No Man Knows* with Freudian psychoanalysis (see p. 3).

To support his opinion that *No Man Knows* was a “seminal work,” Bringham borrows language from Roger Launius, the foremost contemporary RLDS (Community of Christ) historian, who claims that Brodie’s work somehow started a so-called new Mormon history, which has moved away from concerns about the truth of religious claims and is now “more interested in understanding why events

89. Bringham quotes Brodie as once indicating that “it might be fun to write about ‘The Impact of the World on the Mormon writer’ because obviously there is no such thing as the impact of Mormonism on the writing world.” She thought this topic would be an easy one because “everything would come out of my own head, and I wouldn’t have to check sources and footnotes” (pp. 134–35). Fiction was attractive to her for the same reasons.

unfolded the way they did" (p. 266). Launius makes this assertion, but his larger point runs in a different direction. He actually complains about the impact Brodie has had on the study of the Mormon past. He insists that her influence remains both "disturbing and unnecessary."⁹⁰ He would like to see the study of Mormon things move away from questions concerning the truth of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's prophetic claims. For Launius, these are not interesting questions because they are already settled in the negative and should not or cannot be addressed by historians. However much he praises Brodie for her influence, Launius faults her for having led historians into answering what he insists are the wrong questions.

Launius correctly sees Brodie as driven by what he calls an either/or dialectic⁹¹ flowing from her conviction that the Book of Mormon is either what it claims to be and Joseph Smith was God's prophet, or the foundations of the faith are fraudulent,⁹² whatever else one might say about the sentimental and emotional elements of being a Latter-day Saint. Launius sees Brodie's influence as nefarious, though powerful. He holds that through her influence, the Saints began attending to the crucial truth claims upon which the faith is ultimately grounded. On this issue, Launius faults Brodie, while I applaud her, since I believe that although she was on the wrong side, she focused on the right issues. She should be celebrated for that for which Launius condemns her. I see her role in getting the Saints thinking about the truth of the Book of Mormon differently than does Launius—I see it as helpful and even perhaps providential.⁹³

Launius insists that concern with the question of the truth of the Book of Mormon has been a "blind alley down which Brodie led

90. Launius, "From Old to New Mormon History," 195.

91. *Ibid.*, 201, 208, 213, 219.

92. *Ibid.*, 233 n. 93, which is essentially the conclusion to his essay.

93. On the renewed interest in the Book of Mormon after World War II, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century," *BYU Studies* 38/2 (1999): 6–47. At least some of the credit for the revival of interest in the Book of Mormon must go to Brodie, and I hold this opinion for what may well be the same reasons that Launius finds her influence nefarious.

Mormon historians.”⁹⁴ He prefers, instead, “a more ‘catholic’ middle position . . . that emphasizes the powerful message for the present-day LDS church and the world as a whole.”⁹⁵ Launius wants Mormon historians, or at least those from the RLDS Church, to assert that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient text, but is, instead, frontier fiction in which Joseph Smith struggled with contemporary theological issues. He holds that even when the book is read as fiction, it still offers some nice messages. This was not Brodie’s opinion, nor does it seem to be one held by Bringhurst. Though Bringhurst does not inform his readers, Launius ultimately censures Brodie, which in itself is not a bad thing; however, in this case he has done so for the wrong reasons.

By describing *No Man Knows* as a “seminal work,” does Bringhurst mean that the publication of her book was a kind of turning point? Or that *No Man Knows* somehow shifted the terms of the debate over the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith? Or that it resolved some issues? Or that Brodie raised questions that others have examined and on which they have reached other and different conclusions? Or does he mean that she started Mormon historians moving in the right or wrong direction and hence looking into either the right or the wrong questions? Of course, Bringhurst ignores the debate about these matters. And yet the Brodie legend is made to rest on the ambiguous proposition that *No Man Knows* has an “unquestioned status as a seminal work.”⁹⁶

Bringhurst tends to skirt interesting intellectual issues as he describes Brodie’s life and times. So his treatment of Brodie is comprehensive, detailed, and accurate, but neither penetrating nor profound.

Freud and Psychohistory

What can be said about Brodie’s competence in the literature from which she borrowed her “insights”? Bringhurst begins *A Biographer’s*

94. Launius, “From Old to New Mormon History,” 208.

95. *Ibid.*, 209.

96. Bringhurst, introduction to *Reconsidering*, 2; cf. 3, 5.

Life by stressing the “direct influence” exerted on her by the writings of both Erik Erikson and Sigmund Freud (p. 3), although he also admits that “she avoided what she dubbed the ‘clinical language’ employed by Erikson and Freud. She was not comfortable with such language, believing it ‘better left with the clinicians.’ A large portion of the audience was alienated by the use of clinical language, she asserted” (p. 4).

Bringhurst also grants that “her psychobiographical approach had evolved, both in intensity and sophistication . . . moving from limited use in the first edition of *No Man Knows My History* to a highly theoretical, almost clinical approach to *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*” (p. 224). He also opines that Brodie eventually had “well-honed skills in psychoanalytic methodology” (p. 224). However, he does not offer evidence to support his opinion.

If we assume that at least some portion of the literature from which she borrowed psychological “insights” is in fact solid science—and this is a controversial assumption at best—we are still faced with the question of whether Brodie had mastered the relevant literature and then managed to apply it more or less successfully to men she had never met and interviewed (either because they were dead or declined to be interviewed by her). Her critics claimed that she had managed to discover whatever she wanted as she combed the literature (see pp. 211–13, 217–19).

It turns out that even those who agreed with Brodie that Thomas Jefferson did or perhaps could have fathered one or more of Sally Hemings’s children sometimes objected to her treatment of this subject (see p. 218). When “she sought input from the eminent psychobiographer, Erik Erikson, [who was] himself preparing a short volume on Thomas Jefferson” (p. 211), she was warned by her publisher, George P. Brockway, that Erikson had recommended “that she limit her psychological analyses” (p. 308 n. 80). Brockway also told Brodie that Erikson

is always bothered by the extreme claims made for psychohistory and most anxious that the discipline keep as low a profile as possible. The Bullitt-Freud book on Wilson he

thought as disaster, and the recent books on Nixon and the Kennedys disgraceful. He has . . . no such feelings about your work. At the same time he does . . . feel it politic to reduce the opportunities for sniping by unsympathetic reviewers. (p. 308 n. 80)

Brodie seems to have counted on a favorable review of her book on Jefferson from Erik Erikson, “if [he] would review it” (p. 213). But Erikson would not review it.⁹⁷

The complaints of certain friends of psychohistory that Brodie had given psychohistory and psychobiography a bad name with *Thomas Jefferson* are not entirely missing from Bringhurst’s cautious account of her literary career (see pp. 218–19). Thus, Bringhurst quotes Bruce Mazlish, a noted psychohistorian, as holding that Brodie’s treatment of Jefferson is “a disappointment” and that her work is “flat and one-dimensional” (p. 219). But one can add that Mazlish also thought that her “analysis of the psychological situation is simply not convincing . . . she then takes as bedrock what is still the shifting sands of speculation.”⁹⁸

Unfortunately, Bringhurst shies away from such questions. But he could have investigated these and related issues. Brodie’s lectures for the courses she taught on political biography, psychobiography, and American history at UCLA seem to have all been written first and then presented to her students. Of course, she borrowed lectures or portions of lectures from her own store of such manuscripts, creating much duplication. Bringhurst claims that “she wrote out each and every lecture, evidence of an overriding need to be carefully prepared but also of a deep-seated fear of public speaking—surprising, given her extensive forensic experience” (p. 182).⁹⁹ It would have been possible to examine in some detail what she made out of the lit-

97. One wonders if Erik Erikson communicated his opinions about Brodie’s manuscript to her publisher in writing. If he did, why didn’t Bringhurst quote from the relevant correspondence? If not, was Erikson unwilling to put his opinions in writing? I wonder if what was communicated to Brodie was the full story.

98. Bruce Mazlish, *Journal of American History* 61/4 (March 1975): 1090.

99. For two years she was a “debater” at Weber College under Leland Monson, Weber’s legendary forensics coach (pp. 39–42).

erature of psychoanalysis and psychiatry through a careful examination of these materials.

Bringhurst could have indicated which authors and books and which theories equipped Brodie with exactly what tools to pry into the intimate lives of others. Would it not have been useful to know how well she had mastered the literature she claimed had equipped her with the ability to peek inside the lives of others and to reveal previously dark secrets about them? And would it not be nice to know just how skillfully she had applied whatever she borrowed from the psychological literature with which she was presumably familiar? Some historians have believed the stories linking Jefferson and Sally Hemings, and some have not. And some of her critics—Garry Wills, for example—accept the story about Sally Hemings. What they tend to object to is the way she tried to support her conclusions and the extent to which the alleged liaison dominates her book. The issue is not whether Brodie was right in her claims about Jefferson fathering children by Sally Hemings but the way she tried to support her claim based on the evidence available when she wrote.

Bringhurst has figured out why Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson* became a best-seller. Her

examination of Jefferson's personal life had contemporary relevance during this period [late 1960s and early 1970s] when many Americans were cynical about their elected leaders, particularly their presidents. Fueling such cynicism were Lyndon Johnson's troubles in Vietnam followed by Richard Nixon's problems over Watergate. Then there were the revelations concerning past presidential behavior, including the extramarital affairs of Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. Brodie's treatment of Jefferson's carefully concealed intimate relations with women other than his wife seemed both timely and titillating, and it all went toward making a best-selling book. (pp. 186–87)

So it turns out that Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson* was trendy, which made her work commercially viable, though it was not necessarily popular with historians, who tend to look for a broader and deeper treatment in a biography than the sort of thing available in kiosk magazines.

It appears that once Brodie discovered in 1968 a tale about an alleged illicit relationship between Jefferson and Sally Hemings, this became the main focus of her book. And her publisher recognized that her treatment of Jefferson would be sensational, controversial, and would sell well, which it did (see pp. 227–28, for example).

Right at the time Brodie was beginning to work on her biography of Jefferson, she made the painful discovery that her powerful, charming, famous husband was cheating on her. According to Bringhurst, he had always been “drawn to other women” and given “to flirtatious behavior,” which was “usually limited and vicarious, but he became deeply involved with one particular woman, which led to an extra-marital affair during the late 1960s” (p. 187). However, Bringhurst does not see Brodie’s discovery of her husband’s infidelity as part of the explanation for the passion with which she insisted that the powerful, charming, influential Thomas Jefferson was guilty of an infidelity.

Bringhurst also reports that in May of 1968 Brodie discovered Winthrop Jordan’s “much heralded” book on American attitudes toward blacks.¹⁰⁰ In this important book, Jordan played with the possibility that Thomas Jefferson might have had a sexual relationship with Sally Hemings. “Brodie felt that Jordan had not gone far enough in pursuing the nature of the relationship” (p. 194). She determined to go further, and the relationship became the major focus of her treatment of Jefferson.¹⁰¹

Brodie assumed that Jordan would be favorably impressed with her treatment of Jefferson, but he was not.¹⁰² Bringhurst explains that

100. Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1968).

101. Annette Gordon-Reed explains that “Winthrop Jordan’s 1968 treatment of the [Jefferson-Hemings] controversy . . . represented something of a departure from the attitude that had been taken until that point. Jordan wrote as an agnostic on the subject, considering the matter as part of his general analysis of Jefferson’s personality and attitudes toward race. His generally balanced appraisal of what he considered to be the evidence paved the way for Fawn Brodie’s more ambitious study of the issue.” Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 3.

102. See Jordan’s review of *Thomas Jefferson* in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series 32/3 (July 1975): 510–12. Bringhurst notes that “Jordan’s actual speculation on a

Winthrop Jordan, whose own work on early American slavery and Thomas Jefferson . . . had so influenced Brodie, was surprisingly negative, accusing the author of bad psychology and noting that on the question of Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings, the centerpiece of Brodie's work, he remained "persuaded that it does not much matter." (p. 218)

Jordan was not arguing that her conjectures were not true. Like others of Brodie's critics, he complained that she stressed issues that were of relatively little importance, even if some of her guesses turned out to be right, which they might have been. These critics also doubted, especially with her use of so-called "insights" borrowed from Freud, that she had come up with solid evidence to support her hunches.

It is clear that Bringhurst remains in thrall to Brodie as a historian; it is also clear that he wanted to find something that would vindicate her work as a biographer. He sought this evidence in her biography of Jefferson; hence, he conjectures that "the book's great popularity resulted largely from Brodie's controversial assertion that Jefferson had carried on a long-term sexual relationship with one of his black slaves" (p. 5). He also claims that "recent DNA evidence, in fact, proves nearly conclusively that Jefferson fathered at least one child by Hemings, thus vindicating Brodie's earlier assertions" (p. 5).

Bringhurst asserts that "in 1998, DNA tests confirmed a direct lineal relationship between Eston Hemings, Sally's youngest son, and Thomas Jefferson, thus vindicating the assertions made by Brodie a quarter century earlier" (p. 267). I am not convinced, however, that the DNA tests and subsequent very detailed review by Gordon-Reed¹⁰³ of everything that might constitute evidence have vindicated Brodie's way of dealing with such issues. It is not clear how one could independently test some of her ways of reading texts.

As I have shown, some historians already accepted the possibility that Jefferson had fathered one or more children by Sally Hemings.

possible Jefferson-Hemings liaison is the focus of a mere five pages . . . in the book. Jordan concludes, 'The question of Jefferson's miscegenation, it should be stressed, . . . is of limited interest and usefulness even if it could be satisfactorily answered' (p. 304 n. 27).

103. See Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*.

What they often objected to in Brodie's treatment of this issue was the way she tried to support the claim and the importance she placed on it. So, on the real issues surrounding Brodie's many "assertions" about Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson, DNA evidence does not seem relevant and simply cannot vindicate her way of doing history; that is, it cannot vindicate her efforts at psychohistory in this or any of her books.

A Tentative Assessment

When I first encountered *No Man Knows*, it was obvious to me that Brodie was a very adroit writer. One only has to compare *No Man Knows* with either the scholarship or literary qualities of earlier treatments of Joseph Smith to see that this is true.¹⁰⁴ And her literary gift, for which she has been justly celebrated, was also superior to most of those who have subsequently published on the Church of Jesus Christ. Soon after and partly as a result of the publication in 1945 of *No Man Knows*, an increasingly sophisticated literature began to appear that has relentlessly moved in different directions than those pursued by Brodie.¹⁰⁵

Brodie claimed that her biography of Joseph Smith grew out of an effort on her part to explain the Book of Mormon.¹⁰⁶ She thought that she could identify the sources from which Joseph Smith fashioned what she considered his "frontier fiction." As she worked on her naturalistic explanation, she refused to explain Joseph Smith with

104. For example, compare with Harry M. Beardsley's *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931). Thomas G. Alexander holds that Beardsley's book "has to be one of the most confusing books on Mormonism produced by a major publisher in the twentieth century." See Alexander, "The Place of Joseph Smith in the Development of American Religion: A Historiographical Inquiry," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 3–17, available in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretative Essays on Joseph Smith*, ed. Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 21 n. 7.

105. It is, however, only since the publication of Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* that an account with both high scholarly and literary merit has been available.

106. Fawn M. Brodie, "Fawn McKay Brodie: An Oral History Interview," *Dialogue* 14/2 (1981): 104.

the categories of abnormal psychology, which was an approach favored by some other critics. Instead, following Morgan's lead,¹⁰⁷ she sought to picture Joseph Smith as a conscious fraud.¹⁰⁸

Given her agenda, it is not surprising that in April 1944, Brodie wrote to Morgan as follows: "I am quietly tearing my hair over the Book of Mormon again. Those chapters [of *No Man Knows*] are the ones I have worked over the most and [they] are still the least satisfactory."¹⁰⁹ She was exactly right; she was never able to fashion a really satisfactory explanation of the Book of Mormon. In 1971, in the revised version of *No Man Knows*, she more or less silently parted company with Morgan by shifting toward an explanation that relied on the categories of abnormal psychology. But her portrait of Joseph Smith necessarily continued to rest on her account of the Book of Mormon. Her original insistence was that the book was a consciously contrived hoax and hence merely vapid "frontier fiction" intended at first as a history of the so-called Mound Builders. Only after Joseph Smith had dictated a portion of this tale, according to Brodie's surmise, did he decide to weave some religious themes into it.¹¹⁰ And it was at this point that he started to evolve into a "prophet." Whatever one might think about Brodie's ingenuity, her speculation about the Book of Mormon was not grounded in a careful assessment of its contents and was dependent on a selective acceptance of some of the earliest anti-Mormon lore.

It has now been fifty-five years since Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith first appeared in print. Why should her speculation still be receiving attention other than as a historical curiosity? For at least one good reason: When *No Man Knows* first appeared in November

107. See Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 148–53; and Gary F. Novak, "The Most Convenient Form of Error": Dale Morgan on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 (1996): 122–67.

108. See Midgley, "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?" 113–20.

109. Fawn M. Brodie to Dale L. Morgan, 26 April 1944, Morgan Papers, manuscript roll 10, frame 62.

110. Brodie should receive credit for persuading academics to reject the Spalding explanation of the Book of Mormon. Only among a few sectarian anti-Mormons and others with little critical capacity is this seriously flawed explanation still taken seriously.

1945, Brodie startled some of the Saints with the claim that the Book of Mormon was an intentional hoax fashioned by Joseph Smith out of materials he found in his immediate environment. Her claim seems to have played a role in getting the Saints to take seriously both the teachings and historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon.¹¹¹ She also seems to have managed, whatever her own intentions, to have prodded Latter-day Saint historians into paying attention to previously neglected archival and other obscure texts related to Joseph Smith. She thus stimulated the production of more accurate, detailed, and authentic Mormon history. From my perspective, whatever one might think about the quality of her own scholarship, she should receive credit for these sanguine developments.

Despite Brodie's engaging style, her treatment of the Book of Mormon turns out to have been cursory and flawed. *No Man Knows* has been promoted all these years mostly by those who are satisfied with a smoothly written, though implausible, treatment of the Book of Mormon and by those who have not given its arguments critical attention. Subsequent serious attention to the Book of Mormon has moved relentlessly away from Brodie's explanation and assessment. It has thus become awkward to support the opinion that she had adequately explained Joseph Smith or confirmed the nineteenth-century authorship of the Book of Mormon. In addition, key components of her explanation have been directly refuted. Even for those sympathetic with her naturalistic stance, *No Man Knows* has become a nicely written historical curiosity rather than a source for solid arguments and analysis.

The decay of Brodie's standing as a Mormon historian has not gone entirely unnoticed. Elsewhere I have described efforts to shore up her slumping reputation.¹¹² Bringhurst's earlier essays and now his biography of Brodie fall within this general grouping. But he has not been able to fashion a portrait of one able to take the measure of Joseph Smith. *No Man Knows My History* is not a peg on which to hang unbelief, unless one is inclined to ignore much of what Bring-

111. See Reynolds, "Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon."

112. See Midgley, "A Biographer and Her Legend," 147–230.

hurst has uncovered about Brodie and most of the relevant literature published since 1945 on the Book of Mormon and on the Mormon past.¹¹³

113. If one were inclined to brush aside what has been printed in the more than half a century since *No Man Knows* first appeared, it would be less messy to simply go back to E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: 1834), which is the mother of anti-Mormon books, including Brodie's, and to skip the entire conversation that has taken place since 1834.