



A Lillian Smith Reader

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As a writer and forward-thinking social critic, Lillian Smith (1897–1966) was an astute chronicler of the twentieth-century American South and an early proponent of the civil rights movement. From her home on Old Screamer Mountain overlooking Clayton, Georgia, Smith wrote and spoke openly against racism, segregation, and Jim Crow laws long before the civil rights era.

Bringing together short stories, lectures, essays, op-ed pieces, interviews, and excerpts from her longer fiction and nonfiction, *A Lillian Smith Reader* offers the first comprehensive collection of her work and a compelling introduction to one of the South's most important writers.

A conservatory-trained music teacher who left the profession to assume charge of her family's girls' camp in Rabun County, Georgia, Smith began her literary career writing for a journal that she coedited with her lifelong companion, Paula Snelling, successively titled *Pseudopodia* (1936), the *North Georgia Review* (1937–41), and *South Today* (1942–45). Known today for her controversial, best-selling novel, *Strange Fruit* (1944); her collection of autobiographical essays, *Killers of the Dream* (1949); and her lyrical documentary, *Now Is the Time* (1955), Smith was acclaimed and derided in equal measures as a southern white liberal who critiqued her culture's economic, political, and religious institutions as dehumanizing for all: white and black, male and female, rich and poor. She was also a frequent and eloquent contributor to periodicals such as the *Saturday Review*, *LIFE*, the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, and the *New York Times*.

The influence of Smith's oeuvre extends far beyond these publications. Her legacy rests on her sense of social justice, her articulation of racial and social inequities, and her challenges to the status quo. In their totality, her works propose a vision of justice and human understanding that we have yet to achieve.

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