The representation of tabooed love in Lillian Smith's fiction

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The Representation of Tabooed Love in Lillian Smith's Fiction
by Jane Elizabeth Payne
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Dr. Suzanne W. Jones, Thesis Director

My study explores Lillian Smith's autobiographical relationship to her fiction, particularly two novels, *Strange Fruit* and *One Hour*. The focus of this work is Smith's challenge to the category of sexual orientation and her related use of fiction as a source of social commentary and self-reflection. Smith uses veiled and encoded language and other kinds of tabooed love to study her own lesbian love. She also assumes a male persona to understand and express her erotic attraction to women. I approach Smith's life and literature in chronological order with an emphasis upon characterization, symbolism, narrative technique, and metaphors of nature. My fictional interpretations are supported by excerpts from Smith's letters and essays.
I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Suzanne W. Jones, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Marcia E. Whitehead

Dr. D. Ladelle McWhorter
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Lillian Smith was a premier human rights activist who challenged the categories of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation with a progressive, if not radical, zeal. As other white Southern belles sipped mint juleps on the porch, Lillian Smith wrote and lectured about discrimination. While challenges to the categories of race, class, and gender are more prevalent and obvious in her works, it is the obscure challenges to the category of sexual orientation that are the most personally significant in the fiction of Lillian Smith. Repressed by a culture that refused to accept her affectional preference, Smith wrote of same-sex love in a concealed, discreet way. She was a lesbian who used her writing as a source of social commentary and self-reflection. Smith also studied interracial love, adulterous love and homosexual love to further explore tabooed love, including her own lesbian love. In one novel, One Hour, Smith adopted a male persona to try to understand her erotic attraction to women. An investigation of these features of Smith's work reveals the courageous plight of a lesbian writer who tried to understand her self and her world through her writing, but who could do so only in a veiled way.

In the past, critics have suggested that Lillian Smith's work primarily concerns race relations, class relations, or gender relations because, as mentioned, these are the more obvious themes in her work. However, her exploration of the category of sexual

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1 The term "lesbian" has multiple meanings, and therefore, to clarify my usage in this text, I borrow an applicable definition from Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon: a lesbian is "a woman whose primary erotic, psychological, emotional and social interest is in the member of her own sex, even though that interest may not be overtly expressed" (Lesbian/Woman 7).

2 Critics who have suggested Smith's novel is primarily about race relations include, for example, Leslie W. Dunbar and Margaret Jones Bolsterli. Among critics who maintain Strange Fruit mainly concerns gender relations are Margaret Rose Gladney and Redding S. Sugg, Jr.. Critics who have suggested combined themes of race and gender include Jo Ann Robinson and Pat B. Brewer. Fewer critics have focused on the novel in terms of class relations; however, Margaret Sullivan has analyzed this concern. It is important to note that most critics who have addressed "sex" typically have truly addressed the issue of...
orientation is subtle, yet noteworthy. It is of equal, or perhaps even greater concern to her as race, class, or gender relations. An in-depth study of her literature clearly reveals this concern and is supported by letters written by Lillian Smith that were published in the Spring of 1993 by Margaret Rose Gladney. Smith's letters confirm her challenge to the category of sexual orientation.

Lillian Smith discreetly wrote herself into her fiction to address the question of sexual orientation. Her representations of her self and her lesbianism were most obvious during the apprentice stages of her career when she seemed to be exploring her self-definition and her world with the greatest intensity. Smith's first novel probably contained detailed and revealing information about her personal and social positions on homosexuality. Entitled "Walls" (and later "The Waters Flow On"), this unpublished novel was about her personal experiences in China. Smith went there in 1922 to teach music in a missionary school and wrote a novel about the experience beginning in 1932. Smith said of "Walls," "It was soft, warm, passionate, vivid, naked, honest, lyrical and it scared the publishers to death. No one would dare publish this book. I laid it aside knowing I might never write so personal, so terribly honest a book again" (Gladney, How Am I to Be Heard? 9-10). Many of Smith's references to her experiences in China in her letters and essays imply that lesbian affairs existed, and thus, given the conservative climate of the 1930s, would likely "scare" away publishers. In a letter to her friend, Margaret Long, Smith described "Walls:"

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gender. Also, most reviews which discuss Smith's attack to the category of sex or sexuality have been in regard to heterosexual relations between races. Loveland and Hugh Murray are two critics, however, who have also considered Smith's homosexuality, yet their considerations are limited to a simple acknowledgment of her lesbianism. I suggest that her affectional preference was an extremely significant influence in her writing and a prevailing consideration in her fiction.

3 All selections from Lillian Smith's letters and texts are quoted exactly as she wrote them. Smith frequently used ellipses and dashes, and often disregarded grammatical conventions.
A love letter to China it was in a deep sense about six lonely white women (missionaries all from the arid South, U.S.A., and who thought they had something to give China simply because they were Western and white. Well, they did in a way; but not in the way a few of them believed). All this had fascinated me in China . . . but had continued to haunt me. I remembered the shadowy relationships, intense, passionate, but unnamed (Gladney, How 9).

There is little question that the novel "Walls" openly explores same-sex love, yet we have no actual proof because this novel, along with several other manuscripts and letters were destroyed in a fire at Smith's home in Clayton, Georgia. There were two fires at "Old Screamer" Mountain, one in 1944 and one in 1955, and there is some discrepancy as to which manuscripts burned in which fire. Regardless of the sequence of destruction, no manuscript of "Walls" exists today, yet the implications in Smith's letters suggest that the novel was intensely personal and revealing. In her unauthorized biography of Smith, Lillian Smith: A Southerner Confronting the South, Anne C. Loveland notes that two publishers rejected the China novel "because of its discussion of homosexuality" and states that when Smith "realized that it would be easy to recognize the real-life counterparts of many of its characters, she decided not to try to publish it" (194). Loveland therefore agrees that "Walls" contained "a good bit of homosexuality" and was likely a very "candid treatment" (183), although she is equally unable to offer textual citations as verifiable proof.

In addition to "Walls," Smith wrote three other novellas between 1930 and 1935: "Tom Harris and Family," "Every Branch in Me," and an untitled piece. All three were destroyed by fire; however, Smith confirmed that the content of "Tom Harris and Family" was autobiographical. She rejected this short novel as a candidate for publication because the characters, although fictionalized, too closely resembled people she knew (Gladney, How 10). Smith feared that people would be able to recognize her, as well as themselves,
in her work. Given these fears and her portrayal of a character named Tom Harris in *Strange Fruit*, I suspect the novel was directly and boldly about Lillian Smith and the dynamics of her family relationships, especially in regard to philosophies about sex. In the novel *Strange Fruit*, Tom Harris is a character modeled after Smith's father, Calvin. The similarities between Tom Harris and Lillian Smith's father are undeniable and include owning a mill, being concerned with human rights, having a preoccupation with Puritanical evangelicalism, running a camp, and fathering nine children. If "Tom Harris and Family" maintained similarities accordingly, it would have been a powerfully revealing autobiographical text about Smith and her family life.

Details about another autobiographical novel, "Julia," are more commonly known because it, unlike most of her early manuscripts and letters, survived the fires in her home in Clayton. Both fires were said to be arson. One cannot help but wonder, however, if either or both were in actuality "search and destroy" missions which are often associated with homosexual authors (Keener 304). These missions involve the intentional destruction of incriminating information about the author, including the burning of all personal letters, and typically occur after the author's death, or upon sudden popularity. They are most often orchestrated by a family member or personal friend. In Lillian Smith's case, the first fire occurred at the height of her popularity; no arrests were made. The second occurred eleven years later, and destroyed most of her remaining letters, photographs, and manuscripts, and, again, no arrests were made.

The novel "Julia" was apparently so intensely personal and reflective, that Smith kept it in her bank's vault. It was therefore not only saved from the fires that Lillian Smith

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4 Although the manuscript "Julia" was saved from fires in Smith's home, it is no longer extant. According to a letter from Esther Smith (Lillian's sister) to Anne C. Loveland, dated September 2, 1983, the manuscript was destroyed in 1982. The reason for this destruction is unknown and no such instructions were stated in Lillian Smith's operative will, dated March 23, 1964, of which Paula Snelling was named sole executrix.
allegedly knew nothing about, but was also protected from public access and viewing. The manuscript was never published, yet it remained one of Smith's life-long projects. She started the novel in 1935 and revised it through 1966, the year of her death. The length of time allocated to this project alone reveals her dedication to the work, which was probably her greatest autobiographical study.

When Smith began writing "Julia" in 1934, she was studying her relationship with her family. She began exploring psychoanalysis (in addition to writing) as a means of resolving her feelings about herself and her relationships, especially with her family. Smith felt a dichotomy of existence between how she actually felt and how she was supposed to feel. She referred to this binary existence as the "Martha" and "Mary" sides of herself. Martha was the embodiment of societal and familial prescriptions; Mary was her Other self who reacted to her deepest emotions and sensibility. She was the rebellious liberal. Lillian Smith had difficulty reconciling the two conflicting self identities. She expressed how the two sides of herself interacted in her personal notes:

"Psychoanalysis helped me come to grips with many of my false guilt feelings, and with my Puritanic upbringing; it also helped me loosen this awful bond to my family which made me feel I must always be "Martha" in every situation, although I longed to get away from family, I was easily irritated by Mother and the "family as a whole" overwhelmed me. I felt differently from most of them . . . . I did not agree with the old ideas, I was part idealist, part iconoclast, part rebel. I was inclined to be a leftist (Gladney, How 11)."

She wrote the above note between 1930 and 1935, at which time she also focused on writing the novel "Julia." By writing "Julia," Smith tried to resolve the differences between her Puritanical background and her so called "deviant" emotions. She was overwhelmed by the pressure to be "normal" which her family exerted upon her, and the
so called "abnormal" feelings she had deep inside. To reconcile these disparate feelings, Smith had to acknowledge her other side: "Mary". Mary is the side of Lillian Smith that emerges from her encoded writings. Mary is the topic of this paper.5

In a letter to Rochelle Girson, the book review editor of Saturday Review, Lillian Smith explained more about these twin identities, and her woman-identified perspective:

Do give me a chance at some female stuff now and then; I hate to be stereotyped as a race specialist or Civil specialist or South specialist. I do know a goodish bit about such matters but what I really know best is women and their curvatures of the soul and twisting relationships- and . . . I am part Mary and part Martha: as Martha, I have written about segregation, the South, etc. etc.; as Mary, I know best girls, women, artists (Gladney, How 295).

In this same letter, Smith expressed her desire to review Dorothy Baker's book, Cassandra at the Wedding. She said "its homosexual overtones are fresh and muted tastefully" and called it "an astute revelation of female homosexuality" (Gladney, How 294-295). Her comments imply both gratitude for such writing and a sense of authority about it.

"Julia" appears to have presented issues that Smith also addressed in her life. The book seems to have been an extended study of the dynamics of relationships—homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, and familial. It appears to have played a significant role in Smith's reconciliation of her sense of self, particularly her lesbianism. She admitted of the novel's homosexual orientation in a letter to her publisher in 1959, and expressed fear about this precious manuscript's safety outside of the bank's vault (Gladney, How 230). Its content must have been diary-like to warrant her need to guard the manuscript so fiercely. In a letter to her publisher, Smith said that Julia's relationships with the two women in her life

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5 For a discussion of "Martha," see Anne C. Loveland's biography. Leslie W. Dunbar reviewed this biography and also noted that "Professor Loveland's biography is about Martha" ("A Southerner Confronting the South" 205).
were not significant to Julia, although "terribly so to her author" (Gladney, How 230). She thereby confessed that the novel was a self-study.

"Julia" was set in Maxwell, Georgia, the fictional town based on Smith's own hometown, Jasper, Florida, that was later used in her most acclaimed novel, Strange Fruit. Of "Julia", Smith wrote: "It is the story of a woman, self-contained, exquisite, who stirred an old dream in men's minds and fanned old doubts in every woman for women could not quite believe in Julia though every man did" (Gladney, How 114). The statement discreetly suggests that the novel addressed, at least in part, the issue of lesbianism. "Self-contained" implies an independent identity or self-definition, thus Julia, like Smith, was her own woman. Such bold self-reliance was unusual at a time when the majority of women were male-dependent. Smith's description suggests that Julia was independent and that men found Julia attractive, but women did also. By "fanning old doubts" in every woman, Smith was perhaps suggesting that Julia was able to arouse the erotic sensibility of other women, thus causing them to doubt their heterosexual self-definitions, or at least the legitimacy of society's prescription of strictly heterosexual behavior.

Smith challenged the category of sexual orientation most overtly and intensely in these earliest unpublished works. She continued to challenge the category in later, published fiction as well, although in a much more cloaked way. Smith feared that an obvious, uninhibited presentation of homosexual relationships would result in literary expatriation and the general defamation of her character. In short, she elected a more discreet, disguised, and even safer treatment of homosexual love in her first published novel, Strange Fruit. Smith realized such disguises were required to survive, literally and literally, in the 1930s. While the use of these disguises may seem cowardly and politically weak to many of today's writers and readers, it is important to position her actions in time and place. The prevailing white-supremacist, patriarchal, homophobic society of the
early twentieth-century South was intensely restrictive and suppressive. Fortunately, however, by the time Smith wrote and published Strange Fruit, she had discovered writing strategies that allowed her to deliver her homosexual messages and themes obliquely. By using encoded language, symbolism, and strong characters, Smith could say within plots that which she could not say aloud.

In the novel, Strange Fruit, Smith reveals her affection for her life-long companion, Paula Snelling, almost immediately. On the very first page is Smith's dedication of the book, simply "To Paula." This immediate acknowledgment simultaneously offers the sensitive reader a hint about the deepest, most personally significant meaning of the text. Lillian Smith first met Paula Snelling at the Smith family's girls' camp, "Laurel Falls," in 1920. The two worked together at the camp and eventually directed it. They revised the focus of the camp from sports and playful recreation, to more avant-garde intellectual and creative activities. They conducted nightly conferences with the girls and discussed psychology, philosophy, and even sexuality. Paula Snelling assisted Smith in maintaining the camp, and thus allowed Lillian Smith time to write while managing her family's business. She remained thereafter an important catalyst in Lillian Smith's work. The two women developed a friendship that matured into a forty-six year relationship. This relationship is, at least partially, depicted in Strange Fruit.

Strange Fruit is a novel about society's others: the non-white, the poor, the orphan, the female, the disfigured, the insane, and the homosexual. Smith used this novel to challenge stereotypes about each, including and most intensely, those to which she was personally subjected. Lillian Smith challenges the category of sexual orientation perhaps most forcefully in Strange Fruit. A casual reading of this text would not likely reveal the intensity of this challenge because most of the attacks are cleverly, and in all likelihood, consciously encoded or purposefully vague. At the time of this writing, homosexuality
was a taboo topic of conversation, much less practice, and therefore Smith elected to
explore the topic for both a main character and herself very discreetly. She did so
primarily through the use of symbolism and characterization, especially the character
Laura Deen. In exercising this discretion, Smith never overtly labels Laura's relationship
with Jane Hardy as "lesbian," but instead assists the discerning reader in drawing this
conclusion. Smith was bold to have even addressed such a liberal scenario in her novel,
and she tempered this bravado by using discretion and tact in representing same-sex love.
She portrays the two women and their love sensitively, and never fully discloses the details
of their physical, sexual involvement. Smith omits such personal details and thereby
avoids shocking her naive public too drastically.

In the novel, Laura stands simultaneously as a resource for Smith to subtly reveal and
explore her own sexual orientation and as a general representative of lesbian love. Smith
wrote herself into the novel through the character of Laura Deen and added a place for
her real life companion, Paula Snelling, in the character of Jane Hardy. A study of Laura
and Jane's relationship is concurrently a study of Smith and Snellings' relationship and
indeed homosexual relationships in general.

It becomes increasingly obvious that Strange Fruit is not just a novel about race,
gender, and class relations, as most critics have asserted. It is foremost a novel about
sexual relations most specifically, and disparity in general. There is no one main plot,
theme, or character; but there are many different ones. There are also multiple narrative
perspectives which reveal many different sides of the story. Thus, difference is to be
appreciated, accepted, and valued; that is the point of this novel and the totality of Smith's
work. Smith's literature bravely evidences her goals in achieving human rights for all
people. Granted, much of her public work focused on racial segregation, yet Smith was

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6 Smith began writing Strange Fruit in 1936 and completed the novel in 1938. It was first published in
1944.
concerned with any and all types of forced isolation or division. She saw a richness in difference that many of her contemporaries failed to see. Lillian Smith used her writing to encourage readers to explore and value difference, including difference in sexual orientation.

In *Strange Fruit*, Smith introduces Laura as "big-boned and awkward" wearing "sport clothes" and being "inclined to make too many decisions, perhaps and too surely- no deferring, no bend of will to meet another's in the social trivia" (51). This description was befitting to young Smith, and serves as one of the initial hints of Smith's identification with this character. Like Smith, Laura refused to compromise with the prevailing racist, homophobic, patriarchal ideology. It is a strong autobiographical statement by Smith and it is not only present in *Strange Fruit*, but also either explicitly or implicitly present in all of her works.

Smith effectively employs characters and symbols throughout the novel to suggest to the reader the depth of Laura and Jane's relationship and coincidently society's abhorrence of homosexual relationships. Smith uses Laura's mother, Alma Deen as the primary representative of the homophobic society-at-large. Mrs. Deen serves as a constant reminder of Southern conservative mores in the early twentieth century. She stands as one who upholds such mores at all costs, including her daughter's happiness. Alma Deen reflects the Puritanical ideology of the South in the 1930s, which included conduct supporting male superiority, white supremacy, guilt-based religiosity, and a strictly heterosexual existence. She attempts to impose all of these prescriptions upon her daughter constantly. Mrs. Deen tries to frighten Laura by representing homosexual attractions as inherently dangerous. Alma Deen therefore serves Smith well as both a character and a symbol.
Of the many symbols of Laura and Jane's relationship and related social mores, the clay figure is the most indicative and provocative. The figure is a model of a nude female that reflected the high level of intimacy in Laura and Jane's relationship, as well as the continual molding of people by society, in this case most specifically the molding of Laura by her mother. Laura had sculptured the clay figure for which Jane was the model. The clay figure had a "curve of breasts" whose visual accuracy made Mrs. Deen extremely uncomfortable. It suggested an intimate and carnal familiarity with such curves that shocked and appalled Mrs. Deen, forcing her to destroy it in an attempt to destroy her daughter's increasingly obvious homosexual orientation. Mrs. Deen "kneaded and pressed and pounded it with slow deliberateness until it was reduced to a shapeless wad and... dropped it in the garbage can". In this destruction, Alma Deen is attempting to simultaneously discard her daughter's most intimate and private life, and the object that symbolized this tabooed love. Her ability to destroy the clay model, as a representative of society and accordingly social mores, makes the clay figure also doubly significant. It not only represents Laura and Jane's relationship, but also (and secondarily) reveals the power claimed by adherence to accepted behaviors. As a conformist, Mrs. Deen is empowered to destroy, or at least attempt to destroy, all action and evidence of non-conformity.

After the mother tries violently annihilating the clay figure and attempts to destroy the reality it represents, she orders the family servant, Eenie, to "make Miss Laura some fig ice cream" (73), as if to rectify her act of malice and attempt to pacify Laura with sweets, a bribe often given to children to achieve prescribed behavior and serve as a peace offering from the reprimanding parent. This attempted bribery is significant because it suggests the ridiculousness of parents' and/or societies' attempts to regulate the sexual behavior of free-willed individuals.
The clay model remains an extremely important symbol throughout the novel. Much later in the text, Mrs. Deen interrogates Laura about Jane and Laura's relationship, and Laura's attention promptly returns to the clay model. Mrs. Deen asks Laura, "do you think it wise to go around with older women so much? After all, Jane Hardy is so much older than you. Why do you like-that type of woman? Don't you like your old friends?" (242; emphasis added). She later continues, "There're women, Laura, who aren't safe for young girls to be with... They're women who are- unnatural. There're like vultures-women like that. They do- terrible things to young girls" (243). Mrs. Deen attempts to convince Laura that such same-sex affections are unsafe, unnatural, and dangerous. She implies that homosexuals lure "normal" people who are really heterosexual. Feeling defensive and realizing her mother had spoken with an unusually assured authority, Laura suspiciously went to her letter drawer and picked up Jane's letters. The omniscient narrator explains,

Yes, they did write to each other even though they lived in the same town. They had so much to say. There was so much you could say to Jane that you never had before been able to say to anyone. Laura's heart was beating heavily-she did not know why. She picked up the top letter. No, it wasn't the last she had had from Jane. Then Mother had been in her letters. Mother had read them. Mother knew Jane had posed for the figure. Jane had talked about it in that letter. The letter was gone (243-244).

This passage is significant because it reveals the depth and extremely private nature of the two women's relationship. It suggests an intimate and sensitive communication. They wrote to each other, and the fact that they wrote, rather than talked about "so much" is extremely significant in Smith's writing. The characters are silenced in the novel, much as Smith was in reality. Like Smith, the lesbian characters wrote to claim a voice.
Even before discovering that Alma Deen had read the letters, Laura knows her mother has destroyed the clay figure. In an earlier passage, the narrator states, "That her mother destroyed the little clay figure, Laura took for granted. It was one of those things you took for granted. But asking herself why was like going through old trunks for something lost. She had not found the answer, though she had found many other answers" (241).

Laura could not understand why her mother felt such vehement disdain; Laura had come to understand and accept the way she felt for Jane. The clay figure represented this understanding and acceptance. The narrator revealingly explains,

You can get more clay. But there are some things you cannot get more of. She had wanted to say something, to make a scene as Tracy sometimes did. But she had no words that could safely be used. Words that, unspoken, seem so harmless would, once said aloud, become dangerous explosives containing hidden feelings that would flame into something you dared not set free. They would begin with the little chunk of clay. They would not end there. No. That little piece of clay would merely be a lighted fuse which would lead, circuitously perhaps, but inevitably, to everything in your life that you cherished (241-242).

Laura realized her "different" sexual orientation, but knew she could not discuss, much less defend it. The unspoken words were "homosexuality" or "lesbianism" and once spoken, or identified, the admission was irretrievable. In fact, such words would not actually be spoken aloud, but would rather only be alluded to or intimated in a whisper. In Smith's era, homosexuality was considered deviant, if not completely reprehensible. Rather than claim the deviant label, many homosexuals chose to live in silent secrecy. Laura, like Smith, therefore had to hide her true feelings and suffer the consequent feelings
of entrapment. Laura must keep her relationship a secret to allow it to survive as natural and as special.

Smith used literary arts to quietly explore her self-definition and understand her relationship with Paula Snelling, and she gives the modeling clay to Laura to explore her sense of self as a lesbian. The clay figure is therefore a powerful symbol. It as a sign of homosexual love in both a specific and generic sense. At once, it reveals Laura's reconciliation with her sense of self and the potential reconciliation of any individual's sense of self.

Later in the novel, after Laura's brother, Tracy, is killed, Smith again employs symbolism in a powerful way to further introduce Laura's lover, Jane Hardy. Tracy's white girlfriend, Dot Pusey, walks to the Deen's house after hearing of Tracy's murder and Jane drives by and picks her up. The two ride silently in Jane's car to the house, and although their silence most obviously reveals the impracticality of words at a time of death, more importantly, and much less obviously, it reveals the silence imposed upon Jane as a lesbian by society. Jane delivers Dot to the house, yet she remains quiet and stays in the car. She is not allowed to acknowledge the relationship she has with Laura, and therefore cannot go in to console her mate as she would as a male character in the same situation.

Jane Hardy's confinement to the car is an important symbol because it reveals the acute entrapment Jane feels by society, again, as a lesbian. Jane was trapped in the car physically, just as we colloquially refer to gays being trapped "in the closet" even today. The car/closet symbolically represents the need for homosexuals to hide their feelings from others simply because they are "different"-- "different", that is, if the standard or norm is heterosexuality. In short, it is much safer to stay in the car/closet and hide, rather than come out and openly identify and express homosexual preferences. In her fiction, Smith
was somewhere between safe and daring in her acknowledgment and expression of her homosexuality. While we might currently regard her efforts in the pioneering of gay rights as being too mild, we must remember that we are living in a vastly different social, psychological and literary context than Lillian Smith was. Her efforts, however mild, existed nevertheless, thus she attempted to promote this aspect of human rights through the only means available to her-- in veiled and encoded writing. A message was being bravely delivered, but only the open-minded recipient could discern its meaning.

The imposition of silence remained critically important to Smith, and she reveals its significance mainly in the quiet character, Jane Hardy. She leaves Jane to be a rather mysterious character and in doing so suggests that we cannot know Jane because she is not allowed a voice in the society. Smith intentionally denies Jane a narrative voice. Lillian Smith therefore achieves a poignant message in electing not to give Jane a voice in a novel where she is so extremely careful to give all of the other characters a narrative voice. In this silence, Smith suggests that by the very nature of one's homosexuality, Smith's included, a gag order was issued--for life. Homosexuality was simply not to be discussed, much less defended. Smith therefore keeps Jane as a rather mysterious figure and offers only enough details about Jane to help the reader equate her character with Smith's real-life companion, Paula Snelling. We are only told that "Jane was an orphan who lived on in Maxwell teaching school, living with the Harrises, but living always alone with herself. For no one knew Jane" (246). Paula Snelling was also a school teacher and although she may not have actually been an orphan, Snelling was adopted by the Harrises' real-life counterparts, the Smiths.

Unable to freely discuss homosexuality in her literature, as evidence indicates, to address the subject, Smith openly analyzed another kind of tabooed love: interracial love or miscegenation. She used interracial love to explore in more detail yet in a veiled way,
homosexual love. For example, in *Strange Fruit*, Smith presents Tracy Deen and Nonnie Anderson's relationship as a basis of comparison. In examining the tabooed love the white man Tracy feels for the black woman Nonnie, the reader examines tabooed love, including homosexual love. Smith purposefully presents the love between both Tracy and Nonnie, and Laura and Jane, as healthy, natural, and meaningful. She reveals the naturalness of tabooed love perhaps most effectively during a scene in which the interracial couple display affection. Smith wrote: "When she looked again, his head was in Non's lap. Her hand rubbing his forehead, slow-moving, easy. Fingers moving over temple, back of ear, neck. Fingers moving through his hair, lifting it, letting it fall, lifting it. Like breathing" (17). Smith creates a powerful image in the readers' mind by equating their display of affection with one of our most natural, involuntary acts---breathing. She presents their love with sensitivity hoping that the reader would feel obligated to respond positively to their relationship. In doing so she suggests that this socially tabooed love is not necessarily deviant or distasteful, but is as "natural" as racially segregated heterosexual love, the standard norm.

By examining the nature of Tracy's conflicts, the reader is offered a mirror of the many conflicts a lesbian has prior to accepting her sexual orientation as something natural, rather than unnatural or deviant. For example, while away in Marseilles in the armed forces, Tracy thinks of Nonnie and the narrator interjects, "She had been something you tried not to think about" indicating Tracy's need to suppress his sexual desires for Nonnie (50). Tracy tried not to think about Nonnie, especially in a sexual way, because society prohibited him from acting on his loving, but "deviant" thoughts. As a black woman, Nonnie was to be regarded as subservient to Tracy, according to social norms, not his equal, much less his mate. The narrator continues, "She wasn't a Negro girl whom he had in a strange crazy way mixed his whole life up with. She was the woman he loved. And
he saw her, tender and beautiful, holding in her eyes, her pliant spirit, in the movement of her body, her easy right words, low, deep voice, all that gave his life its meaning" (50).

Smith thus represents their tabooed love as rich and meaningful, challenging the categorization of it as being inherently wrong. She represents Laura and Jane's love similarly, to effect the same challenge.

Although most of Lillian Smith's letters were destroyed by fire, Margaret Rose Gladney's compilation of Smith's surviving letters offers evidence as to Smith's authorial intentions. While literature, by nature, offers multiple interpretations, the author often guides the reading public toward intended themes in responses to criticism and in general correspondence. This seems to be the case with Lillian Smith. The following correspondence is offered as Smith's own confirmation of her autobiographical relationship to Strange Fruit and her use of the novel to challenge the category of sexuality. In a letter dated June 2, 1955, Smith explained:

I wrote Strange Fruit because I love above all else to tell a story that has levels of meaning. The story was in its deepest sense my own story, of course; the legend of my life. I see it, today, far more clearly than when I wrote it. It dealt with white and colored people because my childhood was white and colored and many of my most profound experiences concerned white and colored people. It was interpreted by my public as a book to solve the "color problem." And I cried when I read the reviews! I did not even realize myself the urgency of the color problem until I was two-thirds through the book. My own book converted me to the importance, the urgency and indeed, the universality of this "problem." But my book was a fantasy. Every character in it was myself or a mirror in which I looked at myself. Every tension was an echo of a tension in my own life. Not in the naive sense, of course. I knew as a craftsman what I was up to; I drew not only on my childhood but my mature experience and knowledge of life and let that wiser outlook stretch and distort, where such
distortion would come closer to the truth (Gladney, How 167).

In this letter, Smith claims the story as her own. Smith blatantly admitted that the characters in Strange Fruit were either reflections of herself or mirrors of the images through which she saw and defined herself. She also said she was not focusing on the "color problem" as most critics have assumed (i.e., she was two-thirds through the book when she realized that she had even addressed the issue of race); she suggested that she had focused on another issue, however obliquely: the category of sexual orientation. Finally, in referencing her "mature experience and knowledge of life," I suspect that Lillian Smith was referring to her sexually enlightened vision. Her understanding of life was sophisticated, especially in terms of sexuality. She was far ahead of her time and region.

Another telling selection from Smith's correspondence is a letter dated July 7, 1939, in which the author admits, "I tend always to think first of interpreting characters in terms of their many and complex relationships with their family, as these affect and are affected by their religious beliefs, their sexual and racial ideas" (Gladney, How 33). She obviously interpreted many of her characters in Strange Fruit in terms of their relationships and "sexual ideas." This letter is only one of several which openly reveal and express Smith's preoccupation with sexual ideology. Additionally, in a letter dated July 26, 1943, Lillian Smith described Strange Fruit as a story of "the pull of cultural taboos against desires of the heart . . . the pull of family against one's own personal conscience" (Gladney, How 72). Each of these three excerpts endorse and corroborate the theory that Lillian Smith wrote herself into her fiction to better understand herself and to challenge the category of sexual orientation.

In her second published novel, One Hour (1959), Smith continues to challenge the category of sexual orientation, and again focuses primarily on lesbianism, although she
also refers to male homosexuality. In this novel, Lillian Smith adopts a male persona to explore and express her feelings toward women. Through the narrator, David Landrum, she explains emotions and lust for a woman in a way that she would not ordinarily be able to do. Smith was able, for example, to describe women sensually and erotically by speaking from a male perspective. As a male, Dave is allowed to have and express sexuality in a way that females of Smith's time were not. Smith wrote of Dave frankly, admitting, "there were things I wanted to say that could be said only through his mouth, I felt" (Gladney How 227). To ask daring questions that challenged the status quo and reveal an affectional preference for women, Lillian Smith had to camouflage her identity. She had Dave say and do things that her society reserved strictly for men.

*One Hour* is not just a novel about one person or family's experiences. It, too, is a novel about difference and relatedly, acceptance. As in *Strange Fruit*, Smith expands the narrative role in the novel *One Hour*. In *Strange Fruit*, multiple narrative perspectives highlight the importance of difference; in *One Hour*, Landrum's multiple narrative functions achieve the same end. Although David Landrum remains the first-person narrator, his role shifts and changes. At times he is a mere observer and storyteller, at others he is an analyst or interpreter. He also narrates his own story as a character in the novel, and therefore serves a wide variety of functions. He offers different sides to the story by telling it in a variety of ways.

In *One Hour*, Smith presents homosexual love tenderly, as she did in the novel *Strange Fruit*. Again, she primarily employs characterization and symbolism to challenge the category of sexual orientation. In this novel, the character who best represents this

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7 For additional information on the assumption of a male voice by lesbian writers, see Bonnie Zimmerman's essay, "What Has Never Been" in Showalter's *The New Feminist Criticism*.
8 Blackwell and Clay have indicated that they, along with many other critics, have faulted Smith's narration in *One Hour* as being "not unified." They contend that Smith's changes in narrative functions are distracting and confusing to the reader. I suggest that such narrative shifts offer the reader variety which enriches the text.
challenge is Grace Channing. While in *Strange Fruit* Smith used Laura as the primary character who challenges the category of sexual orientation, in *One Hour*, Smith assigns the role to Grace. Grace has traditional roles as both wife and mother, yet she also has many non-traditional experiences. For example, throughout the novel, Grace continually refers to an experience she had with a female camp counselor. Grace explains:

> She was tall and beautiful- and could do everything: swim, ride, shoot, paint...Saying that is saying nothing. I know. It was not her skills, nor her beauty. It was her quality of imagination that made her extraordinary. Perhaps I am wrong here, too. I won't try to analyze her too much, nor me. What draws you to another human being? I don't know. It is like asking, What makes you want to look at a painting hour after hour after hour . . . she was not real, in one sense--as music is not real. I won't try it any more. She opened up the world for me, I'll leave it at that. There was an old trail at camp: I had hiked down it a hundred times but I had never seen it until the Woman showed it to me: I had never felt a rock becoming a rock through a million years changing . . . I had never felt time before . . . a scarlet branch of sourwood tree- I had never seen what light could do to it. There were Indian pipes creeping out of the ground and once she knelt beside them and whispered, Come! And I knelt by her and looked at those smokey, translucent things- I didn't know what they were, not flowers nor plants, not mushrooms, not lichens- they were just themselves and they seemed miraculous. ... I learned from her about tenderness and passion (352-3).

The above passage is the most revealing description of their relationship. Grace hints about the affair in many other scenes of the novel, but most descriptions are more encoded and vague, like those Smith used in *Strange Fruit*. In this excerpt from the novel, however, Smith allows a woman to openly express affection and admiration for another woman.
In the above passage, Grace remarks on the Woman's looks and abilities while trying to describe her to David, and then says, "I won't try to analyze her too much." She thus promptly delivers Smith's message about avoiding the categorization of people. Grace tries to refrain from over-analyzing the Woman and, at the same time, the legitimacy of the relationship. She succumbs to the affection she feels for the woman and promises, "I won't try it any more." In this case, the "it" refers to questioning their emotions. She accepts her own feelings and identity, and does not try to categorize it. Grace's confession that "She opened up the world for me" indicates the experience revealed the possibility of an alternative kind of love and lifestyle to her. Smith then has Grace describe their experiences of re-viewing life through nature, thereby revealing the naturalness of their love, just as she displayed the naturalness of Tracy and Nonnie's love by likening it to breathing.

When the Woman introduces Grace to Indian pipes, Grace admits, "I didn't know what they were, not flowers nor plants, not mushrooms, not lichens- they were just themselves," and thereby simultaneously expresses a moment of self-acceptance through identification with nature. She accepts the Indian pipes without categorizing them, and simultaneously learns to accept her own identity, without categorizing herself by sexual orientation. In referencing "tenderness and passion," Grace implies carnal knowledge. The entire explanation is sensitive, revealing, and almost confessional. Smith hoped to leave her readers feeling comfortable with their tabooed love. Through Grace, therefore, Smith has once again employed a strong character to attempt to influence her readers and deliver her liberal messages.

Immediately following this important passage in the novel, Smith seizes an opportunity to make perhaps her most overt statement about the ineptitude of categorization. The narrator informs us:
And then camp closed and Grace went back to school and a doctor came and told the girls about the facts of life. And she learned during that lecture on 'normal love' that this amazing creature who had seemed to her to have come out of a myth, who did not quite belong in the ordinary world, was nothing but a homosexual (353).

Smith juxtaposes the doctor's remarks with Grace's thoughts:

I struggled to hold on to my image of her, to cling to the validity of what I had experienced, but I couldn't. I fought that word the doctor had used, but it whipped me after two or three weeks, lying awake at night looking, listening to Her, then remembering what the doctor had said. ... all the time I kept thinking of her . . . and of the old trail, and all she had told me and it seemed good and true and wonderful, then in a split second, it seemed ugly and dirty and horrible (353).

Grace tried to maintain her respect and regard for both the Woman and their experience, yet she could not do so. Her recollections were tainted by the doctor's words. His label transformed Grace's regard for their relationship from "wonderful" to "horrible." Her struggle to avoid labeling or naming her relationship with the Woman is similar to Laura's experience and the anxiety she felt by her mother's attempt to name Laura's relationship with Jane, and accordingly, the anxiety Nonnie and Tracy experience when society, particularly his mother, tried to label their love. When lesbian love is labeled "deviant" by an authority figure, it owns a deviant identity. Until then, the love is and seems as "natural" or "normal" as the more traditional form.

In regard to labels and naming, Smith uses Grace and the Woman's relationship to make several other statements in One Hour. For example, she employed an unconventional use of grammar to deliver her message about labeling. Smith probably
capitalized words which referenced Grace's lover—"the Woman" and "Her," as both a sign of and a demand for respect. This manipulation of language conventions can be aligned to Smith's use of courtesy titles (i.e., "Miss," and "Mr.") for blacks at a time when such consideration was unheard of in the early South. Smith simply demanded respect for all marginalized people and indicated this demand however she could. Lillian Smith effectively employs capitalization again, in reverse, by not capitalizing references to Grace's lover after the doctor imposed prevailing theories of sexual normalcy upon Grace and her classmates. In reconsidering their relationship after the doctor has named it deviant, Grace becomes engulfed with confusion and denial. She said:

The living part of it was gone. The pain had left, and the wonder of it; the mystery, the ecstasy were gone and the love I felt. The new way of looking at Indian pipes and caves and thunderheads and rocks and poetry stayed, but I forgot who opened my eyes so I could see. I existed, she existed, but the relationship did not exist" (354).

Deeply affected by the doctor's labeling of their relationship as abnormal and immoral, Grace Channing de-valued their experience. She abandoned her feelings of ecstasy and love in favor of guilt and remorse. To reflect this abandonment, Smith used lower case letters to refer to the depreciated character. Smith elects not to give Grace's lover a name in the novel, and thereby makes yet another powerful comment about the notion of naming. By not naming Grace's lover, Smith seems to be protecting her from inevitable discrimination. In an attempt to preserve and protect the richness of their experience, Smith allows the Woman to remain both anonymous and universal.

The imposition of sexual norms caused Grace to re-view their experiences in another section of the text, also. Grace reflects upon seeing the Woman years later, first at a dance in Annapolis and later in a newspaper photograph. The alarming photograph was part of
an article that reported the Woman's suicide and Grace begins to explore the circumstances of her death. The Woman was enlisted in the armed services and had become a pilot. Grace explains, "One of the pilots at the air base fell in love with her and apparently she was in love with him- or hoped she was. They were married. Two days later, she took a plane up and headed out to sea" (217). Her last words were to her husband: "Tell Bill he has been wonderful, tell him... tell him I tried-" (217). The Woman elected to get married and try to lead a conforming, traditional heterosexual life. In making this election, Grace notes that the Woman "hoped" she was in love with the man, indicating that the Woman wished to have "normal" feelings, but probably did not have them. Here, Smith delivers a poignant message about the results of repressing or denying one's homosexuality. The Woman attempted to conform to societal prescriptions, and the outcome was self destruction.9

Smith therefore warns her readers of the danger inherent in sexual repression, and of the dictatorial power of social mores. She allowed the Woman, as a pilot, to be secure and "fit" enough to hold a position traditionally reserved for men, yet she was not strong enough to completely disregard the power of the status quo. The Woman confesses that she tried to conform, yet she was unable. In recalling her lesbian experience and the Woman's death, Grace admits: "What hurt was not her death but what I let a few words do to my image of her- and of me" (217). Thus, the doctor's words and naming their relationship had destroyed Grace's understanding of the Woman and herself. It took Grace years to reconcile her feelings about the incident, yet she did. Grace reveals this reconciliation, in part, with frank advice to a friend: "You see, people miss so much by thinking there is only one way to love; there are dozens of ways" (68). Grace has come

9 Catharine R. Stimpson recognizes this outcome as a repetitive pattern in twentieth century lesbian novels and refers to it as "the dying fall." See her essay "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English" for further details on this concept.
to accept herself and the totality of her experiences and related roles. As Margaret Rose Gladney has observed: "Through Grace Channing, Smith portrays a woman whose sense of self transcends her role as wife and mother. She has been deeply hurt by society's labels and stereotypes, but she has learned to create her own definitions and she is open to a variety of human relationships with both men and women" ("Hope" 279). Gladney's interpretation of the character is accurate and Grace's position is beyond that of the traditional wife and mother, although she is both. Smith intentionally presents Grace as a character who is complex beyond her marital and maternal roles. Related experiences suggest that she is multi-dimensional and therefore purposefully hard for the reader to categorize.

To reveal the naturalness of lesbian love, Smith employs metaphors of nature. As Catharine R. Stimpson noted in "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English," using such tropes helps a lesbian author reduce the "taint of unnatural actions through the cleansing power of natural language" (371). Therefore, Smith is able to counter the prevailing notion that homosexuality was unnatural, by creating an image of a natural world which neither outraged nor violated. It is at peace with itself and with Grace. In the passage above, the doctor stands in contrast as a symbol of the sexual status quo just as Alma Deen does in Strange Fruit. The doctor tries to impose his and society's definitions of "normal" upon the students, including Grace, yet the presence of nature via the old trail discredits this attempted socialization. The trail survives the imposition of society's prescriptions and proscriptions, and therefore stands strongly as a representation of natural paths to alternative lifestyles.

Grace's affectional complications do not stop with her erotic attraction to women. She becomes involved in another kind of tabooed love with David Landrum, the rector of her church. This incident allows Smith and the reader to study lesbian love via adulterous
pastor-parishioner love, another form of tabooed love. In the novel, Grace remains very close to David and eventually their friendship develops into a sexual relationship. In one scene they succumb to the emotions they feel. David's narration allows Smith to portray an erotic attraction to a woman, and, again, reveals the ineptitude of labeling or naming:

Her eyes were blazing. Not with one feeling but two three four five feelings that embraced and fought and pushed and implored- There are no words for what I saw in her eyes. I said once more, I must go now; I'll drop in again this afternoon. But I did not go. I took her in my arms and kissed her on the mouth, again and again, and I knew she wanted me to, and I knew I had to. ... I held her a long time. Then I let her go and turned and left her. I was trembling as I walked across the street: there were tenses of feeling in me that I dared not label (371).

The passage offers the reader an opportunity to explore another tabooed love, and realize the complexities of having multiple feelings. David notes the complexity and multiplicity of Grace's feelings and by relation, his own. He states that there are no words for their emotions, which again, reflects Smith's abhorrence of labeling and categorization.

Dave Landrum speaks for Lillian Smith in many other sections of the novel, also. Another such substitution of voice is when he simply says, "People are different. ... How can there be one way to eat or play or vote or make love?" (31). For Lillian Smith, the question was obviously rhetorical, yet she could not even ask it. She used the pastor's voice instead to deliver her questions and messages discreetly. By having a minister speak, Smith imposed yet another voice of authority. Smith thus cloaked herself in one of the safest, most respected cloths, and had the pastor ask the daring questions which threatened the status quo.

In addition to studying Dave and Grace's relationship, Smith also offers the reader one additional form of tabooed love to make comparisons to lesbian love: male homosexual
love. In *One Hour*, Smith is careful to present these affections very cautiously, because she intensifies the taboo by implying that anyone, even an Episcopalian minister, can experience homosexual emotions and inclinations. He says of his friend Mark Channing (who is also, incidentally, Grace's husband),

> My love for him is deep. It goes into places in my nature that are unexplored terrain: no other relationship has left a footprint there. I cannot explain it: but must we? are we compelled to explain a relationship that does not fit the stereotypes? does any real relationship fit a pattern? whose pattern? what pair of scissors snipped the one, two, three, four, or five, or six patterns out? who is the pattern-maker? (63)

In making this confession, Dave reveals an affection for his friend that is more emotional than that of traditional friendship. His feelings cause him to question himself and society in general for trying to impose definitions and labels. He boldly asks, "are we compelled to explain a relationship that does not fit the stereotypes?" Dave ponders these same questions throughout the novel, and thereby stands as an effective substitute voice for Lillian Smith. He asks the questions for her, in fiction.

In addition, Smith presents a minor character, Jane Houghton, as her closest autobiographical representation. Jane lives on a mountain, runs a camp, and is an avid reader. Described as being strong, "rocklike" (233), Jane has characteristics that were similar to Lillian Smith's. Smith often interjects their common philosophies, such as during a conversation about Grace's lesbian experience with the Woman, when Jane asserts, "It is the quality of a relationship that counts; easy to paste a good label on something spurious and cheap, easy to paste a bad one on something fine and delicate" (355). The comment presents a moment of intense revelation to Grace. She realizes the force of
labeling and how easily, if not carelessly, it can be employed. Through Jane's words, however, Grace is able to re-claim the meaning of her relationship with the Woman.

In honor of this reclamation, Grace creates a canvas painting and later enlarges it to a fresco. She entitles the piece "Lost Memory." It is an important symbol in the novel, if not the prevailing one. While the clay figure in Strange Fruit stands as both a representation of homosexual love in both a specific and generic sense, the fresco has an identical function in One Hour. The fresco symbolizes Grace's total reconciliation of her sense of self and thus any individual's potential reconciliation with his or her sense of self. David describes the fresco as having "giant smokey shapes and curiously unstable planes [that] had a way of holding you" (351-352). The fresco is described in the same way Grace described the Indian pipes and serves as a replication of her experience with the Woman. Through art, Grace is able to claim and preserve the experience. Its enlargement from a small canvas to a fresco on a main wall signifies Grace's recognition of the importance, and even prevalence, of this event in her life. The fresco is therefore a cardinal symbol of Grace Channing's self-acceptance.

Although Lillian Smith did address One Hour in her correspondence, there are only a few letters expressly confirm her autobiographical relationship to the novel, including its challenge to the category of sexual orientation. Perhaps the most telling excerpt is from a letter about the novel dated March 19, 1957:

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What is so ordinary, actually in real life, sounds sometimes so damned perverse when put into words. I have never been afraid of life- at least, I don't think so- and the unnamed places, the forbidden experiences have drawn me toward them rather than away from them. But I find it difficult to say things in print that I say in daily conversation. I know a number of young ministers intimately enough to know quite a bit about their love
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affairs, and their somewhat perverse and "abnormal" affairs (211).

The excerpt above reveals the real-life scenarios with which she was personally familiar, and addressed in her fiction. She exposes these "unnamed places" and "forbidden experiences" in One Hour to comprehend them, and she intends for the reader to embark upon the same comprehension process. In being "drawn toward them," Smith makes them sound inviting, even tempting. She challenges the notion that these scenarios are unusual or unnatural by introducing them as simply "ordinary."

Although many of Smith's letters and manuscripts were destroyed, her fiction lives on as a representation of her life and the issues she so bravely addressed. 10 Through her novels, Smith expressed and addressed her sexual orientation. She once explained, "most of my work is autobiographical," and continued,

So, when a storyteller - and every autobiographer is a storyteller - starts out to tell his own story, he has to search deep and wide to know what the story really is. This is a spiritual and intellectual ordeal. It is more: it is a creative ordeal for he is actually creating his own Self and his own life as he writes, because he is giving it its meaning ("On Women's Autobiography" 49).

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10 Smith wrote fictional works in addition to Strange Fruit and One Hour which were autobiographical and published, such as stories in the journal she and Paula Snelling created and co-edited in 1936. Initially named Pseudopodia, the journal name changed in the Spring of 1937 to The North Georgia Review, and finally to South Today in the Spring of 1942. The journal contained both fiction and non-fiction. It was a liberal magazine which invited writers of all backgrounds to contribute at a time when the white literary patriarchy prevailed. Smith published several stories in this journal about her hometown, including "The Harris Children's Town-- Maxwell, Georgia." This essay appears to have been the literary predecessor to the novel Strange Fruit. She also contributed several stories about her trip to China such as "-Bearing Gifts" and "The Road to Shuh," which appear to have been precursors to her unpublished novel, "Walls." The magazine was successful and helped the two women propel their progressive ideals into the mainstream public. Although Pseudopodia focused on presenting a portrait of the South, it also helped create a portrait of liberal Lillian Smith through her fiction.
Smith used writing in general, and fiction in particular, to create herself and give meaning to her life. She once admitted, "The writer, the novelist, the artist can only tell us about one man, one woman, one child; one experience- and always it is himself that he reveals" (Gladney, How 140). Fearing repudiation if her affectional preference were publicly named, Lillian Smith was careful to encode her messages to avoid revealing too much, too openly. She elected to write in vague and obscure language because she was unable to freely discuss her sexual ideology. Lillian Smith therefore carefully concealed, and revealed, her lesbianism in fiction.
Works Cited


VITA

Jane Elizabeth Payne, commonly known as "JP," is the daughter of the late Stuart H. Payne, Sr. and Gertrude Odham Payne. Originally from Fredericksburg, Virginia, JP attended college in Blacksburg at Virginia Tech, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 1984. She then moved to Richmond, Virginia and began working as a banker. JP became a Trust Officer and served on the Board of Directors of the American Institute of Banking. Working with the A.I.B., JP promoted continuing education among bankers. She was asked to teach a finance course at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and while doing so, discovered her love for teaching. She then tendered her resignation at the bank, and enrolled in the Master's program in English at the University of Richmond in August of 1991. She has worked while in graduate school as a financial consultant and communications consultant. She has also worked part-time as Composition instructor at ECPI business college and as a tutor at the University of Richmond Writing Center. JP will graduate in May of 1994 and plans to teach literature. She resides in Ashland, Virginia.