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LILLIAN SMITH'S *KILLERS OF THE DREAM* AND MICHEL FOUCAULT:
STRUCTURAL RACISM, CRITICAL THEORY, AND THE U.S. SOUTH

by

EMILY PIERCE

Under the Direction of Gina Caison, PhD

ABSTRACT

While scholarship on Lillian Smith and her works has increased in recent years, there is a lack in variety when it comes to how scholars discuss her work. In the same vein, no one has discussed Smith as a critical theorist in her own right despite her analysis of the U.S. South in *Killers of the Dream*. This thesis argues for re-examining Smith as an unrecognized critical theorist of the twentieth century by analyzing *Killers of the Dream*. It also explores Smith's theories in relation to that of Michel Foucault's and what her theories regarding structural racism add to Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality in his lectures.

INDEX WORDS: Lillian Smith, Michel Foucault, Structural racism, Biopolitics, State racism, Governmentality, Critical theory

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

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STRUCTURAL RACISM, CRITICAL THEORY, AND THE U.S. SOUTH

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those who fostered my love of writing throughout the years: Cheryl Allen, Lisa Cohorst, Joanna Shackleford, Tara Finco, Tim O’Keefe, and Xhenet Aliu; and to those who read my writing and lovingly critiqued it: my first editor, Ann Cannon, my grandfather, Jim Wallace, my parents, Keith and Kristen Pierce, and my sweetheart, Caleb Cummins. Without all of you, I may not have kept writing, let alone grown my love for it. So, with all of you, this thesis became possible.

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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Racially-based language shifted greatly in the second half of the twentieth century and continues to shift today. Lillian Smith wrote *Killers of the Dream* in the late 1940s using the terminology of the time. This terminology is racist, offensive, and damaging, regardless of original intent, and should not be perpetuated in any setting. As such, this language is not used within this thesis. The thesis avoids quotes that include this wording and censors the insensitive language when such quotes cannot be avoided. The censorship retains the first letter of the word so that the original text is clear, and the last letter of the word is added when differentiation between words is necessary.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Speaking truth to power often comes with consequences. This was true for Lillian Smith, who analyzed and critiqued the U.S. South and its history of segregation. When Smith's *Killers of the Dream* was first published in 1949, it was considered shocking and controversial that someone would speak so plainly about these issues in the U.S. South, let alone an upper-class white woman. Margaret Rose Gladney writes in the introduction to the 1994 edition that "*Killers of the Dream* [...] affronted too many southerners—including powerful moderates—to become financially or critically successful. After an initial 30,000 copies, sales stopped dramatically, and when reviewers and critics refused to accord it critical notice, Smith was effectively silenced as a writer" (4). Despite Smith's thorough analysis of structural racism in the U.S. South, *Killers of the Dream* is often categorized simply as memoir or autobiography, though it does not fit into any one genre. While her analysis is often highlighted in scholarship on *Killers of the Dream*, no scholarship focuses specifically on her analysis and the methodology she uses to examine the U.S. South. Likewise, Smith has not been considered a critical theorist of the twentieth century, nor has her work been considered theory, a concept I discuss more later. In some ways, Smith's work in *Killers of the Dream* anticipates Michel Foucault's theories related to biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality in his lectures at the Collège de France. In this project, I argue for re-examining Smith as an unrecognized critical theorist of the twentieth century by analyzing *Killers of the Dream*, exploring how this project anticipates Foucault, and elucidating what her theories regarding structural racism add to Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality in his lectures.

In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith diagnoses structural racism decades before people use the term. Her examination is close to home, sticking to the region where she grew up. Smith shows

the blueprints of structural racism in the U.S. South through close analysis of the region's history as well as her own. She examines structural racism from the inside, recognizes her place in the structure, and acknowledges the impossibility of getting outside the structure. Smith cannot imagine a world outside of structural racism. She sees and shows how carefully its structure is built, how fortified its foundations. However, for Smith, this is never an excuse; she tries to think herself and others outside of structural racism anyway. Smith notes where the structural integrity falls short, and, in the chapters added to the 1961 edition, where elements have been weathered and weakened by the civil rights movement. While the body of her analysis stays in the U.S. South, also discusses structural racism on a national and international level, naming segregation as colonialism's twin and recognizing the stubborn and insidious nature of different forms of structural racism (15).¹ Smith's nuanced examination of segregation in *Killers of the Dream* shows that it requires more critical attention. While there has been some increased variety in Smith scholarship in recent years, few scholars examine Smith's analysis of structural racism in the U.S. South, let alone argue its value as theory.² This thesis seeks to correct this oversight.

Part of this process includes putting Smith's work in conversation with that of Foucault's. Foucault never lectured on the U.S. South, nor used it as an example within his lectures. However, he frequently discusses the U.S., most often as an example, and, in many cases, these topics related to the U.S. have their basis in its South, particularly when it comes to biopolitics,

¹ This includes discussions of McCarthyism, the spread of communism internationally, and the large number of new, free nations in Asia and Africa, noting that some of these new countries may "turn to communism, rejecting what they call 'white democracy'" (17).

² By increased variety, I mean in recent years, published scholarly works on Smith have expanded from memoir and gender studies to include queer theory and trauma theory, as well as focuses on children and on the cold war; see Bachman, Brinkmeyer, Cherry, Garcia, González, Haddox, Hinrichsen, Hobson, Holiday, Huguley, Laré-Assogba, O'Dell, Osborne, Perreault, Poister, Romine, Schmidt, Upton, Wallach, Watson, and Wray for examples of this regarding *Killers of the Dream*.

state racism, and governmentality. For instance, Foucault, at the beginning of his lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), asserts the importance of examining neoliberalism when it comes to better understanding biopolitics, particularly American neoliberalism and “law and order,” which he says “are not just slogans for a stubborn American extreme Right born in the Midwest” (174). This is one example of a U.S. topic having its basis in its South and is discussed later. However, the fact that Foucault explicitly mentions the American Midwest shows that discussing regionalism is not a stretch when it comes to his lectures regarding the United States.

While this project does not assert that Smith is doing what Foucault would have done if he lectured on the U.S. South, it is, in some ways, an extension of Foucault’s discussions on and related to these topics. Using Smith’s analysis of the U.S. South as example and elaboration, this project further supports Foucault’s theories, showing how, in some ways, Smith may have anticipated Foucault. Given that much of his discussion on these issues relies on U.S. examples, as well as his reference to the American Midwest during these discussions, the stretch to the U.S. South is hardly far-fetched. While many Foucault scholars have analyzed these topics in relation to the U.S., few, if any, have examined them in relation to the U.S. South.³ Issues of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality permeate both the U.S. and the U.S. South, so it is both important and necessary to continue examining them in different contexts.

Within this introduction, I mention several complex terms that, in the coming chapters, are crucial to my analysis. For example, “theory” and “theorist” have a variety of meanings depending on which academic discipline one is referring to.⁴ From a literary perspective, critical

³ See Ellen Feder’s *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender* (2007) and Ladelle McWhorter’s *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (2009) for two examples.

⁴ For example, when discussing this project with a friend, their first thought when I said “theory” was scientific based on their background, as in the theory of relativity.

theory is an approach that often brings in several disciplines to challenge established or traditional interpretations (“Theory”). For example, Foucault’s work is theory but rejects more specific labels when it comes to types of theory such as historicism, postmodernism, and structuralism despite arguably containing elements of these theoretical schools. In a similar way, Smith’s work in *Killers of the Dream* arguably contains elements of specific theoretical schools. These schools of thought are explored more fully in Chapter One, where I argue that because Smith challenges preconceived notions of structural racism during her analysis and because her work makes many of the same claims as established theoretical schools, it should be re-examined as critical theory.

Another important term within this thesis is biopolitics, which, as Foucault discusses it, is the politics of life, of who gets to live and die, as dictated by biopower in a state: “biopolitics will derive its knowledge from, and define its power’s field of intervention in terms of, the birth rate, the mortality rate, various biological disabilities, and the effects of the environment” (*Society Must Be Defended* 245). In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault spends most of the year examining what he believes is critical to understanding biopolitics: neoliberalism and its three main themes, “[l]aw and order, the state and civil society, and the politics of life” (78). Biopower, in this context, follows the same word structure as biopolitics, and shows the relation between power and life, or who gets to live. As Foucault puts it, rather than sovereign power’s right “to take life or let live,” biopower’s right is “to make live and let die” (*Society Must Be Defended* 241). He also defines biopower overtly in *Security, Territory, Population* (2007), saying that it is “a number of set phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power” (1). While the focus remains on

biopolitics, biopolitics and biopower are discussed together in Foucault's lectures, so an understanding of both concepts is important. While discussing Smith's analysis in, I show how her theory can relate to biopolitics and what her analysis adds to recent scholarship of Foucauldian biopolitics while avoiding anachronism.

Next in terms of Foucauldian terminology is state racism, which is racism that is a specific mechanism of power within the state, and it exists mainly within the biopolitical state. Foucault defines it as "a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products. This is the internal racism of permanent purification, and it will become one of the basic dimensions of social normalization" ("*Society Must Be Defended*" 62). While for Foucault, state racism exists before the biopolitical mode, once it enters biopolitics, it leads to sovereign power purifying the race seen as the "superrace" while deciding the "subrace" must die: "[i]t will become a discourse of a battle that has to be waged not between races, but by a race that is portrayed as the one true race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage" ("*Society Must Be Defended*" 61). This, as Foucault notes, is what led to the Holocaust, and leads to other forms of eugenics and genocide: "[i]n a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable [...] Once the State functions in biopower mode, racism alone can justify the murderous function of the State" ("*Society Must Be Defended*" 256). Like biopolitics, I discuss state racism both while examining *Killers of the Dream*, again, avoiding anachronism, and while exploring what Smith's theories can add to Foucault scholarship.

The final Foucauldian term crucial to my analysis is governmentality: the art of government that allows the state to survive, and it is tied to power. Foucault breaks down what he means by governmentality into three things:

First, by “governmentality” I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument [...] Second [...] the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power—sovereignty, discipline, and so on—of the type of power that we can call “government” and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (*savoir*). Finally [...] the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually “governmentalized.” (*Security, Territory, Population* 108-109)

This definition from Foucault, though long, is the clearest explanation he gives during his lectures. In other words, governmentality is the methods by which the state exists and thrives, and governmentality works through power. Foucault also notes that “[g]overnmentalization of the state is a particularly contorted phenomenon, since if the problems of governmentality and the techniques of government have really become the only political stake and the only real space of political struggle and contestation, the governmentalization of the state has nonetheless been

what has allowed the state to survive” (109). Here, Foucault notes that governmentality is also where politics and political struggle takes place. In other words, what different political factions argue over is which methods should be used to ensure the survival of the state.

Foucault often uses “governmentality” and “art of government” interchangeably, which is why I placed it at the forefront of my definition. Later, Foucault notes that police make statistics both necessary and possible (315) and “[c]onsequently, at this level, police is really the entire art of government” (319). In other words, police are a method by which the state survives, making it governmentality and, as Foucault argues, a large part, if not the entirety, of governmentality. I mention this due to biopolitics’ relation to statistics, policing’s relation to state racism, and the interrelatedness of all these points: “[p]olice is the set of interventions and means that ensure that living, better than just living, coexisting will be effectively useful to the constitution and development of the state’s forces” (327). In other words, police are a mechanism of biopower, which makes governmentality a mechanism of biopower. These terms, biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality, are related within Foucault’s lectures, and these connections will be further elucidated and explored in relation to Smith’s work in the coming chapters.

For the purposes of this project, I will define the U.S. South as the region, and culture therein, created from the shared history of slavery, the Civil War, and Jim Crow in those states that once formed the Confederacy: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. This definition, though commonly used, has flaws. I am not counting territories that were under Confederate control that did not become states until later, such as Arizona and Oklahoma, the latter of which is often grouped into the region. This definition leaves out Kentucky, Missouri, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, which are sometimes called the border states in reference to the Civil

War and many of which share the culture of the U.S. South and are included in the region as part of the U.S. Census Bureau. This definition also brushes over subregions within the U.S. South that show nuances in its culture and history such as the Deep South, the Upland South or Appalachia, and the South Atlantic or Coastal South. While I plan to hold to this definition since it is a common one, I want to acknowledge its flaws and that the history and culture of the U.S. South does not necessarily restrain itself to state borders.⁵

Out of all Smith's works, *Killers of the Dream* most accurately describes and examines segregation as a form of structural racism. Beginning with her own history and childhood, Smith elucidates the structure of segregation, the foundations of this form of structural racism, and how it is upheld by other systems in society. During her examination, she moves from the personal, her own childhood, to the individual, the childhood of others, showing that segregation begins teaching early on as well as the cyclical, generational nature of structural racism. From here, Smith moves to the large-scale, generalizing the history of segregation in the U.S. South and how it affects the region's population, repeating these ideas in different ways and contexts each time to provide clarity. Despite her inability to see herself outside the system of segregation, Smith diagnoses structural racism while remaining hopeful about the prognosis. This sets Smith's work apart from that of contemporaries like W. J. Cash, sometimes considered an early theorist of the U.S. South, or Gunnar Myrdal, who also noted that the "race problem" is a white problem.⁶ In

⁵ This has been discussed by several scholars, some of which further divide my definition of the U.S. South into different regions, not subregions. Colin Woodward's *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (2011) is a good example, dividing the U.S. South into five different regions.

⁶ Smith discusses both Cash's *Mind of the South* (1941) and Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) in her essays in letters, which can be found in *A Lillian Smith Reader* and *How Am I to be Heard?*, respectively.

Killers of the Dream, Smith sees herself inside the structure of racism should be recognized for the work she does there.

In Foucault's lectures, readers experience him figuring out ideas, concepts, and theories in real time during the reading. The three lectures I focus on are those that hold the main discussions of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality: "*Society Must Be Defended*" (2003), *Security, Territory, Population*, and *The Birth of Biopolitics*.⁷ Since the lectures are the most recent of Foucault's publications, much of the current scholarship regarding biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality focus on the lectures, and I am interested in joining the conversation.⁸ The lectures are also of interest because Foucault works through these topics and realizes their connections in real time. This provides insight not only on Foucault's thought process, but, since readers see him backtrack and correct himself on topics he has previously discussed, the lectures show a fuller understanding of these topics than might be gleaned from his antemortem publications.

The outline of this thesis and its argument are as follows: Chapter One explores Lillian Smith's work in *Killers of the Dream* as critical theory by examining her thesis, methodology, and execution. Smith's theoretical inquiry regarding structural racism in the U.S. South shows the relationships between the large- and small-scale aspects of these issues. By focusing on these relationships, Smith shows the influence that these aspects have on each other in the U.S. South. In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith not only analyzes the U.S. South, but also offers a theory of the

⁷ Foucault's "*Society Must Be Defended*" has the title in quotes on the front cover and title page. Since it is part of the title, "*Society Must Be Defended*" is found in italics and quotes throughout Foucault scholarship.

⁸ Several of these are sources from a range of disciplines; see Betta, Cecire, Collier, Erlenbusch, Gane, Hull, Macey, Marx, McNay, McWhorter, C. Taylor, J. Taylor, and Terranova. Book reviews were included here to show the range of recent Foucault scholarship on these topics.

region. Chapter Two considers Smith's work alongside Foucault's lectures, particularly with regards to biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality. This chapter starts by discussing how Smith anticipates Foucault before transitioning to putting both their theories in conversation regarding Foucault's ideas of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality. It also includes what Foucault says about the U.S. specifically in relation to these topics and shows the relationship they have to the U.S. South through Smith's work. Overall, this chapter aims to show what Smith's theory in *Killers of the Dream* can bring to Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality: namely, the personal, small-scale aspects of these issues. Chapter Three concludes this project, reiterating major points from the previous chapters, including the Introduction. This chapter also considers what can be gleaned from this project in terms of what it means for Smith scholarship as well as Foucault scholarship.

2 CHAPTER ONE

Lillian Smith lays out her thesis early within *Killers of the Dream*: “[o]ut of the intricate weavings of unnumbered threads, I shall pick out a few strands, a few designs that have to do with what we call color and race... and politics... and money and how it is made... and religion... and sex and the body image... and love... and the dreams of the Good and the killers of dreams” (27). This thesis comes after two pages of Smith describing the U.S. South in general terms, and the prelude leading up to the thesis states, “[i]n this South I lived as a child and now live. And it is of it that my story is made. I shall not tell, here, of experiences that were different and special and belonged only to me, but those most white southerners born at the turn of the century share with each other” (27). While Smith’s thesis is steeped in metaphor, her argument is clear. Smith intends to highlight and examine the terms she lists as well as their relationships to each other and to the U.S. South.

However, it is not clear at this point in *Killers of the Dream* how Smith plans on doing so, but she does note her interest in keeping anecdotes within the book more focused towards a particular group of people: “white southerners born at the turn of the century” (27). The focus on maintaining a stance generalized for white people during Smith’s analysis continues throughout *Killers of the Dream*. However, personal anecdotes bolster much of this analysis. Other aspects of her analysis include extended analogies and parables, some of them taking up entire chapters, as well as open-ended questions. Smith also crafts her examination through juxtaposition, repetition, and a mix of figurative language and clear, precise language. Her analysis of these relationships shows that *Killers of the Dream* is more than memoir and should be recognized as critical theory of the U.S. South.

Segregation in the U.S. South and its relationship with the region's people are at the heart of Smith's discussion in *Killers of the Dream*. Smith not only elucidates the structural racism inherent to segregation in the U.S. South and the structure's foundations, but also highlights how these relationships affect individuals. She is interested in how racism affects white people as well as African Americans and especially in how racism affects children as they grow in a racist society. Smith also considers the role of gender and sex in her discussion, describing how structural racism affects white women. These discussions show both the role the individual has in maintaining segregation and the impossibility of working outside of this system. This chapter starts by exploring Smith's theoretical inquiries of structural racism before moving to a discussion of its relationship to those living in the U.S. South. Then, I argue how these aspects of Smith's analysis show that her work in *Killers of the Dream* constitutes theory.

In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith does not discuss the support systems of structural racism individually. Rather, due to the cultural landscape of the U.S. South, she recognizes these issues as not only intrinsically linked, but also nearly impossible to discuss separate from the others and maintain the crucial nuances that their relationships create. Since her target audience is the average white person from the U.S. South, Smith knows that many readers will be familiar with the region's history already. For this reason, Smith's discussion of the historical background of structural racism often uses general or universalizing language. For example, Smith generalizes this background overtly in the third chapter of *Killers of the Dream*, writing, “[b]efore that war,⁹ there had been a way of living that destroyed human dignity, and for a long time people living in the South did not even think those words. These were evil experiences for white and N[----], rich and poor, but they were curiously complicated by the attitude of the North and South toward

⁹ Smith is referencing the Civil War.

each other” (57). Here, Smith sets the stage for the Civil War and the changes that would follow it by establishing the primary form of structural racism during that time: slavery. Smith goes on to briefly and generally explain the complicated relationship between the two regions, both before and after the Civil War, using plural nouns during the discussion to add to the generalization: “[t]hey [the North] hung our [the South] racial sins up for the world to look at, and at the same time began to practice these sins, under cover, up North. They blamed and grew rich and smug, and we hated and grew poor and stubborn” (61). In this section, Smith highlights the beginnings of the animosity between regions that developed a form of southern exceptionalism. Generalizing allows Smith to cover complicated, complex, and large-scale history briefly without lecturing to the white reader.

Beyond that, while the above quotes aim to describe the history of the U.S. South, structural racism is inherent to this conversation. These relationships between the regions tangle and exacerbate the existing structural racism, showing the intended audience, white southerners, that this system is not a regional issue. Smith continues:

Yet there were individuals, all over the South, who kept themselves without hate, admitting the South’s mistakes, and refusing to believe in the tenets of white supremacy [...] But most gave up, did things the easy way regardless of human consequences, thought the easy way, and identifying with the group, dissolved their scruples by substituting for a personal conscience and a clear brain this thing our politicians call ‘loyal to southern tradition.’ (63, single quotations original)

This substitution of loyalty and overall complacency described holds a mirror up to the average white, southern reader. Though Smith generalizes, to maintain nuances within this generalization, she cannot discuss the history of the U.S. South without discussing the influences

of structural racism and how it is upheld by the same population as Smith's intended audience. They support each other, with compound origins and influences. In other words, structural racism in the U.S. South is built and maintained by its history, and these structures are an inherent part of southern society and culture. While each aspect is independent of the others, the cultural landscape of the U.S. South entangles them to the point where it is nearly impossible to pull a single strand such as race, society, or history out of the knot without the others coming with it.

This tangled knot created by structural racism appears throughout *Killers of the Dream*. Smith's discussion of "the lessons" is one example: "[b]y the time we were five years old, we had learned, without hearing the words, that masturbation is wrong and segregation is right, and each had become a dread taboo that must never be broken, for we believed God, whom we feared and tried desperately to love, had made the rules concerning not only Him and our parents, but our bodies and N[----]s" (84). These lessons on sin, sex, and segregation begin in the home and continue to be taught by the church, customs, and southern tradition so that they are part of normal life for white southerners (84-98). Here, Smith breaks down the complicated relationships between sin, sex, and segregation by using clear language and juxtaposition. In other words, by putting these concepts side-by-side, Smith emphasizes the hypocritical ideals inherent to structural racism in the U.S. South.

Smith returns to different elements in the structure of structural racism throughout *Killers of the Dream*. By showing structural racism in different contexts from a variety of angles, Smith examines its architecture and support systems. Towards the end of the book, Smith again discusses of the beginnings of Jim Crow in the U.S. South. After describing the increase in lynching during this time, Smith writes:

The responsible, educated, well-to-do group who thought of themselves as dominant (or hoped they were) did not know how to stop this monster created of poverty, fear, ignorance, guilt, political greed, and crazed by the drug of white supremacy. Nor could they confess their big role in creating it. So they turned away and laid down a smoke screen of silence over the South's racial tensions. It became taboo to talk of these problems; bad form to question; "irresponsible" to discuss the issues in newspapers or write about them in books. They hoped the silence would cure what intelligence and good will felt helpless to combat. (201)

Here, Smith analyzes the attitudes of those who benefit from racism in the U.S. South as white terrorism amplified. By creating a taboo, the U.S. South maintains structural racism as its society raises a new generation under this silence while avoiding liability. In other words, Smith's analysis here shows another way in which structural racism is structural, as well as how it is maintained.

By discussing and analyzing these aspects of structural racism and segregation, Smith presents a cultural landscape of the U.S. South as well as a theory of the region. While the idea that race, society, and history affect each other is not new, Smith's addition of the personal and individual to depict the small-scale, every-day instances of these issues and their effects forms an interesting balance of large- and small-scale often missing from critical theory. The tension created between the general and the personal mirrors the tension between the large-scale and small-scale when it comes to issues of race in the U.S. South: the structural racism backed by society at large and its relationship with the personal, every-day socializations and stigmas. In other words, by putting the large- and small-scale aspects of segregation in the U.S. South on equal footing, Smith presents a theory of the region that paints a fuller picture of these issues.

While Smith often generalizes for the large-scale aspects of structural racism, her analysis of the small-scale is often based in personal anecdotes. For example, when Smith first begins discussing “the lessons” mentioned above, she describes them from her own perspective:

I learned it is possible to be a Christian and a white southerner simultaneously; to be a gentlewoman and an arrogant callous creature in the same moment; to pray at night and ride a Jim Crow car the next morning and to feel comfortable doing both. I learned to believe in freedom, to glow when the word *democracy* was used, and to practice slavery from morning to night. (29, emphasis original)

Here, Smith shows that she is complicit in segregation; she understands this and sees herself inside structural racism. Smith also names segregation as a form of slavery, a type of structural racism, emphasizing that Jim Crow is no better than Antebellum. Throughout *Killers of the Dream*, her experiences season her analysis without letting it drift completely into memoir.

Vignettes of Smith’s childhood are common in the early chapters. Despite her interest in keeping her analysis universal, Smith shows how she has both benefited from and been affected by structural racism. In other words, by adding the personal to her analysis, Smith provides a vested interest in depicting not only the effects of segregation in general, but also the effects on herself.

Smith makes this clear in the foreword added to the 1961 edition, “A letter to my publisher”:

“[b]ut I wrote it for another reason: I wrote it because I had to find out what life in a segregated culture had done to me, one person; I had to put down on paper these experiences so that I could see their meaning for me” (13). By not only analyzing the U.S. South, but also its effects on herself, Smith engages in a self-analysis that shows, personally, the suffocating nature of structural racism from an early age.

However, not every personal anecdote puts Smith at center stage. As Smith moves from discussing her childhood to analyzing how structural racism affects children in general, she includes an anecdote of her campers and a play that they create based on *The Little Prince*.¹⁰ The Prince begins on a planet by himself but cannot grow if he stays there (44). Along the way, the Prince finds traveling companions created by the campers: Conscience, “a tall nurse-maid, prissy and prudish,” Southern Tradition, “a group of eight dancers [...] blocking his way or opening it, as he traveled,” Religion, placed in one balcony, and Science, placed in the opposite balcony (44-45). Then, the camper playing the Prince begins to ask if the Prince can play with all the earth’s children, and chaos ensues (46). Once things settle down, the camper playing the Prince asks his traveling companions if he can play with every child, including those who differ in race and class (47). The campers playing the traveling companions are asked to stay in character based on what they represent (47). Conscience says that she always defers to Southern Tradition when it comes to race. When Religion begins preaching, Conscience says she never listens to Religion when it comes to race, “No one does, down here” (48). Conscience claims that she cannot hear Science, as it is too far away on the balcony and too busy inventing things (48-49). At the end of this extended anecdote, Smith summarizes this experience:

It seems such a little thing, doesn’t it? A few children gathered on a mountain making a play—a small play to be presented only before their parents—of Every Child living on a planet alone, who tries to reach out and embrace his universe and finds that he cannot because Religion will not show him the way, Science is

¹⁰ Smith’s father started Laurel Falls Camp, a private summer camp for girls, in 1920; Smith is a counselor for a few seasons, but in 1925, Smith’s parents become too old to maintain the camp. Smith becomes the director of Laurel Falls, purchasing the camp from her father in 1928. The camp closes permanently after the 1948 season (*A Lillian Smith Reader* xiv-xvi).

too busy with the making of machines and gadgets and bombs to use its resources to help him, and Conscience has learned no new lessons since childhood, and only Southern Tradition is strong and vigilant in acting out its beliefs. (74)

While this anecdote may feel heavy-handed to modern audiences, it shows the intergenerational effects of structural racism in the U.S. South. These campers are children one or two generations younger than Smith, but the effects of a racist history and society have changed little since Smith's childhood. Smith not only highlights the effects of growing up steeped in a segregated culture, but also shows these campers processing these effects themselves. In doing so, Smith diagnoses structural racism through its side effects, depicted here as a struggle with conscience and morality that exhausts and suffocates emotional growth from childhood.

Children fall into the small-scale category as a specific population; however, Smith recognizes the importance of childhood to maintaining structural racism and frequently discusses children in her analysis. Early in *Killers of the Dream*, she writes:

I began to understand slowly at first but more clearly as the years passed, that the warped, distorted frame we have put around every N[----] child from birth is around every white child also. Each is on a different side of the frame but each is pinioned there[...] though we may, as we acquire new knowledge, live through new experiences, examine old memories, gain the strength to tear the frame from us, yet we are stunted and warped and in our lifetime cannot grow straight again any more than can a tree, put in a steel-like twisting frame when young, grow tall and straight when the frame is torn away at maturity. (39)

Here, Smith argues that racism affects not only African American children negatively, but also white children. The growth described is emotional and mental, and without the room to grow,

there is not enough strength developed to fight the frame. Another example is a goldfish in a small bowl. Goldfish grow to be about foot in length but cannot if they are not given enough room. A small bowl leads to a difficult life without the room or water to breath, resulting in a shorter lifespan as well. This, Smith argues, is the effect that structural racism has on a child's emotional and mental growth, as well as the rest of their life.

By highlighting and critiquing structural racism, *Killers of the Dream* constitutes critical theory, an approach that challenges established or traditional interpretations ("Theory"). As shown, Smith does exactly this. She uses several different avenues to do so, not only leaning on generalizations, but also supporting her analysis with personal anecdotes. By doing this, Smith puts the large- and small-scale aspects of structural racism on equal footing. In other words, Smith paints a fuller picture of the symptoms to confirm her diagnosis of structural racism. She examines the structure's foundation and other support systems, recognizing how she and other white southerners are equal parts complicit in and hurt by structural racism. Smith also sees the impossibility of getting outside this system, but that does not stop her from trying anyway.

In terms of other types of critical theory, Smith's analysis contains aspects of the Frankfurt School, critical race theory, and critical whiteness. The Frankfurt School of thought, also called critical theory, adds critique to its study of society, and Bronner writes, "[i]nterdisciplinary and uniquely experimental in character, deeply skeptical of tradition and all absolute claims, critical theory was always concerned not merely with how things were but how they might be and should be" (1-2). This means that critical theory may include a call for change in its analysis and critique. Critical race theory "considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, setting, group and self-interest, and emotions and

the unconscious” (Delgado and Stefancic 3). In other words, critical race theory examines the relationship between racism and power from a variety of disciplines or avenues. Delgado and Stefancic also note other movements and scholars that critical race theory builds from, including Foucault among them (5). Smith’s discussion of the relationships between racism and other large-scale issues, as shown above, is both thorough and in line with aspects of critical race theory. Critical whiteness studies are a spin-off from critical race theory, specifically looking at the construction of whiteness, and it “includes examining what it means to be white, how whiteness became established legally, how certain groups moved in and out of the white race, “passing,” the one-drop rule, the phenomenon of white power and white supremacy, and the array of privileges that come with membership in the dominant race” (Delgado and Stefancic 85). In other words, critical whiteness studies how race and racism affect white people and the construction of their whiteness. In the discussion of the small-scale aspects of these relationships, Smith analyzes whiteness and what it means for her, as well as how racism affects white people. This follows elements of critical whiteness studies.

In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith’s analysis includes elements of each of these theories, examining the relationships between structural racism and mechanisms of power while holding up a mirror to herself and her white, southern audience. Smith not only critiques the U.S. South and its racist foundations, but also calls for change, particularly in the final chapters of the book added in the 1961 edition. In these two added chapters, Smith discusses the New Deal, the atomic bomb, McCarthyism, and their connections to a fear of change and outsiders, as well as the change beginning in the U.S. South with Martin Luther King, Jr., the Freedom Riders, sit-ins, and student movements (219-253). These two chapters, “Man Against Human Being” and “The Chasm and the Bridge,” replace the final two chapters in the 1949 edition: “Man Against the

Past” and “We Are Tall Enough for Men.” However, the major differences between the 1949 edition’s ending and that of the 1961 edition’s ending are in bringing it up-do-date and making it more relevant for the 1961 audience. In both editions, *Killers of the Dream* ends with hope and a call to action:

Man... with feet tied to the past and hands clutching the stars! Only by an agonizing pull of his dream can he wrench himself out of such fixating stuff and climb thin air into the unknown. But he has always done it and he can do it again. He has the means, the technics, he has the knowledge and insight and courage, he has the dream. All have synchronized in beautiful harmony for the first time in his history. Does he have the desire? That is a question that each human being must answer alone. (256, 1949 edition, ellipses original)

So we stand: tied to the past and clutching at the stars! Only by an agonizing pull of our dream can we wrench ourselves from such fixating stuff and climb into the unknown. But we have always done it and we can do it again. We have the means, the technics, we have the knowledge and insight and courage. All have synchronized for the first time in history. Do we have the desire? That is a question each of us must answer for himself. (253, 1961 edition)

Smith’s analysis of structural racism goes beyond simply studying how these different aspects influence one another; her analysis also critiques the region’s structural racism and calls for change.

Smith’s analysis does not fit perfectly under any single theory discussed here. However, the overlapping of theories I describe highlight elements of Smith’s discussion that follow theoretical schools of thought. Foucault’s body of work shows that it is possible to reject specific

labels but maintain status as theory. Smith examines and critiques preconceived notions about the U.S. South, diagnosing structural racism, identifying its symptoms, and giving her prognosis. *Killers of the Dream* also provides a cultural landscape for the U.S. South. In other words, by including both the large- and small-scale aspects of structural racism in her analysis of the relationships between these issues and their effects, Smith describes a theory of the region. She not only depicts the U.S. South through segregation, but she also analyzes its influence on the personal and the individual. In this way, Smith portrays how structural racism works in the U.S. South at the large- and small-scale. Smith challenges segregation in all her writing, but the combination of disciplines and avenues that she uses to analyze structural racism in the U.S. South push *Killers of the Dream* into critical theory.

3 CHAPTER TWO

Both Lillian Smith and Michel Foucault's interests situate themselves on the connections or relationships between issues such as structural racism, biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality. This was described above while defining biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality, as those definitions relied on each other, and this was also shown in the previous chapter during the discussion of structural racism and its support systems. The relationships between Foucault's biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality are closely knit, as is Smith's diagnosis of structural racism in the U.S. South, its foundation, and its effects, and these close ties make it difficult to examine any one issue or node without highlighting its connection to the others. This similarity between Foucault and Smith, as well as the aspects of their critical theory put into conversation below, not only show how Smith anticipates Foucault, but also strengthens the argument to re-examine Smith as a critical theorist.

Smith's diagnosis of structural racism and Foucault's discussion of biopower go hand-in-hand. A key component of biopolitics is the shift from considering the people in a state as "the masses" to "the population," and this emphasis on statistics means that biopolitics ignores the individual, small-scale aspects of issues such as race, racism, and socialization. While Smith brings the small-scale to the table, her analysis also includes generalization and parable, in which characters represent a larger group of people. By doing so, parables highlight the larger structure at work rather than the individual. Smith's discussion of lynching during the parable of Mr. Rich White and Mr. Poor White describes biopower's right "to make live and let die" (*Society Must Be Defended* 241). This parable shows the unspoken bargain between those in charge and the larger white population: that they can do whatever they want to people who are black, and the state will turn a blind eye. Smith writes:

They flogged him, or feathered and tarred him, or ran him out of town, or shot him down like you would a hound dog. And they knew they could do it and nothing would happen. They knew they were free to lynch and flog, to burn and threaten each other and nothing would happen, for they had a bargain. They had a bargain with Mr. Rich White and he'd fix the police and the papers and the court and the judge and the jury and the preacher so nothing would happen. (182)

During Smith's time, the state decided that some people were allowed to die without consequences for those who caused that death. Smith clarifies this well later in *Killers of the Dream*, writing that "[a]lthough 3,148 lynchings took place in the South from 1882 to 1946, no member of a lynch mob was given a death sentence or life imprisonment. Only 135 persons in the entire United States (according to records of years 1900-1946, during which time almost 3,000 lynchings took place) have been convicted of being members of lynch mobs" (210). Some populations are more desirable to the state than others, showing the relation between biopolitics and state racism. Smith notes during this parable that those in charge in the U.S. North saw this bargain and took it there as well, which means that while this particular aspect of biopolitics began in the U.S. South, it did not stay there (180). This means that biopolitics in the form of lynching occurred not only within the region, but at the national level. While Smith wrote before Foucault's time, her analysis of the U.S. South shows a state in line with what Foucault describes as a state that has moved from sovereign power to biopower, and whose governance is based on biopolitics.

What Smith's theory brings to biopower overlaps with what her theory brings to state racism and, later in this chapter, to governmentality. This topic is the most obvious one to bring Smith's work in *Killers of the Dream* into conversation with, as much of her discussion focuses

on structural racism. While Foucault discusses state racism on the larger scale, Smith brings the individual and psychological into the conversation. Her theories describe what could be considered state racism, but from a different angle than the one Foucault takes. Smith notes the difficulties after the Civil War that exacerbated a racial superiority complex for people who were white: “[t]hey could take your house, your job, your fun; they could steal your wages, keep you from acquiring knowledge; they could tax your vote or cheat you out of it; they could by arousing your anxieties make you impotent; but they could not strip your white skin off of you” (164-165). By leaning on one of the few things no one could take from them, white people in the U.S. South became concerned, without naming it, with what I note earlier Foucault calls “the internal racism of permanent purification” (“*Society Must Be Defended*” 62). This leads to the early days of Jim Crow and the Klu Klux Klan, both of which make their way north, and to a true state racism that is not bound by the confines of its region of origin. Smith’s parable of Mr. Rich White and Mr. Poor White contains a third character, a man who is black, and in the parable, she describes the racism towards him: “[a]lways he was something you had to prove you were better than, and you couldn’t prove it, no you couldn’t prove it. And always he was something you had to hate and be afraid of [...] If you once let yourself believe he is human, then you’d have to admit you’d done things to him you can’t admit you’ve done to a human” (179). This fear helps elucidate the perpetuation of state racism at the smaller scale. The smaller scale described by Smith shows the societal pressures and psychological aspects of state racism, and that gives a fuller picture to Foucault’s theory.

Smith continues to paint this fuller picture when her work is paired with Foucault’s governmentality. Smith’s discussions tangential to governmentality can be found throughout *Killers of the Dream*. Smith’s theories show a regional form of governmentality, based in

biopolitics and state racism, that explain segregation's perpetuation. Most notable in Smith's discussions of society and state is her analysis of the U.S. South's long-standing one-party system that biopolitics and state racism made work.¹¹ While discussing Jim Crow and the institution of the white primary, Smith notes, "[t]hrough its means, not only unity was a political totalitarianism of great power was achieved. It established the one-party system which has made and kept the South solid for seven decades" (194). By restricting who can vote, who has rights, the governmentality of the U.S. South changed to one where politicians and the state did not have to worry about someone being elected who might oppose the state racism the region relied on.

This governmental control showed itself in other ways as well. Smith frequently references the political demagogues who stirred up fear and trouble the moment anyone tried to change the U.S. South. She spends two pages on things that politicians and journalists in the U.S. South have said in support of Jim Crow and segregation (78-79) and, in a different section, she shows the few differences between the reactionary, white supremacy candidate in an election and the supposedly "moderate" candidate (198-199). Smith notes, straightforward as she often is, that "[a]fter many gubernatorial campaigns in the South, we have a wave of cross burnings and terroristic activities—not because of the few who dare affirm human rights and dignity and brotherhood, but because of the millions who deny these truths by their silence while race-bigotry and white-supremacy words are chanted over radio and television and in newspaper, day after day" (200). Smith notes that these terrorist acts conducted post-election in the U.S. South occur not because of a defeat of the white supremacy candidate, but their victory. Here, Smith

¹¹ The party referenced here is the Democratic. The Republican party was long seen in the U.S. South as the party of Lincoln and thus associated with the Civil War and the freedom of those previously enslaved. This began to change as the agendas of both parties flipped, unsurprisingly, over the issue of race.

shows how the state thrives in the U.S. South: through state racism and biopolitics in the form of lynching, cross burning, and other “terroristic activities” (200). In other words, since governmentality is the art of government that allows it to thrive in this way, Smith is showing the governmentality of the U.S. South.

Foucault first mentions biopolitics and biopower in “*Society Must Be Defended*” as part of his final lecture of the year, having led up to it for the entire lecture series through war, power, and state racism (243). Foucault then begins the next series of lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, by stating he intends to study biopower that year (1). However, he feels he must discuss some other things first, as a prelude of sorts, and spends the entire year mainly discussing governmentality. The next year, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, goes similarly: Foucault begins saying he wishes to discuss biopolitics, but there are some building blocks that lead up to biopolitics that are important to understand first. Much of *The Birth of Biopolitics* discusses neoliberalism, including American neoliberalism, which Foucault says is crucial to understanding biopolitics. So, layered within these nodes is something overtly American. In this series of lectures, Foucault states:

I hope we can study successively the problem of *law and order*, the opposition between state and civil society, or rather the way in which this opposition functioned and was employed, and then, finally, if I am lucky, we will come to the problem of biopolitics and the problem of life. Law and order, the state and civil society, and politics of life: these are the three themes that I would like to pick out in this broad and lengthy history of two centuries of liberalism. (78, italics original)¹²

¹² The italics within the lectures indicate that Foucault said this phrase in English.

“Law and order” as a political phrase has its basis in the U.S. South. It was used as part of the Southern Strategy, where Republicans flipped the region from being majority Democrat over the issue of civil rights and race in general in the 1960s.¹³ “Law and order” politics and policies were (and are) anti-crime and anti-drug, which sound like positive things to the average constituents, but often are based in racism, which is unsurprising given its was a direct response to the Civil Rights movement. Foucault lectures on “law and order,” stating that they “are not just slogans for a stubborn American extreme Right born in the Midwest” (174), but he also speaks on it elsewhere.¹⁴ In “Lemon and Milk,” a commentary on Philippe Boucher’s *Le Ghetto judiciaire*, Foucault writes, “‘Law and Order’ is not simply the motto of American conservatism, it is a hybridized monster. Those who fight for human rights are well aware of this [...] Just as people say milk or lemon, we should say law or order. It is up to us to draw lessons for the future from that incompatibility” (*Power* 438, emphasis original). Foucault’s opinion of “law and order” is more overtly stated in this commentary than in his lectures; however, the format of the lectures means that his focus is more on discussion than opinion.

In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith also mentions “law and order” in one of the chapters added to the 1961 edition. While discussing the fear that led everyone labeled an “extremist,” whether Civil Rights activist or KKK, being put in the same category, Smith writes, “[t]he self-

¹³ See Egerton’s *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (1974), Kruse’s *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005), and Maxwell and Shields’ *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics* (2019). Egerton’s book is a journalist’s view of the shift in values in the U.S. and its South at the time, particularly southern taboos and mores becoming American ones. Kruse, a historian, examines how white flight influences political ideology, focusing on Atlanta as the supposed “City Too Busy to Hate.” Maxwell and Shields unpack how the Southern Strategy changed the Republican party and American politics. All three authors cite “law and order” as part of the Southern Strategy; however, other scholars discuss this connection as well.

¹⁴ Interestingly, Smith also mentions the Midwest specifically: “There are only two or three million of these racists—the other segregationists are simply conformists—but their leaders are powerful in Congress and in many southern and midwest states” (*Killers of the Dream* 18).

termed ‘moderates’ were those who spoke for law and order but would not speak against the segregation that threatened law and order” (231). Her thoughts on the phrase show that “law and order” was already steeped in hypocrisy by the time she was writing, though the phrase had barely taken on the larger political nature when she was working on the 1961 edition of *Killers of the Dream*. The rest of her discussion following “law and order” also highlights this hypocrisy: “as they [“the self-termed ‘moderates’”] grew in number, apathy became modish, silence a synonym for sanity, and complacency as much a sign of success and good breeding as an Ivy League suit” (231-232). Smith recognizes here that those who preach “law and order” are not interested in either, but simply wish to influence voters. In other words, her opinion on the phrase is in line with that of Foucault’s.

Though “law and order” is important for Foucault’s discussion of American neoliberalism, and thus for biopolitics, some aspects of American neoliberalism itself are tied to the U.S. South through the state racism that, having its origins there, spread to the rest of the region. Foucault states, “[t]he other, American form, is a neo-liberalism defined by reference to the New Deal, the criticism of Roosevelt’s policies, and which, especially after the war, is developed and organized against federal interventionism, and then against aid and other programs of the mainly Democrat administrations of Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, etcetera” (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 78-79). This reactionary politics is, in part, due to civil rights policies and state racism, and was used to flip the U.S. South away from the Democratic party and towards the “American extreme Right” Foucault mentioned in conjunction with “law and order.” In addition, Smith notes, “[a]fter one decision,¹⁵ the Supreme Court made no other in favor of civil

¹⁵ The Supreme Court decision here is *Guinn v. United States* (1915), which found grandfather clauses, racist legislation that required one’s grandfather to have voted to be allowed to vote, rendering all who were formerly enslaved as well as their children incapable of voting, unconstitutional.

rights for more than a decade. And, until the New Deal, our national government was loath to break the old bargain” (*Killers of the Dream* 195). This unofficial bargain that Smith mentions is one made between whites in the U.S. North and U.S. South: to let the white South handle its own race problems. This meant the U.S. South’s racism being ignored on a national scale. However, according to Smith, the New Deal is a turning point in this bargain. In other words, after the New Deal, it becomes more difficult for the U.S. to let the South handle its own issues regarding race. Smith cites the New Deal as a turning point politically in the U.S., and a turning point away from the history of structural racism and segregation.

To many, the New Deal felt like an overstepping of boundaries at the state level. Smith’s implied good that came from the New Deal is what, according to Foucault, American neoliberalism reacted against. In his introduction to American neo-liberalism, Foucault discusses the contexts for its development as well as what makes it different than European neo-liberalism: “liberalism was appealed to as the founding and legitimizing of the state [...] liberalism has, of course, always been at the heart of all political debate in America [...] and] non-liberalism—by which I mean interventionist policies [...] appeared, especially from the middle of the twentieth century, as something extraneous and threatening” (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 217-218). These interventionist policies are exactly the ones that began with the New Deal that conservatives opposed, and all of the contextual elements for the formation of American neo-liberalism fall into this category: “Keynesian policy, social pacts of war, and the growth of the federal administration through economic and social programs—together formed the adversary and target of neoliberal thought, that which it was constructed against or which it opposed in order to form itself and develop” (217). The New Deal caused a large shift in governmentality in the twentieth century, and this created ripple effects for state racism and biopolitics as well. While Foucault

finds these interventionist policies to be part of the foundation of American neo-liberalism, “law and order” is equally important in his discussion. As discussed above, since “law and order” has its basis in the structural racism of the U.S. South, the region in turn affects not only “law and order,” but American neo-liberalism, which for Foucault is crucial for understanding biopolitics. This shows the prevalence of the U.S. South not only in national politics, but also in the basis for Foucault’s discussion of biopolitics, and, by association, state racism and governmentality. In other words, reactionary politics that began in the U.S. South creates the foundation for Foucault’s theories of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality.

Both Smith and Foucault’s theories have their basis in examining the connections or relationships of different nodes that often rely on and build off each other. *Killers of the Dream* shows Smith analyzing different aspects of segregation in the U.S. South, returning to certain facets multiple times in different contexts to explain the complex nature of these relationships. In this way, Smith anticipates Foucault, as his lectures show him consistently going back and establishing the basis and related aspects of the main topic or issue he wants to discuss, often running out of time to do so by the end of the academic year. By putting their theories in conversation, Smith brings a smaller-scale, regional version of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality to the table, showing not only the individual and the psychological, but also how the biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality of the U.S. South affects the entire country. Finally, by looking at this relationship between the U.S and its South regarding biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality, the importance of the region to these topics is clear, despite Foucault never lecturing overtly on the U.S. South. The connections that can be formed between the two bolster a claim to re-examine Smith’s work as theory.

4 CHAPTER THREE

Speaking truth to power often comes with consequences. During her lifetime, Lillian Smith received little to no critical attention for her works regarding structural racism in the U.S. South. The introduction to the 1997 edition of *Killers of the Dream* says Smith was effectively silenced for speaking up about segregation.¹⁶ The first chapter of Smith's collection of letters, aptly named *How Am I to be Heard?*, argues that "neither her style nor her subject matter was acceptable to the literary establishment, the New Critics, or the general public in Cold War America" (15). Since her death, scholarship has increased. However, when it comes to *Killers of the Dream*, there is little variety in scholarship. Most scholars view her work as autobiography or memoir, often considered "lesser" genres, and while scholars often mention Smith's analysis of the U.S. South within their work, there is no scholarship that focuses solely on her analysis and critique. Not only does Smith's work in *Killers of the Dream* deserve more critical attention, but her work should also be considered as critical theory not only because of her analysis, but also because of its relation to established theories such as critical race theory and theorists including Michel Foucault.

Smith's analysis focuses on the relationships between large- and small-scale aspects of structural racism in the U.S. South. Her discussion breaks down the complexities of segregation and analyzes its foundations and structural integrity. She does this at the large-scale through generalizations and at the small-scale through personal anecdotes. Throughout *Killers of the Dream*, Smith's analysis fits the idea of theory as an approach that uses several disciplines or avenues to challenge established or traditional interpretations of the U.S. South. Much of Smith's discussion also overlaps with theories such as critical theory, critical race theory, and critical

¹⁶ This passage was quoted at the beginning of my Introduction.

whiteness studies. The theoretical nature of *Killers of the Dream* shines through in these overlapping theories. Though Smith's analysis and critique of the U.S. South rejects one specific label when it comes to theory, this indeterminate nature does not make Smith's analysis any less theory. Foucault is one example of a theorist who rejects specific labels when it comes to what type of theory his work falls under. In other words, Smith's theory does not have to fall perfectly into critical theory, critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, or any other single theory for her to be considered a theorist. If anything, the fact that Smith's work in *Killers of the Dream* contains similar arguments of established theories cements that Smith's work is theory.

Pairing Smith's theory with Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality also helps to cement her work as theory. Arguably, Smith anticipates Foucault in the sense that she is a forerunner or precursor. Not only does Smith bring elements specific to the U.S. South to Foucault's discussion, but she also makes some of the same arguments as Foucault regarding these concepts. Both Smith and Foucault focus on the connections or relationships between large-scale concepts or nodes. By examining these interrelated nodes and the connections between them, both Smith and Foucault reach a fuller understanding of the innerworkings of power regarding structural racism in a state. Smith's analysis brings the small-scale to the conversation as well, both in the personal, every-day instances of these concepts through personal anecdotes, and in the ways that biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality interact in the U.S. South specifically. Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality contains elements that have their basis in the United States; however, bringing Smith to the table shows the importance of the U.S. South to these conversations as well. The political phrase "law and order" is one example, showing how something that begins at the regional level can affect the national scale. The elements of Foucault's discussion that rely on

concepts in the U.S. have their basis in the U.S. South. Furthermore, this examination helps to cement that Smith's work is theory.

This project shows that when it comes to scholarship on Smith and on *Killers of the Dream*, there is still plenty of room to grow. While most scholarship on Smith falls into easily identifiable categories such as memoir studies and women and gender studies, recent scholarship expands upon those categories to include trauma, queer theory, and other focuses.¹⁷ This project fills a gap, both in identifying Smith as an unrecognized theorist and in pairing her work with Foucault's. In terms of Foucault scholarship, while many scholars have applied Foucault's theory to the United States, few have examined where the United States shows up in his work and its importance, let alone the U.S. South. However, this project shows the importance of not just the U.S. but its South to Foucault's discussion of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality. Smith wrote critiques of segregation and the U.S. South in a world recently upset by two world wars, before the civil rights movement truly took off. Foucault lectured on biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality in the late 1970s after most civil rights legislation was passed in the U.S. and racists in power began shifting gears to keep structural racism legal. The issues of structural racism diagnosed by Smith in the late 1940s and those of biopolitics, state racism, and governmentality discussed by Foucault in the late 1970s maintain a solid presence a post-9/11 world where hot-button issues like mass incarceration and police brutality have their origins in slavery in the U.S. South. This project keeps the conversation going and asserts the importance of doing so.

¹⁷ This is evident not only in the general increase in scholarship discussed earlier, but also in an uptick in public awareness in recent years. Events such as the Lost Southern Voices Festival have highlighted Smith and her work, and the recent documentary, *Lillian Smith: Breaking the Silence*, has won several awards in the film festival circuit.

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