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Lee Smith

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## PAMELA DUNCAN

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Pamela Duncan has given new meaning to the term “authentic” in three novels which honestly chronicle the real lives of real people, their good times and hard times, their valor, humor, and passion as they deal head-on with the circumstances that shape their lives. Her large and impressive first novel *Moon Women* brings us three generations of mountain women whose needs conflict with each other; it covers the term of the granddaughter’s pregnancy. Its strong themes, dead-on dialogue, and gritty first-person narration brought Pam many readers and awards including Finalist for the Southeast Booksellers Association’s 2001 Book Award.

*Plant Life*, her second novel, presents a compelling and moving portrait of an entire community—the life of a cotton mill and the women who work there, women whose entire lives have been determined by the mill. Stark, poetic, and intense, their stories are moving and important. This novel was widely and favorably reviewed, earning North Carolina’s Sir Walter Raleigh Award for fiction.

Pam’s recent *The Big Beautiful* finds one of her mountain characters down at the beach on an unusual search for love. It is filled with the good humor that has increasingly become one of Pam’s trademarks. As anybody who has ever been to one her readings can attest, she can be hilarious!

These books are impressively different from each other, demonstrating Pam’s wide range of interest and empathy for many different kinds of characters. But regardless of time and milieu, Pam always presents her people and her region in a warm clear light, showing the humanity, strength, and humor in us all. I have watched Pam grow and change from a somewhat tentative young writer to a confident, vibrant, wild and wonderful woman—and one of the very best public speakers I have ever heard. Open and honest as the day is long, Pam is an invaluable spokesperson for our region.