In Lee Smith’s *On Agate Hill*, war and motherhood contribute to disabilities experienced by major and minor characters. Disabilities take various forms, including wounds inflicted by crude and brutal weapons used in the Civil War and maternal injuries, both physical and emotional, suffered during childbirth and postpartum. Frail and sick children, abused children, and children with birth defects also populate Smith’s novel. Body, mind, and spirit are intertwined and deeply connected to time and place. *On Agate Hill* is told through the voice and consciousness of Molly Petree, whose story begins and ends at the ruined plantation of Agate Hill in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Agate Hill becomes emblematic of the human suffering caused by war, motherhood, and other life events. At the same time, the plantation offers Molly shelter and opportunity in her quest for survival and self. In the end, her narrative and embrace of life provide a triumphant response to war, childhood trauma, and maternal loss. In depicting female experience in *On Agate Hill*, Smith creates parallels with her earlier novels, including *Oral History* and *Fair and Tender Ladies*, and with her own life and maternal loss, which manifest in the novel. Smith’s treatment of war and motherhood calls to mind Bobbie Ann Mason’s *In Country* and the impact of the Vietnam War, another lost cause in American history, a connection this essay will also explore.