



Bobbie Louise Hawkins

Photograph by Jeanne Merklin

Bobbie Louise Hawkins

Last year during the La Jolla Jazz Festival, Bobbie Louise Hawkins went into a minor aside, as only a good storyteller can do, about talking with a psychiatrist who inquired about the mental health history of her relatives. She explained to him (and her audience in the process) that she was from Texas

so all her relatives were crazy but were okay as long as you didn't try to take them out of Texas.

She read, her deep, resonant voice enriching the tale, bringing her characters to life, making their experiences real:

They were both fighters, my mother and father. I remember him pulling the tablecloth off the table when his breakfast didn't suit him . . . what a mess. And the time she threw a meat cleaver after him and it stuck in the door jamb inches from his head; he stopped and she says he turned pale. But he left. Time and again he left and when he came back (it's called coming-back-home) after a few months or whatever time, they'd get along until they didn't.

Her audience in the straight rows of Sherwood Hall laughed, grew quiet — she moved them in and out of the mood of the story; they followed willingly.

So Bobbie Louise is back in town (it's called coming-back-to-visit), this time as a regents lecturer at UCSD, teaching playwriting, instructing in the craft of dialogue. This is certainly a **strength in her work**, the ability to reveal character through speech.

Aside from the content of her writing the effects of her cultural experience on her consciousness are evident in other ways. The point of view one develops growing up in a dull landscape stimulates attention to be focused on minute details, and vision peers into the inner landscape of the heart without the distractions of urban neon. This seems to have contributed a double strength to her work, the ability to look within while simultaneously seeing precisely what is without. Her work offers what much contemporary writing leaves its audience hungering for — a deep feeling for real human experience, for the poignant sense of life in the day-to-day, the quiet heroism of simple people.

Hawkins

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Her prose is language operating at its ultimate: an energy and movement, a subtle mounting toward a climax often found only in poetry, with the swaying rhythm of music. What makes her work so significant is that while the style of language is fully realized, the content demonstrates deep sociological implications. We can never know to what degree this is intention on the part of the writer. In any case, it testifies to the magic and power of good literature.

Bobbie Louise Hawkins has written both poetry and prose. More recently she has done plays for radio and television and has toured throughout the country reading her work with singers Rosalie Sorrels and Terry Garthwaite. While in San Diego she will read at Scripps Cottage, San Diego State University, on Tuesday, February 19th at 3:00 p.m. and in the UCSD New Poetry Series, Revelle Formal Lounge, Wednesday, February 20th, at 4:00 p.m.

The reading will include work from a novel in progress:

The dogs are also infected, that in the day's heat will have as much as they can do to move from the sun into the shade. They bark and howl until they feel they have as much as they can do to move from the sun into the shade. They bark and howl until they feel they've done enough.

Old Vivvy, wearing a dirty rainbow of dresses goes into Mrs. Vitty's prized garden, a shadow among pre-dawn shadows, to pick the flowers.

"When that woman was a child . . ."

She owned the first piano in the colony. Her parents meant to make her a concert pianist. Both parents were killed in an accident and the child's guardian took the money. That was the story.

— Sarai Austin