

**Moll Cutpurse.** Ellen Galford. 1985. Firebrand Books. \$7.95. Light tales of a pipe-smoking lesbian rogue in Elizabethan England.

**Accommodations Offered.** Anna Livia. 1985. Woman's Press, London. Biting humor and political insight into feminist culture, apartheid, lesbian relationships.

**Tales of The City; Further Tales of The City; More Tales of The City.** Armistead Maupin. 1978, 1982, 1980. Harper & Row/Colophon. \$8.95. Fun romp through gayest San Francisco.

**For Keeps.** Elizabeth Nonas. 1985. Naiad Press. \$7.95. Dykes in money-making professions and nicely done eroticism.

**Murder in the Collective.** Barbara Wilson. 1984. Seal Press. \$7.95. Intriguing lesbian mystery a cut above most.

**Trying to Be an Honest Woman.** Judith Barrington. 1985. Eighteen Mountain Press. \$6.95. High praise for these Northwest Coast poems by a local talent.

**Stoner McTavish.** Sarah Dreher. 1985. New

Victoria Publishers. \$7.95. A humorous lesbian western adventure you can get your teeth into.

**Women Who Loved Women.** Tee Corinne. 1984. Pearlchild. \$7.95. Picture book of our lesbian ancestresses.

**The Second Seasonal Political Palate.** 1984. The Bloodroot Collective Sanguinara. \$10.95. A cookbook for the vegetarian (or carnivore) who likes to eat well.

**Dancer Dawkins and the California Kid.** Willyce Kim. 1985. Alyson. \$5.95. A Western which tap dances to the rhythm of poet Kim's deft words.

**The Way Back.** Stories of Gay and Lesbian Alcoholics. Gay Council on Drinking Behavior. 1981-2. The Whitman-Walker Clinic. \$5.95. A teaching, moving collection of real life stories.

**Triangles.** Ruth Geller. Crossing Press. \$7.95. Geller's third and most lesbian novel. Worth it for Grandma Rose Rosenthal alone.

**Other Women.** Lisa Alther. 1985. Knopf. \$4.50. A lesbian with familiar conflicts which

she explores with a therapist.

**The Swashbuckler.** Lee Lynch. 1985. Naiad Press. \$7.95. "... perhaps the most moving novel of lesbian life ever written." Joy Parks, *The Body Politic*. Love story set in the transition years of the 1960s. Hell, I'd read it even if someone else wrote it.

**Jonestown and Other Madness.** Pat Parker. 1985. Firebrand. \$5.95. Fifth book of Parker's popular poetry.

**Lesbian Nuns, Breaking Silence.** Rosemary Curb, Nancy Manahan. 1985. Naiad Press. \$9.95. A sensitive and passionate collection of real stories by women whose passage to themselves led through the convent.

**Misfortune's Friend.** Sarah Aldridge. 1985. Naiad Press. \$7.95. Another good read for the hordes of Aldridge fans.

**The Unexpected Mrs. Polifax.** Dorothy Gilman Butters. 1966. \$1.25. Not new, not feminist, not lesbian or gay. A sixtyish widow decides to become a spy. For mystery/espionage buffs with a conscience there are a series of these books.

**Quiet Fire: Memoirs of Older Gay Men.** Keith Vacha. 1985. Crossing. \$8.95. Quiet, yes, but instructive of our common lives and aging.

**We, Too, Are Drifting: Torchlight to Valhalla.** Gale Wilhelm. 1985. Naiad. \$6.95. Reprinted for the first time since the 1930s, these novels are *incredibly* fine works of art. A true gift for all of us.

**Outgrowing the Pain.** A Book For and About Adults Abused as Children. Eliana Gil, PhD. 1983. Launch Press. \$6.95. For the emotionally as well as physically battered, an introduction to oneself.

**More from Musica Femina.** Janna MacAusland and Kristen Aspen. 1985. Lilac Recordings. Taped musical fare to play by the fireside from still more local artists.

## Judith Barrington: A concern with excellence

by Pat Scott

Six years ago she stood in front of a women's poetry class at Portland State University as teacher and budding poet, and spoke of feminism, lesbianism, the female experience, the problems of women writing. Today she speaks of the same things; but she stands taller somehow, straighter, more self-assured.

Judith Barrington has just returned from a 16-city national tour promoting her book of poetry, *Trying To Be An Honest Woman*. Her readings took her from Boise, Idaho to Boston, Massachusetts, and her book has nearly sold out its first printing — unheard of for a book of poetry.

She has published essays, poetry, travel features. She is a book reviewer. She is also co-leader and organizer of Flight of the Mind — a program of writing classes for women, which includes a week-long summer workshop retreat by the McKenzie River in the Oregon Cascades.

Exhausted as she is by these efforts and frustrated by her lack of time, Barrington is brim-full of ideas for new works. She is co-editing, with Seattle fiction writer Barbara Wilson, a collection of feminist pieces about writing. She is writing a novel. And a concept she's beginning to pursue is the creation of "performance pieces," blending poetry and music.

Barrington's poems have a strong narrative strain and appeal to those who are not poetry aficionados as well as those with a strong literary bent. Her poems are not obscure, not arrogantly ambiguous; she chooses not to distance herself and her experience from her audience. And her readings give nod to the fact that poetry really is an oral tradition. Thus, Barrington views herself as a "performer" and encourages audience interaction. "One of the things I don't



Judith Barrington.

like is that audiences, particularly poetry audiences, feel obliged to be very well-behaved and quiet," she says. Barrington works to challenge that and other stereotypes.

Judith Barrington is a writer, a lesbian and a feminist, and each of these threads is woven inextricably into the fabric of her life.

About writing she is "obsessive" — writing early in the morning, before talking to anyone, before doing anything else. "I don't like to get involved in the world before I start

writing," she says. She makes her living primarily by freelance journalism, a difficult undertaking, and her private life is arranged to provide the optimum atmosphere for creativity.

Lesbianism, and *her* lesbianism, is another equal part of Barrington's life and writing. Her poems are laden with "'wrong'-gendered pronouns," as one reviewer delicately put it. And her sexuality is acknowledged, explicit, overt. During a recent poetry reading, Bar-

ington advised the audience, prior to intermission, to "stick around. The love poems are in the second half." Lesbianism is a fact of her life the author is very comfortable with and not at all loathe to share.

And feminism is the framework. Barrington is a woman-identified-woman not only in her sexuality but in recognizing her connectedness to all women. This is visible in her writings and in her workshops and classes as well.

In writing, her target audience is quite obviously women, although Barrington hastens to add she is pleased that her book of poems also "reaches beyond that community." In classes and workshops she is determined to create a space "Where all women feel comfortable to come." She discusses the history of women and of women writing. And she explores some of the difficulties indigenous to women writers: from discussions of the female role and writing to "finding your own voice."

One of the major differences still facing women writers, particularly those with children, Barrington asserts, is that even when they are able to create a space for their writing, "it's always poached from between so many things; it's never open-ended space." Women have the opportunity to side-step this particular difficulty during the week-long summer writing retreat presented by Flight of the Mind. Along with lodging, food is provided, and stimulating lectures and discussions are offered. One has the chance to establish networks with other women writers; and a safe environment is provided to stretch and hone creativity.

As far as advice to women writers, Barrington encourages them to seek out other women. "It's very hard to be alone," she says. Have the courage to share your work but pick carefully the person to do that with — not someone who might damage you. "Your experience is legitimate and important. Don't listen to the voice that says, 'It's all been said before.' And perhaps most importantly, learn your craft — something Barrington herself is beginning to take much further now.

"At this point, for me, most especially, I'm concerned with excellence," she says. "The feminist movement helped us find our audience and find our voices and find ways to get to that audience; but I think now we must consciously pick what of the mainstream standards are important and aspire to them. We need to bridge the gap between the feminist community and the rest of the world. Any writing that's any good will speak to everybody in some way, even if it makes people momentarily uncomfortable."