women photographers to form a compact and well-organized book. The first section of the book includes portraits by 60 photographers and the second is a collection of six portfolios by women working more extensively in self-portraiture. In her introduction, Cohen explains that the book is 'the first attempt to show what women are really seeing — and what they are saying about what they see — when they look at themselves through the camera's eye.' Cohen then goes on to point out patterns and themes which recur in the photographs that follow. These categories serve as a useful key to examining the images themselves.

When I first looked through the photographs, my immediate inclination was to rush out and show it to all my women friends. *In/Sights* is a book you instinctively want to share. I showed it first to a particular friend who had been going through a year-long struggle to be a separate person, a 'self'. Her reaction to the book was somewhat less enthusiastic than mine and she said sadly, 'If someone asked me to do a self-portrait, I couldn't do it.' Which set me to thinking about how I would fulfill such an assignment myself. No matter what else the book may provide, the exercise in self-examination which it generates is an important achievement.

Many of the portraits are very frank . . . 'This is what I see when I look at me.' Others are more muted, almost wistful . . . 'This is what I *want* to see when I look at me.' The play between what you see and what you want to see (and what you think you *should* see) is fascinating, neither vision being any more or less necessary and defining than the other. In many of these portraits, there is a sense of process, growth, becoming — they are not static statements. They explore intimately the process of discovering a 'self', as well as the experience of being one. I would be curious to see how each of these 66 women would choose to portray themselves five years from now, even one year from now. The book shows self-image as a process, not a final achievement.

Not all of these women are alone in their portraits. Some include other women, men, children, animals. The self does not exist in a vacuum and it is unrealistic to think that your self-image cannot be touched by the important external realities (and this must include husbands and lovers) which are part of your life. Does your self-image help determine how others see you, or does the way others see you help determine your self-image? This is a chicken and the egg question. There will clearly be times in all of our lives when this relationship sways more to one side than the other. There are portraits here which reveal all degrees of influence.

In the last section of the book, each of the 66 photographers comments on her own work. It was wise to put this section at the end of the book where it does not interfere with the visual impact of the pictures themselves. Some of these brief statements are very powerful in their own right. For example, Karen Clemens writes of her self-portrait: 'Sometimes I wish I could be this person. I spend a lot of time pretending that I'm not. I get no help from my friends — nobody will let me hide in their house.'

After the photographs, there is also an insightful essay called 'Self As Subject: A Female Language' by Patricia Meyer Spacks. She discusses the photographs from a more academic point of view and concludes:

'This group of photographs declares a female consciousness sensitive to the restrictions of society, capable of surmounting them by knowing them inclusively. The pictures re-create a collective icon of woman as a being of power emerging from mystery.'

It is not necessary to agree with all of the images presented in the book, it is only necessary to accept and believe them. No matter what my own self-image might be now or five years from now, there is not one of these images that I cannot readily imagine some woman somewhere having and sharing.

The book as a whole is a warm flow, life-giving, initmate, and strong. Somehow it makes me think of blood and we all know about that. ◎

D'Sonoqua: An Anthology of Women Poets of British Columbia

V. 1 & 2, ed. Ingrid Klassen, Intermedia, Vancouver, B.C. 1979, V. 1-pp. 83, V. 2-pp 91, paperback
Marsha Mildon

This two-volume anthology of B.C. women poets *D'Sonoqua*, arrived in my mailbox — coincidentally — fortuitously — three days before I myself was moving to British Columbia. Aha, I thought, an introduction, a Cook's Tour of the literary landscape.

D'Sonoqua certainly does travel an immense literary landscape — 32 poets with different styles, subject areas, philosophies. It includes the better-known landmarks, Marlatt, Fiamengo, Musgrave — displayed in familiar poses. And, most exciting for me, it introduces glimpses of new voices, poets I hadn't read before but will return to. Perhaps this is enough to ask of any poetry anthology.

Like any tourist on a guided tour however, I found myself asking 'why these landscapes?'; 'why these poets and these poems?' The introduction to *D'Sonoqua* admits that these poems 'are not linked by an identifiable local idiom or by marked similarity in style.' Later it says: 'It is interesting to read these poets in one collection, to see how they reverberate together, what kind of harmonies or sparks they set off.' The question to be addressed then is are there indeed harmonies or sparks here? Is the anthology any more than a guided tour?

I believe it is more, due primarily to its rather unique editorial process. Ingrid Klassen, editor of the anthology, states in her preface that the poets were invited to submit their 'favourite' poems, from which she made her choices. We should expect, then, that these poems, these favourite poems, should tell us something about what excites poets in their own poems, and that in turn, may tell us something about the process of art.

In fact, many of these poems do have something in common. The most exciting poems in the anthology explore that peculiar space where incident, real world perception, poet and poem all meet. They attempt to pinpoint the precise moment in the spinning of straw into gold when the material is both straw and gold. The poets do not, I suspect, know the secret, but they recognize the moment, and these moments become their favourite poems. Any number of the poems in this anthology could be analyzed from this perspective. In particular Rona Murray's 'The Death of the Bear', Marilyn Bowering's 'Rose Harbour

Whaling Station 1910', Stephanie Judy's 'Narrative No.12', and Myra MacFarlane's 'Women Weaving Colours into White' carry an inescapable sense of the world of perception slipping, abruptly, dazzlingly, into art — the intimate moment when the world makes poetry and the poet is allowed as privileged observer. MacFarlane's poem, for instance, can be read almost as a photographic image, or, better, a painting super-realistic full of stark stripped detail of the scene as observed — the women, the weaving, the sun, butterflies, orchids. But then, dramatically, the scene reported becomes scene animate: 'Fingers are birds/flying through screens/and leaving fine trails of themselves:/ sudden as humming birds/sucking ideas for nectar/they hover and plunge/while patterns form and hum.'

The world, the poet, the poem become one entity; art happens.

In summary, then, this anthology is a tour that I can recommend. While I don't feel any single poet is adequately represented (this may be impossible in anthology form), each single poem deserves and rewards study. There is little chaff here. For some, the anthology's chief value will be the introduction to new voices. For others, the inclusion of better-known poets may make this a useful book for teaching purposes. For those intrigued by the process of art, there may be clues here. ◔

A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison

Edited by Margaret Grimsby, University of British Columbia Press, 1976, pp.144, paperback

$7.95

Rainer Baehre

Susan Allison was a gentlewoman in the tradition of Catharine Parr Traill, Anne Langton, the Strickland sisters, and others. As a teenager in the mid-19th century, she left the effete confines of English upper-class society, and shortly after became one of the very earliest non-Indian settlers of the remote backwoods of British Columbia in the Okanagan and Simalkameen valleys. Margaret Ormsby, the noted Canadian historian, has edited and written an introduction to Allison's recollections — the latter put on paper during the 1920s when their 80-year-old author had to stop writing periodically because her pen shook in her hand. Ormsby's introduction and Allison's recollections (despite some limitations) provide a highly readable account of, and a penetrating glimpse into, the social landscape of frontier British Columbia. Moreover, their publication helps to commemorate the contributions of a remarkable human being to Canadian 'nation building' (that overworked, misleading, but still useful phrase).

This edition is barely four years old. Yet, one cannot help but remark that Ormsby's introduction, detailed and well-written as it is, is already somewhat dated in its approach. Compare it with another documentary collection just published, *Pioneer and Gentlewomen of British North America, 1713-1867*, and one observes that Ormsby almost wholly emphasizes what Allison saw of early British Columbia, of noted local figures, and of the province's growth. A much greater emphasis should undoubtedly, and rightly, have been placed on Allison herself, her expectations, her status, her perceptions of marriage, and so forth.

One item only touched upon by Ormbsy is the transformation of Allison from a gentlewoman to a pioneer. Interestingly, the book cover is a portrait painted of Allison before she departed from England. One sees a prim and proper young miss, barely 15. The fetters of the Victorian female 'proper sphere' are very much in evidence here. In the portrait, she is sitting passively on a stuffed, carved chair gazing at the artist, dressed in a green satin gown with lace collar and cuffs, bedecked in jewelry and holding a fan.

Her later life was a virtual antithesis to this picture of her. After arriving in British Columbia Allison was forced to find a job partly because her stepfather deserted the family and partly because she was unmarried. She worked in some of the few respectable occupations open to a woman of her class, namely, being a governess, seamstress, and teacher. Her marriage to a cattle rancher, the son of an English surgeon, subsequently changed both her lifestyle and attitudes. While remaining largely subservient to her husband, Allison's pioneering did liberate her somewhat — at least in her own mind.

During this stage of her life, she did become responsible for the so-called womanly tasks of the household. She engaged in housekeeping and cooking helped by servants; and, she raised 14 children who came into the world without formal medical assistance except for their father and an Indian woman being present at birth. But, Allison also became indispensable to the operation of the pioneer household in other less traditional ways. She participated in fur trading, bookkeeping, running the ranch, a trading post and a post office alone during her husband's frequent absences. Although the work was onerous, she described this period in her life as her 'camping days.' It was 'the wild, free life I ever loved till age and infirmity put an end to it,' she wrote. What can this possibly tell us? Some gentlewomen such as Susanna Moodie, dutifully, but reluctantly, followed their husbands into the backwoods of Canada. Is it possible, however, that some of these women might have chosen to marry pioneers, whether consciously or unconsciously, in their effort to escape the suffocating and alienating constraints of the Victorian female role? Does Allison fit this mould? If so, how atypical was she? If not, might such a motivation be present in others?

In another vein, Ormsby gives much credit to Allison for her views on 'the degradation of the Indians.' Allison's attitudes, however, are even more surprising when placed into a larger context. First of all, she had genuine respect for B.C. Indians at a time when many other white settlers, including government officials, were overtly racist in both rhetoric and policy. Though Allison shows certain cultural biases, she also interacted at a social level with Indian women in a manner very much opposite, for instance, to those European women in the fur-trade who openly disassociated themselves from their Indian and half-breed counterparts, even when they happened to live within the same trading post. And, perhaps most importantly, Allison