

tions, the viewer discovers a museum in a book, and finds one's appetite to touch the works therein whetted, but not sated. Steven Clay's books are destined to be some of the most cherished works of the last part of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st.

While publishing books of great literary, social, and aesthetic value, Clay also convinces of the necessity of the book centrality as a cultural artifact. These three works from an essential library for anyone interested in the book arts.

To Do As Adam Did: Selected Poems.

Ronald Johnson.

Talisman House, 2000.

151 pages. \$16.95 (paperback).

Johnson, who died in 1998, has yet to be acknowledged as the great 20th century American visionary poet that he was. Johnson's architectural, visual, and aural poems explode on the page — fireworks moving easily from meditation to ecstasy. Grounded in scientific precision, the poems are dolphin-like, intense, sleek, beautiful, experimental — yet accessible. They contain some of the most unashamedly gorgeous language in poetry: "What we wanted // was both words and worlds / you could put your foot through."

Poetry like this deserves to be read aloud as the subtleties of his music ring more clearly when nursed by the voice. Johnson's work is one of exploration and unknown lands — the mind's land enraptured by the shape of things, the earth's landscape becoming the mind's residence. Grounded early on in a hybrid 18th century post-modernist style which soothed as the gorgeous prose of English writer/artists such as Samuel Palmer soothes, and surprises as the Concrete and Objectivists poets surprised, Johnson's work evolved into an ecstatic otherness which is hard to describe — abstract, metaphysical, scientific, futuristic, and, yes, pastoral.

This volume contains poems from some of my all time favorite volumes of poetry by anyone, Johnson's *Valley of the Many-Colored Grasses*, *The Book of the Green Man*, and *RAD IOS* (a poem "found" in the text of Milton's *Paradise Lost*). As the essentially pastoral vision of his poems transformed into a cosmic one (as Blake and Palmer moved from pasture to constellated sky), Johnson built a space ship out of words and cre-

ated *ARK* — a work which expanded into a celestial riff in the mode of Rodia's Watts Towers in Los Angeles or James Hamilton's "Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly" (which can be seen at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in D.C.). The beauty, the weirdness, the spinning lightness and vortex-aural dizziness of *ARK* is unsurpassed anywhere in poetry — particularly in America. "I find I advance with / sidereal motions / — my eyes containing substance // of the sun, / my ears built of beaks and feathers — // I ascend with saps." ("Emanations") *ARK* is the culmination of work begun by Blake, continued by Dickinson and Whitman, hinted at by Sitwell, and demanded by our dark time.

Cloud Writing.

Ricky Garni.

Micro-Ding Production, 1998.

16 pages. No price (paperback).

fred.

Ricky Garni.

101 Secret Wing Ding, 1998.

46 pages. No price (paperback).

Wardrobe: A Tale at Home.

Ricky Garni.

101 Secret Wing Dings of Change and Summer, 1999.

66 pages. No price (paperback).

El Hombre de la Capacastellana.

Ricky Garni.

Ricky Garni, 1999.

30 pages. No price (paperback).

I know the poets Russell Edson and Alfred Starr Hamilton would love to meet Ricky Garni, for they are as quirky, and separate, and as original, as he. The three make the triumvirate of American poetry of the parenthetical thought, and only Edson has had the luck of gaining some attention from it. (Check out Russell Edson's newest too: *The Tormented Mirror*) Hamilton may be dead now for all I know. He would be 86 this year, I think, living hand-to-mouth in Montclair, NJ, with the Muse. (Be sure to read Jonathan Williams's essay on Hamilton in *Blackbird Dust*, a book reviewed