

DANIEL KANE

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**OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS**



egg box

## **Ostentation of Peacocks**

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## **PRAISE FOR OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS:**

“Daniel Kane is the revitalising voice twenty-first century poetry needs, and *Ostentation of Peacocks* is a full display of his transatlantic talent. Fresh, funny and visionary, this book offers the reader a real world of fantasy with the lyric grace of early Ashbery and the prophetic ambition of early Ginsberg.”

**Jeremy Noel-Tod**

“The funny thing about Daniel Kane’s book, given its rather showy title, is how unostentatious his poems really are. Excessive, yes, gorgeously so; and ‘out there’ in bravely following his, or his given language’s, inclinations. What is anything that can be observed or thought and how do our words account for, and even augment, that sketchy existence? How is a poem a fact if anything can be? Peculiar to Kane is his often headlong, always nimble variant on how to proceed: transmutation, an ostensible care for writing as fitting together a world in words as if out of nowhere. This remarkable book adds up, heartily, to its own ‘heap big meal’.”

**Bill Berkson**

“The variegated plumage of Kane’s elegant, iridescent, fan-tailed poems is a constant delight. Some are indeed as ostentatious as peacocks in their pride, but others obliquely and movingly mime uncertainty, confusion, and loss. This is a gorgeous collection, and one that deserves a ‘harmonious welcome’.”

**Mark Ford**

## **PRAISE FOR OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS:**

“Fun is missing from this world everywhere; but here it is, at times pitiless but still fun. Daniel Kane’s personable imagination dwells in the house of free play: a posture of meditation on the couch upon which there is ought to do but muse on things of a consequence neither relativized nor sanitized. Absolute inquiry into creatures-objects-ideas produces, in this leavened mind, a flurry of response that is a ‘cosmos or order or harmony in a bag full of hard to categorize leaves’. Not only fun has been missing, but also compassion, and that is here too, ‘with singular freshness and poignancy.’”

**Rebecca Wolff**

“For all his talk about peacocks, cows, mares, turtles—his speaking to them, sometimes even flirting with them—Kane’s repeated reminder that ‘the material world is tenuous’ suggests a deeper existential problem at the core of this excellent book. The natural world brims with life, sure, but the poet is still a bit anxious. Language itself hangs in the balance. The result is a book of poems with a New York School sensibility and a weirdly cuddly philosophical heart.”

**Aaron Belz**

OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS

by Daniel Kane



to Bubby

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s*

*What is Poetry: Conversations with the American Avant Garde*

*Don't Ever Get Famous: Essays on New York Writing After the New  
York School* (editor and contributor)



# CONTENTS

## PART 1

OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS	3
FISH 1 / FISH 2	4
BEGINNING WITH FLAPPING	6
BIRD AND LEAF COUPLETS	8
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	9
SONNET	10
JEWISH VARIATIONS ON ERIK SATIE'S "SPORTS ET DIVERTISSEMENTS"	11
A DAIRY MAID IN THE ACT OF TEASING A COW THAT WISHES TO BE A DAIRY MAID	13
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	14
LITTLE GOAT SONG	16
SUGGESTIONS	17
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	18
THE WHOLE DARN LOT OF US	19
AMBIVALENT PICNIC	20
HOSTILE STUFF	21
VARIATIONS	22
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	23

## PART 2

SEVEN	27
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## PART 3

OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	37
SPIDER MELANCHOLIA	39
ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORK PLACE (FAT SONG)	41
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	42
INVITATION	43
SONNET: DEAR FIRE	44
ALBATROSS SLAUGHTER	45
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	46
2 ORNITHOLOGY VARIATIONS	47
POEM	48

## CONTENTS

OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	49
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUNNY	50
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	51
KAYAK TRIP	53
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	55
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	57
I DID	59
SECOND DATE WITH ESTHER DRILL	60
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	61
AGAINST FUN	62
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	63
MUGOO	65
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>continued</i>	66
POEM <i>the sexiness of the ancient world</i>	68
CHOCO-TACO CREAMY BURGER	
TINGLY CENTERS	69
OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS <i>concluded</i>	70

# PART 1





## **OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS**

A group of peacocks is called an ostentation of peacocks a muster of peacocks there is mustard and there is stuffing oh the beef we kill the cow to eat its meat I render a cloud a buzzard hornet whatever the sky knows what to do as long as I tell it to I say beef is in the oven here it comes served up smiling note harmonious welcome to my heap big meal.

## FISH 1 / FISH 2

(for Alan and Naima)

### FISH 1

Becalmed. Beware. The fish.  
That's how they are all day.  
Becalmed. Aware. The fish.  
No fear of winter for the fish.

Spirits drifting no it's fish.  
Bugle blow an answer for the fish.  
Golden hours early spring / a pond.  
March chill in air of watching drifting fish.

In dark trees there might be bracelets of the fish.  
That there's seventeen poems no they're fish.  
Another green world inside our darkest pond.  
Fish here do survive this winter.

Toy ship brushing 'gainst the cheeks of fish.  
Provoke St. Elmo's fire blossoms fish.  
Come running up the hill through the sentence to the fish.  
All in the same sense given would do here.

Fish here overhead this is the model.  
Islands clouds and water heard again.  
Surviving winter under layer one here ice.  
Answer and you'll set the wild echoes flying

## FISH 2

Becalmed. Beware. The fish.  
That's how they are all day.  
Becalmed. Aware. The fish.  
No fear of winter for the fish.

Spirits drifting no it's fish.  
Bugle blow an answer for the fish.  
Golden hours early spring / a pond.  
March chill in air of watching drifting fish.

In dark trees there might be bracelets of the fish.  
That there's seventeen poems no they're fish.  
Another green world inside our darkest pond.  
Fish here do survive this winter.

Toy ship brushing 'gainst the cheeks of fish.  
Provoke St. Elmo's fire blossoms fish.  
Come running up the hill through the sentence to the fish.  
All in the same sense given would do here.

Fish here underhead this is the model.  
Islands clouds and water heard again.  
Long stretches fish are the exception.  
Answer and you'll set the wild echoes flying

A great fish of concentrated attention

## BEGINNING WITH FLAPPING

The fly doesn't *flap* her wings she doesn't *flutter* them  
what does she do what does the fly do what does the

hummingbird do for I have seen the hummingbird  
suck from the bluebell or is it even bluebell and does the hummingbird

suck or sip does the fly flap or flutter and what does the pigeon  
in his daily excursions do is he a flapper or a flyer

or a glider OK hawks glide of that I can be sure hawks glide  
and seals flap their flippers on the rocks in the north west shores

of Scotland I do not cry out after the seal I do not wonder often  
about the platypus as it sparkles in the waters of New Zealand

huh I saw a squirrel scamper and nibble and once a squirrel kind of  
looked at me funny and then scampering and nibbling at the same time

scurried up a tree which was as far as I know in the process of  
growing though it could have been dying as there was a mysterious

*bulge* in the tree a mysterious *bulge* as if some infection or tumor  
had made its home in the trunk oh an ant just crossed my path I'll

slap it I'll slap it with my flip-flop and a duck just landed in the  
swimming pool or does it land does it merely slide or settle

does it *settle* or *slide* or *land* into the pool a naked  
man can be like a river a body can have a coastline a baby

can be a forest of blood and you can wear a wedding dress but  
a cat never slouches a crane's neck bends and it doesn't so much

peck at the water as test it yes I'd say a crane tests the water  
before consuming the fly and the fly doesn't flap her wings and

nibble and a squirrel kind of day or a crane day or ant moment  
a million gray rats life and a platypus a breeze of coral and

life who would be like a river if life could be  
like a river when that is the world at sunrise with a fly and ant and more

## BIRD AND LEAF COUPLETS

I have yet to meet a vulture I didn't like.  
A willow leaf can give sage advice but is sometimes prone to pedantry.

Swans are violent creatures. Never approach a swan for a loan.  
Oak leaves nudge each other in the wind in much the same way oxen do.

A parrot is practically designed to entertain.  
The larch produces a 'fun' kind of leaf.

Be careful to lube the sparrow up liberally before you fuck it in the ass.  
A bay leaf once encouraged me to sidle up to Nancy.

I once heard there's a myth to the myna bird.  
Rose leaf not petal not leaf.

A crass bird is the cockatoo.  
The elm leaf is not to be trusted around children.

Ravens towards rest comes you guessed it the raven.  
Apply the healing balm of the aloe vera leaf to your burn.

The crow has advised me to 'drop' Lytle as a friend.  
The pine leaf whispers Bettina's secrets to me.

I immediately turn away from the attacking seagull.  
A cosmos or order or harmony in a bag full of hard to categorize leaves?

## **OSTENTATION OF PEACOCKS** *continued*

I've got a real pain in my stomach today it is the pain of sorrow this is my candid admission little butter cup little ladybird oh little fox terrier designed so cute is that you Hosanna don't make me blush I know I have terrifically gorgeous big brown eyes eyelashes that some people insist are made ostentatious through mascara do you like me.

YES I sniff airplane glue YES I am generally engorged with pleasure YES you are absolutely delightful have you prepared the meat plate and when is the weather actually going to happen what is now predicted has been predicted and will come true as has always been predicted a couple of long notes before the horrid claw gets through the gate.

Those things that are pretty include a little pot of peat or buzzard or bee well what else is there to say I haven't had a delicious plate of ribs in gosh I don't know how long I wonder what Aaron Belz is doing now is he fishing or is he watching TV every now and then getting up off his Christian ass to adjust the rabbit ears Aaron dig right in it's beef.