



Opening Statements

Poems by Wayne Moore
1980

OPENING STATEMENTS

by

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B.A., University of Colorado, 1977


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Master of Arts

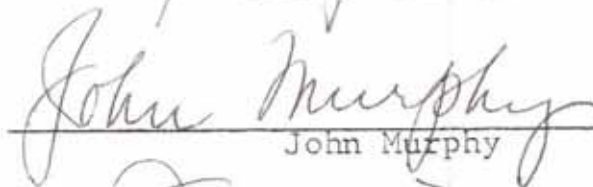
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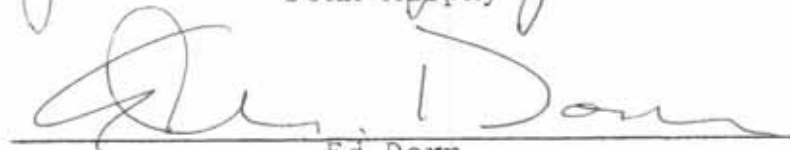
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Date 30 april 1980

Moore, Wayne Crosby (M.A., English Literature)

Opening Statements

Thesis directed by Professor Ed Dorn

Opening Statements is a collected work. The order is chronological, the earliest poems appearing first, and represents a two-year study into the art of poetry. Although I had wanted to write a book-length poem during my degree years, this collection maintains a storyline of its own and is, in this way, acceptable to me, satisfying my original design.

This abstract is approved as to form and content.

Signed



Faculty member in charge of thesis

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RENT

Kumiko's Photograph

I found you before the camera.
You may be posing, arranging the flowers
in your kimono for a quiet start,
but I am before you first
in your eyes.

That tree that is not quite between us
is cover I lost in your approaching.
Those stones carry you lightly
as they themselves entered
near dry rice fields.

You are not frightened, but pause
as I move to explain my hiding.
I have no breath
and yet you are still calm
silent on my clumsy intrusion.

The space ends as a dream
I have become. I cannot follow
but you will not turn away
before I have finished, and here
I remain, nearly telling you.

Guilty Party

Beyond the arms of chairs,
the reach of rug, the grip
of a fire in its place, you circle
a room's infinity
reflecting like a comet
the distance you have to go
to leave.

Your life, baggage
of its own accord
splits onto sidewalks
a suffering that suits you
sprouts an empty lot
not saleable.

Festering like a wound
the community before you
has your population of regret.
Swelling with cheers
they elect you to power
as leader of the guilty party.

Unearthing Roberta

Even against bluegreen hopsack
her features lie restful, as though you caught her
napping in a Reader's Digest.
The creases from the paper smiled like surprise
but actually she hadn't been
and once she explained why
she spoke too clearly
I had nothing to say.

I can't remember ever asking for advice.
I thought I wanted to seduce her
but she had taken away
her clothes immediately
and I was still explaining.

Before I could reach the door
I had seen her fade.
Only the dress size
blew about the room.
Whoever would follow me into that place
would be confused as to
a stain they were examining, and she
never had seen me
let myself out.

Graffito

This bar of soap I'm writing with is actually very old. It has cracked with the tile along lines. It has been a long time since we used this shower for love, or even each other. And the drain has grown very deep.

But you don't follow that.
You'll be glancing a brick off someone's head
who had chips enough to call a bluff
and leave. And while walls of that sandstone
clot your blood, you'll stand there shocked
at how long, realizing the mirror
that I had been writing on.

The Turtle

Smoke twists about my ankles. It is struggling
to take me, to lift me, but I am the Turtle.
I will never fly.

I crawl very close to the ground. I like to
kiss it, and make certain I can. The ground
is my way. It is where things fall to.

I know the promise of the sun. He has tricked
the birds into flight. See their blood on the dishes
and fingers? I wear my shadow on my back.

Rain and night wait. They don't pretend,
but they come. I am not their fool either. I carry
reasons everywhere I go.

Pointed sticks and smiles find no place to enter.
My answers cover me as armour. They silence any
before they may ask.

I will never be taken. I have seen to that. I will not
betray the ground. I will not betray my fear.
I am the Turtle.

Traffic Jam

Discover an accident you had managed
to misplace, involving only one.
The scene surfacing, stain-like as
your skin. Road with roads
as destinations, turnouts
for alternatives, legs you couldn't depend on
bring you to your knees.
There is no vehicle here, merely a victim.
There is no guilt, only the thought,
set aside like a lifetime guarantee:
examined, and discarded in an instant.
It passes through you,
passes for you in a pinch,
it so becomes you
this accident of birth.

My Refuge with the Bees

When I come, I am looked after.
From swarms channels are hollowed
through my eyes and my worries
lose their cavity to eggs
and the newly incubated.
Teams of workers replace
a weakening confidence
below these brittle collar-bones,
and a chamber of the heart
is made ready for the Queen.

Chameleon

If he climbs on the glass
he doesn't disappear. I want
my money back.
I want a pet
that changes everything.

Good Morning lizard, I want
to be sitting
in a mountain stream.
Become the sun.

Final Thaw

Winter has eased its burden
and my mind is thick
drinking each snowflake.
Stockpiles of heavy water
bound in still waves break
details of design and the arrow
of direction, out of the head.

The morning after attends us.
Silver watersmoke draws green
shoots of birth over
the balding of winter.
White shadows shift before
the rising of the sky
and disappear to the north
from their lost planet.

The New Lease

I stand in fresh air
waving the arms of my hair wild
like drapes out of open windows.

Spring cleaning means new winds
move the old tenants of winter out.

The body vacates, completely
renewed in seven years.

I'm not the same as I remember
me being, now that I
think of it.

INSIDE STORY

The Inside Story

"This was to be bigger than life;
this, the inside story."

--James Tate
The Coming Out of Ourselves
Party

We share it, rarely
the right moment, gathering the one
or more captives in a special reading.
It couldn't be, but it seems
an annual occasion
soon after.

When we pay for audience,
the tin ear of a cup,
it's not the real thing.
It's a story about the story, lost
in narration
and the entropy of two minds.

Or when we save whole chapters,
crucial ones, the moving climax
which we suspend just before
or behind our place in the text,
and commit ourselves to giving this,
finally, to one who has remained
standing, or awake, or recently
arrived,
some old accident appears
to have stuck pages together, compounding
strata upon strata in a solid amber.

The structure weakens having, yet
not revealing, its inside story.
Like the thirteenth floor, it is
between excuses for its absence,

until, one night, the elevator breaks down
in darkness, and its empty room
slides the silent doors open
to a peculiar vacancy, where
hands on the button there
welcome home.

A Time Payment Plan

"Money is but frozen time.
Time is of the essence.
If you got a minute,
can you spare a buck?"

--J. Moore
T-shirt, 1977

The refinements of civilization
have elevated trade
to a most god-like communion: clean coinage
off the steps of the temple.
But don't put it in your mouth,
it still transmits disease.

A Swiss movement catches my eye
at the auction: a clock with rare coins
in place of numbers for the hours.
Quarter 'til the nineteen oh nine signature
'D' means the banks are closing.
Evidence that you
can't spend an hour
without spending a dime.

Fine. Joke at my expense.
Last night I looked outside
to the schoolyard and saw
an old man fanning
a metal detector
under the swings like a cane
gone drunk. There was a child
in the last seat
who grew tired of dragging his feet,
went home with a conquistador's treasure
spilling into his dreams.

Feigning Madness

I cannot recall for whom
I am pretending. The ghosts,
who no longer leave me,
see through me. What I am
protecting is the right
to doubt, but I am beginning to doubt
that, too.

A Conversation with My Body

Author: I will not live in anyone's
shadow. I make this plain
in the way I address you.
Hey body, what gives?

For months now we have shared
the same roof, the meals,
the shower. But as close as we are
the hairs are growing split.
There is a breakdown
and somewhere down the line
the train of thoughts
is late.

Body: It is hard to push breath
through the swollen sleeping bags
of the chest. The throat is constipated
with dense forests of green phlegm.
There is little light
and every weekend we sleep in
to the next.

Author: The colors are turning glossy
wings of rainbow birds, flying off
in flocks from every corner I pass.
A museum of fine weather has no doors
but every wall transparent
to the next sky.

Body: We cannot join you this holiday.
Perhaps help will reach us soon.
Perhaps the black gas of this troubled night
will seep out the cracks in our voice.

Author: Without you, I am a screen of wet steel,
a mesh with holes
too large to net anything.

Headphones

No such thing as silence
I've decided. And that
was a noisy battle,
proof in itself.

I believe laundromats
are the worst.
Every glance is at least two
sentences and possibly entire
soliloquies addressing you.

The nose hairs of an old man
scream laughter and tears
for uncomfortable moments
after the joke.

The slight girl with sharp
creases in her sheets
slides thin grammar, splinters
of mistrust, fear being
the backboard of her volley
and loss. Still slighter
possibilities of romance, somewhere,
slipping the aerosol starch
from her limp hands.

And the rubber frowning
my face is doing, speaks
in the bubble door of a dryer.
Words I am having trouble
hearing, until their shock releases
its window shade in a flap,
stop all together.

There Is Archeology in My Behavior Today

There is archeology in my behavior
today.
From leaving the bed as a cold depression
in the clay of my sheets,
to the tin face of my bathroom mirror,
a thin hologram in rust,
to the worn signs of the kitchen:
cups emerging from drifts
in the table, fossilized paths
circling, and stopping before an altar
of washing and water,
to this desk, where record of my finds
seems ancient already.

Supposing the ceremonies of this life
are like our own, these artifacts
suggest a long wedding with death.
How is it that a gray residue of fear
remains upon handles and the arms
of chairs? They have crumbled last,
buffed and cohesive as resin.

Obsessed, I have taken the covers
off the walls. I have rolled back
the floors. I have shaved away
the crawlspace, and I have lifted one layer
at a time, up from that hole.

In my search, I am bringing back fear
already, before there is time
for us to lose anything.
Truth may not be selective
but life is, and these ruins
of my daily retrospection
may be curious, but their rubble
is slowing me down.

I have a feeling that what grows
about me is backward; the arthritic root
scraping in the breeze.

The Only Poem

It is yours.
Given to all the world
as the metaphor of your suffering,
your hidden beauty, it is, modestly,
the best you've ever done.

That's just the first stanza.
It stretches patience
into a trance of ecstasy, a grip
of absolute wonderment and pathos, and
that's only a teaser
from the cover jacket.

The second stanza traces light tails
in the space of your eye, rushes;
trembling and wetness
from every opening
line. Knock out pauses
catch you just before losing
one bittersweet scene
for the next.
You can hardly stand it.

By the fourth section, you've called
every old lover, sent roses to mother,
and given a bonus to the paper boy.

By the fifth, you're cancelling
appointments for the month, selling the house,
and wading along the reef of Guadeloupe Island.

In the final five lines, you approach
Buddhahood. Your skin peeling
orange rind, the sunset of your hair
lingering filament.

Two words, unpunctuated,
lead you through the dark
tunnel of your body.
A round light
meets you.

All gone

Georgetown Volunteer Fire

For the big cities you're a refugee but here
city council pulls babies' new teeth for taxes
calling everyone Mayor eventually there being
nothing situationally comic about the cafe's
special a reasonable #4 overeasay.
"One plastocene morning, while crossing
the landbridge of counter space, my hand
came upon Karen's...
my novel so old here among the carpenters
eating Sharon's face listless with a slow
goodbying in here every timeclock day
with "Well, spose we oughta; Ya an don't work too
when WWWWWAAAAANNNNNHHHHHHHHH the siren blows up
always sounds close but it's too
early for the noon whistle
so these woodchucks go piling
over each other like cliffs
past Lucille at the register
stiffed but laughing at these intense
vanishing manhoods
and I get home walking
through chapter four where Karen smiles
back and I find these Toon-Boons out there
trying to flag down the fire in the Sun
with occasional night and slapping screen doors.

House of the Tragic Poet, Pompei

What is tragic
was buried in the name
for this.
A house of open air
and thin shadows.
A ruin reamed
or earth's bad memory,
eating sand again
as we sun here,
sandwiches
for our picnic steaming
in their plastic rooms.

You have already hung
tapestries and eaves
and will now
send the servants, no
the slaves, off
to stamp grapes
for tonight's wine.

In this spring heat
I think of rotting fruit
and rodents collecting
excessive hours,
matted like fallen robes
into compost
and humid half lives.

The half light
of the sunken day
ignites marble walls
against falling blue
and first stars.
It won't be long now
before they return,
kegs exploding
with the spirit,
purple with night
and our chilled lips.

Creation Myth

The Truth of the matter
is the cooling of it
The timing

One hot number
round in entrance
growing hieroglyphic
with each sobbing
breath

we have come
to call this
zero

we have come
to forget the fetal
9
with our tail

and swim with the moon
coins
eyes
rolled all the way back.

TO BE SIMPLE

The Gift: To Be Simple

--for Mother

This is the mythology of childhood
where you return once upon a time
every time you think of this thing.
It is a landscape minutely detailed
as tundra, flint hard and persuasive
as the mountain's face, and cool
to the touch with shadows and snow.
It is a room where the sun sets
inside the curtain of clouds,
the couch by the window,
the afternoon nap of waking life.
This is the story of finding everything
in place when you return to yourself
with misplaced intentions of a calendar year.
Like the season of crystals and night
there is the slowed motion and low light
of always evening, where blessings
are clear, and the forgiveness of sleep
overcomes you, as all forgiveness does.

Pre-elegy Poem for My Step-father

You breathe air as if it were a bell rope
and follow it up past the ceiling hole
into and out of an atmosphere
I smudge the glass to.
Through commercials of the ball game
you're driving the Olds F-85 again,
safely your eyes roll up to the curb
of cold air as you re-enter the room.
When I wake
with my hands on the wheel,
having parked drunk one night
outside the house,
I scream and stomp brakes
in weak celebration to you.

Blood Is Blue

Take the smallest liberties with everything.
Grow solid on buses
or in airport bars like sweat clothes
hard and fast on chairs.

Dead. Be dead and clamped
upon the chairs.
The paging telephones are not for you.

Journeys. Spy on everyone.
Horns of cattle
are tickling your feet
under the ground.

At the conference grounds
winged bugs fall from the cedar siding
of the cabin and land on the page.
They detach their wings
and leave them behind in the book.
The sign on the cabin reads
Training Center California State Park System.
The bear logo is searching the ground.

Inside is
the room pictured in the postcard
you studied at the desk, minus
the sunshine, minus the fire,
minus the reclining figure
of a woman wearing sixties' skirt and blouse.

You never expect much from such journeys anyway.
Relax. Be dead.

Breath is the weather we can control
and cannot control; more immediate
to respond than the body's other
labors, but no less difficult
to suppress. It is ours to use
but not to keep. We must keep
using it well.

Highway maps are not free any more, not even
with full-service stops. An indication
of something, as everything can be,
given the text. The free maps
at the desk
suck revenue up
from cartoon destinations
disproportionately drawn
at the ends of each road;
the beginning of favors paid
incestuously among the shopkeepers.
It tells you nothing. Nothing
is free.

An act is like a breath
but more like the weather.
This is what some yell after you
running through beach fog
down the beach.
We cannot refuse any of it.

I came here last year.
Dying with slow cancer, my mother
ventured to remain
cheerful; the center of a family
reunion at my father's convention.

Everyone's back again.
Taking walks
through the white sand dunes
cropped with ice plants:
red and green succulent fingers
that resist only momentarily
the sole of my shoes; I move anxiously
around the grounds
expecting a reason for anger and disgust
to show itself
in this alien beauty.

Waiting

The others have to catch up.
There is no way to move on
one's own,
without the orchestra
and the road builders one
will not arrive anywhere.
This is why you are so calm.
Everyone can see that you are
a seasoned traveler; that traveling
is old hat to anyone
as exhausted in serenity
as you appear to be.
Excitement hardly suits you.

Perhaps you are going
to meet a lover here.
She is late.
Everything about you seems
to notice.
Your drink is icewater now.
Your swizzlestick jabs the napkin.
There is only one way
to behave. The waitress wants
you to have another.
Start again.

Locale (a Noveletta)

Another layer of dust settled on the Great Basin region. Before that, insects carried away the crop of the Great Plains in thunderheads of wings. The chainsaw stopped. I think it seized from the heat. Our family has scattered. We have no home, she said. Dust settles on everything eventually, he added. These had occurred to them.

Generations had come and had sprung since that time of discovery. Towns, cities had broken forth from the rich sand river banks of the Platte where Pawnee villages had once sacrificed enemy squaws to the Morning Star, Venus or Mercury. They had not prospered from that time. Along the bed of Boulder Creek transients discovered timeless alleyways through the foothill relief. A young blond woman in halter top and shorts snapped at the saw. The spark ignited. The teeth on the blade whirled in a spray from the automatic oiler. The transients turned away discouraged.

Year by year, Time/Life series after Time/Life series, the poor became poorer. Book poor. Junkmail poor. Fire was outlawed long before the plague. Quality in some things meant quantity went unrestrained in what was not. Liquor stores closed their bottle recycling doors in the face of all. There was no time. The cash count had to be made each day. Again, just before they opened, there was a profit. Soon it would be September, and the town would rise with its lifeblood to a pallid recline.

Tintype

There is a blindness in the snow.
There is the expense of forgetting
winter, when my memory bounces
and returns with a cancelled lip-print
of Zebras squinting over the ice flow;
as with the sun, when I find
the yard decoys of frozen laundry
and nigger jockeys.

All night the white climbing
out of the typer
until the ink is gone.
There is silence
waving its Thermos
from across the river.

My car scars crow's feet
across the white face
of a Noh morning;
slow going toward town.

The coffee shop is open.
People who live for work
live in the back says the waitress.
Cab drivers and bus drivers
lean on the front pages
of old papers.
Our eyes blink adhesively,
occasionally jerk to the whimpering
of a car discovering the curb;
snow everywhere equally false
to the face of the road.

In the static frying eggs
there is speaking among yucks,
gagging on eagerness like cocaine.
There are incentives of flame:
papers burning in Pakistan, Lybia.
There are clotted footsteps
making for the trains, the recruitment
office.

Our tableknives, the telling of beads
in the beading salt, all of this proximity
despite the sea's long distance
and the trade wind's impossible echo
call attention to it now.

Usually I am the bastard of an orphaned god
intent on publishing her collected works
as astrology. "The wet tracks of tongues
on the erasing sands
of sunsets, Supernova
gone blackhole,
just at supper."

In this, I am ridiculously composite.
Lighting the candles
in the blacked-out greasy-spoon;
pressing on knees
around the dishwasher's transistor:
an other-war's reminder
of trampled people
yanking boot straps.

Let's imagine it's natural
in a bone of ice
to dream the ghost dance
from windows of the shopping mall
or abandoned cars in the intersection.
To suspect lights and movement
untrue lovers behind a shade of snow.

The weather will break of its own.
The news will catch us up
on all that we have lost here,
and possibly, award you
for a snapshot you have made.

The Groundhog's Riddle

Emergence into light, what we see
changes nothing of what is
cast. It is a hairline fault,
the possibility of light
escaping the mold
that starts at a tremor,
attaches, knuckle white
to the inanimate landslide of things.
Plato often lectured at night
on caves from inside the city walls.
Diogenes walked through towns
of prairie dogs, learning
the darkest secrets
in the white lies of day.

Hatpins in the Storm, Mt. Ypsilon, 1915

I'm sure now lightning
melts transmutes the figures
this one a tree in the snapshot

Grandma's mountain outing
the weather electric
the ladies girls in high laced boots
the dresses heavy layers
waving, unstuck and waving
their hatpins in the storm.

Because she heard it was harmless
believed the magic buzz they made
like an insect mind of her own
she, I think of Marie Sklodowska C.
at the top of the world
was somehow safe. This is where
in the story she
would pause

Returning down the ridgeway
they saw a horse and man
struck dead, smelled the flesh.
A small boy the son glued in her mind
all of these years
on the horse's back
was alive. This is where
but only once I paused
to ask how
does the story end

The Edible and the Inedible

--after Claude Lévi-Strauss

To find the world one day
emptied as carnival grounds

and to hear myself in echo
as after a storm

hawking tickets, is
to realize how raw

the mind. Sometimes
just a headache.

Since I've been on my own,
out of the shopping cart,

my tastes have been beyond me
moving through the aisles.

My plates have lost the faith
of cartoon decals,

the gas range leaks
details of my appetite

to the roaches and to women
who stay the night.

At dawn the paper cracks the stormdoor
and my pores close up.

We don't care to know
the semantics of small print.

There are rhetorics without choice
in the weaponry of choices

we have made.

Little David Marks 8th Year
Inside His Germ-free Bubble

In all heroic journeys
there is a lack;
the rattled kid
is the center's seismic
growing up sad as lava.
He is no test-tube baby
but a final museum piece
rolling off the shelf.
His skin is thick
against timidity,
has an interest
in watching sports, sees
space does bend
driven down court
by those giant hands.
He is our transfixing eye
like snow falling through water
in a shake-up toy.
These are the answers
he posts on the wall:
The sky is a dome
The stars, eggs

This Spot Mark This Spot

It will simplify everyone involved
if you leave
an impression

No need for disfigurement
or the soft whittling
words,
hooves in sand
will recall more
than the throat's afterburn

Part the boughs

Look out

with the erupting light
for branches snapping back
behind you those following
expect some care
in your progression

Deserve attention

As it happens
the signs are not the signs
that belong here The place
mentioned in them
is admissible but so
inaccurate as evidence

Don't encourage correcting
the desert
browns on the map
to grass or savannah, let alone
the forest Let
the boundaries lie
Let it all stand
as it is
for something else

In the great North Woods
 one pilgrim wearing sheepskins
Not cured but tan with blood
 like his baseball skin
 turned loose, literally
was snatched from the berrybushes
 and by then a flock
 of longhairs scattering
spores and roaches behind him
Was an easy trail
 for the birds, brought him
 back to Arvada
 Boiled him to a primal scream
now he studies massage in another wing
 of the clinic

Even pilgrims tend to
 ward off the center
 overlook the wayside
Not oversee as the plow
 iron filings waylaid
 in the aching earth

Among the flaking minerals
 chariots scale gold leaf
 creating seasonal wakes
The weather thin in the long hauls
 from Rome to Rome
Arching resisting the square
 stone from settling
 with the full conviction
 of its weight

There remains
 one possible out
 The short form-
ations, might be notions
The architect's childhood
 splinter ply wood
 crescents of earth
black moons
 under the nails

He is the boon
of class reunion
remember

hard arms/arms quilled
head/fast as an arrow
head poised
rags of skin
many blooded colors
in ragged furs and skin
many clay stone shell
bone beads
threads/dyed gut string

What
he said

This is for
killing food
This is for
the baby
This is for
the woman to eat
and make robes
This is for
moving toward
larger fires
in the west

The Wheel of Ixion Stands Still

Against the odds of June
it snows. Pipes of hair
exhausted, joint-bunched
like a sleeve, an elbow,
bangs about the eyes, such heat
as suns forget,
the sky a color red,
residual wavelengths fear
the coming summer.

Step into the river twice.
Never the same foot. Call the gods
liars.

Bring them seven capes of war,
the brides of whoring soldiers,
a child from the leper caves, eat with them
and bring them news of how the music
sports its movements to the ear.

The whirring.
The faces of the sun.
Crackle spit-dry whirlwinds
toast the stonewalls,
dust the bedrock sleep
each city rocks to,
hanging on the clouds' envelopment.
A currency of linings,
our tuna seas' mercurial rain,
the sapphire gutters on the cheeks,
their reservoir, depend.

There is not much that harbors
in the heat a losing any turn
might well abandon
to the winter.