

1976

# Where Wylie Ends

Richard Hugo

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The earth out here doesn't bear us  
up so much as it keeps us out,  
an old trick of the beautiful.  
Remember what Chief Left Hand said?  
Never mind. Everything else  
was taken from him,  
let's leave his grief alone.  
My eastern friends ask me

how I like it in the west,  
or God's country, as it's sometimes  
called, though God, like a slumlord,  
lives in the suburbs: Heaven.  
And I don't live "in the west";  
I live in this canyon among a few  
other houses and abandoned  
mines, vaccinations that didn't take.

## Where Wylie Ends / Richard Hugo

Our road ends near stars.  
The stream flows counter to our road.  
Dogs howl at the end of the road  
in the woods where people howl.  
Beyond the woods other roads end.  
Not our road. Our road ends  
near stars and howling dogs,  
near water going the other way.  
Their roads end going the same way  
as water, going away from stars.  
Dogs howl at the end of their roads  
in the woods where people howl.  
Same dogs, Same people. Same howls.  
The howling people have no road.  
They howl in the woods with dogs.  
The woods has roads. The howls  
find trails that lead to roads.  
The howling people have joined us

on the road, moving with, moving  
counter to water. Stars  
pale like dog howls in dawn.  
Where our road ends, people  
from the woods ask the way home.  
Our road moves with the water.  
Both carry stars to our lawn.

## Ricky / Philip Levine

I go into the back yard  
and arrange some twigs  
and a few flowers. I go alone  
and speak to you as I never could  
when you lived, when you  
smiled back at me shyly.  
Now I can talk to you as I talked  
to a star when I was a boy,  
expecting no answer, as I talked  
to my father who had become  
the wind, particles of rain  
and fire, these few twigs  
and flowers that have no name.

\*

Last night they said a rosary  
and my boys went, awkward  
in slacks and sport shirts,  
and later sitting under the hidden  
stars they were attacked and beaten.  
You are dead, and a nameless rage  
is loose. It is 105,  
the young and the old burn  
in the fields, and though they cry  
*enough* the sun hangs on  
bloodying the dust above the aisles  
of cotton and grape.