The People from the Valley

—for Frank Waters
in affectionate and grateful memory

The farmers come, come
on down the Pecos Valley
in busted-bottom wagons

their children thin
blonde cornhusk hair
blowing

Sparrows watch dry ruts
for spilled kernels
the men, stiff, formal

black suits, white shirts,
the women searching for
other wagons, bright bonnets

Cottonwood leaves clash
green in Saturday’s wind
as the quiet children sit

aware they
will be watched by
town boys in their victor’s clothes
the dark eyes of townsmen

watching for any beauty
the land has missed, its
women, this land hungers

for women, and for farmers
who can write their own obituaries
in the lines of their hard hands.