Spring

—for my compadre Rudy Anaya

Who grew up on the Pecos too

All night he could hear the noise.
In the morning, the plains lay
like pages of sunlight, no wind.
He hurried past the village,
through the Breaks, saw the crest
come down, heaving, adobe earth,
carrying uprooted trees, parts
of wooden houses from upstream.

The Rio Pecos had gone crazy again.
Rio Loco, the old man had called it once.
Quicksand in the Summer, floods in the Spring,
dry as hell in Winter. Rio Loco.
Ought to build a dam, the old man said.
Stop that crazy river in its tracks.
Now he could see what Old Tom meant.
A heavy snake gutting the Valley.

A young girl in a pinafore, pale
silk hair spun by him, her arms out
stretched, blue eyes open, was gone
before his muscles could even tense,
whirled away, turning and turning
into the dark water and he knew
through his trembling that this
was the first Spring he had ever known
with some kind of truth and backed up
quickly as the River ate the land
from under his feet, passed him by.