**Blooms**

Cheryl Slover-Linett

I.

Hot pink petals cry *see me* on a single barrel cactus.

A year without rain sapped even hardy succulents

yet this delicate ball of spines and webbing asserts

its birthright. Spindly cholla won’t flash their fuchsia

till summer so for now we praise these rose profusions,

like *Perpetual Plum* on my lips for my first high school dance,

to match the shoes cast into a corner

before *Stairway to Heaven* ends.

Like the claret skin of my second twin

umbilical worn like a choker.

Like the bittersweet maroon of my final moon cycles,

small ochre smudges remnants of fecundity.

II.

Once, I drove east on I-40 from the Dinetah, embraced

by red rock, after a visit to my birthplace left me

tender. To be born on another’s motherland is a gift

I still don’t know how to receive—generous yet

without instruction. I pass Mount Taylor, Blue Bead, *Tsoodzil*,

southern sacred mountain, spiritual boundary

indifferent to treaties that state otherwise. As I crest

the hill toward Acoma Pueblo and Route 66 Casino,

the Sandias beckon, watermelon in half light, with the

Sangre de Cristo peaks crimson to the north.

*Conquistadores* claimed by naming—mountains, tribes,

flowers. These badlands claimed me with barely a whisper.