**Matrilineal Weaving**

Cheryl Slover-Linett

I slide my dead mother’s Navajo ring onto my finger

and watch my hands become hers, fifty years younger.

Her: holding a turquoise princess phone

as she cooks us Swanson’s best. Me:

at our white Formica table, cross-legged

in an aqua plastic chair. “Chippewa,”

my friend’s brother teases. I’m eight,

he’s ten and thinks I’m an Indian because

I was born on Indigenous soil. I’m not,

though secretly I dream of dwelling in the desert,

near my southwestern birthplace, leaving New England

cold. For my third-grade reenactment

of another’s customs, I choose the Navajo.

The fresh-inked pages of our Encyclopedia Britannica

depict how they shear sheep, turn fleece

into the signature woven rugs that hang

throughout our split-level home. My mother takes

my hands in hers, shows me how to card,

how to align the fibers. She and I spend evenings

spinning wool, coaxing it into form

so she can teach me to use her wooden loom,

which I bring to class with my weaving.

I’m wearing a fringed leather vest, my mother’s

squash blossom necklace, her silver concho belt.

I’ve brought my beaded doll with her crushed

blue velvet dress, her black hair pulled back in a braided bun.

I even borrowed my brother’s beloved headdress

from his Indian Guide powwow. I know how this sounds now,

but imagine this young couple—trusting that

“all my relations” included them, wanting to share

the blessings they received from generous Diné friends,

from the hands of the famed Gorman weavers

to my mother’s to my own.