Microwindmills

A few miles past Cameron and the bridge that takes you over the almost-always-empty Little Colorado, there’s a house that’s been under construction for as long as I’ve driven route 89 between here and the vermillion cliffs. The face of the house is full of features, like the cliffs toward which I drive. It’s hard not to notice two-story tall Navajos, painted flat, their photographic faces pressed into plywood. The man wears a cowboy hat, the woman, a bandana. I only think they’re Navajo because the house is being constructed on the reservation and their skin is as weathered as that plywood. Cynthia Yazzie, a student of mine, works at Kohl’s and writes lines of poems that do so much undoing and see so much unseeing that they suck the air out of the room. She hates the painted bodies on the forever-under-construction house. Because they lie, she says. There are no two-storied Navajos out on the reservation. No one would pose that tall. No one would paint that weather. There aren’t even any two-storied houses constructed on the reservation. On the top of the mostly mobile, one-story houses, empty tires line roofs. On mobile homes, the sheet metal roof skin is screwed in only on the perimeter, not across the top of the trusses. The tires prevent roof rumbling in the high winds. Sheet metal makes its own business, reminding the house dwellers exactly where they live which is helpful because out here, in this hundred and twenty miles of crumbling red cliffs, there are no trees to let you see the wind.