Out of Style

My partner took me to a museum for a Native fashion exhibit, though I don’t know much about clothing.

We took our time walking around, reading descriptions of each piece, and looking at artist bios.

There was plenty of beadwork, feathers, and different sorts of animal hide. Though some clothing included designs from pottery shards or baskets, they were modern and what I think is called high-fashion. Other pieces were more classic. Like the cinched waistlines and dart-work of 1950s dresses—the type I can imagine my grandmother wearing.

Sportswear and skateboards were also on display, made for and by urban Natives. I knew the last names of several of these designers, Yazzie and Begay, from years of living in Phoenix. My mind has forgotten it now, maybe out of shame, but I also recognized a Cherokee surname when I saw it. One my grandmother has mentioned in old stories, one I can’t connect to a face. This artist had made a scarf printed with the Cherokee alphabet, and I’m sure Sequoyah never expected
his lettering to be fashionable, but it feels appropriate that it’s worn around the throat.

I try to imagine myself taking the scarf from its clear display case to pull tight around my neck.