



Navajo Monument Valley playing field, where "the football field rises / to meet the mesa." Photograph by Skeet McAuley.

There is no thin man in a big hat
writing down all the names
in two columns: winners and losers. 10

This is the eternal football game,
Indians versus Indians. All the Skins
in the wooden bleachers fancydancing, 15

stomping red dust straight down
into nothing. Before the game is over,
the eighth-grade girls' track team

comes running, circling the field,
their thin and brown legs echoing 20
wild horses, wild horses, wild horses.

1992

Pawn Shop

I walk into the bar, after being gone for a while, and it's empty. The
Bartender tells me all the Indians are gone, do I know where they went?
I tell him I don't know, and I don't know, so he gives me a beer just for
being Indian, small favors, and I wonder where all the Skins disappeared
to, and after a while, I leave, searching the streets, searching storefronts, 5
until I walk into a pawn shop, find a single heart beating under glass, and
I know who it used to belong to, I know all of them.

1992

Sister Fire, Brother Smoke

Have I become an accomplished liar,
a man who believes in his inventions?
When I see my sister in every fire,

is it me who sets her in those pyres
and burns her repeatedly? Should I mention
I may have become an accomplished liar,

a man who was absent when his sister died,
but still feeds those flames in the present tense?
When I see my sister in every fire,

am I seeing the shadow that survived her
conflagration? Because of my obsession
have I become an accomplished liar,

who strikes a match, then creates a choir
of burning matches, with the intention
of seeing my sister in every fire?

Is she the whisper of ash floating high
above me? I offer these charred questions.
Have I become an accomplished liar
if I see my sister in every fire?

1996

From Tourists

3. Marilyn Monroe¹

drives herself to the reservation. Tired and cold,
she asks the Indian women for help.

Marilyn cannot explain what she needs
but the Indian women notice the needle tracks
on her arms and lead her to the sweat lodge
where every woman, young and old, disrobes
and leaves her clothes behind

when she enters the dark of the lodge.

Marilyn's prayers may or may not be answered here
but they are kept sacred by Indian women.

Cold water is splashed on hot rocks
and steam fills the lodge. There is no place like this.

At first, Marilyn is self-conscious, aware
of her body and face, the tremendous heat, her thirst,
and the brown bodies circled around her.

But the Indian women do not s
inside the lodge. The hot rocks
and the songs begin. Marilyn h
these songs before, but she soo
Marilyn is not Indian, Marilyn
but the Indian women sing abo
The Indian women sing for her
Finally, she is no more naked t

The Exaggeration

I open the door

(this Indian girl writes that her brother tri
with a belt just two weeks after her other

and this Indian man tells us that, back in
five priests took him into a back room and

and this homeless Indian woman begs for
her about her tribe, she says she's horny a

and this homeless Indian man is the uncle
who writes for a large metropolitan news
both

and this Indian child cries when he sits to
because he had never known his own fam

and this Indian woman was born to an In
who sold her for a six-pack and a carton of

and this Indian poet shivers beneath the f
and begs for enough quarters to buy penci

and this fancydancer passes out at the pov
and wakes up naked, with no memory of t
gone)

I open the door

(and this is my sister, who waits years for a
Service, receives it

and stores it with our cousins, who then t

though the feathers reappear in the regali
who is dancing for the very first time

1. American actress and sex symbol (1926–1962).