

Christopher Dier

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Rolling the Dice

Like Sherman Alexie, Stephen Graham Jones has broken from the oral tradition of communal storytelling and transfer of heritage to become an author whose books fill the shelves of commercial bookstores. Despite, what many would call an abandonment of ceremonial practice, neither author argues for, nor embodies, selling out. Alexie encourages books, writing, and storytelling as a means of recovery. Jones' response is more self-motivated. While admitting, "books saved my life," survival for Jones is dependent on being recognized as a complex human being, not bound by a single identity. His reasons for writing are diverse and varied, logical and nonsensical, practical and poetic. Jones understands that living is hard, it's a game that's "never stopped." He also recognizes that for Native Americans living is made even more difficult by the loss of "action figures," the loss of ancestral and nostalgic heroes connecting past to now. His argument then is that those lost heroes can still exist on the page. Writing isn't an assimilated loss but a necessary progress for cultural survival, for game play.