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HOME: NOVEMBER 9, 2001: BOOKS

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Fall Book Reviews

BY ANNA HANKS

Rolling the Bones

by Kyle Jarrard

Steerforth Press, 320 pp., \$24

Rolling the Bones is like one of those pokey rides at the original Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels. You drift along pleasantly until you realize that you're in one of those backwaters where you have to stand up, pick up your tube, and haul your sorry self over to the next part of the ride. *Rolling the Bones* is a lot of work and trouble for a fairly small payoff. It's the story of a couple of drifters, Carl and May, who meet a respectable married couple, Carl and Venus, in a small Texas town. Eventually most of the characters go to Mexico, and then some of them drift back to the U.S. Jarrard seems more concerned with writing "literature" than telling a story. He flagrantly violates the freshman writing class truism, "Show, don't tell." All of this ensures that none of the characters jump off the page, although you sometimes wish they would go ahead and jump off a bridge. Still, there's a good short story or novella hidden in these 320 pages. *Rolling the Bones* has a few good scenes and characters -- too bad they're at the end of the novel.

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