

## Atlanta Daily World Reviews

Drinking Coffee Elsewhere

By ZZ Packer

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Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by ZZ Packer is an ensemble of stories that chronicle snatches of time in unsuspecting characters' lives. Although the character-driven stories and colorful characters are unrelated, the type of characters and situations they find themselves in are the same throughout. Every story is a snatch of time, a life transition in the characters' lives. I felt as though ZZ recorded a string of life altering occurrences in the characters' lives.

The stories are Southern, imaginative...smooth, quiet stories that make their point. There is no fanfare, flash, or flamboyance, just simple storytelling. Simple people living an everyday life or growing up, trying to make it to class, through the day, through the train station, through monthly cramps etc. Drinking Coffee Elsewhere are simple snatches of hours, days, and sometimes months out of the blue-collar workers' life...that's the Elsewhere in Drinking Coffee Elsewhere.

Like freshly brewed coffee, ZZ Packer has a cup full of deep, rich stores that will warm you. We've got mischievous adolescents trying to make it through a chaperoned Brownie Troop camp out. A misunderstanding leaves these victims of puberty embarrassed and in hot trouble. Then there is the cross-eyed and unwillingly single Sister Clareese of the Greater Christ Emmanuel Pentecostal Church of the Fire Baptized Church. We find Sister Clareese suffering from monthly menstrual cramps and frustrated with the Church Council, the pastor, and Cleophus, the unsaved, one-legged, patient at the hospital where she is a nurse. One of my favorites is Lynnea who is just shy of poverty "Lynnea always paid her rent late and hadn't paid last month's at all. She slurped black bean soup straight from the can, used newsprint for toilet paper..." , so she makes a career transition that changes her life and just about makes her loose her mind. Then there is Dina in the story for which the book is named after. "...My name is Dina, and if I had to be any object, I guess I'd be a revolver." That these characters are unconventional, non-conforming, and eratic had me ecstatic and eager to see what in the world they would do next. Never a dull