



On Blondes

Joanna Pitman

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Number of natural blondes in America: 1 in 20. Number of American females who dye their hair blonde: 1 in 3.

Blondenness became a prejudice in the Dark Ages, an obsession in the Renaissance, a mystique in Elizabethan England, a mythical fear in the nineteenth century, an ideology in the 1930s, a sexual invitation in the 1950s, and a doctrine of faith by the end of the twentieth century. With its powerful imagery of wealth, light, youth, and vitality, built up over thousands of years, it has woven itself into the most popular materials of the imagination. In art and literature, in history and popular culture, blonde has never been a mere color. For two and a half thousand years, it has been a blazing signal in code, signifying beauty, power, and status.

From Greek prostitutes mimicking the golden haired Aphrodite, to the Californian beach babe; from pigeon dung and saffron dyes to L'Oreal-because you're worth it-Joanna Pitman unveils the lengths to which women will go to become blonde. We watch while the blonde as erotic symbol, saintly virgin, or racial elite waxes and wanes throughout the ages, but never disappears. Why is it that blondes rose to prominence in Hollywood and in Nazi Germany at the same time? Why do young Japanese women today want to be blonde?

By looking at the world through the eyes of famous and infamous blondes and their admirers, we are drawn into an intriguing portrait of society. Weaving a story rich in drama, mystery, triumph, deception, disaster and curiosity, Joanna Pitman effortlessly combines the wealth of her knowledge with a sharp and clear-sighted view of the power of the blonde throughout the ages.

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