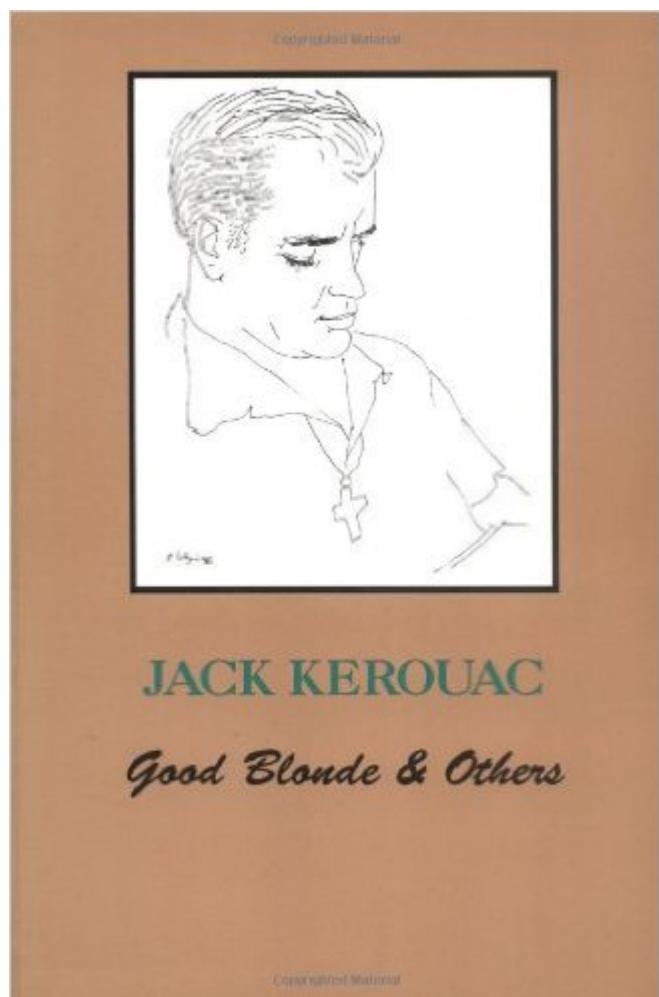


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Good Blonde & Others



Synopsis

In these uncollected writings Jack Kerouac portrays himself in his life. He hitches a ride to San Francisco with a blonde, goes on the road with photographer Robert Frank, rides bus through the Northwest and Montana, records the blues of an old Negro hobo, talks about the Beats and how it all began, gives his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" and defends his novel *The Subterraneans*, compares Shakespeare and James Joyce, describes the cafeterias and subways of Manhattan, goes to a ballgame and a prize fight, and reflects on Christmas in New England, on Murnau's *Nosferatu*, on jazz & bop, and tells us what he's thinking about.

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Customer Reviews

In college, I was nuts about Jackie K., which was what my friends and I called Jack Kerouac. I liked "The Dharma Bums," "Lonesome Traveler," and "Satori in Paris," but I loved, loved, loved "On the Road" despite suspecting that few readers who weren't twenty years old and male would enjoy the book or even make much sense of it. I later read "Dr. Sax" and "The Subterraneans" and got nothing from them. I suspected that Kerouac might have had no idea how to write a novel that wasn't a lightly fictionalized memoir. Heretical though I feel in saying so, I enjoyed Kerouac more in

spite of his "spontaneous prose" than because of it. "Good Blonde and Others" was my first taste of Kerouac in decades. It has many good moments, particularly the title essay, but the spontaneous prose is more an ordeal than ever. I find it telling that, when Kerouac wants to explain something rather than merely record impressions, he eases away from it. I found myself skimming as much as reading. It's ironic that what was once avant-garde is now more or less the style of the average internet comment. In the "Last Word" column, "One," Kerouac explains the obsolescence of conventional English. As an example, he criticizes a sentence he presents as typical, "Snow was on the ground, and it was difficult for the car to climb the hill." This is okay as speech but weak as prose. It's too wordy and imprecise and also needlessly passive, besides which drivers, not cars, experience difficulties. "Snow covered the street, and driving up the hill was hard" would be better. "The snow made getting up the hill tricky" would too, and so would dozens more variations of the statement. Kerouac's example of a commonplace English sentence says more about his writing than I wanted to know.

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