



Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov's Little Girl All Over Again

Graham Vickers

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In the summer of 1958, a twelve-year-old girl took the world by storm—*Lolita* was published in the United States. This child, so fresh and alive, yet so pitiable in her abuse at the hands of the novel's narrator, engendered outrage and sympathy alike, and has continued to do so ever since.

Yet Lolita's image in the broader public consciousness has changed. No longer a little girl, Lolita has come to signify a precocious temptress, a cunning underage vixen who'll stop at nothing to get her man. How could this have happened?

Chasing Lolita, published on the fiftieth anniversary of *Lolita's* American publication, is an essential contemporary companion to Vladimir Nabokov's great novel. It establishes who Lolita really was back in 1958, explores her predecessors of all stripes, and examines the multitude of movies, theatrical shows, literary spin-offs, artifacts, fashion, art, photography, and tabloid excesses that have distorted her identity and stolen her name. It considers not just the "Lolita effect" but shifting attitudes toward the always volatile mix of sex, children, and popular entertainment—from Victorian times to the present. And it also looks at some real-life cases of young girls who became the innocent victims of someone else's obsession—unhappy sisters to one of the most affecting heroines in American fiction, and one of the most widely misunderstood.

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