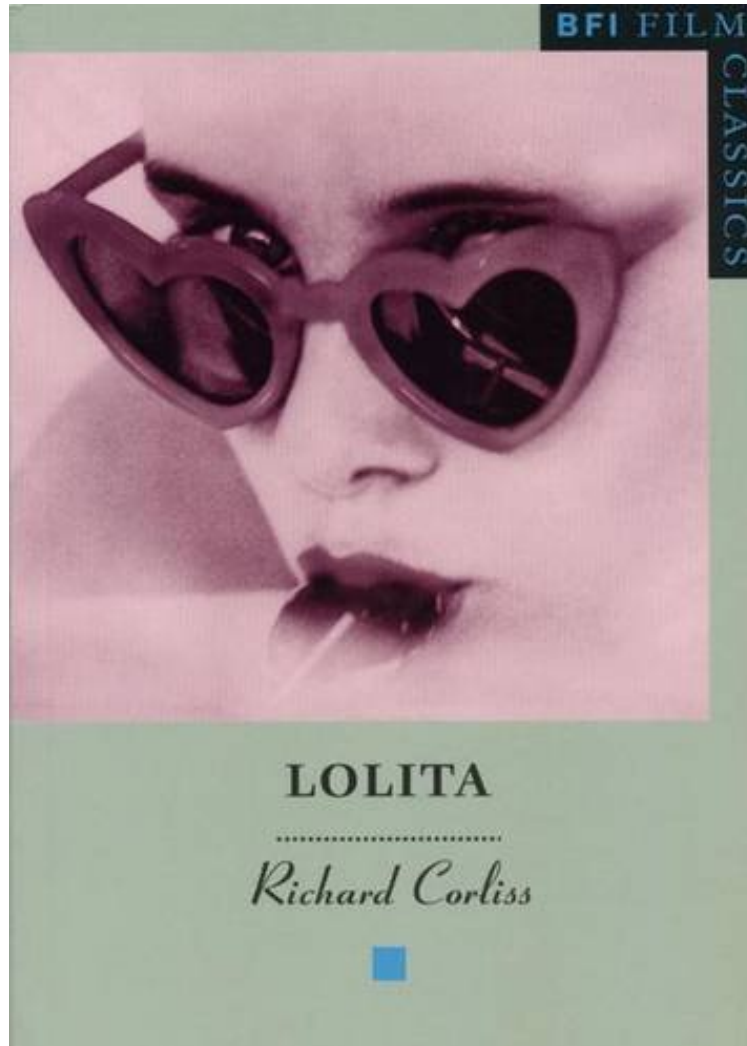


(Free) Lolita (BFI Film Classics)

Lolita (BFI Film Classics)

Richard Corliss

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Richard Corliss : Lolita (BFI Film Classics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lolita (BFI Film Classics):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good analysis of a controversial movie By joedud It was a good job of discussing key issues in the film. I enjoy almost all of the BFI little books. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "Lolita, from book to film, was a wet dream that got dry-cleaned into a daydream." By S. Michael Wilson Perhaps my favorite entry into the BFI Film Classics series, Richard Corliss' book on the Stanley Kubrick film adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's novel Lolita is an unflinching examination of two great artists from different forms of artistic expression. Corliss, former Tim magazine editor and film critic, displays a passion and knowledge for Kubrick and Nabokov that allows him to compare and contrast both them and their works in unflinching detail, warts

and all. The beginning of this reportedly truncated version of Corliss' original piece starts with the 99 line poem *Pale Film*, which is then referenced line by line throughout the book, with lines and phrases standing in for subject headings. This is in direct homage to the 999 line poem *Pale Fire* from Nabokov's novel of the same name, in which the deceased poet's work is deconstructed with dubious expertise by his neighbor. This sort of layered homage to Nabokov's work is just the first hint that the author is a student of literature as well as film. Corliss makes no excuses for any shortcomings that Kubrick's *Lolita* might suffer in adapting the novel, and instead looks at how the censorship of the time delayed the printing of Nabokov's novel in certain states, and partially influenced the tone and content of Kubrick's retelling, from the screenplay through casting and direction. Historical and biographical influences are weighed as much as the craft of both novelist and filmmaker, fully informing a nearly flawless critical analysis that will impress readers regardless of whether their sympathies lie with the author or auteur. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Corliss tackles the big boys, Nabokov + Kubrick. The winner? By darragh o'donoghue Stanley Kubrick's 1962 *Lolita* is unusual among the 360 films chosen by the British Film Institute as Classics in that it is not really a 'classic' at all, if we mean by that term a flawless work of art that transcends its time and culture, and is open to new readings from succeeding generations. *Lolita* is considered an entertaining compromise, a film that cannot be called a true interpretation of Nabokov's notorious novel about a middle-aged Professor's rapturous lust for a prepubescent girl, because of censorship restrictions and the impossibility of capturing the book's essence on screen, it's narrative voice. Richard Corliss doesn't try to counter critical consensus, concluding, after listing all the ways it fudges Nabokov, that *Lolita* is 'a very good film', damning faint praise for a director usually spoken of in reverent superlatives. Corliss argues that *Lolita* came too early for a still-young Kubrick who, a couple of years later in an increasingly liberal decade, might have made a freer, truer adaptation. Nevertheless, he sees *Lolita* as crucial in Kubrick's development, a signpost towards an aesthetic integrity away from the compromises of his last film, *Spartacus*. Corliss' monograph is a highly enjoyable study that gives equal prominence to Nabokov as Kubrick. Indeed, it is structured in imitation of Nabokov's other famous masterpiece, *Pale Fire*, with a poem '*Pale Film*' and commentary. There's no overall thesis beyond the one outlined above, just a fascinating patchwork of insights concerning Nabokov (his life; *Lolita* and his other work; his ambiguous, often contradictory response to cinema in general and Kubrick's film in particular; his unfilmable screenplay); Kubrick (his biography, poised before becoming the 'Stanley Kubrick' of legend; his themes; *Lolita*'s position in his oeuvre); the close connections between two seemingly disparate artists - their megalomaniacal conception of their art; their fondness for hermetic works about mad criminals. Corliss' insights in detail are more persuasive than his general interpretations. Part of the problem is his critical conservatism - despite his protestations to the contrary, he reads Nabokov's book like a 19th century, character-driven, thematically coherent, realistic novel (when, on a textual level, it is the uncorroborated confession of a sick paedophile and murderer, and, on an ontological level, the masterpiece of a notoriously leg-pulling formalist); he reads Kubrick with little reference to cinematic form. This is fatal in the cases of two artists famous for retaining the pleasures of narrative while ludically (sic?) upending them. This failure results in an undervaluing of Kubrick's film, which may be Nabokov-lite, but is full of its own tricks. Corliss, unlike most critics, notices the disparity between the two framing Castle Quilty scenes (where Humbert comes to kill his nemesis), but doesn't seem to think this radically alters our appreciation of the film (I think it does, and is an exciting pointer to Kubrick's masterpiece, *The Shining*). In any case, Corliss' study is one of the better BFI Classics' books, written in the style of diluted David Thomson (whom he thanks in the Acknowledgements), with some neat character sketches of the cast, and a gallant, long overdue defence of Sue Lyon. And, mercifully, NO tedious personal reminiscences about the author's first visit to the local fleapit where nice Mr. Winthorpe bought him an ice cream.

Stanley Kubrick's version of Vladimir Nabokov's novel was one of the most controversial films of the 1960s. This analysis is written by Richard Corliss, editor of *Film Comment*. It features a brief production history and a detailed filmography.

.com There are probably a dozen film critics as good as Richard Corliss (of *Time* and *Film Comment* fame), but none can match his verbal inventiveness--he's clever to the point of the preternatural. Others might have ably summed up Stanley Kubrick's film of Vladimir Nabokov's "nymphette" novel *Lolita* in under 100 pages, as Corliss briskly does in this British Film Institute book. (In fact, a true film buff really should consider buying the entire BFI Film Classics series--they're great little picture-filled books about amazing movies, for about the cost of a movie ticket.) No one but Corliss, however, would have dared to write his essay on 1962's *Lolita* in the form of a pastiche of Nabokov's 1962 novel *Pale Fire*, which consists of a poem followed by a mad scholar's commentary on it. Corliss gives us a lively, learned, but quite sane gloss on his own poem "*Pale Film*," a funny but serious mediation about *Lolita*'s perilous leap from literature to Hollywood, "a pasture full / Of pretty creatures, barnyard words, and bull." Corliss's style seems influenced by Nabokov's poem that begins, "What is translation? On a plate / The poet's pale and glaring head." Here is Corliss on the novelist's translation to screen: "Here lies Nabokov: teacher, critics' pet, / Daft lepidopterist (nut with a net).... And here flies V.N.'s work through movieland: / A butterfly in the projector beam. / It floats, then flits away,

as in a dream / Of monarchs who find freedom in a cage / With horizontal bars--lines on a page." It's remarkable how much gets packed into this tight package: a quick sketch of 1962 society and the state of the film biz; micro-bios of writer and director (both Nabokov and Kubrick started out playing chess for money); notions on Nabokov's own unfilmed *Lolita: A Screenplay*; spotlit insights into specific scenes (including the film's eight kisses and Peter Sellers's four big improvisation skits); sharp insiders' quotes; and dazzling critiques of acting craft. Shelley Winters (whom Kubrick almost fired mid-picture) "dances around ... like an elephant cow in heat... [she] virtually cha-chas as she sits.... [S]he uses the cigarette holder as a Balinese dancer would her cymbals." Imagine how good Corliss is on the still greater work of James Mason. Corliss even has thoughts about Adrian Lyne's 1996 remake (silky, slyly read by its star Jeremy Irons on the audiocassette *Lolita*). Though it was not yet made when Corliss wrote in 1994, he did write, "[Lyne] and *Lolita* seemed a match made in New Hollywood heaven." --Tim Appelo