



## *Lolita*

(with others)

This PDF is one of a series designed to assist scholars in their research on Isaiah Berlin, and the subjects in which he was interested.

The series will make digitally available both selected published essays and edited transcripts of unpublished material.

The PDF is posted by the Isaiah Berlin Legacy Fellow at Wolfson College, with the support of the Trustees of the Isaiah Berlin Literary Trust.

All enquiries, including those concerning rights, should be directed to the Legacy Fellow at [berlin@wolfson.ox.ac.uk](mailto:berlin@wolfson.ox.ac.uk)

*Lolita*

(with others)

Letter to the editor, *The Times*, 23 January 1959, 11e



*Sue Lyon and James Mason in the 1962 film*

TO THE EDITOR OF *THE TIMES*

23 January 1959

SIR, – We are disturbed by the suggestion that it may yet prove impossible to have an English edition of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Our opinions of the merit of the work differ widely, but we think it would be deplorable if a book of considerable literary interest, which has been favourably received by distinguished critics and widely praised in serious and respectable periodicals were to be denied an appearance in this country.

Prosecutions of genuine works of literature bring governments into disrepute and do nothing to encourage public morality. When today we read the proceedings against *Madame Bovary* or *Ulysses* – works genuinely found shocking by many of their contemporaries

LOLITA

– it is Flaubert and Joyce whom we admire, not the Public Prosecutors of the time. Let good sense spare us another such case.

Yours, &c.,

J. R. ACKERLEY; WALTER ALLEN; A. ALVAREZ;  
ISAIAH BERLIN; C. M. BOWRA; STORM JAMESON;  
FRANK KERMODE; ALLEN LANE; MARGARET  
LANE; ROSAMUND LEHMANN; COMPTON  
MACKENZIE; IRIS MURDOCH; WILLIAM PLOMER;  
V. S. PRITCHETT; ALAN PRYCE-JONES; PETER  
QUENNELL; HERBERT READ; STEPHEN SPENDER;  
PHILIP TOYNBEE; BERNARD WALL; ANGUS WILSON

© *the signatories* 1959

**Posted in Isaiah Berlin Online 13 March 2022**