ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Basic written presentation

1. Adhere to the **basic requirements** for written assessment (see Study Guide p.6)

2. Use the **headings** outlined in your Study Guide pp.9-10

3. Do **not** use capital letters for **terms/concepts**

4. Adhere to the **word count** for the task set

5. Watch grammar, spelling, word choice, clarity of expression, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph structure (use the **SmartThinking** Service for this)

6. Your textbook *Film Art* and any films mentioned in your essay should be **referenced correctly** at the end of your paper in a List of References

Strength of analysis

7. Could use more **terms** appropriate to screen analysis (see *Film Art*)

8. Do **not** offer a definition of terms from *Film Art*, rather offer an **analysis using** those terms

9. Less retelling of the film’s plot (do not simply describe what happens in the film but rather **analyse** the **specific film style techniques** employed and the narrative affect)

10. More specific and detailed analysis needed regarding the **meaning** created through the various elements of film style

11. Do **not** make vague/unqualified statements but rather be specific and offer **examples to illustrate** your point
INTRODUCTION TO SCREEN ANALYSIS

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RUN LOLA, RUN

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

FILM STYLE ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

The following essay aims to articulate how technical elements of film form use specific stylistic choices to create meaning in a film. Tom Tykwer’s film *Run Lola, Run (1999)* is an artistic effort, true to the ‘What If?’ genre that essentially manipulates the boundaries of time. Because of the complexity of the narrative, it thoroughly exemplifies how meaning can be created through the four technical codes of mise en scene, cinematography, editing and sound. The subsequent chosen sequence from *Run Lola, Run* is essentially the films inception as it consists of a phone conversation that unfolds the plot. It is a model piece of study as it illustrates the conventions of the ‘What If?’ genre and captures the influence of the four technical codes. The following discusses genre and the four technical codes of film style to accurately display how these elements combine to create an overall narrative effect that supports the genre conventions and expectations.

GENRE AND SEQUENCE:

*Run Lola, Run* is a difficult film to define in terms of genre, as it crosses many through its plot (romance, action, thriller). However, the one genre that acts as a through-line to plot is the ‘What If?’ genre. The primary convention of this genre is related to cause-effect. Films begin by establishing a situation and endeavour to explore the different outcomes it creates when small factors are altered through different causal routes. Manifestations of the ‘What If?’ genre can be exemplified in films such as *Groundhog Day (1993)* and *Sliding Doors (1998)*, where in each film, the protagonist’s life forks into different paths. Within ‘What If?’ films, stylistic techniques such as flashbacks, flash-forwards and repetitions are often used to support the complexity of a multiform narrative. Because of the conventions of such films, stylistically, audiences will expect and accept the use of such continuity manipulation through temporal editing.
So how does *Run Lola, Run* find its place within such a genre? The narrative fueling *Run Lola, Run* offers three alternate plots, each comprising the same story, told in contrasting ways.

The subtext explores the Chaos Theory, where every choice, however small, can lead to completely different endings. This idea supports the cause-effect convention of films following the ‘What If?’ genre. Stylistically, the heavy use of discontinuity editing through both temporal and spatial manipulations meet the audiences expectations of the nonlinear timeline. The specific sequence being analysed (4min:30sec - 11min:30sec) acts as the film’s enigma and establishment. Viewers are thrust into the action and learning about the characters simultaneously - another convention untrue to traditional Hollywood cinema. The combination of complex elements of mise en scene and cinematography make it an excellent exemplification of the film’s narrative intent through the conventions of genre and its particular style. Similarly, its intricate editing choices (animation, jump cuts, flash-forwards) reflect such conventions of the highly stylised ‘What If?’ genre, further defining its place here. It is these reasons that make this sequence an interesting and detailed piece of study.

**MISE EN SCENE:**

The complexity of editing in this opening sequence creates numerous representations of how meaning is created through mise en scene. For the purpose of this analysis, focus will be placed on specific examples of setting, prop and costume, lighting and performance that best contribute to the films meaning.

In terms of setting, for the most part, the sequence uses actual locales. The only break in this ‘realism’ occurs when animation is used as Lola begins her first run.
Both literally and metaphorically, this interjection of animation is the viewer’s and Lola’s introduction to an artificial world. It sets up expectations that the ensuing action may or may not be ‘real’.

A distinctive prop used in this sequence is the ‘flying’ red telephone. Also acting as a motif through the film, the telephone creates a sense of urgency that resounds through the film’s entirety. Combined with the use of slow motion editing as the receiver flies into the air and slowly begins its decline to the phone itself, suspense is achieved as Lola, and viewers, realise how little time she has to complete her mission. Adding to the rhythmically pumping pace that the underlying soundtrack creates, is the stylistic choices for Lola’s costuming. Her cut off singlet, jeans, fiery red hair and little make up illustrates to viewers a strong, rebellious and in terms of culture, idiosyncratic character, breaking traditional cultural expectations.

On the flip side of Lola’s personality is her honesty. The use of frontal lighting through this first sequence removes any potential shadows on Lola’s face. The effect of such lighting eliminates any suspicions viewers could form about her integrity.

Acting style helps further define Lola’s character attributes. Lola’s performance is quite stylised and psychologically motivated. In this sequence, Lola screams so intensely glasses break. As a motif repeated through the film, this stylised form of acting aids to create a less realistic world, suggesting there must be more to the film’s genre than a basic romance, or action.
CINEMATOGRAPHY:

Fast pace, intensity of dialogue and character psychology are conventions flagged through mise en scene and are further highlighted through photographic elements of cinematography, particularly contrast, fast shots, close ups and mixed camera angles.

Lola’s face and body is highly contrasted, as opposed to the dull, under contrasted appearance of the surrounding room and on a broader scale, the German background. The variance in contrast guides viewers to the important areas within the frame and the films overall meaning, which is in fact not concerned with the events taking place in Lola’s world, but her experience within it as a result. This effect combines with the mise en scene element of lighting to have greater influence.

There are many elements of cinematography that manipulate the spatial and temporal aspects of Lola and her mission to rescue Manni. The scene uses fast paced shots back and forth between Lola and Manni to coincide with the rising intensity of their conversation. Working alongside the photographic effects of contrast is the use of close ups in this sequence. Because of the film’s rapidity, the purpose of this choice is to show viewers what is important, nothing else. Likewise, the chopping and changing of camera angles, particularly when filming the two lovers faces, enhance this pace.

It is also interesting to notice the sped up motion used in both Lola and Manni’s flashbacks, most likely achieved through ramping in digital post production. This creates a bumpy, disjointed effect and combines mise en scene, cinematography and editing to indicate to viewers that these are past events that have significant influence on the ensuing action. This technique is one that reoccurs through the films entirely and essentially carries conventions of genre.
EDITING:

The particular editing choices in Run Lola, Run contribute greatly to the viewers experience of the film. These choices include crosscuts, flashbacks, rhythm, jump cuts and the non-diegetic insert and will be discussed in detail to demonstrate how film style supports conventions of genre.

Crosscutting is used effectively in this opening sequence as shots cut between Lola and Manni’s faces as they converse. Although this technique of spatial editing creates some minor spatial discontinuity, temporally, it is simultaneous and further accelerates the pace of the sequence. This temporal continuity however, is not constant.

Flashbacks are used twice to describe the inferred events of Lola and Manni’s mornings. Although this momentarily causes temporal discontinuity, the synchronisation through Lola and Manni’s conversation helps sustain the real narrative development.

The rhythmic relations between Lola and Manni’s conversation builds to very short cuts between figures, accelerating the pace gradually. This technique uses length of shot and soundtrack rhythm to highlight conversation intensity. Viewers aren’t allowed much time to reflect on what is shown, building interest and curiosity.

The following shots and culmination of this sequence violate conventions of spatial, graphic and temporal continuity by use of the jump cut and non-diegetic insert. Lola realises the fleeting time she has to find 100 000 marks and hurls the telephone receiver through the air, before beginning to brainstorm ideas. The jump cut is used repeatedly here, showing Lola rubbing her head as she racks her brain for solutions. There are two or three shots of Lola shown in sequence where the camera angle has not changed.
This somewhat sporadic technique, although rather disorienting to the spectator, corresponds with Lola’s mind, jumping through ideas. In mainstream Hollywood cinema this technique is rarely used as it makes the audience aware of the transition. Evidently the discontinuity here is a stylistic technique used to break away from this genre. To follow, a non-diegetic insert of an animated man appears on the screen. He says “Rien ne va plus” (no more bets) and figuratively corresponds with the Croupier at the Casino later in the film.

Tykwer combines a metaphorical image, not part of the diegetic landscape, with Lola’s action. Narrative continuity is interrupted and viewers are motivated to search for the implicit meaning within the image. The non-diegetic sound of the animated man’s speech further enhances this, demonstrating how technical elements work together to create the overall narrative effect.

**SOUND:**

The technique of sound within film is a powerful element of film style. As Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein theorised, it opens the possibility of a “synchronisation of the senses”. This synchronisation is of particular importance within *Run Lola, Run*.

An important device throughout this sequence is the fundamental music score. The constant rhythm sustains a turbulent, ‘techno’ beat, serving as the driving force behind the action. The sequence develops as Lola and Manni’s phone conversation begins and music subordinates. Here although the importance of dialogue overshadows music, the track still maintains its rhythm, upholding consistency to generate urgency. Often during this conversation, Manni or Lola’s voice is heard off-screen leaving viewers to observe the other’s facial expressions This functions as a diegetic sound bridge, shaping the viewers response to the authenticity of character emotion.
The flashbacks within the phone conversation use non-simultaneous sound as Lola and Manni recount their mornings. They are consistent with speech continuing in the present. This temporal technique, although temporarily interrupting plot, serves to continue story narration. During these flashbacks, dialogue pauses, volume of the music score increases. The purpose of this manipulation of volume is to maintain rhythm and uphold tension.

This first half of the sequence is moderately dense regarding music, speech and noise. Sound is modulated, blending smoothly throughout. This consistent approach to sound mixing creates a contrast for ensuing action, beginning when Lola screams and the soundtrack becomes silent, breaking the rhythmic pattern. As dialogue picks up, music does not and a higher importance is placed on intensity of dialogue and images. Suddenly this sparse mix is interrupted by a loud, sharp beeping - its source soon revealed to be the phone card. The former acoustic stream is abruptly contrasted suggesting an ensuing criticality and possible danger for the protagonist. The rhythmic music recommences and a diegetic clock ticking further accentuates the pressing criticality of time.

The following shots show Lola searching her mind. Non-diegetic images of individuals that can help her appear and the internal diegetic sound of Lola’s mind is heard subjectively. In a roundabout way, sound and image here are synchronous as Lola’s internal musings of names match the figures shown. Sound is entering into an active relation with image track by clarifying images. This unconventional use of a ‘sound over’ conforms to conventions of genre as viewers hear the thoughts that will eventually lead Lola to her destiny.
CONCLUSION

It is clear that the ‘What If?’ genre sets itself apart from traditional Hollywood film by specific stylistic conventions. The four technical elements of mise en scene, cinematography, editing and sound have worked together through Run Lola, Run to create this particular style of filmmaking. Tykwer’s characteristic use of flashback/forward editing, rhythmic soundtrack, close ups and short cuts and costume choices emphasise the overall kinetic style, key to ‘What If?’ genres.

Furthermore, these salient techniques create a sense of narrative progression that guides viewers through what could potentially be a rather ambiguous story. This essay demonstrates how Tom Tykwer’s stylistic choices through ‘Run Lola, Run’ combine the four technical elements of filmmaking to harness conventions of an intricate genre to shape a fast-paced yet succinctly formed film.
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