

TCOM 460

---

Run Lola Run (1999)  
Extra

Submitted By:

Michael Siebenaler

October 28, 2003

---

Time means a lot in the narrative of Run Lola Run. Time in the film universe of this film has a lot of creative avenues that astound the viewer, but the narrative and character dialogue still provide enough information so the audience can understand what's going on.

In the beginning, the film uses a rhetorical mode of narrative which directly addresses the viewer as the director, Tom Tykwer, weaves through a crowd of people who provide hints of the movie's theme with their dialogue, ultimately ending with the man who kicks the soccer ball incredibly high up in the air to begin the movie. The film continues to go back and forth between the rhetorical mode of narrative and the next shown mode, Hollywood narrative. The audience sees a realistic situation where Lola, played by Franke Potente, must accumulate 100,000 marks in 20 minutes to save her boyfriend Manni, played by Moritz Bleibtreu, from apparent crime boss retribution because he lost the same amount of money on a train. This technique sets up a specific diegetic time for the audience to reference easily because the same amount of time is repeated three times. In a future sequence, Tykwer wisely incorporates camera shots of a clock to remind the audience what they're watching exists in a specific time construct which increases the drama and tension because Lola has little room for error. He moves from a vertical split screen of Manni getting ready to rob a bank and Lola on the right running to stop him in time, then pushing a horizontal bar at the bottom to show the clock.

Each of the smaller three narratives gradually develop the entire narrative concentrating on elements in Lola's life (her father, her boyfriend Manni). The audience sees intense, disparate discussions with her father. In the first section, Lola thinks of who she can ask for the money. The audience sees images of people she knows and hears Lola say their names, but Lola herself doesn't say anything on screen as the camera continues to circle her around her 360 degrees. This voice over technique cues the audience into the narrative because they're hearing Lola's actual thoughts even though she's not saying anything on screen. When she makes her final decision to ask father, the audience sees her father look directly at the camera and shakes his head – another example of rhetorical narrative use in the film. The audience knows that Lola won't be successful in extracting money from her father, but since his first response is directed towards the audience, it's assumed that Lola is entering a situation that will not end in her favor. This important technique establishes important audience involvement in the story. The audience receives a base of information about the father's characteristics instead of solely relying on the beginning scene between him and his mistress.

The audience also sees quieter, in-depth discussions between Manni and Lola in bed in flashbacks layered in red tinted cinematography. These discussions increase the running time of the entire narrative so filmmakers have time to guide the audience through the three 20 minute sections.

Filmmakers also use action in the overall narrative within the three 20 minute sections to show how Lola's actions can have consequences in the real world, gradually progressing from

tragically realistic to fateful (and lucky) to willful. For example, in the first section, Lola is shot by police who have her surrounded in the street after she and Manni robbed a store. In the second section, Lola decides to rob her father's bank and again, encounters surrounding police officers when she exits the bank, except this time the police don't believe she's the robber and she walks away from the scene. In the third section, Lola wins the money in a casino and strongly wills the roulette wheel to land on her number (20 of course) cumulating in a shrieking scream on the last roll.

The animated narrative, representing self-reflexivity, shows Lola's first obstacle, a man and his dog standing by the stairs, which constructs Lola's first major obstacle as she tries to complete her task. This technique also represents an experience and gives the audience insight into what Lola must be thinking at this moment – she's just been thrown into a surreal reality. The narrative builds around repetition of certain narratives like this one where the audience expects this element to appear each time, but the narrative continues to change the interactions between the main characters and other supplementary characters in the environment ultimately shaping the ideal “happy ending” for Lola and Manni.

A great example of denotation narratives are the “And then” flash forwards that also orient the audience to the characters Lola mainly encounters during her 20 minute quest. Not only do these narratives tell us what happened to these characters after Lola or Manni encounters him or her, but they create more narratives within the story that goes along with Lola finding out what she wants in life and trying to control what's happening to her amid a real world full of reality, luck

and fate. The dialogue from the bank guard sums it up well – “You can’t have everything. I understood the personal plight of trying to raise 100,000 within twenty minutes, but Manni’s occupation gets surprisingly overlooked in this film. We can all relate to the narrative theme of “getting life right”, but why should I care about someone who’s engaging in what looks to be criminal activity.