

Lola Montès (1955) Max Ophüls (1902-1957)

OVERVIEW

Auteur: Maximilian Oppenheimer, known as Max Ophüls, was a German-born film director. He was born in Saarbrücken, the son of Leopold Oppenheimer, a Jewish textile manufacturer, and his wife Helene Oppenheimer (née Bamberger). He took the pseudonym Ophüls during the early part of his theatrical career so that, should he fail, it wouldn't embarrass his father. Initially envisioning an acting career, he started as a stage actor in 1919. He became creative director of the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1926. He turned to film production in 1929. He worked in Germany (1931–1933), France (1933–1940 and 1950–1957), and the United States (1947–1950). He made nearly 30 films, with the most notable ones being: *La Ronde* (1950), *Le Plaisir* (1952), *The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953), and *Lola Montès* (1955). Ophüls died from rheumatic heart disease on 26 March 1957 in Hamburg, while shooting interiors on *The Lovers of Montparnasse*, and was buried in Paris. The annual film festival Max Ophüls Preis in Saarbrücken is named after him.

Film: *Lola Montès* is a 1955 historical romance film. It is the last completed film of Max Ophüls. Adapted from Cécil Saint-Laurent's novel *La vie extraordinaire de Lola Montès*, the film chronicles the life of Irish dancer and courtesan Lola Montez (1821–1861). It stars Martine Carol, Peter Ustinov, and Anton Walbrook. The screenplay is by Max Ophüls, Annette Wademant, and Jacques Natanson. The cinematography is by Christian Matras. The music is by Georges Auric. The story focuses on *Lola Montès'* most infamous relationships, including her affairs with Franz Liszt and King Ludwig I of Bavaria. A co-production between France and West Germany, the film features dialogue primarily in French and German, with some sequences in English.

Historical background: *Lola Montès* is based on the life of Lola Montez who was an Irish dancer and actress who gained fame as a dancer, courtesan, and the mistress of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who granted her the title of Gräfin von Landsfeld (Countess of Landsfeld). Amid the Revolutions of 1848 in the German states, she was forced to flee and traveled through Austria, Switzerland, France, and London before making her way to the United States, where she resumed her career as an entertainer and lecturer. *Lola Montès* was the final film directed by Max Ophüls, who passed away from a heart attack in March 1957. In its original 1955 release in France, the film presented the events of Lola Montès' life through flashbacks. This narrative technique was criticized upon its release, contributing to the film's poor box-office performance. Despite this, it had a significant artistic impact on the French New Wave movement and continues to be highly regarded by many critics.

CHARACTERS

Lola Montès: A famous dancer reduced to appearing in a circus after her scandalous past

Ringmaster: The person who offers a contract to Lola with his circus

Ludwig I of Bavaria: King of Bavaria who has an affair with Lola and makes her his mistress

Maurice: Lola's coachman

Mrs. Craigie: Lola's mother, a neglectful and distant parent, has an affair with Lieutenant James

Josephine: Lola's maid

Bavarian student: A young man who guides Lola to Munich and later asks her to become his wife

Lieutenant Thomas James: Lover of Lola's mother, later becomes Lola's first husband

The elderly baron's private secretary: The secretary of the Baron

Franz Liszt: A famous musician, one of Lola's lovers

Ferdinand von Freiberg: A soldier from King Ludwig's regimen, approaches Lola in the street

Lieutenant James' sister: Sister of Lieutenant James who tries to stop Lola from leaving him

Lola's doctor: Doctor who has concerns about Lola's weak heart
Young ship steward: A young man who accompanies Lola on the ship
Circus manager: The manager of the circus who also performs as a clown
Painter: An old painter who paints Lola's portraits by the commission of King Ludwig

SYNOPSIS

In the 1850s, Lola Montès, a former royal mistress, is presented as the "attraction of the century" at a New Orleans circus. The ringmaster introduces her as the "most interesting predator" of the circus, drawing attention to her exotic appearance. Audience members ask her personal questions, with the proceeds going to a home for "fallen women." The ringmaster humorously answers the questions about Lola's waist size and past affairs, leading to a parade of her lovers represented by circus performers. This prompts Lola to reflect on her past, especially her affair with composer Franz Liszt.

In a flashback, Lola and Liszt travel to Rome, where Liszt writes a farewell note and a short piece of music for her before trying to leave. However, Lola catches him, and they share one night before parting ways. Afterward, the scene shifts to Lola's childhood, where she and her mother return to Europe after the death of Lola's father. Lola escapes an arranged marriage to an old baron and marries her mother's lover Lieutenant James, only to flee years later from his abusive, alcoholic behavior. She begins her career as a dancer, moving through various cities and experiences multiple encounters with men, including being kidnapped by a Russian suitor.

Throughout her life, Lola's health is a concern, with a doctor concerned about the toll her dangerous performances take on her heart. As the ringmaster lists her famous lovers, including Richard Wagner, Chopin, and Ludwig I of Bavaria, Lola recounts how she became involved with the Bavarian king, eventually becoming his mistress and influencing his politics. However, after the 1848 revolution, Lola flees to Austria, rejecting a simpler life with a young Bavarian, and revealing that she no longer has the capacity for love.

The ringmaster announces that Lola, who joined the circus after being offered to work together, has been performing for four months. Her act involves jumping from the top platform onto a padded mat without a net. The doctor suggests keeping the safety net, but Lola agrees to jump without it. Despite appearing to struggle, Lola successfully completes her jump. After the performance, she sits in a cage, and male spectators pay a dollar to kiss her hand.

SCENES

Lola Montès is presented to the audience by the ringmaster We see a circus flamboyantly designed. The ringmaster announces that the audience will be presented with the most sensational act of the century: 'A creature a hundred times more murderous than any beast in our menagerie.'

Meanwhile, the lined-up girls perform acrobatic tricks. The ringmaster continues to say that there were ravaged hearts, squandered fortunes, and the saraband of lovers. He announces that it is Lola Montès he is talking about. Lola

Montès is carried to the scene with the help of four men and horse riders accompany the scene. The lights are turned off and a big chandelier descends to where she sits. The ringmaster asks the audience to ask questions to Lola and that she will answer even the most shocking questions. Every question costs 25 cents and the proceeds of the performance will be donated to fallen women in accordance with Lola's wish. Meanwhile, tens of men dressed in red accompany the scene. The audience starts asking questions such as where she danced without her costume. Lola answers in a soft voice that it was in Paris. Another one asks about whether her mother was like her too. Yet another asks about her measurements. Finally, somebody asks about how many lovers she had and the ringmaster says that they will all count together. Then a parade of men representing Lola's lovers enters the scene and they all dance around her.



Flashback: Lola Montès and Franz Liszt travel in their carriage

One person from the audience asks whether the Countess still remembers the past. We get a flashback to Lola's past. A carriage travels on the roads. Lola and her lover Franz Liszt are in the carriage. He says to her that the next day, they will travel to Rome early morning. While Liszt is playing the piano, she tells him to play faster as she cannot stay on her toes too long. Liszt is surprised to hear that because until then dancers have only danced according to his music, not the other way around. Later, Lola says that when a man is attractive, it's easy to yield and hold on. She further says to him that when he asks about whether she doesn't love him anymore, she answers: 'Do you?' Franz tells her that that is not an answer. He points out to the carriage following them and asks her if it belongs to her. Lola says she likes to have at hand a means to go away. Franz asks if she ever dreams of having an affair with no end. Lola replies that dreams cannot be shared with everyone and sometimes they are embarrassing. Franz asks if they are embarrassing because they don't last as one has to cling to them and live them before it's too late. Lola says life for her is movement. The carriage arrives in the old town. Lola and Franz get out of the carriage. We also see Maurice, Lola's coachman Josephine, and Lola's maid. Maurice asks Lola whether he should grease the carriage for the next morning. She answers: 'Perhaps'.



Lola and Franz say goodbye to each other

Franz composes a piece called *Valse de Adieu*. Lola pretends to be asleep while Franz asks him whether she hears him. As he does not receive an answer, he proceeds to leave. When he opens the door, Lola tells him that he might at least say goodbye for courtesy. Franz replies that he didn't want to wake her. He adds that their separation is the best for both of them. Lola agrees. She says they'll meet again: she will be dancing and he will be giving a concert. When Franz ponders whether such a coincidence can be possible, Lola replies all life is a coincidence. Then they start kissing and spend the night together. The next morning, Lola's servants prepare the carriage while she gathers up the pieces of Franz's composition. When she goes outside to say goodbye to Franz, he remarks that she is true to his music. Then Franz's carriage leaves. As Lola gets on her carriage, she remarks that maybe it was for the best.



Lola's childhood

After this flashback, we are back to the circus. The ringmaster announces that Lola leaves the ring with her entourage. He says that they will look into her family life where she had a beautiful happy life and recreate her happy youth and radiant adolescence. He starts recounting how her mother was attentive and devoted while her father was strict, affectionate, and a colonel working at the 44th Indian Infantry. The ringmaster recounts how Lola's father died while in service of the British crown and how Lola and her mother sailed back to Europe, the Old World. We see young Lola and her mother boarding a ship back to Europe from India after the death of her father. Lieutenant James greets them to the ship. Lola's mother says to her that he is a very nice person as he is obliging, sociable, and amusing. Later, she says to her that she will have a cabin to herself as cabins with two beds are not available. Meanwhile, Lola has to sleep in the dormitory with other girls. While someone guides Lola to her cabin, she sees her mother talking to Lieutenant James. As Lola moves to her cabin, she asks the person attending her how many single cabins there are. He answers that there are very few single cabins as most are for two, three, or four people. This reply makes Lola realize her mother's lie. When she enters the dormitory, she is struck by how crowded the place is. When she goes up to her bed, she starts crying which the other girls notice and comment on.



Lola's mother sends Lola to bed when it is dance time

We see Lola, her mother, and Lieutenant James sitting in the main hall of the ship. A man announces that it is dance time. As Lola looks around, her mother tells her it is bedtime for her. Lola greets Lieutenant James and leaves. She walks around in the dormitory and once again she is on the verge of tears. Lola goes outside and hears her mother talking to Lieutenant James while dancing. Lola's mother says that she hates men who only dance with their wives and that if her poor husband had prevented her from dancing with other men, she would have never met him. As Lola listens to these utterances, she keeps crying. She goes to the end of the ship, cries while a strong wind blows, and looks at the stars above.



Lola's mother wants Lola to marry an old Baron

In Paris, Lola, Lola's mother, and Lieutenant James are in the theater. Her mother wants Lola to meet an old baron who was the family's banker. She says to her she will have all the riches even though Lola does not care for any of them. When they enter the Baron's room, a man tells them that the Baron was obliged to leave for somewhere else. While Lola's mother talks to the men in another room, Lola and Lieutenant James sit together at the entrance. As Lieutenant James pours a drink for Lola, he notices that she has run away. Lieutenant James runs after Lola. Lola says to him she hates him and this is all his fault that she will be given to a rich old man. He replies that he didn't influence her mother at all. When he runs near her, he says he'd do anything for her. As Lola moves away from him, she asks him to do something and then tells him to marry her. They kiss each other and decide to marry.



Lieutenant James is violent and cheats on Lola, Lola escapes the marriage

A flashback into Lola's marriage with We are back to the circus. As Lola is about to start her performance, she says to a female assistant that her life is whirling in her head. The ringmaster announces that Lola marries Lieutenant James for love. He depicts her married life as one of bliss and serenity. Lieutenant James shows him breaking the door to enter the house. He calls Lola *the eternal victim*, asks what he did, and whether one of his girlfriends called to complain. Soon, Lola tries to run out of the house as she cannot stand him anymore. However, James runs after her, tells her he will never let her go, and that he'd sooner kill her. They keep fighting, but Lola manages to escape.



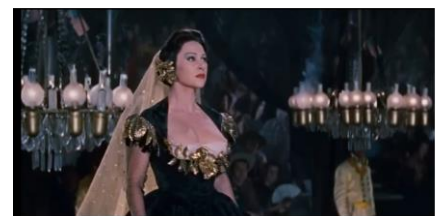
Lola trains to become a ballerina to realize her childhood dream

Back in the circus, the ringmaster recounts that that peaceful life couldn't last forever. The Countess could easily live off other men, but she had other ambitions as she longed to realize her childhood dream of becoming a ballerina. After many years of study, she makes her debut in 1841 in Madrid.



Lola is kidnapped by the Russian viceroy only to be saved by the French ambassador In 1842, there erupts a political scandal in Warsaw as the Russian viceroy General Paskievitch falls in love with Lola. When she rejects him, he sends his Cossacks who carry her off. At dawn, the French embassy intervenes. She is thus freed by the intervention of the French ambassador.

The ringmaster recounts Lola's scandals The ringmaster recounts that rumors, scandal, and passion were what she chose to create a sensation. He tells the audience how Lola bathed in the nude at the Sultan's request in Turkey and how in St. Petersburg



the Czar decided to serve his soldiers champagne from her slipper. Then at Ragusa, Lola is denied entry to the church because of her dress.

The famous wrestler Bulgakov falls in love with Lola, and later he becomes her bodyguard

In Budapest, the famous international wrestler Bulgakov falls in love with her. When she ignores him, he cannot sleep, eat, or drink. He is defeated in wrestling and abandons his career. He soon becomes Lola's bodyguard.

In Tivoli, Lola exposes Claudio Piroto who lies to her about being divorced Lola begins to narrate that she was in Tivoli and in love with the musical conductor Claudio Piroto. But she didn't know he was married. When she learns about his wife, she slaps him while he is conducting. Then she goes to his wife who is on the balcony. She tells her that he told her he was divorced, but it was not true: 'I don't appreciate married women much, but I hate cowardly men.' She continues to recount how she was the most famous woman on the French Riviera the next day. The international elite would come and visit her.

The ringmaster offers Lola a contract with his circus which she rejects

While she is at her hotel, the ringmaster also visits her. He wants to book her as he saw her at the theater the other day. Lola asks the ringmaster whether he likes her dancing. The ringmaster says she cannot dance at all, but she knows how to trigger a scandal and excite the audience. He says that scandal equates to money and in America, it has no limits. He wants her to reenact her scandals at the circus. Lola finally replies that she is not a machine for scandal: 'I always do as I please.' The ringmaster says that's what the elephant he trained once thought too, but in the end, he learned to play the piano. Lola says: 'I'm not a fairground freak.' Thus, she rejects the offer, but the ringmaster says the offer stands nonetheless. Then he kisses her and leaves.



Lola embarks on a dizzying ascent The ringmaster recounts how Lola embarked on her dizzying ascent after that point. He says her ascent will be presented to the audience as an acrobatic and trapeze act. As Lola begins to climb up the various ropes, stairs, and swings higher and higher on a trapeze structure until she reaches a platform at the top of the circus tent, the ringmaster reads out the list of her powerful lovers such as Richard Wagner, Frederic Chopin, the Count of Lichtenfeld, and The Grand Duke of Hesse.



Lola is in Bavaria and gets the help of a young man to guide her to Munich

We see another flashback to Lola in Bavaria. As she, Josephine, and Maurice travel in the mountains during wintertime, Lola opens the window of the carriage and asks a young hiking man where Munich is. Even though the young man is going in the opposite direction, he agrees to enter the carriage and be their guide.



Lola's audition Lola arrives at a place to stay and plans to stay in one of the rooms on the upper floor for 5 florins. Then she receives a letter from the Royal Theater and finds out her audition is on the next day. She gets excited and says in that case she'll get the big apartment downstairs. Lola hopes to get a position dancing at the Bavarian Royal Theater, but she is not accepted, as they do not like her Spanish style of dancing and bolero. She decides to walk on the streets rather than to travel in the carriage. While she walks, a soldier approaches her and asks whether he can help. He presents himself as Ferdinand von Freiberg from the king's regimen. Lola hopes he will help her meet the king.

Lola is granted a private audience with Ludwig where she complains about people who did not hire her

Next, we see her in a private audience with King Ludwig. Ludwig says he should have demoted the lieutenant she attacked and expelled her. Instead, he promoted him to captain and granted Lola an audience. Then he talks about how she was turned down in the audition. Lola says the committees, bureaucracies, and counselors all choke her because of their restraining natures. She adds his subjects must be choked too with laws and regulations. She expresses frustration over the stuffiness of the people who didn't hire her and removes any doubts about her appearance by tearing open her bodice.



King Ludwig arranges for Lola to perform at the National Theater

King Ludwig arranges for Lola to perform at the National Theater. King Ludwig and the Queen watch the performance and the Queen says she will go on a trip. Among the audience is also the young man who had guided Lola to Munich. Next, Ludwig invites Lola to his royal box. He congratulates her and says she won her place at the National Theater. She thanks him as she could prove that she can dance because of him. Ludwig says he watched her many times during rehearsals and wishes to discuss dance and even politics with her as she has original ideas. He asks her if she ever thought about settling, she pauses for a few seconds and replies that he is so lonely. After his talk with Lola, Ludwig decides to commission a portrait of Lola and gives an order to his advisors that she won't leave Munich. He chooses the portrait painter who works the most slowly. However, even when the portrait is completed, Ludwig complains about it as he finds it too formal.



Lola becomes Ludwig's mistress and influences politics

The ringmaster recounts how the painter took his time as he didn't like the dress or the gloves. One day, he asks if she dares pose for him all in pink. She accepts and the king, enraptured by her pose, offers her a palace. Ludwig tells Lola how he wanted to put the portrait in the National Theater, but the director and the archbishop protested and he doesn't know what to do anymore. Lola self-assuredly tells him to dismiss the Minister of Fine Arts, close the university, forget the archbishop, and do as he likes.



Lola takes Ludwig to Professor Jeppner to get examined for his hearing

Lola takes Ludwig to Professor Jeppner because of his deteriorating hearing. Professor Jeppner prescribes many medications for Ludwig. However, he says the will to hear is the most important thing. The doctor says he should also hear things that concern him as misfortune can strike swiftly. The doctor's assistant gives Ludwig a pamphlet which Ludwig tears away.



King Ludwig and Lola are protested during the March Revolution of 1848

King Ludwig begins to be protested by the public during the March Revolution of 1848. There is chaos dominating the atmosphere and people believe Lola is an insult to dignity, morality, and religion. They demand that her titles and estate be rescinded. They further demand that the university be reopened and Lola be expelled from Bavaria. The protestors start destroying the palace Lola is staying in. Meanwhile, Ludwig reads to Lola pieces from *Hamlet*: 'O God! How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world.' Attendants knock on the door incessantly. Lola goes to check that everything is all right.



Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him to go to his own palace

Lola witnesses how the windows are being crushed by the public. The King's attendants tell her that some students, shopkeepers, professors have built a mob and are having a revolution. The King also comes to the scene and says if the people continue attacking like this, it will be a revolution. Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him that he must play his part and go to his wife and children.



While escaping the palace, Lola encounters the young man who had guided her to Munich

A man comes to inform Ludwig that a carriage is waiting for him behind the stables. Meanwhile, Lola cries in her bedroom. As she hears the sounds of the attacks, she runs outside and encounters the young man who had guided her to Munich. He tells her they want to save her as she represents love and freedom, but the rebels are reactionaries. Lola asks what she has to do with revolutions, either from the left or the right. The young man says they represent the left.



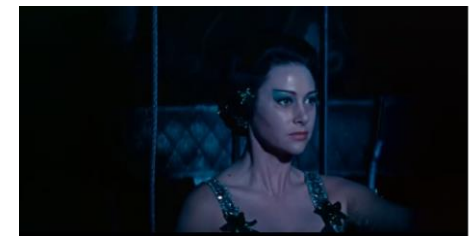
The young man helps Lola flee Bavaria and wants to marry Lola, but is rejected

The young man helps her and she flees across the border to Austria at night in a carriage. On their journey, Lola tells him he is too young. The student says he is not old, but the king was old and she saw how it ended. He offers her a new start and a simple life on the land. He also says he will soon become a Latin teacher. After she lets him talk, Lola says she has lived many adventures and Bavaria was her last chance. Yet, the warm offer of the young man still leaves her without hope, then it means something is broken in her.



The doctor asks the circus manager to provide a safety net for Lola's jump

The ringmaster recounts how Lola thus relinquished power and glory, remembered his offer and took the leap over the ocean. Meanwhile, the doctor talks to the circus manager about whether she will jump again and asks whether he noticed a loss of agility. The manager replies that she has managed very well every night for four months. The doctor then asks him to provide a safety net for her. The ringmaster is informed about the situation and tells the audience that he is not allowed to remove the net. But then he asks Lola whether she accepts the safety net. Lola remains silent. The ringmaster announces that after the event men older than sixteen will be able to approach her: 'She will be in our menagerie, among the wild beasts.' Then he talks about how the gentleman will only have to pay 1 dollar to kiss her hand whereas in the past kings have sacrificed millions for her. After this announcement, Lola agrees to jump without the safety net. Although she seems to be dizzy, she successfully completes her leap.



Lola sits behind a cage while male spectators wait in line to kiss her hand for 1 dollar

After the show, we see Lola hiding behind a cage. The ringmaster says to her that he was terrified and couldn't live without her. Then he invites the male spectators to treat themselves to a good time. The spectators greet her and kiss her hand while she thanks them.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Lola Montes: Lola Montes is the protagonist of the film. She is a notorious beauty and a famous dancer who has many affairs with people of important ranks. However, after her failed attempts to build a stable relationship with others, she is reduced to working in a circus and becomes a public spectacle. Her character is alluring, artistic, and vulnerable, yet always dignified.

Vulnerable: Lola's vulnerability begins in her teenage years when she loses her father and travels to Europe with her distant mother. She is isolated, tries to escape from being married to an old Baron, and thus marries Lieutenant James. However, his husband becomes abusive, and she escapes once again to take command of her life. Yet, her many affairs always end up in famous failures, and she becomes emotionally damaged. As she reflects on her past as part of her circus performance, her vulnerability comes to the forefront.

Alluring: Lola's mysterious beauty makes her alluring to many men around her. She has affairs with diverse people ranging from musicians to politicians and even a king. Although she is presented as a femme fatale by the ringmaster, we see that she has much more complexity than the simplistic label of a tantalizing woman as she has deep emotions, ambitions, and always searches for something that will make her fulfilled.

Artistic: After leaving her abusive marriage, Lola decides to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a ballerina. She trains and works hard for her goal as she specializes in Spanish dances. Even though she fails at the Bavarian audition and is not regarded as quite talented by the critics, she continues her art with ambition. Her final decision to join a circus—despite the possibility of being perceived as mere entertainment—is a thread that links her dancing to performative arts.

Dignified: Despite having faced many disappointments, heartbreaks, and failures; Lola always has a composed or serious manner that is worthy of respect. She experiences neglect by her mother, abuse at the hands of her first husband, and failed relationships with Liszt and other musicians and politicians including King Ludwig. Because of these experiences that broke her, she decides to join a circus and becomes a spectacle for the audience. However, even though the audience might perceive her as having fallen from higher ranks, her attitude and countenance always reflect a sense of regalness and exaltedness.

Ringmaster: The ringmaster plays a significant role in the film as he recounts Lola's tale to the audience. His way of framing the events shapes the audience's perceptions. He is the one who offers Lola a contract with the circus which Lola initially rejects. He is a rather pragmatic personality and even though he seems to care for Lola at times, he seems more driven by an ambition of profit in the circus.

Pragmatic: When the ringmaster first visits Lola, he tells her directly that she cannot dance at all. This shows us that he does not care about politeness and is rather pragmatic in his approach. He further tells her that she has what the audience wants: scandals and excitement which equate to money. While the ringmaster recognizes the complexities of Lola's past and her emotional struggles, his primary focus is on making her an attraction that draws in the audience.

Complex: On the one hand, the ringmaster expresses affection for Lola when he first meets her and after her dangerous jump in the last scene. On the other hand, he remains emotionally detached from the chaos of Lola's past relationships. He focuses on his role in managing her performance and the financial success of the circus. Furthermore, the fact that he doesn't genuinely want Lola to be provided with a safety net despite being condemned by the doctor shows us that he does not care enough about Lola's well-being and health.

Mrs. Craigie: Mrs. Craigie is Lola's mother. She and Lola travel to Europe after her husband's death. She has an affair with her deceased husband's adjutant Lieutenant James. Her relationship with Lola is not strong or healthy as she mostly acts from a place of self-centeredness and mainly neglects her.

Self-centered: Lola's mother's self-centeredness can be seen when she asks Lola to sleep in the dormitory so that her lover Lieutenant James can visit her. To achieve her aim, she also lies to Lola about there not being enough cabins with two beds. Her act makes Lola feel vulnerable and discarded. Later, she wants Lola to marry an old Baron despite her unwillingness. She does not take into consideration her daughter's wishes and only wants to profit from her.

Neglectful: Her neglect can be seen in how she prioritizes spending time with Lieutenant James rather than her daughter. She seems to have moved on quickly after her husband's death and does not consider that her daughter might feel vulnerable after her father's death and their relocation to Europe. Lola's frequent crying spells are an effect of her mother's neglectful behavior.

Young ship steward: The young ship steward is a blonde young boy who accompanies Lola on the ship while her mother is with Lieutenant James. He plays a rather minor role in the film.

Enthusiastic: The steward's character can be described as enthusiastic as he excitedly talks to Lola about his cousin who grew up in Calcutta, his family, and his life in Grenoble. However, Lola is too preoccupied with her mother's lie about the cabins that she does not engage with him.

Lieutenant Thomas James: Lieutenant James was Lola's father's adjutant, that is, a military officer who acts as an administrative assistant to a senior officer. He has an affair with Lola's mother. However, when Lola's mother wishes Lola to marry an old Baron, he makes Lola escape by marrying her. Lola's marriage is presented as a blissful one by the ringmaster, however, this is far from the truth.

Abusive: Despite seeming initially helpful and in love with Lola, Lieutenant James's character switches after marrying her. He is violent toward her, cheats on her with multiple girls, and drinks excessively. Lola cannot take his abusive behavior anymore and decides to leave him. He even threatens to kill her when he is faced with Lola's packing her stuff and running away from the house. However, Lola manages to flee.

Franz Liszt: Franz Liszt is one of Lola's musician lovers. We encounter him in the first flashback of the film where he and Lola travel in a carriage. His conversations with Lola are deep, reflective, and somewhat mysterious. They talk about whether Lola ever thinks of having an affair with no end, their dreams, and how all life is a coincidence. He is an attractive, charming, and yet rather self-absorbed character.

Charming: One of the qualities of Franz is his charm. As Lola points out he is an attractive person and she feels drawn to him which can be seen in their interactions. It is not only his appearance that is charming, but his work and his deep conversations regarding Lola's dreams also reflect his appeal to Lola.

Self-absorbed: Despite his charm, musical ability, and depth, Franz Liszt seems tone self-absorbed. This can be seen when he plays the piano and Lola tells him to play faster. Franz acts surprised because up to that point, dancers have always adapted themselves according to his music and not the other way around. Thus, Lola's challenging him surprises him. Later, when the two decide to go their separate ways, Franz sees Lola carrying his pieces of composition, he remarks she is true to his music which once again shows us that he is more absorbed in his music and talent than anything else.

Bavarian student: Bavarian student is a twenty-year-old man who studies Latin and philosophy. Lola invites him to her carriage while he is hiking in the snowy landscape of Bavaria. He agrees to guide her to Munich. After the revolution against King Ludwig starts and people demand that Lola be expelled, the Bavarian student helps Lola to escape the protests.

Idealistic: Bavarian student is idealistic because he believes in the ideals of happiness, love, and freedom. He supports left-wing politics and says to Lola that they want to save her from the reactionaries because she represents everything they are against. He also views Lola through rose-tinted glasses, sees her as perfect, and imagines her as someone who would fulfill his dreams.

Naïve: Bavarian student's naiveté can be seen when he offers marriage and a simple life to Lola. He is so caught up in his emotions and his romantic fantasies that he fails to see the reality of Lola's situation: her troubled past, past lovers, and personal conflicts. That is why he believes a new start will be easy for Lola. However, Lola does not accept his offer as she is too broken to start another relationship.

Ludwig I of Bavaria: King Ludwig is the king of Bavaria. He grants Lola a private audience when she charges at a lieutenant during a military parade. Lola impresses him with her dancing and dislike of laws and regulations. Later, he arranges for Lola to perform at the National Theater. He grows very fond of her in time and Lola becomes her mistress. The character of the king can be described as adoring yet controlling.

Adoring: King Ludwig's adoration for Lola is all-consuming. He views her not just as a lover but almost as a symbol of beauty, grace, and art. His commissioning of Lola's portrait is a reflection of his adoration. After she becomes his mistress, he also listens to her ideas about politics, and takes action accordingly: he dismisses the Minister of Fine Arts and closes the university. This reflects to us viewers that he places great importance on her thoughts and views.

Controlling: King Ludwig's intense adoration for Lola is coupled with a tendency to control her. The reason why he commissions a portrait of hers is he wants to make her stay in Bavaria. He also gives an order to his advisors that she won't leave Munich. He chooses the portrait painter who works the most slowly. However, even when the portrait is completed, Ludwig complains about it as he finds it too formal. Thus the completion of the portrait is delayed continually until she becomes his mistress. Thus, we see how King Ludwig uses control to win Lola's heart.

Lola's doctor: Lola's doctor appears in the last scenes of the film where he talks to the circus manager about Lola's health and weak heart. He can be characterized as a caring person and professional.

Caring: The doctor talks to the circus manager and asks him to provide a safety net for Lola as he thinks her jump is incredibly dangerous. When the ringmaster is informed of this and does not like the idea, the doctor tells him that he will otherwise call the police. His assertive attitude shows us that he truly cares for Lola's health and well-being.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Patriarchy Patriarchy as a central theme in *Lola Montès* is explored through the way male characters interact with Lola and how she is defined, constrained, and controlled by societal expectations. The film is set in the nineteenth century and during that period, patriarchal structures were deeply embedded in European society. Lola is constantly subjected to these systems of power, yet she always remains resistant and dignified. The patriarchal system confines her to the role of an object. After Lola's father's death, Lola's mother wants her daughter to marry an old Baron against her wishes. She reasons that Lola will gain riches. Here we see how even her mother uses Lola as a quasi-object to fulfill her wishes of wealth. Later, Lieutenant James gives the impression that he truly loves Lola and saves her from a bad marriage. However, in their marriage, he becomes violent and cheats on her which shows us that he is part of the patriarchal system too which sees women as property. Lola's other lovers also see her in a way that reflects their own desires, ideologies, and needs, reducing her to a mere object within their lives. For instance; Franz Liszt views Lola as a passionate lover and a symbol of his artistic genius. He admires her as a reflection of his ambitions. Similarly, King Ludwig II idolizes her, yet wants to possess and control her as he restricts her freedom to leave Munich. Finally, Lola's career as a performer is also shaped and commodified by male audiences, directors, and lovers. The film focuses on her as a spectacle in a circus which highlights how she is being constantly observed and entrapped within the gaze of patriarchy.

Illustrative moment: Lola sits behind a cage while male spectators wait in line to kiss her hand for 1 dollar. After the show, we see Lola hiding behind a cage. The ringmaster says to her that he was terrified and couldn't live without her. Then he invites the male spectators to treat themselves to a good time. The spectators greet her and kiss her hand while she thanks them. In this scene, we see how Lola is reduced to entertainment to be onlooked by the male spectators. Even though she has been resistant and dignified all her life, the patriarchal system is such that she is always ensnared within it.



POLITICS

Power & Conflict The theme of power comes to the forefront with regard to Lola's relationship with King Ludwig of Bavaria. Ludwig possesses a great amount of political power. Lola uses that power to her own advantage so she can perform as a dancer and achieve her ambitions. Later on, she becomes the mistress of Ludwig and starts to interfere in the political affairs of the land. When her nude portrait is not accepted by the National Theater, the directors of the university, and the archbishop who all protested, she self-assuredly tells the king to dismiss the Minister of Fine Arts, close the university, forget the archbishop, and do as he likes. Her interference eventually creates a big protest among the public. During the March Revolution of 1848, people demand that her titles and estate be rescinded as they believe Lola is an insult to dignity, morality, and religion. They further demand that the university be reopened and Lola be expelled from Bavaria. This protest symbolizes not only Lola's downfall but also King Ludwig's. His indulgence and scandalous affair expose him to public scrutiny and political instability. We do not know what happens to King Ludwig after Lola escapes Bavaria. One possibility is that he is overthrown by the forces of political change that Lola helped ignite, albeit unintentionally. Thus, Lola's story is not just one of individual ambition but also a reflection of the volatile relationship between personal power and political authority where one woman's rise to power helps unravel the stability of an entire monarchy.

Illustrative moment: King Ludwig begins to be protested by the public during the March Revolution of 1848. There is chaos dominating the atmosphere and people believe Lola is an insult to dignity, morality, and religion. They demand that her titles and estate be rescinded. They further demand that the university be reopened and Lola be expelled from Bavaria. In this scene, we see how Lola's intervention in Bavarian politics leads to the eventual downfall of King Ludwig. It is also important to notice that even though a king's power is usually perceived as something stable, it is actually subject to the same fragility that all forms of authority face, and we see how even the most seemingly secure reign can destabilize.



PSYCHOLOGY

Sadness There is a thread of sadness in Lola's life which starts after her father's death. As she embarks on a journey to Europe with her mother, she realizes how lonely she is. Her mother neglects Lola, lies to her about the cabins, and prefers to spend time with her new lover Lieutenant James. It seems that after her father's death, Lola experiences a major loss. This can be witnessed when she goes to the end of the ship crying after seeing her mother dancing with Lieutenant James and how she quickly moved on. Lola also experiences sadness after her marriage to Lieutenant James as it turns out that he was not the person he presented himself to be in the beginning. He acts violently, cheats, and drinks excessively. Thus, Lola is unhappy in her marriage as well. Later on in the film, she achieves happiness while having an affair with the Bavarian King. However, her happiness does not last long as she becomes the focus of the protests and has to leave King Ludwig. After she escapes Bavaria, Lola also rejects the young student's offer of a new life saying something is broken in her. This straightforward statement reflects how the cumulation of life experiences changed her permanently and she does not have that childlike joy in her anymore.

Illustrative moment: Lola cries after she sees her mother and Lieutenant James dancing. Lola goes outside and hears her mother talking to Lieutenant James while dancing. Lola's mother says that she hates men who only dance with their wives and that if her poor husband had prevented her from dancing with other men, she would have never met him. As Lola listens to these utterances, she keeps crying. She goes to the end of the ship, cries while a strong wind blows, and looks at the stars above. In this scene, we witness Lola's sadness which is caused by her father's death, her mother's distance, neglect, and quickly forgetting her husband. Her feelings of loneliness contribute to her sadness.



Fear Fear is an unpleasant emotion that arises in response to perceived dangers or threats. Lola is not a fearful person at all as she always shows courage and resilience even in the face of betrayal, neglect, dishonesty, failure, and loss. When her assistant informs her about the ringmaster who wishes to talk to her, the assistant mentions the strange or frightening appearance of the ringmaster to warn Lola. However, she responds that nothing frightens her. Thus, she has a brave personality. The only scene where she experiences fear is when the protests erupt against King Ludwig and her. She becomes frightened not for herself, but for Ludwig. She wants him to be safe and shielded from the revolutionaries. This scene can be pointed out as the only scene where she experiences apprehension and fear. Other than that, during her circus performance which includes dangerous actions such as embarking on an ascent on ropes and stairs and jumping without a safety net, we see that she experiences dizziness which is probably related to her heart condition. However, even when presented with the option of a safety net, she decides to jump without one. As the circus manager points out, she has been doing these dangerous acts for four months at the time which reflects her strength, resilience, and bravery.

Illustrative moment: Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him to go to his palace. Lola witnesses how the windows are being crushed by the public. The King's attendants tell her that some students, shopkeepers, and professors have built a mob and having a revolution. The King also comes to the scene and says if the people continue attacking like this, it will be a revolution. Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him that he must play his part and go to his wife and children. This is the scene where Lola experiences prominent fear. However, she fears not for herself, but for Ludwig which shows us her caring nature.



Otherness Lola is a woman who exists on the margins of society. She does not conform to the typical social norms of the time and the traditional roles women are expected to occupy. Although she is adored by many men, including famous personalities and royalty, she is fundamentally separate from them. The men she has affairs with, while enamored with her, also objectify her. Whether they are royalty, politicians, soldiers, or musicians, they all view her as an object of desire, and their actions toward her are often driven by possessiveness or control. The men who fall in love with her do not truly see her as an individual, but rather as a *symbol* of beauty and passion. She is thus not seen as a complete, autonomous human being with her own needs, desires, and emotions. Her individual depth is not recognized which makes her 'the other'. The otherness is further emphasized by her ongoing public performance in the circus, where she is presented as an exotic 'other' to the audience as she is viewed by the audience as a spectacle for them to consume. She is an object of fascination for the crowd, similar to an exotic animal or a rare object in the circus menagerie.

Illustrative moment: The ringmaster asks the audience to ask questions to Lola. Lola is carried to the scene with the help of four men and horse riders accompany the scene. The lights are turned off and a big chandelier descends to where she sits. The ringmaster asks the audience to ask questions to Lola and that she will answer even the most shocking questions. Here, it is particularly noticeable how the ringmaster introduces Lola: 'A creature a hundred times more murderous than any beast in our menagerie.' She is thus reduced to a beast or an object to be gazed at which emphasizes her otherness.



FLAW

Ambition Arguments can be made on both sides for whether Lola experiences the tragedies in her life because of her flaws or whether she is a victim of the external events that befall her. Starting from the beginning of her teenage years, we witness a young orphaned girl who seeks an escape from her neglectful mother and her plans by marrying Lieutenant James. As her marriage becomes abusive, she leaves and pursues her childhood ambition of becoming a ballerina. This is a proactive way for her to assert control over her life after being trapped in her marriage. It's not just an act of survival, but a sign of independence, self-expression, and dignity despite the obstacles she faces in her life. Dancing allows her to reclaim an aspect of herself. Nevertheless, dancing is not her only ambition. Lola's other ambition is often tied to her need for love and affection. She desires the adoration of powerful men, but in doing so, she often sacrifices her autonomy. Whether it is the musicians, politicians, or the king, each of these men sees her as an object to possess or a symbol of beauty and sensuality. Lola's ambition to be loved and desired is understandable in the context of a woman who searches for genuine connections. However, her ambition to be seen as desirable and worthy of love leads her into relationships that leave scars in her heart. She is drawn to men who promise her status, wealth, and attention, but who ultimately exploit and abandon her. Her inability to find love on her own terms contributes to her sense of otherness. All in all, her pursuit of dance can be seen as a positive ambition whereas the constant search and need for affection by men can be viewed as negative as she becomes dependent on men's perceptions of her and their validation. Thus, her ambition to receive constant male validation seems to be her flaw.

Illustrative moment: During a parade of soldiers, Lola charges at a lieutenant to get the attention of the King. During a parade of soldiers, Ferdinand points out the king to Lola. But he says it takes more than six weeks to present a dancer to the king. Lola replies her hotel bill is six weeks old too. She grows impatient and charges at lieutenants on her horse. In this scene, we see Lola's ambition to get the attention of the king. As she had failed previously in the dance audition, she targets the king as a way to gain and secure her place in the world of dance. Thus, this scene can be seen as a combination of her artistic ambitions and ambition for male validation.



QUEST

Explore Lola's life is an ongoing exploration of herself and the world around her. Starting from her teenage years after her father's death, we see how she navigates her relationship with her mother who stays distant from her. She settles in Europe with Lieutenant James and experiences an abusive marriage. Her later decision to pursue a career in dancing is a reflection of her desire to explore her personal ambitions and express herself authentically. Her affairs with different men including musicians such as Franz Liszt, and Claudio Piroto, and rulers such as King Ludwig show us the viewers how Lola explores the dynamics of passion, love, and power. Her final decision to work in the circus with the ringmaster after her turbulent story is another exploration of the world of performative arts *and* also an exploration of *herself* as her past is gradually revealed in the circus acts and the viewers of the film are represented with flashbacks which are her memories. It can be said that she is presented as both a victim and an agent as she is torn between societal constraints and norms and her will to freedom. As she

moves from one lover to another, from one performance to the next, she constantly tries to carve out a space for herself in a world that sees her as an object of attraction.

Illustrative moment: Lola is in Bavaria and gets the help of a young man to guide her to Munich. We see another flashback to Lola in Bavaria. As she, Josephine, and Maurice travel in the mountains during wintertime, Lola opens the window of the carriage and asks a young hiking man where Munich is. Even though the young man is going in the opposite direction, he accepts to enter the carriage and be their guide. In this scene, we see Lola traveling with her maid Josephine and coachman Maurice. She explores another land and meets a young student. This is the beginning of another adventure for her as she will try to secure a place in the Bavarian dance world.



RELATIONSHIP

Marriage Lola decides to marry Lieutenant James, because she wants to escape from the prospect of marrying the old Baron. She also escapes her distant mother's influence by marrying Lieutenant James. However, her marriage does not turn out as she expected it to be. Her husband's initial presentation of himself as a caring and loving individual proves to be deceptive. He cheats on Lola, acts violently, and is abusive. Thus, Lola feels suffocated and entrapped. In the end, she cannot take it anymore and leaves him. Even though the ringmaster depicts Lola's married life as one of bliss, through the flashback we see that there was no happiness in their marriage. The facade of marital bliss is shattered as we witness the emotional and physical abuse Lola suffers at the hands of her husband. This failed marriage reveals the disillusionment that marks Lola's entire life. Later on in her life, Lola does not get married. Rather she has several affairs with powerful men from the world of art, politics, and so on. After her failed relationship with King Ludwig, the young Bavarian student offers her a new life and wants her to be his wife. However, she rejects him as she has been through a lot of emotionally exhausting adventures already and wants to put a pause on her habit of pursuing one affair after the other.

Illustrative moment: Lieutenant James is violent and cheats on Lola, Lola escapes the marriage. A flashback into Lola's marriage with Lieutenant James shows him breaking the door to enter the house. He calls Lola *the eternal victim* asks what he did and whether one of his girlfriends called to complain. Soon, Lola tries to run out of the house as she cannot stand him anymore. However, James runs after her, tells her he will never let her go, and that he'd sooner kill her. They keep fighting, but Lola manages to escape. In this scene, we see the unhappiness Lola experiences in her marriage and the shattering of her expectations as Lieutenant James's personality switches after she decides to be his wife and builds a stark contrast to the loving and caring facade he initially presented.



Caring Lola receives care neither from her mother nor the men who have affairs with her. First of all, she experiences emotional neglect because of her mother's distant and self-centered behavior. Secondly, she endures abuse in her marriage. In her later affairs with important men such as Franz Liszt and King Ludwig, we might get the impression that they care for her in their own ways. However, their care seems to be more tied to how they perceive her as a symbol of beauty, desire, passion, and art. The ease with which Franz Liszt abandons her and the way King Ludwig prohibits her from leaving Munich by ordering his advisors show us that the care that her lovers give her is conditional and does not respect her autonomy as a human being. Moreover, the ringmaster's treatment of her also reflects how he perceives her as an object to be profited from. We can understand this attitude of his when he dislikes the idea of providing a safety net for Lola because such a safety net may lower the excitement of the audience. Thus, the men around Lola do not seem to be truly considering her autonomy, wishes, and well-being.

The only individuals who truly seem to care for her are her maid Josephine, his coachman Maurice, and the doctor. This shows us that care may not always come from people apparently closest to her.

Illustrative moment: The doctor asks the circus manager to provide a safety net for Lola's jump. The ringmaster recounts how Lola thus relinquished power and glory, remembered his offer, and took the leap over the ocean. Meanwhile, the doctor talks to the circus manager about whether she will jump again and asks whether he noticed a loss of agility. The manager replies that she has managed very well every night for four months. The doctor then asks him to provide a safety net for her. In this scene, we see how a stranger can sometimes be more caring than those closest to a person. The doctor is genuinely concerned about Lola's health and well-being which reflects his care for her which builds a contrast to the objectifying desires of the men with whom she had affairs and the audience who sees her as a quasi exotic object.



Love The theme of love is explored in the film as a complex and often destructive force. Lola's first marriage starts out as a love marriage, but soon becomes a suffocating institute which makes Lola suffer. Her subsequent love affairs are marked by passion and attraction, and influenced by power, fame, and status. However, there is a lack of genuine affection toward Lola by the men claiming to love her. For instance; Lola's relationship with the Bavarian king Ludwig is romantic on the surface but also reveals a possessive and controlling side, in particular when we consider how the king orders that Lola will not travel outside of Munich. His order which limits her autonomy is an example of how the king wishes to possess Lola. However, when we consider not how men love Lola, but how *she* loves them, we see that her motivations are different. She does not desire to possess her lovers. For instance, when Franz Liszt wants to leave, she lets him go. Similarly, when King Ludwig becomes a target of the people's revolution, she tells him to go to his family and play his part to secure his reign. This shows us once again her ability to let go of her attachments, respect her lovers' autonomies, and her selfless love. As she confesses to the young student in the carriage while they are escaping Bavaria, she loved King Ludwig deeply, but had to leave him. At the end of the film, Lola becomes emotionally scarred and realizes that love, rather than being a source of fulfillment, has brought her pain and regret. Thus, the film may be seen as critiquing the idealization of love and revealing its potential to destroy rather than elevate.

Illustrative moment: Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him to go to his palace. Lola witnesses how the windows are being crushed by the public. The King's attendants tell her that some students, shopkeepers, professors have built a mob and having a revolution. The King also comes to the scene and says if the people continue attacking like this, it will be a revolution. Lola is frightened for Ludwig and tells him that he must play his part and go to his wife and children. In this scene, we witness how Lola cares for King Ludwig. Lola's primary concern is his safety. Her urging of Ludwig to return to his family and play his part reflects her ability to let go and the selfless nature of her love.



Attraction Attraction is the action or power of evoking interest in or liking for someone. In the film, we see how men are attracted to Lola's captivating presence, the mystique surrounding her, and her allure. Lieutenant James, Franz Liszt, wrestler Bulgakov, King Ludwig, and even the ringmaster can be named among these men. If we examine the theme of attraction regarding Lola's affair with Franz Liszt, we see that their connection is more intellectual and artistic compared to her other more politically charged or possessive relationships such as the one with King Ludwig. Franz Liszt is not only captivated by Lola's allure and charm but also by her intellectual and emotional complexity. Similarly, Lola is drawn to him not only for his status but also for his artistic sensibility. Their attraction is not based purely on physical desire, rather it is shaped by a shared understanding of the world of art, performance, and spectacle, where both of them are used to being objects of public admiration. Thus, Lola's practice of dance, the art of movement, and Franz's practice of music complement each other and bring them closer. While her

interactions with other men often involve power dynamics, control, and exploitation, her bond with Liszt appears to be built on a more genuine emotional and intellectual connection. They seem to have a more equal sharing of admiration and respect, even if Liszt decides to leave Lola in the end.

Illustrative moment: As Franz is about to leave Lola, she stops him and they spend the night together. Franz composes a piece called *Valse de Adieu*. Lola pretends to be asleep while Franz asks her whether she hears him. As he does not receive an answer, he proceeds to leave. When he opens the door, Lola tells him that he might at least say goodbye for courtesy. Franz replies that he didn't want to wake her. He adds that their separation is the best for both of them. Lola agrees. Then she asks for a farewell kiss. She says they'll meet again: she will be dancing and he will be giving a concert. When Franz ponders whether such a coincidence can be possible, Lola replies all life is a coincidence. Then they start kissing and spend the night together. In this scene, we see how the attraction between Lola and Franz is both physical and artistic. Franz composes a piece for Lola which is a thoughtful gesture reflecting his respect. Afterward, we witness their deep and emotional conversation about life being a coincidence. Their act of staying together for the night highlights their physical and emotional attraction.



APPEARANCE

Lies Lies take place in several scenes of the film. The first lie that Lola encounters is from her mother who tells her that cabins with two beds are not available, and therefore she will stay in a single-bed cabin while Lola will sleep in the dormitory. Lola finds out about her mother's lie while talking to the young steward about the availability of single cabins. Later on, the ringmaster depicts Lola's first marriage as one of bliss and serenity. However, we the viewers find out in the flashback that their marriage was far from blissful. Based on the ringmaster's profit-oriented personality, we can hypothesize that he deliberately chooses to portray Lola's marriage in a deceptive light. Another lie we encounter is by the character Claudio Piroto. He hides from Lola the fact that he is married. Later, Lola exposes his dishonesty in front of the public and his wife.

Illustrative moment: In Tivoli, Lola exposes Claudio Piroto who lies to her about being divorced. Lola begins to narrate that she was in Tivoli and in love with the musical conductor Claudio Piroto. But she didn't know he was married. When she learns about his wife, she slaps him while he is conducting. Then she goes to his wife who is on the balcony. She tells her that he told her he was divorced, but it was not true: 'I don't appreciate married women much, but I hate cowardly men.' She continues to recount how she was the most famous woman on the French Riviera the next day. The international elite would come and visit her. In this scene, we see how Lola responds to being lied to by Claudio Piroto. She decides to expose him as she perceives him as a coward for his dishonesty.



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO THE READERS AND VIEWERS

1. How does the film's non-linear structure and fragmented narrative reflect Lola's emotional and psychological state? What is the impact of shifting between different time periods in her story?
2. In what ways does Ophüls use the circus setting to mirror the artificiality and cyclicity of Lola's life? How does this contribute to the theme of spectacle versus reality?
3. How does Lola's relationship with each of the men in her life (Franz Liszt, King Ludwig, etc.) shape her identity?
4. Lola is often portrayed as an object of desire or a spectacle. How does this objectification affect her character, and how does she respond to it?
5. In what ways does Lola exhibit both vulnerability and strength in her interactions with the men around her?

6. How do the visual techniques (like the circus setting, framing, and lighting) reinforce themes of confinement, spectacle, and the objectification of Lola?
7. How do Lola's actions and choices challenge or uphold the expectations placed on women in 19th-century society?
8. How does the film convey the idea of women being trapped in their roles and expectations? Does Lola ever manage to break free of the limitations imposed on her, or does she remain confined to the roles of lover, performer, or object of male desire?
9. What is the significance of Lola's final portrayal in the film?
10. What does the film suggest about the limitations of female empowerment within a patriarchal system? Can a woman truly empower herself in such a system or are there always forces that try to reduce her to an object of desire and control?
11. How does Lola's ambition to become a dancer and pursue a career in dance reflect her autonomy, resilience, and artistic expression?
12. While some may argue that Lola is reduced to entertainment by her decision to join the circus, how can her transition from *dancing* to *circus performance* be seen as a continuation of her journey in the world of *performative arts*, building a coherent thread in her life?