Wicker Park

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Directed by Paul McGuigan, Wicker Park follows businessman Matthew’s return to Chicago after having spent two years of his life in NYC, mourning his long lost love Lisa, who’d mysteriously vanished from his life. Things are finally looking up again for Matthew; his career is in full swing, and he’s engaged that is, until he thinks he’s spotted Lisa in a restaurant. Immediately, Matthew puts the brakes on his marriage plans and career in order to search for his old flame.
How was the plot presented?

The plot is presented non-linear, to build mystery and suspense. The viewer is given information at different points that usually pertains to information that was presented at a different times.
Opening Credits

The screen splits apart and shows the settings of the movie as all the credits are shown. It also shows images of Matthew in the past and then transitions to the present of him. As Matthew walks to the jewelry store for his fiance, the screen splits again to different kinds of views of the city/Chicago with a background music.
The director, Paul McGuigan, explains how they didn’t actually shoot majority of the movie in Chicago but in Montreal.

He explains what the meaning of the split screens were which in order to... (split lenses), he meant to do that to give the scenes different depths of field and focus on the close ups. He mentions split scenes multiple times as it is a part of the theme.

Also mentions that the opening credits have the theme of split screens.

Many of musics that he chose were appropriate for the scenes they were in.
Setting

- Chicago, Illinois
- Lisa's Apartment
- Theater
- Matthew's Apartment
- Lady Dragon (Shoe Store)
- Bellucci (Restaurant)
- Airport
- Luke's Apartment
- Wicker Park
- The Drake Hotel
- Season is in the winter
CHARACTERS

Matt: tall caucasian male, with pale skin, chestnut brown hair and brown eyes. (Static and round Character)

Lisa: short, wavy blonde hair, blue eyes (Static and flat Character)

Rebecca: short brown hair, pale skin, hazel eyes (Flat Character)
CHARACTERS

Alex: short, dark brown hair with bangs, pale skin, dark brown eyes (Round Character)

Luke: short dark brown hair, blue eyes (Flat Character)

Daniel: Tall Caucasian Male with Dirty Blonde hair, appears Middle Aged, and is light skinned
PERSONALITY TRAITS

Matt- rash, stubborn, persevering, determined, obsessive

Lisa- Kind, friendly, daredevil (because walking on window side)

Alex- Manipulative, Liar, Romantic, Selfish, Obsessive, nurse and also actress for play

Luke: Oblivious, Push Over, caring, indecisive

Rebecca- Ambitious (speaks Mandarin), oblivious, rich, entitled
CHARACTERS

Luke  Alex  Lisa  Matthew
CHARACTERIZATION

Matt: Matt is supposed to make the viewer feel angry on his behalf but also contradictory because although he was wronged by Alex some of his actions are borderline stalkerish (breaking into hotel room, apartment) in his quest for Lisa. He is the protagonist.

Alex: Alex’s purpose is to be the villain in the story. Although her motivations through her eyes may be justifiable ultimately her actions negatively affect the other characters. She is the Antagonist.

Lisa: Lisa is a romantic supporting role who didn’t make any effect in the story. Only builds up the Plot.
CHARACTERIZATION

LUKE: In a way, the intention was for the audience to feel sorry for Luke. The character is a supporting role and also doesn’t make any effect to the story line. Only builds up the plot.

REBECCA: Plot device to add tension in Matthew’s relationship with Lisa.

DANIEL: Plot Device that Enables Matthew to get the key from Lisa’s apartment that was under the door.
What did we miss?

- When Matt exits Video Camera Store, you see Alex looking at him while he follows Lisa.
- Alex accidentally bumps into Rebecca (Matthew’s fiance) at the restaurant.
- When Alex was looking through the cupboards and all around the kitchen for mugs but ended up only finding wine glasses.
- Broken heel of shoes in the apartment.
- Alex was in the Park while he waited for Lisa in the flashback.
Non Diegetic Elements

- Bgm (background music) When Matthew realizes that Lisa was inside the phone booth talking to Alex
- Bgm when Lisa goes inside the apartment and Matthew runs after her
- Bgm when Matthew and Lisa are waiting at the park at different times
- Bgm when Matthew tries to find Lisa
- All of them mattered because it added hints of emotions in each scene.
Causal, Spatial, and Temporal

Causal (Cause and Effect) - Alex deleting a message off of Matt’s phone and never delivering Lisa’s letter resulted in their relationship falling apart.

Spatial - The first flashback shows the camera at a far distance from the character, Matt and how far he is from Lisa when he’s trying to look for her.

Temporal - The scene where Matt is fixing a camera at the store and he sees Lisa, the screen turns into a split screen.
EMOTIONAL: Matthew was being extremely desperate to look for Lisa throughout the movie; he even lied to his fiance that he went to China, to find Lisa.

SYMPTOMATIC: Mood switched when Alex was looking at Matthew sleeping on the couch and took her gown off.

EXPLICIT: What the audience know/see. For example, the audience knew that Alex was the fake Lisa and that she was Luke’s girlfriend.

IMPLICIT: Characters’ attitudes are based off this. Alex’s “love” towards Luke was not real.

IMPLICIT: In the way the Characters act towards each other

REFERENTIAL: When Matthew ran to take a cab to Wicker Park to meet Lisa and how he was looking for her through the crowds at the airport
MOTIF

Several motifs we see throughout the movie are the red soled shoe, cell phone usage, the hot dog stand.

There’s a motif of a song used in multiple scenes (Alex’s scenes) throughout the movie: Strange & Beautiful BY Aqualung.
The 4 V’s

Voyeuristic - we have this represented throughout the movie. Like for instance when we witness Alex’s actions to separate Lisa and Matt. (deleting the voicemail, hiding the letter lying)

Visceral - The movie invokes visceral feelings every time the audience witnesses Alex’s lies and how they affect the leading characters.
Vicarious - The movie was made vicarious for the viewers in the especially emotional scenes such as when Matt pieces together everything that happened in the restaurant with Alex and Luke, and when Lisa and Matt finally reunited.

Verisimilitude - The events shown in the movie all did occur in the movie universe - there may be some parts that have been exaggerated but overall parts of the plot is true.
Narrator

The Narrator is the Camera. The camera shifts around every character point of View except Luke. In the beginning of the movie, it revolves around Matthew, then Lisa, and lastly Alex. It shifts back and forth towards the end. In the beginning of the movie the camera specifically leaves out and includes certain details to leave the reader in suspense and lost until the pieces come together.
Point of View

The perspective also changes during the movie; camera transferring one character to another. The point of views switch between Matt, Lisa, and Alex. The scenes become more in depth and reinforces the point of view to strengthen the plot when Matthew slowly unravels the truth behind Alex’s motives.
In the beginning of the movie, we are confused because most of the facts aren’t told till later in the movie. We slowly start to understand once we’ve reached the climax. In the end, we find out why Matt and Lisa’s relationship came to a bitter end without closure because of Alex manipulating their messages. Fortunately Matt and Lisa get together in the end.
Wicker Park is shot at different ranges. There are scenes where there’s a close up on a character and scenes where the characters are far from the camera.

The colors in the movie were significant because it allows the audience to infer what the mood is without explicitly saying what the mood is.
Use of Music

Arguably, one of Wicker Park’s best features was its amazing soundtrack. Using indie rock and pop tunes the music in the movie manages to grasp and convey the many themes in the movie perfectly. From the first song Maybe tomorrow, to the last The Scientist the songs manage to capture the emotions of their scenes perfectly.
Subplots

Luke and Alex: Luke, Matt’s best friend is romantically involved with Alex A.K.A the fake Lisa throughout the movie.

Lisa and ex boyfriend: shown in beginning of movie where she exits through her window because boyfriend won’t leave her alone and enters into Alex’s room

Daniel: slips letter under Lisa’s door and appears staring through Lisa’s window in the middle of the night when fake Lisa was with Matthew
Climax? Anticlimax?

The climax is where Matt starts to find out that Alex is not who she says to be in which it raises suspicion in him. Then there is the scene where he sees the broken shoe and tries fitting the same pair of shoes on Alex to confirm his suspicions about her.

The anticlimax is where we the audience see that Matt and Lisa are both at the same area of the airport but they don’t end crossing paths and miss each other. But the scene was built up with such anticipation to the point where the audience thought that they both would actually be able to see each other but then they both looked the other way which just brought down the scene.
MOTIVATIONS

MATT: His motivations throughout the movie are to find Lisa. He does this at the cost of his current relationship, his job, and his sanity.

ALEX: Her motivations are to keep Matt and Lisa apart and to hide her deceptions from them and ultimately to be with Matt.

LISA: Her motivations is to meet Matt once more before she left for London.

LUKE: His motivations are to make Alex happy and to try and save their relationship.
Symbols? Metaphors?

The colors in the movie set the mood for the scene in various ways. When in the present, the scenes were more dull in comparison to the scenes in the past were more colorful. The visual made the movie a lot vivid; most of them contained red symbolizing passionate love, seduction and anger.

- Alex’s hair
- Alex’s coat
- Lisa’s dress
- Etc.
At restaurant, Matt goes to the phone booth area to make a call. But someone was already in there so he just walks into the restroom where he hears a familiar voice. Which then he realizes that it sounded like Lisa and so when she leaves the booth he runs out after her but was too late in seeing her face. So he walks back to the phone booth and finds a key card to the Drake Hotel.
(Important Scene 2)

Alex deletes messages off of Matt’s voicemail and did not leave the letter Lisa wrote for Matt in which Alex was supposed to drop off the letter but instead she just took it back with her.
Matt tried to confirm whether or not the house was really Lisa’s so he brought size 8 and ½ shoes for Alex, thinking it’s Lisa, to try on but it doesn’t fit her.
What was a significant quote or dialogue to you?

This quote was significant because she went through the extreme measures to keep two people away from each other because of how insanely in love she was with Matthew.
The moral of the story is summed up when Alex says “Love Makes you do crazy Things. Things in a million years you never thought you’d see yourself do”. We see this most obviously in Alex’s character but also in Matt, who does questionable things in his hunt for Lisa.

Another idea present in the movie is that no matter how much you keep two people apart, they’ll always find their way back to each other. Like the saying, “If you love something let it go, if it comes back it was meant to be.”
Irony

Some irony in the movie would be the actions people take in an effort to find/gain love.

Ex. Alex not reciprocating Luke’s feelings for her like Matthew doesn’t reciprocate her feelings for him.

Matt thought Lisa abandoned him and was heartbroken but he abandons Rebecca once he finds Lisa again.
Is it a good story?

The events in the movie while dramatic are possible and make sense. The movie digs deep into theme of jealousy, deception and unrequited love. The characterization left much to be desired because there was limited depth in the characters personalities besides their respective romances.
Thank you!
The End
There are moments where when a character would be in the present but a swooshing sound would occur to show that they’re now focusing on the past of that specific character’s memory.

Ex: Alex was in a car with Luke and was talking about Matt and Lisa. Alex then remembers a memory of them and takes the audience into a flashback.

The camera doesn’t show most of the scenes in the beginning and in a way the camera is lying to us and not revealing the entire story right away to build tension.
BGM on Lisa

Every time Lisa is shown in the film, there is always the same background music that plays possibly to show that Lisa is to set the mood or emotions of how Matthew feels about her and the BGM may be used to romanticize the character.
Significant Items

The Broken Mirror: The mirror may symbolize a reflection of the consequences of actions that are both negative and positive. Another symbolism may be bad luck. Also, the mirror brought Matt to realize that it was definitely Lisa’s and when Lisa realized she was missing the compact mirror later in the film, she explains how important it was to her because it was given from someone close to her.

Scarf: Reminded Lisa of Matthew and how it smelled like him but Alex denies and gets defensive when she talks about it.

Engagement ring: The jeweler says “It don’t rely on your eyes, follow your heart”

Key: Represents how Matthew gave up on looking for Lisa by throwing it in the sewer but then he gets it out because he wants to look for her again.
PARALLELISM

An example of parallelism, the parallels in the behaviors of Matthew and Alex with their obsessive tendencies, and in how they treat their respective romantic partners (Luke and Rebekah).

Another example is how we see different frames from different points of view and how each time we gain a little more information but you see it in a different scene.

When the high heel of Lisa breaks in the beginning of the movie and at the end; the flashback of the memory from a different perspective.
A song get played in the background whenever Matthew and Lisa have a sort of connection ("Plus minus all I do").

Their love and obsession are followed by their characteristic

The "swooshing" effect that is shown multiple times is also a Motif to show when there is a flashback about to happen. And it shows the smooching in and out of the person's head who is having the flashback.
More on Causal

For causal there was the compact mirror which Matt found in the drake hotel room where he thought Lisa was.

The compact mirror caused Matt to believe that Lisa was indeed at the hotel at one point because he recognized it. Since he found he found the found the compact which has lead onto his quest to finding Lisa.