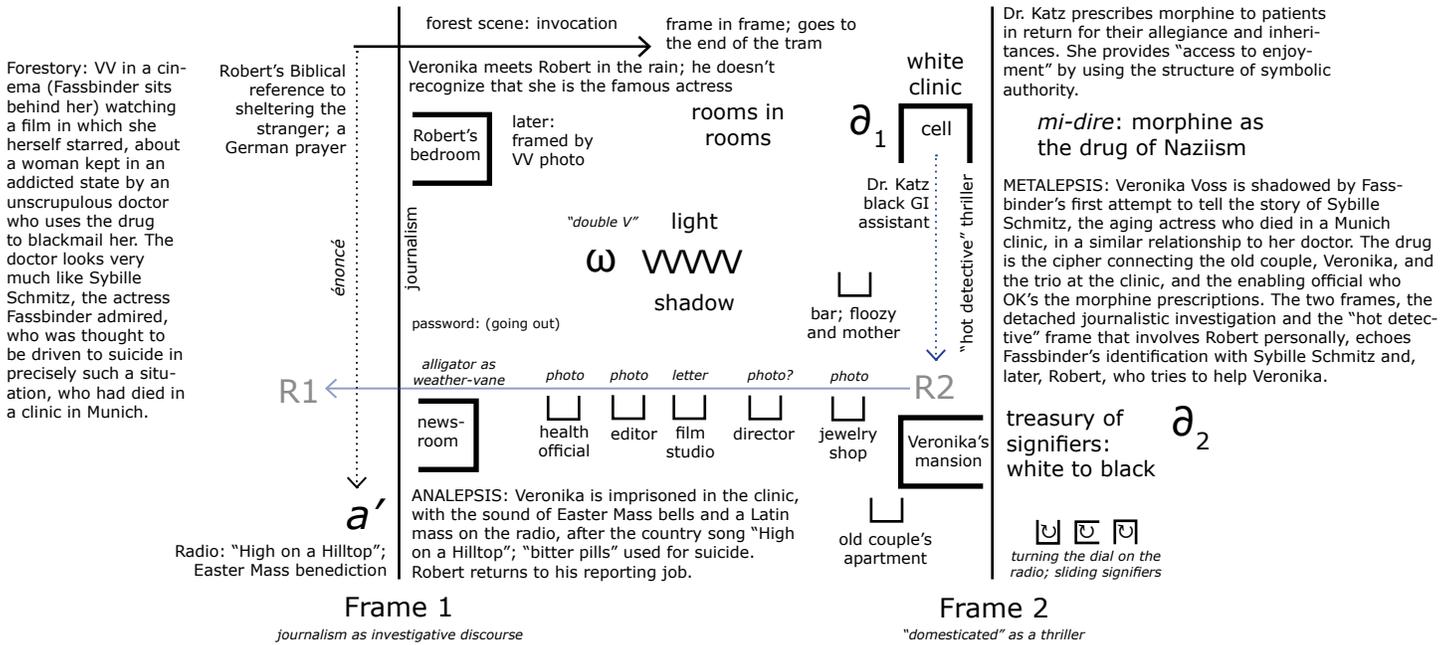


BOLAGRAM: VERONIKA VOSS (FASSBINDER, 1982)

"BoLaGRAM" ("boundary language diagram") is an analytical method for parsing the imaginary as generated from the distinction of enunciation into the material *énoncé* and performative enunciating act. This division corresponds to Aristotle's "efficient cause," but a suppressed/dropped-out element functions as *automaton*, the Aristotelian element of natural chance. This is the center to which the dynamics of the framed field returns in a motion of analepsis (recovery) after a turn constructed through metalepsis (metonymy of a metonymy) a double negation that emphasizes material cause. The subject/subjectivity is barred through devices of anamorphosis that construct an "impossible-Real" point of view within the visible field where an internal blindness/invisibility constitutes a defect (∂) that offers a means of escape. R1 and R2 plot the line of this escape, beginning with metalepsis and proceeding analeptically to recover concealed elements until the destination point, a' , is reached. Structured enclosures (\square) are sites of ∂ and metalepsis, R2, but the turn is often represented in relation to the POV aspect of ω .



Frame Analysis: The frame of enunciating is the "onstage" condition of the film, but *énoncé* is carried inside and beneath this throughout by means of the *poché* conditions (\square) didactically referenced and carefully placed: the newsroom, editor's office, health official's office, director's office, film studio. These echo each other and repeat the theme of light and shadow. These compartments contain the "agalma" that defines the essence of desire, objectified as treasuries of signifiers. In the health official's office, a closet is mysteriously jammed with unused furniture; the walls and fixtures are "unhealthy." The director's office is filmed with the polarizing lens that creates star-like gleams. The bar where Robert meets Veronika's ex-husband has a scene playing in the background: a "floozy" and older friend (mother?), echoing the film where Veronika plays a "floozy's mother." Fassbinder perfected the technique of background stories in *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, where mannikins changed position as the story in the foreground evolved. Visual planes keep the viewer's POV in the shadows even when light dominates, as in the multiple glass partitions in the clinic and the glazed solarium of Veronika's mansion. The clinic's "defect," the cell where Veronika is locked up, is the central *templum* which is the film's exit passage, which "shoots past" the memories of the spaces where Veronika has "come detached" from her image, as signaled by her attempt to find it in a hand-mirror in the cell. We finally see the newsroom from the reverse angle, cued by the alligator that hangs like a weather vane from the ceiling. In the beginning, we faced the head; now we face the tail.

Background: Fassbinder was interested in Sybille Schmitz's case because, perhaps, he saw both herself and himself as a personification of Germany's decay during and after World War II: "I have a tender feeling toward her (Schmitz)—I understand her in all the things she has done wrong. She has let herself be destroyed. Maybe that has something to do with me." The division in enunciation between the actions that people are led into and the enabling structures beneath, many of them criminal in the case of post-war Germany, sets up a hall of mirrors by which the film *Veronika Voss* is able to depict itself depicting itself depicting itself. The crystal/lens/mirror/window themes dominate visually. Tracking shots, such as the trolley shot in the beginning, create a diagram of the signifiers that link the two halves of enunciation, here portrayed as actress and audience, condensed into the emblem, "shadow and light." Robert, the sports reporter (who shifts from preferring winners to "losers"), himself occupies the shadows of observation as he observes and then tracks the mysterious situation of Veronika. Lights have lights and shadows have shadows as the film's editing and camera work intensify the use of frames, double frames, *poché* spaces, repeated motifs, and reflections.

Contribution to the General Idea: Overdetermination is present, not just is Fassbinder's personal involvement but in the accidents that became signatures of the film. Rosel Zech chose her farewell song, *Memories are Made of This*, "on a whim," but its lyrics are the antipode of the doubles that dominate the film's theme and structure: "one girl, one boy ..." are the lost ideal in this world of doubles, where everything comes in halves like lost gloves. Once the neutral thriller mechanism is installed (to investigate the illegal use of narcotics by high officials and prominent doctors), the sublime formal-structural interaction of the characters — who become "pure shadow and light," so to speak, can begin. This is evident in Dr. Katz's sinister beauty and the whiteness of her clinic, where there are no shadows. Sounds play an acousmatic role, particularly in the lyrics of songs played on the radio: "High on a Hilltop," "Run, Johnny, Run," and "Sixteen Tons" are featured in a radio broadcast show featuring country music. This amplify the acousmatic use of double entendres, such as the reference to a German prayer in the park rain scene, an invocation, echoed by the Easter benediction at Veronika's suicide. The echo chamber allows the film to refer to German history, Sybille Schmitz, Fassbinder's first treatment of the theme, itself, and Fassbinder's biographical complications simultaneously.

§1 The film offers a unique opportunity to see how the function of 'automaton' works within the province of S1, the master signifier. Specifically, it shows how the master signifier's structure as an 'enthymeme' (rhetorical syllogism) permits the work of art to 'enjoy' the audience. This is important for cases, epitomized by thrillers and tragedies, where the POV is mobilized within the work of art in a 'left-handed' mode — i.e. in the experience of displeasure, danger, pain, etc. This is a key to any theory that holds that Lacan's discourses are the formal basis for the varieties of fantasy formations, particularly in the arts. This transfer moves the discourses from their normal domain of social obligation (where symbolic castration creates an order based on mutual sacrifice, responsibility, and interdependence) to the alternative domain of enjoyment, normally the province of fantasy, seen as 'compensation' for the inability to frame encounters with the traumatic Real. McGowan argues that there are formal structures that regulate fantasy's alternatives to the symbolic domain's 'alienation' and the Real's traumatic direct encounters. The four classic Lacanian discourses (master, hysteric, university, analysis) seem to offer a basis for these formal structures, but several aspects of discourse have to be refitted to the case of the work of art.

§2 The stakes behind this conversion are significant. Primarily, such a 'structuralist' project takes over from the kind of genre analysis that attempted to categorize artistic works along 'meta-' lines, usually based on four forms of metaphor (comedy, romance, tragedy, irony). The problem here was that, if the theory 'worked', it would create a fractal structure undermining a strictly categorial interpretation. Irony would reveal 'pockets of comedy', which in turn would have micro-tragedies built in, etc. An understanding of discourse that operates within fantasy should avoid the idea of categories altogether in favor of a 'synesthetic' resistance to any single set of stabilities that identify a work or fragment as subject to paraphrase or interpretive explanation. It is the *resistance* that the work of art offers to interpretation that maintains its requisite openness, and that resistance is marshalled and maintained via the forms of discourse. Though not the structuralist project of 'meta-genres', discourse theory has access to the earlier theory wherever common interests in metaphor are at stake. One could say that the structuralists' project simply fell short of the radical Lacanian step of taking the role of the automaton seriously. This step requires the view that the art work 'enjoys the audience', and that the audience is in the position of the Lacanian/Freudian hysteric: undermined by the 'missing element', a, and confronted with the doubly negative commands of two Big Others, a left-handed 'evil' that 'makes way for' an ethical right-hand version. This is true not just for the specific types of narrative arts that favor hysterical subjectivity (thrillers, farces, tragedies) but art in general, in that the audience's mode of being is generically hysterical, and that hysteria opens the way, via the automaton, to other specific modes of representing subjectivity.

§3 While there are several productive ways to begin this project of seeing fantasy in terms of discourse, the 'short-circuit' that pays off the highest dividends involves the idea of completion. One economical insight into completion is the idea of the collection, where the compulsion to complete is materialized by the idea of a set of objects that effectively 'takes over' the project on enjoyment, mobilizing the idea of the gap or missing element as the component most active in the obsession of pleasure and pain. The collector is 'at pains' to complete the collection, and this condition is the basis both for the enjoyment of collecting and the structure of the collection. Like the compulsive gambler, the greater pleasure comes from the negative instances of loss and return. This is a more reliable engine of allegiance than any direct pleasure or value, since it operates in any condition, for any object, for any subject. The structure is present from the start and is self-sustaining. This is clear in the case of the ideological mandates of 'super-ego' figures such as Groucho Marx, who demand: 'Who are you going to believe? What I'm telling you or your own eyes?' Every hysterical subject lives under such mandates, where S1/S2 constitute the screen of reality against which pleasure is experienced as pain and pain as pleasure (1/x). My contention is that the -x of (S1/S2) and the 1/x of the hysterical subject's enjoyment explains the structural basis of fantasy in general; and that the frame conditions within fantasy elaborate different conditions that give art its requisite variety, its possibility of success and failure. Without this, we would not 'enjoy' so-called bad art, trash, kitsch, etc.; and the marginality that allows subjects to invest emotionally in 'debased' fantasies — increasingly common in McGowan's 'society of enjoyment' — would be inexplicable. The collection, which promises completion at the expense of the failures of incompleteness, allows us to move from the level of the representation to the artifact, metaphor to metonymy; where the behind-the-scenes role of metalepsis (metonymy of metonymy) can be described in full.

§4 The classical numbers of geometries of completion tell a similar story. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 21, 24 ... even the number of quarantine, 40 ... are all numbers with claim to be 'numbers of completion'. The Golden Mean of Fibonacci and the Golden Cut of ancient Roman and Greek architecture, the 'lambda' combining double and triple number sequences, and even the idea of $\sqrt{-1}$ involve the idea of completion by means of an 'irrational' or resistant element that simultaneously prevents and allows completion. The role of an element that is excluded but then inscribed at the center is the idea of the collection, and this explains the gambler's compulsion as well as the everyday collector's personal motivation. Significantly, this logic involves the issue of the automaton. In Aristotle's account of the four 'classic' causes of formal, final, material, and efficient cause, automaton is given as 'natural chance' which, thoroughly antithetical to the idea of cause as intentionality, cannot be ignored as a basis of causality and, one could argue further, the element operating inside the traditional causes as the radical inscribed element. Material cause is subjugated to formal cause, in the sense that the statue of Apollo might be made of either wood or bronze and still be an image of the sun god; similarly, final cause contains a germ of an 'inexplicable impulse' that, in the full-blown form of madness/mania, must still be located within subjectivity proper. Even formal cause betrays an alien element whenever the question of completeness runs head-on into the paradox of time as a basis for completion. The finitude of beginning, middle, and end is the basis for the universal aspiration for finality, where the end concludes by 'returning to the beginning' in a claim to 'say all that can be said on the matter'. One could say that any condition of presentation/reception creates margins and frames that must simultaneously be 'denied' if the representation's claim for completion is to be maintained. Negativity is built into the positive formula, the irrational element, which resists inclusion, must be included, and this condition of recursion is universal — hence, the need for a 'hysterical' theory of discourse (where hysteria appears as one of the specific modes of discourse).

§5 In *Veronika Voss*, the dial of the radio in VV's villa links her wartime 'successful' past with her current predicament of poverty and drug addiction. The Ø of the dial captures the idea of the extimate, the 'subjective object', internally divided, that mediates the 'master's voice' (S1, ideology) and the idea of sliding signifiers (S2) as bands of broadcast frequencies that overlap and slide past each other. The acousmatic role of the radio is carried through the film as background radio music from a country-music station playing songs laden with clues about Veronika's situation: 'Sixteen Tons', 'High on a Hilltop', 'Run, Johnny, Run'. Voss's own solo song, 'Memories Are Made of This', a paean to marital unity, is the positive impossible offered against the negative dualisms that pervade the film. The subject 'holds hands with' the demanding super-ego dominatrix, the unscrupulous doctor, on the left, and the pleasure-based world of art on the other, where a director rather than a doctor dominates what, as Voss says, is a reality of shadow and light, the basis of all film. 'Across from the subject', so to speak, is the radio, S2, the signifiers that slide past each other and refuse to be stabilized. This across is off-stage, the radio's 'elsewhere', the station that unknowingly coordinates its broadcasts with the final twists and turns of Voss's life. The radio's disk-jockies 'enjoy the audience' in a rather literal way by automating the process of enjoyment on behalf of listeners who enjoy because they go along with the mandate of the appliance to 'Enjoy!' whatever is being played. Similarly, Voss's solo song, 'Memories Are Made of This', tell the audience what is enjoyable, and how it is to be enjoyed, without giving any helpful instructions on how to enjoy. This, one realizes, is the 'enjoyment' of morphine as well. The drug 'enjoys' the user to the point that delirium creates black-outs of the local scale and death at the larger scale. The doctor and her three associates enjoy Voss's dwindling wealth and will finally take over her villa, demonstrating the parasitical process of hysterical enjoyment in the easily recognizable 'journalistic' formula of the exposé.

§6 The film, after some backstory detailing, begins formally with a 'prayer', a phrase that Robert uses when he offers Voss shelter from the storm. This prayer is echoed in the final death scene, where Easter mass replaces the country music show's playing of 'High on a Hilltop'. The film could be said to be strung between an invocation and a benediction, a transubstantiation of the body of a sacrificial victim, flesh made word in this case. The words of the invocation and benediction have literalized/embodied themselves in the sacrifice of Voss through the recursive process of addiction, where the victim is enjoyed rather than enjoys, reflecting directly the audience's relation to the film as automaton. In turn, the automaton's logic is explained entirely by the boundary conditions by which the completion of the 'collection' — the narrative sequence of events — calls for the inclusion of the Real/impossible alien element, the negative non-element, that makes the collection a continuously failing project. The 'evil' (the left-handed or literally tragic evidence of the film) makes way for the 'good' (the vindication of Veronika Voss as a hero who has been wrongfully abused and whose death will serve to purify us), a 'stereognostic' basis for the work of art through the hysterical transfer of enjoyment from audience to artwork.

§7 The role of the future anterior should not be overlooked. It is the 'end by which time' completion will be made possible through the 'retroaction' of analepsis, keyed and opened by metalepsis. In this way, the Real will be present, albeit negatively, not by restoring any loss but by placing loss, as an inscription, through negotiations made at the margins and frames of the work. In this way, we reconceive the tracking shot through the trolley in the opening scenes as a means by which Voss's misrecognition has led to the desire of Robert to see, 'first through detached investigation', but then, as a 'hot detective', in a way that will involve him in the Real of Voss's destruction.