

Tokio Whip: Warp 'n' Woof

A READER'S GUIDE

by Arturo Silva

What is *Tokio Whip*? The city in language, the city as language, on the micro and macro levels; an “experimental” novel, meaning only that style and structure are paramount over story and character (though those are there too¹); a linguistic, stylistic, structural, cartographical, experiential (eighteen years!), etcetera, reading of Tokyo – a reading on every level – a city novel that begins with its title. *Tokio Whip* is a title:

TITLE

1. TW = talking/walking; it’s all people do in the book.
2. W(h)ip = Work In Progress
3. Whip = long, flowing sentences (the twelve ‘whips’) that snap back on the reader
4. Whip = the mix (as in ‘whipped’ food) of bits and styles (the 24 Elements, and all the others).
5. Tokyo with an “i” = the old, three-syllable Western way of pronouncing the city name, and thus a reminder that this is a *Western* novel. (And whenever we see “Tokyo” spelt “Tokio” it is Lang speaking.)
6. tOkIO whIp, the doubled “o, i” = “oi”, an abstracted exclamation point, a Greek shout of joy, and graphically a male/female symbol of sexual union; doubled, it becomes a sign of an excess of sexual joy.

PLACES / CHAPTERS

Part One, “The Yamanote,” consists of twelve chapters, but is divided at mid-point (between Chapters Six and Seven) by Part Two, “Tozai! Tozai!,” and resumes afterwards. (The Yamanote is the name of the train line that loops round the so-called city center. The Tozai is one of the subway lines that horizontally intersects the Yamanote. “Tozai! Tozai!” is the cry heard at the opening of a Kabuki performance; it means “East, West,! East, West!,” something akin to a “Hear Ye! Hear Ye!”)

The names of the twelve chapters of Part One are compounds of stations along the Yamanote line, which in fact has 29 stations, but are here reduced to 24, or 12 doubled stations/hours. (The old Chinese clock had 12 double-hours.)

TIMES

1. A day: from the east side of Tokyo, a group of friends walk west (The Walk), stop to see another friend’s film (The Film), arrive at Roberta’s in Shinjuku (The party), and then continue farther west to greet the rising sun.
2. Years: mid-1980s–mid-1990s and beyond.

¹ Briefly, the novel concerns a group of twelve friends (male, female, Japanese, non-Japanese in equal parts), and especially Roberta, who has left Lang and come to Tokyo, and his journey there to “get her back,” and the effect of Tokyo upon them all.

THE ELEMENTS

Each chapter is composed of a mix of units that recur in all of the other chapters. This is an almost solid grid of an evenly distributed 12 Large Elements and 12 Small Elements, plus 108 Miscellanea, as well as various other bits, all together totalling 577. The distribution of the Large and the Small Elements is according to a cyclic system (the “RAM Cycles”) that allows for more than sufficient variations to ensure both predictability and surprise. But within this distribution there is another “system,” another rhythm(s) – chance, coincidence, faith. In other words, it’s not all *fixed*.

The 12 Large Elements can be divided into four groups, Speech, Events, Meditations, and Art:

1. *Speech*

1. Long Dialogs, LD: all of the characters, in pairs (according to the RAM Cycles);
2. Short Dialogs, SD: between Roberta and Lang;
3. My Monolog, ML: the author’s monolog.

2. *Events*

4. The Film: consisting of 12 photographs of 12 representative architectural sites – a restaurant, a museum, a home, a train car, etc. – and that follows the Yamanote Line counter-clockwise;
5. The Walk: there are 36 of these (and with various combinations of characters taking part): 12 across the city, East to West; 12 around it, that is, along the Yamanote line; and 12, well, all over the place;
6. The Party: there are 13/(24) of these: one is Roberta’s Party – *the Party* – parts of which occur in each chapter (ie, one divided into twelve parts); and again, 12 other parties, or types of “party” (a private dinner, a serious drunk, a “sayonara party,” etc.).

3. *Three Private Meditations*

7. Lang’s Meditation, LM;
8. Roberta’s Meditation, RM;
9. My (the Author’s) Meditation, MM.

4. *Art*

10. The Songs Common to Dreams, SCTD: 24 separate dreams, two per chapter, with pairs of dreamers. Let’s say, characters A and B each have a separate dream, but each of those dreams occurs in the same place, and in the backgrounds of each dream the same song is heard. In the next chapter, characters B and C will have separate dreams, but their dreams share the same place and song. The places are on the twelve furthest border

points of the city, according to my compass; the 12 songs are American: Blues, Gospel, Jazz, Country; i.e., the borders of the city are contiguous to the borders of consciousness (and the music the aural borders). All together, city, dream, song uniting the 12 characters;

11. Stories and Legends of Tokyo, S&L: these 12 go back in time (see below for list);
12. Film Quotes, FQ: to infuse the city with the seeds of some film culture (which it so needs again!).

The 12 Small Elements can be divided into two groups, the first is comprised of:

Six recurring Phrases

1. I Saw This, Saw: from Goya, a title of one of the “Caprichos”;
2. TTT: from Joyce, who has “dear, dirty Dublin”;
3. Rich and Strange, R&S: from Shakespeare, “The Tempest”;
4. The Costs of Confusion Notwithstanding, CCN;
5. Who is this person for whom love?, Who: “The Names of Love”;
6. Ah, but this city, AH.

(1–4 and 6 are distributed according to the RAM Cycles; 5 occurs all together in Chapter 8.)

7–12 are a variety of other Small Elements

1. 1. “R ‘n’ L!” = The Letter: from the Author to Roberta and Lang, or “A Portrait of the Artist as a Silly Young Thing”;² each letter has twelve bits, one of which is a reference to Elvis;
2. 2. “Original Contributions,” OC: other pieces of writing, poems and such; who says a novel has to be whole and unified? Doesn’t any city – and especially Tokyo – have elements that are unexpected, out-of-place, don’t-fit-in (but-do)? (See below for list.)
3. 3. Anti-Tokio, Anti: the 12 characters’ protests to the Author against his whole-hearted love for the city;
4. 4. Ante-Tokyo, Ante: their recollections of other cities;
5. 5. Literary Quotes, LQ: largely other writers’ remarks on cities;
6. 6. Litanies and Lyrics, L&L: verbal fantasies; these might be confused with the Miscellanea, but they are distinct in their own way.

² Incidentally, the Writer of this is to be distinguished from the Author of that.

Note: the 24 Elements can also be seen in another way:

- 12 belonging to all 12 characters: the six Recurring Phrases, the SCTD, Anti- and Ante-Tokyo, the Long Dialogs, the Walk, and the Party;
- 6 belonging only to Roberta, Lang, and the Author: the three Meditations, the Letter, the Short Dialogs, and My Monolog;
- 6 are “impersonal”: the Film (though it is dubbed “A VZ Film”), the Film Quotes, the Stories and Legends, The Litanies and Lyrics, the Literary Quotes, and the Original Contributions.

Besides the 24 Elements, there are also:

108 Miscellanea: Twelve per Chapters 1–6, and six per the last six Chapters; these gradually increase in size (chaos happily overtaking order – and so too for the Reader).

The 12 “Whips”: the 12 sentences (see above, “Title, C”) that head each chapter title and figure in that chapter’s Long Dialog, and that relate the story of Roberta and Lang.

One Overture: the brief opening of Chapter 1.

12 Sex Lyrics: in Chapter 11.

August: six more dialogs between Roberta and Lang (in Chapter 12).

Tozai! Tozai!: Part Two, a middle chapter that interrupts/divides Part One: this is in three parts, a Dialog, a Letter, and Notes: these comprise the city’s subway system (the underbelly, the sun/anus thesis); the bridges of the Sumida River, and the Sobu Line, heading east, and evoking the city’s memory/past.

“WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?”

A better way to put it is what does it want (to do)? Admittedly, there are a few ideas and intentions:

- *To write Tokyo*: again, the city as/of language; an experimental city novel in the Western tradition (eg, Joyce’s Dublin, Bely’s St Petersburg, Perec’s Paris, Pamuk’s Istanbul), or even – in another medium – Jacques Rivette’s Paris of *Out 1*);
- And in this writing, *to write the experience* of Tokyo’s dizzying balance of chaos and order.³ This is accomplished in at least two ways:
 1. The reader never knows quite exactly what is going on, but the writing and its variety (the mix, the whip) *charms* him or her to continue

³ The newcomer to Tokyo can’t “figure it out,” perceives only disorder; after some time he/she starts to see recurring elements of order (the old city-as-a-group-of-villages thesis); and later still, sees how much more chaos there actually is – but is by now ok with that.

on her or his way. It is then a book meant to charm the reader, to pleasure and to humor him and her. (I think it is a very funny book, and as it proceeds a highly erotic one too. ((I just found a blurb of another book that I wish I could claim for the *Whip*: “A book to seduce the world.”)))

2. There is a stable, organized reality – order – the reader relies on (24 regularly recurring Elements), along with another set of Miscellanea – chaos – that seem to make no sense. At first these appear as one-liners, then as the chapters proceed they increase in size so as to appear to overwhelm, but by this point the reader is acclimatized to the surrounding chaos and so accepts it.
- Not so much as to connect everything – city, world – memory, dream, desire – actuality – as to *express* its plenitude.
 - Stylistically, to *connect* east and west: styles of conversation (lyrical-but-empty Japanese with graceless-but-content-full Western, or specifically American);
 - To *show* Shitamachi (old Tokyo) as having relocated West (the new Tokyo); the Sumida River become the Bay (and Tokyo thus doubled, enlarged);
 - To *free*: the book’s elaborate structure allows the Author/Characters/Readers greater freedom, and emulates the city’s own chaos and order which propels the alert Tokyoite to a greater degree of freed Imagination.
 - To *compose* a conversation novel. Again, the T of the title invokes Talk.
 - To *compose* also a novel that my flâneur reader walks through as one walks Tokyo. The W of the title invokes Walk.
 - To *present* the Author as a multiplicity of selves; and to delight and complicate the Author-Character-Reader continuum/relationship.

NAMES ‘N’ NUMBERS

Original Contributions

Ars Amatoria / Ars Poetica
ABC
Antoku and Rokudai
The Articulation of a Need
Spanish Joys
The Cranes of Tokio
The Happy Isles of van Zandt
One Thing Leads to Another (for TB)
Purgatorio Monogatari
A Tour of the Mariannas
Urbi et Orbi
The Way They Left / He Said/She Said

Stories and Legends of Tokyo

Kazuyoshi Miura: Murder in the Media
Sir William Rutland
Musashino Fujin
The Teigin Incident
Hazuko's Hoax
The Loves and Death of Osugi Sakae
Osen and Sōkichi
Okio-san
Bakin and the Eight Dogs
Hiraga Gennai and "Dutch Learning"
1657: The Fire of the Long Sleeves
1457: Ota Dokan

The Names of Love

Roberta	To love	A Poetics of Union
Arlene	To love and to want to love	A State of Desire
Marianne	To love – perhaps	A Prospect on to the Infinite
Lang	To love one, to love many	A Condition of Knowledge
Van Zandt	To love many and to lose oneself	A Situation of Plenitude
Cafferty	To love by chance	A Position of Refusal
Hiroko	To love and to love and to love	A Realization of Both Being and Non-Being
Hiromi	To demand love	A Fall from Grace
Kazuko	To have loved once and no more	The Responsibilities of Memory
Hiro	To 'love'	A Denial of the Absolute
Kazuo	To love once and only once more	An Acceptance of Mastery
Kaoru	To hate	A Denial of Wonder

Numbers

LD, SD, ML, Film	= 4 x 12 =	48
Walk	= 3 x 12 =	36
Party	= 2 x 12 =	24
LM, RM, MM	= 3 x 1 =	3
SCTD	= 2 x 12 =	24
S&L, FQ	= 2 x 12 =	24
6 recurring phrases	= 6 x 12 =	72
Letter	= 12 x 12 =	144
OC, Anti-, Ante, LQ, L&L	= 5 x 12 =	60
Miscellanea	=	108
Whips	= 1 x 12 =	12
Sex	=	12

Tozai! Tozai!	=	3
Overture	=	1
August	=	6
Total	=	577

IMAGES & FANCIES

Two abstracted kanji:

Sun (a circle bisected horizontally) = The Yamanote line crossed by the Chuo.
 Eye (a circle twice bisected horizontally) = The Yamanote line crossed by the Chuo and Sobu lines.

Fancies

The Yamanote line plus Tokyo Bay = the Doubled City, land and water; thus, the city doubled upon and mirroring itself, as well as the sign for infinity.
 The Path of the Songs Common to Dreams = Mandala and cloud. Three circles bisecting each other (or, a circle within a circle within a circle, each half the size of the former) = Tokyo as a Mika Yoshizawa drawing.
 The Yamanote line and the subway system = an anus and an eye (circle with various lines extending from it).
 The Yamanote line (its actual shape), along with the curve of the Chuo line and the Palace, plus the many train lines coming together by the Sumida River running alongside = Tokyo as the Face of James Joyce (Joyce's head ((Yamanote)), the eyepatch and strap ((Chuo and Palace)), the ear listening to the river of language).