TEI By Example

TEI by Example. Module 4

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5. Algernon Charles Swinburne: Sestina

This example features a so-called ‘Sestina’, a highly structured verse form consisting of 6 six-line stanzas followed by 1 three-line stanza. While the same set of six words conclude the lines of each stanza, in each stanza they occur in a different order. Since Swinburne in this example adheres to a strictly alternating rhyming scheme (if the internal rhyme of the tercet is not taken into account), the line ending patterns in this example vary from the traditional structural pattern for a sestina.

In this example, the rhyming scheme is indicated per stanza, using the @rhyme attribute on the stanza’s <lg> element. Rhyming words are marked with <rhyme> elements, with a @label attribute indicating their place in the rhyming scheme. In order to trace the line ending scheme, the ending words of the first stanza have been identified with a @xml:id attribute. Since they were already marked with a <rhyme> element, identification happens on this level. In the other stanzas, each line ending word is connected to its counterpart of the first stanza with a @corresp attribute. This is one of the global linking attributes, whose value formalises a correspondence relationship with another identified element (see P5.16.4 Correspondence and Alignment). Since the reference is to a local element (an identified element in the same document), its value takes the form of a shorthand local pointer by simply preceding the target’s @xml:id value with a hash sign #. Here too, the <rhyme> element provides a sufficient peg for pointing out this correspondence. Otherwise, if no other element would have been available, a <seg> element could be introduced for identifying or referring to a span of text.
<lg type="sestina">
  <lg type="sestet" rhyme="ababab">
    <l>I saw my soul at rest upon a <rhythm label="a" xml:id="A">day</rhythm>.
    <l>As a bird sleeping in the nest of <rhythm label="b" xml:id="B">night</rhythm>,
    <l>Among soft leaves that give the starlight <rhythm label="a" xml:id="C">way</rhythm>.
    <l>To touch its wings but not its eyes with <rhythm label="b" xml:id="D">light</rhythm>,
    <l>So that it knew as one in visions <rhythm label="a" xml:id="E">may</rhythm>,
    <l>And knew not as men waking, of <rhythm label="b" xml:id="F">delight</rhythm>.
  </lg>
  <lg type="sestet" rhyme="ababab">
    <l>This was the measure of my soul's <rhythm label="a" corresp="#F">delight</rhythm>.
    <l>It had no power of joy to fly by <rhythm label="b" corresp="#A">day</rhythm>,
    <l>Nor part in the large lordship of the <rhythm label="a" corresp="#D">light</rhythm>,
    <l>But in a secret moon-beholden <rhythm label="b" corresp="#C">way</rhythm>,
    <l>Had all its will of dreams and pleasant <rhythm label="a" corresp="#B">night</rhythm>,
    <l>And all the love and life that sleepers <rhythm label="b" corresp="#E">may</rhythm>.
  </lg>
  <lg type="sestet" rhyme="ababab">
    <l>But such life's triumph as men waking <rhythm label="a" corresp="#E">may</rhythm>.
    <l>It might not have to feed its faint <rhythm label="b" corresp="#F">delight</rhythm>.
    <l>Between the stars by night and sun by <rhythm label="a" corresp="#A">day</rhythm>,
    <l>Because its way was as a lost star's <rhythm label="b" corresp="#C">way</rhythm>,
    <l>A world's not wholly known of day or <rhythm label="b" corresp="#B">night</rhythm>.
  </lg>
  <lg type="sestet" rhyme="ababab">
    <l>All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of <rhythm label="a" corresp="#B">night</rhythm>.
    <l>Made it all music that such minstrels <rhythm label="b" corresp="#E">may</rhythm>,
    <l>And all they had they gave it of <rhythm label="a" corresp="#F">delight</rhythm>,
    <l>What place shall be for any starry <rhythm label="b" corresp="#A">day</rhythm>,
    <l>What part of heaven in all the wide sun's <rhythm label="b" corresp="#C">way</rhythm>.
  </lg>
  <lg type="sestet" rhyme="ababab">
    <l>Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the <rhythm label="a" corresp="#C">way</rhythm>,
    <l>Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed <rhythm label="b" corresp="#B">night</rhythm>,
    <l>And sought no strength nor knowledge of the <rhythm label="a" corresp="#A">day</rhythm>,
    <l>Nor closer touch conclusive of <rhythm label="b" corresp="#F">delight</rhythm>,
    <l>Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers <rhythm label="a" corresp="#E">may</rhythm>,
    <l>Nor more of song than they, nor more of <rhythm label="b" corresp="#D">light</rhythm>.
  </lg>
</lg>
For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night
Shall care no more to fare as all men may
But be his place of pain or of delight.
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

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