TEI By Example

TEI by Example. Module 5

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4. Front and Back Matter

Besides peculiar basic structures in the actual text, drama texts can be preceded or followed by specific structural elements. Consider following fragments preceding and succeeding the play’s body text:

**front**

CHARACTERS:
USER: a computer user
COMP: a DECPDP-10 computer
demigods:
PROG: the computer programmer
ENGI: an engineer
helpdesk, narrator

The play is situated in an anonymous computer lab room, at an undetermined time. Technical equipment looks outdated, though, while suggesting naive technological optimism.

Prologue, spoken by USER:
'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

**back**

Epilogue, spoken by PROG:
"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Hello World, and Goodbye.
Barry Crowne − ENGI, Douglas Everett − USER.
Challenge

What structural elements can you distinguish in these front and back sections?

Following are significant elements in a drama text's front and back part:
- Cast list
- Description of setting
- Prologue
- Epilogue
- Performance information

The following sections of this tutorial explain how these structures can be encoded using TEI.

4.1 Cast List

The front matter of this play starts with an enumeration of all dramatic characters, and a brief explanation of their respective roles in the play. This could be encoded as a basic TEI `<list>`, with each character and role set as a distinct `<item>`. However, the `drama` module includes a dedicated `<castList>` element. Inside `<castList>`, each named character is to be encoded as a distinct `<castItem>` element. This description of a cast item can consist of a `<role>` element, describing the name of the dramatic role; a `<roleDesc>` element, describing the role of that character; and an `<actor>` element, naming the actor performing the role:
This example, however, is incorrect. A `<castList>` element doesn't allow unstructured text, as illustrated by the highlighted phrase "demigods:". Rather than naming or describing one single character, this functions as a kind of label for the following two character descriptions. This suggests a grouping, which can be accomplished in TEI by wrapping grouped `<castItem>` elements in a `<castGroup>` element. The label, then, can be encoded as a `<head>` for the `<castGroup>`. The @rend attribute can be used to indicate any typographical indication of this grouping. If in our example, the PROG and ENGI character descriptions are grouped using a brace, this can be expressed by the value braced for the @rend attribute:
If we look closely, we can see that the last two character descriptions could be considered a group as well. Yet, they are a mere enumeration of character names. Minor characters in a play are often just listed together. Such a list can be encoded in a single `<castItem>` element, using a `@type` attribute with value `list`. Note how these character descriptions only consist of a role description:
<castList>
  <head>CHARACTERS: </head>
  <castItem>
    <role>USER</role>
    <roleDesc>a computer user</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
    <role>COMP</role>
    <roleDesc>a DECPDP-10 computer</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castGroup rend="braced">
    <head> demigods: </head>
    <castItem>
      <role>PROG</role>
      <roleDesc>the computer programmer</roleDesc>
    </castItem>
    <castItem>
      <role>ENGI</role>
      <roleDesc>an engineer</roleDesc>
    </castItem>
  </castGroup>
  <castItem type="list" > <roleDesc>helpdesk</roleDesc>,
      <roleDesc>narrator</roleDesc> 
  </castItem>
</castList>

Note how the @rend attribute on the <castGroup> element is used to indicate that the grouping of cast items is typographically supported by using braces.

Remember how other elements in the transcription of this drama text referred to the definition of dramatic characters 'elsewhere in the transcription' (see 3.2 The basic building block: speeches (p. ), 3.3 Stage directions (p. ))? Well, this is the place! Therefore, we'll add the identifier codes to the respective <role> elements, using the @xml:id attribute:
<castList>
  <head>CHARACTERS:</head>
  <castItem>
    <role xml:id="user">USER</role>
    <roleDesc>a computer user</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
    <role xml:id="comp">COMP</role>
    <roleDesc>a DEC PDP-10 computer</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castGroup rend="braced">
    <head>demigods:</head>
    <castItem>
      <role xml:id="prog">PROG</role>
      <roleDesc>the computer programmer</roleDesc>
    </castItem>
    <castItem>
      <role xml:id="engi">ENGI</role>
      <roleDesc>an engineer</roleDesc>
    </castItem>
    <castItem type="list">
      <roleDesc>helpdesk</roleDesc>,
      <roleDesc> narrator</roleDesc>
    </castItem>
  </castGroup>
</castList>

Summary

A cast list can be encoded with the <castList> element. It consists of a number of <castItem> elements, providing information on the name of the role (<role>), the description of the dramatic role (<roleDesc>), and/or actors who perform(ed) the role (<actor>). Enumerations of minor characters can be encoded in a single <castItem> element, with a <type> attribute whose value is list. Groups of character descriptions in <castItem> can be wrapped in a <castGroup> element.

4.2 Description of Setting

Sometimes, the front matter of a play contains a general description of the setting. This can be encoded with the specific <set> element. As <set> can't contain unstructured text, its text should be wrapped in paragraphs (or lines, for that matter). For example:
The play is situated in an anonymous computer lab room, at an undetermined time. Technical equipment looks outdated, though, while suggesting naive technological optimism.

Summary

If the front part of a drama text contains descriptions of the settings in which the action of the play takes place, these should be encoded in `<p>` elements inside a `<set>` element.

4.3 Prologue and Epilogue

A drama text may be preceded and/or concluded by a short speech. Such speeches can be encoded as `<prologue>` and `<epilogue>`, respectively. They can be encoded according to their genre-characteristics (most often prose or verse), or according to their rhetoric characteristics (as a speech in `<sp>`, which is particularly meaningful if the speech contains typical dramatical elements such as stage directions). Here is an example of both approaches:

```
front

back
```

......

1 Caution! Whereas a general description of the settings in the front matter of a drama text is to be encoded in a `<set>` element, descriptions of the setting in the body of a drama text should be encoded as stage directions with `<stage>` (see 3.3 Stage directions (p. ______)).
Summary

Speeches serving as a prologue or epilogue to a play can be encoded with `<prologue>`, or `<epilogue>`, respectively.

Note, that the analysis of a speech as prologue or epilogue is sometimes open to interpretation. When such speeches immediately precede or follow the actual drama text, they may as well be regarded as a separate division of the text body. Note, however, that they should then be encoded inside the existing dramatic structure, or inside a separate textual division (`<div>`). When considered as part of the actual drama text, they may not be encoded as `<prologue>` or `<epilogue>`.
4.4 Performance Description

The front or back matter of a drama text may include information on how it should be, or has been, performed. Such information should be encoded as structured text in one or more paragraphs. When descriptions of past performances include information on the cast, this can be captured in an embedded <castList> element. The back part of our example happens to feature a performance description:

```xml
<performance>
  <head>Hello World, and Goodbye.</head>
  <p>Performed for the first time on the <name type="event">Festival for Computing in the Humanities</name>, at <name type="place.venue">Shakespeare's New Globe Theatre</name>, <name type="place.city">London</name>, on <date when="2050-06-21">June 21, 2050</date>.</p>
  <castList>
    <head>Actors:</head>
    <castItem>
      <actor>Alfred Brown</actor>
      <role>PROG</role>
    </castItem>
    <castItem>
      <actor>Barry Crowne</actor>
      <role>ENGI</role>
    </castItem>
    <castItem>
      <actor>Douglas Everett</actor>
      <role>USER</role>
    </castItem>
  </castList>
</performance>
```

Summary

Information relating to the performance of a drama text, be it descriptions of past performances or general directions for future ones, can be encoded in a <performance> element in the front or back matter of a drama text. Besides a heading and paragraphs, such performance descriptions can contain their own embedded <castList> elements, listing cast for cast lists relating to a particular performance.