Practice in Reading Transcription, Part II

To help you in learning transcription, here is a sample passage, written in a fairly broad phonemic transcription. The transcription represents my own speech, which is a fairly neutral variety of American English. I’ve include ligatures for diphthongs and affricates, but no length marks, since their use for American English is a matter of dispute. The original punctuation is included for clarity, though this is not part of the IPA. Capitalization is not reflected, since the IPA has no way of depicting capital/lower case distinction. A caution: many “little words” (grammatical words) have special pronunciations when used in a sentence. Thus for is [ˈfɔː] by itself, but [fɔr] in (say) go for broke. Also, consonants are often dropped from long consonant sequences in connected speech; I’ve occasionally reflected this in the transcription as well.

The answer (orthographic version) to the transcription is given on the next page.

Feedback on this new exercise (including corrections and complaints) is welcome.

A similar exercise with a different text can be obtained from the course website, http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/103/
Linguistics 103 Exercise in transcription reading, Part II

«sztń iz, wth ḥez 'sidx ḏst məs bi fɔrænt'pɔræd bai 'sztń 'bʌdż, ḥe wthj ḥez 'ʃlaʊəz wəθ 'sepərət 'sɛksəs əbsələltli ək'kwələni ɪə 'eɪdʒənsi ov 'sztń 'ɪnəkts tə 'hɪŋj 'pɔlən fəm 'wɔn 'ʃlaʊə tə də 'lədə, ir iz 'ɪkwəl ɪərə'pəstəs tə ˈkɑːnt fɔ di 'stɪəktʃə ov ′dɪs 'rɛdə,səit, wɪd əts ək'leɪʃəns tu 'sɛnvəl ɔr'ɡənɪk 'biɪŋz, bai di ə'fɛkts ov ək'stənəl ˈkən'difsəns, ə ov 'hæbət, ə ov əd vo 'ləfɪʃən ov əd 'plæə rɪ'səlf.

— fləm ″,ɪnɪʃə'pʌkʃən″ tu ən di ˈʊrədʒən ov 'spɪʃəz bai ˈmɪnz ov ˈhæfɪʃəl əs'leɪʃən, bai ˈʃɔlər ˈdɑːmən ]
Answer:

In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and other such facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species. Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified so as to acquire that perfection of structure and co-adaptation which most justly excites our admiration. Naturalists continually refer to external conditions, such as climate, food, etc., as the only possible cause of variation. In one very limited sense, as we shall hereafter see, this may be true; but it is preposterous to attribute to mere external conditions, the structure, for instance, of the woodpecker, with its feet, tail, beak, and tongue, so admirably adapted to catch insects under the bark of trees. In the case of the mistletoe, which draws its nourishment from certain trees, which has seeds that must be transported by certain birds, and which has flowers with separate sexes absolutely requiring the agency of certain insects to bring pollen from one flower to the other, it is equally preposterous to account for the structure of this parasite, with its relations to several distinct organic beings, by the effects of external conditions, or of habit, or of the volition of the plant itself.

— from “Introduction” to On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection by Charles Darwin (1859)