

The Chaos

--Gerard Nolst Trenité¹

Dearest *creature* in *creation*²
Studying English *pronunciation*,
I will teach you in my *verse*
Sounds like *corpse*, *corps*, *horse* and *worse*.

I will keep you, *Susy*, *busy*,
Make your *head* with *heat* grow dizzy;
Tear in eye, your dress you'll *tear*;
Queer, fair *seer*, *hear* my *prayer*.

Pray, console your loving *poet*,
Make my coat look *new*, dear, *sew* it!
Just compare *heart*, *hear* and *heard*,
Dies and *diet*, *lord* and *word*. [0:35]³

Sword and *sward*, *retain* and *Britain*
(Mind the latter how it's *written*).
Made has not the sound of *bade*,
Say-said, *pay-paid*, *laid* but *plaid*.

Now I surely will not *plague* you
With such words as *vague* and *ague*,
But be careful how you *speak*,
Say: *gush*, *bush*, *steak*, *streak*, *break*, *bleak*,

Previous, *precious*, *fuchsia*, *via*
Recipe, *pipe*, *studding-sail*, *choir*;
Woven, *oven*, *how* and *low*,
Script, *receipt*, *shoe*, *poem*, *toe*. [1:11]

Say, expecting fraud and *trickery*:
Daughter, *laughter* and *Terpsichore*,
Branch, *ranch*, *measles*, *topsails*, *aisles*,
Missiles, *similes*, *reviles*.

Wholly, *holly*, *signal*, *signing*,
Same, *examining*, but *mining*,
Scholar, *vicar*, and *cigar*,
Solar, *mica*, *war* and *far*.

From "desire": *desirable-admirable* from
"admire",
Lumber, *plumber*, *bier*, but *brier*,
Topsham, *brougham*, *renown*, but *known*,
Knowledge, *done*, *lone*, *gone*, *none*, *tone*,
[1:51]

One, *anemone*, *Balmoral*,
Kitchen, *lichen*, *laundry*, *laurel*.
Gertrude, *German*, *wind* and *wind*,
Beau, *kind*, *kindred*, *queue*, *mankind*,

Tortoise, *turquoise*, *chamois-leather*,
Reading, *Reading*, *heathen*, *heather*.
This phonetic labyrinth
Gives *moss*, *gross*, *brook*, *brooch*, *ninth*,
plinth.

Have you ever yet *endeavoured*
To pronounce *revered* and *severed*,
Demon, *lemon*, *ghoul*, *foul*, *soul*,
Peter, *petrol* and *patrol*? [2:29]

Billet does not end like *ballet*;
Bouquet, *wallet*, *mallet*, *chalet*.
Blood and *flood* are not like *food*,
Nor is *mould* like *should* and *would*.

Banquet is not nearly *parquet*,
Which exactly rhymes with *khaki*.
Discount, *viscount*, *load* and *broad*,
Toward, to *forward*, to *reward*,

Ricocheted and *crocheting*, *croquet*?
Right! Your pronunciation's OK.
Rounded, *wounded*, *grieve* and *sieve*,
Friend and *fiend*, *alive* and *live*. [3:06]

¹ Published with the written permission of [Jan G. Nolst Trenité](#), the Netherlands.

² *Italics* show words that compare to one or more other words. Underlined words are those that intermediate speakers of English will want to know.

³ The numbers in [] indicate the place in the audio file. Please see www.statesidesounds.com/trenite_poem.php.

Is your r correct in higher?
 Keats asserts it rhymes Thalia.
Hugh, but hug, and hood, but hoot,
Buoyant, minute, but minute.

Say abscission with precision,
 Now: position and transition;
 Would it tally with my rhyme
 If I mentioned paradigm?

Twopence, threepence, tease are easy,
 But cease, crease, grease and greasy?
Cornice, nice, valise, revise,
Rabies, but lullabies. [3:43]

Of such puzzling words as nauseous,
 Rhyming well with cautious, tortious,
 You'll envelop lists, I hope,
 In a linen envelope.

Would you like some more? You'll have it!
Affidavit, David, davit.
 To abjure, to perjure. *Sheik*
 Does not sound like Czech but ache.

Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, loch, moustache, eleven.
 We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed but vowed. [4:18]

Mark the difference, moreover,
 Between mover, plover, Dover.
Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice,

Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.
Petal, penal, and canal,
Wait, surmise, plait, promise, pal,

Suit, suite, ruin. *Circuit*, conduit
 Rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it",
 But it is not hard to tell
 Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall. [4:55]

Muscle, muscular, gaol, iron,
Timber, climber, bullion, lion,
Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
Senator, spectator, mayor,

Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
 Has the a of drachm and hammer.
Pussy, hussy and possess,
Desert, but desert, address.

Golf, wolf, countenance, lieutenants
 Hoist in lieu of flags left pennants.
Courier, courtier, tomb, bomb, comb,
Cow, but Cowper, some and home. [5:34]

"Solder, soldier! Blood is thicker",
 Quoth he, "than liqueur or liquor",
 Making, it is sad but true,
 In bravado, much ado.

Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
 Neither does devour with clangour.
Pilot, pivot, gaunt, but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand and grant.

Arsenic, specific, scenic,
Relic, rhetoric, hygienic.
Gooseberry, goose, and close, but close,
Paradise, rise, rose, and dose. [6:13]

Say inveigh, neigh, but inveigle,
 Make the latter rhyme with eagle.
Mind! Meandering but mean,
Valentine and magazine.

And I bet you, dear, a penny,
 You say mani-(fold) like many,
 Which is wrong. Say rapier, pier,
Tier (one who ties), but tier.

Arch, archangel; pray, does erring
 Rhyme with herring or with stirring?
Prison, bison, treasure trove,
Treason, hover, cover, cove, [6:49]

Perseverance, severance. Ribald
 Rhymes (but *piebald* doesn't) with *nibbled*.
Phaeton, paeon, gnat, ghat, gnaw,
Lien, psychic, shone, bone, pshaw.

Don't be down, my own, but rough it,
 And distinguish buffet, buffet;
Brood, stood, roof, rook, school, wool, boon,
 Worcester, Boleyn, to *impugn*.

Say in sounds correct and *sterling*
Hearse, hear, hearken, year and yearling.
Evil, devil, mezzotint,
 Mind the z! (A gentle hint.) [7:32]

Now you need not pay attention
 To such sounds as I don't mention,
 Sounds like *pores*, pause, pours and *paws*,
 Rhyming with the pronoun yours;

Nor are proper names included,
 Though I often heard, as you did,
 Funny rhymes to *unicorn*,
 Yes, you know them, *Vaughan* and
Strachan.

No, my maiden, coy and *comely*,
 I don't want to speak of *Cholmondeley*.
 No. Yet *Froude* compared with proud
 Is no better than *McLeod*. [8:05]

But mind *trivial* and *vial*,
Tripod, menial, denial,
Troll and trolley, realm and ream,
Schedule, mischief, schism, and scheme.

Argil, gill, Argyll, gill. Surely
 May be made to rhyme with *Raleigh*,
 But you're not supposed to say
Piquet rhymes with *sobriquet*.

Had this *invalid* *invalid*
 Worthless documents? How *pallid*,
 How *uncouth* he, *couchant*, looked,
 When for *Portsmouth* I had booked! [8:39]

Zeus, Thebes, Thales, Aphrodite,
Paramour, enamoured, flighty,
Episodes, antipodes,
Acquiesce, and obsequies.

Please don't monkey with the *geyser*,
 Don't peel 'taters with my razor,
 Rather say in accents pure:
Nature, stature and mature.

Pious, impious, limb, climb, glumly,
Worsted, worsted, crumbly, dumbly,
Conquer, conquest, vase, phase, fan,
Wan, sedan and artisan. [9:14]

The **th** will surely trouble you
 More than **r**, **ch** or **w**.
 Say then these phonetic gems:
Thomas, thyme, Theresa, Thames.

Thompson, Chatham, Waltham, Streatham,
 There are more but I forget 'em-
 Wait! I've got it: Anthony,
 Lighten your anxiety.

The archaic word *albeit*
 Does not rhyme with eight-you see it;
With and forthwith, one has voice,
 One has not, you make your choice. [9:45]

*Shoes, goes, does *. Now first say: finger;*
 Then say: singer, ginger, linger.
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze and gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, age,

Hero, heron, query, very,
Parry, tarry, fury, bury,
Dost, lost, post, and doth, cloth, loth,
Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath.

Faugh, oppugnant, keen oppugners,
Bowing, bowing, banjo-tuners
Holm you know, but *noes*, *canoes*,
Puisne, truism, use, to use? [10:27]

Though the difference seems little,
 We say actual, but victual,
Seat, sweat, chaste, caste, Leigh, eight,
height,
Put, nut, granite, and unite.

Reefer does not rhyme with deaf,
 Feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.
Dull, bull, Geoffrey, George, ate, late,
Hint, pint, senate, but sedate.

Gaelic, Arabic, pacific,
Science, conscience, scientific;
Tour, but our, dour, succour, four,
Gas, alas, and Arkansas. [11:07]

Say manoeuvre, yacht and vomit,
 Next omit, which differs from it
Bona fide, alibi
Gyrate, dowry and awry.

Sea, idea, guinea, area,
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.
Youth, south, southern, cleans and clean,
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,
Dandelion with battalion,
Rally with ally; yea, ye,
Eye, L, ay, aye, why, key, quay! [11:43]

Say aver, but ever, fever,
Neither, leisure, skein, receiver.
 Never guess-it is not safe,
 We say calves, valves, half, but Ralf.

Starry, granary, canary,
Crevice, but device, and eyrie,
Face, but preface, then grimace,
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.

Bass, large, target, gin, give, verging,
Ought, oust, joust, and scour, but scourging;
Ear, but earn; and ere and tear
 Do not rhyme with here but heir. [12:24]

Mind the o of off and often
 Which may be pronounced as orphan,
 With the sound of saw and sauce;
 Also soft, lost, cloth and cross.

Pudding, puddle, putting. Putting?
 Yes: at golf it rhymes with shutting.
Respite, spite, consent, resent.
Liable, but Parliament.

Seven is right, but so is even,
Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen,
Monkey, donkey, clerk and jerk,
Asp, grasp, wasp, demesne, cork, work.
 [13:03]

A of valour, vapid vapour,
 S of news (compare newspaper),
 G of gibbet, gibbon, gist,
 I of antichrist and grist,

Differ like diverse and divers,
Rivers, strivers, shivers, divers.
Once, but nonce, toll, doll, but roll,
Polish, Polish, poll and poll.

Pronunciation-think of Psyche!-
 Is a paling, stout and spiky.
 Won't it make you lose your wits
 Writing groats and saying "grits"? [13:40]

It's a dark abyss or tunnel
 Strewn with stones like rowlock, gunwale,
Islington, and Isle of Wight,
Housewife, verdict and indict.

Don't you think so, reader, rather,
 Saying lather, bather, father?
 Finally, which rhymes with enough,
Though, through, bough, cough, hough,
sough, tough??

Hiccough has the sound of sup...
 My advice is: GIVE IT UP! [14:11]