

Is it hachu

hachoo, achoo

atchoo, kerchoo or kachoo

For A, P, F, R, M, M and A again

Mexico or Morocco are just a location
That helps to start a conversation
About familiar features of sound and voice
Between you and I, without a choice
Thus my words are written down on this paper
Where moments, people and stories come later
In shape of sneezes, hiccups and chews
Of grandmothers and fathers
just passing through
Human relations
Of different nations
Dialogue, discussion
Endless instructions
But everyone misses out
What language is all about

MEXICO CITY
COYOCAN, 2016

I guess I first came across sound
when I moved to Mexico City.
Back in the summer of 2016.
Not that I was unaware of sound
before.

But nothing compares to the
vibrant and frenetic sound
portraits that become part of my
daily life.

Traffic jams,
Metro warnings,
Bus stop shouts,
Construction sites,
Street markets,
Street sellers,
Street musicians,
Square rituals,
Avenue protests,
Shop promoters,
Backyard birthday parties,

Openings and closings.
RUSH.
Hard to put down in words.
The constant movement and flux
of a city.
Especially when you are squeezed
among 21 million people.
Or fall on the ground after
missing a hole on the sidewalk.
So tiring.
To become aware of your body.
Becoming a part of a collective.
Of yawns, coughs, spits,
whistles, songs and screams.
There is no longer space for
silence.
1 am,
2 am,
5 am,
7 pm.
Twenty four hours.
It doesn't really matter.
Even the earth screams out when
it starts shaking.
Luckily I haven't experienced
that yet.

MEXICO CITY
METRO SAN PEDRO DE LOS PINOS
SEPTEMBER 2016

Gently I place my hand inside the bag.

Not any bag, a crammed one.

With two fingers I can pull three chips.

Naturally shaped salty chips.

Without lemon, of course!

Such a big adventure to pull chips from a crammed bag inside the metro.

Squeezed between thighs, breasts and braided hair, I can barely move two fingers.

I guess we can say that in Mexico city a woman metro wagon at 7 pm feels like a bag of hand cooked salty chips.

At least tonight, I'm free from the chili and lemon wagon.

No more ass grab, bore eyes and

inappropriate rubbing.

It is already hard to be squeezed among so many bodies.

Especially when your hair gets stuck in someone's purse.

Ouch!

Purses, bags, packages, boxes and a full amount of bodies.

No one could ever fall to the ground, as there isn't one here.

Everybody holds on to something.

With one hand on other's arm and two fingers on a bag, I continue to struggle.

To remove those chips with these two fingers from that bag.

The struggle is the sound.

I cannot bare that sound.

Wrinkled plastic bag sound.

I wonder if others can even hear it.

As I tend to apologize for it.

Also for the terrible chewing.

Properly tightly sealed mouth chewing.

Yet unbearable sound of chewing chips.

Strange to be bothered by your own chewing.

I guess it feels like the first time you hear the sound of your own recorded voice.

Unrecognizable!

I love the sound of my mom's chew, though.

Especially when she eats chips. Banana ones.

Let's try to focus on that.

MORROCO

AMEKHLIJ, MARCH 2017

The first time I stepped a foot
on an African country I faced
myself struggling with language.

My French was long gone.

My Arab not even there.

Juts bits and pieces of English
mashed with Portuguese and
Spanish.

Yet, I found my way out.

Through pointing fingers,

Waving hands,

Babbling sounds,

Songs.

Hard to remember Portuguese
songs.

The Berber seem to remember all
of their songs.

I guess because they are still
here.

At their roots.

At this village.
Along their grandmothers and
grandfathers.
Uncles and aunts.
And I am here.
Far away from mother and father
Sisters and brothers.
Making out new cousins.
Three, to be more precise.

MORROCO

AMEKHLIJ, MARCH 2017

6 women sit around a table.
Down on their knees.
Different leg positions.
All comfortable with their hair
tuck into a scarf.
And long colorful dresses.
6 right hands bring food to 6
wide open mouths.
Food falls off from less
experienced fingers.
The sun is way too high.
Setting the right tone for the
meal.
Under a shadow, there are no men.
Just left hands resting on laps.
At round tables they lose their
purpose.
I tap mine against my chest.
My name comes out.
Strange name.

They wonder.

6 hands tap their own chest.

One by one.

Name after name.

Everyone laughs.

In circles.

**The Mouth,
Its Soundscapes
And Desires**

Today I don't feel like talking.
Sometimes I wonder how long
you could keep your mouth shut
throughout a whole day without
producing any single sound.
I guess you would have to stop
drinking and eating.
Along with sleeping.
So there would be no more space
for breathing.
Oh, the mouth!
Strange cavity confined between
teeth, tongue, lips and throat.
So crucial to one's body.
Chew, whistle, stutter,
proclaim.
In and out.
Hold, release.
A hollow of gatherings and
farewells.

Of voice, spit, gag, yawn, cough
and all the other involuntary
bodily utterances.

I call them involuntary, against
my own will, but I suppose
they are precisely voluntary
concerning the body.

As if the body has the need to
speak for itself.

Skipping syllables, accents or
tones of voice.

By filling in the gaps of
silence.

Whenever my Italian housemate
wonders if I'm at home in
the middle of the night, he
searches through silence for my
deep breathing. I was not even
aware I have that. I guess I
must sleep with my mouth open

or my nostrils produce some kind of loud whistle. Whatever sound I produce is the red code for his night rituals. He is so worried about waking me up that he tiptoes to the lower level bathroom where he will make less noise. Then, he takes off his shoes, gently closes doors and ends up brushing his teeth in darkness. He even skips flushing the toilet. So thoughtful and yet so useless. I guess I should mention I don't have a door in my room, but I still manage to sleep like a stone. A heavy one.

What happens if we close off the mouth?

Possibly with tape?
The body will still find its way
to start up a conversation.
With or without a mouth.
Like a pressure cooker.
The air will still find its way
out.
Seeking to be heard.
Refusing to be forgotten.
A bit like those coughing
outbreaks that rise at theater
pieces.
Or the growling stomachs among
the silence of moments of
intimacy.
We are all familiar with those.
Those itchy sounds.
At uncomfortable moments.
Nevertheless, we have no other
choice.
The body will not remain silent.

**The Voice,
Its Throat
And Morning rituals**

Morning voice.
Deep, low, awkward voice.
Such a familiar sound.
Especially when the phone rings.
Or you have to greet the
neighbors.
First we hum.
Drink few glasses of water.
Jump into the shower.
Vaporize!
What a hustle to wake up your
voice.
I suppose each part of the body
takes its own time to wake up.
Somehow we have to stir them up
into an active state.
Everybody with its own order.
With its own set of time frames.
I first move my hands.
Followed by the arms.

In order to turn off the alarm
clock.
Rub my eyes,
Pull off the covers,
While the heavy head moves around
the pillow.
Then arms helped by hands, lift
up the head.
Later the body.
Still no voice.
A body half asleep.
The voice caught up inside.
Hoarseness - they call it.
Raspy, breathy, strained hoarse
voice.
Symptoms involve the swelling
of the voice box and surrounding
tissues.
Like on those days after a
concert
Or cheering sporting events.
Either way it would be
meaningless if one were alone.

Thus the voice operates
essentially in the presence of
the other.

Good morning - greeting the
other.

Yawn - contagious to a room
filled with others.

Socializing sound systems
engraved into body organs.

Somehow waiting for recognition.

My classmate went for the
first time to Iceland to meet
her boyfriend's family. When
gathered around the table among
older Icelandic women, she
noticed a constant inhale sound
described by her as an aaaaa
inhaling. At first she thought
they were constantly surprised

by what was being said. A surprising A. Only then she understood that the inhaling sound was instead a sound of agreement. AAAAAA! Witty how an inhaling A can cause such misunderstanding.

What would happen with an exhaling A?

A sign of tiredness, boredom, relief?

Happiness, affection or pleasure?

Aw. Sigh.

In some way the A's work as involuntary emotional responses.

Little gaps between breaths. Uttered to help the lungs to work properly.

Yet, triggering endless
assumptions.

Can you please say AAAAAA? While
the doctor presses your tongue
with a spatula in order to check
your throat.

The sound suddenly shifts.

Comes from the throat and no
longer from the mouth.

The mouth becomes a vehicle for
opening and closings.

Like a string, a hole, a valve, a
key or a pedal.

Shaping A's and V's.

Lips and teeth.

Wet and dry.

The throat, in sync with the
mouth, delivers the insides.

Like a tube of forecasts.

Predicting tunes, rhythms and
breaks.

Resembling the identities of a
body and its tempo.

Sometimes I wonder how the mother of my Italian housemate looks like. I like to picture how people might look like after hearing about them. I would say she is quite small, with short hair, golden skin, wearing flowery skirts. But all I know is that she owns a restaurant where she spends most of her time. Back home, alone in a room, she likes to scratch her throat. Odd to know how someone sounds like even before I've ever seen her face. I suppose she suffers from a throat tick that comforts her in the silence of her own home. A Grrrr sound, my housemate would say. He misses that sound. He spent most of his

childhood alone at home. The sound was just a sign that mummy was back home after a busy day of work. Perhaps he misses her right now. He seems quite lonely. Should I start enacting that sound?

Once in a while.

I guess we should start cleaning our throat like we would clean a flute.

Gently with a light blue micro-fiber cloth.

Or a swab slurped in oil.

You choose.

The saliva would no longer be in the way.

Like at those conferences.

When you miss out the words projected on a microphone.

And all that is left are those slurping noises.

Argh!

The same noises people make when they chew food with an open mouth.

If you know what I mean.

Nevertheless, clearing the throat brings in the right tune.

Ahem.

Or attracts the right attention before a speech.

Some say, to a certain extent, that the action damages your vocal cords.

So, I guess there is no right way to deal with the throat after all.

Perhaps it should take a nap.

Of 30 minutes at least.

Few months ago I took a singing class. I was too shy to ask one of my singers friends to hear me out. We started with vocal warm ups, breathing exercises, ear training and a set of vocal scales. The normal procedure, I would say. Even as a chatty person, I found myself feeling very insecure. Heads down, avoiding the looks. Shrunken shoulders with sweaty hands. A silent voice, taking a nap, for all we know. Holding in notes. Swallowing in air. Can you imagine being afraid of your own voice?

There are so many decisions to
make upon voice.

As many as the ones we make about
what we should wear.

Should it be low or loud, fast or
slow?

Jeans or skirts,
sweaters or t-shirt?

Dressing up.

Warming up.

Dressing down.

Restrain.

Formal.

Casual.

There is more to take into
account, than when you tune in a
guitar.

Tone, volume, pitch, speed.

Word pronunciation.

People's impersonation.

More manly.

More friendly.

More Girly.

More surly.

Disguise.

Costume.

Scary to think that some out
there fake their own voice.

Do they have coaching teams?

Voice stylists?

It's all about the right pitch.

The right image.

I guess they also teach you when
to keep it in.

To tuck in your voice like you
tuck in a shirt.

Tightly close to your stomach.

Then again.

How many voices are undelivered?

Left out.

Unsaid.

Never tuned.

Never played.

Left at the backstage.

After a singing class.

Or chit chat at a bar.

Specially, when you hear the
words:

Keep it to yourself!

**Songs
Its Lines
And Territories**

I have a song stuck in my head.
One of those songs you just can't
get rid of.
Trala la la la
One, two.
Repeat!
Here it comes again.
Nonsense.
Out of context.
A puzzle of words.
Fractions of memory.
Triggered by some written words
down on a paper.
I don't even feel able to
reproduce this voice.
I guess we have two voices.
One.
The one stuck inside.
Two.
The one others can hear.

The primary one.
Locating you and me.
Spaces between one and another.
Singing, I suppose, becomes an
expansion of that space.
A voice that stretches out
of a body and its visceral
utterances.
Linking bodies to spaces.
Like Australian song lines.
Songs built up from landmarks,
nature, waterholes and land
depressions.
Said to be crucial to keep the
land alive.
Opening paths for indigenous
people.
Songs as marks of territory.
Setting up boundaries on human
interaction.

The metro at wibautstraat in
Amsterdam has a playlist for

ambient music. I guess the aim is to ease out waiting time. Particularly on snowy days, when everything seems to be on slow-motion. Everybody perceives this type of playlists in a distinctive way. For instance, my teacher cannot stand this playlist. She says that the boring chill out music filling up the metro, makes her feel like an invalid person. She even states that the music might be used in order to control out people's behavior. Keep people on the right place. Like everything else in Amsterdam. All in the right place.

I wonder, how many other public spaces use songs to set people's actions?

Pharmacies in Mexico hire a mascot to dance and sing along with the music.

Others hire girls to spend their days promoting products in shape of songs.

Loud microphones.

Giant speakers.

You must sing along.

As if you were at a karaoke's bar.

It doesn't matter what kind of shop.

The singing matters.

I heard that in Tokyo they even cast out the right voices.

Attractive ones.

In fact songs facilitate the ability to interact. Even if we don't sing along. They help setting up a connection.

When I was little I used to play a game with my dad, after he picked me up from school. With the seat belt on, highly focused, I had to guess the composer and the settings of the song that was being played. Most likely, we would be listening to classical music. Symphonies, concerts, sonatas, quartets, operas. I had to pay careful attention to the tempo, instruments and the emotions addressed by the

song. Vivaldi was supposed to be happy, Bach dark, Beethoven romantic. I use to love that game. I miss riding back home in my dad's car.

We seek and wish to share the
journeys of our lives.

And orally transmit it over
time.

Songs are nothing else but a
living language.

Spreading ideas about time,
space and social identity.

They hold so much history within
them.

Infused with feelings.

Like Fado music.

Of longing, fate and melancholia.

Lisbon is often associated with
life on the sea and the ones left
behind.

Love, death, poverty,
humbleness.
Mainly sung by women.
Under candle lights at taverns.
In Coimbra, the singing links to
the life of the students, their
achievements and failures.
First loves, first drunkenness,
failed exams.
Often sung by men.
Facing a window.
Like a serenade.
According to tradition, when it
comes to applauding,
Lisbon = clapping hands
Coimbra = cough, like when you
clear out your throat.
All cultures sing.
Around tables, boom fires,
coffins, new born babies, under
tree shadows and burning sun.
Expressing what people long to
say.
Wishes, hopes, dreams,
resentments, fears.

Songs for birthdays, weddings
and funerals. Songs for rain,
lullabies and prayers.

Under the shower, in schoolyards
and during house holding tasks.

Farmers, weavers, sailors,
armies.

Group chores often result into a
song.

To bring in a precise rhythm.

To synchronise their actions.

My classmate once told me about
the time she went hiking with
her sister and friends. Over
five long rough days they walked
upon the mountain somewhere in
Russia. To sing was to overcome
their tiredness. To kill time.
Random melodies, old-fashioned
songs, stepping rhythms and

clapping hands. Everything they could reach out for, they would sing. Singing became the motor to keep going. How many songs have been written after a hike?

**Sneezes,
Its Silences
And Family members**

Libraries.
Peculiar places for encounters.
Filled with odd smells.
Endless floor plans.
Dusty shelves and crumble left
overs.
Everyone seems to move.
Change position.
Absorb sunlight.
Pause.
Silence.
Silent readings.
Scribbling hands.
Scratching heads.
Only books wait in vain.
Somewhat like at a church.
Waiting to be whispered.
Or turned into songs.
Prayers.

Perhaps, librarians belong to
some kind of sect of whisperers
and silent keepers.
Keeping in silence among crowds.
Here, at this library, where
I'm standing, noise overcomes
silence.
The security man calls our
attention.
Not for the whispering.
But for the food, beverages and
napping heads.
His voice comes in hourly
cycles.
To constantly state that "we are
not at a hotel".
I guess he is mistaken.
I keep hearing loud cellphone
tunes.
Rapping freshly written lyrics.
Tutors angry at their pupils and
kindergarten activities.
Perhaps, he should focus on
reassuring silence.
What is silence, after all?

Am I allowed to sneeze?
I guess there should be a book on
the code of silence.
Especially for libraries.

Whenever we get out of the house on a sunny day, it's inevitable to hear an orchestra of sneezes. Me, my mum and my two sisters have to sneeze a minimum of 3 times at the first rays of sun. We can reach up to 10 times. Who is counting? It has always been a mystery why 4 women from the same family would sneeze at the exact same time. Back in the days when I've studied Biology I found out that there was a genetic mutation that

would cause this event. ACHOO syndrome, they call it. An autosomal dominant trait that creates a photo sneeze response after a sudden expose to bright light. Apparently, 18-35% of the population suffers from the same harmless phenomenon. We actually have fun with it. Especially my dad: the official sneeze meter, who keeps waiting for the next one to come.

Alone.

Together.

A sneeze is not the same if we change location.

Neither will it be at a different situation.

To sneeze during a speech.

Or in a fight.
If there is one, two, three up
till five.
There is laughter.
Sometimes embarrassment.
Hands over nose.
Heads up high.
So many tactics to take control
over a sneeze.
Why don't we just let it be?
In Japan to sneeze once implies
praise.
Twice, criticism.
Three times, depreciation.
Over Mexico one sneeze is
answered back with health
Two, with money.
Three = Love.
So if I sneeze 10 times, then
what?
Somehow the common response to a
sneeze is either related to God
or health.
Or both at the same time.

There are people who sneeze
before orgasm.
Would you also say God Bless?

Isit hachu, hachoo, achoo,
atchoo, kerchoo or kachoo
Aaaaaaatchsuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu
A A A. ASHUUUUUUUUU
ah ah aaa sshshches!
ah ah ah AaaaaaaaTxim

How would you write a sneeze?
Apparently in every country
there is a different convention
on how to write a sneeze.
It's even said that languages
with a common linguistic
background can have the similar
onomatopeias.

In Portugal we write Atchim
 England - Atchoo, Achoo, Achew
 Spain - Achu, Achís
 France - Atchoum Italy Etcíú,
 Etcì - Etcìùm, Etchòum
 Netherlands - Hatsjoe, Hatsjie
 Germany - Hatschi, Hatschu.

So many meanings.
 So many conventions.
 Yet it seems like written
 language is not enough to
 describe the sound of a sneeze.
 Or any other melodically written
 human sound.
 Babbling, coughing, gargling,
 gibberish, hiccup and hum.
 Hi c cup
 Does it feel like a spasm?
 Letters, vowels, consonants,
 words, sentences.
 Symbols.
 Sound conventions.

Like those table good manners we
hold on to so strongly.

No singing at Portuguese tables.

No nose blowing at Indian ones.

Celebrating burps in China.

Loud slurps in Japan.

And fights over restaurant bills
in Mexico.

How to avoid offending locals?

Should travel guide books
include sound manners?

**The body,
Its Missing voice
And Memories**

Last February.
Back home.
Under the echo of an old
amphitheater.
Of an even older university.
I sat beside my dad.
Amongst a hundred or more other
people.
At a lecture of a famous singer
song writer.
Who came all the way from Brazil.
To tell me and all the others.
Between acoustic guitar tunes
and songs.
The following.

“Você vai morrer e a voz fica”
”You’re going to die and your
voice still remains.”

Strange to think about a voice
detached from its own body.

Lungs, Diaphragm, Larynx, Vocal
Cords, Jaw, Tongue, Mouth, Lips,
Nose, Ears, parts of a body.

A body as an instrument.

Unique in size, shape and
mechanisms.

Yet, who would have thought that
the body wants to remain without
its organs?

What would be left?

Emptied bodies, full of noises.
Floating organs and enclosed
voices.

Sound containers.

What about the voice?

Would there still be a voice
without the body?

Back in Mexico, I was sharing
my flat with a doctor, an

Ophthalmologist. After spending some time together, he noticed that I tend to do a sound with my tongue every time I'm upset. The tongue hits the palate and then it pops. I suppose I do it rather often. Fascinating, he says. Few months ago I got a message from him. Apart from the news and dues, he says that he has a new patient. For him the news was exhilarating because he noticed that his patient does the exact same sound as me. He had assumed that this person must have been Portuguese like myself. Assumptions based on this popping tongue sound. Believe it or not, his suspicion were correct.

Although I guess he doesn't know
a lot of Europeans. This seems
to me, a common sound between
us.

Perhaps with time the voice
will be traced in the memory of
others.

As sound images of what was once
a body.

The body will no longer be there.
Just the sound in shape of a
memory.

Pop.

Snap.

That is what is being left of me
once I die.

A tongue sound.

In the memory of others.

Perhaps that sound will be part
of my last words.

A death rattle.

Sounds often produced by someone who is nearly dead.

Mine would be that tongue popping sound.

I guess I will be kept alive as long as people remember that sound.

What to call this kind of sounds, after all?

A non-language marked by a non-body.

A sound prior to the person.

A pre person.

Or perhaps, a pre-condition of a person.

If so, what would be the sound of the after person?

I used to date a Portuguese boy that had a very unusual mother. She is the only person I have known so far that lives a normal

life over 12 years without her intestines. She recalls vividly the day she was told at the hospital, that her intestine had decided to die. Among 6 other people in Portugal she suffers from a very rare disease with a high rate of mortality. Every night she finds herself lying in bed, watching her favorite soap opera while her chest connects to a bag of nutrients. Carefully prepared during the day at her home nursery. She has no longer the need to eat food. In fact none of her nutrients get absorbed from the food she eats. Although, she keeps doing it just for the pleasure. I can't seem to forget the sound

of her shaking hands while mixing the nutrients. Neither skip her heavy breathing with the tube bubbling sound.

After all, this text, is not about notions of being dead or alive.

That doesn't really matter.

But then again about notions of what a body is or might be.

What its organs are and represent.

What they are capable of expressing.

The voices they have.

And all the memories.

With which we hold on to others.

I'm aware that I've only focused on the head.

Forgive me for skipping all the other body parts.

There was not enough time for it now.

However, I wonder if you have ever stopped to listen to all of these.

Sounds.

MEXICO
PACHUCA, 2016

It is cold outside.

One scarf,

One skirt,

One vest,

Two jackets,

Woolly socks.

I can't remember if there were
boots.

The fire must have been about 3
meters tall.

I've never seen one so tall.

Volcanic stones rest quietly
inside.

Filled with holes

And holes filled with fire.

Burning for the last 2 days.

2 days of preparation, 4 hours of
ceremony.

Wearing a skirt.

To protect the womb.

Layer by layer.
One by two.
I start to undress.
It is time!
8 people get on to their knees.
Inside a circular dome.
Pitch black.
We hum
We breathe.
4 hours.
4 openings.
Welcoming stones at each hour.
The door open and they shovel in
another one.
4 stones.
One by one.
We greet them as our ancestors.
They are no longer stones.
But grandmas and grandpas filled
with holes.
Holes of warmth and wisdom.
A sweat lodge of unknown family
members.
The skirt sticks to my legs like
a new membrane.

Soaked in sweat.
I can't breathe with this heat.
With legs wide open and the back
against the wall, I rest my head
on my knee.
Breathe in and out.
Slowly.
And has if I knew, the body just
detached from its head, knees,
legs and back.
Floating among the fumes.
There it was.
A body and its organs, just
laying down there.
Me up here.
I know, if you would have told me
I wouldn't believe it either.
So let's keep it like that.

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