

The world of no rings  
:100 days in bicycle

mariana carpanezzi



LONGE

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Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação - CIP

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O mundo sem anéis : 100 dias em bicicleta / Mariana Carpanezi. – Brasília, DF:

Do Autor, 2015.

168 p. ; il. col. ; 148cm x 210cm

ISBN: 978-85-920293-0-2

1. Viagem. 2. Bicicleta. 3. Memória. 4. Meditação. I. Título.

CDD 910.41 (21. ed.)

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*In gratitude and love, I dedicate this book  
To Sri Ramana, Mooji and Papaji*

## 2.

### Prior to measurement devices and clocks:

your unmistakable face touching mine upon dawn, hair scattered in all directions when your fingers comb me a good morning announcing the weather before breakfast:

- Another rainy day in Paris.

Nothing new, I suppose, and two steps away the kitchen shows me once again the stove, a boiled egg, a cup of coffee, my cheese sandwich and your face watching the street beside the window. This apartment is quiet. No sound is coming from the neighbors or the traffic. No voice is coming from us. We don't talk much.

I finish up the food, stretch my legs cursing a brand-new lower back pain. Glass of water, time to close the window, back to the pillow, my violet blanket awaits. Spine spread on the mattress and forearm covering the eyes, I can sense you coming to lay down next to me while I notice my eyes closing again, very slowly this time.

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In the beginning there was sadness.

It would be a lie to say I was able to discern that presence right there. From the realm of formlessness, in the end sadness is but a word.

As for me, all I cared about was sleeping. Eight months in Paris and the sleeping hours growing by the day. The first three months still watched me cycling around in thick wool socks, a warm hat and rubber boots from the *rive gauche* to the *rive droite* towards the yoga studio. Alone, as usual. Sleeping happened in

between my single daily adventure and the moments I faced the computer surrounded by books I needed to write my PhD thesis. In the very center of a thousand pages, the best description of my own life would be this: Paris is beautiful, but it feels so much better from inside my apartment.

February shows itself with an unusual awe of snow and ends with a predictable 40-day hemorrhage. Painless, incapable of being an open wound or a dramatic episode. A sort of everyday thing, a losing myself little by little, drop by drop life departs with no suffering or resistance. Every other day a humid red stain washing the sheets, for truth sometimes comes through the body. A boat sailing the colored ocean, it feels comfortable to leave blameless. After one year and a half in Geneva, Paris now should be wonderland but I do not remember the last time I felt something.

And so I gave in. For two months I slept. Eighteen hours a day. Weeks and nights navigating dreams, laying on my back, forearm covering the eyes. To rest and to recover the body being the same as my illness. A bit better every day, a bit sicker every day. Stronger and more willing to sleep. Life away from life interests me more than that which is happening here. Even better now, when this body is ironless: my lethargy supported by the doctor's advice.

I wish one day I could wake up feeling like waking up.

In the beginning there was sadness.



#### 4.

An island is a piece of land surrounded by water.

As soon as we turn 7, schools teach us the stupidity of defining the obvious

- surrounded by water -

, but they do not point us the way to leave our prisons. Given the lack of answers, it is the dignity of life that clarifies it: the only way out of an island is through a suspended door up in the air, by flying above, a leaving behind. Alone in my bed I watch comets and satellites, shooting stars and the Milky Way. We're destined to rotate around the sun.

It took me two months to give up my bedroom, and it came only upon the discovery that no flying saucer would come rescue me while I was laying down. I sailed the sea for I had no wings. No hope to reach the other side: boat freedom is not a complete one. My tiny intention was limited to exploring the nearby landscape.

Carol invites me to cycle some 1200 kilometers of bike lanes across the Atlantic coast of France, and I say yes. Yes to panniers, sports clothing, maps, train tickets, camping gear and to 15 days of bike touring for the first time. Yes to this trip that does not mean I will leave the island. A tiny little yes to getting lost in the surroundings.

At times, it is like that. When there is no solution, all I can do is sail around.

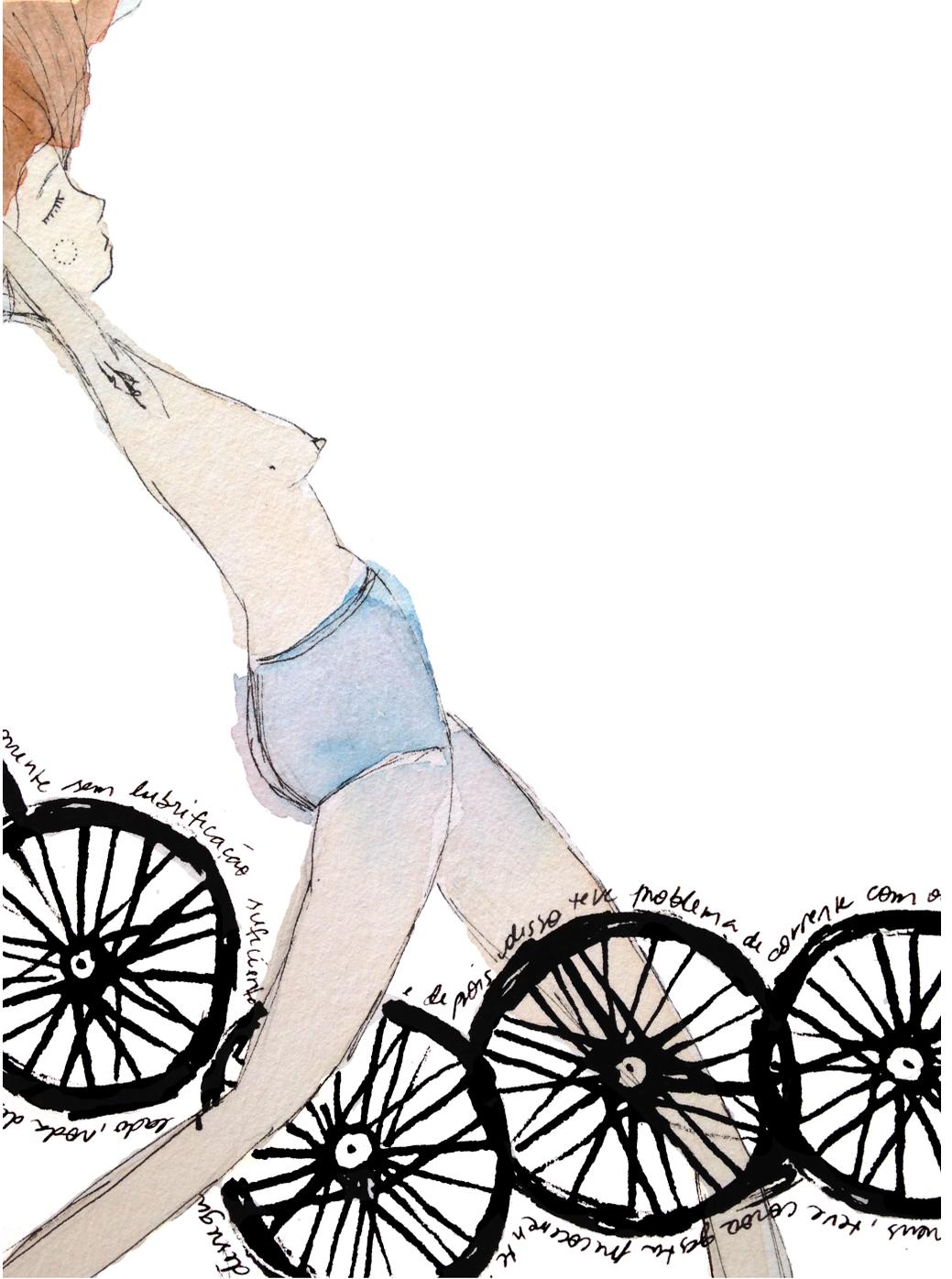
A puzzle consists of boxed tiny pieces screaming loud their urge to return to total order. Before my eyes, though, the appeal for absoluteness does not turn puzzles into revolutionary or subversive toys. Rather, on the contrary, they reinforce my tendency to imagine that by the very end each piece will find its perfect match. Puzzles leave me with the impression that no matter what it takes, the whole effort of putting particles together – starting from the corners – will give me back the Versailles Castle or a herd of cows eating grass in front of a perfect Swiss snowy mountain. Everything shall be the way it should be, make no mistakes and you will get to the colorful photo displayed in the box.

There are people who frame and then hang enormous finished puzzles on the wall. As with elevator music, a 5000, 7000-piece puzzle goes well in the waiting room of a dentist. Not only in this case – which is the most critical one – as in all of them, the worst we can face is the loss of a piece. A finished puzzle reveals beyond any doubt that which is not there. A kidney is an invisible tissue inside our body but a missing piece is for a puzzle like a mutilated leg for a marathon runner.

I asked a man who was passing by if he agreed to take a picture of my bicycle and me but he said no, so I took the pictures of my journey along Cataluña myself. I tried to frame and hang them on the wall with every part fitting with each other because that is what we do when we tell others stories of a trip. The weaving of continuities linking one day to the next, enlarged details nobody noticed and the romanticized lines for a catastrophic afternoon. Turning everything into text and pretending life were as coherent as memory.

Now, notice that Cataluña was properly described only by the Dalís, Mirós, Adriás and Gaudís. It is a place that belongs to no straight lines and spices, to no beginnings and to no ends, to no perfectly matching pieces. Each day, here, is born from and through the following one, like a bush. There are various ways of saying it but, to tell you the truth, a tree is born ready within the seed.

Thus I ask you to forgive me. As much as I try, I cannot tell you the story of Cataluña in chapters and I do not know how to return you to the royal palace. At best, all I am able to say is that one day I realized it was another day. Having let go of learning, one afternoon I realized I already knew how to wake up, sleep, be a woman and live on the road. Only on it, perhaps. Above all, it was in Cataluña that I removed the frame from the wall and stopped to make plans, celebrate events and pretend I knew the day I would stop cycling forward.



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deixa

de pensar nisso tem problema de correr com o

vans, tem certeza  
pode fluir

## 95.

**In between** every character of the word “character” there is a tiny space.

In between every word and every paragraph of this page there is some space.

In between this page and the previous one there is space.

There is space in between two cycles of breathing.

Although it may seem minuscule, almost invisible, the thought you’re having now is distanced from your next one by space.

Now forget letters, words, the previous page, the next one, your breath in, your breath out, the thought that has arrived and the thought which will land soon.

Do as the blank page who asks for rest after carrying a book full of stories.

Spend a whole day in silence.

Then notice where it is that you reside inside all your space.

Are you letter, phrase, breath? Where do you begin? Where do you end? What is it that exists where everything stops to matter, and all that matters is the space where it appears?





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Published by Longe  
Brasília, 2016