We're on a Bridge to Nowhere

Shumon Basar

Bridges are everywhere, but unlike monuments, I see them all. They remain visible despite their ubiquity. There are two bridges from my youth that I remember and are in some way lodged inside me, as symbols, or portents, or semantics. The first is from Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 film, Pierrot le fou. The protagonist couple — Ferdinand and Marianne — are on the run, and, to fake their death, they set their car on fire, a way outside of Paris. The backdrop of this narratological immolation is an unfinished bridge. A concrete stump, missing the roads to either side. An abandoned non-bridge going from nowhere to nothing. It is here that the plot of the film turns Robinson Crusoe, far away from bourgeois structure. The characters cross a threshold which is a bridge we don't see.

The bridge between waves and clouds
The bridge between tides and stars
The bridge between doubt and hope
The bridge between eras and galaxies
The bridge between epochs and voids
The bridge between moments and horizons
The bridge between passion and grief
The bridge between desire and abandonment
The bridge between gloom and brightness
The bridge between fear and courage
The bridge between depths and heights
The bridge between pearls and moonbeams
The bridge between eternity and infinity
The bridge between devotion and absence
The bridge between instants and dimensions
The bridge between affection and emptiness
The bridge between romance and farewell
The bridge between cynicism and faith
The bridge between despair and dreams
The bridge between defeat and resilience
The bridge between apathy and enthusiasm
The bridge between roots and branches
The bridge between whales and satellites
The bridge between currents and breezes
The bridge between shadows and sunshine
The bridge between lifetimes and cosmos
The bridge between yesterdays and frontiers
The bridge between forevers and universes
The bridge between seasons and atmospheres
The bridge between adoration and heartbreak
The bridge between tenderness and sorrow
The bridge between intimacy and loneliness
The bridge between fondness and void
The bridge between memories and possibilities
The bridge between heritage and innovation
The bridge between tradition and progress
The bridge between nostalgia and aspiration
The bridge between history and prophecy
The bridge between ancestry and legacy
The bridge between relics and blueprints
The bridge between echoes and visions
The bridge between sailors and astronauts
The bridge between seashells and comets
The bridge between harbors and horizons
The bridge between skepticism and trust
The bridge between attachment and separation
The bridge between coral and constellations
The bridge between foundations and horizons
The bridge between resignation and determination

The second bridge is from a 1986 novel by Ian Banks called The Bridge. It describes a habitable bridge, that's a linear city, and it goes on for hundreds of miles, or even, in my mind, it encircles Earth, like Uroboros. No beginning, no end, no getting off The Bridge. Many things happen — anxious things, sexual things, murderous things — on The Bridge. These days, when bridges are designed, they have to anticipate all the people who will want to jump to their demise. Every invention, Paul Virilio said, is the invention of its accident. Every bridge is the shortest distance from life to death, from this side of the dream to that side of the nightmare. I cross bridges to transform here into elsewhere. I stand on bridges to estrange myself from certainty.

We're on a Bridge to Nowhere by Shumon Basar. Text commissioned as part of 'Channel', a solo presentation by Thomas Jeppe at Well Projects, Sept-Nov 2024.