

Branches of a House

SAMPLER

Also by Agnieszka Studzińska

Snow Calling (2010)

What Things Are (2014)

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BRANCHES OF A HOUSE

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CONTENTS

Part I

Foundations / 11
Architecture / 12
Brick / 13
Attic / 14
Body House / 15
Area / 17
Spring / 19
Summer / 20
Autumn / 21
Winter / 22
Homegrown / 23
Stól / 24
Blue / 25
Voice / 26
Spaces / 28
Doorways / 29
Flamingo / 30
Still Life with Fruit, Bird Nest and Broken Eggs / 31
Permanence / 33
This Could All Be / 34
Cityscapes / 36
Notes Towards a Poem / 37
An essay on <i>The Dragon and the Invisible Creatures</i> / 40
Port / 43
Biography of <i>H</i> / 46
Cave / 47

Part II

Branches of a House / 51
Conversations / 55
Dear Ghost / 62
Family Values / 65

Part III

Winged Narratives / 71

Notes / 79

Acknowledgements 81

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for my mother
Alicja

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Part I

Ne rien dire, ne rien taire. Écrire cela. Tomber. Comme le météore. Être seul à oublier comment la nuit se déchire...

To say nothing, to allow everything to be said. To write that. To fall. Like a shooting star. To be the only one who forgets how the night is torn apart...

—Jacques Dupin

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Foundations

*...Now when I build, I shall begin
With the smoke from the chimney.*
Leopold Staff

With the smoke from the chimney
With hail stones and snow
With crumpled rain
With breath in quivering air
With a falling of soot
With dew from a working field
With winter in fog
With voices of distance
With shapes in the margins
With language belonging elsewhere
With shadows dismantled
With the haunting of walls
With the brume of writing
With ink inhabiting skin
Whose hands shape these structures?
Whose architecture or bones?
Whose history in the hem of skirts
In the pockets of brickwork?

Architecture

lines \ annex & rive \ bracket \ paper landscapes & \ lines of
humanity \ clayed & constructed \ called upon \ materials
of tenure & term \ what is this space if not us? \ configured
nests & soft symmetries \ bodies in lovemaking \ irregular
forms of sensuality \ criss-crossing conceptions \ solidity &
our names \ pencilled identities \ you touch this groundwork
\ draw my lineation \ feel the edges like a rough cut \ erase
me \ insert me back \ erase me again \ in lust & downfall
& draughtsmanship \ we loose our footing \ in these skin-
stone buildings \ we build from ourselves \
we are invisible lines of sculpture & detail \ thresholds
in need of safety \ we hammer & knock \ secure flesh &
facades in our tentative versions \
align blood with the grind of history \ our undeclared kisses
\ blown apart \

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Brick

Irregular palettes of colour – stung yellow, mustard brown, buried shades – off white, umber lining scabrous to the soft fingers of a child who traces its exterior as he learns to walk in a house. It is as if the brick moves through him or we through the brick, the house changing in registers of light. Far away, another house rehearses ghost language & dance, interprets the seasons of snow spoken winters, spring shadowed with unsent letters, summers sated with summer rain & autumn from its fleeting blush. There are bricks wherever we look & fallen branches & families re-writing their version of what they were told. There are ghost houses in every village & houses in every ghost as it enters through an open window of that distant dwelling while you bury yourself deeper inside it. You too move through these bricks, the blue wind cooling your almost blue face while you listen to conversations cobwebbed in unlikely corners. In sleep you scan all the occupations & childhoods & weddings, perceive bodies that once lived inside you, smell their small hands stretching towards futures, in & away from this structure. You welcome these waxy flashes, loneliness writes its own, on these walls where photographs hang flattened by daylight & error. You welcome their supple illusions, the wisp & sail of their flux, in which you are spun & swaddled & taken back to where you began. The wind in petal, rising ash, & the brick now, coated by cheap paint, floorboards tiled, stories cloaked in this notebook of home, as we ghost linger in these irregular palettes of colour, stung yellow, mustard brown, buried shades – breath building bricks in preparation for a house to be that house again –

Attic

My origin is a linguistic surface like a decorated wall
Mei Mei Berssenbrugge

The cutting of the white rose bush is sent by post, roots like a spider's cuticular hairs navigating a way in this sensory field of plant, source, descent. Upstairs, the builders pull apart the attic. Brick from wall, joint from hinge, screw from wood, substance from structure. The morning mislaid in segments, glimmer, & dust, like a waking dream from a precipice I refuse to jump. Downstairs, sounds lean on interruptions, light unstable in these lines of keeping & remove. What is the drift of silence? Where is the wilful murmur of our origins? I ask M. the next day. Outside, the rose remains in a bucket. Roots absorb all the cold water. Inside, the noise of things falling in their inconsistent, shattered way lament, as they stake themselves to our forms where definitions hedge the living we once inhabited.