

HOLLY KARAPETKOVA

Leviticus

A woman who gives birth is unclean, and all flying insects that walk on four legs. I wanted order, cleanliness, a place to walk without stepping on something hard and hurtful, stones piled in the corner. I started making rules. I hung them on the walls like scrolls, the book that no one reads: No running in the house. Pick up after yourself. Leave your dirt at the entrance, scrape your dishes clean. Nothing extraordinary. The plan was sanity, clarity. Instead I spent my breath yelling *dirty hands off the manna*. I wound myself up like a top and set myself spinning. How many animals in a herd, a flock, how many doves torn open by the wings, crushed heads of the new grain: a burnt offering, a sin offering, a guilt offering. Take scarlet yarn and hyssop. Take the stones, timbers, and all the plaster. Take the live bird from an open field. A message from a voice somewhere on fire.

HOLLY KARAPETKOVA's poetry, prose, and translations from Bulgarian have appeared recently in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Drunken Boat*, and many other places. Her second book, *Towline*, won the Vern Rutsala Poetry Contest and was published by Cloudbank Books in 2016.

