



The Judas Ear

Poems

ANNA JOURNEY

“Between first and second readings of *The Judas Ear*, I could not shake Baba Yaga’s scent; a bearded, naked potter; and the biodegradable funeral suit of Luke Perry. Even now, Anna Journey’s lines echo like lines of a song. The final word is ‘blooming.’ The poems are big, rangy, expansive in Whitmanesque, democratic ways. They have a narrative charisma but maintain Dickinson’s perversity, independence. Journey is as much a storyteller as a poet. Few write with her variety of emotional, intellectual, and musical muscle. This is simply a masterful collection of poems.”

—Terrance Hayes

“On the rotting bark of the tree from which the faithless disciple hanged himself, or so they say: a mushroom called ‘the Judas ear.’ Perfectly edible. ‘Risen flesh, shape-shifting, everlasting,’ as the author of these beautiful poems has the wisdom to teach us over and over again. The ever-ingenious biosphere is Journey’s tutelary spirit, luminous figuration her genius, and narrative restored to its proper essence her discovery mode: inspiring elementals all.”—Linda Gregerson

Anna Journey’s *The Judas Ear* resurrects a host of vanished people and places, often through marvelous Ovidian metamorphoses that seem as natural in the gritty tableaux of Richmond, Virginia, as in the luminous shape-shifting vistas of folktale or myth. Journey’s music is lush and visceral, her humor warm and sly, and her sensibility metes out tenderness and grotesquerie in equal parts. Like the ear-shaped mushroom named for a biblical betrayer, the poems in *The Judas Ear* can shift suddenly from wit to pathos, from seductiveness to danger, with a generosity of vision that is at once wise and revelatory.

ANNA JOURNEY is the author of the poetry collections *The Atheist Wore Goat Silk*, *Vulgar Remedies*, and *If Birds Gather Your Hair for Nesting*, which was selected by Thomas Lux for the National Poetry Series, and the essay collection *An Arrangement of Skin*. She teaches at the University of Southern California.

It was almost a dare:

the rehydrated mushrooms sitting there, the *Eat Me*
 hovering, like a prompt on Alice’s
magical cakes in Wonderland. The last time

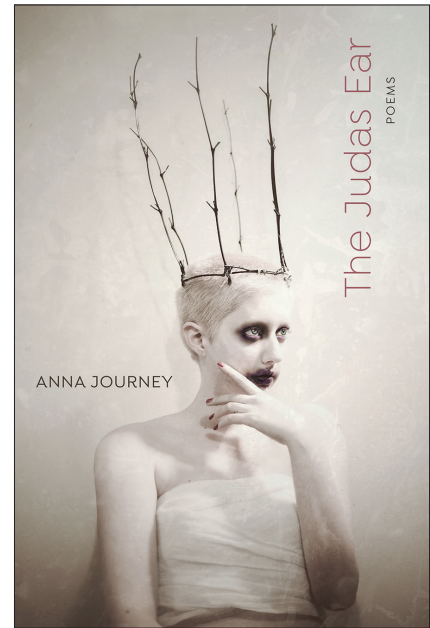
an Episcopal priest dropped a consecrated
 wafer on my eighteen-year-old tongue,

muttered, *The body of Christ, the cup*
 of salvation, I pressed the Host
to my wet palate until the bread crumbled.
 What would the communion of Judas

now make in my mouth? What was there to do
 except turn the gas burner off, grab
a serving spoon, give the wok

one final shake, wonder who would betray
 whom after the first bite.

—from “The Judas Ear”



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Stephanie Danti

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