

THE WAY OF YOU

For Victoria

Four girls danced in rubber boots
welcoming a sunburst between thundershowers,
hand-me-down slickers discarded
as if purple clouds weren't already gathering
like bruises against the yellow sky.
Earthworms, forced from bloated soil
to sizzling brick, curled in desperate
shapes, ugly in their helplessness:
muscular strips of suffering, no
more than that.

The air was thick with ozone
and with heat, cut by the shrieks of the dainty
one, merciless in her disgust. The tomboy
stomped her brother's scarred boots:
*It's Nature's Way. They're only food for birds
and ants, now* – as the plump one's eyes widened
in admiration. But the fourth girl knelt
on scabbed knees, silent, judging neither
the shrieking nor the stomping, but busy
at her calling: gathering worms
into the leaf-lined pocket of her folded shirttail.

- Anna Scotti