

ELIZABETH STEALEY

Shells

Grandmother wakes with the sun
each morning, walks one mile,
returns.
She tells the children playing on the beach
it's harder
to find perfect shells now. Most
wash up broken.

"The island's grown so,
it's no longer a sheller's delight.
Do you remember?"
She turns to her husband, forgetting
she'd left him up north,
covered with a mound
of scentless flowers.
Last night, before bed, she saw the Naples weatherman smile,
"Two feet of snow
in Indiana!"

She thinks of flowers in winter,
wind rustling icicles on blue spruce branches,
making music
like the star shells
they'd collected together.
In Indiana, icicles shatter,
pierce the snow. And

she shivers, pulls the sweater
across her chest, turns
to face the sun.

Prelude

Crisp slivers of leaves catch
between my toes, twigs and stones
cut—pleasant pains—remind me I'm real
as scents, heavy rotting plants, creatures
returning home, that surround,
drown me. I lay on a mound
I made, leaves crumpling like day-old
newspaper under my legs, breasts, face.
My grave.