

# 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.