

Sex Without Love · *Sharon Olds*

How do they do it, the ones who make love
without love? Beautiful as dancers,
they glide over each other like ice skaters
over the ice, fingers hooked
inside each other's bodies, faces
red as steak, wine, wet as the
children at birth whose mothers are going to
give them away. How do they come to the
come to the come to the god come to the
still waters, and not love
the one who came there with them, light
rising slowly like steam off their joined
skin? These are the true religious,
the purists, the pros, the ones who will not
accept a false Messiah, love the
priest instead of the God. They don't
mistake the lover for their own pleasure,
they are like great runners — they know it is a matter of
the road surface, the cold, the wind,
the fit of their shoes, their overall cardio-
vascular health — just factors, like the partner
in the bed, and not the truth, which is
the single body alone in the universe
against its own best time.