

## High School Senior by Sharon Olds

For seventeen years, her breath in the house  
at night, puff, puff, like summer  
cumulus above her bed,  
and her scalp smelling of apricots  
--this being who had formed within me,  
squatted like a bright tree-frog in the dark,  
like an eohippus she had come out of history  
slowly, through me, into the daylight,  
I had the daily sight of her,  
like food or air she was there, like a mother.  
I say "college," but I feel as if I cannot tell  
the difference between her leaving for college  
and our parting forever--I try to see  
this house without her, without her pure  
depth of feeling, without her creek-brown  
hair, her daedal hands with their tapered  
fingers, her pupils dark as the mourning cloak's  
wing, but I can't. Seventeen years  
ago, in this room, she moved inside me,  
I looked at the river, I could not imagine  
my life with her. I gazed across the street,  
and saw, in the icy winter sun,  
a column of steam rush up away from the earth.  
There are creatures whose children float away  
at birth, and those who throat-feed their young  
for weeks and never see them again. My daughter  
is free and she is in me--no, my love  
of her is in me, moving in my heart,  
changing chambers, like something poured  
from hand to hand, to be weighed and then reweighed.