

An Essay in Major and Minor Voices

dirt, inside and out, bulbs,
seeds, nuts, cheese, cows, bird
feeders, foxes, no creature more
intense or more delicate

champagne, mushrooms, arti-
chokes, fields of strawberries,
kneeling and lifting them gent-
ly from their stems,

squeezing the blueberry be-
tween my fingers until it lets go

the *sum* of my errors

clematis, especially the white
ruffled kind and the deep
purple, yellow roses up the
chimney, peonies, all types and
colors but most the white
tinged with pink, and the oh
my god red

concrete and road signs, men
in one room at the solstice
party, women in another, my
asbestos office in Morrill Hall,
bloated organ men huffing
and puffing up death's steps

syllabuses, final grades, an-
nual reports, applying for
grants, describing what I do,
posturing, bowing down be-
fore man

the sum of my errors

Christmas, funerals, doctor's
appointments and reminders,
waiting rooms

freshly falling snow, rain over
the Sangre de Cristo moun-
tains, streetlights with great
glass globes, full moons, leaves
in a dry dangerous wind, reds
and yellows banked against the
house

grass so green as it begins to
live, the hydrangea a carafe of
burgundy, meadow drifts of
cream-colored daffodil, tincture
of jonquils flannel soft, star
gazer lilies like pillowed heads,
the blood red thunder of the
poppy, the Japanese maple, tree
of doubt

white lilacs, armfuls of them

drizzle over water, the thread
of smoke, cherry trees in clus-
ters and cherry pies with little
windows in the crust, the cello,

lives carved out of butter, hor-
mones and the call of hunters

gravy-stained plates in a sink
and cold thick caution, keys to
unknown doors, answering
surveys, shoveling dirty
snow, pap smears and mam-
mograms, root canals and
crowns, tarnished silver serv-
ing bowls—those vessels of
knowledge

vacuuming, my unwelcoming
sisters

days of gray to gray, twisted
roadside deer, Christmas trees
at the curb with their rags of
tinsel

rivers besotted with trash, o-

Dido's lament "Remember Me," primordial hums, longing, Dingle, the Great Blasket Island, Doolin's of western Ireland, the Platte River of western Michigan

blue flowers, elegies, bald eagles rowing over the Huron shoreline, an inner life, cardinals peeking out of the boxwood, the inmost maroon of hollyhocks – and repeat

marriage

verorganized religion, pledge drives and board meetings and strategic expansions, housing developments and strip malls, the smell of gasoline, gas caps

digs in the guise of jokes, blood-red beef, dinner guests bickering or glum, cover letters, submission letters, rejection letters, sleepless nights, obligations, recaptions – and repeat

airport check-in, fill-in-the-dot evaluations, cell phones, fast food, Bahamas birthdays (me home, parents there), birthdays with children gone, life insurance, anniversaries, marriage

her naked pleasure in diamonds garish round a woman's old neck, chunks on ring fingers, the loud, consumers upscale and down, plastic surgery, elective surgery, SUVs

roads to lakes through green
canopies of thought, blue
herons on the scything river,
black-swan lagoons, nipples,
milk pouring out of my breasts

planting dahlias, watering,
weeding, deadheading, treat-
ises on the inexplicable

books, their spines, covers,
pages, the thingness of them,

hands, eggs, tiles, wood floors,
deep raspy voices, naps, avoca-
dos ripening through the night,
the laps of large-bellied men,
singing mandolins

mittens and velvet, cattails, the
dogs of my life, O you majestic
heads, the alert of horses, eyes
cloud darkened

neoconservatives—no, *all* po-
liticians, publicists, talking
heads, boosters, sloganeers,
cheerleaders, nattering ad-
sters, foolish remakes

reporters, agents, talk show
hosts, my undesired confes-
sions, secrets from my par-
ents, from my children, from
my friends

and from myself

mirrors appalling, people left
un-told-off, weddings of the
doomed

gladiators, bottomless wrath,
birds diving at my head,
snakes at my feet, defending
myself against my rivals and
those embittered before I
came

stories about pigs that burn
with a bluish glow told in a
wavering, collapsing voice,
deer the color of sparrows

train tracks and whistles, alleys,
bridges, ferries, bear and sal-
mon, headstones off-kilter, two
births, of daughter, of son, the
light on the front porch, old
poems, lungs and vocal chords,
pledges made in my sleep, a
friend with a beefsteak laugh,
Thanksgiving

peanut butter, clean sheet
scents, white cotton night-
gowns

finding what I need in an ani-
mal's eyes

labor, the struggle of poetry
with its explosive breath and
head festooned with serpents,
upsurges, crescendos of rain
and then suddenly

suicide, the bottom of pools,
conversations with me as
Atlas holding up the world,
making my voice heard in
decibels, five-year plans, the
relentless pursuit of per-
fection

lugging personal history at
charity pancake suppers,
people telling me how they
feel, telling me their complete
schedule, telling me

Champions on Ice

perky women

etiquette and sagging breasts,
body art installations, Diane

abating, easing, softening

women swooping up their
young, myth, rides and
handkerchiefs from strangers
who have words to say, black
overcoats on street corners,
stars and fog, lights caught in
night's nerve, mother.

Sawyer, writers saying

"when I was a child," manag-
ing my anger, store managers
dull sermons and moral equa-
tions, cocksure bullies, bigots,
the slap of the open hand,
whips, nightmares entrenched,
Ritalin, humidity, toupees,
father.