2000:
1. Mary Burger, Eating Belief
2. Camille Roy, Dream Girls
4. Fanny Howe, parts from Indivisible
5. Eleni Sikelianos, from The Book of Jon
6. Laura Mullen, Translation Series
7. Beth Murray, 12 Horrors
8. Mei-mei Bensusanbrugge, Audience
9. Laura Wright, Everything Automatic
10. Lisa Jarnot, Nine Songs
11. Kathleen Fraser, Soft Pages
12. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Draft 43: Gap
13. Nicole Brossard, Le Cou de Lee Miller/The Neck of Lee Miller
15. Adeena Karasick, The Anugula Fugues VII-VIII
16. Aja Couchois Duncan, Commingled : Sight
17. Lila Zemerorain, PAMPA
18. Cheryl Pallant, Spontaneities
19. Lynne Tillman, chapters from Weird Fucks and "Dead Talk"
20. Abigail Child, Artificial Memory—vol 1 & vol 2 ($6 set)

2001:
21. Deborah Richards, Put A Feather In It
22. Norma Cole, BURNS
23. Jocelyn Saidenberg, Dusky
24. Gail Scott, Bottoms Up
25. Carla Harryman, DIMBLUE and Why Yell
26. Anne Waldman, [THINGS] SEEN/UNSEEN
27. kari edwards, a diary of lies
28. Bhanu Kapil Rider, from The Wolf Girls of Midnapore
29. Rosarie Waldrop, Trace Histories
30. Tina Darragh, from rule of dumb
31. Chris Tsh, Mother, I (fragment of a film script)
32. Jennifer Moxley, The Occasion
33. Zhang Er, Cross River . Pick Lotus
34. Tonya Foster, A Swarm Of Bees In High Court
35. Lauren Gutath, Animal & Robot
36. Alice Notley, IPHIGENIA

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37. Caitlin McDonnell, Dreaming the Tree
38. Eileen Myles, We, the Poets
39. Suzanne Wise, from The Blur Model
40. Elaine EQUI, Castle, Diamond, Swan
41. Maggie Nelson, Something Bright, Then Holes

Castle, Diamond, Swan
by Elaine EQUI

deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish red flowers and black berries
Castle, Diamond, Swan © Elaine Equi 2003
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Rachel Levitsky, editor belladonna* Books.
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levitsk@attglobal.net • http://www.durationpress.com/belladonna
Nodding Statues

You understand weight, mass—
the body fallen into its habitual stance:
posture is destiny.

You acknowledge slowness,
the durability of fears
carving themselves again and again
from the raw materials of any given circumstances.

And yet there is lightness too,
an implied wink to your stately decorum
(civil or religious garb, ostentatious nudity)
as if to say: all a put on—
for display purposes only—
revealing instead telepathic emptiness
where an inner life should grow.
In you is stored strategy
saved up for the next move.

Do I look like a statue to you?
Do you keep your memories on a pedestal?

Can we meet here again?
Can we not talk some time?
Epic Mountain Hoax

Always a question of scale
fanning the flames of music.

Temple of crumbs.
Stalwart microcosms.

Swerps of brazen heroes
coup de grease.

Singularly panoptic delirium.

Tales of the mogul
lost in space.

What are you not doing down there—
the sky seems to say.

I am climbing
a flat surface (hence the difficulty)

with a sack of juicy fears—
I mean pears!

Whatever I told you yesterday wasn't me.
I was mixed up.

Today I can separate,
subtract myself better from the landscape.

Do only certain lives have the necessary coherence to make the grade?

I don't believe that.
Well, maybe I do. It's possible.

But as I've said, I have no desire
to live in a biography.

What story does my life tell?
Whatever one you want to hear.

3.

Be careful of what you get,
you just might end up asking for it.

A kind of constant going forward
to work back—which reminds me,

where is my Scherazade?
Tell her to fix me a drink

and make herself comfy.
It's going to be a long, dull night.
Not So Grand Narrative

1.

To be honest, I was never interested in the story—except as a way out.

Something had to happen that much I knew, though it doesn’t much matter what.

The past belongs to a character who shares my name and not much else.

An eccentric neighbor usually seen looking over her mail.

Sometimes, I wish she’d leave—just move to another city.

If she won’t, perhaps I will.

2.

“You’re either biography or you’re not.”

Now, what does that mean?

Almonds

Almonds make me feel like autumn all year long. They’re like a carrying case for tears that have dried but are still salty. When I’m gone, shed no almonds for me. The coffin-maker’s daughter was an unusually happy child. She wanted only a pair of almond slippers to go clogging in—and a marzipan forest full of hand-painted leaves. Lorca was said to be able to play the almond and coax from it music to soothe melancholy moods. Instead of rice, Italians throw almonds at a bride and groom, perhaps because they think no pleasure complete without a bit of pain. In the palm of the hand, almonds nestle like pills said to transform phlegm, alleviate coughs, and soothe the intestines. Some worship the smooth lingam, but other secret societies extol the almond. Pray daily an edible rosary which they crunch between their teeth.
Swallowed

Famished and Full are sisters. They come together for brief periods known as meals. Famished is always rather irritable. Some say food eaten quickly is hardly tasted, but Famished wouldn’t agree. She finds most things delicious, if hard to distinguish in the rush to consume them. It’s Full who finally couldn’t even say if she’s eating or not. Still, she feels food in a way that Famished can’t—as a starchy afterglow or wavelength. At first, these two seem like opposites. Famished likes to gobble everything standing up. Full is happiest lying down. Famished can appear saucer-eyed and greedy, a ravenous scavenger. Full can seem full of shit or sometimes contempt. For most of the day, each goes her own way and imagines herself an only child. However, when they are together, that is while eating, there is a moment when even they can’t tell or tear themselves apart.

and kept to a minimum. And the title, I know, is “Safari Queen”.

At least that’s what it says on the label still attached to the marigold planted next to me. Caught up, no doubt, in it’s own plot, but still a queen.
Safari Queen

It's like being at the theater.
Every night,

I'm literally in heaven.
Climb the stairs,

slip into my private box
and watch the sunset's lap-dance,

its coy, over-the-shoulder wink.
I can imagine decorating

a place like a movie theater—
red velvet and popcorn strewn

across the floor. Right now,
my place is more like a therapist's office

but I feel the need for something
visually sumptuous about to emerge.

First, the cars move. Then the people.
The dialogue is simple

Castle, Diamond, Swan

I began life as a straight man,
using only straight lines
to connect things.
The ruler ruled.

One tower towered over
its two brothers or sisters,

dividing itself evenly between.
All things being equally said and done,

I liked the gap-toothed rook best—
its horizontal stairway leading nowhere

but across to the castle next door.
The diamonds followed.

A triangle phase that could only be resolved
by adding more triangles to make

a whole heap of crescendoing pointed things:
witches' hats, kites, knives. Perhaps a diamond

was just an icy cube stood on its side.
A rock one could see through—

the facile facade of its glittering pool or skyscraper.

I drew enormous diamonds
perched on fragile smoke rings.

If you looked at one long enough
it turned into a tent set up by glossy nomads.

I didn't care much for jewelry
but took care to make mine big and showy.
As far as I could see, the best thing about being a diamond was that you got to live in a box, velvet-lined and eerie with music and mirrors which a diamond would never look twice at.

But a swan was a much more complicated thing. First, there was its dark eye locked in the tight parenthesis of its head. Next came the long rays of its neck's diagonal strokes – their fall cushioned by a pillowy body. To draw a swan required a certain amount of allowing its glide to guide you. I'd had a few parakeets for pets until I met you. Then a swan would come to greet me, suddenly appear in the lagoon at the end of the narrow street we lived on.

Once I gave it half my ham sandwich – after that it seemed to know my step.

Would look directly into my eyes as if to say: "Don't romanticize these things."

I'm not an enchanted being."
"Okay," I'd think. "Whatever you say."

I wore a lot of black eyeliner back then myself, and you and I were always drinking vodka, and in spring the swan was like a clump of snow that never melted, and in winter the cold didn’t bother us at all.

“Incognito As Summer”

Hidden in heat's edgeless brim:

was that fountain always there or did it just spurt up?

Forged in forgetfulness—

an unending green signature.

Your name has been chosen.

Your presence is requested.
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Some of these poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in Accurate
Key, Conjunctions, The Mississippi Review, and Vanitas.
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