

Obscene. I called them  
Whore, slut, cunt, more.

That made them buy.  
I didn't have to sell,  
They stole from me.  
I worked the whole town.  
They'd wait for me,  
And everyone let me in.

-- William Virgil Davis

Bristol, CT

### The Plantsitters

Friends and strangers bring them  
their run-down philodendrons,  
their lonesome geraniums,  
vases of jaded pussywillows.

John talks kindly to the plants,  
plays them records of birdsong,  
cricketchirp, sounds of dusk  
and dawn, and the sea.  
Susan soothes them with recorder  
music, knowing that Bach has been  
proven a tonic for house plants,  
acid rock the deaths of them.

Are the plants benefitting?  
Yes, but they can't hold a bloom  
to the look of well-being budding  
on the faces, in the eyes  
of the sitters.

### The Excuse

Unlike the shy lower animals,  
Our retiring, hard-to-know neighbor comes  
Briefly out of his house and shell  
When trouble knocks.

The night a rampaging, souped-up car  
Leaped our hedge, sheared off a pine  
And plastered it, crashing, into his oak  
He was there. When I was solicitous  
About the mangled bark, he spoke  
Comfortingly, "Oaks can take  
A lot." Later, he broke  
Off a crushed twig of the evergreen  
Murmuring, "M-m-m, it smells good."

When a tornado struck, he was neighborly,  
And there have been other times.  
But it would take a dropped bomb  
To bring out the man completely --  
Too late to tell  
Whether we could love him as well  
As we love ourselves.

-- Elaine V. Emans

Minneapolis, MN

### Con Man

The gifts I buy and offer you, my dear,  
may seem installments on a payment plan  
devised to ease you, an impoverished heart  
finds purse more open than the inner man.

When you unwrap them I hope you can find  
forgiveness for the way I try to meet  
the promissory notes you hold, my name  
proved to your eyes I walk on honest feet.

Bankrupt, burglar, forger, I confess  
the signature I swore to writ in sand  
you witnessed when I opened love's account,  
I bring you gifts to hide my empty hand.

### A Field You Can Not Own

You thought there was a For Sale sign  
on her heart and decided to buy  
the property but sometimes a clover  
meadow turns to sand and meadowlarks  
vanish before the hawk -- what makes  
love or good earth barren?  
She gave herself in trust  
and you thought it was fee simple,  
the promised land you hoped to settle.  
She tried to tell you that love  
can only be deserved but you  
wanted to make a down payment  
on a field you could never own.