

# On the Lawn at the Villa

By Louis Simpson

On the lawn at the villa—  
That's the way to start, eh, reader?  
We know where we stand—somewhere expensive—  
You and I *imperturbes*, as Walt would say,  
Before the diversions of wealth, you and I *engagés*.

On the lawn at the villa  
Sat a manufacturer of explosives,  
His wife from Paris,  
And a young man named Bruno,

And myself, being American,  
Willing to talk to these malefactors,  
The manufacturer of explosives, and so on,  
But somehow superior. By that I mean democratic.  
It's complicated, being an American,  
Having the money and the bad conscience, both at the same time.  
Perhaps, after all, this is not the right subject for a poem.

We were all sitting there paralyzed  
In the hot Tuscan afternoon,  
And the bodies of the machine-gun crew were draped over the balcony.  
So we sat there all afternoon.

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