It came to the notice of Antonio Gramsci
in jail in sunny southern Italy
that people like to emulate their betters
which is generally truer
for what are betters for if not to be better.

Just take the case of lawns
They say one day the sheriff
Of the town of Nottingham
Spied Robin Hood and young Maid Marion
 cavorting in a sunny grassy glade
and thinking grass as necessary to such play
as is the hind to the stag, he said one day
I'd better have some grass. I'll call it lawn
Which is how such a necessity was born.

To have a lawn you had to have a sheep
to keep it nicely shorn
or better still hefty lad, still young and lithe
who has the skill to mow it with a scythe
and so it was that stately homes
each had their private greens,
 large or small, according to their means

No doubt the news of Monticello's plot
Would spead by pony, word of mouth
And the fashion became common
in the mansions of the antebellum South

Not everyone can have a slave, or flock
a peasant in a smock and even those
blessed with very best intension
had to wait on the invention of a mower
so those belonging to a lower order
would not find it unreasonably hard
to tidy-up the grass about a yard.

Once done they backed off from the street
And those with grass in front could swank
and hold it as a mark of social rank,
and since they worked so very hard
preferring grass, replacing their rough yard
acquired a rank as those who would
have common care and pride in neighborhood.

Recalling it began with Shady Glade
and pouncing on an unsuspecting maid
we learned we should be more discrete than
that
we needed place to stroll, to smile to raise a hat
and for that the solution did not seem too hard
what better than the shady Boulevard

O sacred boulevard and lawn
With what delight on Summer's morn
Are joyful call's of songbirds seldom known
above my neighbour's mower's steady drone
So stalwart on his mowers seat
He keeps his grass patch short and neat
And flower plot so small and mean
Cannot compete with scent of gasoline.

Quaderni del carcere

Eric Winter