

Lotus-eaters

by Swanson Tudor

I was twelve and vexed by my face
its one true eye seeing only the left side of things;
angry at the legs
lank branches, each center knurled and scarred
my hair cursed
a taunting trove of cowlicks, stalky and bullheaded;
annoyed at the size of my feet
making my shoes look like clod hoppers;
arms loose on each side, two sticks extending
knocking, elbowing and dangling without manners and grace.

I would bring this uncouth congregation
to my oasis, dense with ticks and garden snakes
a hidden patch of scrub and sassafras
gone mad in the sticky summer sweetness
pulling at its uneasy borders
of drainage ditch and fussy trim lawns.
In the heat and insect hum
of late afternoon, it would sleep, languorous and sated,
while, within the perfect and heroic body
of Ulysses, I explored its green and rank coat.

My sword rose and fell amidst a swarm
of blackberry bush, stinkweed and maniacal thicket
following a trail left by Lotus-eaters
who had stopped to rest in that hobo Eden;
I imagined them crouching, talking,
mellow laughter, smoke between their broken teeth
dancing over the last drop
and the luck of good company;
reconciled with their memories, they dreamed
stretched out in the warm night air.

Leaving me to discover a hidden treasure
of empty wine bottles, and a single abandoned boot.

