

# 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.

