

GLADYS McKEE IKER

Legend of Hanging Rock
(Allegheny Foothills)

Hanging Rock, Lawrence County, Ohio

There was a childhood summer
I played a game with a giant boulder
which hung over the roadway
on the hot spit of August, threatening
the small village that bore its name.

Legend had it that Daniel Boone
had tipped it almost over, swinging
from a grapevine, to escape a Miami war party
with scalping on its mind.

It was only when I was ten that I noticed
the Hanging Rock and fantasized a legend of my own,
pretending Indians still might shove it
onto the roadway below and smash us all
to smithereens, rumbling down each narrow street,
headed, I hoped toward the river where,
with one sky-shaking drop...PLOP...it would make waves
higher than mountains and the Ohio River
would leak through to China.

That was the summer I was ten when every shadow
on hillside or meadow took on a strange shape
and red the fantasy.

Later the Allegheny foothills' trees waved red and gold
Indian bonnets, the Hanging Rock stayed steady
into my eleventh year and I marched back to school
in autumn's apple-sweet air.