

KINNICKINNIC
MICHAEL HILL

Standing thigh-deep in the Kinnickinnic River,
I lean forward, watching the drift
of my dry fly so intently
that I can see clear back to my childhood
and the pages of my dad's old *Fishing Facts*
magazines, splashed as they were
with the same sorts of tableaux
as the one I now find myself occupying.
Back then I was bent on untangling the mysteries of trout streams,
this one in particular, and had no inkling
of all the other existential snarls
that would soon enough divert my course.
Tonight though, with the early June twilight
silhouetting the leafy crowns of oaks and elms
and the hungry trout boiling the surface
in the mad frenzy of the Sulphur hatch,
I am filled with a sense of arrival. And the river,
right here where I left it, welcomes me
without reservation, offering up
eager tugs and dazzling aerial displays.
Yesterday my son caught his first trout,
a gorgeously-mottled twelve-inch Brook,
on a different fork of this same river.
It was also his first fish taken on a fly rod,
and the smile it brought to his face is what I expect to find
when I lift my landing net from the dark water
and get a look at the joy wriggling inside.