

Michael Palmer

AUTOBIOGRAPHY 7

You go out for a walk in the rain.
You make love in the rain.

These are not the same
acts. It might or might not

be the same rain. The in
might be two different ins,

one an under, one a during.
You sell fish of gold for a living,

not goldfish, not living fish.
You make a poor living.

It rains day and night
causing the river to rise

and flood your knick-knack shop.
You can step into this river twice

unlike the river of life.
Unlike the river of life

this is a real river, brown and turbid,
with many objects in it.

Today I count: a drowned dog,
short-haired and of medium size;

an office chair, the kind that squeaks
when you lean back; the head of a stag

mounted on oak; endless mattresses
stained and striped like cheap ties;

a tongue-and-groove door lacking its knob;
a superannuated perambulator

such as I was paraded in as a child
by my mother in her cardigan, her blue

cotton skirt and sensible shoes;
the fractured limb of a buckeye

tree, whose fruit will paralyze
the nerves and lead to death;

an oar, a doll, an ice chest,
a camper shell and pesticide cans.

But what of these shadow-flowers with yellow stems?
What of panthers in the skins of men?