

## Michael Palmer / AUTOBIOGRAPHY 6

### (PART 1)

*My name is Johnny Jump-Up  
And I live in a shiny car  
And when I'm really happy  
It takes me very far*

Often this most post-modern of songs  
runs through my head  
Perhaps I should explain  
after my fashion

When I play games of cards  
I like to shuffle the deck seven times  
knowing that at the eighth  
as regards randomness

little more is to be gained  
I live with Dolores, a sailmaker  
who has proven a satisfactory companion  
though prone like myself to melancholy

when the winds are not just right  
Once I found a book on a table  
which changed my entire life  
So I moved from the hotel where I was born

to another hotel, less well kept  
where lizards lolled in the sun  
of a deliquescent solarium  
We feared tropical storms

yet set sail frequently nonetheless  
perhaps as a kind of test  
Dolores explained to me how it is  
ships float

Any object that floats  
is buoyed upward to some extent  
This force is caused by the weight  
of the water it displaces —

the water pressure rises with increasing depth  
and because the object is subject  
to more pressure from below  
than from above, it too may rise

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY 6

### (PART 2)

*Oh they call me Johnny Jump-Up  
For that is not my name  
My head rolled down the marble stairs  
Things never stay the same*

Our acquaintance M. Collins  
would often sing this refrain  
from a seat in his favorite cafe  
on Escarpment Place

M. Collins it appears came from Chicago  
though his accent was no less than perfect  
He taught philosophy to idlers  
including yours truly

whenever we took shelter from the rain  
under the awning of his cafe  
It should be noted that M. Collins  
has published no books of philosophy

and in fact describes himself  
as "a mere table of contents . . .  
a very snarl of twine"  
Yet on induction and probabilities

he has much to say,  
as on indices and icons,  
ordinary propositions and the indefinite future  
He sang in a lilting tenor

which, given a calm day,  
could be heard as far away  
as the Library of the Ursulines  
in one direction, #10

Street of Modalities in another,  
an address which recently appeared to me  
in a dream very brief but very clear  
The taxi taking you away was a drunken blue

*O they called him Johnny Jump-Up  
Since that was not his name  
His head rolled down the marble stairs  
All this is really true*