

Perspectives on Moving Backwards · *Julia Mishkin*

There's no smell like
the first cigaret
your father lights in the car

near the middle of the George Washington Bridge;
the man you pass stares at the sky
as if the color blue were everything.

How can you doubt it
when your own street is thick with houses,
blue as bottles washed up by waves . . .

The air hangs limply like a tern
too far inland, but when you lift
a rock from the ground

there's only the ground,
the man on the bridge,
his wife nodding from shore

like a broken doll;
when it's time to go back
to the roses stretching their thin necks,

the dead grass lining the gutters,
already your house detaches itself
and swings along the ground,

further than oceans
or the next blue continent.
Look out the back window:

you see how everything will leave you,
the telephone poles chained together,
the geese racing backwards,

the sun dawdling into
the nearest window.
Even the man on the bridge backs away.

And how the smoke turns blue in your
father's mouth, that fragrance
wrapped round you like a scarf !