**Diverging**

Nicole Rollender

When I want another time / but also now / we take the fireball red / legendary Trans Am

through the deserted Pine Barrens. / It’s turning the years / back two decades / the shift

& heft of this car’s doors / creased leather seats / smelling old oil & yellow wax / my biker

jacket from the ’80s / molded to some dude’s body / but also mine. / The car, sunset’s

aftermath. / Maybe I’m afraid / where this year / pulls me / rough foamy tide’s empty

cans & seaweed / replacing what I remember. / Feeding cardinals / winter grasses

& snow / their red chatter still alive / because we were there. / This car— / the body—

a strange porthole / for seeing / the world / as it is, as it was / a finch turning inside

another finch / my grandmother who’s gone / still hungry & awake / somewhere. / Girth

of God / shadowing my house. / Trans Am in the rain. / We parked by a tiny / church

& its headstones / next to an abandoned / house clairvoyant / among the pines &

cloud / cover hymning songs I’ve / never heard / & never will again. / The rapt question

when we shut / the lights: Today, / how have you / prepared for your death? / I can’t

recall the exact / tactility of my fingers / touching an 1864 grave / marker’s / grit & moss.

But still, I know / the dampness / entering my arm bones / as a way to mark time / warning

that home never / stays the same. / It’s always floating— / moving on bird feet. / When

you sleep / I touch your palm’s fate / lines. It’s difficult / for me to explain / why loving

you / is dangerous / as driving the Trans Am / in freezing rain / toward disaster / also

a reward. / I can’t recall / a future where / I’ve stopped caring / for you. / Or where

you never / lived at all. / Where / I can’t tell / you how I’ve / broken things / again.

We can’t go back / to how it was / when you were a stranger / to me / when your body’s

a new land / my womb still empty. / I remember Caravaggio / shadows in Paris catacombs

on skulls, / ribs holding / centuries of raspberry hearts. / The golden light from the shaft

above. / Like tiger lilies falling.