

FAITHFUL STREET

*Sun-Brite Laundromat
Cook Street Village, Victoria, 1980*

Weathered sheets take me seaward: bedding shoaled
With shirts in my dryer's dime-spun vortex
As I walk past Faithful, rinsed by pale sparks
Chestnut lanterns drizzle, stairs a keyhole

Through foamy pink welters of rugosa
And broom the cliffs sheer off the foreshore with
Each tread down slippery, long-limbed kelp drifting
On stones the flow rumbles, lifts sub rosa

Waves advancing in abandoned washes
Of gritty, tingling, fast-withdrawing noise
Stirred-up sea glass unsound and jangling, poised
To be tamped against the sand, angles quashed

In the salt's pulse, beliefs pegged out to dry—
Until my cycle's over, I'm tongue-tied.

—John Barton

from *Lost Family: A Memoir* by John Barton (Montreal: Signal Editions, 2020).