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The Divide

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The Divide

The approach comes on slow, the crossing fast
One shore moulting spring; its opposite, fall

Aspens facing me thinning to a sprawled
Near leafless clearing I stare into past

Powerlines, wires overlapping the currents'
Hard shoulders shrugging off topsoil and rock

Sheered from cliffs to dwindle into chalky
Likelihoods of cold—the cold's gradient

Nothing I had banked on but, pant legs wet
Standing on a wave-steeped gravel where before

I can ascertain how solid the ground
Should feel, I forget my feet and forget

What's coarsely washed downstream—how what passes
Is past already; what stays, unsurpassed.

JOHN BARTON's books include *Polari*, *For the Boy with the Eyes of the Virgin: Selected Poems*, *Seminal: The Anthology of Canada's Gay-Male Poets*, *We Are Not Avatars: Essays, Memoirs, Manifestos*, and, most recently, *Lost Family: A Memoir* (a nominee for the 2021 Derek Walcott Prize), *The Essential Derk Wynand*, and *Best Canadian Poetry 2023*. Born in Edmonton and raised in Calgary, he lives in Victoria, where he was the city's poet laureate from 2018 to 2022.