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## Two Poems

by George Bishop

### Jail Time

Letters were handwritten,  
in pencil, recorded  
on lined paper, usually  
yellow—kind of a sick act  
of innocence. There's trying  
to hide the explanations  
in punctuation, hoping  
the pause can pronounce  
your deep sigh and rapid heart-  
beat. There's the blank space  
between paragraphs you count  
on your mother, wife or daughter  
to fill in with a plan, a parole.

Really. Who in the hell am I  
talking to? Here, we don't even  
take our own confessions  
seriously. Only at lock down  
do I think about what I said,  
remember how I couldn't  
seal the envelope. By bed  
the jailor's eyes are full  
of erasures, chewing like  
roaches in a box of old  
books. The ink of answers  
takes time to dry. There's more  
jails than this to go  
through, some solitary  
each word must escape.

### Centennial

Riding a bus through the country's  
version of downtown, speed bumps  
where speed has always been locked  
in a clock, I scan the rows of second,  
sometimes third floor windows  
that look out from the old hotels  
along this sketch of Main. Usually,  
I'm looking for a curtain that's barely  
separated, maybe some part of a woman's  
face, the inside of her eyes deep  
in the sidewalk, dark hair hanging  
like a haunted forest. Then, I wonder  
if anyone's studying the rows of tinted  
windows I'm behind, the bus waiting  
for a light to change. Inside, I'm going

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from door to door, different kinds  
of loneliness tapping the English oak  
just below each peephole. Who is it?—  
I make myself hear as we pull away.  
The next stop is mine where Dot's Diner  
waits—a thick cup of coffee and something  
sticky. I'm hoping for my booth to be empty,  
the one with an old photo of Main. There's  
a woman leaning out one of the windows  
I just passed, a parade below her, a band  
playing in a pavilion, instruments to their  
lips. They've been taking my requests  
for years now. Nothing to march to.  
Just a couple songs about going back,  
all the vacancies of a different key  
in my hand, something beginning  
to turn.

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**George Bishop's** latest work appears in *New Plains Review & Border Crossing*. New work will be included in *Melusine* and *Nagautuck River Review*. Bishop is the author of four chapbooks, most recently *Old Machinery* from Aldrich Publishing. He attended Rutgers University and now lives and writes in Kissimmee, Florida.

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