

REVIEW

“Boxes” (1987)

Raymond Carver

(1938-1988)

“Boxes” is an example of Carver’s plain style, which has been so much imitated in creative writing programs, mistakenly identified with Minimalism. It was selected for inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories 1987*. A man feels helpless about his mother, who is old and sad. She keeps moving in an effort to be happy. She packs all her things in boxes. Other people too seem to live in boxes. The man looks out the windows of his house at ordinary events that suggest his feelings. Carver is a Realist inclined to Expressionistic moods like Sherwood Anderson, except his writing is flatter because he avoids irony--except in his great story “Cathedral” (1981)--which Henry James advised all writers to cultivate. Carver was edited to death by Gordon Lish at Knopf.

Michael Hollister (2015)