

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **The Box-Man Cometh**

By William Doreski

Recall the man who placed boxes  
at the four corners where Boylston  
crosses Massachusetts Avenue?

Every morning he distributed  
four small taped and sealed cartons,  
admired them for a minute or two,

then picked them up and left.  
I remember the sturdy but stunned  
Black traffic cop who asked me,

“You see what he did? Crazy  
White guy. Tell me what it means.”  
We watched the man recover

and stack his boxes, then trot  
south toward Huntington Avenue,  
probably to a cheap rented room.

One day, out of exasperation,  
the cop had to ask. The box-man  
explained that each box contained

a soul desperate for liberation,  
and he hoped to give it a chance.  
Fifty years later the sidewalks

at that intersection look raw,  
stained, mottled, and colorless  
as flesh beneath a bandage.

I hope those souls took flight before  
the box-man died. I hope that cop  
is happily retired and healthy

and doesn't dream of those boxes  
the way I do, my soul struggling  
to escape its dark confinement.

Have you ever believed in art  
the way the box-man did? I cross  
the streets, examine each corner

of the sidewalks and confirm  
that only scorch marks remain  
in memory of his aesthetic.