

## “Zen of Tipping”

My friend Lou

used to walk up to strangers  
and tip them—no, really—  
he'd cruise the South Side,  
pick out the businessman on his way  
to lunch, the slacker hanging  
by the Beehive, the young girl  
walking her dog, and he'd go up,  
pull out a dollar and say,  
Here's a tip for you.

I think you're doing a really  
good job today. Then Lou would  
walk away as the tipee stood  
in mystified silence. Sometimes  
he would cut it short with,  
Keep up the fine work.

People thought Lou was weird,  
but he wasn't. He didn't have much,  
worked as a waiter. I don't know  
why he did it. But I know it wasn't  
about the magnanimous gesture,  
an easy way to feel important,  
it wasn't interrupting the impenetrable  
edge of the individual—you'd  
have to ask Lou—maybe it was about being awake, hand-to-hand  
sweetness, a chain of kindnesses,  
or fun—the tenderness  
we forget in each other.