

## THE THROWER AND THE KEEPER

It's best when casual---a quick  
"I love you" while the coffee cools  
or when we pass each other  
in the hall.

Skywriting lovers  
who proclaim "I love you"  
to the world mistake publicity  
for praise.

Better the ways  
of Cyrano who saved his praises  
for Roxanne alone.

No Cyrano,  
I do my best to thank you  
for your bravery of heart, your sense  
of who'd be hurt by what  
is said or left unsaid, your rage  
when something totally unjust  
is totally ignored.

On basics  
we agree.

On trivia, not always.  
I claim the Iroquois were right---  
"Travel light, travel far."

You say  
the things we chuck today  
we just might need tomorrow.  
So there we are---the chucker  
and the saver---now against  
mañana.

On trips you pack  
for three eventualities---delay,  
disaster and death.

I pack  
the clothes I plan to leave  
behind, the socks I'll never  
wear again, the books  
I bring to give away...

To be exact,

you're two-thirds right.

When I  
need dimes for tolls or parking  
meters, presto! you produce  
them from the pocket of your coat.

If I need dollars, presto! out  
they pop like Kleenex from the selfsame  
coat.

And that trick works  
with any coat.

You keep  
a history of birthdays, wedding  
dates and anniversaries, and twice  
that saved us from the worst  
of all embarrassments.

You store  
for years the sales receipts  
I'd throw away, and once  
that spared us a calamity.

I doubt  
we'll change.

What leaves me edgy  
makes you more assured, so why  
adjust?

I'll keep on lightening  
our overload of blankets, towels,  
issues of the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC,  
Christmas ribbons, drinking  
glasses from a dozen different  
sets, galoshes, photographs  
and stubs, discarding, I concede,  
some quality in all that quantity.

You'll go on saving snapshots,  
rubber bands, old programs  
from Toronto and New York,  
cancelled stamps from Italy  
and Belgium, shillings, francs,  
a ring too tarnished to be worn,  
doorkeys for God-knows-which  
hotels, outdated medicines

and, finally, I gratefully admit,  
some quality in all that quantity,  
including, in the process, me.