

i didn't mind. it's flattering  
to be argued about. i tilted  
the bottle of cognac and sat  
back. julian, in spite of his  
education, and mike, in spite  
of his lack of same, both  
made a number of good points.

by the end of the evening  
i was feeling a trifle self-  
conscious and more than a  
trifle bored and i'm relieved  
the subject has never come up  
again. the only reference  
made to that night was on  
the following holiday when  
old mike greeted me by saying  
"here comes shakespeare,  
hide the cognac."

of course  
julian immediately  
handed me the bottle  
of v.s.o.p.

#### RAINY DAY WOMAN #1

when i was 15  
on my first job  
as a bus boy the best  
looking waitress, 10  
years older, used to  
tease me. when it  
rained she would say:  
"we shouldn't be working,  
this is baby-making weather."  
i poured coffee on my hand  
when she walked by  
and before long she started  
'forgetting' to leave  
my 15% when she went home.  
she was a master of  
the quick remark  
delivered on the fly  
and a month passed before  
i grabbed the manager  
back by the dishwasher.  
he gave her a list  
of the days she owed  
me for. it rained

a helluva lot that year  
but she never mentioned  
babies again.

-- Christopher Daly

Long Beach CA

### THOSE PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA EYES

Aunt Maple at 105 totters into breakfast, wants the pancake on the bottom of the stack, "They're all the same!" shouts the husband of her dead sister's daughter (nephew-in-law?), only she can't hear because she's got her hearing aid turned off, saving batteries, a whole box of old batteries under her bed, "They're not really 100% dead," a dab of soybean margarine, "I don't know whatever happened to butter..." "It got overpriced!" yells her dead sister's daughter's husband, but not even the vibrations get through, and her niece says kind of to the air over the center of the table, "I don't know why she even wears that silly thing if she doesn't want to put any batteries in it," Aunt Maple squirrels her way through one pancake, then another two, always dealing from the bottom of the deck, a cup of cream-swamped, sugar-supercharged coffee, then spiders into the living room where she sits on the sofa watching her watch,

10 AM, a car comes dust-clouding down the road, pulls up in front,

"Who's that?" asks Margaret-Niece.

Aunt Maple already at the front door as Mr. Knit Orlon rings the bell,

"Miss Maple Watkins?"

"That's me!" she says, he's swimming in shame/con-  
sternation/befuddlement,

"I try to block these things," says Margaret-Niece,

"I sell life insurance," says Mr. Knit Orlon,

"You're neither the first nor the last,"

"Well...", he stands there in a puddle of confusion,