

POEM

Jay Teitel

They wooed me,
 The old ladies of Italy,
 Italian old ladies snipping
 Grapes in Switzerland:
 They filled their baskets
 From between the rows of vines,
 Garish orange baskets
 From between the rows of vines
 And wailed, "Caisse, Cassetta (Basket)!"
 "Jeune homme, caisse s'il vous plaît!"
 The jeune homme was me, was
 I who raced starry-eyed and breathless
 Up the rock-strewn aisles with
 Empty orange baskets and a shy smile
 For the old ladies of Italy
 Snipping grapes in Switzerland,
 Was I who answered first
 The siren-like charm of a
 Toothless grin,
 Then the adolescent pout
 Of brown leather lips and
 Tributariad cheeks,
 The lewd wagging beckon of
 A crooked finger,
 And finally the winsome
 Dignified lure of a white and tired wisp of hair,
 Blowing from beneath a red checkered

THE DALHOUSIE REVIEW

Head bandana:

They competed for me
And lavished me with their
Most alluring glances and gestures
And one in particular I remember,
One ancient proper blushing maiden
With whom I formed a tableau
Of formal and absurdly unhurried
Grace—the lady
Kneeling immaculate
Between the rows of vines—the gentleman
Hovering above, unsteady,
Clinging to the steep aisle:
“Your basket, madame”,
“Thank you, monsieur”,
“Thank you, madame”,
“At your service, monsieur”.

The grape is the embryo
Of wine,
It has none of the experience,
None of the savoir-faire
of its later liquid life,
But most people will agree
That it has great promise.
Most people
Will also agree
That the old ladies
Come to pick the grapes
For money—I know better;
They have had their fill of mellow
Old wine and life, and
They come rather to relive lost hope,
Relive lost hope
And woo exotic young men
Between the rows of vines
(The old ladies of Italy
Snipping grapes in Switzerland.)