

DEREK OTSUJI

Preserves

What she remembers still is the sweet smell
Of summer guavas boiling on the stove,
Plumes rising with aromas of a grove
Where the fruit's lemon yellow was a bell
Of ripeness rung. To hear my mother tell
The story again—how they'd sack the trove
From trees growing wild by the road they drove
To school and church and back, a ritual
That was her frugal mother's and imposed
On her and the twins, when she was scarcely tall
Enough to reach the low hung fruit at all—
Is to preserve more than I had supposed.
In extract tart and red and gold and clear—
The sweet yield of memory, the simmered year.