



11-15-2003

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Recommended Citation

Suárez, Virgil (2003) "Don Malo Prunes His Guayaba in Late Autumn," *Westview*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol23/iss1/14>

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Don Malo Prunes His Guayaba in Late Autumn

by Virgil Suárez

His shears in one hand and an espresso coffee cup
made from a cut gourd in the other, Mr. Malo
works his guayaba tree Bonsai in his patio, next

to the hen coop where the chickens lay their eggs,
the smell of moist chicken shit rising up to greet him.
This is Havana, he knows, but he's always had a passion

for Japanese aesthetics. He remembers his grandmother
telling stories of Samurai warriors, of Ninja sects, men
living and dying by secret codes of the sword, of Kabuki

dramas where masked men made strange noises and stuck
out their tongues. Though this is simply a guayaba tree,
he knows well, he intends to work it into art, snipping

the tip of an overgrown branch here, keeping the trunk
down with copper wire—at least until it achieves its form.
Moss blankets its tiny roots. A rooster crows, and Malo

bows to the rising sun. This is his favorite time of day,
when the sun light blanches the trees, catches its own
reflection in the pond water. Mr. Malo thinks about poets

on their way down river, to visit friends, to drink Sake,
to write eternal words in snow-banked villages. Why,
he asks, could not a man make a little of his imagination

blossom on the tiny branches of a guayaba tree? Sure.

