

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## ★ **The Sweetest Fruits.**

By Monique Truong

Sept. 2019. 304p. Viking, \$26 (9780735221017)

He began life in 1850 as Patricio to his Greek mother, immigrating at two from the island of Lefkada to the Emerald Isle, his father's birthplace, where he became Patrick. By 19, he landed in New York, made his way to Cincinnati, and married a formerly enslaved woman who called him Pat, although as a struggling journalist, he was known as Lafcadio. His restlessness pushed him to New Orleans, then Martinique in the West Indies, until he settled on his final island, Japan, where he became Koizumi Yakumo and lived with a samurai-descendant wife and, eventually, their four children. More than a century since his 1904 death, Lafcadio Hearn remains one of Japan's preeminent literary expatriates. Truong, whose family's violent 1975 displacement from Vietnam when she was six makes her intimately familiar with peripatetic longing, stupendously imagined the life of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas' Vietnamese Parisian cook in her award-winning debut, *The Book of Salt* (2003). She displays similar ingenuity in her extraordinary new book (an eight-year effort) presenting Lafcadio Hearn through the four most important women in his life: his willful Greek mother, his determined first wife, his protective last wife, and his tenacious first biographer, Elizabeth Brisland. By reclaiming these exemplary women's voices, Truong enhances history with illuminating herstory too long overlooked.

— *Terry Hong*