

(summary)

ANNITA P. PANARETOU

*This long, magical journey...*

Patrick Leigh Fermor: thousands of pages about thousands of miles

Independent, daring, open-minded and impartial, Patrick Leigh Fermor was the embodiment of the ideal traveller. Beginning with the walk that he took over many months in his early adulthood from Holland to Mount Athos in Greece, travel provided Leigh Fermor with an inexhaustible store of material; for a man with huge physical and mental strength, long journeys made for a great variety of experiences. The combination of his impressive learning in the fields of history, literature and art with his great talent as a writer resulted in striking renderings not only of scenes, but of the character, nature and mood of people and places.

Leigh Fermor constructed a mosaic of Europe in terms both of the continent's topography and its civilization in his books *A Time of Gifts: On Foot from the Hook of Holland to the Middle Danube* (1977), *Between the Woods and the Water: On Foot to Constantinople from the Hook of Holland: The Middle Danube to the Iron Gates* (1986) and *The Broken Road: From the Iron Gates to Mount Athos* (2013). He described the colour and noise of the Caribbean in *The Traveller's Tree: A Journey through the Caribbean Islands* (1950); and, in stark contrast, he wrote about austere monasteries that led to contemplation in *A Time to Keep Silence* (1953). His deep knowledge of and unusually strong bond with the Greek world - Greece was an unbroken, life-long journey for Leigh Fermor - are evident in his books *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese* (1958) and *Roumeli: Travels in Northern Greece* (1966).

Patrick Leigh Fermor's idiosyncratic personality, life and works combined in the most compelling way to make him one of the 20th century's leading travel writers.