

(summary)

ADAM SISMAN

Paddy as a letter-writer

Handsome, dashing, and erudite, Patrick Leigh Fermor was a traveller, a war hero, a Philhellene, a lover, and a writer of genius.

His letters exhibit many of his most engaging characteristics—his zest for life, his unending curiosity, his keen sense of place, his lyrical descriptive powers, his love of language, his boyish exuberance, and his tendency to get into scrapes, particularly when driving.

It has often been said that Patrick Leigh Fermor was one of the most distinctive prose writers of the twentieth century. Now we can see that his letters were an important part of his output. They may sometimes be penned in haste (or even *in tearing haste*), but they are delightful to read nonetheless: perhaps all the better for being written in a free flowing, uninhibited style. At their best, Paddy's letters are as good as any in the English language.