

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Michael O'Sullivan** was introduced to Patrick Leigh Fermor's writings in Vienna in the early 1980s. He was curating the first major exhibition on the life and work of W.H. Auden in the Künstlerhaus where he met an exiled Hungarian aristocrat whose friends had known Leigh Fermor in Hungary in 1934. He has lived in Vienna, Marrakesh, Budapest and Dublin and has been a foreign correspondent, broadcaster and biographer. He is currently writing a biography of the Hungarian author and statesman Miklós Bánffy (with Bánffy's great-nephew, Tamás Barcsay).

#### ON THE FRONT COVER

Patrick Leigh Fermor on horseback in Moldavia

#### ON THE BACK COVER

Patrick Leigh Fermor's passport from 1934

Cover design by Sebastian Stachowski

Patrick Leigh-Fermor's account of post-Habsburg Hungary and Transylvania is a classic piece of travel-writing, but it is also an Anglo-Irish Bildungsroman. Michael O'Sullivan's account of the people, mainly aristocrats, whom Leigh Fermor encountered, and of the places in which he stayed, is a wonderful and important piece of social archaeology.

**Norman Stone**, Emeritus Professor of History, University of Oxford.

A superb evocation of Hungary and its noble families in 1934, indispensable both to Magyarophiles and to aficionados of Patrick Leigh Fermor.

**Philip Mansel**, author of *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire*.

A book which places Patrick Leigh Fermor firmly in the context of his Central European formation has long been awaited. Michael O'Sullivan has done fans a great service by exploring in such a masterly fashion the families who nurtured and educated Leigh Fermor "between the woods and the water".

**Richard Bassett**, author of *A Guide to Central Europe and For God and Kaiser*.



ISBN 978-615-5225-64-2



**Central European University Press**  
Budapest – New York

Sales and information: [ceupress@press.ceu.edu](mailto:ceupress@press.ceu.edu)  
Website: <http://www.ceupress.com>

Patrick Leigh Fermor



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# Patrick Leigh Fermor



NOBLE ENCOUNTERS  
*between*  
BUDAPEST *and* TRANSYLVANIA



Michael O'Sullivan



In March 1934 a young man stood midway on a bridge over the Danube which connected Czechoslovakia and Hungary. He was taking stock of a world which, ten years hence, like the very bridge he stood on, would no longer exist. Patrick Leigh Fermor had left London the year before, at the age of eighteen, to walk from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople to complete a journey which would later become the source for some of the best travel writing in the English language. As he stood on the Mária Valéria bridge, facing the ancient Hungarian city of Esztergom, he had no idea that he would one day become the chronicler of a form of social life which was soon to be extinguished by the vicissitudes of war and by the repression which so often went hand in glove with Communism. But for now he was on an entirely different path which would take this gregarious, intelligent, handsome young man into the welcoming embrace—social and romantic—of some of the oldest and grandest families in Europe. He was there at that time, not as a witness to history, but to enjoy himself. The author of this book has had access to the private papers and correspondence of many of Leigh Fermor's hosts, has used extensive interviews with surviving members of these old noble families, delved into the Communist Secret Police archives and even met the last woman alive who knew Patrick Leigh Fermor in Transylvania in 1934. *Patrick Leigh Fermor: Noble Encounters Between Budapest and Transylvania* is the extraordinary story of how one unknown young man charmed his way into the castles, manor houses, beds and lives of some of the most influential people in a part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire which was then on the cusp of tremendous change. This book records the history of a class, as witnessed by an exceptional young outsider in 1934 and also records what happened to many of them once the grim reality of Communism took hold in this part of East-Central Europe. It is also a portrait of Budapest in 1934, a grand city about to change forever.