



I Asked Cathleen to Dance

Gerard Windsor

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In 1963, the beginning of the sixties and the sexual revolution, Gerard Windsor entered a novitiate to prepare to become a Jesuit priest. A decade later, in 1973, he visited Ireland for the first time, having left the Jesuits not long before. *I Asked Cathleen to Dance* is his intimate and beguiling memoir of that heady visit to Ireland when he first became bewitched by both the country and the world of women. It follows on from *Heaven Where the Bachelors Sit*, his highly acclaimed book which recounted his time spent in the novitiate. Patrick White had said to Windsor before the young man set out on his journey, that Ireland is an old man sitting on a bridge watching the water go by. For Windsor, however, Ireland was always a woman and unambiguously female. She was the woman old and the woman young.. And so we follow Windsor as he travels by bike, bus, on foot and in the cars of strangers across Ireland, and as he encounters women and his own latent sexuality. He says of himself on leaving the priesthood, and I was slow to enter any new world of sexual bonding. Yet he found himself seduced by the 'siren song' of Cathleen ni Houlihan 'the' party girl on Ireland's currency.

Most of us can remember a journey taken early in our lives when the world opened up to us in ways we will never forget. This is such a journey, recalled here in poignant yet often humorous detail. Windsor's playfully wry and confiding tone and his own inept stumbling towards women suit perfectly the soft landscape and the cast of quirky characters he describes in *I Asked Cathleen to Dance*.

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