



# Dancing with the Devil: The Windsors and Jimmy Donahue

Christopher Wilson

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The story of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor is one of the most romantic of all time: Edward VIII abdicated his throne and gave up an empire so that he could marry the woman he loved, American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Very few people suspected, and even fewer actually knew, that the Duchess cuckolded him—and almost gave him up—for a gay playboy twenty years her junior.

Blond and slender, Jimmy Donahue was the archetypal post-war playboy. He could fly a plane, speak several languages, play the piano, and tell marvelous jokes. People loved him for his wit, charm and personality. The grandson of millionaire Frank W. Woolworth, Jimmy knew he would never need to work. Instead, he set about carving for himself a career of mischief. Some said evil.

Gay at a time when the homosexual act was still illegal, Jimmy was notorious within America's upper class, and loved to shock. Though press agents arranged for him to be seen with female escorts, his pursuits, until he met the Duchess of Windsor, were exclusively homosexual. He was thirty-five when he was befriended by the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in 1950. The Duchess was fifty-four, and despite the difference in age, there was an instant attraction. A burgeoning sexual relationship – a perverse sort of love – was formed between Jimmy and the Duchess. Together with the Duke, they became an inseparable trio, the closest of friends. As Jimmy had planned, the royal couple became obsessed with him.

With information from surviving contemporaries, *Dancing with the Devil* is the extraordinary tale of three remarkable people and their unique and twisted relationship.



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