

Annotated Bibliography of Alice McDermott's Works

A Bigamist's Daughter (1982)

McDermott's first novel examines ways in which the past shapes people. It tells the story of Elizabeth Connelly, a young editor in chief at Vista Books, a vanity press. While she may impress her friends and family with her position, Elizabeth charms potential authors into signing the large checks that make up Vista's profit. When Elizabeth becomes romantically involved with one of Vista's authors, Tupper Daniels, a Southerner who has written a novel about a bigamist, she begins for the first time to confront larger deceptions in her own life and her family's past. She examines her own father's long absences and her suspicions about his secret life, and she revisits her relationships with her mother and a former boyfriend in her search for the truth behind the stories people tell to romanticize their past.

That Night (1987)

McDermott's second novel was a finalist for the National Book Award, the Pulitzer Prize, the PEN/Faulkner Award, and the Los Angeles Times Book Award. Set in a Long Island suburb in the early 1960's and narrated by the romantic, impressionable ten-year-old girl narrator, it begins with the incidents of one particular summer night. Rick, the leader of a group of young hoods, arrives to claim his fifteen-year-old girlfriend, Sheryl, from her family. An awkward fight ensues, and the rest of the novel revolves around that night, describing events leading up to it and resulting from it.

At Weddings and Wakes (1992)

Set in the 1960's, *At Weddings and Wakes* tells the story of an extended Irish-American family. The family relationships are explored from the viewpoint of three children whose mother takes them on a weekly trip to her childhood home in Brooklyn to visit Momma, their grandmother, and three aunts: Veronica, an overprotected recluse; Agnes, a sophisticated career woman; and May, a sweet former nun whose marriage and death are foretold in the title. As family rituals are observed and stories are told and retold, the children bear witness to the Irish immigrant experience.

Charming Billy (1998)

Winner of the 1998 National Book Award

Child of My Heart (2002)

Narrated by fifteen-year-old Theresa, the novel takes place during a summer in the early 1960s on the far end of Long Island. Theresa, beautiful and kind, is the only daughter of middle-aged parents who move from their own working-class neighborhood to offer their daughter better opportunities. Since she is left alone much of the time, Theresa's imagination runs wild until reality intrudes. Theresa begins to unravel the mysteries of adult behavior when her eight-year-old cousin, Daisy, comes for an extended visit, and Theresa babysits daily for Flora, the two-year-old daughter of a famous and aging artist whose fourth wife has just left him.