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# Books

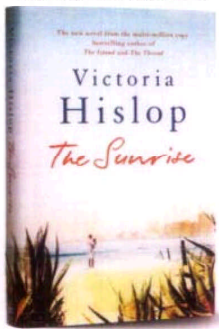


*Lawyerly London, spooky Suffolk, punky Ireland and a bellicose Mediterranean. By Sebastian Shakespeare*

## THE CHILDREN ACT BY IAN MCEWAN (Jonathan Cape, £16.99)

A compelling moral dilemma forms the heart of Ian McEwan's latest novel. Adam, a beautiful 17-year-old Jehovah's Witness, is refusing a blood transfusion that could save his life; Fiona, a High Court judge, has to decide whether to override his wishes (and his parents') or comply with their religious convictions and let him die. Her visit to him in hospital has unintended consequences: he ends up becoming besotted with her. She has other problems – as the story unfolds, we learn more about her regret for her own childlessness and how her marriage is in crisis. Her sex life with her husband is moribund ('only latterly a failure, elevated by him into a mighty injustice') and he embarks on an affair.

Be prepared for some arid legal case history – rather too much, actually – but the story soon regains momentum and exerts its narrative pull. What emerges is an absorbing portrait of a woman who has sacrificed motherhood for professional success. Fiona is a family lawyer without a family who is ageing in 'paranoid millimetres'. She takes refuge in playing the piano, but even her Bach melodies become a form of reproach; Bach, after all, sired 20 children by two marriages. The novel itself is a fugue, with the two main protagonists in flight from themselves. McEwan ushers the story to a close with a moving and heartfelt denouement.



## THE SUNRISE BY VICTORIA HISLOP (Headline Reviews, £20)

Another slice of Mediterranean life from the bestselling author of *The Island*. Set in Cyprus during the Turkish invasion of 1974, this vibrant novel tells the story of two families left behind in Famagusta,

whose population of 40,000 fled from the advancing Turkish soldiers. Hislop brings history to life in this compelling tale of social upheaval. Famagusta had once been golden – the beach, the bodies of the sunbathers and the lives of those who dwelt there. And then the war arrived. Blood, sweat and tears.

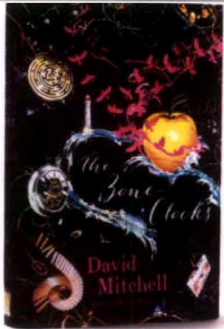


## KILLER HEELS BY LISA SMALL (Prestel, £35)

From the stiletto to the wedge to the platform, here's a gorgeous illustrated paean to the high-heeled shoe. Coveted, adored, mocked, reviled and fetishised, spectacularly elevated shoes have been status symbols for centuries, and they've been central to feminine identity. Small's book examines sensational examples of contemporary and historical heels, exploring their mystique and transformative power; it's not just about shoes, it's about eroticism, glamour and transgression. Cobblers make the gods we worship.

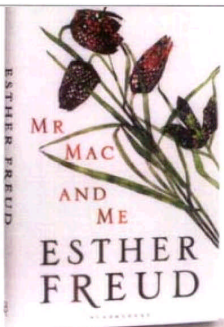
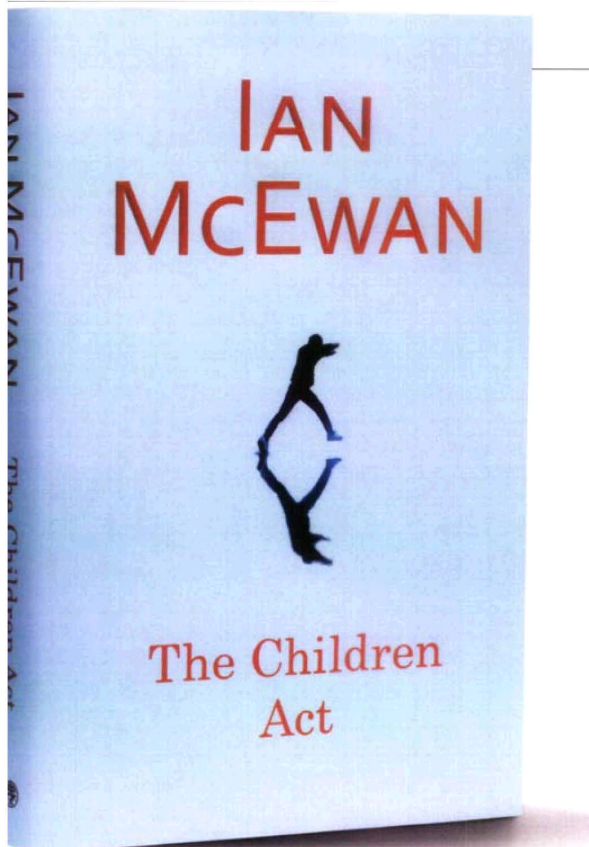


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**THE BONE CLOCKS BY DAVID MITCHELL** (*Sceptre, £20*)  
Another metaphysical dazzler from the author of *Cloud Atlas*. Mitchell's new novel follows the twists and turns of a teenage tearaway's life, from a punk adolescence in Gravesend to old age on Ireland's Atlantic coast. Holly Sykes becomes a pawn in a spiritual war between the mysterious Radio People and the Horologists. The book jumps forwards and backwards in time and is at once a gripping thriller and a far-out fantasy, a brilliant mash-up that pulsates with energy, satire and wit.

boy, the son of a local publican, and his unlikely friendship with the great Glaswegian architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who lived on the Suffolk coast in 1914. Life is quiet until the mysterious Scotsman arrives on the scene and stares across the waves as if he's searching for clues. It's atmospheric and elegant; you can almost smell the brine – and you hunger for the climax. □



**MR MAC AND ME BY ESTHER FREUD** (*Bloomsbury, £16.99*)  
Esther Freud has a remarkable fluency of style that can almost mask her skills as a novelist. This captivating tale is about a young