

# THE WORLD, IN WORDS

CHARLOTTE SQUARE GARDENS  
EDINBURGH  
[www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk)  
13 – 29 AUGUST 2011

## NEWS RELEASE



in association with

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### SARAH WINMAN WINS EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL'S NEWTON FIRST BOOK AWARD

Sarah Winman's debut novel, *When God Was a Rabbit*, was announced today as the winner of the 2011 Edinburgh International Book Festival's Newton First Book Award. The Award encourages the Book Festival audience to discover the up-and-coming new novelists that are featured in the Festival Programme each year and vote for their favourite. Every one of the 47 writers who brought their debut novel, novella or short stories to Edinburgh in August was eligible for the award.

This was the second year the Book Festival has run the Award, and the first with new title sponsors, Newton Investment Management. Over 900 votes were cast both through the Book Festival website and on ballot cards submitted during the Festival in Charlotte Square Gardens in August. Every book entered in the award received at least one vote, and *When God Was a Rabbit* was a clear favourite with over 10% of the votes while two books shared second place - *Invitation* by Shehryar Fazli and *The Registrar's Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* by Sophie Hardach.

*When God Was a Rabbit* is a story about childhood and growing up, loss of innocence, eccentricity, family ties and friendships and the unbreakable bond between a brother and a sister. Catherine Taylor reviewed the book in The Guardian as "Thronging with incident, wonder and outré language, Winman's first book is simultaneously cloying and sharply funny, whimsical and innovative." Book Festival voters' reviews included "This is one of the best novels published last year, and in my view should have won this year's Orange Prize. I defy anyone not to fall in love with the characters in this book - I laughed and cried my way through this compelling story", "The characters in this book stayed with me long after I turned the last page, it was absolutely beautiful and hilariously funny, as well as utterly tragic at times" and "Dark and charming at the same time. Excellent read."

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "The Newton First Book Award has been very successful in introducing the best in new writing from the UK and abroad to our Book Festival audience. I am thrilled that the prize has been met with such an enthusiastic response from readers: it is their passionate support for emerging authors that makes the Newton First Book Award

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT FRANCES SUTTON, PRESS MANAGER:**

**[frances@edbookfest.co.uk](mailto:frances@edbookfest.co.uk) / Tel: 0131 718 5654 / Mob: 07841 579481**

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special. *When God Was a Rabbit* is a worthy winner in a strong field, and we offer our congratulations to Sarah Winman.”

Sarah Winman, author of *When God Was a Rabbit* said “It is fantastic to receive this award, especially as Edinburgh was such a great and memorable festival to be part of.”

Helena Morrissey, Chief Executive Officer, Newton Investment Management, said “We are delighted to sponsor the Newton First Book Award at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, through which we aim to encourage and support talented writers who have potential to bring a wonderful range of imaginative and individual works into the modern literary canon. We congratulate Sarah Winman, and hope that for her, and all the finalists, this is a prologue to a vibrant and successful career.”

The debut fiction eligible for the 2012 Newton First Book Award will be announced with the Edinburgh International Book Festival Programme in June 2012. Further details of the 2011 Newton First Book Award can be found on <http://www.edbookfest.co.uk/writers/newton-first-book-award>

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For further information please contact:

Frances Sutton, Press Manager  
07841 579481 or [frances@edbookfest.co.uk](mailto:frances@edbookfest.co.uk)

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