

**\*\*Under strict embargo until 20.00 GMT, Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011\*\***

## “WATERSTONE’S 11” ANNOUNCED

A 25-year-old lecturer from an Ivy League University, an actress, the former literary editor of *The Daily Telegraph* and an unemployed man who made national headlines when he found himself at the centre of a twelve-way bidding war are just four of the individuals making up the inaugural **Waterstone’s 11** list, a major new initiative created to uncover and champion the very best in debut fiction for the year ahead.

Announced this evening (Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>) at a reception in Waterstone’s flagship store in London’s Piccadilly, the 11 debut authors, chosen from nearly 100 submissions from publishers, are expected to go on to achieve critical and commercial success for their debut novels.

A truly global list, authors hail from countries around the world, including Sri Lanka (Shehan Karunatilaka), Kashmir (Mirza Waheed), Latvia (David Bezmozgis), Germany (Sophie Hardach) and Canada (Johanna Skibsrud). Notably there is a near 50/50 split between male and female authors making the grade.

The full list is as follows:

- *City of Bohane* by Kevin Barry (Jonathan Cape, 7<sup>th</sup> April)
- *The Free World* by David Bezmozgis (Viking, 7<sup>th</sup> April)
- *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages* by Sophie Hardach (Simon & Schuster, 14<sup>th</sup> April)
- *22 Britannia Road* by Amanda Hodgkinson (Fig Tree, 28<sup>th</sup> April)
- *Chinaman* by Shehan Karunatilaka (Jonathan Cape, 7<sup>th</sup> April)
- *Pigeon English* by Stephen Kelman (Bloomsbury, 7<sup>th</sup> March)
- *The Coincidence Engine* by Sam Leith (Bloomsbury, 4<sup>th</sup> April)
- *The Tiger’s Wife* by Téa Obreht (Orion, 10<sup>th</sup> March)
- *The Sentimentalists* by Johanna Skibsrud (William Heinemann, 7<sup>th</sup> April)
- *The Collaborator* by Mirza Waheed (Viking, 24<sup>th</sup> February)
- *When God Was a Rabbit* by Sarah Winman (Headline, 3<sup>rd</sup> March)

Whilst some authors are completely unknown at this stage, others have already grabbed the attention of the literary establishment: Roddy Doyle described Kevin Barry’s work as “hilarious and unpredictable”; Michael Ondaatje called Shehan Karunatilaka’s novel “a crazy ambidextrous delight”; whilst William Boyd hailed Sam Leith’s work as “a tremendous novel – droll, savvy, original. An invigorating blast of fiction”.

Waterstone’s Managing Director Dominic Myers, said:

“I am in the book business because I love finding great new writing, and I know I am not alone in that passion. Our first Waterstone’s 11 is quite genuinely one of the most exciting and remarkable collections of debut novels I’ve seen in my career. It’s going to be a great year for fiction”.

Waterstone’s Head of Fiction, Toby Bourne, said: “We aspire to make the Waterstone’s 11 one of the first major fixtures of the literary calendar, annually introducing our squad of authors en masse to the media, and supporting their titles as they are published. This will culminate later in the year when we promote all 11 titles together in a front-of-store promotion.”

As well as hosting a reception for London’s literati, Waterstone’s commissioned leading photographer Fergus Greer to capture an image of all 11 authors, and produced a limited edition book containing extracts from each of the Waterstone’s 11 titles to mark the occasion.

**All authors are available for interview. For further information and any image requests, please contact Anwen Hooson at Riot Communications on 020 3174 0118 / 07789 798885 / [anwen@riotcommunications.com](mailto:anwen@riotcommunications.com)**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. The inaugural Waterstone's 11 was open to debut literary fiction, first published in the UK in English in 2011.
2. Waterstone's is the UK's leading specialist bookseller with branches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as branches in Eire, in Amsterdam and Brussels, on the Isle of Man and Jersey. Its transactional website Waterstones.com was launched in 2006, and there are currently over 3 million holders of the Waterstone's Card.
3. **Waterstone's 11 in detail:**

### **City of Bohane by Kevin Barry**

Thirty or so years in the future. The once-great city of Bohane on the west coast of Ireland is on its knees, infested by vice and split along tribal lines. For years it has all been under the control of Logan Hartnett, the dapper godfather of the Hartnett Fancy gang. But they say his old rival Gant Broderick is back; there is dissent within the Fancy ranks; there are problems with the missus...and then there's his mother. A provincial noir of mesmerising imagination and vaulting linguistic invention.

'Kevin Barry's first novel is a lightning bolt. Told with the speed and directness of a film or graphic novel, it sucks influences from far and wide, breeds these with all the ripe inheritance of Irish literature and creates a world which is hilarious, violent and bewitchingly entertaining.' – **Adam Bowler, Senior Editor, Jonathan Cape**

### **About the Author**

Kevin Barry's story collection, *There Are Little Kingdoms*, won the Rooney Prize in 2007. His short fiction has appeared widely on both sides of the Atlantic, most recently in *The New Yorker*. He has written about literature and travel for many newspapers and magazines including the *Irish Times*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *New Zealand Herald*. He previously worked as a columnist with the *Irish Examiner* and the *Glasgow Sunday Herald*.

### **The Free World by David Bezmozgis**

Welcome to Rome. It is the summer of 1978, and the Krasnansky family, alongside thousands of other Soviet Jewish refugees, are supposed to be passing through. But when their sponsor in the USA lets them down they find that they're no longer passing through at all. On the contrary, they're stuck. *The Free World* is a tragic yet comic tale of reckless brothers and long-suffering sisters, ailing parents and innocent children, of love affairs and criminal liaisons, of a wonderfully troubled family and a perpetually wandering people, and their epic search for a home: somewhere, anywhere – or Canada, as it turns out.

"*The Free World* is a staggeringly good novel by a truly remarkable writer. Through the Krasnanskys' various acts of courage and cowardice, loyalty and betrayal, this grand, poignant and gloriously funny novel asks profound questions about how to make the best of our lives." – **Will Hammond, Commissioning Editor, Viking**

### **About the Author**

David Bezmozgis was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1973 and emigrated with his parents to Toronto in 1980. His story collection, *Natasha and Other Stories*, was shortlisted for the *Guardian* First Book Award, was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the year, won the Commonwealth Writers Regional Prize for First Book and has been translated into over a dozen languages. He is also a film-maker, whose narrative and documentary films have played at festivals internationally, from Sundance to Shanghai. His first feature film, *Victoria Day*, premiered in competition at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and was later nominated for a Genie Award for Best Screenplay in Canada.

In 2010, he was selected as one of the *New Yorker's* '20 Under 40', celebrating the twenty most promising fiction writers under the age of forty.

### **The Registrar's Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages by Sophie Hardach**

When Selim, a Kurdish refugee, lands up in a small town in Germany, he believes he has finally found a safe haven – but as his 18th birthday approaches and his residency permit remains elusive, there seems to be only one way to avoid deportation.

Touching on important contemporary themes of identity, immigration, terrorism and marriage, the book is also the intimate story of two young people, a German girl and a Kurdish boy, who despite their best intentions, discover that a marriage of convenience is anything but...

“Original.’ It’s the one word that seems to crop up time and again from early readers describing *The Registrar’s Manual for Detecting Forced Marriages*. Just when you think you know where the story is taking you, it takes you somewhere else instead” – **Jessica Leeke, Fiction Editor, Simon & Schuster**

#### **About the Author**

Sophie Hardach was born in 1979 and grew up in Germany. She studied economics and political science at Edinburgh University and the National University of Singapore. After graduating, she worked as a correspondent for Reuters news agency in London, Milan, Tokyo and Paris, where she now lives. She is fluent in six languages.

### **22 Britannia Road by Amanda Hodgkinson**

After the war, Silvana and her seven-year-old son Aurek board a ship bound for England from Poland where they have been living wild in the forests, hiding from the occupying forces. Silvana carries with her a terrible secret, but is determined to bury the past and take Aurek to a new start with his father Janusz, who will love him and keep him safe.

However, the years apart have changed them all. Struggling with life in peacetime, Silvana and Janusz are desperate to make a real home for Aurek. But first they must accept what each has been capable of during the war, come to terms with what really happened and allow their beloved but wild boy to be who he truly is.

"As harrowing and compelling a novel as you will read all year. Surely far too assured to be a debut." - **Chris White, Waterstone's Fiction Team**

“Shudderingly gripping and incredibly moving story-telling from first time author Amanda Hodgkinson, it tells the story of a Polish émigré couple and their little boy, who, separated by World War II, are reunited and settle in Ipswich, where they struggle to make a new life as the secrets they have withheld from each other are slowly divulged.” – **Juliet Annan, Publishing Director, Fig Tree**

#### **About the Author**

Amanda Hodgkinson was born in Somerset and grew up in a small seaside village in Essex, before moving to Suffolk where her novel is set. She moved to France with her husband and their two daughters seven years ago, after falling in love with a ruined house on a hill with a view of the snow-capped Pyrenees. She had just finished an MA in creative writing at UEA. While renovating the house, growing her own vegetables and keeping chickens, she simultaneously developed other strands to her career, playing in a French band (singing and playing guitar, performing all over the region) waitressing and arranging flowers for weddings while also working as a columnist for *France* magazine and writing for various UK magazines about life in France. Then finally she found time to write her novel.

### **Chinaman by Shehan Karunatilaka**

Retired sportswriter WG Karunasena is dying. He will spend his final months drinking arrack, making his wife unhappy, ignoring his son and tracking down Pradeep S. Mathew, a spin bowler who has mysteriously disappeared and who WG considers ‘the greatest cricketer to walk the earth’. On his quest to find this unsung genius, WG uncovers a coach with six fingers, a secret bunker below a famous stadium, a Tamil Tiger warlord, and startling truths about Sri Lanka, cricket and himself.

“A crazy ambidextrous delight” – **Michael Ondaatje**

### About the Author

Shehan Karunatilaka was born in Sri Lanka in 1975. He studied at Massey University in New Zealand, before becoming an advertising copywriter. He has worked for agencies in Sri Lanka, London and Singapore and won many awards for his campaigns. Shehan plays bass with the band Independence Square. *Chinaman*, his debut novel, was first published in Sri Lanka, and won the 2008 Gratiaen Prize for the best Sri Lankan novel of the year. It has been hailed as ‘the first genuine contender for the title of Great Sri Lankan Novel’.

### **Pigeon English by Stephen Kelman**

Newly arrived from Ghana with his mother and older sister, eleven-year-old Harrison Opoku lives on the ninth floor of a block of flats on an inner-city housing estate blissfully unaware of the very real threat all around him. But when a boy is knifed to death on the high street and a police appeal for witnesses draws only silence, Harri decides to start a murder investigation of his own. In doing so, he unwittingly endangers the fragile web his mother has spun around her family to try and keep them safe.

“Stephen Kelman has written about an important, urgent subject in a way that is funny and terrifying, entertaining and heartbreaking – and with Harri he has created an unforgettable narrator. If I had to give you one reason to read *Pigeon English* it would be to meet him.” - **Helen Garnons-Williams, Editorial Director, Bloomsbury**

"Bright-eyed optimism and innocence meet the harsh realities of life, all through the eyes of the beguiling and charming Harrison Opoku. Memorable, important, unforgettable." - **Janine Cook, Waterstone's Fiction Team**

### About the Author

Stephen Kelman was born in Luton in 1976. After finishing his degree he worked variously as a warehouse operative, a careworker, and in marketing and local government administration. He decided to pursue his writing seriously in 2005, and has completed several feature screenplays since then.

He made national news last year, appearing on both The Today Programme and the News at Ten when his novel *Pigeon English* was at the centre of a twelve-way bidding war.

### **The Coincidence Engine by Sam Leith**

A hurricane sweeps off the Gulf of Mexico and in the back-country of Alabama, assembles a passenger jet out of old bean-cans and junkyard waste. An eccentric mathematician – last heard of investigating the physics of free will and ranting about the devil - vanishes in the French Pyrenees. And the thuggish operatives of a multinational arms conglomerate are closing in on Alex Smart - a harmless Cambridge postgraduate who has set off with hope in his heart and a ring in his pocket to ask his American girlfriend to marry him.

At the Directorate of the Extremely Improbable – an organisation so secret that many of its operatives aren't 100 per cent sure it exists – Red Queen takes an interest. What ensues is a chaotic chase across an imaginary America, haunted by madness, murder, mistaken identity, and a very large number of unhealthy but delicious snacks. The Coincidence Engine exists. And it has started to work.

“I defy anyone not to be swept away by the sheer abounding vitality and originality of *The Coincidence Engine*. It makes you laugh, think, cry; it has been compared by its various publishers to Thomas Pynchon, Douglas Adams, Douglas Coupland and Haruki Murakami (actually that was my nineteen-year-old son, who adored it). Infectiously exuberant, fiendishly clever, utterly exhilarating, it reminds you of not only what is possible in fiction, but what it is there for in the first place.” – **Michael Fishwick, Bloomsbury**

### About the Author

Sam Leith was, until recently, the Literary Editor of the *Telegraph*. He now writes for many leading publications including the *Guardian* and the *Evening Standard*. His previous books, *Dead Pets*, and *Sod's Law*, have been published to critical acclaim. *The Coincidence Engine* is his first novel. Sam Leith lives in London.

### **The Tiger's Wife by Téa Obreht**

In April 1941 a tiger escapes from a Balkan Zoo, padding through the bomb-ruined streets and onwards, to a ridge above the village of Galina. His nocturnal visits hold the villagers in a terrified thrall. But for one boy, the tiger is a thing of magic - Shere Khan awoken from the pages of *The Jungle Book*.

Natalia is the granddaughter of that boy. After she receives word of her beloved grandfather's death, far from their home, in circumstances shrouded in mystery, she stumbles upon a clue that will lead her to a tattered copy of *The Jungle Book*, and then to the extraordinary story of the tiger's wife.

“When I started reading this novel, I had the strange sensation which editors might be lucky enough to experience only once or twice in their commissioning careers. The spine-tingling and delicious feeling which means you have in your hands *the real thing*. This is swiftly followed by the terrible anxiety that another editor is having the same experience. And indeed they were, but thankfully we got the book.” - **Arzu Tahsin, Editorial Director, Weidenfeld & Nicolson**

"Téa's talent is way beyond her years." - **Emilie de Quadros, Waterstone's Oxford**

#### About the Author

Téa Obrecht was born in 1985 and raised in Belgrade. In 1992 her family moved to Cyprus and then to Egypt, where she learned to speak and read English, eventually immigrating to the United States in 1997. After graduating from the University of Southern California, Téa received her MFA in Fiction from the Creative Writing Program at Cornell University in 2009 where she is now a lecturer. Téa Obrecht was featured in the *New Yorker's* 'Top 20 Writers Under 40' fiction issue in 2010, and at 24 was the youngest on the list. Her short story, *The Sentry* was published in *The Guardian* in August 2010. She currently lives in Ithaca, New York.

#### **The Sentimentalists by Johanna Skibsrud**

*The Sentimentalists* is a remarkably poised novel about a young woman reckoning with her dying alcoholic father, a veteran of the Vietnam War living with the father of a fallen comrade. Johanna Skibsrud's debut novel captures the rich complexities encountered by a woman who desires to comprehend and frankly express the truth – in all its fragility – of her life and of the lives of her family.

‘In Johanna Skibsrud’s remarkably poised and lyrical exploration of guilt, family and duty, she reminds us just how rich and hypnotic good writing can be. This is a book that demands and deserves a close reading, and one that rewards with extraordinary things.’ - **Jason Arthur, Publishing Director, William Heinemann**

#### About the Author

Johanna Skibsrud was born in Nova Scotia, Canada in 1980. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Late Nights With Wild Cowboys*, which was shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Award, and *I Do Not Think That I Could Love a Human Being*. She has held a variety of different jobs, including working with youth at risk in the Canadian arctic, as a wilderness instructor in Florida and Maine, teaching ESL in Asia, and as a sales associate for Canadian Scholars' Press and Women's Press in Toronto.

Her debut novel, *The Sentimentalists*, was awarded the 2010 Scotiabank Giller Prize. The novel is based, in part, on the true story of her own father's experiences during the Vietnam War – specifically his involvement in a controversial operation, which resulted in civilian casualties. Johanna currently lives between Paris and Montreal.

#### **The Collaborator by Mirza Waheed**

It is Kashmir in the early 1990s and war has finally reached the isolated village of Nowgam, close to the Pakistan border. Indian soldiers appear as if from nowhere to hunt for militants on the run. Four teenage boys, who used to spend their afternoons playing cricket, or singing Bollywood ballads down by the river, have disappeared one by one, to cross into Pakistan and join the movement against the Indian army. Only one of their friends is left behind, forced to collaborate and go into the valley to count the corpses, fearing, each day, that he will discover one of his friends lying amongst the dead.

“*The Collaborator* is a brilliantly original and humane work of fiction with an unpredictable hero at its heart. It is shocking and heartbreaking, and forcefully brings home how the real story that underpins the novel, the story of Kashmir, is so little *felt* by the outside world.” – **Mary Mount, Editorial Director, Viking**

About the Author

Mirza Waheed was born and brought up in Srinagar, Kashmir. He spent some of his childhood years in the mountains of the valley where his father worked in tourism and at home near the Dal Lake where his family continues to live. As a teenager, he closely witnessed the peak years of the separatist militant uprising and the brutal military crackdown in Kashmir.

He moved to Delhi when he was eighteen to study English Literature at the University of Delhi and worked as a journalist in the city for four years. He came to London in 2001 to join the BBC's Urdu Service, where he now works as an editor. *The Collaborator* is his first novel.

**When God Was a Rabbit by Sarah Winman**

In *When God Was a Rabbit*, Sarah Winman illustrates innocence – and the loss of it – in a wonderful and magical way. More than anything *When God Was a Rabbit* is about love in all its forms. This debut novel illustrates love, loss, memory, innocence and family life in the most incredible and eloquent way.

‘A debut novel that I found astonishingly accomplished, enjoyable and impressive...A debut this stunning is a rare thing’ – **Tim Hely-Hutchinson, CEO, Hachette**

"Winman infuses her characters with the very stuff of life. One cannot be far from either laughter or tears when reading this glorious debut." – **Simon Burke, Waterstone's Fiction Team**

About the Author

Sarah Winman was born and grew up in Essex. She attended the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art and went on to act in theatre, film and television. Her TV credits include: *Silent Witness*, *Holby City*, *Foyle's War*, and *The Forsythe Saga*.

Five years ago she enrolled on a literature fiction course. *When God Was A Rabbit* is her first novel. She lives in London, but spends as much time as possible in Cornwall, a place that both fascinates and inspires her.

