

2004/June MEG ROSOFF - Publishing News

There have been whispers about Meg Rosoff's debut novel, *How I Live Now*, since the summer of last year when agent Catherine Clarke began selling it, Puffin being the eventual winners of that particular race. Very quickly afterwards the film rights were sold and then the publication date was brought forward by a month, both signs that either something out of the ordinary was out there, or a hype was in progress. It turned out to be the former.

Rosoff, an ex-advertising copywriter, ex-New Yorker and now full-time Londoner, is married to artist/illustrator Paul Hamlyn (no relation). She began her career as a copy editor in publishing, went to *People* magazine, then the *New York Times* and from there to advertising. "I first came to England when I was at university, 19 years old," she says. "I knew it was my spiritual home, I had to live here. I still think it's my spiritual home."

How I Live Now, set in an England which is, as Rosoff puts it, "three or maybe seven weeks in the future", is narrated in a first person stream of consciousness by Daisy, a 15 year-old New Yorker. There's a lack of regular punctuation, paragraphs are short, shotgun spattered with WORDS IN CAPITALS, and the whole thing just zings. "I was writing it down as fast as I could think it and I wrote it very, very quickly, in eight or ten weeks - I was working full-time at the time, coming home and falling asleep with my daughter at 8pm, waking up at 10.30 and working till midnight, which sounds all very Sylvia Plath but wasn't. It was just all there, somehow."

This is an extraordinary book; it's about war, survival, love, magic, life and, because this story is rooted in both fantasy and reality, death as well. And just how is she going to follow an entrance like this? "When I've finished the screenplay for *How I Live Now*, I have an idea for a story that starts with a nice, ordinary boy, but his life will probably turn out to be fairly peculiar, too."