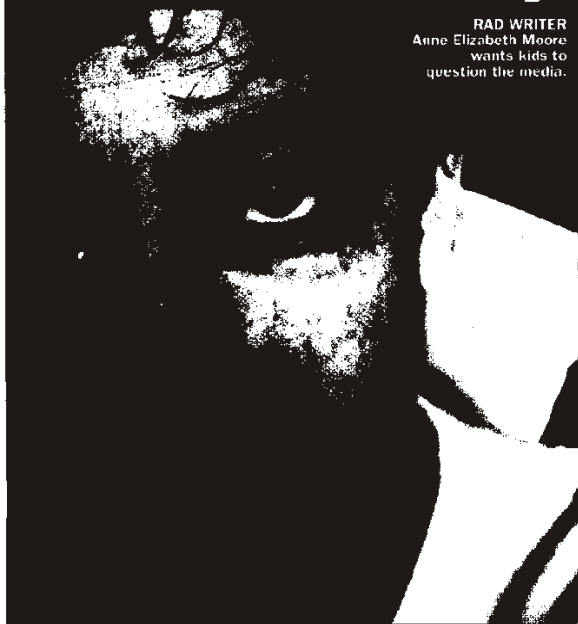


Books & Poetry

RAD WRITER
Anne Elizabeth Moore
wants kids to
question the media.



No logo

A subversive new book sets out to turn tweens into conscious consumers

By Billie Cohen

If you like children who obey, sweet and puttylike, when you say, "Because—that's why!," don't read any further. And definitely don't buy them *Hey Kidz! Buy This Book: A Radical Primer on Corporate and Governmental Propaganda and Artistic Activism for Short People*. Still, those angels are likely to get their hands on the book anyway.

"I want parents to participate, but what I really want is for this book to be snuck to other kids who wouldn't necessarily seek it out on their own," says *Hey Kidz!* author Anne Elizabeth Moore, from her home in Seattle. "Because that's how I got all the best books and records."

Although she's been writing on youth and media for years, *Hey Kidz!* is Moore's first book. It's one of three debut titles being published by Red Rattle Books, a new children's

imprint from Brooklyn-based indie press Soft Skull. The Red Rattle mission, says publisher Richard Eoin Nash, is to "develop subversive children's literature—books that demonstrate that the world can be changed. Most everything kids are given is designed to pacify them," he adds. "We

"Most everything kids are given is designed to pacify them. We want to agitate them."

want to agitate them." Moore, 33, uses the first half of her primer to show kids how corporate marketing permeates nearly everything—down to the Coke machines in the school hallway—and how they can choose to participate in those commercial interests (for example, by shaving a swoosh in their head or wearing a Nike T-shirt) or not, once they learn to recognize them. Paranoid lefty stuff? "Is

it paranoid to notice that, say, people go to Burger King 40 times in a *Spider-Man* movie," asks Moore, "and to realize that Burger King would have paid quite a bit of money for that? I think it's something that you should be aware of. If you're aware of it while you're sitting in Burger King," she adds, laughing, "that's fine. Bring your patronage there, buy the little *Spider-Man* toys, but know [that you're buying in]."

In the second part of her book, Moore goes on to provide a slew of useful and occasionally whimsical resources for the aspiring anticorporate activist, including how to write press releases and business letters, how to develop seed money for a project and how to bake a pie to entice people to meetings.

The idea for *Hey Kidz!* was Nash's; Moore decided to gear it to tweens, who, she feels, are most targeted by and susceptible to advertising. "Our entire media culture is about destroying our self-esteem," she contends. "Every single ad is meant to make you feel bad so that there is something that you can buy that will replace your bad feelings." Middle schoolers, she says, already feel bad.

The flip side of being targeted by the media, argues Moore, is that this age-group is also incredibly media-savvy. "It's unfathomable to adults how much more youths know about media," she says. "And to the same degree that these kids know media better than I ever will, they are going to have critical capabilities better than I ever will, as long as they get

the tools as soon as possible." Moore's primer—plus her Radical Education Roadshow, a series of workshops that comes to NYC this summer (go to www.softskull.com for info)—will help get those critical questions rolling. All you have to do is think of another answer when your kids refuse to settle for "Because."

***Hey Kidz!* (Red Rattle Books; \$11.95) is out in June.**

Reviews

Shadowmancer

By G.P. Taylor. Penguin Putnam.
\$16.99. ■ Ages 12 and up.

At first glance, G.P. Taylor's best-selling fantasy novel, *Shadowmancer*, looks suspiciously like a Harry Potter imitation. On the side of evil, we have a very wicked baddie who wants to take over the world. Fighting on the side of good are two plucky boys, one feisty girl and the sympathetic adult character who helps them. Sound familiar? Luckily, Taylor's first effort—which has sold by the truckload in the U.K.—distinguishes itself from Potter by being substantially dark and properly spooky. Taylor dispatches spirits and ghouls with fantastic names like Thulaks, Boggles and Hobs to haunt his 18th-century English setting, and sailing ships, sirens, smugglers and hidden caves add to the gothic effect.

Obadiah Demurral is the piece's villain, and he's more nightmarish than any mere Voldemort, with devilish antics made extra chilling by the fact that he's posing as a man of the cloth. In its country of origin, *Shadowmancer* has been as popular with adults as with kids, and Taylor's fairly sophisticated biblical and occult references will go over the heads of most young readers (the author is a vicar who confesses to have once dabbled in paganism, witchcraft and other dark arts; see interview, page 43). But the religious notes never get in the way of a fast-paced plot that culminates in a cliff-side showdown in a ruined abbey. Yes, it all ends a bit abruptly, but not to worry: Potter-style, there are sequels in the works. —*Ive Claxton*



CHECK OUT TIMEOUTNYKIDS.COM 93

