COMMENTARY

Literate Arts in a Global World: Reframing Social Networking as Cosmopolitan Practice

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Gaps, disconnects, and contradictions—these largely characterize the relationship between the digital, mobile, and radically interconnected social, economic, and cultural worlds that we increasingly inhabit, and the print-centric, stationary, traditional school day, still organized for the most part by tools, space–time relationships, and participant structures that belong to a previous age. On the one hand, social media have taken the digital world by storm, surpassing everyone's imagination in terms of their rate of uptake, popularity, and viral spread, especially among youth and especially out of school (Beach, Hull, & O'Brien, in press; boyd, 2008; Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Ito et al., 2010; Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008). On the other hand, formal schooling has typically not kept time, being generally skeptical of the educational value of social media and especially alert to the risks of social networks and media sharing (cf. Lemke, Coughlin, Garcia, Reifsneider, & Baas, 2009; Livingstone & Brake, 2010; Sharples, Graber, Harrison, & Logan, 2009).

Yet at this historical moment, locating points of entry for 21st-century tools and practices into formal as well as informal educational spaces seems tantamount to a moral imperative, with important implications for access and equity. Of course, all children and youth require 21st-century resources, tools, practices, and opportunities as well as powerful versions of literacy (cf. Collins & Halverson, 2009) to participate most agentively in their social and economic futures.

In addition, as we will shortly explain, the rewards could not be greater, or the risk of failure more grave, for educating a citizenry able and willing to communicate with digital tools across differences in a radically interconnected yet divided world. Toward these ends, we join other educators and researchers who have recently attempted to explore, develop, and promote promising curricular practices around social media (e.g., Davidson & Goldberg, 2009; Erstad, Gilje, & de Lange, 2007; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009b; Lam, 2006; Lemke et al., 2009; cf. Beach, Anson, Breuch, & Swiss, 2009).

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In so doing, we seek a rapprochement between in-school and out-of-school social media practices and conceptualizations of literacy, believing that opportunities to engage with distant and global audiences via digital social networks should now be threaded throughout the curriculum, especially in English language arts. To theorize this project, we turn to cosmopolitanism, an old philosophy newly conceived, for its insights about difference and identity in a global world (e.g., Appiah, 2006; Hansen, 2010), and we draw as well from conceptualizations of a semiotic and aesthetic underpinning for literacy (e.g., Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kress, 2005; cf. Willis, 1990).

To illustrate those 21st-century literate arts, habits of mind, and communicative exchanges that constitute cosmopolitan educational practice, we offer examples from research on the development of an international social networking site for youth called Space2Cre8 (www.space2cre8.com; see also Hull & Nelson [2009] and Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni [2010]). Finally, we invite readers, in the spirit of de Certeau (1984), to join us in devising tactics for introducing new media tools into old educational spaces, hopefully with transformative potential.

Social Networking: Cosmopolitan Educational Practice

Ours is a radically connected, interdependent, yet increasingly divided world, characterized by "cultural flows" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33) of ideas and people—"goods, capital, technologies, people, knowledge, images, crime, beliefs, fashions and desires...across territorial boundaries" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 258). In such a world, particular skills, practices, and values around literacy and communication come to the fore, as images and audiences, with their increasingly circulatory movement, offer important resources for meaning making and "self-imagining" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4).

Especially important for negotiating a complex and dynamic world are capacities for creatively and adaptively making and sharing meanings across modes

and media (Kress, 2005), for imagining others and for imagining others imagining us (Silverstone, 2007), for seeing ourselves as social actors with obligations toward others (Stevenson, 2003a), and for negotiating meaning and interpretations across divergent cultural, linguistic, geographic, and ideological landscapes both on- and offline (Hull & Nelson, 2009; The New London Group, 1996). In our view, these are quintessential 21st-century literacies, echoed also in the recent framework of the National Council of Teachers of English (2007) for curriculum and assessment, which asserts in part that 21st-century readers and writers must be able to "build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally," "design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes," and "attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments" (para. 3).

Such 21st-century capacities for dialogue and the respectful imagining of others across aesthetic, cultural, historical, and ideological difference *require* educational scaffolding and positioning. They do not spring fully formed from mere exposure to social media, where, as research has already shown, social networks tend to function as extensions of existing offline relationships (e.g., boyd & Ellison, 2008), and where online communities tend to reproduce the race, class, and geographic divisions that exist offline (e.g., Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Thus, we see the need to reframe social networking as an educational practice and, more specifically, as a potential "cosmopolitan" educational practice.

Rooted in classic and Enlightenment philosophy (Kleingeld & Brown, 2006) and characterized by metaphors of hospitality in which strangers, otherness, and justifiable difference are welcomed (Beck & Sznaider, 2006), cosmopolitanism has reemerged of late in fields such as philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and media theory, a flowering of interest referred to as a "cosmopolitan turn." Rightly criticized previously for its Western, normative, elitist, and occasionally romantic orientations (cf. Ong, 2009), cosmopolitanism is now being reimagined as a strategy for reconciling the tensions inherent in a vastly interconnected yet deeply divided world, where we have "obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by

the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship" (Appiah, 2006, p. xv).

Such a redesigned cosmopolitanism juxtaposes and balances local commitments with broader arenas of concern, positioning us to negotiate shifting relationships between self and other in everyday life (Hansen, 2010). The need for respectful dialogue and for the capacity to generously imagine others across aesthetic, cultural, historical, and ideological differences assumes particular importance if our aim is to position youth to envision themselves as social actors with responsibilities toward others and the world.

Although a focus on multiculturalism (e.g., Banks, 2004) and intercultural competence (cf. Thorne, 2003; Ware & Kramsch, 2005) has helped attune educators to issues of difference and diversity, these approaches primarily have addressed intranational differences between cultures within the nation-state or language learners' willingness to engage linguistically across assumptions of difference. Cosmopolitanism helpfully broadens this focus on communication across difference to include global contexts influenced by cultural flows of people and ideas facilitated by the digital. Although we do not have space to do justice to either of these literatures in this article, we acknowledge their importance in understanding communication across difference.

We suggest, then, that a reimagined cosmopolitanism might offer the field of literacy studies a starting place for including conceptions of local and global citizenship within its curricular and pedagogical purview, such as new spaces for building communities, including digital ones, and new kinds of civic engagements within those communities, ones that foreground communication and literate arts.

Such arts, as we envision them, use multimodal symbolizations across multiple spaces—what might be called "transliteracies" (e.g., Hull & Nelson, 2009), foster youthful capacities to listen and reflect (e.g., Hull et al., 2010; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Luce-Kapler, Sumara, & Iftody, 2010), encourage hospitable interaction (cf. Silverstone, 2007) across "legitimate difference" (Appiah, 2006, p. xv), and promote care for the self and others (Hansen, 2010). (The term *transliteracies* has recently begun to be used in literacy studies to signal the availability of a variety of modes, platforms, and tools for meaning making. Thomas et al. [2007], for example, define *transliteracies* as "the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media" [para. 3]. Given our cosmopolitan orientation, we believe the term can be usefully extended to capture the construction, use, and movement of texts across communicative and geographical spaces as well as multiple platforms, tools, and media.)

In conceptualizing the literate arts that might constitute cosmopolitan practice, we have found helpful Hansen's (2010) discussion of cosmopolitan philosophy as an educational art of living: "how a person can learn, through formal tuition and its fusion with experience, to draw as fully as possible on prior human achievements and one's own life encounters to craft a humane, meaningful life, even, or especially, when extant conventions seem to reject, thwart, or cheapen this project" (p. 8)—values not unfamiliar to the English classroom or a liberal arts curriculum. More particularly, Hansen explained how such a life project is both a "response to the demands of justice toward others and of the desire for self-improvement" (p. 8), or morality and ethics. Finally, he signaled the privileged place in this project of "deliberative ways of speaking, listening, interacting, reading, writing, and more" (p. 9), perceptive and critical capacities and practices that may be ignited by encounters with difference.

We gloss Hansen's account as "self-work" and "other-work" or those literate arts that instantiate, respectively, the ethical and moral dimensions of communicative practice. In our own previous work on digital storytelling (e.g., Hull & James, 2007; Hull & Katz, 2006; Hull, Kenney, Marple, & Forsman-Schneider, 2006; cf. Lambert, 2009; Lundby, 2008), our focus was often "self-work," as we attempted to position young people to tell, retell, and share pivotal narratives about self, family, and friends in local contexts, such as home, school, and community, developing, representing, and experiencing themselves as powerful storytellers, artists, and multimodal communicators. Our current projects, however, including Space2Cre8, more explicitly also orient young people toward "other-work" and a moral disposition in relation to distant audiences and global as well as

local communities—an orientation that we believe is compatible both with the requirements of living in a global world at our particular historical moment and the newly available social media that link us one to another.

Digitally enabled social networks, to be sure, are familiar sites in the new media landscape, especially for youth (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Researchers have shown that such networks are prime out-of-school locations for maintaining existing social ties, constructing and experimenting with multimodal representations of self, and creating and exchanging social capital (Beach & Doerr-Stevens, 2009; boyd & Ellison, 2008; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009b; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Livingstone & Bober, 2004; Parker, 2010). Educators are beginning to explore the integration of social media into educational spaces (e.g., Davidson & Goldberg, 2009; cf. Greenhow et al., 2009), even as they come to terms with heightened concerns about privacy, access, and safety (Clifford, 2010; Livingstone & Brake, 2010; Tynes, 2007). However, studies to explore the educational implications of social networking are still few and far between (cf. Ahn, 2010; Greenhow et al., 2009).

In the remainder of this article, we describe our recent work to develop, research, and theorize a private international social network for youth, which we call Space2Cre8, and its associated offline instructional programs, which we call Kidnet. We consider the network and programs as sites for cosmopolitan practice and our opportunity to explore how youth might develop flexible, adaptive, and critical capacities for constructing, negotiating, and conveying meanings in the context of social media.

Adolescents in grades 7–11 in South Africa, India, the United States, and Norway currently participate in Kidnet either after school or during school in enrichment classes. The students collaborate with their local peers and newfound international friends to create and exchange digital artifacts via an online multinational and multilingual network, Space2Cre8, which they also helped design. In addition to creating and sharing digital stories, digital music, stop-motion videos, animations, and digitized artwork, youth also engage in critical dialogues about common concerns

in their everyday lives and respective societies, such as discrimination, school pressures, poverty, and the challenges of media representation. These online and offline activities, at once playful, designful, and filled with import, provide challenging occasions for youth to negotiate dimensions of personal identity and cultural knowledge in relation to one another and across time and space, using different languages, script systems, images, music, and other forms of multimodal communication.

Although Space2Cre8 shares certain functionalities with sites such as Facebook, including the facility to create a profile and articulate a list of friends, it differs in several important respects, especially in being a closed network that privileges the development of online-only relationships. In contrast, social networking sites are typically used to display and maintain offline friendships (boyd & Ellison, 2008). In concert with theorizations of media as a moral sphere (Silverstone, 2007) and efforts on the part of educational organizations and teachers to use the Internet to encourage children to bridge linguistic, geographic, and cultural divides (e.g., Youth Voices [youthvoices.net], Taking IT Global [www.tigweb.org]), we have envisioned Space2Cre8 and the Kidnet project as opportunities to deploy social networking, not only to maintain current friendships but also to develop new relationships—ones that are cross-cultural, cross-national, and cross-linguistic—through communication and the creation and exchange of arts-based media artifacts. Kidnet and Space2Cre8 are at core, then, educational in intent, and the project is an effort to develop and explore the educational implications of social networks. We now turn to some examples of key activities and processes.

The Ethics of Self-Representation

One of the powerful affordances of social networking that researchers have repeatedly noted is the potential for self-presentation through multiple modes (e.g., boyd, 2008; Dowdall, 2009; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a), as participants experiment with images, color, video, music, text, and articulations across modes to communicate with others about themselves. We have found that these presentations of self by youthful participants in the Space2Cre8 network represent serious

self-work, as youth thoughtfully negotiate the desire to reveal themselves to the world, and the playful, kaleidoscopic, emergent, and transformative nature of those revelations. In the educational context of the Kidnet program, youth are encouraged to reflect on how their various presentations of self function as media representations to multiple audiences. We believe that such self-reflexive practices help youth develop cosmopolitan dispositions and habits of mind.

The development of the self and the ability to critically reflect on that development—that is, processes of self-work—are a key part of negotiating the self's relation to others. As Delanty (2006) described, a central component of cosmopolitanism involves

the internal transformation of social and cultural phenomena through self-problematization and pluralization. It is in the interplay of self, other and world that cosmopolitan processes come into play. Without a learning process, that is an internal cognitive transformation, it makes little sense in calling something cosmopolitan. (p. 41)

We would argue that this self-transformation, or learning about oneself through "self-problematization and pluralization," is an important part of developing an ethical stance in the world; without reflective, reflexive, and critical work on oneself, it seems quite impossible to understand one's obligations toward others and develop a just and moral responsiveness toward them. Thus, youth's social networking activities, including opportunities for self-presentation on the network coupled with offline reflective and artistic practices, functioned in our program as crucial contexts for the development of the self.

One of the most prominent ways that our adolescent participants represented themselves in the digital space, exhibiting this care for the self, was through the design of a profile page, a powerful means by which to control others' impressions of them through the choice of a profile picture, background image or color, and variously colored text. Participants maneuvered complex articulations of themselves through their profile designs, as they negotiated multiple audiences who might view these pages, including local classmates, teachers, researchers, and distant youth, some more familiar than others. Also, these articulations shifted over time as youth experimented with

different "narratives of the self" (Stevenson, 2003b, p. 346). For example, De'Von (all names are pseudonyms), an articulate but reserved eighth grader in California on the U.S. site, originally created a profile on the Space2Cre8 network that combined a picture of an anime character with the name ~ProtoType~ and this self-description (see Figure 1):

Hello, my name is [De'Von], I'm 13 years old. I like playing basketball and football. I'm known for my jokes and stuff. Yea, i like animals, my favorite animal is a male lion because of the beautiful mane. I look up to my mother a lot. well, this is simple things about me.

In this description, De'Von named some "simple things" about himself that might interest his potential friends and spark a conversation about something shared: his enjoyment in sports, his admiration of his mother, his interest in animals, his aesthetic sensibility (beauty in a lion's mane), and his sense of humor. From his reference to how he is "known" by others to his closing line announcing what holds his list together ("simple things about me"), we see this textual description as infused with an awareness of others who might read it, others who might not know his penchant for jokes, his interest in sports and animals, or his unique nature (i.e., that he is a prototype).

Communicating online with unknown others, without benefit of prior offline relationships or shared online affinity spaces, is an exciting but

Figure 1   De'Von's First Profile Page on Space2Cre8
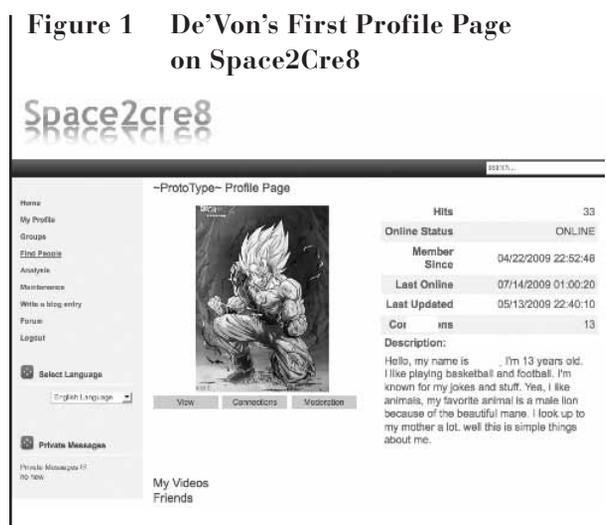
Note. Student name is a pseudonym.

daunting challenge—a 21st-century literacy, if you will, that adds to and sometimes overfaces the concerns of print-based literacy, such as spelling, diction, and coherence. De'Von and his Kidnet cohort were supported in their efforts to communicate with unknown others in the Space2Cre8 network by an accompanying curriculum that foregrounded reflection on representational choices online and the potential impact of these choices on distant audiences. Bolstered by this assistance, De'Von found potential openings for dialogue through imagined points of connection, building common ground through small moments of communicative outreach.

(As readers will notice, De'Von's postings contained errors in grammar and spelling. We do not have space in this article to discuss differences in conventions for online and offline writing or our particular approach to encouraging participants to be thoughtful users of written language. However, we note that in our programs, particularly in the United States, although we did not eschew attention to sentence-level conventions, we did not privilege such attention either, and more often we gave participants free play to communicate by using youthful idioms.)

When De'Von had the opportunity to remake his profile during a network upgrade, he changed his username to Rinkhals and chose an image of the snake as his profile picture (see Figure 2). He chose this photo of a cobra to represent himself on the network, as he explained in the "about me" section of his page, because the snake is like him in key ways:

Figure 2   De'Von's Second Iteration of His Profile Page on Space2Cre8

Note. Student name is a pseudonym.

My name is [De'Von] but i chosed the name of Rinkhals. Rinkhals is a spitting cobra. I love this animal because its highly smart. It plays dead to avoid fight, I think this snake like me because i avoid conflict, but when this snake is provoked its attacks to kill. Doesn't stop till the other person leaves xD! But other than that this is my favorite animal and i chosed it to represent [me].

In this second iteration of his profile, after coming to know others on the site over the previous months and thinking about the representational and communicative potentials of images through classroom activities, De'Von seemed to change his mind about how he wanted other youth on the network to perceive him. Like De'Von, the adolescents on the site often created a mutable online identity that both revealed and concealed different parts of themselves for multiple audiences. This tension about what to reveal or conceal was constantly straddled by these adolescents as they coordinated who they might be in the online community, with their identities performed among their peers in day-to-day school and home worlds.

In choosing Rinkhals to represent himself, De'Von communicated a dual message to both sets of peers—that is, he may seem to avoid conflicts, but should you cross him, he is a force to be reckoned with. This message of strength and smarts seemed particularly important in the urban setting in which De'Von lives, one of the most violent cities in the United States, where a quiet nature might be perceived as weakness. Youth like De'Von regularly capitalized on the affordances of different modes for communicating multiple meanings. In their images, music, and text, which they mixed in complex ways across the site, these young people explored powerful ways of communicating with their peers through the various affordances of meaning available through the network.

As youth imagined future and potential selves, took strides toward developing as strong communicators, and negotiated their understandings of themselves as ethical actors—all activities encouraged through the semiotically rich identity work available through the digital (Buckingham, 2008)—they engaged in the ethical project of self-making. De'Von's shifting representations of self to others over time constitute one such kind of self-work, the project of

representing oneself to myriad audiences through the semiotic choices available on the social network. When supported by an educative framework, as were De'Von and his classmates' efforts, this kind of representational endeavor can encourage reflection and critical consideration of one's meaning-making choices.

As youth develop and display this care for the self (cf. Foucault, 1994), working toward being the best person they can be, they engage in an ethics of self-making, which Hansen (2010) called "self-improvement," whereby people "might endeavor to cultivate as richly as possible their intellectual, moral, political, and aesthetic being" (p. 8), activities intertwined with cosmopolitan practice and instantiated through literate arts.

Looking Outward: Self in Relation to Others and the World

It is through such practices of self-presentation that small moments of connection with others occurred on the social network. As youth interacted with one another around these self-representations, whether profile pictures, background images, videos, or blogs, they negotiated differences in beliefs, aesthetics, cultural norms, and communicative practices as they searched for commonality. Papastergiadis (2007) has argued that it is "the small degrees of overlap between different people that can produce a glimpse of cosmopolitan consciousness" (p. 144), for cosmopolitanism does not exist in a fixed state but only "in the act of relating to the other" (p. 146).

The understandings and relationships developed among youth in transitory, phatic, emergent, or occasionally sustained interactions across the social network can contribute to cosmopolitan habits of mind. Certainly as youth learn self-reflexive moves, through which they consider their presentations of self from multiple points of view, they can come to better understandings of themselves in relation to others and the world. As Hansen (2010) has argued, the abutment of self to other is a crucial part of gaining critical distance from oneself, a distance that allows for a "reflective loyalty to the known" (p. 17). That is, we might gain new, reflective understandings on what we know about the world through the judicious

juxtaposition of "familiar frames of interpretation and understanding" (p. 17) with alternative frames. This stepping back from one's grounded interpretative position in the world—seeing the world through new eyes—is fundamentally intertwined with our capacity to develop respectful and hospitable relations with others, for as Turner (2002) stated, "the ability to respect others requires a certain distance from one's own culture" (p. 55).

Smith (2007) extended Turner's notion of critical distance as a crucially other-directed phenomenon by marrying it to Arendt's concept of worldliness, which includes the idea of critical distance as a means of "[stepping] back from [our] ties and commitments without disowning them" to "place ourselves in a better position to understand and criticize the world" (p. 46). Thus, a critical component in developing a cosmopolitan disposition involves a self-reflexivity that is both inward and outward looking, balancing one's position in the world with a consideration of others and our obligations to them.

One way that this critical distance, gained from considering one's position in the world relative to others, has been instantiated in the Kidnet project is through youth's viewing of one another's digital artifacts, itself a practice supported by classroom conversations about how we interpret others' digital creations and make meaning through multiple modes. One striking example occurred when a participant on the California site, a 13-year-old boy named Jorell, viewed a set of movies made by youth in Norway. Shown one such movie in his Kidnet class for critique and guided discussion, Jorell became inspired to watch all six movies in a row on Space2Cre8 and to leave comments and feedback for the authors. The topic of the movies was drug and alcohol use, part of a school-sponsored program that had been integrated with the Kidnet Norway class during the school day. In conjunction with this program, six groups of students in Norway filmed videos that they wrote and acted in, editing the final version into short movies and uploading them onto the Space2Cre8 network for feedback. Filmed in Norwegian with English subtitles, the movies generated a flurry of interest, but none more intense than Jorell's.

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Weeks later, when filming a short introductory clip for a group movie that his U.S. class would send to Norway, Jorell spoke eloquently and at length to his Norwegian peers about his own experiences with alcohol, especially his upset at living with parents who sometimes drank too much and struck him and his siblings (a topic depicted in more than one of the Norwegian movies that had also come to the fore in a digital story from India). Clearly introspective, his reflection on his own experiences after viewing the movies by the Norwegian youth was at the same time a reaching out—a seeking of common communicative ground about a shared experience—and a reaching in—a self-reflexive consideration of his own position as a victim of alcohol abuse in relation to the student actors in the film.

Jorell's poignant autobiographical story in response to other youth's movies involved not only this critical, inward-looking self-reflection but also a "reflective openness to the new" (Hansen, 2010, p. 17) that scholars of cosmopolitanism call for in considering what constitutes a cosmopolitan outlook. A number of theorists writing about rooted cosmopolitanism, or cosmopolitanism that balances the local and the universal (e.g., Appiah, 2006; Delanty, 2006; Hansen, 2010), have described the need to balance reflection on one's own beliefs with an openness to considering those of others. This notion of "openness" involves a focus on our obligations to others, including our obligation to listen and respond respectfully and considerately.

As Smith (2007) characterized this openness, it must involve an "ethic of care for the world" (p. 47) that motivates our actions and beliefs through a caring connection with others. According to Ong (2009), this disposition is not a fixed identity but a continuum, in which "we weave in and out of being open and closed to difference—in the rhythm of daily life" (p. 463). Appiah (2006) noted that one crucial tool for balancing self-reflexivity and openness to the world is dialogue. Through our dialogues with others, we can negotiate differences that are the basis for all of "the

varied spatialities and temporalities of encounters between self and Other, with each one having its unique geography of power" (Ong, 2009, p. 463).

How to responsibly and hospitably communicate with other youth is a central challenge for participants in the Kidnet project, one that is a frequent topic of discussion both on- and offline. This does not mean accepting what others argue wholesale or holding back from asserting one's own opinion; rather, it entails engaging in dialogue and adopting generous interpretive stances.

The social network has provided many opportunities for youth to situate themselves and their local worlds in relation to others and experiment with self-making through the hybridization of multimedia artifacts. The network has done so in the context of offline programs that encourage youth to reflect on their own choices in communicating with others through multiple avenues for self-making. In particular, youth across the four countries have drawn on popular culture as a resource for experimentation with positioning. One such example is a complex representation of an anime character by a 12-year-old girl named Monica on the California site who was an avid fan of the anime series *Naruto*.

A regular contributor on fan sites, Monica had created her own character about whom she wrote extensive fiction; she had also taught herself to speak some Japanese and regularly chatted about anime on manga fan sites. Well-practiced in communicative norms regarding shared affinities with strangers, she was very outgoing on the Space2Cre8 network and had posted an extensive blog about her character, which she referenced throughout the site. Monica identified so closely with this character that she used it as her online avatar, complete with profile picture and username (see Figure 3). Her role in the Kidnet program was often that of a mentor to other youth, through her leadership in classroom discussions as she modeled considerate and reflective responses to other youth's media and through her willingness to show her classmates how to navigate programs online (e.g., photo editing, audio capturing).

One example of how youth learned to be hospitable readers, able to take up respectful and open interpretive positions, occurred in a youthful interchange

around Monica's anime character. In response to her blog about her character's backstory, Rahim, a 12-year-old boy from Norway who is also an anime fan, posted a disparaging comment about Monica's interest:

> thats so mainstream -__-, u should watch sumthing spec, that no one watches and is interesting! -.- if u didnt know naruto's rated the best manga/anime in the world ! so everyone have watched it...

Rahim's criticism of Monica's interest in the *Naruto* series appeared to stem from a belief that art should not be derivative and that one should distinguish oneself through interest in less popular media. Monica's "mainstream" interest in *Naruto*, one of the best-rated "manga/anime in the world," was an implied critique of following the crowd instead of being unique. Monica bristled at this critique and its implications, justifying her reinterpretation of a character as "making it her own" when she responded to Rahim on his more public profile wall:

> um i know that! Still i created my own charater. ade my own twist to it and many more. And yes it may be watched all over the world but recreating it and making it interesting makes it more popuar. espically on myspace/face/ect. -_-;; So i'm the one to speak. if you dont like it just say it, kay ^~^

In her reply, Monica tried to engage Rahim in a conversation about how she had added her own twist to the character to make it more interesting to her audiences on different social networks like MySpace or Facebook, in fact adding to the series' popularity rather than just following it.

But even more than engaging in conversation about the benefits of fan reinterpretations of existing characters in an anime series and justifying the authority of her knowledge ("i'm the one to speak"), Monica seemed to be socializing Rahim into the norms of communication on a global social network and doing so in a public forum. She corrected him gently but firmly when she told him to "just say it" if he does not like something. A couple of days later, when her teachers asked her to find someone on the network to whom she could ask questions, Monica chose to follow up with Rahim, after no reply to her

Figure 3   Monica's Avatar on Space2Cre8

Note. Student name is a pseudonym.

previous communication, and her next overture made this socialization even more explicit:

> um [Rahim] i have a few questions for you.
> 1. what kinds of sports do you like?
> 2. If you were given a chance to visit okalnd would you and why?
> 3. What kinds of anime do you like and have you ever heard of ultra maniac?
> 4. Last but not least could you see that many people has seen naruto but as you should know that many people love to add a twist to it like i did. As you can see i have twisted it around and added a few charters and made my own boi. She orrignally was sakura but i changed the picture and made a chater into my own. I do respect your critism but if you could understand that if you could of said it in a nicer way i would of accepted it easier. Still thank you for commenting. and you look nice in your picture

Monica began by prompting Rahim to engage in a continued conversation through the question activity guided by her teacher, their disagreement about her interest in *Naruto* notwithstanding. She asked him about his interests and followed these questions with another that aimed to bring his attention back to their conflict over her interest in the *Naruto* series. She explained that she respects his criticism but reminded him to say it "in a nicer way" so that she could hear

it better. She ended with a courteous gesture, thanking him for his opinion and complimenting him on his photo.

Monica thus attempted to listen and indeed *hear* Rahim, and she encouraged him (through her thoughtful questions and carefully placed praise) to listen to and hear her as well. Indeed, he did hear her, later prefacing his thoughtful answers to her questions with an apology: "SRY for not saying it in a nice way xD." It is in this moment of peer-to-peer socialization into respectful communicative norms, socialization supported by classroom activities that foregrounded such reflective moves, that we might understand how listening to others can be an essential capacity for communication in the 21st century.

For youth, developing these capacities for communicating across differences—that is, capacities for listening to one another and being sensitive to the kinds of meanings made by people who may understand the world differently than we do—is a challenging task, yet can be facilitated by social networking turned as an educative practice. When youth communicate with one another via social media, they must struggle to develop sensitivities to the meaning-making practices of others. This sensitivity includes the capacity to listen carefully to others and be generous in one's interpretations of others' intents. Yet, it also involves the awareness of multiple audiences, some real and some projected, whose sensibilities and expectations may be quite different from one's own.

Developing the Literate Arts: A Cosmopolitan Turn

In holding a cosmopolitan lens to this international social networking project, we hoped to illustrate the microprocesses and conversational practices that constitute care for the world as youth imagine themselves in relation to distal and diverse others and develop sensitivity toward others' meaning-making practices in relation to their own. In doing so, we wanted to highlight both self- and other-work, the ethical and the moral, as two tightly intertwined strands of cosmopolitanism that we separated in our analyses only to argue for the importance of both in literacy studies.

If we look only to youthful engagement with the world—whether indices of civic engagement like voting or volunteering—or only to youthful practices of the self—including identity work and creative semiotic and multimodal practices visible in much of the after-school literature—then we risk missing the micro-development of cosmopolitan engagement. By tracing youth's moment-to-moment interactional work on the social network, including their shifting definitions of self and understandings of others across multiple contexts and over time, their semiotic choices, and their rhetorical struggles, we hope to better understand the process of becoming a person engaged with the global world and coming to see oneself as such a person, as this process unfolds in a digital online environment. We also hope to illuminate the role of multiple symbol systems in this process and an approach to making meaning artfully and consciously that parallels the careful and artful construction of a life.

As this project also illustrates, the development of such dispositions and concomitant semiotic strategies is difficult work; we have found that the global and multimodal can increase the challenges of reading and writing exponentially as well as raise their stakes. It follows that there is a need for an educational framework to support both the discursive and mobilized development of engaged citizens (Byrne, 2008; Jenkins, 2009) who take seriously their obligations to others and recognize the other in themselves (Silverstone, 2007). Similarly, social media practices might be reimagined as helpfully traversing institutional boundaries of school and nonschool, bridging what has become a traditional binary in literacy studies (cf. Hull & Schultz, 2001).

With others (Alvermann, 2008; Livingstone, 2010; Moje, 2009; Soep, 2006), we recommend eschewing an uncritical celebration of out-of-school literacy and media practices, although acknowledging the importance of the motivational contexts in which they appear and the power of the symbolic creativity (Willis, 1990) that often characterizes them. Neither is it acceptable, however, to acquiesce to a school-based reluctance to engage with the communication revolution, although the generally glacial pace of institutional change, especially around new literacies and new technologies, and especially during an

accountability-driven, test-centric era, can be daunting (Snyder, 2009).

Our own approach has been to establish extra- and out-of-school programs, tactically determining where best to insinuate, at this historical moment, new literacies in old spaces (cf. de Certeau, 1984). We hope this article inspires pedagogical tactics and institutional strategies that position students to become cosmopolitan communicators who are at home in a global world.

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