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With every expansion of technology into the entertainment realm, humankind gains some and loses much. The Internet itself was initially designed and built by a consortium of state, academic, and corporate entities to coordinate their research and development for high-tech offensive technology. Secondarily, it was grafted upon by the capitalist class looking towards a societal technology of efficiency and speed. It gained potential to become a social technology with the dissemination of the home computer when economics of scale dropped the price to the point where the middle incomes found it affordable. The Internet now reaches a new apex of social reach with the development of the Artificial Social Network (ASN) popularized in Friendster and its copycat systems.

Ostensibly purchased to aid the organization of capital within the family unit, the personal computer quickly became a "necessity" borne out of the quickening societal computerization of such basic tasks as writing or tax recording. The gradual, domestic extension of computers was latched onto by capitalists eager to integrate youth into new efficiencies.

Suddenly, Apple was supplying computers to my elementary school. Soon, composition using word processors provided the advantage of high marks; being computer savvy brought the possibility of attending elite institutions (or at least that illusion); and typing classes became popular electives. Further state and technology sector cooperation brought accessibility to public libraries for those who could not afford their own private computer.

Concomitant to these geographical and mimetic shifts in technology, the Internet became more and more viable through the already-existing telecommunication infrastructure, replicating and building off of the local and wide-area networks of state and capitalist groupings. Soon, like a Trojan horse, the Internet arrived in the households of millions of Americans through BBS's (bulletin board systems), Prodigy, CompuServe, and other on-line connection services.

Confronted with the crushing weight of a technological paradigm unleashing itself on the youth sector, my generation folded quite easily. Anomic suburban geography — where every home is a fenced factory reproducing the social identity-sets of capital — presented the already dissonant category of the "nerd" with two options. One was to participate as a dissident minority in an alienating social context that continually expanded loneliness (only ameliorated in the form of temporary escapes such as Dungeons and Dragons, science fairs, and ham radio etc.). Option two was to seek other distant, defecting minorities and unite in a new geography under the illusory control of said defectors. This option offered relatively permanent escape. Here the Internet completed a human community of pseudo-affinity while inducing a new amputation of social life; limbs were lost. Many chose retreat. This retreat helped form the social basis of the Internet as entertainment; with Doom, Doom II, Quake, and other text-based role-playing games nerds etched geographies of power for the powerless, enhanced by the circuits of capital.

zomes. Because Friendster negates this through its axiomatic splaying of affinity before the control apparatus; its continuance of the sale of identity; and its rationalization of the retreat of human community with more retreat; I find it easy to refuse. This refusal does not pose itself as a negation of the digital geography; in fact it is a comprehension of the joining of digital and human geography; it is one path to the contradiction of something entirely other. I believe that this is actually a simple refusal. So long as humans prowl the streets by day and night; so long as chess is still played in the park; as long as we find ourselves pulled from intensity to intensity by the writhing of human movement; while snowball fights still spill out into midday traffic; and kisses burn between the skins and not circuitry, human community will continue its staunch, storied resistance to control and separation.



The new generation of the technological working class eased into their plastic chairs, comforting and domesticating previously recuperated desires into a plaintive sedentism. Some time later we would see wild amplifications of these desires through the expanding immersion in this divided existence; strange spikes burst forth from the realm of outcast power. Violence experienced as a totalized cross-section replaced its previous social context based on reward and punishment — revenge — as practiced by the Columbine murderers — found new technological blinders. The suppression of guilt was as easy as revisioning the digital geography of murder upon the real. Shotgun shells through student flesh instead of digital Doom Nazis. Neo electrocutes the sentinel in "real life", destroying it; everyone is confused…surely his power exists only in the digital realm?

Where hipsters and squatters pave the way for gentrification in areas of neglected municipal capital; the nerds, building upon their engineer progenitors, established a social basis for technological participation with the noose of technological community. The proliferation of chat clients — at first clumsy (mIRC) — found rationalization in the identity/region/interestbased chats of America Online. That the service would eventually spore into a free, even JAVA-based chat client, enabling constant communication with other cubicles (real or unseen), is indicative not only of the structural necessity for such a societal steam valve, but also the very real submission of desire to the piecemeal chum bucket of love and intensity. These changes corresponded to a re-sale of both nostalgia and identity. The absolute authenticity of the purchased item surged, finding itself best expressed in adult's excited robotic rant: "New aw-aw-object! New aw-aw-object!". The tech sector boom of the late 1990's brought about an era where divided electronic social interaction enabled a further shredding and specializing of human interaction (aided largely by the proliferation of the cell phone). It was on this stage that

the Internet superceded its inceptional base of military and capitalist power; far past its community of flirting engineers; far beyond the barking isolates of divided (but "united") defectors; and into the community of use. Use as a storehouse of history; use as an expression of art; use as a method of "keeping in touch" (overcoming the separation of capital geography). Here is where Friendster enters the social field.

As an alternative to AOL Instant Messenger, ICQ, MSN Instant Messenger, and other instant communication programs — which require minute-by-minute interactions and a sedentary commitment to the computer — Friendster plasters the frozen moments of affinity across the Internet like a starscape. Constellations of friendship navigated at leisure. Replacing the commitment to the constantly mobile social field of instant messaging and providing a visual, homage-based alternative to electronic mail, Friendster promises to unite us as never before; to create a community of dividends on the stock market of testimony.

You are pulled into Friendster's web by another — usually an actual friend — who offers you a place on their list of friends. From there, you find more friends who also found their way to this topography of inter-linkages. Then you write your own list of friends. Friends of friends become your friends and so on and so on. The passion for establishing a huge database of individuals and "meeting new people" becomes an end to itself before subsiding, eventually, into the stationary convenience of an accomplice list. Various urges pull certain individuals into the glamorous garage sale of spectacular bodies, spectacular ideas (usually summed up as an author name or book title), and spectacular lifestyle. Words replace praxis in an economy of accumulation; the social geography becomes yet another zone for conquest.

And yet, perhaps Friendster is useful… perhaps these examples are extremes, not representative of broader participation. Indeed, what I have laid out is a simple social understanding



of some of the broad effects the Internet has had upon American society, a socializing process that seems quite difficult to abstain from.

I choose to abstain from Friendster for two reasons. My first, and primary, reason for abstaining from Friendster is that its use is a commitment to legality. By listing one's affinities (along with your e-mail address books, photographs, and interests) one runs the real risk of a third party (the state's investigators or private detectives) comprehending and intervening into one's libratory projects; be these against capitalism or underneath it. The damage to graffiti, crime, direct action, and proletarian networks by such an exposure should be obvious. The standard objection to this statement is that technological correspondence is already so infested with control mechanisms and observations that one "might as well" just go all out and submit entirely; to effectively write the FBI a letter detailing the day-to-day scams pulled by a whole list of affinities. In fact, the network of control is not so invulnerable nor all-seeing, as evidenced by consistent attacks on data infrastructure, the continuing proliferation of anonymous spam e-mail, and the frantic pace of world governments to outlaw encryption (the state's compromise is to allow an encryption level below its own).

Of course, Friendster relies foundationally upon the public visibility of this web of friends' lists — forming the actual basis for the existence of this "service". By this fundamentally required presentation, Friendsters voluntarily leap into the lion's mouth, by proxy renouncing illegality within the circles of friends committed to the network. And here we see the ultimate conclusion of Friendster's course; all individuals willing to break the law will exist outside of the network.

My second reason for refusing Friendster is precisely that instead of seeking to invigorate a digital community of fractionalized, desiring humans, I seek to invigorate a human community of whole, free individuals and itinerant, nondeterminant rhi-