

## Dromoeconomics: Towards a Political Economy of Speed

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And what are we to say of the enthusiasm of post-industrial companies for the cellphone which enables them to abolish the distinction between working hours and private life for their employees?

Or the introduction in Britain not simply of 'part-time' but of 'zero-hour' contracts, accompanied by the provision of a mobile phone. When the company needs you, it calls and you come running. - Paul Virilio.<sup>2</sup>

It is at bottom false to say that living labour consumes capital; capital ... consumes the living in the production process.

The more production comes to rest on exchange value ... the more important do the physical conditions of exchange -- the means of communication and transport -- become for the costs of circulation. Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange -- of the means of communication and transport -- the annihilation of space by time -- becomes an extraordinary necessity for it. - Karl Marx.<sup>3</sup>

In this article we present an alternative theoretical perspective on contemporary cultural, political and economic practices in advanced countries. Like other articles in this issue of parallax, our focus is on conceptualising the economies of excess. However, our ideas do not draw on the writings of Georges Bataille in The Accursed Share, but

principally on Virilio's Speed & Politics: An Essay on Dromology and Marx's Capital and the Grundrisse.<sup>4</sup> Using a modest synthesis of tools provided by these theorists, we put forward a tentative conceptualisation of 'dromoeconomics', or, a political economy of speed.

It is important to note at the outset that our general argument concerning excess speed departs considerably from postmodern conceptions of political economy, as well as from traditional Marxist formulations.<sup>5</sup> Instead, our synthesis arises from our individual contributions to the ideas of 'hypermodernism' and 'hypercapitalism'.<sup>6</sup> We argue that the two contradictory forces of warfare and international trade drive the necessity for a conceptualisation of dromoeconomics.

These apparently antithetical but actually interdependent logics identified by Virilio and Marx find their 'suspension' in an institutionalised form of irrational rationality, or what we call 'hypermodern managerialism'; an extended, 'evolved', or 'advanced' form of sociopathic managerialism. It is a rationalist, secular fundamentalism that now extends into almost every aspect of life. In short - and we take this to be self-evident - dromoeconomics has become necessary because warfare has become industrialised while trade has itself become outright war. Both are indistinguishable in their hypermodern managerialist emphasis on the need for a political economy of speed.

We begin by focusing on the work of Virilio and the idea of excess speed before considering its relationship to

complementary aspects of Marx's work on the scientific critique of political economy and our conception of dromoeconomics. The second and third sections concentrate on excess speed and overproduction from a hypermodern perspective before centring on human warfare as the basis of international trade, and the suspension of these antithetical forces. In the fourth section we focus our efforts on the concept of hypermodern managerialism and the need for speed, the (il)logic of which suspends the antithetical tensions between war and trade. This section shows how hypermodern managerialism is related not only to war but also to trade, excess speed, the annihilation of space by time and the contemporary conditions of human life. In the fifth section, before concluding our argument, we discuss some of the conceptual difficulties inherent in synthesising Virilio and Marx as well as in developing the concept of dromoeconomics.

### **Dromoeconomics**

For a number of years now, Virilio has been advancing the idea of 'dromology', the study of the logic of speed. Virilio believes that the logic of ever-increasing acceleration lies at the heart of the political and economic organisation and transformation of the contemporary world. As he puts it:

To me, this means that speed and riches are totally linked concepts. And that the history of the world is not only about the political economy of riches, that is, wealth, money, capital, but also about the

political economy of speed. If time is money, as they say, then speed is power.<sup>7</sup>

Thus we see that Virilio equates money, power and speed, implicitly recognising that the circulation time of 'ephemeral' capital (money, for example) can, at least theoretically, substitute for 'massive' wealth and the labour it commands.<sup>8</sup> But it is not enough to say that we have defined excess speed in terms of dromology and that this, in turn, is linked to wealth and power. Rather, we need some way of being able to grasp the relationship between the political production of speed and the economic production of manifest wealth.

Clearly, in the current 'globalised' environment, speed, mobility and wealth are somehow linked. But how do we connect the circulation time of money with the speed of violence? Virilio answers by calling for the development of a political economy of speed in addition to a political economy of wealth. Indeed, for Virilio, the 'physiocrats who provided the basic studies of political economy' were doing the 'same sort of work' as himself. However, the difference is that his 'research examines the comparable power of speed and its influence on morals, on politics, strategies and so on'. Virilio continues:

I'm a physiocrat of speed and not of wealth. So I'm working in the context of very old traditions and absolutely open situations. At present, we still don't know what a political economy of speed really means.

It's research which still awaits subsequent realisation.<sup>9</sup>

Despite apparently confounding the Physiocrats' agrarian political economy with de Tracy's school of 'ideology', Virilio's allusions to a research agenda featuring a political economy of speed provide us with food for thought.<sup>10</sup>

It would of course be possible to develop such a theoretical conception from an explicitly Marxian perspective. Yet we believe that an important aim of this article is to attempt a synthesis of Virilio's ideas on dromology with Marx's rather undeveloped yet scientific and critical conceptions of a political economy of capitalist production, circulation, space and time.

Beginning in earnest in 1867 with the publication of Capital, Marx developed his scientific critique of political economy when investigating the development of the industrial revolution. For Marx, the origins of capitalist wealth lie in the production of an economic surplus, an excess that is distributed unevenly in the context of international economic growth thus giving eventual rise to conflicts over ownership, prices, profits, wages and employment conditions on a global scale. 'Let me point out once and for all', Marx writes:

that by classical political economy I mean all the economists who ... have investigated the real internal framework ... of bourgeois relations of production, as opposed to the vulgar economists who only flounder around within the apparent framework of those

relations ... systematising in a pedantic way, and proclaiming for everlasting truths, the banal and complacent notions held by the bourgeois agents of production about their own world, which is to them the best possible one.<sup>11</sup>

In Marx's terms, classical political economy gave way to vulgar economics in the first half of the nineteenth century when the bourgeoisie became politically dominant. Armed with the often-contested authority to subject the growing industrial proletariat to its rule, bourgeois economists abandoned their previous scientific aims and offered the status quo as the model for all future developments in political economy. Marx's scientific critique of political economy is therefore a radical perspective on the question, definition and central characteristics of classical, conservative and 'neo-classical' economics.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, in the present period, the key question is: how do we synthesise Virilio's call for the development of a political economy of speed with Marx's scientific critique of the political economy of wealth? For us, Virilio and Marx provide the basic starting point for a novel conceptualisation of dromoeconomics, a new political economy of speed. Nonetheless, our inquiry diverges from both Virilio and Marx because it is a synthesis of the related influence of excess speed and its impact on war, on international trade and hypermodern managerialism. For, as Marx suggested:

Circulation proceeds in space and time ... It is ... an essential process of capital ... The constant continuity of the process, the unobstructed and fluid transition of value from one form into the other, or from one phase of the process into the next, appears as a fundamental condition for production based on capital to a much greater degree than for all earlier forms of production.<sup>13</sup>

Marx's incisive remarks on circulation, space and time conclude our initial discussion of dromoeconomics. However, it is important to stress that our attempt to synthesise Virilio's ideas on dromology and the political economy of speed with Marx's conception of a scientific critique of political economy is a radical perspective on the conceptualisation of dromoeconomics and the political economy of speed. We now turn to the second section, and to issues of excess speed and overproduction, to the issues of hypermodernism, war and trade.

### **Excess Speed and Overproduction:**

#### **Into the Hypercapitalist World of War and Trade**

As noted, the significance of our argument with regard to excess speed and overproduction is that it departs markedly from postmodern notions of political economy. Like postmodern political economists, we are of course centrally concerned with the 'difficult restructuring of corporations in a constantly changing cultural climate' but we disagree with postmodernists such as Sassower that this process 'defies the

classical categories of capitalism'.<sup>14</sup> Equally importantly, we distance ourselves from conventional Marxist interpretations such as those of Mandel not because we want to eschew the idea of 'late capitalism' but because we are seeking a less determinist epistemology that is open to a rethinking of Marx's corpus.<sup>15</sup> As a result, our own work rests on the ideas of hypermodernism and hypercapitalism, the latter of which is the most significant in the present context. Broadly, we define hypercapitalism as the system within which the most intimate and fundamental aspects of human social life -- forms of thought and language -- are formally subsumed under capital and become its most predominant commodities. The two most distinguishing differences between hypercapitalism and its previous forms is the speed at which processes of circulation and self-valorisation occur, and the ephemeral nature of hypercapitalist commodities associated with its speed-of-light infrastructure of communication technologies.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, then, we suggest that the twin antithetical impulses of war and trade power the compulsion for a contemporary conception of dromoeconomics.

As Virilio and Marx have both argued, all hypercapitalist trade presupposes the overproduction of something, an excess of speed or a particular commodity within a community, for instance. It also presupposes a perceived or potential need for something for which a particular person or community lacks the means to produce, and which another person, group, or community produces to excess. All human



activity produces something. And this something, and the activity that produces it, is the axiomatic basis of excess production. Excess production is a time-dependent process. Therefore dromoeconomics becomes an absolute imperative for systemic overproduction. This is because, as Virilio and Marx separately suggest, not only do the 'higher speeds belong to the upper reaches of society' and 'the slower to the bottom' but also, in a very real sense, 'the whole development of wealth rests on the creation of disposable time'.<sup>17</sup> Speed, disposable time, surplus production, and a devotion to abstract wealth constitute one side of the two interdependent and contradictory extremes of the political economy of speed: trade and war.

However, one of the earliest forms of socially institutionalised excess is well evidenced by the works of Virilio and Marx with regard to the wars of antiquity, to the maintenance and, crucially, to the movement of standing armies.<sup>18</sup> Considered historically, war is for Virilio a 'method of total control over a territory and of a population'.<sup>19</sup> War is thus a matter of necessity in settled societies. Indeed, according to Marx, throughout the history of human settlement, war has been:

the great comprehensive task, the great communal labour which is required either to occupy the objective conditions of being there alive, or to protect and perpetuate the occupation. Hence the commune consisting of families [is] initially

organized in a warlike way - as a system of war and army, and this is one of the conditions of its being there [in a particular place] as proprietor.<sup>20</sup>

To some extent, then, it is possible to speculate that professional warfare - mercenary warfare - is one of the earliest institutions of overproduction. It is therefore feasible to argue that it is the institution upon which all established systems of excess production, agrarian and industrial are founded.<sup>21</sup> For us, therefore, the logics of war and trade are, at their roots, historically inseparable.

It has long been recognised that, while trade is dependent on the overproduction of speed, capitalism is also based on systemic economic excess. Indeed, the systematic and conscious production of massive excess which, according to Virilio and Marx, is founded firstly on 'the increasing speed of information transmission' and secondly on production 'for export, for the external market'.<sup>22</sup> Thus capitalism, by definition, and at its very foundation, has its historical roots in warfare and international trade. And since excess production implies an emphasis on creating excess time, relatively speaking, economic growth in contemporary capitalism appears to be reliant on the production of faster processes of production. Nowhere in known history has this been achieved more intensively than in the world wars of the twentieth century.

Herein lies a central paradox, which is expressed by the very nature of what is called, rather mystically by

postmodern political economists, 'globalisation'. International trade and its imperatives for ever-accelerating productive activities is the organising logic of the 'globalised' society's tempo. That is to say, the social organisation of overproduction demands, whether positively or negatively, ever-more 'efficient' use of fractured, punctuated and rigidly organised social time - seconds, hours, days, months and years - each of which has its socially significant meaning in relation to excess production. But postmodern globalisation cannot simply refer to the restructuring of corporations, since it apparently requires increasingly massive militaries to maintain its trajectory. This is no less true even if we accept the current reduction of nuclear arsenals by the superpowers and the recent reappearance of tribal, ethnic and religious militias and paramilitaries around the world. For there is a paradox at the heart of these two co-existent systems, war and trade. It is this: whereas globalisation is said by postmodern political economists to be dependent on, and to produce, increasing amounts of international 'harmony' and depends, by definition, on the expansion and integration of national economies, the increasingly complex and expensive system of warfare presupposes increasing amounts of inter- and intra-national conflict.<sup>23</sup> War therefore appears as an antithetical force to that of international trade. But that is not the case. They are complementary systems.

This, then, is what we mean by the hypercapitalist world of war and trade. Today, both systems command, control, solicit, and deploy highly sophisticated information technologies, including, and especially, communication technologies. Both are concerned with control of space and time, and the production and consumption of people. Both are ultimately concerned with increased efficiencies of time, acceleration, increased rates of increasing speed.<sup>24</sup> Both are intra- and inter-national systems. And, despite their apparently antithetical natures, they are in fact unitary and unifying aspects of the same hypercapitalist system.

Any political economy of speed will, by necessity, be two-sided. As Virilio has suggested, war is 'the art of embellishing death' while Marx has noted the excess production of death and the excess production of the means of destruction.<sup>25</sup> On the other, we have the production of excess time - surplus troops and surplus labour, surplus people - and the excess production of the means of excess production. Combined with social and religious reasons, these both seemingly rely upon and solicit increases in the velocity of technology, violence and population growth. In trade, acceleration is sought to reduce production, consumption and circulation time; in warfare, to reduce destruction time.

### **Suspension**

These outwardly contradictory yet truly interlocking developments discovered through focusing on the work of Virilio and Marx attain their suspension in a gruesome,

'pragmatic', and programmatic synthesis that feeds on the antithetical relationship that unites them. The economies of excess speed and power depend upon surplus time, surplus value and thus surplus labour being available. What, for example, asks Virilio, is to become of the surplus 'people whose lives are being destroyed' by the technological revolution currently bringing about the 'end of salaried work'?<sup>26</sup> Marx answers that such revolutions translate - precisely - into a demand for more people:

what is required for all forms of surplus labour is growth of population; of the labouring population for the first form (absolute surplus labour); of population generally for the second (relative surplus labour).<sup>27</sup>

Speeding technological development and growing wealth require increases in surplus time; surplus time requires surplus labour; surplus labour means surplus human activity, surplus human life. This last is manifest in the explosion of global populations during the last century.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, as Virilio maintains, the fastest growing part of the global economy's 'consumer goods' sector is armaments. Indeed, for him, the recent war in Kosovo not only 'gave fresh impetus' to the military-industrial complex but also to the development of a new 'military-scientific complex'. As Virilio suggests, we 'can see this in China ... [and] in Russia with its development of stealth planes and other very sophisticated military machines'.<sup>29</sup> Or, as Marx puts

it, in mechanised, dromoeconomic hypercapitalism, '[i]nvention becomes a business, and the application of science to direct production itself becomes a prospect which determines and solicits it'.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously, according to the United States (US) Census Bureau, the global population continues to mushroom at the rate of about 80 million people per year.<sup>31</sup> Human life - 'the labour market' - along with its means of destruction remains, quite clearly, the real 'growth' areas at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each, it seems, provides the rationale and impetus for the other.

#### **Hypermodern Managerialism: The Need for Speed**

We call the programme that actively suspends the central dromoeconomic paradox hypermodern managerialism, the irrational 'rationality' of trade and warfare management, both of which have fallen progressively under the same logic since Fredrick W. Taylor's 'industrial soldiering' became sine qua non in industrialised nations.<sup>32</sup> Hypermodern managerialism has its secular faith in 'the reality of numbers'. It is a religion presided over by high priests of technical abstraction. Its most vicious phase begins in 1961, with the intensification of managerialist values in the defence department of the US.

That intensification was personified -- though not invented -- by Robert McNamara -- the then US Secretary of Defence and former president of the Ford Motor Company.<sup>33</sup> Armed with the rational, militaristic, 'Management By Objectives' (MBO) system, McNamara mounted an assault on the defence

industries' economic inefficiencies.<sup>34</sup> From that point onwards, global warfare came to be seen in the US as 'a rational business', no different from any other.<sup>35</sup> War and trade once again fell (officially) under the same system of management for the first time since the liberal overthrow of mercantilism.

McNamara decided that from a business perspective the Cold War had been run very inefficiently.<sup>36</sup> To solve this, he 'concluded that it would be rational to limit armament costs by producing larger runs of each weapon and selling the surplus abroad'.<sup>37</sup> This would have a number of desirable effects, improving the balance of trade for the US and making the production of arms much less expensive. It would also ensure 'a unity of material' amongst allies of the US throughout the West should they need to fight a war together.<sup>38</sup> VietNam, the first fully-fledged managerialist war in history, was an abject, destructive and miserable failure. It rang in the era of hypermodern managerialism.

Some insight into the militant, neo-mercantilist logic of our emergent global system can be seen in the attitudes expressed by Friedman:

The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist - McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. 'Good ideas

and technologies need a strong power that promotes those ideas by example and protects those ideas by winning on the battlefield,' says the foreign policy historian Robert Kagan.<sup>39</sup>

Here the dromoeconomic paradox becomes much more crystalline. As Virilio suggested above, the most excessive, massive and currently profitable sector of 'consumer goods' production is the armaments industry, an industry dependent on what Marx called the annihilation of space by time and, today, paradoxically, by distance.<sup>40</sup> Capital, too, has precisely the same tendencies and dependencies.<sup>41</sup> The productive excesses of capital, which presuppose ever-expanding populations and geographical markets, are led by economies of speed, or more specifically, by an industrialised human culling machine - the military-industrial complex - on the one hand, and by a system of parasitic and abstract speculation - the financial market - on the other.

Even though it is the single largest sector in the 'consumer goods' market, armaments constitutes a miniscule percentage of global trade once we include the currently unsustainable levels of speculation in financial abstractions. In 1995, the global economic trade in physical goods totalled \$US 3.9 trillion per annum.<sup>42</sup> Approximately one-third of this was arms sales. In the same year, \$US1.7 trillion per day was traded in currency alone, 100 times the amount of actual goods and services traded. In 1999, the currency trade reached \$US6 trillion per day.<sup>43</sup> The 'parasitic' trade in monetary illusions



has replaced production of the means of life as the focus for the 'new economy'.<sup>44</sup> As Marx argued above, no longer does circulation in space and time play the role of a mere facilitator. Circulation has become an essential process of capital, an end in itself.

The largest corporate mergers and takeovers in history have happened in the last two years. What Virilio calls 'globalitarian' economic power is today centralised to a degree previously unknown in history, with over fifty percent of wealthiest economic entities being corporations, not countries. As Virilio notes:

Now, through the single market, through globalisation, through the convergence of time towards a single time, a world time, a time which comes to dominate local time and the stuff of history, what emerges - through cyberspace, through the big telecommunications conglomerates is a new totalitarianism ... and this is what I call globalitarianism. It is the totalitarianism of all totalities.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the US multi billion-dollar war machine is presented as the primary producer of global peace. The overall result: the shrill calls for increased efficiencies of 'friction-free' speed by irrational management become ever louder based on claims of success. Billions of dollars are made and lost in seconds in a form of trade, which is both illusory and inflationary.<sup>46</sup> More people have been murdered in a violent manner since 1945, when world peace apparently broke

out, than in all the wars of the previous 100 years:  
 over 75 million lives, most of these civilian, have been lost  
 in the ongoing series of 'minor incursions'.<sup>47</sup>

Hypermodern trade and hypermodern wars are economies of excess speed, life and death; theirs is the logic of dromoeconomics. And all of this is joyously construed as being productive of wealth, or excess time. But the over-production of speed is the negation of time; it is the consumption and destruction of time rather than its emancipation. Conversely, the production of arms is the latent negation of human life, and thus of production itself. The paradox of Schumpeterian 'creative destruction', carried to its illogical extremes, is now juxtaposed to a vulgar Marxian impulse for a revolutionary and 'democratic' global economy. But, as Virilio suggests, the 'speed of light does not merely transform the world. It becomes the world. Globalisation is the speed of light.'<sup>48</sup> Murder at twice the speed of sound, beyond the horizon of murderers, is juxtaposed to and complemented by the global integration of the telecommunications media through which speed-of-light speculation in financial abstractions forms by far the largest and most 'productive' sector of the global economy. It would seem humanity has reached the apotheosis of an almost universal system of irrational rationality, the logic of hypermodern managerialism.

### **Towards a Political Economy of Speed**

Although the focus of this article has centred on Virilio's excess speed, Marx's critique of political economy and the

concept of dromoeconomics, it is important to note that there remain at least three critical conceptual problems and interpretative questions that require resolution.

The first concerns the political economy of excess speed, or, rather, Virilio's obsessive conceptualisation of it in terms of war and dromology. As Brügger maintains, Virilio's formulation tends towards 'one-dimensionality and totality'.<sup>49</sup> In short, according to Brügger, in Virilio's world, acceleration explains everything. Consequently, Virilio's analyses tend to overlook other forces at work that he professes to be interested in, namely, the economics of overproduction. Virilio's work is problematic because, although he is deeply concerned with the idea of a political economy of speed, in reality he merely focuses on war and the political logic of speed, leaving aside any meaningful explanation of international trade, its economic production and suspension. While it would be untrue to suggest that Virilio's analyses focus only on speed, it would be true to say that it is virtually impossible to develop a conception of hypermodern managerialism and the need for speed from his chosen stance: there is no method in Virilio's madness. That is why, in this article, we have focused our efforts on providing a Marxian method for a Virilio-inspired hypermodern dromoeconomics.

There are a number of conceptual advantages associated with synthesising Virilio and Marx with the aim of developing the idea of dromoeconomics. But there are also a

variety of drawbacks. For some, Marx's political economy veers towards an obsession with production, and what postmodern thinkers like Sassower consider to be his 'essentialist' tendencies, especially in relation to his broad claims to, and belief in, truth, scientificity, and progress.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, in this context, the richness of Marx's standpoint on excess production stems from the fact that, unlike Virilio's conception of speed, he does not believe that production literally explains everything. In truth, Marx's writings are, in Kellner's conceptual terms, 'multiperspectival' in scope.<sup>51</sup> They seek to take account not only of political and economic forces, but also of war, speed, the globalisation of capital, the effects and functions of philosophy and metaphysics, and, indeed, of any number of other forces in human society. Marx's 'multiperspectivism' is thus to be welcomed because it is only from such a perspective that a dromoeconomics may actually be developed. Our argument is that a fusion of Virilio's analyses of speed with Marx's critique of political economy is the most fruitful way to develop a dromoeconomics.

The second set of problems concerns the use-value of an approach that centres its analysis on excess speed, overproduction, hypercapitalism, war and trade. Obviously, we believe that there is much to be gained from such an approach. Yet a common criticism of Virilio's writings is that they are not simply overburdened with newly minted neologisms, but that they also arrive unannounced and without any subsequent

definition or explanation. However, no such criticisms could be levelled at Marx's works in this regard. Indeed, his conceptual writings are known for their prolonged efforts of clarification and exegesis. Our vantagepoint is therefore founded on the belief that by fusing Virilio's anarchic and conceptual excesses with Marx's theoretical precision, a new kind of hypermodern political economy of speed can be forged.

The recognition of hypermodern political economy also implies the acknowledgement of the significance of suspension, hypermodern managerialism and the need for speed. This leads to our third and most important set of problems and questions. For our study of hypermodern managerialism and militarism is not intended as an 'objective' description of the status quo, but as a new and hopefully significant critique of such developments. Indeed, we maintain that there is something fundamentally at fault in the present system of hypermodern managerialism and globalitarianism founded on the irrational promotion of war in terms of international trade and vice versa. Is there an alternative? We think there is.

First, it is important while developing the idea of dromoeconomics to continue to question orthodox thinking about the role of speed in the economy. This is particularly the case with regard to the current mania for fast companies; unrelenting and unreasonable efficiency gains; hypermodern managerialism's concerns with dromological resource allocation and optimisation; as well as the irrational conduct of trade and war at the international level.<sup>52</sup> Second, it is important

to focus on a viewpoint that simultaneously encompasses new concerns posed by the globalisation of hypercapitalism, as well as those addressed by the traditions of classical political economy. Specifically, 'dromoeconomists' need not deny the orthodox insistence on the significance of international trade. However, we argue that such a focus is too one-dimensional to grasp the reality of contemporary global conditions. It is for this reason that we have decided to centre our conceptualisation on the neglected dimension of the political economy of speed. For what is required, above all, is recognition of the centrality of speed in contemporary societies. But such an acknowledgement must also be joined by the recognition that a focus on speed alone will not, in and of itself, suffice. It is imperative, therefore, to link the issue of speed to relationships of power, of exploitation, of coercion, of hierarchy, and to the accelerating characteristics of the work and market places in global capitalism.

### **Conclusion**

Our tentative dromoeconomics is, to some degree, an acknowledgement that contemporary capitalist societies are 'dromocratic' societies, societies constantly on the move and governed according to dominant perceptions about the political and economic logic that their trade and war technologies demand. They are societies that are truly dynamic. However, they are ones that remain not only in dangerous disequilibria, but also - apparently - in delirious ignorance of the damage

being wrought by their own systemic and turbulent logics. Moving towards a genuine understanding of dromoeconomics in contemporary society therefore entails a conception of the political economy of speed.

But it also entails the recognition that Virilio's emphasis on excess speed and Marx's analysis of overproduction present us with opportunities for thinking about hypermodern explanations of war and trade that differ significantly from those offered by either postmodern or traditional Marxian political economists.

Our preliminary agenda for a political economy of speed centred on suspension is merely one aspect of dromoeconomics. It is by no means definitive or exhaustive. We simply hope to point towards what we think is an important and undertheorised aspect; hypermodern managerialism and the need for speed, and the expression of these in the logics of war and trade. Our emphasis on hypermodern managerialism is necessary because armed conflict is a constituent feature of industrialisation and international trade. Globalitarian economic power, hypermodern trade and hypermodern war are the foundations of the globalisation of dromoeconomics. Moving towards an understanding of dromoeconomics, despite its conceptual difficulties, is therefore no longer an option. It is a necessity. In conclusion, we believe that our conception of dromoeconomics is significant not because it is yet another neologism but because of the important question it raises, the question of the political economy of speed.





## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Greg Hearn, Douglas Kellner and Bernard McKenna for their valuable comments on earlier drafts.

<sup>2</sup> P. Virilio, The Information Bomb, (London: Verso, 2000), pp.67. Original emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> K. Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, (London: Penguin, 1973), pp.349 and 524. Original emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> G. Bataille, The Accursed Share, vol 1, Consumption, tr. R. Hurley, (New York: Zone Books, 1988 [1949]); P. Virilio, Speed & Politics: An Essay on Dromology, tr. M. Polizzotti, (New York: Semiotext (e), 1986 [1977]); K. Marx, Capital, vol 1, tr. B. Fowkes, (London: Penguin, 1976 [1867]); and Marx, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, R. Sassower 'Postmodern Political Economy', in his Cultural Collisions: Postmodern Technoscience (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.113-123; and E. Mandel, Late Capitalism, tr. J. de Bres, (London: New Left Books, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> J. Armitage (ed.), Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond (London: Sage, 2000); P. Graham, 'Hypercapitalism: A Political Economy of Informational Idealism', New Media and Society, 2 (2), (2000a), pp.131-156.

<sup>7</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.35.

<sup>8</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.518.

<sup>9</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.5.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, E. Kennedy, ' "Ideology" from Destutt de Tracy to Marx', Journal of the History of Ideas, 40, (3) (1979), pp.353-368.

<sup>11</sup> Marx, 1976, pp.174-5.

<sup>12</sup> On the complex question of determining the nature of political economy see, for example, V. Mosco, 'What is Political Economy?', in his The Political Economy of Communication (London: Sage, 1996) pp.22-69.

<sup>13</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.533-535.

<sup>14</sup> Sassower, 1995, pp.113.

<sup>15</sup> Mandel, 1975. On recent efforts to rethink Marx see, for instance, G. McLennan, 'Re-Canonizing Marx', Cultural Studies 13 (4), 1999, pp.555-576.

<sup>16</sup> Graham, 2000a.

<sup>17</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.35; and Marx, 1973, pp.398.

<sup>18</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.36; and Marx, 1973, pp.468.

<sup>19</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.45.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.474.

<sup>21</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.491.

<sup>22</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.36; and Marx, 1973, pp.511.

<sup>23</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), '21<sup>st</sup> Century economic dynamics: anatomy of a long

boom: Key points of the discussion', Expo 2000 OECD forum for the future, conference 2, Paris, OECD (1999).

<sup>24</sup> P. Graham, 'Time, Space, New Media, and Political Economy: A History of Hype and Hypercapitalism', (Manuscript under review, 2000b).

<sup>25</sup> J. Armitage 'The Kosovo W@r Did Take Place: An Interview with Paul Virilio' in J. Armitage (ed.), Virilio Live: Selected Interviews (London: Sage, 2001), forthcoming; and Marx, 1976, pp.751.

<sup>26</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.37.

<sup>27</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.771.

<sup>28</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, best available estimates put global population at 1.5 - 1.7 billion. At the year 2000, the mid-year global population is estimated to be 6,073,104,685: United States (US) Census Bureau Historical Estimates of World Population (2000a): <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/worldhis.html>; US Census Bureau Total Midyear Population for the World: 1950-2050 (2000b): <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/worldpop.html>. Both Washington, Department of Commerce.

<sup>29</sup> Armitage, 2001, forthcoming. Original emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.704.

<sup>31</sup> US Census Bureau, 2000b.

<sup>32</sup> T. Dixon, Communication, Organization, and Performance, (New Jersey: Ablex, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> J. R. Saul, Voltaire's Bastards, (Ontario: Penguin, 1992), pp.81-89.

<sup>34</sup> Dixon, 1996. See, in particular, Chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> On the genesis of managerial warfare, see Mandel, 1975, pp.301 and Saul, 1992, pp.81-90.

<sup>36</sup> Saul, 1992, pp.81-83.

<sup>37</sup> Saul, 1992, pp.82.

<sup>38</sup> Saul, 1992, pp.82.

<sup>39</sup> T. L. Friedman, 'A manifesto for the fast world', New York Times Magazine, (1999, March 28), pp.40-44, 61, 70-71, 84 and 96.

<sup>40</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.1-23.

<sup>41</sup> Graham, 2000b, forthcoming; and Marx, 1973, pp.524.

<sup>42</sup> J. R. Saul, The Unconscious Civilization (Maryborough: Penguin, 1997), pp.21.

<sup>43</sup> J. R. Saul, 'Democracy and Globalisation', Address to the Evatt Foundation, Sydney, Australia, 2000. URL consulted March 1, 2000: <http://www.abc.net.au/specials/saul/fulltext.htm>).

<sup>44</sup> P. Kennedy, 'Coming to Terms with Contemporary Capitalism: Beyond the Idealism of Globalisation and Capitalist Ascendancy Arguments', Sociological Research Online, 3 (2) (1998), On

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<sup>45</sup> Armitage, 2000, pp.38.

<sup>46</sup> Graham, 2000b, forthcoming.

<sup>47</sup> Saul, 1997, pp. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Armitage, 2001, forthcoming.

<sup>49</sup> N. Brügger, 'Connecting themes in the Work of Paul Virilio -  
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<sup>50</sup> Sassower, 1995, pp.113-123.

<sup>51</sup> D. Kellner, Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and  
Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern, (London:  
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<sup>52</sup> On the role of speed in contemporary capitalist business  
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