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No Apocalypse Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)

Jacques Derrida

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I propose undertaking a close reading of Derrida's text "No Apocalypse Not Now" in relation to the methodology of interart studies. A reading of this text can return us the fundamental problematic of deconstruction as both an ethical necessity requiring action and an inevitability; it presents both the need for caution as protection from the risk of the worst, and innovation in an effort to avoid solipsistic closure.

In this essay Derrida presents the problematic of the nuclear age – as an age of a globalised risk that is still pertinent politically, socially and artistically today. Nuclear war, for Derrida, becomes a figure of the worst, as the limit point of a totalising destruction of life and even the world. From the perspective of this limit – as the possibility of *remainderless* destruction – Derrida addresses the aporia of speed, as the risk of spiralling too fast, along with the innovations of the techno-scientific, towards a cataclysmic event, or equally blinding oneself with the cautions of history. He addresses the role of the humanities, literature and the arts in competently addressing this risk (a risk that remains "fabulously textual" as it can *exist* only textually). And by indicating here the perils of self-referentiality for the future of humanity – and even life – Derrida provides many important points of discussion regarding the question of methodology in interart studies.

By drawing out many of the complex concerns of this essay, and implicating some of Derrida's more recent theories (particularly that of autoimmunity), I intend to suggest that the political and ethical moves of the "late Derrida" are already intriguingly set out here in terms of the nuclear; a frame that can helpfully suggest the import of artistic innovation in regards to the political and techno-scientific.

Possible questions to be addressed:

How does Derrida re-iterate the structure of deconstruction in terms of the nuclear age?

Despite Derrida's frequent protestations to the contrary does "No Apocalypse" betray the necessity of a certain praxis inherent to deconstruction?

What is the role of artistic practice in relation to the globalised risk that the limit of the nuclear age provides?

How may the political, social and technological shifts since the Cold War have impacted on the problematic as set out in this essay?