Michel Serres and the Literary Value of Folded Time: A Reading of Innovative Temporalities in Iain Sinclair's *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* and J. G. Ballard's *The Unlimited Dream Company*

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In association with

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> An object, a circumstance, is thus polychromic, multi-temporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, and with multiple pleats.
>
> Michel Serres, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*[1]

Imagery of folded time pervades the works of Michel Serres: 'time is the baker's writing, or absent writing', he declares, 'the baker moulds memory'.[2] In more of a self-conscious and recurring 'metametaphor' than a concise concept, the course of time is described as 'disordered', 'unforeseeable' - even 'crazy' - a 'prisoner' of the 'folds... [of] a more complex ensemble' of space and time.[3] By comparing our passage through time with the folding, erratic, *non-linear* trajectory of a fly's flight, Serres sets his concept in opposition to Kant's description of time as a continuous straight line.[4] Serres's contribution to the wider post-structuralist concern with the figure of the fold is to refine the image into a descriptor for temporality whereby, following 'complicated and illegible' trajectories, far-distant moments can be brought into close proximity with one another.[5]

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[1] Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, trans. by Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 60.

[2] Maria L. Assad, *Reading with Michel Serres: An Encounter with Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 2-16; Michel Serres, *Rome: The Book of Foundations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 81-82.

[3] Steven Connor, 'Topologies: Michel Serres and the Shapes of Thought', *Anglistik*, 15 (2004), 105-17 (p. 110); Serres, *Rome*, pp. 79-84.

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by F. Max Muller (New York: Anchor, 1966), A:166-170 (p. 141), B:154 (p. 91); in a rare application of Serres's model to literature Jonathan Gil Harris demonstrates this critique, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 172.

[5] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. by Tom Conley (London: Athlone, 1993). Indeed, critical engagement with the aesthetic of the fold can trace a genealogy through to the works of Gaston Bachelard and Leibniz. See David Webb, 'Michel Serres: From the History of Mathematics to Critical History', in *Time and History in Deleuze and Serres*, ed. by Bernd Herzogenrath (London: Continuum, 2012), pp. 51-68; Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 233; Serres, *Rome*, p. 83.

In its challenge to Kant, Serres's work holds relatively underappreciated utility for critics of contemporary literary production – a field in which, as Paul Smethurst demonstrates, 'chronotopes' of 'non-linear time and temporal displacement' are often instrumentalised.[6] However, the appropriation of Serres's model for literary criticism also has its limitations, as we can see when it is read against the innovative temporalities of novels by Iain Sinclair and J. G. Ballard.

Two Literary Models of Non-Linear Time

Sinclair's *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* and Ballard's *The Unlimited Dream Company* both present locales ruptured from the temporalities of wider London. It is useful to first chart these ruptures before contrasting the works with Serres. In *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* London's Whitechapel is represented as a 'city within a city' haunted by 'spectres' of violence and repression ritualistically unleashed by the murderer and surgeon William Gull.[7] The novel has three main narrative strands – the stories of Gull, of two friends in the 1980s (Sinclair and Joblard), and also of a group of booksellers focussed around an enigmatic figure dubbed the 'Late Watson'. However, further fractures of narrative voice and temporal setting are detectable. Letters quoted in the text allow the voices of James Hinton and Douglas Oliver (a real-life friend of Sinclair's) to displace the narrative's temporal anchorage (Hinton's letters span the nineteenth century, while Oliver's was written in July 1979).[8] Hinton's father is also quoted, speaking from 1875, while Gull is encountered as a child and as a corpse.[9] The objective of this time-hopping structure is to simulate, in the experience of reading, the 'pluritemporal' experience of Whitechapel as a 'text' where 'the walls are soaked with earlier

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[6] For Smethurst, problematising linear 'scientific, social and cultural constructions of time' is one possible (and popular) literary strategy for forming a postmodern critique of hegemonic 'western concepts of reality'. Paul Smethurst, *The Postmodern Chronotype: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), p. 175.

[7] Iain Sinclair, *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* (London: Granta, 1987), p. 125, p. 108.

[8] Ibid., p. 81, p. 92, p. 117, p. 159.

[9] Ibid., p. 176, p. 28, p. 201.

tales, aborted histories'.[10] As a result the boundaries between past and present are continuously confused or disobeyed in the novel. This is evident, too, in the anti-Kantian narrative structure, with the repetition of images across time periods overriding the distinctiveness between past and present.[11] This clearly disrupts Kant's image of time as a line of contiguous but distinct moments, with Whitechapel being characterised as a homogenous, 'stupendous whole', with no distinct past, present or future.[12] This rupture is assigned specifically to 'the breath' of Whitechapel's 'stones' when Sinclair, describing Farringdon Road, invokes and refutes Kant's image of time as a continuous, 'flowing' liquid:

> Squatting on a line of power, aligned, for once, with the drift of the city. Down with the water, from the ponds, the caves of Pentonville, rush with the Fleet, beside its ditch, swept with dead dogs towards Thames. The domes of Old Bailey and St Paul's, the hulls of tenements, the office hulks. Everything in the end floats to Farringdon Road.[13]

In Sinclair's metaphor the entropic vortices resisting the onward flow of motion ('everything in the end floats to Farringdon Road') characterise the road as a river (as do words such as 'rush', 'ditch' and 'drift'). By depicting Pentonville's 'caves' and associating contemporary offices with 'hulks' (a reference to Victorian prison ships) the procession along this river-road *activates* the past rather than moves away from it, subverting the linear flow of time. Instead, then, of a Kantian experience of time the novel depicts a ruptured experience of local time that constitutes a very Serresean narrowing of distance between past and present.

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[10] Michel Serres, *Genesis*, trans. by Genevieve James and James Nielson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 97; Sinclair, p. 64.

[11] For example, tropes of a 'sister in law' and of a beaten-up body recur across distinct time-zones, as do the Pleiades, 'grapes' and imagery of abortion. See Sinclair, respectively pp. 96-97, p. 30, pp. 206-208, p. 119, p. 127.

[12] Sinclair, p. 112.

[13] Ibid., p. 112; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B:154 (p. 91); Sinclair, p. 103.

The impression of a temporal vortex provides a productive point of comparison with localised time in J. G. Ballard's *The Unlimited Dream Company*. On Blake's first attempt to escape Shepperton, the town's liminal edges reveal the presence of a similar spatial vortex:

> Although I was walking at a steady pace across the uneven soil, I was no longer drawing any closer to the pedestrian bridge […] the motorway remained as far away as ever. If anything, this distance between us seemed to enlarge vision. At the same time, Shepperton receded behind me.[14]

The solidification of the 'perimeter road' into a form of spatial boundary is rooted in its symbolic representation of exchange and transition in a capitalist environment – its capacity for flow.[15] This rupture is only exaggerated later when Blake erects palisades on the village's roads.[16] Shepperton is also ruptured from outside temporalities. Surrounded by anonymising motorways the town is 'little more than a supermarket and shopping mall, a multi-storey car-park and filling station […] the everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere.'[17] These generic features of late suburban capitalism mark Shepperton out as what Marc Augé has termed a 'non-place' – a locale where 'the recent past – "the sixties", "the seventies", now "the eighties" – becomes history as soon as it is lived.'[18] Shepperton's amnesia contrasts the permeation of the past into the present in Sinclair's Whitechapel. The adjacent film studios, where international film companies stage lavish historical re-enactments, only exaggerate Shepperton's own poverty of history. Its spatial detachment from wider society, and its amnesiac failure to internalise its historical norms, sees the town unwind into new temporalities of its own. Money is abandoned and the townspeople regress into 'the

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[14] J. G. Ballard, *The Unlimited Dream Company* (London: Paladin, 1979), p. 38.

[15] Ibid., p. 39.

[16] Ibid., p. 189.

[17] Ibid., p. 35.

[18] Mark Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by J. Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1995), p. 26, p. 30.

simple life of the encroaching jungle' and pagan worship of Blake.[19] In a Shepperton where 'no one was at work' the work-time of capitalism becomes repealed.[20] In this we can read the critique of suburbia that Michel Delville also reads in the novel.[21] For Ballard, carnivalesque isolation from the temporal and material systems of capitalism sees its influence unwind, exposing its arbitrariness.

Both texts, then, constitute localised disturbances to the Kantian processional flow of time. While Sinclair's disruption of linear time relies on a Serresean narrowing of the distance between past and present, Ballard's stems from his regressive, rebellious reordering of a suburban lived experience cut free from history. Now that the authors' resistance to linearity have been established, their models of time can be used to interrogate Serres's theory of temporal fold.

Tracing Folded Time in Sinclair and Ballard

Nicola Kirkby persuasively describes Victorian-era books in Sinclair's novel as 'cultural leftovers' of the Ripper era, spreading 'contamination' across 'whatever barrier separates past and present'.[22] Sinclair describes a rare edition of *A Study in Scarlet* not as a static artefact but a 'tunnel into time', and later depicts books as 'ghosts that would never become books'.[23] Booksellers, too, are depicted as contaminated and 'wretched', as when Lane sees his copy of *A Study in Scarlet* as 'so much powder. He might as well snort it'.[24] Books, then, act as agents of the folding process, corrupting the boundaries between points in time.

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[19] Ballard, p. 143, p. 9.

[20] Ibid., p. 108.

[21] For Delville the 'Dionysian release' provided by Blake awakens the Sheppertonians from the 'sustained orthodoxies' of modern life, establishing in its place a 'new psychopathology' that emphasises creativity and sensualised self-annihilation. See Michel Deville, *J. G. Ballard* (Plymouth: Northcote, 1998), p. 58.

[22] Nicola Kirkby, 'Neo-Victorian Dirt and Decomposition', *Victorian Network*, 6 (2015), 109-131 (pp. 113-114).

[23] Sinclair, p. 102, p. 107.

[24] Ibid., p. 107, p. 144.

However, Sinclair's use of intertextuality runs deeper than Kirkby herself realises. Sinclair also engages in an intertextual relationship with Victorian literature at levels of style and structure. For instance, the novel's adoption of a detective story thematic, after the overt encounter with *A Study in Scarlet*, sees it perform an explicit parody of Conan Doyle. Naming a character the 'Late Watson' is one such example of this parodic relationship, as are 'Sinclair' and Joblard's recurring roles as amateur detectives.[25] Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, additionally, inflects into the world of the novel in the recurring appearances of bifurcated bodies and spectral alternate-selves.[26] The depiction, too, of Joseph Merrick as 'the Golem, like one mad' owes much to Frederick Treves's memoirs.[27] Letters and other texts are quoted at length to complete the sense of historical melange.[28] This structural use of intertextuality temporally displaces the reading experience, meaning not only Sinclair's Whitechapel, but Sinclair's *text* should be framed as temporally folded. Serres's theory of the fold, then, is valuable not only for analysing *representations* of time, but also for studying textual stylistics and literary intertextuality.

Intertextuality is also instrumental in Ballard's model of non-linear time. As multiple critics have noted, *The Unlimited Dream Company* associates itself with the works of William Blake.[29] Naming the protagonist 'Blake', after all, is a rather direct and overt way of doing this. Comparing Blake's poetry and Ballard's prose is instructive. In 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' (1790) the poet writes: 'the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt / This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual

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[25] The characters are often depicted as walking the city in search of 'witnesses'. See Sinclair, p. 58, p. 130, p. 198.

[26] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ed. by Robert Mighall (London: Penguin, 2002). Brian Baker succinctly traces this in *Iain Sinclair* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 47-48.

[27] Sinclair, p. 109. The memoirs are even quoted briefly: 'It is remarkable that the skin of the penis and scrotum was perfectly normal in every respect' (p. 148). See Frederick Treves, 'A Case of Congenital Deformity', *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London*, 36 (1885), 494-8. Helen Davies shows that Sinclair's depiction of Merrick as a social deviant aligns with Treves' original account of his life, rather than more sympathetic Hollywood and theatrical portrayals. See Helen Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015).

[28] Sinclair, pp. 130-133, pp. 159-164.

[29] David Punter, *The Hidden Script: Writing and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 20-23; Andrzej Gasiorek, *J. G. Ballard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 133; Malcolm Bradbury, 'Fly Away: Review of "The Unlimited Dream Company"', *New York Times*, 9 December 1979 <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/07/12/specials/ballard-dream.html> [accessed 9 April 2016].

enjoyment.'[30] Compare this to a description by Blake in *The Unlimited Dream Company*: 'I felt an electric fever move below my skin, as I had done during my previous visions, and I knew that once again I was moving through the doorway of my own body into a realm ruled by a different time and space.'[31] Both extracts suggest that a transcendent state is achievable through heightened interaction with one's own body, escaping spatial and temporal bounds. 'Doorway of my own body' is surely an explicit reference to William Blake's 'doors of perception'.[32] It is interesting to note, however, that while Ballard uses contemporary imagery such as 'electricity' and the scientific conjunction of 'time and space' he also uses the relatively archaic word 'realm'. Aside from its regal connotations 'realm', especially in its archaic uses, also connotes heaven.[33] It is to this idea of heaven, metaphorically beyond and devoid of 'time and space' to which Blake and the townspeople are drawn, repeatedly entering 'unseen paradises of the air' under his auspices.[34]

We begin to see the limitations of Serres's metametaphor here. The transcendent temporality at times accessed by Blake constitutes the subject's rupture from history in its entirety. In Ballard's words he enters and facilitates a new 'beginning' of time.[35] The post-historical temporality modelled by Ballard remains unexplainable to a philosopher whose model of historical 'circumvolutions' is intrinsically rooted in an anti-transcendental and postmodern intellectual context.[36]

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[30] William Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' in *The Complete Illuminated Books*, ed. by David Bindman (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), pp. 413-416 (pl. 14, p. 414).

[31] Ballard, p. 149.

[32] Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', pl. 14 (p. 414).

[33] 'realm, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edn, March 2016 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/158948> [accessed 9 April 2016].

[34] Ballard, p. 155.

[35] Ibid., p. 130.

[36] Serres, *Rome*, p. 83. Maria L. Assad provides an informative critique of Serres's wider opposition to forms of transcendence, see Maria L. Assad, '"Being Free to Write for a Woman": The Question of Gender in the Work of Michel Serres' in *Mapping Michel Serres*, ed. by Niran Abbas (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 210-225, (p. 222). See also Gerhard Hoffmann, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: Concepts and Strategies of Postmodern American Fiction* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2005), p. 110; N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990); Laura Salisbury, 'Michel Serres: Science, Fiction, and the Shape of Relation', *Science Fiction Studies*, 98 (March 2006), 30-52.

Visionary Subjects: Problematising the Fold

R.D. Laing's work is useful for exposing the subversive relationship between madness in these novels and linear time.[37] Laing describes madness with an extended metaphor: 'The plane that is "out of formation" may be abnormal, bad or "mad"' from the point of view of the formation. But the formation itself may be bad or mad from the point of view of the ideal observer.'[38] Echoing Laing, Gull and Blake are depicted as being simultaneously mad and visionary. Reflecting on his involvement in the Whitechapel murders Gull declares 'I have been mad for a long time, in a dream of men, of duties,' before asserting that he 'saw more clearly than others'.[39] His violence is framed as an 'appointed' execution of a visionary directive: 'the act is to be acted.'[40] Blake follows a similar pathology. Subject to 'premonitions', 'dreams' and 'strange visions' he displays paedophilic tendencies, and, in his desire to bring about a 'holocaust' of the suburban population, he has been compared to Michael Ryan, the perpetrator of the Hungerford massacre.[41] When inspected closely madness in these novels reveals ways by which the application of Serres's model of folded time to literature becomes problematic.

The violence perpetrated by Gull in *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* can be seen as the fundamental catalyst for the folded experience of a Whitechapel wherein Gull's Victorian milieu constantly and hauntingly resurfaces. This is demonstrable with the recurring personification of time as a human body. Across the novel the emergent twentieth century is

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[37] Brian Baker, *Iain Sinclair* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 6.

[38] R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 98.

[39] Sinclair, p. 191.

[40] Ibid., p. 127.

[41] Ballard, p. 51, p. 56, p. 95. Ballard describes spiritual union with children in extremely sexualised language: 'I took him into me, swallowing his mouth, his cool lips and sweet tongue.' (p. 160). See Ballard, p. 165; Jeanette Baxter, *J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (Farnham: Ashgate Press, 2009), p. 216.

depicted as a foetus, while the nineteenth century is 'dying', and the past is capable of 'bruising' and is 'mutilated' and 'fractured'.[42] Gull's visionary intervention in the surfaces of the human body (as both doctor and murderer) is metaphorically extended, becoming a violent intervention in the surface of time. Indeed, Gull's actions can be said to enshrine Whitechapel as a haunted and temporally folded 'lieu de mémoire'.[43] We can see this when 'Sinclair' and Joblard visit Angel Alley (one of the Ripper's murder sites). As workmen 'take the girl out' to the alley they unwittingly re-enact Tabram's murder the century before, and the narrative excitedly flashes back and forth between centuries.[44] Gull, then, can be seen to act much as the fly in Serres's metaphor of folded time, surgically sewing together disparate historical moments with his ritualised murders and his activation of ghosts. The character of 'Sinclair', however, *resists* Gull's forced folding of time. 'Sinclair' and Joblard are framed as pursuing Gull's ghost. At different points they use a tape recorder, a sketchbook and a camera in attempts to record and rationalise his effect on the spaces of Whitechapel.[45] Their detective-like penetrations of Whitechapel's 'narrative mazetrap' are portrayed as a subversive attempt to 'change fate' and 'tame the doctors, […] banish the phantoms'.[46] Such language reflects an attempt to exorcise Gull's ghost, thereby healing his haunting, folded disruptions of linear time.[47] In this light the later visit to Gull's grave should be characterised as a ritualistic act of catharsis. This is demonstrable with the photograph 'Sinclair' takes of the

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[42] Sinclair, p. 205, p. 108, p. 129, p. 147.

[43] Pierre Nora, *The Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 14.

[44] Sinclair, p. 114.

[45] Ibid., p. 187, p. 113, p. 209.

[46] Ibid., p. 63, p. 130, p. 146.

[47] In Oliver's real-life letter he indicates that Sinclair is ultimately seeking to write literature that is 'curative'. See Sinclair, p. 163. Shamsad Mortuza notes the novel's associations between healing and temporality, even though he misconstrues 'Sinclair' and his resistance to Gull. See Shamsad Mortuza, *The Figure of the Shaman in Contemporary British Poetry* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 108-109.

grave, an action that sees him 'narrow the fear' into his camera.[48] His visit is described with the language of resolution, with fear being 'lived through' and a sense that he is about to 'release' his family from a labyrinth of 'miniatory buildings' and 'corridors of strangers' that resembles the haunted alleys of Gull's Whitechapel.[49] By establishing a tentative photographic memorial to Gull 'Sinclair' is *re*-establishing that Gull is dead and in the past. This attempts to collapse Gull's folded temporality in favour of a curative restoration of the demarcations between past, present and future – a Kantian, linear arrangement of time. The novel, we can see, depicts a contest *between* folded time and linear time that 'Sinclair' and Joblard seek to restore. Serres's metametaphor is problematised in relation to the text. While Serres does allow for the possibility of time behaving in a linear, flowing way (in stating 'time does not always flow' is inherent the belief that it sometimes can) in a clear break with Sinclair he does not directly demonstrate how time can be forced to transition *between* folding and flowing.[50] For Sinclair intervening in time, artistically affecting its nature, *is* possible.

In flying the townspeople towards the sun and the 'canopy of the universe' at the end of Ballard's novel, Blake mediates entry to a realm beyond the human (capitalist) configurations of space and time that is markedly similar to Quentin Meillassoux's speculative realist model of an 'ancestral reality [...] anterior to terrestrial life'.[51] For instance, when he is at the height of his powers (and like God he is able to 'remake Shepperton' in his 'own image') the sun is described as moving 'tolerantly' in relation to him, at a 'steady pace' that he cannot

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[48] Sinclair, p. 209.

[49] Ibid., p. 209, p. 210.

[50] Serres, *Conversations*, p. 57.

[51] Ballard, p. 220; Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 10.

control.[52] Blake, then, is as powerless an observer of this higher cosmological time as are the townspeople. In all his visionary madness, he is depicted not as the originator of the townspeople's transcendent temporality, but its angelic intermediary. Meillassoux is again useful for understanding this. Blake should be read as Meillassoux's 'arch-fossil' – an object displaying 'the traces of past life' in an anterior temporality, and enabling us to transcend and 'get out of ourselves'.[53] We can see this in the suggestion that the pre-historic fossil discovered by Wingate was indeed Blake, 'sleeping there until it was time to be freed by the falling aircraft'.[54] The trans-historical temporal models of the novel in fact call for theories of time that explore movement *beyond* the Serresean folds of human history. Interestingly, Meillassoux's transcendentalist philosophy has been described as holding an antagonistic relationship with postmodern thought.[55] Ballard's Blake, we have seen, provides a foil urging the existence of a deeper reality below the surface of suburbia. Meillassoux heralds back to a pre-postmodern tradition of philosophers to describe a temporality outside history.[56] The archaic 'realm' is a key term in translations of Meillassoux, too.[57] In their respective critiques of postmodern life and thought, then, Ballard and Meillassoux display an affinity that Serres, indebted to postmodernism and with a reliance on the image of the 'historian', simply does not offer.[58]

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[52] Ballard, p. 124, p. 125.

[53] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 10, p. 27.

[54] Ballard, p. 119.

[55] Ben Woodward, *On an Ungrounded Earth: Towards a New Geophilosophy* (New York: Punctum, 2013), p. 51.

[56] Meillassoux positions himself outside 'what modern philosophy has been telling us for the past two centuries' in his reaffirmation of a cosmological absolute. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 27.

[57] Ibid., p. 26.

[58] Serres, *Rome*, p. 84.

Conclusion

Serres's conception of folded time, then, has mixed potentials as a framework for literary criticism. It is valuable when it is refined into a framework for describing intertextual stylistics. Such an application, indeed, gestures towards an innovative approach to intertextuality as a temporal phenomenon as much as a textual one. The metametaphor is useful too as a model of the permeation of history and even trauma into the contemporary landscape of the neo-liberal city. However, the literary application of Serres's theory of folded time is problematic. Serres's theory struggles to explain trans-historical representations of time in texts such as Ballard's, and the speculative realism of Quentin Meillassoux proves much more useful in describing that novel's attempts to transcend history and its neo-liberal suburban context. Furthermore, in his break with a Kantian, linear understanding of time Serres seems eager to prove his philosophical alterity. In turn he fails to fully explore how folded temporality can *come to an end a*nd time revert to a linear, contiguous arrangement of past and present. While Serres's work can be instrumentalised by existent fields it should not be up-scaled into a general theory of literary time. The inapplicability of his metametaphor to cosmological temporalities means Serres's model of folded time can, in fact, only be considered a model of *history*.

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