

Time Distortion in Bierce's "One of the Missing" and Uroshevic's "Ракописот од Kitab-An" ("The Manuscript from Kitab-An")

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Kalina Maleska,
"Time Distortion in Bierce's 'One of the Missing' and
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Abstract: In her article "Time Distortion in Bierce's 'One of the Missing' and Uroshevic's 'Ракописот од Китаб-Ан' ('The Manuscript from Kitab-An'))" Kalina Maleska examines the relationship between literature and astronomy in the context of time. The two stories share several common elements: they explore the possible manipulations of time in unexpected and extraordinary ways and come close to certain scientific explorations of time. For "One of the Missing," Albert Einstein's theory of relativity provides an interesting foundation for understanding Bierce's treatment of time. For The Manuscript of Kitab-An, the speculations of time travel starting from the Einstein-Rosen concept of the black hole as a bridge to a parallel universe proves useful in interpreting the treatment of time in this story. Although the concept of time has often been the subject of critical analysis in twentieth-century literature in general, there has been only scarce research on the relation between scientific discussions of time and its literary representations.

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Time Distortion in Bierce's "One of the Missing" and Uroshevic's "Ракописот од Китаб-Ан" ("The Manuscript from Kitab-An")

Time as a concept has been discussed in philosophy, mythology, anthropology, ethnography, physics, and astronomy. In fiction, time has traditionally been represented in a linear way, especially in novels of realism in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, technological developments, scientific progress, changes in culture, and the devastation of World War I and II created, as Stephen Kern explains in his book *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*, new modes of understanding and experiencing time and space. This changed perception of time is reflected in the experimental treatment and representation of the passage of time in modernist and later postmodern literature. Examples of how time is treated differently in the literature of the twentieth century are the stream of consciousness novel (which privilege thoughts over linear events) and metafictional novels (which frequently present parallel stories from the past and the present that are closely interwoven).

The two texts I am discussing in the study at hand are distinctive for their unusual manipulation of the concept of time in unexpected and extraordinary ways and I explore the relationship between astronomy and literature in the context of time. The two stories I analyze in order to show their distinctiveness are "One of the Missing" (1888) by the US-American writer Ambrose Bierce and "Ракописот од Китаб-Ан" ("The Manuscript from Kitab-An") by Macedonian writer Vlada Uroshevic. Although the non-linear representation of time is more common in twentieth-century literature, Bierce reveals the possibilities of time distortion in his stories. "The Manuscript from Kitab-An," on the other hand, is a story from the second half of the twentieth century and includes many recognizable characteristics of postmodernism. Although the concept of time has often been the subject of critical analysis in terms of twentieth-century literature in general, there has been only scarce research on the relation between scientific discussions of time and its literary representation. My study is an attempt to elaborate on questions such as can the understanding of time offered by physicists or astronomers be helpful for understanding a literary work?, does it shed light on aspects in the literary work which are otherwise not identifiable?, would the literary work, in turn, affect the scientific understanding of time?, and what is the contribution the interrelation of literature and astronomy can offer?

For "One of the Missing," Albert Einstein's theory of relativity provides a foundation for understanding Bierce's treatment of time. For "The Manuscript of Kitab-An," the speculations of time travel, starting from the Einstein-Rosen concept of the black hole as a bridge to a parallel universe proves useful in interpreting the treatment of time in this story. Bierce's story has been analyzed in the context of the Civil War and the manipulation of time in it is explained mainly through the chaotic mental experience resulting from war, fear, and death. According to Paul Juhasz, "despite Cathy Davidson's call for a study of Bierce's 'manipulation of subjective and objective time' in her introduction to the 1982 *Critical Essays on Ambrose Bierce*, there have been few comprehensive treatments of Bierce's use of temporal manipulation" (<<http://www.ambrosebierce.org/journal4juhasz1.html>>; in subsequent quotations from Juhasz's article the same online source applies). In his "No Matter what the Actual Hour May Be: Time Manipulation in the Works of Ambrose Bierce" Juhasz analyzes four different cases of time manipulation in several of Bierce's stories and notes that Bierce has not received the deserved attention as an insightful analyst of the possibilities of time distortion and that prominent critical works dealing with representations of time in literature neglected Bierce (e.g., Kermodé; Meyerhoff). However, there have been a few instances of highlighting Bierce's unusual treatment of time such as in Eric Solomon's "The Bitterness of Battle: Ambrose Bierce's War Fiction" which, according to Juhasz "makes promising strides in this direction, but fails to account for the breadth and depth of Bierce's treatment of time."

In the beginning of "One of the Missing," the brave Union Army soldier Jerome Searing is sent on a special reconnaissance mission: to come close to the enemy lines in order to see whether the soldiers of the Confederate Army are still holding their position. Searing arrives at an evidently old and fragile small house on a low hill. The house is elevated on four posts off the ground and seems about to fall apart and this establishes an atmosphere of imminent tragedy. The house is an excellent spot from which Searing can see the Confederate Army withdrawing. He is supposed to go back and report this information, but at the same time he has an urge to kill at least one of the enemy soldiers. So, as the narrator tells us, "Searing cocked his rifle and 'set' the trigger" (55). At this point, the image of Searing is abandoned and the narrator introduces a new image. At one point, we read that Searing is just about to pull the trigger and next we are taken to another place and time into the story of a young boy in Europe and how he came to be a part of the battery of the Confederate Army, which is at this moment a couple of miles from the point where Searing is standing. This transfer to another place and time in the story condenses many years within the few seconds that Searing observes the enemy and it is the first indication of the time distortion which is about to follow in the story. This same man fired a shot in the direction of Searing, but aimed too high. The shot of the enemy soldier strikes one of the pillars of the house of timber and brings it down with a loud clatter and clouds of dust.

The most extraordinary part of the story begins with the next sentence: "When Jerome Searing recovered consciousness he did not at once understand what had occurred" (56). This is the moment in the story when two parallel times begin to run in the story: time flows at a certain pace in his mind on the one hand and at a different pace in the reality outside his mind on the other hand. As Emmert suggests, "the story becomes, at this point, a study of the psychological reactions of a man facing his death" (<<http://www.ambrosebierce.org/journal1emmert.html>>; in subsequent quotations from Emmert's article the same online source applies). Emmert's focuses not so much on time distortion as on another aspect of the story that he calls "inescapable trap of human existence." Yet, his observation at

this point is relevant for the treatment of time: "when Bierce writes of Searing's 'recovered consciousness' after the building's collapse, the story begins to focus on its protagonist's subjective state of mind." It is this subjective state of mind that is the cause of the appearance of the two parallel times. The events which take place in the plot from this moment on are given in many details: they take place slowly and for a long time — presumably several hours, and, in the course of their passing, Searing loses and regains his consciousness several times. All these aspects contribute to the story's emphasized relation to Einstein's concept of so-called "time dilation," which is connected to the special theory of relativity (see Kaufmann and Friedman). The moment he gains consciousness, Searing thinks he has died and was buried. He feels as if his wife is kneeling upon his grave and her weight presses him more under the ground. He hopes she will soon leave, thus releasing the pressure. He opens his eyes and sees the sky, thus realizing he is not dead. He sees a heap of wooden planks that seems to be far, far away. He hears a low, rhythmic sound like a thunder, and someone's words spoken as if in some magic incantation: "Jerome Searing, you are caught like a rat in a trap" (56). Suddenly, silence and darkness falls unto him. Searing realizes he is caught under the wooden planks of the elevated house which has tumbled down — he is in a reclining posture with wooden planks pressing his breast, feet and arms, while his head is stuck as if in a vise, he can only move his eyes and very little his right arm. He uses all his effort to move his right arm in order to release himself, but with his hand moving just a few inches, he is unable to do so.

Looking around to see if there is any other way in which he could release himself, he suddenly notices a ring of shining metal that surrounds some black substance. Soon, he realizes it is, in fact, the barrel of his rifle pointing straight at his forehead. Remembering that just before the house tumbled down, he had set the trigger so that a touch would discharge it, Searing feels certain uneasiness. He is stuck and unable to move with a gun pointed at his head which may fire at his slightest move. Several times he employs all his strength to release himself, but stops when he remembers this may cause the rifle to fire a shot. Then, it seems to him that the barrel moves, that it's nearer to him. With nothing left for him to do in this illusion of the slow passage of time, he gazes at the trees and the sky, hoping that his fellow soldiers will soon arrive and save him. Suddenly, he becomes aware of a dull pain in his forehead — which vanishes when he opens his eyes and reappears when he closes them. Then he sees some rats crossing the debris and hopes they will not start eating him while he is still alive. The pain on his forehead becomes unbearable. He feels it gradually penetrating his brain more and more deeply until it is stopped by the wood at the back of his head. This causes his fear to grow enormously. Then Searing manages to move slightly a strip of board, but only enough to see that it extended as far as the trigger. Another indication of his fear is given at this point: "In his defeat, all his terror returned, augmented tenfold. The black aperture of the rifle appeared to threaten a sharper and more imminent death in punishment of his rebellion" (61). Suddenly, all his fear is gone; as he gives up the attempts to save himself, and another idea forms in his mind — he decides to shoot himself — all his trembling stops. He uses the strip of board to press against the trigger with all his strength: "There was no explosion; the rifle had been discharged as it dropped from his hand when the building fell. But it did its work" (61).

What is revealed at this point in the story is that Searing died about a couple of seconds after the building fell on him and he died because the rifle discharged as the timbers fell on it and its bullet shot him. Everything that happens in the story since the moment the building fell down takes place within those couple of seconds. This means that for Searing time passes differently from how it passes outside his mind and resembles the explanation of Stephen Hawking about how the understanding of time has changed in the twentieth century. According to Hawking in his *A Brief History of Time*, at the beginning of the twentieth century, people believed in an absolute time, that is, that "all good clocks would agree on the time interval between two events" (143). However, after the publication of the theory of relativity it has become clear that "each observer would have his own measure of time as recorded by a clock that he carried: clocks carried by different observers would not necessarily agree. Thus time became a more personal concept, relative to the person who measured it" (143). Accordingly, if measure by a clock the time from the moment the house fell to the moment Jerome Searing is dead is very different from the time measured by Searing's mind. Discussing Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," Juhasz underlines that most scholars and critics focus on the effect this story causes with its surprise ending, but he disagrees with this strategy: "the manipulation of time many critics note is thus not a vehicles to set up a surprise ending but is the thematic essence of the story itself." As the ending of "One of the Missing" is similar, that is, in both stories the reader finds out at the end that the protagonist was killed in the beginning and that the events which follow are happening only in the protagonist's mind, the same can be said of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge": the manipulation of time is significant not simply because it leads to a surprise ending, but because it is the essential point of the story.

Einstein's theory of relativity explains a phenomenon which resembles so much this time distortion in the story that it is challenging to compare them. The theory of relativity describes how motion affects measurements of time and distance. In order to explain it in a way that would be understandable for readers who are not (or have not yet become) scientists, Roger A. Freedman, Robert M. Geller, and William J. Kaufmann III., give an example: "imagine that you are on the Earth while a friend is moving at a speed v [velocity] with respect to you. Suppose that you both observe the same phenomenon on the Earth — say, the beating of your heart or the ticking of your watch — which appears to occur over an interval of time. According to your clock (which is not moving relative to the phenomenon), the phenomenon lasts for T_0 seconds. This is called the proper time of the phenomenon. But according to your friend's clock (which *is* moving relative to the phenomenon), the same phenomenon lasts for a different length of time, T seconds" (592). Further, the Lorentz transformation of time tells us that these two time intervals are related by v (the speed of the moving observer) and c (the speed of light) (see Kaufmann and Freedman 592). If one supposes that a friend is moving at 98% of the speed of light, then, by using this equation, it can be calculated that "a phenomenon that lasts for 1 second on a

stationary clock is stretched out to five seconds on a clock moving at 98% of the speed of light. As measured by your fast-moving friend, a 60-second commercial on your TV will last for five minutes and the minute hand on your clock will take 5 hours to make a complete sweep" (Kaufmann and Freedman 593). This phenomenon, in which events moving relative to an observer happen at a slower pace, is often called "time dilation." It is usually stated by people who have had a near-death experience that all his/her life flashes in front of his/her eyes incredibly fast within just a few seconds. It may seem at first that this is what is happening in Bierce's story because so many things happen within a couple of seconds from the moment Searing is shot to the moment he dies. Yet, this is not so, because of two reasons: first, it is not memories of his past that come to Searing's mind within those seconds; and second, nothing, in fact, happens fast. On the contrary, instead of memories, Searing experiences the things that actually happen to him within those two seconds; additionally, rather than passing rapidly, all events have slowed down exactly as if they were stretched, extended, as if they were observed by a person who is moving at a speed that approaches the speed of light.

In reality, no more than a couple of seconds may have passed from the falling of the building and the shot to the moment when Jerome is actually dead. But all events in his mind are subject to time dilation: he has time to think and make assumptions that his wife is standing on his grave, time to open his eyes and watch the sky, to hear a rhythmic sound and words slowly being repeated to him, to spot a bright ring, and only after a seemingly long period of time to realize that it is the barrel of his rifle, to assert that he is not afraid and then gradually, as if ages pass by, to recognize signs of fear that grow into sheer terror, to try and release himself and come up with various ideas how to do so, to take the time to wonder what holds his head, to realize that he feels a sharp pain penetrating his brain, and to lose and regain his consciousness. There is no indication that these events are flashing through his mind; on the contrary, to his mind in this state of facing death time is distorted: everything that happens within a couple of seconds seems to take place for several hours almost in slow motion. Hence time dilation is an appropriate phenomenon to explain the developments in the story. It is precisely as if these events were observed by his mind far from earth and moving at nearly at the speed of light.

The end of the story also contains an indication of time which goes in favor of such an explanation. In the last short part of the story, Jerome's brother, Adrian Searing, in the same battalion, hears a faint, confused rumble. He looks at the clock, which shows 6:18. He and his battery are ordered to advance towards the former enemy positions. They come to a ruin and see a dead body buried in timbers. It is so covered in dust so that they think his uniform is gray like the uniform of a Confederate soldier. His face is so transformed by fear, with fallen cheeks, yellowish hue, sunken temples and the officer accompanying Adrian comments: "Dead a week" (62). It was 6:40. Only twenty-two minute pass from the time Jerome dies to the time he is found by his brother. But within the few seconds while dying, his fear grew so tremendously that he was transformed into an unrecognizable figure, one of the missing soldiers in the war that the title refers to, as even his own brother cannot identify him.

While fear manifests an extraordinary characteristic to intensify many times within a second owing to the fact that the mind, in utter stress, experiences that second as a period of several hours, it is the belief in the possibility to reveal objective truth that suffers the most from the strange bifurcation of time into several parallel times in Uroshevic's story "The Manuscript from Kitab-An." This story (published first in 1983 in the collection *Unicorn Hunt*) is about a manuscript destroyed in the great fire in city of Skopje in 1689. Only one page written on parchment remained from the manuscript and split into two halves so that the text on it could not be reconstructed without connecting the two parts. The story traces the history of this manuscript written by an Arab alchemist all the way to how the left half of the only remaining piece of parchment ends up in 1923 in the hands of Isak ben Saruk, a PhD candidate in Orientalism at the University of Prague. Working on his research, ben Saruk comes to Skopje, taking with him the left part of the split parchment. The unexpected encounter with the right part of the same parchment placed under a dirty glass among a few old photographs in a small barber shop in Skopje causes a series of events which lead to multiplications of time. Four parallel universes, four parallel times, each of them equally possible, are generated after ben Saruk looks at the right piece of the parchment and determines that it is the correct counterpart of the same paper whose left half he owns. Unfortunately, he fails to convince the owner to sell him the piece of parchment he desires so much for his research. During the night, an unknown person knocks at his window in the hotel where ben Saruk is staying and hands him the parchment asking for money in return, which ben Saruk is only too glad to pay, refusing to consider how this man got hold of the parchment. Then he connects the two sides which have been divided for centuries, but suddenly the light goes out because of defect in the electricity and ben Saruk has to postpone the reading of the manuscript for the next morning.

The next morning time is multiplied into four different parallel times. Four different events involving the same character take place simultaneously in the same place, which corresponds to the general perception that space stands still, while time moves, passes by. According to Lidija Kapushevska-Drakulevska, Uroshevic, as in other stories, uses "the principle of inevitable omnipresence and beyond-time universalism" (17; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). The parallel "universes" are marked graphically with four different letters to present the four possible versions of what may have happened: A, B, C, D. According to the first (A), the morning after the stranger gave him the right side of the parchment in the middle of the night, ben Saruk, before looking at the manuscript, first took a walk and went into the barber shop where he saw the parchment still standing in the same place—yet, it was not the same: it was the left side of the parchment, the one that belonged to him. Deeply upset, he rushes to the hotel, opens the container of his parchment and finds inside the right side of the manuscript, burns it, and leaves Skopje. According to the second occurrence (B), the next morning before looking at the manuscript ben Saruk first takes a walk and notices people gathered around the barber shop. He finds out that someone broke in and killed the barber. The police questions him and, after some statements from witnesses, orders him to bring the container of the parchment from the

hotel to the police station. When the police opens the container, there is nothing inside. The police releases ben Saruk who takes the container and leaves Skopje. According to the third occurrence (C), after taking a walk, ben Saruk opens the container and takes the two sides of the parchment and realizes to his despair that he holds two exactly same left sides. Enraged, he throws them through the window and leaves Skopje. According to the fourth occurrence (D), while walking the next morning in the bazaar, ben Saruk is approached by several crippled people offering to him a piece of parchment which resembles the one he has. Some have the same shade of yellowish color that indicates the oldness of the parchment and some have the same handwriting. Others are copies, which is obvious from the small mistakes in the spelling of words, whereas still others are poor copies which show great lack of skill in imitation. ben Saruk rushes to his room, takes out the two halves of the parchment and notices a series of mistakes and illogical sections in the text. Desperate, he realizes that some of the samples offered to him in the bazaar were much closer to the original than the two halves he has, so he tears them to small pieces and leaves Skopje. As the narrator tells us, "wanting probably to explain the numerous variants of the story, some say that two people with the same name, ben Saruk, were staying in Skopje at the same moment. And that they were even staying in the same hotel. Others say — exaggerating, of course — that there were four" (329). Instead of explaining the different variants as only possible versions of what happened among which only one is true, while the others are a result of misinformation, the story explains them as simultaneous and equally possible and truthful events, all of them taking place in Skopje in the course of one day in the second half of July 1923. Such a possibility opens up the question of existence of parallel universes in the story.

The possibility that in a literary work all four versions may have actually happened resembles the discussion of the possibility or the impossibility of the existence of time machines. There have been speculations about travelling through time via back holes ever since the publication of Einstein's general theory of relativity. All the way back to the 1930s, Einstein and his colleague Nathan Rosen analyzed the possibility of a black hole being a bridge to a parallel universe and this possibility has been further elaborated in various versions by scientists (as well as science fiction writers) ever since. Such imaginary parallel universes are established in Uroshevic's story beyond what can be proven by science. Theoretically, time machines can multiply one person into four persons of the same kind. Namely, by using time machine "if you could get back from a trip an hour before you left, you could meet yourself and tell yourself what a nice journey you had. Then both of you could take the trip. If you and your twin return just before you both left, there would be four of you" (Kaufmann and Freedman 605). This is an obvious paradox, so according to science, time machines are illogical because "making copies of yourself is an example of how time machines violate causality, the notion that effects must follow their causes" (Kaufmann and Freedman 605). However, speaking scientifically the universe seems rational while literary texts have more freedom to present illogical and impossible events. Four copies of ben Saruk exist in the story and he does not travel through time (at least not until later in the story, when this possibility is examined), but a kind of imaginary wormhole opens to multiply the distressed character into four versions of himself, each hoping to find the long-searched-for half of the manuscript in a different way. At one point, the story and science come close and, just as science stipulates, the wormhole in the story is closed so that all version end in the same way: by ben Saruk leaving Skopje. However, the story does not end there and offers still another speculation on the relationship between space and time. It is revealed that the four versions of ben Saruk may also be the result of the unification of four different points in time into one and this is yet another contemplation on the nature of time. Although there is no physical evidence that there were four people by the name of ben Saruk in 1923, there is evidence that there were four people by that name staying in Skopje in various periods in history. According to documents in the city archive, one of them was in Skopje in 1693, captured and accused of being an Austrian spy, another in 1783 mentioned as one of the Jews who used to buy women slaves converted to Islam, a third ben Saruk was trying unsuccessfully to convince the lord of the city of Skopje to dry out the Katlanovo swamp and save the city from malaria, and the fourth one was the PhD candidate from Prague staying in Skopje in 1923. The question remains open whether these four people may have actually been one and the same ben Saruk travelling through time.

Situations which remain unresolved rationally until the end are a typical characteristic of the whole literary output of Uroshevic. It may be stated, as Kapushevska-Drakulevska says, that "the enigma, the secret is his Platonic Beatrice, the guiding idea through the pathways of his creative work" (7). The purpose of emphasizing the unexplainable, in the case of Uroshevic, is to defy the dominance of the existing order and the logical thinking in laying claim to the ultimate truth and to celebrate the freedom of imagination. It may thus be concluded that Uroshevic's focus on the unusual experience of time in this story as in most of his stories is not based on any "conversation" with science in order to test scientific assumptions. Even so, I believe that it was challenging to take into consideration the scientific aspect as it reveals a connection between all fields of human action, in this case astronomy and literature, even if this is not visible on the surface and it may help reveal aspects of the story that are otherwise not immediately obvious through other methods of interpretation. On a surface level, the story does not have much to do with the scientific method. Its accent on paradox, however, brings it closer to science. The paradox as a form of contradiction brings into question the existing knowledge, and with radical reexamination it may be discovered that readily excepted truths are, in fact, unfounded and wrong. This is something that not only literature, but science as well has been doing for centuries. A most typical and well known example is the long-held belief that it is the Sun that circles the Earth, which was defied and proven wrong by science. So, the paradox may be helpful in attempting to discover the truth in both science and occasionally in literature and "The Manuscript from Kitab-An," with its use of paradoxes, is certainly a case to the point. In this context, the story does not introduce fantastical elements only in order to display the author's imagination; rather, it is a pursuit of knowledge. Just as science, the story reexamines what is considered to be impossible — the multiplication of an event into

four different alternatives — and establishes a hypothesis that this may be an illusion, a consequence of something more realistic, namely the existence of four persons of the same name, the time traveler ben Saruk, in different periods in the history of Skopje. And it uses evidence to test its hypothesis: it draws information from material evidence such as historical reports about the city which mention the name of Isak ben Saruk four times in different periods.

In her discussion of intertextuality in "The Manuscript from Kitab-An," Marija Gjorgieva discusses the problematic relation between literature and science in the story. She underlines that the manuscript in the story has the status of an object of scientific interest that "brings about the following causality: if the text-object-of-scientific-research is subjected to unexplainable multiplications and conversions, then this has negative consequences for the scientific enterprise and its parameters of plausibility, authenticity, objectiveness, finality" (129). This is obviously similar to the scientific assumptions of time travel I mention above: if a person can go back and find the younger version of him/herself and so on in infinity, then this violates the principle of causality. Science concludes that time travel is, therefore, impossible. The literary work does not make conclusions in the same way: it considers the speculation that this may be so even if it violates the principle of causality in order to put into question the possibility of science detect some definite truth and in order to make an artistic impression on readers. Although the stories by Bierce and Uroshevic were written in different periods in different cultures and discuss different events, what they have in common is their exploration of the concept of time and how it can be experienced in ways that are unexpected in our lives. This exploration opens up various possibilities of the purpose of time manipulation in the stories. "One of the Missing" reveals how the mind may work in the case of stress and facing death and offers an extraordinary view on the development of fear in such circumstances. In "The Manuscript from Kitab-An" one of the purposes of the multiplication of the character ben Saruk is to deviate deliberately from "logical reality" in order to show the wrongness of the claim that it is possible to know something with certainty even after thorough scientific research. In each text, the background is different and specific for the culture the author comes from: the Civil War in the case of Bierce and the atmosphere of mystery and superstition in Skopje at the beginning of the twentieth century in the case of Uroshevic.

In conclusion, my objective is not to claim that the notion of time as explained by scientists is reflected in the texts analyzed or that the authors were in any way consciously affected by physics or astronomy. Rather, I attempt to show that it is valuable to shed light on the neglected closeness of astronomy with literature. Although in these cases it is not a matter of conscious influence of science on literature, they reveal how the interrelatedness between the two disciplines helps interpret the stories in unexpected and unconventional ways. Bierce's story has mostly been analyzed in terms of the Civil War context and Uroshevic's story has mostly been discussed as a postmodern narrative centering around the mystery of a discovered old manuscript. The interrelation of astronomy and literature offers an additional contribution into understanding human experience of the phenomenon of time. The concept of time in "One of the Missing" with regard to the special theory of relativity one can come to interesting conclusions about how the mind may perceive time and how a writer may employ this assumption to create a story that raises numerous questions about experiencing time or the processing of information by the mind in cases of utter stress. In "The Manuscript from Kitab-An" and its speculations about time travel, Uroshevic creates a story that opens up various possibilities of thinking about time distortion and parallel universes and that remain undetected with critical methods used normally in the study of literature.

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