

RESEARCH ESSAY

Many Clocks at Home: Temporal Layering in Diaspora Fiction

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A family dinner in diaspora may occur at several times at once: the host country's workday, a religious calendar, remembered seasonal rhythms, and the hour displayed on a phone connected to relatives elsewhere. Fiction can make those clocks audible in the same room. How does temporal layering represent migration without reducing it to nostalgia for a single lost homeland? Diaspora narratives use competing schedules to show belonging as coordination among unequal demands rather than movement between two complete worlds. Rather than asking whether the object is inherently progressive, authentic, communal, or memorable, the account asks how tense shifts, recurring meals, clock references, communication delays, and changes in seasonal description organize the dynamic between temporal coordination and uneven care work in undertaking.

The inquiry proceeds through narratological mapping of domestic routines against institutional and transnational time, supported by tense shifts, recurring meals, clock references, communication delays, and changes in seasonal description. Observation is recorded before evaluation, then revisited after respondents' accounts and technical documentation are compared. The practical threshold is whether a reading explains who gains rest, continuity, or authority when schedules are reconciled. That threshold keeps the reading responsive to complexity without making every explanation equally persuasive.

In one domestic scene, a night-shift worker eats breakfast while children prepare for school and a grandmother waits for an overseas call. Their shared table does not synchronize them; it reveals the labor required to create even brief simultaneity. What appears incidental in the finished object is central to its history of use. The case exposes how the relation between temporal coordination and un-

even care work depends on timing, placement, and practical judgment. It also warns against converting one contributor's later explanation into the settled meaning of an earlier event.

Provenance changes the meaning of detail. Tense shifts, recurring meals, clock references, communication delays, and changes in seasonal description acquire authority through preservation, description, and access, each of which can favor one account. A source-critical reading therefore connects the link between temporal coordination and uneven care work to the history of the record itself. It accepts the conclusion only where whether a reading explains who gains rest, continuity, or authority when schedules are reconciled survives that additional layer of mediation.

A festival chapter can invert that arrangement. Public celebration follows an inherited date, yet weather, school terms, and municipal permits relocate its sensory meaning, producing a calendar that is both remembered and newly practical. Unlike the first example, the second foregrounds the cost of successful form. Its coherence depends on labor or restriction that can be hidden from the final audience. Bringing that cost into assessment changes how the connection between temporal coordination and uneven care work should be judged and who must be included in the account.

Reading every clock as a symbol of displacement can ignore comedy, habit, and the ordinary convenience of keeping multiple times. This limit guards against a familiar interpretive shortcut: turning complexity into automatic approval. Complexity can describe exploitation as readily as emancipation. The argument therefore remains conditional on whether a reading explains who gains rest, continuity, or authority when schedules are reconciled, with dissenting evidence preserved where it changes the outcome.

The paired scenes turn an abstract

value into an analyzable process. Narratological mapping of domestic routines against institutional and transnational time traces how the connection between temporal coordination and uneven care work is proposed, enacted, received, and revised. Each stage can succeed or fail independently, which explains why a formally compelling instance may remain ethically or historically inadequate and why an imperfect instance may still generate central knowledge.

Critics should follow repeated routines across the whole narrative and distinguish imposed deadlines from voluntary rituals and accidental overlaps. The proposal also redistributes expertise. Technical staff, respondents, caretakers, performers, users, and local knowledge holders may see contrasting failures. A process that allows those observations to redirect the work is more informative than consultation whose only product is institutional reassurance.

A productive sample includes cases that initially appear unsuccessful. Failed coordination, rejected design, contested construction, and incomplete preservation can reveal the conditions of the tie between temporal coordination and uneven care work more clearly than a finished example. Such material should be studied with consent and context, not repackaged as a cautionary spectacle detached from respondents' explanations.

No procedure eliminates the analyst's authority to select and describe. Even narratological mapping of domestic routines against institutional and transnational time frames some details as central and leaves others peripheral. Reflexive disclosure is therefore necessary but insufficient; explanations also need challenge from people represented in the evidence and a clear procedure for correction when whether a reading explains who gains rest, continuity, or authority when schedules are reconciled is disputed.

Future inquiry should also study re-

fusal. People who decline participation, documentation, preservation, or understanding may identify costs that cooperative cases hide. Their reasons should not be treated as missing data to overcome; they can refine the meaning of the tie between temporal coordination and uneven care work and expose where the proposed criterion assumes forms of openness that

are not equally safe.

The topic also demonstrates why form and ethics cannot be separated cleanly. Commitments about sequence, scale, timing, access, and revision are simultaneously aesthetic and social. Evaluating them together produces a more exact account than either moral praise or formal description alone.

The examples do not settle every case; they establish what a responsible next investigation must be able to show. The result is a politics of time grounded in who waits, remembers, adjusts, and gets to declare an occasion complete. Diaspora fiction makes home not a place outside time but the difficult art of inhabiting several durations together.

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