

Yun-hua Chen

Mosaic Space and Mosaic Auteurs

**On the Cinema of Alejandro González Iñárritu,
Atom Egoyan, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Michael Haneke**

Neofelis Verlag

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Geschwister Boehringer Ingelheim
Stiftung für Geisteswissenschaften in Ingelheim am Rhein.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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www.neofelis-verlag.de

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Umschlaggestaltung: Marija Skara

Lektorat & Satz: Neofelis Verlag (mn/ae)

Druck: PRESSEL Digitaler Produktionsdruck, Remshalden

Gedruckt auf FSC-zertifiziertem Papier.

ISBN (Print): 978-3-95808-044-7

ISBN (PDF): 978-3-95808-107-9

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Introduction

1. What Is Mosaic? – Mosaic Space and Mosaic Auteurs

A troupe of clowns enters a castle to entertain king and queen who suffer from childlessness. A promiscuous king lies among naked female bodies next to a fountain. A middle-aged king caresses a gigantic flea with love. A runaway princess is chased by her ogre husband along the top of rugged cliffs. A beautiful young woman, transformed from an elderly woman, examines her new flesh in the forest. A pair of look-alike pale-skinned friends dives into the depth of a lake together. In *Tale of Tales* (*Il racconto dei racconti*, IT 2015, D: Matteo Garrone), with a script inspired by 17th century fairy tales, the paths of kings and queens, princes and princesses from three neighbouring castles diverge for the most part of the film and only briefly converge at ceremonies. By intercutting between tales, suspense is well kept throughout the film; each encounter with the characters remains fresh and untainted. This is a 'mosaic', in which narrative threads are interwoven from different characters' perspectives, instead of following one single storyline. In fact, since the late 1980s and arguably until roughly the first decade of the 21st century, this is a trend which can be observed in a great diversity of films across genres, nations and film-making contexts. They range from the commercially successful *Pulp Fiction* (USA 1994, D: Quentin Tarantino) and the Oscar-winning *Crash* (USA 2004, D: Paul Haggis), to the Indian horror *Darna Mana Hai* (IN 2003, D: Prawaal Raman) and the relatively low-budget Taiwanese production *Do Over* (*Yi Nian Zhi Chu*, TW 2006, D: Yu-Chieh Cheng). This recurring global phenomenon, in no ways the dominant narrative paradigm in contemporary cinema, catches the zeitgeist of

the turn of the century and reflects certain observations, concerns, and understanding beyond the scope of national cinema.

These multi-strand and multi-character films have been widely investigated by scholars such as Thomas Elsaesser, Warren Buckland, and David Bordwell, under the banners of “mind-game films”¹, “puzzle films”², “forking path narrative”, and “network narrative”³, and in terms of spectator engagement, narratology, cognitive psychology and socio-politics. Yet the linkage between cinema and film production and distribution context, especially important to the making of these films, has not been established. This book hence provides a different understanding of multi-strand films and argues that the bringing-together of narrative threads infers a larger mosaic of geopolitical spaces, which are interwoven through a variety of cinematic means, including narrative as well as camerawork, framing and mise-en-scène. In addition, a correlation between the construction of filmic mosaic space and the transnational filmmaking contexts can be observed in some auteurs’ filmmaking; as the auteurs in question draw talents, resources, and subject matters from a wide range of geopolitical spaces along their border-crossing journeys, their films juxtapose diverse spatial configurations. In this book’s model these auteurs are termed ‘mosaic auteurs’ and the assembled film space ‘mosaic space’. To stress its allegiance to the bigger framework of mosaic space, the multi-strand narrative, which functions in conjunction with framing, camerawork, mise-en-scène and other cinematic means, is called ‘mosaic narrative’. In fact, the word ‘mosaic’ is used here as a spatial metaphor, putting emphasis on the visual image of spaces and linking space, narrative and authorship into a multi-dimensional model of spatial compilation. It is a mosaic which gathers, groups, juxtaposes, and re-arranges spaces. Without the intention of being exhaustive and productive enough to solve all the issues of the phenomena or provide a global explanation, this model offers a reading of mosaic beyond an exclusive focus on narrative.

1 Thomas Elsaesser: The Mind-Game Film. In: Warren Buckland (ed.): *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, pp. 13–41, here pp. 15–16.

2 Warren Buckland: Introduction: Puzzle Plots. In: Id. (ed.): *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, pp. 1–12, here p. 6.

3 David Bordwell: *The Way Hollywood Tells It*. Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press 2006, pp. 72–75.

The spatial aspects of mosaic will be explored in terms of representations of space, understood through theories of space, and spatial aesthetics, in terms of formal cinematic aspects such as editing, framing, and mise-en-scène. At the level of spatial representations, at the same time that narrative threads are interwoven, the mosaic joins together geopolitical spaces of different kinds, including: the developed world, where we can see immigration for different reasons and the phenomenon of diaspora, developing areas visited by tourists from developed countries, global cities with interconnected local networks of information, people, and capital, colonial and postcolonial countries, regions at a time of peace, and regions experiencing an ongoing state of war. In addition, within the mosaic, the actual diegetic image and virtual reframed and remediated images are brought onto the same spatial plane. These spatial configurations complement and interact with each other dynamically. They are analysed with the aid of the theories of space, such as Gilles Deleuze's concept of "any-space-whatever"⁴ as the deserted but inhabited wasteland where people do not know how to react, the smooth (nomadic and open space) and the striated (sedentary and demarcated space), and deterritorialisation (distanciation from the territory) and reterritorialisation (reapproximation with the territory)⁵; Marc Augé's places (relational and historical) and (contractual and unrelational, such as airport lobbies and supermarkets) in supermodernity⁶; Saskia Sassen's global city, which is the meeting locale between flows of people, images, finances, technology,

4 Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. from French by Robert Galeta/Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum 1989, p.xi. Gilles Deleuze has cited Pascal Augé in *Cinema 1* and this has led to many instances of confusion between Marc Augé and Pascal Augé, cf. Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. from French by Barbara Habberjam/Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum 1986, p.109. A detailed explanation can be seen in the communications between Charles J. Stivale and Les Roberts, cf. www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/DuellingAuge.html (accessed 08.03.2011). Here I am considering Gilles Deleuze's any-space-whatever and Marc Augé's non-places as two independently developed concepts, agreeing with David Martin-Jones' belief that Pascal Augé in fact refers to Deleuze's student Pascal Auger at Université Paris VIII, instead of Marc Augé, as in David Martin-Jones: *Deleuze and World Cinemas*. London: Continuum 2011, p. 249.

5 Gilles Deleuze: *A Thousand Plateaus*. London: Continuum 2004, pp. 10–11, 23, 356–367, 523–551.

6 Marc Augé: Paris and the Ethnography of the Contemporary World. In: Michael Sheringham (ed.): *Parisian Fields*. London: Reaktion 1996, pp.175–179, here pp.177–178.

information and goods⁷; Mike Featherstone's "glocalism", the amalgam of increasing interdependencies across nations and daily local activities⁸; and Arjun Appadurai's flows and disjunctures of various aspects which he terms ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and ideoscapas⁹. Instead of confining and restraining the scope of films, these spatial theories present new ways of reading films. The spatial concepts are not seen as binary and categorical in the framework of mosaic space, but rather as fluid, dynamic, interactive, and therefore productive. In fact, the global/local theorised by scholars of globalisation, places/non-places of Augé and the smooth/striated of Deleuze overlap in various ways. The global space where different flows of people, finances, and information meet is where non-places proliferate. Because of its facilitation of exchanges, the global space also approximates nomadic smooth space, which has fluid boundaries and is open to redefinition. On the other hand, the local space, demarcated and fragmented by clear borders, tends to be the striated space that is divided and defined by lines. It is also where Augé's anthropological places remain. Yet the interconnectedness of the spatial configurations has to be contextualised in order to be meaningful. The second half of section three in this introduction is dedicated to the discussion of these spatial theories, which interweave into a complex and interactive mosaic.

The mosaic is not only formed by the encounter between spatial configurations of different kinds, but also by the conglomeration between images on screen in terms of spatial aesthetics. It is through mosaic narrative, as well as through framing, mise-en-scène, choices of setting, and cast that the multi-dimensional mosaic manifests itself. Mosaic narrative, assembling different characters' storylines through crosscutting between perspectives and spaces, is the most discernible and most discussed aspect. Yet apart from mosaic narrative, mosaic

7 Saskia Sassen: *Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization*. In: Arjun Appadurai (ed.): *Globalization*. Durham: Duke UP 2001, pp.260–278, here p.267; ead.: *Territory. Authority. Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton: Princeton UP 2006, pp.402–403.

8 Mike Featherstone: *Localism, Globalism, and Cultural Identity*. In: Rob Wilson/Wimal Dissanayake (eds): *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP 1996, pp.46–77, here pp.46–47.

9 Arjun Appadurai: *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996, pp.32–35, 49.

space can also be composed of images of bodies and object parts which are fragmented through framing; it can also piece together layers of the mise-en-scène with great depth of field. Sometimes the mosaic juxtaposes linguistically and culturally diverse spaces through a mismatch between the origin of the cast and the film setting. Whereas the interweaving narrative strategy has been the prevailing route to understand the surge of multi-strand films, this book branches out from narrative concerns to explore a broader variety of mosaic aesthetics, including some elements which are rarely considered in scholarly works. In section two, I will demonstrate how we can understand cinematic formation of mosaic beyond the realm of narrative, as well as how different cinematic techniques work together in specific film-making contexts to construct mosaic.

The spatial mosaic, assembling a diverse range of spatial configurations and deploying cinematic aesthetics to construct them, is correlated to the travelling and filmmaking mode of the auteurs in some situations. Alejandro González Iñárritu, Atom Egoyan, Hou Hsiao-hsien and Michael Haneke are four chosen examples of the mosaic auteurs here. As most scholarly works on multi-character narrative tend to predominantly draw examples from films produced and distributed in the West, apart from Patricia Pisters' example of Faouzi Bensaidi's *WWW: What a Wonderful World* (FR 2006)¹⁰ and Bordwell's rather comprehensive scope of network narrative in *Poetics of Cinema*¹¹, I choose four auteurs from three continents as an attempt to broaden the geopolitical range while considering spatial assemblages. These auteurs are the travelling-auteurs who constantly cross borders and incorporate financial resources, cultural materials, industrial networks and film talents from diverse contexts into a unique mosaic auteur-space, thanks to high speed transportation and diverse global flows. As a consequence, the mosaic auteurs' experiences of the shifting spatial configurations in the age of globalisation help them transcend the confinement of nation-based scope and explore transnational filmmaking milieus. Their films also travel

10 Patricia Pisters: The Mosaic Film – An Affaire of Everyone: Becoming-Minoritarian in Transnational Media Culture. In: *Proceedings of the Second Encuentro Murcia-Amsterdam on Migratory Aesthetics*, 19–21.09.2007. <http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/m.g.bal/bestanden/Pisters%20Patricia%20Encuentro%20Migratory%20Politics%20READER%20OPMAAK.pdf> (accessed 21.07.2011).

11 David Bordwell: *Poetics of Cinema*. New York: Routledge 2008.

across boundaries, for they are consumed in circuits of international film festivals and in different local spaces across the globe. As a part of the theoretical framework I build, side by side with the theories of space, in the first half of section three I will review major debates in film authorship and discuss my framework of mosaic authorship, as well as the way it works to compile spaces in filmmaking contexts. Mosaic authorship will then be examined in relation to other important frameworks of transnational authorship, such as Mette Hjort's typology of transnationalism, Hamid Naficy's accented cinema, and Laura Marks' intercultural cinema.

These branches of space, aesthetics and authorship are intertwined into a mosaic. Hence, this book lies in the intersection between the cinematic manifestations of mosaic space, spatial representations, and transnational filmmaking networks facilitated by authorship. By introducing the concept of mosaic, the understanding of multi-character films is not restricted to the consideration of narrative, but rather, enables us to see these films from a spatial perspective. The framework of mosaic also connects the film space on screen and filmmaking contexts in the nuanced analyses of auteur cinema. These key elements will firstly be examined with an analysis of the last eight minutes of Michael Haneke's *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (*71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls*, AT / DE 1994) to build up the multidimensional mosaic. I will then exemplify my framework of mosaic space and distinguish it from other models, before moving on to discuss mosaic authorship and theories of space which facilitate the contextualised understanding of mosaic. A chapter-by-chapter breakdown can be found at the end of the introduction.

2. Mosaic Space: Visual Spatial Assemblage

Mosaic Space and *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*

Haneke's *71 Fragments* is a good example to illustrate my framework of mosaic space and its spatial reading of multi-character films. Space, aesthetics, and authorship are interwoven into a multidimensional model in which diegetic representational spaces are brought together through cinematic means, at the same time that human and material resources are gathered together extradiegetically in the making.

Haneke's third feature film, *71 Fragments*, inspired by a real-life shootout in Vienna, follows the intertwining lives of several people

from diverse socioeconomic and geopolitical backgrounds, over the course of ten days before Christmas Eve. It culminates in an unexpected shootout on the 23rd December inside a Viennese bank. As the resulting mosaic is in correspondence to the transnational filmmaking context established by the travelling auteur, it is helpful to put the film in its context before analysing it. *71 Fragments* is an international production which pulls funding resources and cast mainly from three major West European countries: Austria, Germany and France, even if Haneke's transnational filmmaking networks are more limited at this early stage of his career. This indicates Haneke's early border-crossing and transnationality in the European context, which are subsequently expanded and broadened through the progressive milieu-building process. Following *The Seventh Continent* (*Der siebente Kontinent*, AT 1989) and *Benny's Video* (AT / CH 1992), the first two films in his debut trilogy, Michael Haneke's third feature, *71 Fragments*, is an European coproduction of the Austrian Wega Film based in Vienna, German Camera Film based in Berlin, German television channel ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen), and the Franco-German television channel Arte. In addition to gathering filmmaking resources from different West European countries, the actors and actresses are also recruited from Germanophone countries across national boundaries in Western Europe: Austria (Lukas Miko, Otto Grünmandl), Switzerland (Anne Bennent), and Germany (Udo Samel, Claudia Martini). In addition, Branko Samarovski, playing the role of the guard Hans, who was born in Yugoslavia and fled to Austria with his parents at the age of five, brings the dimension of political migration within Europe into the picture. Upon its release, the film did not attract much attention and its distribution was first confined to a limited number of distribution networks, such as the Catalanian International Film Festival, Rosebud in Greece, and Sputnik Film in Germany. It is only after the critical and box office success of Haneke's *Caché* (FR / AT / DE / IT 2005) that *71 Fragments* was widely re-released on DVD as part of Haneke's debut trilogy by Tartan in the UK and Alamode Film in Germany. It was even released in theatres in the US by Kino International in 2006. The consumption of this film has thus extended from a rather limited circuit within Western Europe to a global network of art cinema thanks to Haneke's increasing significance as an established auteur. Given its original transnational filmmaking context within Europe, it is

not surprising that the film's subject matter evolves around the issues which deeply concern the continent: wealth divides between wealthy and underprivileged countries in Europe, the resultant migration, and discrepancies between bourgeois and working-class Europeans; all of which are present in the daily life of Europeans from different socioeconomic and geopolitical backgrounds. As these experiences have only intensified with the global flows of information, people, finances, and technologies accompanied by new tools of communication and high speed transportation since the 1990s, *71 Fragments* remains relevant to both the European and the global audience two decades after its release.

The film follows the characters' snippets of life before the random shooting of university student Max. Throughout the film they are represented in segments completely segregated by editing, which confine them within individual snapshots and reinforce the feeling of separation. Instead of following one main character's trajectory closely, the spectator gets to know several characters at the same time through fragments of their daily life separated by black-outs. Without knowing the characters' family history or psychological state, we see static shots of Hans walking past his wife who is feeding their baby in the morning, Max talking in a public phone booth in front of his dormitory, a reframed shot of Mrs. Brunner teaching Marian simple German words such as "star" and "people" while driving through the city centre, and a panning shot showing Tomek carefully donning a suit, waistcoat, and tie and putting Christmas presents in a bag. It is through the accumulation of fragmented information like this that the spectator gradually realises how eagerly wealthy Mrs. Brunner, living in the spacious flat she shares with her husband, wants to adopt a child to fill the void she feels. She later hosts the homeless Romanian boy, Marian, who has recently been caught by the police for illegally entering Austria. The lonely middle-class elderly man, Tomek, communicates with his bank clerk daughter face-to-face only in the bank as a customer. The middle-aged working class bank guard, Hans, struggles to make ends meet in a cramped filthy dwelling and to emotionally connect with his wife and their infant daughter. As for Max, who is intensively trained for table tennis, he has won a stolen handgun from his friend in a mind game. Hence the mosaic narrative progressively weaves together snippets of information, which are kept parallel to one another until the moment of encounter. For example,

Marian's nomadism has no direct relation to Tomek's isolation or his daughter's alienation from him. Max's frustration is also unrelated to the unhappiness of Hans' family. They are finally brought together into the same spatial plane when these characters of diverse generations and socioeconomic backgrounds end up in the Viennese bank on the 23rd December 1993, one day before the major cultural occasion for most of the Western world, Christmas Eve. Mrs. Brunner drives Marian around for Christmas shopping and stops by the bank to withdraw money. Tomek wants to give his granddaughter's Christmas presents to his alienated daughter in the bank. Hans transports money from an armoured truck to the bank as his daily routine. And Max, on his drive home for Christmas, realises that he does not have enough cash after refueling his car. He then experiences a series of obstacles in his hasty attempt to withdraw money, including a rude cashier in the gas station, a dysfunctional cash machine, a violent customer at the bank counter and an aggressive passer-by in a car.

At the moment that Max, Tomek, his daughter, Mrs. Brunner, and Hans appear together in the same diegetic time and space on screen for the first and only time, the spectator experiences this encounter from Hans' perspective. Framed from the waist up, the camera follows Hans walking along the corridor in the closest plane. At the pace of Hans' steps, we glance around the crowd in the hall. In the background, the bank customers, separated from the guard by wooden counters, are out of focus but still somehow recognisable as the characters we know amidst the ones we don't know. With Hans' gaze we first see Mrs. Brunner talking within a circle of people, Tomek waiting patiently in the back of a long queue, and his daughter talking to a customer across the counter. By the time that Hans crosses the half-size wooden door to enter the main hall, we see in the background Max entering the frame by pushing through the glass door with a gun on his right hand; he is first seen from Hans' perspective as an anonymous blurry undersized image behind the door. The camera then swiftly zooms in to a medium shot facing Max, as he shoots towards different directions offscreen without any warning or explanation. Max's face is expressionless against the sound of a woman's shouting and no reverse shot of the object of his gaze is given.

Through this example, we can see that *71 Fragments* chooses to represent the events prior to the shootout in fragments from the characters' respective perspectives, and then reassembles the previously parallel

lives of the shooter and the victims into the same spatial plane in the tracking with Hans' gaze. In this way, it shows how seemingly insignificant and trivial fragments of everyone's lives can evolve into an unexpected and tragic encounter. Without dwelling on any melodramatic moment or providing psychological explanation, the fragments always end before the spectator gets familiar with a certain setting or involved with a certain character. Accordingly, the way Hans glances through the group of people in the bank in the tracking shot is similar to the way we follow the fragments of each character one by one without really getting to know them in depth. The diegetic world is experienced in snippets, in the same manner that Hans perceives people in the bank hall in fragments. Because of the fragmented perception, the spectator is not omniscient and does not have a privileged access to the characters' inner state. While these characters' pieces of life are edited together, the assemblage is not only of various lines of the story, but also of spatial configurations from diverse socioeconomic and geopolitical backgrounds. All living in the developed and wealthy capital of Austria, the characters carry with them the spaces of the bourgeois, the working-class, the young, the middle-aged, the elderly, the educated, the uneducated, the thriving Western Europe, and the less developed parts of Europe in the small area around the bank. This patchwork of spaces correlates with the filmmaking context, in which funding and cast from different European nations gather in the same production. *71 Fragments* thus constructs a mosaic through editing, which brings together not only narrative threads but also diegetic spaces and extradiegetic spaces.

In addition to bringing actual representations of socioeconomic and geopolitical spaces together, the mosaic of *71 Fragments* also interweaves the actual film diegesis and the virtual images within the diegesis. The diegetic film is in fact bracketed by doubly-mediated images; it opens with an unsolicited zapping of news footage of violence and political conflicts familiar to households of Western Europe: civil wars in Georgia, Somalia and Haiti in 1993, in which the United Nations and/or the Clinton government intervened. Following the usual televisual convention, the segments of news items are separated by the introduction of a news broadcaster emotionlessly talking straight at the camera. The footage provides shaky and abruptly cut images that we are used to seeing on news programmes, oscillating

between bird's-eye shots providing an overview and medium shots to close-ups revealing human emotions. Despite the geographical diversity between these locales undergoing civil wars, they are commonly portrayed with medium shots of soldiers on tanks driving by, swarms of distressed civilians and refugees, long shots of surveying helicopters and jet fighters flying overhead, and close-ups of machine guns juxtaposed with the sounds of gunfire in the background. The same kind of news footage is placed in the very end of the film as well. After the last diegetic images created by Haneke which show Max collapsing dead on the steering wheel and the patiently waiting Marian within respective reframed car spaces, the real-life news report on the aftermath of Max's random killing is cut in after a brief black-out. We see medium shots of bodies being carried out of the bank, policemen carefully collecting biological evidence, and a close-up of the gas station cashier in a cursory interview. These images are simultaneously the actual news footage broadcasted on TV in the real extradiegetic world, and the doubly-mediated virtual images reframed by TV sets and also consumed by the diegetic characters within *71 Fragments*. The news report is followed by a repetition of the news zapping, which has already been inserted into the diegesis before the characters start moving towards the bank. It starts with the failed cease-fire agreement in Bosnia before Christmas, portrayed by medium shots of two young children decorating a Christmas tree at home, long shots of civilians in Sarajevo running to escape the bullets from sharpshooters, a close-up of a young woman commenting on the high price of Christmas decoration, and a medium shot of a mother running to the hospital with her infant child whose leg has been scraped by shrapnel. The footage of masked surgeons treating the child cuts to the news report on Michael Jackson's child abuse charge, which ends abruptly in the middle of an archival image of his stage performance with the voice-over of a news commentator in the middle of her sentence. Without any indication of a closure the film returns to complete black with white letters giving credits to production companies. In fact, all the zapped doubly-mediated images represent images of violence readily consumable by Western Europeans from their comfortable sofas on a daily basis: large-scale violence in countries in turmoil, smaller-scale violence right inside the centre of Western Europe in a Viennese bank, and suspected sexual abuse in the luxurious household of a world famous rock star

in the USA. By editing together the news footage of the actual gunshot's aftermath circulated on virtual platforms and a selection of unrelated news footage on violence in different corners of the world, and placing them before and after Haneke's virtual representations in the diegesis, *71 Fragments* is interwoven into a mosaic of different virtualities and broader geopolitical contexts, while commenting on the consumption mode of journalistic materials and short attention span of the news spectator.

While the bracketing and mirroring of the doubly-mediated virtual images of news footage provide the outer layer, there is also an inner layer of mirrored images bracketing the diegetic film of *71 Fragments*. After the gunfire, a canted overhead shot shows Max walking across the busy four-lane road between the gas station and the bank, towards his car, where he shoots himself in the head. Accompanied by the sounds of honking and swearing, some cars reluctantly stop while Max fires a couple of bullets randomly towards the drivers. This portrayal of Max's path towards suicide, before the news footage in the very end of the film, is visually similar to Marian's crossing of a river towards Austria in darkness right after the opening news zapping. Although Max and Marian come from very different backgrounds, Max being a future intellectual from a middle-class Austrian family and Marian being a homeless boy from rural Romania, they are filmed 'indiscriminately' while they cross over to a different stage of life (or death). In both instances, Max and Marian cross the screen space diagonally from bottom left to top right, and the camera follows them closely from high above and keeps them in the centre of the frame. In Marian's crossing, he is momentarily obscured by the green leaves of a tree which grows by the shore, whereas Max's crossing is temporarily obstructed by some cars which almost run over him; Marian's traversing of the demarcation of national boundaries in the nature is mirrored with Max's crossing of the artificial urban lines. While the outer brackets of news footage provide a different layer of virtualities, the inner brackets of the canted overhead shots of Max and Marian with analogous composition illustrate the visual mosaic of the interconnected individuals despite their wealth and cultural divides.

Apart from the mirroring between the beginning and the end, mosaic narrative also works in combination with an assemblage of disembodied close-ups, which are isolated from the immediate visual

contexts through framing. In *71 Fragments*, the narrative line often progresses by aligning a sequence of close-ups with different durations. These close-ups isolate objects or body parts from their immediate surroundings and hence detach them from the contextual information of the images. Bodies and objects are truncated in the screen space by framing, and are never re-embodied again in the film. For example, Hans' routine trajectory is portrayed by a close-up of Hans' disembodied finger pushing a red button on a dashboard embedded on a wooden door, which is cut to a close-up of his truncated lower body and two silver cases beside it while pushing open that door. This is then followed by close-ups of a microphone and a piece of paper being signed by a pen held by a hand. The sequence leading to the eventual gunshot is also composed of a chain of close-ups: a nozzle coming out of a gas cap, a hand twisting the cap back on, disembodied hands searching for money in the wallet, taking a couple of bills out and putting them back in, a "hole in the wall" ATM, and a credit card being ejected by the machine. In fact, the use of close-ups in *71 Fragments* intentionally differentiates the film's fragmentation from the news footage's conventional representations of violence in pieces. Instead of zooming in to give a closer look, Haneke's close-ups substitute for conventional shots and reverse shots. They fragment, truncate, and dissociate without providing an overview of the situation. Hence, the film leaves all the fragments unexplained and does not pretend to provide a complete picture. When the close-ups appear on screen for an unusually long duration, its effects become even stronger. For example, after Max's suicide in his car, which is represented offscreen with an overhead medium shot of the car roof juxtaposed with the sound of a gunshot, we see a canted static shot of a fragment of a torso for almost 90 seconds. The face down truncated torso and the right arm slant across the screen space and compose an asymmetrical composition. During these 90 seconds, we see red blood flowing very slowly in silence from underneath the body on the white floor towards the bottom of screen space. We can recognise that the torso wears the grey uniform of Hans, and the white marble floor belongs to the hall of the bank. Although the headless torso does not provide facial expression, the combination of the close-up and long take creates an especially striking mosaic of colour contrasts between grey, red, and white. By forcing the spectator to stare at the blood flowing out in its duration, this close-up portrays violence in

sharp contrast to the quick zapping of news reports in the beginning and the end of the film. No matter how much the spectator wants to zap away from the scene of the violence's consequences, the close-up of the torso rolls on and refuses to cut.

Not only a mosaic assembled by snapshots of the socially diverse characters' day-to-day life which are edited together, *71 Fragments* is also a mosaic of mirroring sequences, and a mosaic of disembodied body and machine parts isolated from their immediate visual contexts by framing. Therefore, its explicit multi-character structure does not stand in isolation from other cinematic means, but instead, all the formal aspects work together in the construction of a mosaic. Furthermore, narrative threads as well as spatial configurations represented in the diegesis and filmmaking resources are joined together in the mosaic. At the same time that the characters' fragments are woven in the bigger picture, their diverse geopolitical socioeconomic spaces are also brought together on the same plane. Correlating with the transnational filmmaking mode through which film professionals, funding, and settings from different national contexts are drawn together, the rich and the poor, the Easterners and the Westerners, the young and the elderly, the fictional representations in the diegesis and the doubly-mediated news footage all meet in the film's mosaic. In the following section I will differentiate my framework of mosaic from other scholarly works.

Literature Review: Multi-Character Narrative

71 Fragments belongs to a group of films with mosaic narratives cutting back and forth between the narrative threads of several protagonists. This group of films has precursors as far back in history as D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (USA 1916), and also develops out of Jean-Luc Godard's polemical works in the 1960s, European art films like Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* (*L'année dernière à Marienbad*, FR 1961), and US auteur films like Robert Altman's *Nashville* (USA 1975). It starts to become a more popular, and at times mainstream, narrative strategy during the late 1980s. Some recent examples of widely-circulated multi-character films include *Short Cuts* (USA 1993, D: Robert Altman), *Pulp Fiction*, *Magnolia* (USA 1999, D: Paul Thomas Anderson), *Mulholland Drive* (USA 2001, D: David Lynch) and *Crash*. Significantly, this trend traverses boundaries of geopolitics and film genres without being

restricted to big budget productions in the US. Its far-reaching scope can be seen in film productions from a wide range of regions including Scotland (*Festival*, UK 2005, D: Annie Griffin), Spain (*La soledad*, ES 2007, D: Jamie Rosales), Taiwan (*Do Over*), and Argentina (*Historias minimas*, AR 2002, D: Carlos Sorin). In addition, the mosaic narrative strategy has been employed in both auteur cinema such as Jorge Fons' *Midaq Alley* (MX 1994) and Maria Notaro's *El jardín del Eden* (MX 1994), and genre films such as the Hindi horror *Darna Mana Hai* and the Hindi romantic comedy *Life in a Metro* (IN 2007, D: Anurag Basu)¹². Films with mosaic narrative can also be found in American independent productions such as *Fragments* (also called *Winged Creatures*, USA 2008, D: Rowan Woods), *Do the Right Thing* (USA 1989, D: Spike Lee), and *Slacker* (USA 1991, D: Richard Linklater). Sometimes interweaving narrative becomes the trademark of certain filmmakers and film professionals, such as Wong Kar-Wai (*Fallen Angels* / *Do Lok Tin Si*, HK 1995 and *Chungking Express* / *Chung Hing Sam Lam*, HK 1994), Alejandro González Iñárritu¹³ (*Amores Perros*, MX 2000; *21 Grams*, USA 2003; *Babel*, USA / FR / MX 2005), and the scriptwriter Guillermo Arriaga who wrote scripts for Iñárritu's first three feature films and later directed his own multi-character film with temporal disorder, *The Burning Plain* (USA 2008). The use of interweaving narrative in diverse contexts, which has been comprehensively documented by Bordwell's alphabetical list at the end of *Poetics of Cinema*, demonstrates that it is a phenomenon beyond national cinemas, generic conventions, and cultural backgrounds.

In this book I theorise the films with intertwining narrative such as *71 Fragments* in connection to interweaving spaces and transnational filmmaking contexts; this understanding of multi-character films is significantly different from other scholarly works. As we can see in the example of *71 Fragments*, the narrative threads are interwoven

12 The bringing-together of narrative threads from different characters in these Hindi films is different from typical popular Indian narratives, which are very often multi-strand due to the influence of discursivity in the precursor epic texts, which are characterized by generally autonomous fragments without closure. Cf. Vijay Mishra: *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*. London: Routledge 2002, p. 4.

13 Subsequent to Iñárritu's falling-out with the scriptwriter Guillermo Arriaga, Iñárritu intentionally diverted from multi-strand narrative, to the extent that his award-winning *Birdman* (USA 2014) appears to be one single take.

towards the end of the film through the gunshot, without forking into a loop of possibilities and alternative courses of events like *Run Lola Run* (*Lola rennt*, DE 1998, D: Tom Tykwer), *Blind Chance* (*Przypadek*, PL 1981, D: Krzysztof Kieślowski), *Sliding Doors* (UK 1998, D: Peter Howitt), and *Too Many Ways to be No.1* (*Jat Go Zi Tau Di Daan Sang*, HK 1997, D: Ka-Fai Wai), which are grouped together as “forking-path narrative” by Bordwell who attributes its development to the filmmakers’ immersion in labyrinthine storytelling techniques enabled by the innovations of VCRs, DVDs and computer games¹⁴. Mosaic narrative films interweave diverse storylines together in one encounter, which can be face-to-face or in a less tangible form, instead of forking from one temporal point towards a range of outcomes as a result of one particular decision or coincidental event. The example of *71 Fragments* also shows that although the spectator has the task of actively assembling the mosaic narrative, it does not engage the spectator in the process of folk-psychological game-playing with trick endings like Thomas Elsaesser’s “mind-game films”¹⁵ do, or operate with characters suffering from schizophrenia, memory loss, or other psychology-related diseases, as has been suggested in Warren Buckland’s “puzzle films”¹⁶. It is different from Allan Cameron’s “database/modular narrative”¹⁷, and what David Martin-Jones calls “the manipulation of narrative time”¹⁸ in *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*. The former signifies “narratives that foreground the relationship between the temporality of the story and the order of its telling”¹⁹ whereas in the latter model, the “multiple narratives” of *Sliding Doors* and the “disrupted, jumbled or backwards narratives” of *Memento* (USA 2000, D: Christopher Nolan) are used to demonstrate the narrative’s reterritorialisation of national identity.²⁰ Unlike these two models, the framework of mosaic narrative does not dwell on chronological disorder but regards it as an

14 Bordwell: *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, pp. 72–75.

15 Elsaesser: *The Mind-Game Film*, pp. 13–16.

16 Buckland: *Introduction: Puzzle Plots*, p. 6.

17 Allan Cameron: *Contingency, Order, and the Modular Narrative: 21 Grams and Irreversible*. In: *The Velvet Light Trap* 58,1 (2006), pp. 65–78, here p. 65.

18 David Martin-Jones: *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP 2006.

19 Cameron: *Contingency, Order, and the Modular Narrative*, p. 65.

20 Martin-Jones: *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, p. 1.

option within the mosaic. Hence it includes films which deliberately subvert chronological order, such as *21 Grams*, as well as those which follow chronological linearity like *71 Fragments*.

Compared to the aforementioned frameworks, definitions such as Jason Mittel's "narrative complexity"²¹, "fractal films"²² by Wendy Everett, Maria del Mar Azcona Montoliú's "multi-character narrative"²³, "scrambled narrative"²⁴, and "multi-protagonist film"²⁵, Bordwell's "network narrative"²⁶ and "degrees of separation films"²⁷, and Hsuan L. Hsu's "ensemble film"²⁸ are more pertinent to the current model for their focus on the complicated and perplexing entanglement of narrative threads brought together by different characters. Yet mosaic narrative diverges from these definitions in terms of its strong focus on the visual bringing-together of spaces, using examples drawn from a wide range of geopolitical contexts, and its understanding of narrative strategy in relation to the bigger framework of mosaic space. The key examples of scholarly works in this respect are Bordwell's "network narrative" and "degrees of separation narrative", and Montoliú's "multi-character narrative", both of which attribute the influence of chaos theory, degrees of separation theory and butterfly effect to the emerging alinear narrative since the late 1980s.²⁹ Both Bordwell's and Montoliú's frameworks discuss the interweaving narrative of films such as *71 Fragments* and *Amores Perros*, but they hold different opinions when it comes to this narrative's convergence or divergence in relation to mainstream

21 Jason Mittel: Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. In: *The Velvet Light Trap* 58,1 (2006), pp. 29–40, here p. 29.

22 Wendy Everett: Fractal Films and the Architecture of Complexity. In: *Studies in European Cinema* 2 (2005), pp. 159–171, here p. 160.

23 Maria del Mar Azcona Montoliú: A Time to Love and a Time to Die: Desire and Narrative Structure in *21 Grams*. In: *Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 31,2 (2009), pp. 111–123, here p. 112.

24 Ibid., p. 114.

25 Maria del Mar Azcona Montoliú: *The Multi-protagonist Film*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, p. 2.

26 Bordwell: *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, pp. 100–102.

27 Ibid., pp. 71–75.

28 Hsuan L. Hsu: Racial Privacy, The L.A. Ensemble Film, and Paul Haggis's *Crash*. In: *Film Criticism* 31,1–2 (2006), pp. 132–156, here p. 132.

29 Montoliú: A Time to Love and a Time to Die, p. 114; Bordwell: *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, p. 100.

storytelling techniques. For Bordwell, the narrative in these films essentially remains linear, causal, signposted, and hierarchical in order to aid audience comprehension, and does not radically differ from the classical narrative.³⁰ Montoliú, on the other hand, proposes that causal linearity is in crisis, and that the visible and self-conscious multi-character films form a contemporary genre in response to our increasing experiences of inexplicable forces and events.³¹ The current model is distinct from both of these, for mosaic narrative does not work as a subversive genre, or remain fundamentally linear and classical. Instead, it works in correspondence with other cinematic strategies to form the bigger mosaic space and correlates with the transnational filmmaking contexts of certain auteurs. In this alternative way of understanding this trend of filmmaking, not only are narrative threads brought together, but so too are spatial representations and extradiegetic resources in geopolitical contexts.

Among all the works on alinear and multi-character narrative, the term “mosaic” is not unused in existing scholarship. In *Poetics of Cinema*, David Bordwell cites Italo Calvino in the beginning of his chapter “Mutual Friends and Chronologies of Chance”:

What interests me is the whole *mosaic* in which man is set, the interplay of relationships, the design that emerges from the squiggles on the carpet ... These human presences defined only by a system of relationships, by a function, are the very ones that populate the world around us in our everyday lives, good or bad as this situation might appear to us.³²

What Bordwell calls “network narrative” and “degrees of separation films” in *The Way Hollywood Tells It* and *Poetics of Cinema*, different from his “forking path narrative” in his article “Film Futures”, is essentially a “mosaic” of characters’ lives and relationships with a focus on human relationships embedded in the narrative. Pisters also uses the word “mosaic” in her article on the becoming-minoritarian of mosaic film. Her article encompasses films with “multiple main characters, multiple interwoven story lines, multiple or fragmented spaces, different time zones or spaces or paces” which seem to reflect “the migratory nature and politics of our times”, and discusses *Babel*, *WWW*, *What*

30 Bordwell: *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, pp. 100–102.

31 Montoliú: *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*, p. 114.

32 Bordwell: *Poetics of Cinema*, p. 189.

a Wonderful World, and *Kicks* (NL 2007, D: Albert Ter Heerdt).³³ In comparison to Bordwell's and Pisters' usage, the visual metaphor of 'mosaic' in this book, instead of being confined to the narrative structure, is extended to encompass a multidimensional spatial assemblage at the levels of diegetic space, screen space, and auteurist transnational filmmaking contexts at the same time.

In the chapters that follow, I will analyse the mosaic space in the works of Haneke, Hou, Egoyan and Iñárritu, all of whom have used mosaic narrative in combination with other cinematic tools to construct mosaic space in their own ways. We can observe different levels of causal relationships and different spatial concerns within their uses of mosaic narrative, differences that reflect both the possibilities and constraints of their filmmaking contexts, such as the sources of funding, target audience, and spatial concerns specific to their backgrounds. The characters' chance encounter is often portrayed in a precise and self-reflexive manner in Haneke's films, in a historically laden event in Hou's films, in a complex contemplation of territory in Egoyan's films, and in a melodramatic and tragic manner in Iñárritu's films. In terms of the chain of cause and effect in mosaic narrative, Haneke and Hou employ causal relationships as a narrative device to a far lesser extent than Egoyan and Iñárritu. Limiting the causal relationship between events to its minimum, Haneke and Hou's multi-character narrative is established on a looser, subtler, and less determined relationship between characters. They are more concerned with fluidity of space and narrative, and consciously leave fragments unexplained, unconnected, or irrelevant to the narrative. In their films, some fragments exist only for their own sake and do not serve any narrative purpose. In Egoyan and Iñárritu's films, on the other hand, it is made clear to the spectator that one character's deeds lead to another character's delight or suffering, and that all threads will be tied up in the narrative at the end. This will be illustrated in detail in the following chapters.

In section two, I have demonstrated that films like *71 Fragments* employ mosaic narrative in combination with framing, bracketing, and spatial composition to interweave narrative threads from different characters, and bring together spaces from different virtualities and geopolitical contexts in the process. I thus argue that the

33 Pisters: *The Mosaic Film*, p. 1.

framework of mosaic differs from other frameworks of interweaving narrative because it takes into account not only the interweaving narrative but also the assembled filmmaking resources and spatial configurations. This is when the theories of film authorship and of space become very helpful to the framework. Whereas film authorship situates the mosaic space in relation to the auteurist transnational filmmaking context, theories of space help us understand the dynamism of the geopolitical spaces represented on screen.

3. Theoretical Frameworks:

Mosaic Authorship and Mosaic Space

Mosaic Authorship

I will start with a literature review on the debate of authorship and discuss the framework of mosaic authorship in relation to it. Taking on board the shifting focus in the debate of authorship from personality and vision to a more contextualised notion, mosaic authorship considers aesthetics as well as filmmaking's collaborative and commercial aspects. Instead of a fixed and coherent personality, mosaic authorship is rather a collective trajectory, facilitated by the privilege of travelling and affected by globalisation. Thanks to the unique transnational filmmaking mode established through border-crossing, mosaic auteurs assemble the combination of the cheapest film set, best film professionals and cast, best opportunities for fundraising, and biggest audience appeal, and their films are widely circulated within film festival circuits and international distribution networks.

As the mosaic auteurs' works are created along with their border-crossing, they cannot be fully explored by the framework of national cinema and should be contextualised in relation to the transnational filmmaking mode. This is where Hjort's typology of transnationalism, and especially cosmopolitan transnationalism, becomes pertinent to the forming of the current model. In the following section I will first briefly review the long-standing debate surrounding authorship, and then demonstrate how mosaic authorship develops out of Hjort's original definition and differs from it. Subsequently I will differentiate mosaic authorship from Naficy's "accented cinema" and Marks' "intercultural cinema", for the former has the privilege of border-crossing and hence ready access to multiculturalism and multilingualism. The four auteurs Haneke, Hou, Egoyan and Iñárritu, who have all built unique transnational filmmaking milieus through travelling,