
Mosaic Space and Mosaic Auteurs : On the Cinema of Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Atom Egoyan, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Michael Haneke

By Yun-Hua Chen
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The multi-character or multi-strand narrative has long been effectively employed by filmmakers in order to bridge characters separated not only by time and space, but also characters disparate in terms of social or economic status. Yun-Hua Chen's *Mosaic Space and Mosaic Auteurs* interrogates these films through two specific focuses. Rather than arguing that a fragmented approach to narrative is used to obfuscate, as in Thomas Elsaesser's notion of the 'mind game film' or Warren Buckland's idea of 'puzzle plots', Chen instead suggests that the mosaic "gathers, groups, juxtaposes and re-arranges spaces" (p. 8). The mosaic can take multiple forms; the horizontal, the vertical, or, as discussed in the book through the films of Michael Haneke, a combination of the two. The horizontal mosaic highlights wealth gaps across global space and can be seen in the way that characters in the films of Inarritu are "divided by their wealth, social status, and living milieus" and yet are ultimately brought together by chance (p. 64). The vertical mosaic, however, delves "into historical causes and effects in relation to collective trauma", and is explored through the films of Egoyan and Hou (p. 99). Egoyan's films are discussed through Deleuze's notions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in order to highlight the "unique between diegetic characters and their territories and between spectators and screen territories in Egoyan's mosaic" (p. 100). This contrasts with Hou's vertical mosaic which employs a multi-layered mise-en-scene in order to emphasise the "historical depth of the subject matter" (p. 145).

Beyond analysis of filmic elements, Chen also employs the mosaic approach in order to discuss film production and distribution networks, suggesting that "we can observe a correlation between the bringing-together of the narrative threads and screen spaces, and the bringing-together of filmmaking milieus and resources from a variety of geopolitical contexts" (p. 239). Following the auteur model, Chen highlights the transnational elements present within the chosen filmmakers discussed throughout the book, noting the transnational films

directed by Inarritu, Hou, and Haneke and emphasising the “multiple identities” of Egoyan on account of his being both Canadian and Armenian (p.52). Importantly, it is such transnational tendencies which inform the mosaic approach, as Chen suggests “[m]osaic auteurs are by no means showing the disappearance of borders. In fact, despite their privileged status, frequent border-crossing experiences render them very conscious of the political implications of borders and the imbalanced power relations at border control” (p. 35). In doing so, these filmmakers come to exist within specific “geopolitical, cultural, and financial circumstances” which informs their work (p. 55).

In the closing statements of the book, Chen provides further examples of potential avenues for the mosaic, such as the mystic labyrinth of Gan Bi’s *Kaili Blues* (*Lu Bian Ye Can*, China, 2015) before moving away from the auteurist approach by highlighting the presence of the mosaic among contemporary television productions such as *Game of Thrones*. In amalgamating theories of space by the likes of Deleuze and Augé and merging them with more film-specific theories concerning authorship and transnationalism by Hjort and Naficy *Mosaic Space and Mosaic Auteurs* provides an adept approach at understanding and interpreting film at its formal level, through the use of editing, blocking, and framing in order to thematically convey narratives which juxtapose and highlight various issues and hierarchical or historical relationships. Beyond this, it also provides an interesting methodology through which to contextualise the increasingly transnational interactions occurring within media today, as seen not only in the funding of art cinema but also in mainstream co-productions found in countries such as China and South Korea, the global on-demand network model championed by Netflix, and the growing prominence of visual effects technology and its presence in render farms across the globe.