

On ***Paris, Texas*** (1984)

Just yesterday in Shanghai, there was a screening of *Paris, Texas* (1984) directed by Wim Wenders. I've seen the film couple of times before but this was the first time watching it on a big screen at a movie theater. The house was full. And as the film progressed, I could hear some in tears, laughter at times, and even snores (wake up!). Anyways... There are probably a million things one can write about *Paris, Texas*. So, to not waste my time, I'm just going to write about memories. But first -

What is cinema? I've heard many people say, "cinema is about telling compelling stories." What? No. One can write a book, compose music, paint a painting, record a podcast, or whatever to tell compelling stories. Telling stories is not unique to cinema. Don't fool yourselves. So, *what is cinema*? Cinema presents different events documented at different moments in time that are put together to create an illusion. All the shots in a film did actually happen at one point, but together as a finished film is nothing but an illusion of coherence that is not 'naturally' meant to happen in that particular sequence. So, cinema is a collection of fragmented past presented as a unified whole. One can say that watching a film is like dreaming while awake. Dreaming while awake... Great. And only the masters like Wim Wenders can utilize this fundamental quality of the medium of cinema in a dramatic way.

In *Paris, Texas*, a man named Travis ends up at his brother's house where he reunites with his seven years old son. At this point in the film, Travis had been away from his son for four years. In hopes to re-establish their relationship, Travis' brother decides to show a home-movie that he made with documented 8mm footage of past moments when Travis used

to be with his son. So, the 8mm home-movie plays: beautifully raw montage of bits and pieces of their trip to a beach in Texas.

As Travis and his son watch the home-movie, truth unfolds before their eyes - truth that they are in fact father and son, as this little 8mm home-movie is the evidence of their shared memories. Cinema plays itself an angelic hero that brings back and saves their relationship. But there is another truth. Truth that cinema is just an illusion - a collection of fragmented past presented as a unified whole. The father and son relationship between Travis and his son is nothing but a dream that they are having awake - just memories that once happened a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

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2024/12/08