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A Thousand Sails

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A Thousand Sails

Abstract

This is a film review of *A Thousand Sails* (2019) directed by Eric Tsang.

Author Notes

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A Thousand Sails (2019), dir. Eric Tsang

This is a gentle story about a mother (Mrs. Wah) and son (Chung) who are having a difficult time connecting with each other and the friend (Ren) who mediates their relationship. Ren travels by boat to visit Chung, taking him some money and some food from his mother. Ren discovers that Chung is living in a small room and that he has to share a kitchen and bath with other renters. Chung's room is a mess and he seems depressed. He claims to be running a business, but it's clear that his business is not successful. Chung begs Ren not to tell his mother the truth about how he is living. When Ren returns home, she is torn between telling Mrs. Wah the truth or telling her that Chung is doing well. She asks the advice of her deceased husband and practices her happy spiel in front of his picture. When Ren finally meets Chung's mother, circumstances allow her to say positive things quickly, so she does. This means that there is still hope for the future.

When I asked director Tsang why the movie was titled "A Thousand Sails," he told me that the Chinese title is an idiom meaning that "the timber has been turned into a boat already." Some people interpret this idiom as meaning that what it done is done and cannot be undone. But Tsang

gives the idiom a more positive meaning: that the timbers are not done or dead, but that the timbers are now ready for new adventures as part of the boat. The English title, "A Thousand Sails," is also an idiom meaning that someone who has seen a thousand boats pass by is still unable to see the person he or she is waiting for. But the relationship between the mother and son still holds the possibility for reconciliation: it is still open to many possibilities.