

Film Capsules December 2015

Click on a title to see the longer review on Visual Parables' website—I especially encourage you to do this for *Spotlight*. I have also seen the new *Star Wars* film, plus the excellent films *Brooklyn*, *Concussion*, and *In the Heart of the Sea*, but have not had time to finish reviewing them. They will be posted by the end of the year.

[Spotlight](#)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours 8 min. John 3:20; Luke 17:2; Proverbs 31:8.

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Lord Acton

One of the best films of the year, this is not only the story of how an investigative team from the Boston Globe dug up the evidence proving that Cardinal Law and his staff were protecting pedophile priest from the law, but also a study of the corruption that power can bring to those who wield it. Even the church is not immune, its leaders all too often enjoying the perks of power and thus lashing out at anyone that might expose their clay feet. This true story is told from the standpoint of the reporters. For another good film that tells the same story from the standpoint of one of the lawyers featured in the film, see the cable film *Our Fathers*.

[Trumbo](#)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours 4 min. Isaiah 5:20.

Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Attributed to George Santayana

Dalton Trumbo was the highest paid scriptwriter in Hollywood until in 1947 he and 9 other screenwriters refused to answer questions from the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Known as the Hollywood Ten, all are sentenced to jail for Contempt of Congress. After his release Trumbo manages to get around the blacklist by writing under a pseudo name, his script for *Roman Holiday* even winning an Oscar. An inspiring tribute to a man who would not let the vicious forces of reaction beat him.

The Revenant

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours 7 min. Job 14:14; Psalm 41:8.

Based on the life of fur trapper and frontiersman Hugh Glass, this tale of treachery, survival, and prejudice will be too bloody for some, especially the trapper's mauling by a grizzly mother that leaves nothing to the imagination. Leonardo DiCaprio is certain to be nominated for a Best Actor Award for his depiction of a man who, fueled by the thirst for vengeance refuses to lay down and die when reason tells him there is no hope. There is a brief interlude of grace and even levity when a friendly Native American saves him from starvation, the two for a while traveling together—but then a new tragedy strikes. The director of last year's triumph *Birdman* again brings us an unforgettable film of courage and leaving vengeance to—well, sort of the Lord.

The 33

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours 7 min. Jonah 2:1-2; Psalm 34:19; Proverbs 10:2.

When 33 miners in Chile are trapped deep in the earth the

company is ready to write them off until the new Minister of Mines persuades the President to intervene. Top drillers work around the clock while the miners cope with surviving on food intended to keep them alive for just a few days. A great parable of perseverance, courage and faith.

[By the Sea](#)

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 28 min. Proverbs 17:22.

This is like one of those old Italian movies of the 60s—nothing much happens outwardly, the focus being inward. Angela Jolie-Pitt directs as well as plays opposite her husband Brad Pitt in this story of a marriage dissolving until the couple checks into an almost empty small hotel by the sea. The arrival of a young honey mooning couple whom the jaded pair can spy on through a hole in the wall that separates their rooms starts to stir things up.

[The Peanuts Movie](#)

Rated G. Running time: 1 hour 28 min. Job 12:5a; Galatians 5:22-23.

I loved this update to my favorite comic strip in that for once Charlie Brown, seemingly the eternal put-upon victim, actually comes out on top—and in the parallel Snoopy & the Red Baron story our canine aviator wins the heart of Fifi, also a canine aviator—or given the imaginary WW 1 times, should I write, aviatrix?

[The Danish Girl](#)

Rated R. Running time: 2 hours. 1 Corinthians 13:7-8.

This based on a true story of transgender pioneer Einar/Lili Elbe will not be for everyone. Einar and Gerda Wegener are

both Danish artists in the 1920s when Einar slowly becomes convinced he is a woman born in a man's body. Gerda supports him in this process, still loving and supporting him/her as he seeks a doctor who will understand rather than seek to institutionalize him/her. Lots of heartache and tragedy as the two separate and Lili emerges into a hostile world.

Spectre

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours 28 min. Psalm 7:14-16.

For me this was one of the more enjoyable Bond films with 007 confronting his past and even reconsidering his "license to kill" at one point. As always there are beautiful women and colorful locations—Mexico City during a Day of the Dead celebration; London; Rome; the Austrian Alps; and the desert of North Africa.

Mocking Jay Part 2

Rated PG-13. Running time: 2 hours 17 min. Micah 2:1; Luke 1:51-52

In this final film of the series Katniss Everdeen continues to grow in insight and compassion. Unwilling just to serve as the symbol of the rebellion against dictator Snow by making speeches and propaganda videos, she manages to slip away and join a fighting unit. Even Peter, who had tried to strangle her in the previous film because of Snow's brainwashing him, is part of the unit. However Katniss discovers that for some, including best friend Gale, morality has no place in war, and that the leader of the rebels might also have clay feet.

The Letters

Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour 54 min. Job 23:3; Psalm 22:1-3.

This biographical film is based on the letters that Mother Teresa wrote to her spiritual mentors over a 50-year period. They reveal that for most of her life she was wracked with doubt, seldom feeling the presence of God despite her great mission of ministering to the poor and rejected. The major events—from her leaving the cloistered convent in Calcutta to teaching and ministering to the homeless and the dying to her founding her own order and her eventual reception of the Nobel Peace prize—are dramatized effectively, with British actress Juliet Stevenson excellent as the anguished Albanian nun.

Suffragette

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 46 min. Ecclesiastes 4:1; Ephesians 6:12 (RSV).

“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi

The story of the struggle for women to gain the right to vote in Great Britain is told through the life of a fictional woman named Maude rather than one of the historical leaders—though Meryl Streep does make an all too brief an appearance as Emmeline Pankhurst. Like so many forgotten foot soldiers of the struggle, Maude pays a high price for her involvement, losing her unsympathetic husband and custody of her only child. This power film makes a good companion to the America-set *Iron Jawed Angels* about two feminists who dared to picket the White House in order to persuade the reluctant Woodrow Wilson to support a Constitutional amendment giving American women the right to vote.

Room

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour 58 min. Hosea 13:8; John 15:13.

Kidnapped when she was a teenager and confined to a soundproofed shed 10 by 10 feet where her abductor rapes her every day, this film continues far beyond the usual rescue and return home. When she and her little Jack emerge from their long captivity Jack has to adapt to a world far more immense than he had imagined, and Ma must cope with family, the curious world represented by a crowd of reporters, and her own feeling of guilt and helplessness. A powerful tale of survival, one perhaps even more difficult amidst so-called freedom than it was during their captivity.