Portrayal Of Rome As A State And Empire In Ben Hur And Gladiator

Both films for this discussion entitled Ben Hur and Gladiator portray Rome as a state and empire. I found that this was more so the case with Gladiator rather than with Ben Hur. The portrayal of the Roman characters and Rome itself being in a negative or positive light depends on a few different things.

Personally, I believe that both films portray Rome and Romans in a neutral light. Where the positive light comes into play with regards to their attitudes of perseverance and always following their morals, values and beliefs; they both work hand in hand though. This can be examined with the disagreement earlier on in the Ben Hur film between Judah who believes in freedom and Messala who believes in power. This disagreement caused the two who were once very close friends to become like enemies. This disagreement also causes hostility from Messala in the horse race to ensure that he wins against Judah. That is where the negatives come into play because their beliefs push them to hatred and ensuring perseverance in the demise of the individual(s) that they hate. This can also be found in Gladiator with how Maximus deals with other characters such as Commodus in the film as well.

Maximus can be viewed as a figure whose beliefs and values stand between both Judah and Messala because he has qualities of the both characters. Judah can be viewed as the figure of positivity among the Romans, while Messala can be viewed as the figure of negativity. This isn't only evident between Maximus and other Commodus or Judah and Messala though; it is portrayed in every other character as well. For example, Jesus and the individuals who crucify him at the end of the film Ben Hur. They shared different beliefs and that caused the incident to take place. He imprisoned the women until they are plagued with leprosy, all because he wanted to use them as an example to demonstrate his power.

Messala threatens Judah that if he reveals that Messala knows the truth behind this accident and tries to kill him, he would force Judah to witness his mother and sister’s crucifixion. It seems that a trend is occurring, with Messala’s threats and only his interests in mind, and the Romans are represented by this selfish antagonist. The lower-class citizens were all seated closer to the arena, as the risk of getting sprayed with blood was a common thing. Also, I found that Gladiator showed a good amount of realism in terms of how violent the games could be. However, they were even more gruesome than what was depicted on these films.

Romans were masters of torture and weaponry and were highly advanced for their time period Gladiator highlights Rome through the Emperor who wants the best for his state and chooses Maximus as his successor over his son. Maximus, a martyr for the Roman empire in ways, dedicates his life to avenging the deaths of his loved ones and restores the Roman Dream, as the Emperor wanted. Even the undefeated gladiator lost to Maximus. Though the Romans were depicted as powerful and victorious, when they choose to be, the Romans can be merciful. They are undefeated, powerful, and heroic. Maximus does not seem to support these bloody battles though; he and the late Emperor shared similar thoughts in that Marcus had these fights banned. Whereas Ben-Hur depicts Romans as controlling and governing state and empire that made inhabitants assimilate to their lifestyle and beliefs, like when Messala chooses his empire

and controlling the rebellion of Judea over his friendship with Judah. He declared war with his childhood friend after Judah hesitates to reveal strong Jewish figures behind the rebellion, as Messala demanded Judah to essentially betray his own people.

In conclusion, Ben Hur was viewed as most ruthless and injustice person than Gladiator. I believe Gladiator will build more on the corruption and instability of the Roman Empire, while Beh-hur highlights the tension, jealousy and injustice in Rome empire during struggle period.