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Prompt Two

- This prompt should be easier to write an essay on

Quotes

“History is what the present chooses to remember about the past.” Carl L. Becker, American historian

“The only obligation we have to history is to rewrite it.” Oscar Wilde

Prompt

How would you apply Becker’s and/or Wilde’s quotations above to the two films? In other words, how do the films “choose to remember” the Antebellum South and the period of Reconstruction, and how do they rewrite history?

Response

First, I would say that Becker's quote is more relatable to *Gone with the Wind*. We see a glorified and disillusioned Reconstruction setting, where the North is the villain and the South is being ostracized for their "superior" beliefs. There are multiple occasions where Southerners are depicted to be the victim in the aftermath of the Civil War. We see a Yankee break into the Southern plantation's home and attempt to steal some valuable possessions. It is pointed out by the main protagonist that they have been there before, as if they are trying to siphon their monetary wealth, using slavery as a scapegoat. This ties into how the Southerners felt about how the North was attempting to change their moral compass. Since they thought they had done nothing wrong, they were being robbed of their moral freedom. Another aspect honed in is the portrayal of Blacks in this "Class Society", in which they were treated with respect and as equals. Although they were not verbally or physically abused in the film, Blacks spoke in stereotypical and an uneducated tones, implying that they are socially and educationally inept. This can be seen when Pork is given by one of his masters and has a hard time trying to express his feelings with words only because he appears to not have a firm grasp of the English language. There were mentions in one scene that the slave holders would have set their slaves free, even if they were not forcefully ordered to do so. This is both illogical and a lie, as it would be economically devastating to have an entire workforce you did not have to pay for be set free. There is also no obligations for the slaves to stay because of the harsh living environment and treatment. The contrary is portrayed in the film, where many slaves seemed to be saddened by the thought of separation from their masters.

Wilde's quote reflects more with the film "12 Years a Slave" because of films like *Gone with the Wind*. Textbooks and first hand accounts can only do so much by themselves to truly spread the reality of what people went through. Dramatization of these events, while preserving as much historical accuracy as possible, is paramount to doing justice to the people who suffered at the hands of ignorance and bigotry. We can see that this film shows no sympathy for White plantation owner's whatsoever as they are depicted as being the villain. The only character who is saved from this treatment but he is not exempt from any wrong doing. We can see the flawed mindset of a man who preaches that all men are created equal but yet owns slaves. This truly symbolizes the North's opinion on the matter of slavery, knowing it's wrong to do so but to them, Blacks were inferior. It is also apparent that White slave holders are depicted as ruthless animals who took what they pleased from their slaves, forcing them into submission by any means. We can see that this movie truly conveys the horrors of slavery and it's moral impact on American Society, something that we are still healing from today. Not many movies have been created to capture the true, vile nature of white Southerners which does a disservice to those affect by the fear mongering and oppressive tendencies of Aristocrats of this era.

Roadmap

Becker Quote

- Disillusioned vision of the Civil War and subsequently Reconstruction
- Yankees stealing monetary value from South (include siphon)
- Blacks in Gone With the Wind
 - Stereotypical/illiterate, almost retarded (socially and educationally)
 - Not physically/verbally abused but ^
 - “They would have been set free a long time ago” <– crock full of shit

Wilde Quote

- Textbooks and first hand accounts can only do so much
- You need to dramatize these events while being historically accurate
- We will continue to blunder in the wrong direction if we choose to remember what we please about our past

External Links

[Gone with the Wind - The Class Society GWTW Character List](#)