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Nov. 20, 2015

“The Legitimacy of Interpreting Socialist Themes within De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves*.”

In his review of the film *Bicycle Thieves*, critic Dan Schneider admonishes other critics that, “Much of Marxist theology bogs down...” when they apply a Marxist critical lens to the study of Vittorio DeSica’s classic Neorealism film. Schneider’s claim is valid to a degree – understanding the film only through a Marxist lens would be a great disservice to the full appreciation of this film – but Schneider specifies only a narrowly defined set of symbols in his claim, and there are many symbols within the film besides the hats characters wear or the cleanliness of the sheets on which they sleep that invite a Marxist critique. Critic Godfrey Cheshire recognizes that the film portrays “...a place where the earnest formulas of [socialist] ideologies are deepened by the intuitions of tragedy” (*A Passionate Commitment to the Real*, 4). And Charles Burnett argues in his essay, *Ode to the Common Man*, that the bicycle “unveils the layer of corruption at all levels of postwar Italy...” (16). As evidenced by Cheshire’s and Burnett’s claims, there are several themes that the film explores that a Marxist critic would recognize. This is further evident through an analysis of the bicycle as the film’s central symbol that propels the conflict between the film’s protagonists against the underbelly of rapacious capitalistic forces griping Rome in the aftermath of World War II.