

On Not Showing Dostoevskii's Work: Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket*

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Hide the ideas, but so that people find them. The most important will be the most hidden.¹

How does French filmmaker Robert Bresson, who minimizes affect and expressivity on the screen and rejects psychological realism in filmmaking, connect with the Russian novelist Fedor Dostoevskii, a master of psychology whose works burst with emotional turmoil and scandal? The question is an important one because underlying these obvious stylistic differences are ideational ties with Dostoevskii that are vital to Bresson's films. Allen Thiher observes that "[i]n nearly all his works, [...] Bresson's narrative turns in one way or another on isolation and humiliation, on estrangement and the impossibility of a desired community."² It is precisely these quintessentially Dostoevskian concerns, and not the intense, complex narratives in which they are embedded, that draw the French filmmaker to engage with the Russian novelist in his films. Significantly, Bresson is determined not to reproduce the stories that Dostoevskii tells in his own quest for understanding. Nor does the filmmaker wish to create innovative cultural recontextualizations of these stories by moving them out of nineteenth-century Russia to situate them in his own time. Rather, he engages with Dostoevskii in an ideational sphere, positioning the existential questions that famously preoccupy the Russian novelist at the core of the newly created worlds of his films.

The way in which Bresson connects with Dostoevskii's thinking emerges directly from his emphatically articulated desire to distinguish his own art form from literature to which, as he felt, film had subjugated itself. Bresson's resolve to revitalize cinema works hand in hand with his concentration on Dostoevskii's thinking, which he privileges over the action habitually featured in film. As he connects with Dostoevskii, Bresson is intent on doing so in uniquely cinematic terms and at a level considerably deeper than that of

conventional film adaptations. The cultural borders between Dostoevskii's nineteenth-century Russia and Bresson's mid-twentieth-century France fall away before the two artists' shared concerns about the human condition. How Bresson negotiates the boundaries between their media, respecting their unique, distinguishing features as he activates the cohesion of his own thinking with Dostoevskii's, is the subject of this chapter.

To prepare the subsequent examination of how Bresson relates to Dostoevskii, I will begin by providing brief overviews (1) of how the filmmaker relates to literature in the context of the cinematography he develops and (2) of how Dostoevskii's place in Bresson's oeuvre has been described. I will then focus my attention on *Pickpocket*, a black-and-white film that Bresson shot in seven weeks in the summer of 1959, and whose release Louis Malle called "one of the four or five great dates in the history of cinema."³ My overarching purpose is to study how ideas that are conveyed by the psychological realism of Dostoevskii's action- and character-packed works are carried over into Bresson's ascetic, uniquely cinematic vision. How Bresson accomplishes the intermedial crossing from literature to cinematography, as we will see, shapes the lived experience of his film. Remarkably, it also takes us deeper into Dostoevskii's thinking. The complexity of Bresson's project dictates a multi-faceted approach that attends closely to how his film is made and how this making connects him with the Russian novelist. The brief outline below of how this approach will unfold over the course of this chapter will help us navigate the multifarious but closely interrelated issues that claim our attention.

To begin with, the importance Bresson assigns to suppressing plot and psychological realism and to achieving interiority on the screen demands that we give serious attention to how he uses the form and style of his film to advance these challenging goals. This will prepare us to consider *Pickpocket*'s points of contact with Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* specifically in light of radical departures from it. As we will see, these departures are merely apparent and ultimately bring his film closer to the issues Dostoevskii addresses in his novel. At the same time, they work to draw yet another of the author's novels into the orbit of the film—*The Gambler*, whose important role in *Pickpocket* has thus far remained without notice. Finally, *Pickpocket* prompts us to reflect on the hands that it so prominently features and that are instrumental in accomplishing an impressive range of border crossings, drawing the viewer beyond the surface of the screen to a deeper domain where Bresson connects with Dostoevskii.

As Jonathan Griffin notes, the "cinematography" in terms of which Bresson defines his work "has the special meaning of creative film making which thoroughly exploits the nature of film as such."⁴ This guiding principle, which manifests itself in all of Bresson's work, informs how he relates to literature in

general and to Dostoevskii in particular. Bresson works consciously to recuperate the particularity of his medium, pulling away from literary and theatrical conventions to which, as he felt, this particularity had succumbed. In an interview with Paul Schrader, he explains:

I want to be as far from literature as possible, as far from every existing art. [...] Until now, I have found only two writers with whom I could agree: Georges Bernanos, a little, not too much, and, of course, Dostoevsky. I would like the source of my films to be in me, apart from literature. Even if I make a film from Dostoevsky, I try always to take out all the literary parts. I try to go directly to the sentiments of the author and only what can pass through me. I don't want to make a film showing the work of Dostoevsky.⁵

This far-reaching statement draws attention both to the level at which Bresson engages with the literary text and to the terms of this engagement. Bresson's cinematographic project takes him beyond that well-trodden space where film and literature most effortlessly overlap: "I try more and more in my films to suppress what people call plot. Plot is a novelist's trick," he maintains.⁶ Predicated on his attention to the uniqueness of his own medium, Bresson's suppression of plot reflects also his understanding that in great fiction plot is not an end in itself but a vehicle that conveys its author's ideational and philosophical concerns. Works of literature, too, have much to lose from being recast as visual plot summaries that amount to little more than filmic equivalents of *CliffsNotes*. When working with Dostoevskii, Bresson affiliates his films with questions that impel Dostoevskii's writings—moral, ethical, social, and philosophical issues that the author grappled with over the course of his entire literary career.

Attendant on the question of how films might best connect with literary texts as rich as Dostoevskii's is also the question of whether the filmmaker offers viewers an experience that is commensurate with what the novelist affords his readers. To translate demanding reading into passive spectatorship is to deny the viewer entry into the complex issues that Dostoevskii's densely interwoven, action-packed novels interrogate. Bresson's focus on deeper levels of signification compels his viewer to attend more closely both to his films and to the literary works with which they engage. As he pushes against the degeneration of his medium into a storytelling venue, Bresson works also against the passivity of desensitized viewers for whom the wonder of cinema had been eroded by habituation and by films that did not go beyond repeating stories in moving pictures. "CINEMA, radio, television, magazines are a school of inattention: people look without seeing, listen in without hearing,"⁷ Bresson protests in an entry in *Notes on Cinematography*. The recuperation of

acute, mindful seeing and hearing that is crucial to the reception and continued development of his cinematography demands the successful subversion of mindless habit and convention. For Bresson this means refusing to replicate not only novels but any existing reality—whether of the actual world or an artifact in it—to insist instead on the created world of the film itself.

Bresson's idiosyncratic views on how literature might find its way into film make it difficult to define or even to discern connections between his films and literary texts, something that has led him to be widely acknowledged as a director who has "revolutionized our ideas [...] of literary adaptation in the cinema."⁸ The inapplicability of the term "adaptation" to describe Bresson's working method has led scholars to speak of his recognizably Dostoevskian films as "refractions," "paraphrases," "allusions," or "travesties" of the Russian novelist's works. The overall significance of Dostoevskii in Bresson's oeuvre is variously described or even discounted altogether. Indeed, even the question of which films to consider Dostoevskian remains in dispute. Thus, for example, Mireille Latil le Dantec sees the Russian novelist's presence in virtually every one of the twelve films Bresson made over the course of his thirty-five-year career.⁹ Sergei Iutkevich, on the other hand, acknowledges this presence only in the two films that Bresson links explicitly with the Russian novelist's works: *Une femme douce* (1969), which, as the title suggests, is based on "The Meek One" and the 1971 film *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur*, which Iutkevich labels a "free improvisation" on *White Nights*.¹⁰ Although its less apparent ties with Dostoevskii have, on occasion, been overlooked, *Pickpocket* (1959), as scholars recognize, must necessarily join the two films that Iutkevich singles out as having demonstrable connections to Dostoevskii—specifically to his novel *Crime and Punishment*.¹¹

Dostoevskii presents the suspenseful plot and sensational axe murders of *Crime and Punishment* in a world dense with pathos, scandal, and psychologically unstable, emotionally demonstrative characters. Its main storyline features an impoverished student whose axe murder of an old, disagreeable pawnbroker is ostensibly motivated by the desire to use the money he plans to steal from her for the swift betterment of his own life and that of his mother and sister. Yet Raskolnikov commits murder also to test himself. The theoretical underpinning of the crime is the exceptional man theory that he describes in an article advancing his claim that some individuals are above moral and ethical constraints and are entitled by their very exceptionality to transgress them freely at will. Raskolnikov's meticulously laid murder plans are quickly derailed when the pawnbroker's sister suddenly appears at the scene of the crime and he kills her too. Sensational as they are, it is not these two axe murders themselves but what leads up to them and especially Raskolnikov's condition in their aftermath that are of primary concern for Dostoevskii. This central narrative is imbedded in densely populated interlacing storylines that

permit their author to offer a variety of perspectives from which to assess the situation in which Raskolnikov finds himself and the attempts he makes to grapple with it. A police detective is hot on the criminal's trail, while a self-sacrificing prostitute with a story of her own offers him unconditional Christian love, urging him to surrender to the authorities and confess to his crimes. Raskolnikov finds himself torn between the desire to evade arrest and the desire to be apprehended. Transposed into film, the suspenseful, hyperactive narrative makes for gripping viewing but, by the same token, threatens to overwhelm the ideational dimension that commands Bresson's attention.

Bresson's sparsely populated, pared-down hypertext appears far removed from the dense complexity of *Crime and Punishment*, especially given the gulf that separates the crime announced in the film's title and the axe murders perpetrated by Dostoevskii's Raskolnikov. The film is set in Paris in the 1950s, and its lean seventy-five minutes do not evoke the voluminous hypotext that runs to over four hundred pages. In place of the novel's multiple, densely interwoven storylines the film offers only a series of disconnected scenes that show the lead character developing his pickpocketing skills, plying his transgressive art, and, until the very end, evading capture. Its sparse cast of characters—seven in all and only three with given names—can hardly bear comparison with the bounteous *dramatis personae* (all with multiple names) of *Crime and Punishment*. Yet though *Pickpocket* does not immediately bring Dostoevskii to mind, those familiar with *Crime and Punishment* can recognize three clear points of intersection between that novel and Bresson's hypertext. These are: (1) the notion of the exceptional man that is espoused by the protagonist and that provides the theoretical underpinning and justification for his transgressive behavior, (2) the cat-and-mouse game between him and the police inspector who is on his trail, and (3) an ending whose carefully crafted openness indicates possibility for the protagonist's regeneration thanks to the unconditional love extended to him by a selfless woman.¹² Upon recognizing these similarities with *Crime and Punishment*, the viewer can discern Raskolnikov in the poverty-stricken garret dweller Michel, Razumikhin in his sensible friend Jacques, and a hybrid of Raskolnikov's sister Dunia and the prostitute Sonia in Jeanne, the woman who offers Michel salvific love.

Yet because these underlying similarities appear in a film so unlike Dostoevskii's novel, they are attenuated and thus easy to overlook. This helps explain why assessments of the role that *Crime and Punishment* plays (or does not play) in *Pickpocket* differ and why the film is not always recognized as one in which Dostoevskii figures at all.¹³ Bresson himself contributed to this lack of clarity with his inconsistent claims that he had never read the novel (an assertion belied by the "well-thumbed copy" of the book in his library noted by James Quandt¹⁴), or that any ties between his film and *Crime and Punishment*

were purely coincidental or wrought unconsciously. The filmmaker's reticence on this score is not difficult to understand. Beyond his efforts to realize the cinematographic precepts he developed to distinguish film from literature was the danger that his contemplative film could be swallowed up by the tumultuous hypotext it referenced. Well known in and of itself, *Crime and Punishment* was perhaps even more widely familiar through its film versions, some twelve of which already existed at the time of *Pickpocket*'s release in 1959. (Georges Lampin's *Crime et châtiment* had come out in France only three years earlier.) Bresson treads lightly in indicating *Pickpocket*'s ties to *Crime and Punishment* lest it distract his viewers from the deeper reaches of both the novel and his film. It is plausible to suggest, too, that he did not want exclusive focus on *Pickpocket*'s ties to *Crime and Punishment* to obscure the film's important links to Dostoevskii's less well-known novel *The Gambler* to which we will turn after considering *Crime and Punishment*.

Determined to push away from what he calls the "contagion of literature"¹⁵ and to create a uniquely filmic experience, Bresson evades the psychological realism of which Dostoevskii was a master and for which film is eminently well suited. Instead he sets his sights on attaining an interiority that lies beyond the camera's reach and to which the very surface of the screen is an impediment. To avoid making "a film *showing* the work of Dostoevsky," and yet also to connect with that writer's thinking, Bresson works purposefully against the grain of his visual medium in an effort to convey the inner world of his protagonist. In order to draw the viewer beyond the screen's surface, he minimizes what appears on it, prompting Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovskii to observe in admiration that "nobody has ever reached such a degree of asceticism."¹⁶ Resorting to parametric narration which privileges style over plot, Bresson uses style also to impart a psychological dimension to his character.¹⁷ In other words, Bresson relies on style to accomplish what Dostoevskii does by means of plot and character development. What has remained unnoticed thus far is that the distinctive style that carries this weighty dual function of standing in for plot and bringing psychology into *Pickpocket* is motivated by the literary form on which Bresson chooses to structure his film. Even as he resists novelistic plot, Bresson draws on another literary genre to create the framework for his film. This is the genre of the journal that he used also in his earlier film *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951) and that is ideally suited for his project to pull away from plot and to achieve interiority on the screen.

Pickpocket begins with a shot of Michel's hand writing in a spiral notebook. This entry, whose text we will consider shortly, is the point of departure for the action seen in the film. A dissolve leads directly to Longchamp racetrack—site of Michel's first attempt at pickpocketing that is ostensibly being recorded in that same notebook. There are only three other shots of Michel's hand making entries in it, but, as Tony Pipolo trenchantly observes, the journal

is continuously evoked by the voice-overs that persist over the course of the entire film.¹⁸ It is given to understand that this is a diary in progress and that the film is not simply punctuated by flashbacks that interpolate past events into its unfolding present, but is comprised entirely of the visualization of journal entries as Michel writes them. Though viewers may lose sight of the fact that the film presents not the events themselves but Michel's recollections and the records he makes of them, the journal form on which the film is built is essential to its created world. Pipolo writes that the journal "reiterates Michel's loneliness and the anxiety that prevents him from doing anything about it."¹⁹ That Michel is lonely and anxious is certainly true, but it is also the case that in the act of keeping the journal he is, in fact, doing something very important about it, for keeping the journal ultimately brings him to the insight at which he arrives at the end of the film. Crucial to the protagonist, the journal form is crucial also to Bresson's making of the film, for much of what goes on in it—including the connections it forges with Dostoevskii—hinges specifically on the distinctive features of this genre. By considering these characteristics, we can better appreciate the complex functions they assume in *Pickpocket*.

Seen as private disclosures of the self, the journal is characterized by the narrative and temporal discontinuities of its individual entries and by the dual temporality arising from the non-coincidence of the time of the action and the time in which it is recollected. Journal entries record events not as they transpire, but only after they have already taken place. Whatever the elapse of time between the event and when it is set down (and this elapse is fluid and need not be consistent), the journal is predicated on a recollecting writer confronting a recollected self and on the reconnection of these two selves that is effected on its pages. Although, as the conceit of the genre would have it, this is a private venture, it remains the case that the journal entries bring a reader into being, even if it is only the writer himself who peruses the text. As the author of the journal entry becomes the reader of his own disclosures, he spans the first person of the entry and the third-person vantage point on the recollected "he" whom he observes in the written text, thus gaining an outside perspective on himself. In his quest for selfhood, Michel, like Dostoevskii's obsessively self-analytical Raskolnikov (whose very name derives from *raskol*, the Russian word for "split" or "schism"), must find a way to reintegrate his divided selves and to reconnect with the surrounding world from which his transgressive actions sever him. The entries in the journal provide a means to accomplish this. Enabling the film's inward turn and adding depth to the theme of alienation that *Pickpocket* shares with *Crime and Punishment*, the journal ultimately carries a restorative function that the ending of the hypertext makes manifest.

The significance that the journal carries for Michel and the ideational content with which Bresson invests it are augmented by the way this particular genre informs *Pickpocket*'s distinctive style. Like the defining characteristics

of the journal form, the stylistic peculiarities of the film insist on recollection in process and work to distinguish the action on the screen from a first-hand record of the unfolding events themselves. Michel's individual journal entries translate into the discrete scenes of the hypertext and account for its discontinuity, its ellipses, and the disproportionate attention it accords to some events and details, while leaving others virtually without notice. Not only novelistic plot, but psychology, too, is implicit in what the character reveals of himself in entries that isolate and privilege particular incidents from his past. Michel's perspective—what commands his attention and how he sees it—offers insights into his personality, his emotional states, and what preoccupies him. Bresson, who demands complete impassivity from his cast, has these self-revelatory recollections rather than the actor's artifice create his character.²⁰ Steeped in Michel's subjectivity, his journal entries are apertures into his inner world that provide not plot, but vestiges of a story that the viewer must piece together. The content of the journal, which is also the content of the film, is determined not by the contingencies of plot development, but by the meaningfulness of the events for the character who writes it.

Michel's self-revelation dictates the film's distinctive style whose purpose is best appreciated in light of the journal form. In the film's four shots of Michel's hand making entries in his notebook, the text appears legibly on the screen and is also heard being read aloud in narrative voice-off before dissolving into action that is thus doubly introduced. Given the exceptional economy that is a defining feature of Bresson's work, this redundancy, which has been duly noted but not explained, must surely signify and thus demands attention. Inasmuch as the writing hand and the speaking voice belong to Michel, it stands to reason that the visual images that repeat (at times imperfectly) what he records and reads aloud are also his, that these are his recollections as they flash on his inward eye as he remembers them and sets them down in his journal. This may seem like a small point, but its ramifications are hugely significant, for it is here that the uniquely filmic sets in as the camera eye merges with Michel's mind's eye to bring his inner vision to the screen. Rather than show Michel engaging with his surrounding world, the film shows how Michel himself envisions these engagements, thus allowing Bresson to accomplish a seemingly impossible interiority on the surface of the screen. If in literature the journal form is predicated on conjoining the first- and third-person perspectives of the recollecting and the recollected selves, in film the journal form resolves the awkward incongruity of conveying first-person narration through the third-person perspective of the camera.²¹

The mind's-eye-view that Bresson's well-conceived redundancy urges his viewer to recognize helps to explain the stylistic peculiarities of the film with persuasive consistency. Just as Michel's journal entries account for the discrete scenes that comprise the film, so too does his subjective take on his own past

account for the content, the idiosyncratic perspectives, and what he attends to as he tries to make sense of his life and where it has taken him. The centrality of money, the impassivity of his victims who command no sympathy, the starkness of the settings, the dearth of emotional content all point to Michel's preoccupation with his transgressive behavior—the need for money that prompted it, the theory that authorized it, and the alienation that both precipitated and exacerbated it. The meticulous attention to detail that combines strangely with lapses of attention and with the perspectival and temporal distortions of the film is indicative of Michel's mental rearrangements of his past.

Louis Malle astutely observes that in *Pickpocket* “the characters are *compelled* by the camera, pulled, pushed, held back by it.”²² This is so because the dictatorial “camera” is Michel's mind's eye in action, documenting the control that his memory exerts on events from his past. Recollected events are not subject to the laws of the actual world in which they transpired, and memory is lax in distinguishing fact from invention. The creative imagination and the psychology of the individual play a notable part in reconstituting the past. Beyond innate cognitive flaws that make it impossible for human memory to retain and replicate what has transpired with exactitude, are various distortions to which memory falls prey. Wishful thinking, repression, denial, a need to justify or redefine the course of events or to impart meaning to them from the vantage point of what subsequently transpires—these are only a few of the forces that take part in setting the mental stage and directing the mind's eye of the reminiscing individual. The peculiar style of Bresson's film captures these distortions, and in so doing, conveys information about Michel's psychological and emotional states both at the time of the events he records and at the time in which he remembers them.

Unsurprisingly, Michel's thefts figure with especial prominence in his perforce selective recollections. While these are replete with great specificity of detail, the point is that Michel's mental replays of his pickpocketing provide the viewer with a realistic presentation not of the events themselves, but of how Michel remembers them. The ruminations that appear on the screen reflect the extent to which Michel is concentrated on his crime. His victims are dehumanized, and it is only his extractions of money from their persons and not the individuals themselves that command Michel's attention. Not only do the rehearsals for and repeated enactments of pickpocketing receive the greatest share of his attention, but they are presented with far greater vivacity than anything else that he recollects.

Bresson sees to this with the care he lavishes on the thefts. Engaging Henri Kassagi, a pickpocket by trade, to serve as his crime consultant and to play the role of the master thief who instructs Michel in his art,²³ he makes sure to get every detail right. The thefts are showcased in close-ups, while stop-action editing accords them extra time. This prompts T. Jefferson Kline to

comment on “stop-action editing on certain hand movements that, were they conducted so slowly, would surely have been detected by the victim.” Kline goes on to observe that “[t]he impression given by this ‘co-operative’ camera work and editing is that the image maker enjoys a very Gidean complicity with the thieves in their most intimate activities.”²⁴ The precision of specific detail in combination with an uneven distribution of attention and with temporal distortions are hallmarks of memory and of the journal genre that records it. Though there is no question that Bresson looks on, the “image maker” in question is most immediately the recollecting Michel who is shown in these scenes to be the accomplice of his recollected self.

The degree of the recollected Michel's obsession with pickpocketing and the extent to which it had blotted out all human relations and concerns emerge clearly as he reconstructs his past. At the same time, in the process of recording these memories, the recollecting Michel reveals the extent to which he is still captivated by the crime he describes in his journal. The seductive appeal that pickpocketing continues to hold for him is exquisitely delivered in the renowned Gare de Lyon sequence in which the camera comes suddenly to life to track fantastic feats of legerdemain in which crime aspires to art. Thoughts of monetary gain are superseded by the flowing choreography of the sequence, which showcases Michel working in concert with two thieves as they move swiftly through the station and onto a train, relieving travelers of cash and wristwatches with remarkable elegance and creative flourishes that include replacing an emptied wallet into the breast pocket of its unsuspecting owner. There is every reason to question the verity of this highly aestheticized vision of pickpocketing, and we are reminded that what is at stake in the film is not how it actually was (or even whether it was at all), but rather how Michel envisions his thieving in the course of his retrospective ruminations. The “hyper-real quality” that Pipolo speaks of in connection with this sequence and his description of it as “beyond any character's point of view”²⁵ can be explained as sure signs of memory at work—hallmarks of the mind's eye in action.

Writing about the camera work and editing of thefts shown in the film, Sandra L. Beck notes that

[a]t the moment of transference, i.e., when the money of the object ceases being owned by the “victim,” the shot of this precarious exchange is held for a few “long” seconds. The distention of this moment denies verisimilitude to the representation of the theft and serves to call it to our attention on a symbolic level.²⁶

Michel's pickpocketing is indeed possessed of a capacity to indicate something beyond itself, but, more immediately, the departure from verisimilitude in its iterations draws attention to the subjectivity attendant on Michel's

reconstruction of the thefts. The camera work reminds us that it is this subjectivity that is at stake. Detailed though they are, Michel's recollections cannot be expected to possess either the scope or the documentary accuracy of which the camera eye is usually possessed. Nor is it reasonable to expect any consistency in the degree to which Michel departs from objective reality in the various entries of the journal he keeps. Human memory, as we have noted, is fallible and subject moreover to alteration by subsequent experience as well as various needs and desires. It is also an individuating and creative force that aligns itself closely with the creative imagination. Michel's recollections are not confined to the temporal and spatial constraints of the actual world any more than film is.

The journal form and the mind's eye view that it enables provide Bresson with a productive way to dissociate his camera from the here and now in which it operates. In the essay quoted above, Malle commends the success with which Bresson avoided the mere replication of the surrounding world: "He starts by strangling realism by the throat, that touchstone of cinema which, quite often, is still only an instrument of reproduction."²⁷ Marveling at what Bresson is able to achieve, Malle goes on to say:

How much talent must one not have, let it be said in passing, to "reorganize" reality to such a degree in a film, two-thirds of which takes place outside the studio, in the streets, cafés, subway—those places where filmmakers are usually condemned to documentarism.²⁸

It is on the strength of the journal he has Michel keep that Bresson successfully evades such documentarism. Presenting with exactitude events not as they happened, but as Michel subsequently remembers and envisions them, Bresson replaces realism with a reality of a different order. The viewer of the film does not watch Michel. The viewer sees with him.

At the end of *Pickpocket* Michel is seen behind bars, and viewers understand that he has been keeping the journal while in prison, presumably working through the events that landed him there. This naturally explains Michel's focus on the crime. At the same time, Bresson uses it to foreground one of the film's most prominent points of contact with *Crime and Punishment*, namely the exceptional man theory that their respective characters author. Reference to this theory features prominently both in *Pickpocket* and in *Crime and Punishment*. Michel echoes Dostoevskii's Raskolnikov in claiming that there are exceptional men who need not remain within commonly accepted moral and legal bounds, but can overstep them in the name of a greater cause. The very ability to defy conventional social and ethical norms with impunity authorizes the transgression. Though the crimes that become their testing ground could scarcely be more different, Michel's extended series of petty thefts and the two murders Raskolnikov commits in the process of robbing the old pawnbroker

stem from a common cause: their impoverished perpetrators' pride-fueled need for self-assertion—both in their own eyes and in the eyes of society at large. Beyond authorizing their transgressive behavior, the theory they develop suggests a means to ennoble the base thefts that the conjunction of pride and impoverishment drives them to commit. The swift monetary gain they foresee is framed as an opportunity to set things right, opening a new path into the future, while the risk that they are prepared to incur valorizes the enterprise and its authors. It is not difficult to see that the theory stems from a very human weakness—the susceptibility to construing selfhood in terms of exceptionality that pulls away from rather than toward humanity at large. The theory, as Michel and Raskolnikov conceive it, is predicated on a self-sufficiency that casts off ties with others and that sets them above the rest of humanity. *Crime and Punishment* and *Pickpocket* demonstrate repeatedly that the “freedoms” that were to have derived from this notion are in fact sources of alienation and of metaphysical constriction within a radically diminished self. Dostoevskii and Bresson firmly believe that the theory is misguided, but their characters must learn this on their own over the course of the novel and the film.

Bresson's film goes immediately to the heart of this matter. *Pickpocket* begins with Michel's first journal entry, which states: “I know that those who have done these things remain silent and those who speak have not done them. Yet I have done them.”²⁹ Whether or not Michel is fully cognizant of this, his opening statement offers a cogent summary of one of the many flaws inherent in his (and Raskolnikov's) exceptional man theory. The problem is that he can define himself as exceptional only against others who are not and that he must rely on these others to acknowledge his exceptionality, a situation that leaves him dependent on those very people over whom he claims ascendancy. This is the source of the impasse that Michel's opening statement encapsulates: To advertise the transgression that validates his ascendancy is to land in prison, but to remain silent is to consign his exceptionality to obscurity. In both film and novel the characters are torn between the conflicting desires to be recognized and to remain undetected. Thus, for example, Raskolnikov's and Michel's returns to the scenes of their crimes—the former to the apartment where he killed the old woman and her sister, the latter to Longchamp race-track, where he first succeeded at pickpocketing—can be seen as manifestations of a guilt-driven need for punishment, but also as the desire to break out of anonymity and to claim authorship of their crimes. The insuperable tension that develops between the fear of apprehension and the desire for it similarly derives from the impasse to which their efforts to put the exceptional man theory into practice brings Raskolnikov and Michel.

Yet even as it offers a concise formulation of this impasse, the opening statement of Michel's journal announces also that he has broken free from it: with his arrest, the tensions are resolved, and he can now speak of his crimes in the

prison journal that he keeps. In the process of doing so, Michel escapes from what Bresson speaks of as “the terrible solitude that is a thief’s prison,”³⁰ as the punishment he endures is commuted, like Raskolnikov’s, from metaphysical constriction to physical confinement. How Raskolnikov and Michel position themselves vis-à-vis others is problematized in their respective worlds as potentially enriching ties with those around them are replaced by alienation that erodes selfhood. In place of the transgressions that can only intensify isolation, Bresson, like Dostoevskii, advocates boundary crossings that enhance communion with others, enlarging the self and the possibilities open to it. In *Pickpocket* the writing hand that accomplishes curative ties between self and others is a positive counterexample to the thieving hand that crosses surreptitiously into the private space of others. Michel’s confrontations with his recollected self in his journal accomplish the reintegration of his divided self and thus prepare the way for connecting with others. Like *Crime and Punishment*, *Pickpocket* ends with the protagonist’s alienation giving way before the possibility of meaningful human ties as Michel, again like Raskolnikov, shows signs of awakening to the unconditional love that is offered him.

The profound connections between *Pickpocket* and *Crime and Punishment* that we have been examining thus far are embedded in salient differences, which must also be considered, for they, too, enlarge Bresson’s relations with Dostoevskii in this film. As we noted earlier in passing, what is perhaps Bresson’s most conspicuous departure from Dostoevskii’s *Crime and Punishment* is his astonishing replacement of Raskolnikov’s axe murders with Michel’s petty thefts. The difference in register between these crimes is instrumental in preventing immediate recognition of the film’s ties to the novel, but at a deeper level serves additionally to strengthen ties to Dostoevskii. I have written elsewhere on the significance of the scene in *Crime and Punishment* that references pickpocketing, observing that it repeats on a smaller scale the broader concern of the novel which explores how “the boundaries between self and others might best be negotiated to attain selfhood and a fullness of life.”³¹ In that context I described Michel’s pickpocketing as both a cause and a consequence of his extreme alienation and as a manifestation of an underlying need to connect with others. The quandary is that the very pickpocketing that brings Michel into close physical proximity with others also forces him to flee from them. Michel’s repeated reaching out in a gesture that intensifies alienation, as I discuss, encapsulates Raskolnikov’s competing urges to connect with others and to cut himself off from them.³² Here I will go on to pursue the connection between *Pickpocket* and another of Dostoevskii’s works that is enabled by the pickpocketing that Bresson features in his film to the bafflement of many, including his own cameraman.³³ This is *The Gambler*, a shorter novel that Dostoevskii wrote in 1866, immediately upon completing *Crime and Punishment*.

Dostoevskii had initially planned to write *Crime and Punishment* in the first person so as to draw his readers into Raskolnikov's inner world. The vast array of characters and storylines, the breadth and depth of the psychologizing, and the spiritual questing that were ultimately absorbed into this voluminous novel, however, called for omniscience, making first person impracticable and leading Dostoevskii to resort instead to third-person narration. In *The Gambler*, which was significantly narrower in scope, he was able to use the first person—specifically in the form of notes kept by his character. Dostoevskii wrote *The Gambler* while in desperate need of money and in the throes of the very compulsion the novel describes.³⁴ Recognizable in it are variations on themes that are central also to *Crime and Punishment*, including the dehumanizing desire for money and overweening pride that generate a sense of exceptionality and promote risk-taking. In *The Gambler* Dostoevskii has Aleksei Ivanovich write accounts of his tumultuous experiences, thus allowing the character to create himself, much as Bresson has Michel do in his film. Beyond their generic correspondence, both *The Gambler* and *Pickpocket* have a thematic kinship with *Crime and Punishment*—one that helps us appreciate Bresson's choice of crime and what it brings to the film.

The notes that Aleksei Ivanovich keeps abound with descriptions of behaviors impelled by the novel's various characters' desperate need for money, to which they ascribe transformative power over their lives. As presaged in the title, the principal and most dramatic of these behaviors is the compulsive gambling, which Dostoevskii knew—disastrously—at first hand. In *The Gambler* the games of chance are situated in a society characterized by obsessive preoccupation with monetary gain. Aleksei Ivanovich insists on the similarity between the unbridled greed exhibited in the casino and the materialism rampant in society at large: "And why should gambling be worse than any other means of making money—for instance commerce?" he asks, and later goes on to say, "and as for profits and winnings, why, people, not only at the roulette wheel, but everywhere do nothing but try to gain or squeeze something out of one another." His conclusion draws attention to the social malaise and spiritual bankruptcy that thread their way through Bresson's film as well: "Money is everything!"³⁵ Distinguishing his own desire for money, as Aleksei Ivanovich would have it, is the risk that he is prepared to incur in going after it. It is this risk, as he claims, in muted echo of Raskolnikov, that elevates his gaming above the diligence and parsimoniousness that characterizes those who stay away from the roulette wheel, but still share the gambler's dream of amassing a fortune. In a clear parallel to Dostoevskii's gambler, the pickpocket Bresson creates tests himself repeatedly, as the filmmaker follows the Russian novelist in splintering the singular, tragic ordeal through which Raskolnikov puts himself, into debased iterations of risk-taking that, far from establishing exceptionality, erode selfhood.

Aleksei Ivanovich describes the avarice, toadyism, and shamelessness that he observes in the crowd that surrounds the roulette wheel in the seedy casino he frequents. Yet the gaming to which his own need for money drives him is ennobled in his accounts into contests with fate itself. As Dostoevskii's gambler describes it, his very need for money generates in him a sense of exceptionality that manifests itself in the conviction that he must surely come out the winner. This delusional conviction exacts a high cost: Winning affirms this erroneous notion and only whets Aleksei Ivanovich's appetite for more gaming, while losing sharpens the need to prove himself and fuels his insatiable urge to continue playing. Gradually the desire to secure the money that would free him from service to his employer recedes before the obsessive need to persist in the exhilarating risk-taking that ultimately enslaves him and swallows up all aspects of his humanity. Like Raskolnikov before him and Michel after him, the gambler fails to use the money he gets to improve his condition and fixates instead on the means by which he procures it. The gambler's notes record an extended conversation with Mr. Astley, an insightful Englishman whose friendship he abandoned for the gaming tables. In it Mr. Astley recapitulates Aleksei Ivanovich's unhappy trajectory and assesses the extent of his losses:

"You have grown wooden," he observed, "you have not only given up life, all your interests, private and public, your duties as a man and a citizen, your friends (and you really had friends)—you have not only given up all your goals except winning—you have even given up your memories. [...] I am sure that you have forgotten all the best feelings you had then; your dreams, your present, most genuine desires now do not rise above *pair* and *impair*, *rouge*, *noir*, the twelve middle numbers, and so forth, and so on, I am certain!"³⁶

The only thing worse than how very much the gambler loses is the degree to which he is enslaved by his obsession: Aleksei Ivanovich comes to perceive the very gambling that devours his life as the only possible means for his salvation. He replies to Astley,

let me tell you, I've forgotten absolutely nothing; but I've only for a time put everything out of my mind, even my memories, until I can make a radical improvement in my circumstances; then ... you will see, I shall rise again from the dead!³⁷

By the end of his notes Aleksei Ivanovich is hopelessly far from resurrection. Indifferent to all but the roulette wheel, he remains unmoved by the news Mr. Astley brings that the woman he once loved is still in love with him. The gambler records Mr. Astley's diagnosis: "Yes, you have destroyed yourself,"

and offers no response to Astley's prophetic warning: "So far," he tells the inveterate gambler, "you've been honest and preferred serving as a lackey to stealing ... But I dread to think what may come in the future."³⁸ There can be no doubt that the money Mr. Astley gives the gambler in parting is destined for the casino, and the odds are slim indeed that it can forebode indefinitely the thieving that would mark the next step in the process of the gambler's degeneration. The novel ends with this bleak outlook.

Even this brief sketch of *The Gambler* alerts us to underlying similarities both with its own author's *Crime and Punishment* and with Bresson's *Pickpocket*. As we have noted, Michel closely resembles Raskolnikov in important particulars, but he is best understood as a hybrid of that character and Aleksei Ivanovich of *The Gambler*. It is clear from Bresson's hypertext that he discerned in *The Gambler* a variation on Raskolnikov's need to test himself and to assert a selfhood in the face of his impoverishment and low social standing. Although the self-aggrandizing exceptional man theory to which Michel resorts corresponds with Raskolnikov's thinking, his increasingly risk-laden iterations of pickpocketing accord with the gambler's escalating contests with chance. Bresson links pickpocketing with gambling by situating Michel's first and last thefts in the midst of the betting at Longchamp racetrack. Other references to gambling in the film subtly support this connection as the accomplices divide their spoils under the cover of wagering at cards and Michel speaks of money he lost at gambling during his sojourn in London. The risk that is entailed in both gambling and pickpocketing contributes to that sense of exceptionality that ultimately intensifies both Aleksei Ivanovich's and Michel's alienation. Like Aleksei Ivanovich's gambling, Michel's thieving sends his heart racing, in a signal that his compulsion has replaced love. Unlike Raskolnikov's tragically high stake and devastating loss—the taking of human life—the gaming and pickpocketing are repeated over the course of the novel and the film in which they are featured. Their iteration draws particular attention to the steady erosion of selfhood that results from Aleksei Ivanovich's and Michel's misguided attempts at self-affirmation, making them slaves to the very means by which they seek to assert themselves. At the end of *The Gambler* Aleksei Ivanovich is left trapped in an obsession that promises a future of further degradation.

By making his character the thief that the gambler is likely to become, Bresson has Michel begin where Mr. Astley predicts Aleksei Ivanovich is heading. Echoing the gambler's contention that his exertions at the gaming table are no worse than the money-seeking behaviors of those around him, Michel situates his pickpocketing on a continuum with the abiding preoccupation with money in his materialistic society. The recollections that *Pickpocket* brings to the screen abound with images of money exchanging hands as race-track bookies, bank tellers, and ticket sellers attend to their customers, allowing

Michel to narrow the distinction between this perpetual exchange of money and his own extractions of cash from his victims. As for Dostoevskii, so too for Bresson, the replacement of meaningful human relations with monetary transactions is indicative of the spiritual bankruptcy of the worlds in which their characters seek to define themselves. Crucially, however, this social ill does not absolve them from individual responsibility, but only implicates them all the more: Raskolnikov, Aleksei Ivanovich, and Michel are not simply victims of a dehumanizing society, but themselves perpetrators of dehumanization.

Michel provides only a perfunctory record of the two years he spends in London after fleeing Paris in the aftermath of his accomplices' arrest at the Gare de Lyon: "During the two years I lived in London, I made some handsome strikes, but I lost the greater part of my gains on gambling or wasted it on women. I found myself in Paris again aimless and penniless."³⁹ Like Dostoevskii's gambler, Michel ends up squandering the fruits of his risk-taking. The transformative power ascribed to money by Raskolnikov, Aleksei Ivanovich, and Michel is illusory.⁴⁰

The dismissive brevity of the entry that spans Michel's two years in London indicates the lesser importance he ascribes to this stretch of time in the confrontation with his past that he undertakes in his journal. The diarist Michel is eager to go back to the scene of his crimes. The entries pick up with his return to Paris where he goes to see Jeanne. Finding her abandoned both by her own father and the father of the child she now has, Michel is moved to find gainful employment so as to support them with money that he has honestly earned. The possibility of a new life opens before him, but the urge to pick pockets is not so easily tamed. Like the gambler, Michel is irresistibly drawn to the risk-taking that, as he construes it, supersedes his degrading need for money. The inordinately daring theft at Longchamp racetrack from someone who, as he rightly believes, is a police agent speaks of audaciously high stakes, but also of a desire for the arrest that would put an end both to his compulsive pickpocketing and to the uncertainty of whether his criminal behavior is known to the police inspector who is on his trail.⁴¹ In the act of removing a thick wad of bills from the breast pocket of the police detective who stands directly behind him, Michel's thieving hand is manacled and he is taken into custody.

At the end of *The Gambler* Aleksei Ivanovich is left a slave to his gambling compulsion—doomed to repeat the very gesture that was to have transformed his life, but that ultimately destroys it. At the end of *Pickpocket*, Michel's compulsion similarly continues to exercise a hold on him. He, however, is rescued from it by his arrest. Here *Pickpocket* rejoins *Crime and Punishment*, and, like Raskolnikov, Michel finds himself "in prison, and free."⁴² Whether or not this is something Dostoevskii envisioned when he had Mr. Astley foresee thievery in Aleksei Ivanovich's inevitable decline, Bresson discerns in the very hopelessness of that character's entrapment the possibility for an

oxymoronically liberating imprisonment. In light of *Crime and Punishment* and *Pickpocket* the thievery that is projected as the next step in Aleksei Ivanovich's decline suggests the possibility for his regeneration.

The notes Aleksei Ivanovich keeps cannot dispel his compulsion to gamble, and he is left impervious to the potentially salvific love of which Mr. Astley apprises him. Michel's thieving hand becomes a writing hand only after his last wager has been lost and he is behind bars. The film, which is to say, Michel's prison journal, brings him to a conclusion that imparts meaning to the events that he has recorded in it: "O Jeanne, what a strange path I have had to take to reach you."⁴³ Michel's words are heard in a narrative voice-off. The hand that was seen recording his pickpocketing career is now seen clutching the prison bars and receiving Jeanne's kiss. The accelerated heartbeat previously triggered by stealing is now that of a heart beating with love. Having fulfilled its function, the journal is now complete, and Michel can move beyond his past to embrace the present and, like Dostoevskii's Raskolnikov, step into a future possessed of the openness carefully crafted for him by his creator.

Pickpocket, as Lindley Hanlon observes, "made famous Bresson's focus on hands as expressive, skilled objects."⁴⁴ In *Pickpocket* it is indeed the hands that take center stage. Repeated hand gestures create an underlying rhythmic continuity for the discrete episodes recorded in the diary entries, and it is in his hands that Michel's selfhood is concentrated.⁴⁵ There is good reason to center attention on hands in a film that has much to say about types of human exchange and does so with exceptional economy.⁴⁶ Money repeatedly changing hands over the course of the film speaks of dehumanizing materialism. Michel's finger-limbering exercises draw attention to the beauty and gestural potential of hands, which can extend into the surrounding world to touch others. Unlike so much of the body, hands are visible both to the self and to others. In Bresson's hypertext hands are repeatedly shown in close-ups performing gestures that negotiate in various ways the boundaries between self and others—Michel's hooking and unhooking of the door of his garret, the pickpocketing episodes, pervasive exchanges of money, and the writing. The thieving hands that cross into the private space of their victims can only intensify and not heal the alienation that prompts the reaching out. Yet hands also demonstrate another sort of reaching out: The writing hand, as we have seen, has restorative powers. It is also possessed of creative vitality. *Pickpocket* was the first film for which Bresson wrote the screenplay himself, and Michel's writing hand is also his own. Engaging with quintessentially Dostoevskian questions that revolve around issues relating to selfhood and meaningful human exchange, Bresson uses hands to deliver his message. In so doing, he does not replicate the work of the novelist. Rather, he charts his own "*drôle de*

chemin”: The conclusion at which Michel arrives at the end of *Pickpocket* is one that Bresson establishes at the very start—even before Michel begins to write in his journal. A *prière d’insérer*, “a technique belonging to a long literary tradition of confessional literature [...] of orienting the reader’s attention in a particular way,”⁴⁷ appears on the screen immediately after the film’s title. It reads:

The style of this film is not a thriller. The author attempts to explain in pictures and sounds the nightmare of a young man forced by his weakness into an adventure in theft for which he was not made. Yet this adventure, by strange paths, brings together two souls which might otherwise never have been united.⁴⁸

As Michel’s creator, Bresson directs the circuitous route that leads his character not only to Jeanne, but to an understanding of what his maker knows from the outset: Michel’s transgressive behavior is a sign of weakness and not of exceptionality, and it is love and not money that is possessed of transformative power. Daniel Millar speaks insightfully of “Michel who spends the whole film discovering his true self, who therefore exists only *after* the end of the film.”⁴⁹ Like Dostoevskii in *Crime and Punishment*, so, too, Bresson in *Pickpocket* lets his character go free in the end.

This freedom manifests itself specifically in Michel’s recognition of the “strange path,” that is to say, the providential erring that brings him to Jeanne. Relinquishing his petty contests with chance, he embraces the unknown and the unforeseeable that lie beyond human understanding and control. The point of arrival is the merging of two souls, for, together with Dostoevskii, Bresson centers on the regenerative power of love, but also—and at greater length—on the forces that obstruct the capacity to experience it and respond to it. *Pickpocket*’s idiosyncratic engagement with Dostoevskii’s *Crime and Punishment* and *The Gambler* is a direct manifestation of both Bresson’s cinematography and his embrace of Dostoevskii’s thinking. Countering what he saw as cinema’s subservience to narrative and the desensitization of viewers that this subservience promoted, Bresson transcends medial and stylistic boundaries to delve deeply into Dostoevskii’s ideational sphere, enlarging on it within his own creative domain, which is thereby itself enlarged.

NOTES

1. Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 18.
2. Thiher, “Bresson’s *Un condamné à mort*,” 292.
3. Malle, “With *Pickpocket* Bresson Has Found,” 731.
4. Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 2.

5. Schrader, "Robert Bresson, Possibly," 696.
6. Cited in Arnes, "Robert Bresson," 9.
7. Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 55.
8. Taylor, "Robert Bresson," 137.
9. Le Dantec, "Bresson, Dostoevsky," 413–25.
10. Iutkevich, "'Sinematograf' Robera Bressona," 2: 151, 152.
11. Bresson authored the screen plays for all three of these films, with *Pickpocket* being the first one in his career that he wrote himself.
12. The most detailed discussion to date of these points of intersection is provided by Kline in "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket."
13. Iutkevich does not include it in his list of Bresson's Dostoevskian films, while Taylor maintains that *Pickpocket* has "no literary original, no pre-existent story even." Taylor, "Robert Bresson," 135.
14. Quandt, "Audio Commentary to *Pickpocket*."
15. Bresson, *Notes on Cinematography*, 27.
16. Tarkovsky, *Interviews*, 45.
17. Film scholar Tony Pipolo writes that "the conflicted nature of the protagonist in *Pickpocket* was an acid test of whether Bresson's style was strong enough to minimize psychology." Pipolo, *Robert Bresson*, 125.
18. *Ibid.*, 130. Here I take a different approach, arguing that the style is instrumental to the psychology in the film.
19. *Ibid.*
20. At the time he made *Pickpocket* Bresson called his cast members "interpreters," while in later films he called them "models" as part of his effort to instill the idea that his cast members were expected not to act, but to *be* in front of the camera. His penchant for inexperienced individuals rather than professional actors in his films is part of this project.
21. Here I part company with Kline's assessment of the genre as he describes it in his superb article "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 301.
22. Malle, "With *Pickpocket* Bresson Has Found," 733.
23. As the film was being made Kassagi amused himself and amazed others by stealing watches and billfolds from policemen present at shoots and returning them later at a bar.
24. Kline, "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 326.
25. Pipolo, *Robert Bresson*, 131.
26. Beck, "*Pickpocket*."
27. Malle, "With *Pickpocket* Bresson Has Found," 732.
28. *Ibid.*, 734, n. 3.
29. "Je sais que d'habitude ceux qui ont fait ces choses se taisent au que ceux qui en parlent ne les ont pas faites. Et pourtant je les ai faites." *Pickpocket*, DVD (my translation).
30. Bresson, "Interview with Bresson from *Cinépanorama*."
31. Hasty, "Bresson and Dostoevskii," 324.
32. *Ibid.*, 325.
33. Bresson's cameraman Léonce-Henry Burel, for example, frankly admitted his bewilderment: "I didn't understand what he was trying to say. As a matter of fact I don't think anybody has ever understood, really. Who is this pickpocket, why does he steal and so on?" Kline, "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 300.
34. For Dostoevskii the years 1863–71 were punctuated by fits of compulsive gambling. Among the disastrous consequences of this obsession was an ill-advised contract Dostoevskii entered into with one F. T. Stellovskii, an opportunistic editor who demanded a new novel by November 1, 1866. According to the contract, failure to meet this deadline

would give Stellovskii publishing rights to all of Dostoevskii's works for nine years with no compensation to the author. In danger of losing his livelihood, Dostoevskii was hard pressed to deliver the promised manuscript. He succeeded in doing so thanks only to Anna Grigorevna Snitkina, a stenographer he engaged on October 4, 1866, who first set down the text of *The Gambler* from Dostoevskii's dictation and then made a fair copy of it for Stellovskii. The grateful author proposed to Snitkina in November of that year, and they were married in February of 1867.

35. Dostoevsky, *The Gambler*, 390, 391, 407.
36. *Ibid.*, 513–14.
37. *Ibid.*, 514.
38. *Ibid.*, 517.
39. Here I rely on T. Jefferson Kline's translation. "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 320. The French in the film is: "De Milan je descende à Rome et peu de temps après je passai en Angleterre. Pendant les deux années que je vécus à Londres je fis de très beaux coups, mais je perdis aux jeux ou gaspillai avec des femmes la plus grande partie de mes gains. Je me retrouvai à Paris sans but et n'ayant presque plus rien en poche."
40. Kline refers to this entry as "wildly out of character for Michel" and notes parenthetically that "gambling does not occupy his time in Paris." Kline, "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 320. Inasmuch as journal entries provide only fragmentary glimpses into their putative author's life, this is not something that can be claimed with any degree of certainty. The very nature of the genre precludes continuity and completeness, presenting only those isolated episodes that the writing character considers important enough to inscribe in what consequently becomes a self-revelatory text. In any event, the proximity of gambling and pickpocketing is clearly indicated in the film, establishing its ties to *The Gambler*.
41. Bresson originally intended to call his film *Incertitude* (*Uncertainty*).
42. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 459.
43. Here I rely on T. Jefferson Kline's translation. "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 316. The French in the film is: "O Jeanne, pour arriver jusqu'à toi, quel drôle de chemin j'ai dû prendre."
44. Hanlon, *Fragments*, 120.
45. In a documentary made some thirty years after the film, Martin Lassalle says that he is convinced that it was for his eyes and especially for his hands that Bresson chose him for the part of Michel. Mangolte, "The Models of *Pickpocket*."
46. "The things one can express with the hand, with the head, with the shoulders! ... How many useless and encumbering words then disappear. What economy!" Bresson observes. *Notes on Cinematography*, 64.
47. Kline, "Picking Dostoevsky's Pocket," 300.
48. *Ibid.*, 300.
49. Millar, "*Pickpocket*," 88.