counters Fonda's unshakable cordiality with a hint of melancholy expressing what Bondarchuk sees as the character's archetypally Russian soul. It's a less compelling performance than one might expect from a People's Artist of the Soviet Union, but it works. Among the secondary characters, Napoleon is an underwhelming stick figure whose epochal importance is presumed rather than shown. By contrast, Vidor's version features an enjoyable Herbert Lom with a purposeful stride and a hand forever tucked in his vest, a historical stereotype with recognizable human traits.

Bondarchuk and company passionately hoped their *War and Peace* would conquer American moviegoers, and they partly got their wish. It became the first Soviet film to win the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language film, and the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Board of Review, and the Golden Globes bestowed the same accolade. American reviews were mixed, however, with some critics finding the battle scenes too confusing and chaotic—a silly judgment, since as Youngblood correctly notes, this was exactly Bondarchuk's point. Tolstoy saw history as an unstoppable, ungraspable flux propelled by imprecise ideas, unfocused motivations, ill-defined impulses, and an endless assortment of other intractably vague factors. The pandemonium of war raises this raging messiness to stellar heights, and the strategies and tactics plotted out by alleged geniuses like Napoleon are worthless in the long haul. Tolstoy's Napoleon, vainly striving for unattainable order and control, is the opposite of the one in Abel Gance's 1927 *Napoleon*, always projecting inspired plans and far-seeing schemes. Bondarchuk follows Tolstoy's vision, depicting Napoleon as a dreary martinet and the war as a bitter, anarchic mess in which good and bad outcomes are pretty much the luck of the draw. Tolstoy would have approved.

The first two parts of *War and Peace* premiered in Moscow in 1966, selling twice as many tickets (about sixty million) as Vidor's film. Parts three and four were withheld until 1967, against Bondarchuk's wishes, and this time the domestic returns were poor; narrative momentum had been lost, TV ownership was up, and lightweight comedies were suddenly in fashion. The film's reputation has risen over the years, even among formerly skeptical Soviet critics, but it failed to boost the careers of some key participants. Although she gave a warm performance and represented the picture at the Oscar ceremony, Savelyeva appeared in only a handful of later films, perhaps because she lacked the formal training required (according to a 1968 French documentary on the Criterion disc) for a Soviet acting career. Following his dream of European fame, Bondarchuk went on to direct the 1970 epic *Waterloo* for Dino De Laurentiis, which promptly tanked, sending him back to the acting profession.

While no adaptation could surpass Tolstoy's novel as a towering work of imaginative historiography, filmmakers—most recently Tom Harper in a handsome 2016 BBC miniseries—continue to find it a fertile source of three-dimensional characters and absorbing narrative ideas. Occasional moments in the Criterion edition look a bit flat (it's a 2K transfer of a very long film), but the images still amaze and the extras are plentiful if somewhat repetitive (one making-of documentary would have been enough). Bondarchuk's magnum opus is a seven-hour binge of "monumental too-muchness," to quote Ella Taylor's eloquent booklet essay, and a weekend with it is time very well spent.—**David Sterritt**

The Man Between

Produced and directed by Carol Reed; screenplay by Harry Kurnitz; cinematography by Desmond Dickinson; art director Andrej Andrejew; edited by Bert Bates; music by John Addison; starring James Mason, Claire Bloom, Hildegarde Neff, Geoffrey Toone, Aribert Waescher, and Ernst Schroder. Blu-ray and DVD, B&W, 102 min., 1953. A Kino Lorber Studio Classics release, https://www.klstudioclassics.com.

The Man Between, Carol Reed's early Cold War thriller starring James Mason and Claire Bloom, received a lukewarm reception upon its release in 1953, with most critics comparing it unfavorably to Reed's earlier, celebrated effort *The Third Man*. This was understandable, but, especially in retrospect, unfair: the producer/director's 1949 masterpiece, written by Graham Greene at the height of his impressive powers, and starring Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, Trevor Howard, and featuring an indelible performance by Orson Welles, would a half-century later be crowned the greatest British film of all time by the British Film Institute (BFI).

Admittedly, releasing two Cold War cat-and-mouse thrillers within four years certainly invited comparison. "Carol Reed's new film returns to the genre of *The Third Man* with, unfortunately, much less success," *The Monthly Film Bulletin* (the in-house journal of the BFI) sniffed in its review of *The Man Between* upon release, adding faint praise for Mason's "very competent performance." Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times* similarly saw the film as aspiring to a "vain illusion" of its illustrious predecessor; unfortunately, however, despite flashes of craft from Reed, Crowther considered *The Man Between* hamstrung by an "utterly foggy" plot "unmercifully tangled in melodramatic clichés."

Other critics observed the same parallels (they are hard to miss), and shared common complaints, which often centered on the screenplay by Harry Kurnitz (then best known for his work on late entries in the cycle of sequels that followed *The Thin Man*). That Kurnitz was no Graham Greene was an easy conclusion to draw, and one that was, not surprisingly, universally proffered by all reputable authority, including, by all accounts, Graham Greene. More generally, the complex plot (the twists and turns of which are indeed not easy to follow in a first viewing), Mason's iffy German accent, and skepticism about Bloom's range at the time (then twenty-two, this was only her second major role after starring opposite Charlie Chaplin in *Limelight* the previous year) were all held up as evidence to the fact that *The Man Between* most plainly did not live up to the standard set by *The Third Man*.

This is inarguable. Especially with the passage of time, however, it is also irrelevant. And in the form of a crisp new Blu-ray edition from Kino Lorber, *The Man Between* is a welcome rediscovery. It can now be appreciated on its own terms as the very good movie that it is; it can also be imagined as the final entry in an informal "divided cities" trilogy by the director, following *Odd Man Out* (with James Mason as an IRA cell leader on the run in Northern Ireland), and *The Third Man* (postwar Vienna under occupation). *Odd Man Out* won the BAFTA for Best Picture in 1948; *The Third Man* took home that trophy as well, and also walked away with the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1949. To wave off *The Man Between* because it does not scale the heights of these achievements—two of the greatest films of the twentieth century—would be like dismissing the less celebrated fiction of Tolstoy for failing to meet the standards set by *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

The Man Between takes place in Berlin, East and West. It was shot on location in the western part of the occupied city, and at Shepperton Studios, England (and with the exception of Mason, Bloom, and Geoffrey Toone, all of the players are German). The essential action, and the essential tension, transpires at or near the border of the Russian and Western zones. In addition to offering a fascinating time capsule—viewers old enough to remember the Berlin Wall will find the city of militarized checkpoints through which crossings were supervised but then permissible a stark contrast with what would follow. Reed also anticipated that shooting as close to the tense lines of demarcation as possible (they were not permitted to film in the East) would "convey something that is not visual—the jittery feeling that pervades the area."

The movie unfolds in two very distinct phases, with a radical transition almost exactly halfway through. The first part is a more conventional, though effective, politically infused melodrama. Young Susanne (Bloom) arrives in still-in-ruins Berlin to visit her brother Martin (Toone), a doctor attached to the British military, and his German wife Bettina (Hildegarde Neff). Martin is something of a pleasant if bland workaholic and the city's needs are great; largely in his absence, and indirectly (often observing

Ivo (James Mason) and Susanne (Claire Bloom) hide in a prostitute's hotel room to escape pursuing East German agents in Carol Reed's *The Man Between*. (photo courtesy of Photofest)

the behavior of others through reflected images), Susanne can see clearly what her brother cannot—Bettina is harboring secrets and is in some distress. In one way or another, both of these seem to involve the mysterious, charismatic Ivo (Mason), who glides back and forth across the sectors of the city in vague dealings not likely to stand up to official scrutiny. The early narrative trajectory (and their oddly charged encounters) suggest that Bettina and Ivo are lovers; as it turns out, their story is considerably more complicated. (An additional strength of *The Man Between* lies in its treatment of marriage and relationships between men and women in general, which is quite sophisticated for its time and perhaps would have been then unfilmable in Hollywood.)

Ivo is somehow mixed up with shadowy Germans, East and West, sparring partners in high stakes games of smugglers versus bounty hunters competing over coveted (human) assets—those with intelligence value to one side or the other. And as they become enmeshed by the intricacies of the plot, Ivo also takes an increasing interest in Susanne—and she is receptive to his charms even as he makes clear to her that he is not to be trusted. "The truth passed me by a long time ago," he warns casually, hinting at what he must have done to survive first the war and then the occupation. All of this is shot fluidly in well-chosen settings; scenes in a nightclub (look for the camera movement that reveals Ivo's hat), skating rink, and café are deftly handled.

The film is upended midway, after a botched kidnapping, and the second half of *The Man Between* becomes a very different thing—a brilliantly filmed noir adventure, shot over the course of one long dark night. Fraught interrogations, swinging lightbulbs, tilted angles, an opera house escape, and chases of all kinds leave Ivo and Susanne on the run together, and in great danger. It is tempting to suggest that the film shifts here away from the mysterious intrigue of *The Third Man* and toward the relentless, desperate flight of *Odd Man Out*, but the larger point remains that these are all distinctly Carol Reed films. In the popular imagination the influence of Welles on *The Third Man* is often emphasized (and exaggerated); savvier observers note the presence of cinematographer Robert Krasker on both of those films—but here Welles is absent and Reed, working with another talented cinematographer (Desmond Dickinson), establishes a visual style that is identifiably and stunningly similar. Add to these three films *Night Train to Munich* (1940) and *Our Man in Havana* (1959, cinematography by Oswald Morris), and it must be conceded that Reed—whose best work plainly reflects the contributions of gifted collaborators—knew what he wanted from the camera, and left his own visual signature on all of these films.

Impressive as the exterior nighttime sequences are, *The Man Between* is distinguished by the emerging Ivo–Susanne relationship and, in particular, by its unflinching treatment of Ivo, which transcends movie convention and cuts against the grain of the audience's hopes. Bloom holds her own as the movie boils down to a two-hander (Susanne's earnestness can wear thin, but the opportunity to play against this makes the quiet, unhurried interlude in a prostitute's flat the best scene in the film)—but the second half of this film belongs to Mason. In fact, *The Man Between* can also be seen as the capstone of an informal Mason trilogy, following *Odd Man Out* and *The Reckless Moment* (1949), the jewel in the crown of Max Ophüls's Hollywood interlude (which included *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *Caught*).

In all three of those films, Mason plays a hardened outlaw, but one whose humanity, long suppressed, hints at the prospect that in better circumstances he could have been a very different person—a quality visible to those who know his character best. (Mason had no peer in playing a villain with the buried soul of a humanist.) *Odd Man Out* is a tragedy in that Johnny McQueen is surely worth saving; in *The Reckless Moment* Martin Donnelly is clearly redeemable, but the rules of Hollywood's Production Code Administration seal his fate. Ivo is the toughest customer of them all, yet *The Man Between* dangles the prospect of a Hollywood ending (an act of selfless heroism, a prison sentence mitigated by context, a good woman waiting on the other side)—but Reed's film is too mature for such comforting fantasies.

What did he do in the war? "It isn't safe to ask such questions of people," Ivo explains. He was in the German Army, and did the things he was ordered to do. Despite Susanne's protestations, however, as with Geoffrey Firman (Albert Finney) in John Huston's *Under the Volcano* (1984), Ivo knows that ultimately there are "some things you can't apologize for." *The Man Between* withholds the details of his combat service, and Ivo's postwar, black-market transgressions are never shown but simply referred to in a dossier waved about menacingly by his Eastern overloads to keep him in line. Such narrative choices gesture at the prospect of a narrow path toward a better life—but true love will not conquer all.

The Man Between is also (unfortunately) rich with contemporary relevance. Ivo, it seems, was an idealist in his youth, and upon graduating law school, was looking forward to fighting the good fights. But "one day the law just vanished," and such aspirations were set aside. At the core of Ivo's self-loathing is that he did not resist the darkening tide as it emerged, but took the path of least resistance, bending to the prevailing political winds—one small exemplar of the shrugging permissiveness that allows evil men to have their way.

The extras on the Kino Lorber special edition are generous but uneven. A fine, friendly documentary overview of Reed's career is informative and boasts impressive testimonials (including reflections from John Boorman, Stephen Frears, Guy Hamilton, and Oswald Morris). But forty-plus audio-only minutes of a 1967 interview with Mason yields few pleasures beyond the sound of his mellifluous voice and warm praise for Reed and Stanley Kubrick; a brief new video featuring Bloom is satisfactory. Avoid the wall-to-wall feature-length commentary track by critic Simon Abrams, which gives the impression of a first draft and consists largely of very lengthy recitations from memoirs and biographies unrelated to the action on screen.—**Jonathan Kirshner**

FILM AND FEMINISM: FOUR ADAPTATIONS OF *LITTLE WOMEN*, 1933-2019

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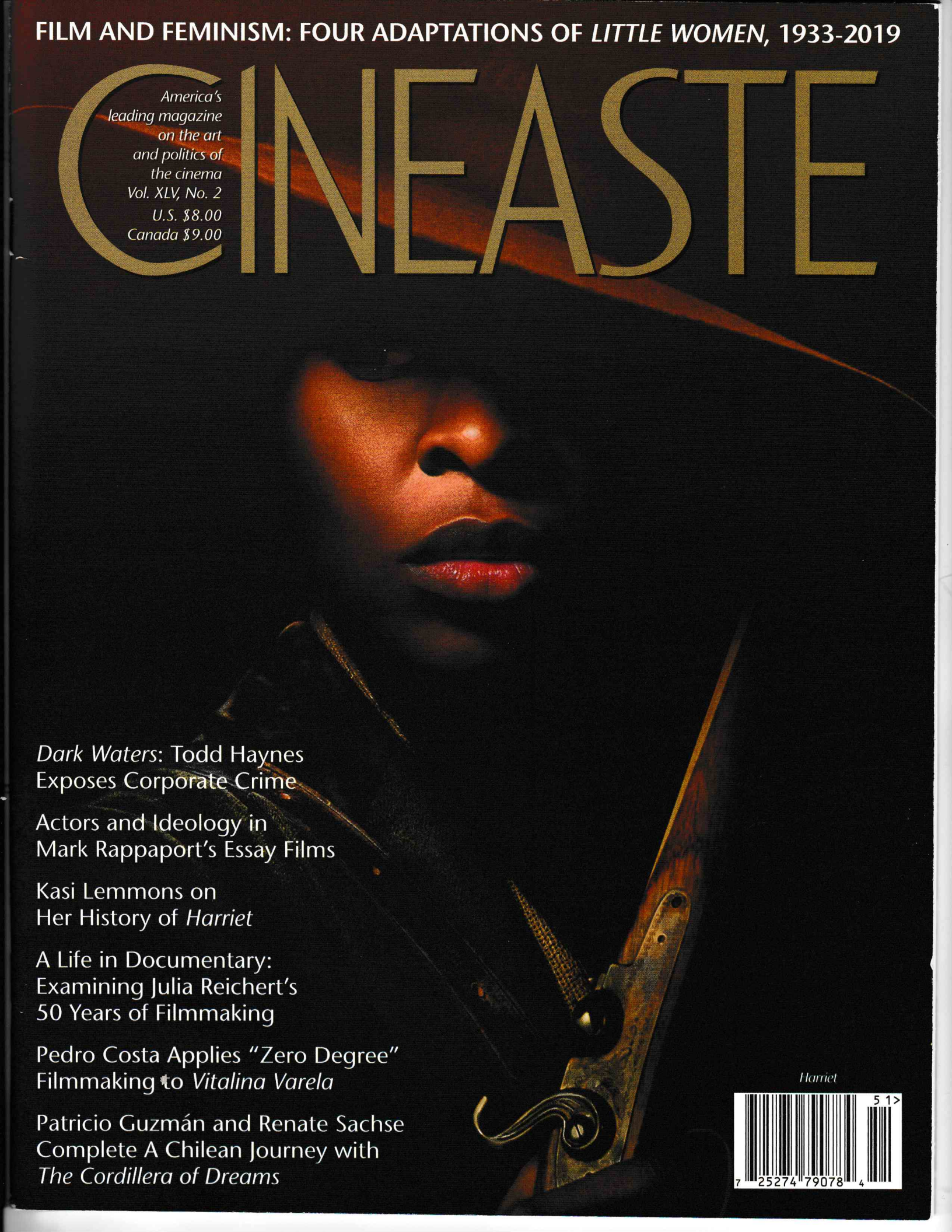

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