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Both less academic and more absorbing was a nice little film from Hungary, *The Adoption*. Unlike many of the other Eastern European entries — *The Unfinished Sentence*, *Fear*, *They Fought for Their Country* — which addressed themselves to large problems with big casts, *The Adoption* is a small case study involving just two women. It was also more interesting than Zanussi's *The Balance*, the only other Eastern European film to deal with contemporary life, because it deals with a social problem in personal terms, and not just one woman's hang-up. The film demonstrates what intelligent socialistic filmmaking can be.

Director Marta Meszaros has a nice feel for faces, like a more compassionate Cassavetes. Kata, played by Kati Berek, has a fortyish face wrinkled by widowhood and work in a sanding factory. Suddenly she decides she wants a child by her married lover Joska, who turns down her request and considers dumping her. At about the same time, Anna, a 19-year-old orphan who has been watching Kata in the park, asks Kata to let her use a room for meetings with her boyfriend, since they have nowhere to go. At first Kata refused but later

relents, finally accepting the girl as her own daughter. In a conclusion saved from the maudlin by restrained direction, Kata helps Anna to marry her boyfriend, freeing her from the hated orphanage. The last scene freezes as we see Kata running to catch a bus, her own adopted baby in her arms.

The Adoption is a film about women's problems told honestly and sympathetically. Kata is not particularly attractive or particularly ugly, just average. She has an unexciting, lonely life in a small village with not even a husband to keep her occupied. She turns to a child for salvation. When Joska turns her down she is once again lost until finding Anna, who shows her that adopted children are lonely too. It is through her positive experience with Anna that she comes to adopt a child herself. The two women, both of them orphans in different ways, find liberation through each other.

There is a timeless, lyric quality to the filming that raises Kata's small story to the level of a poem. A quiet, chilly, autumnal atmosphere prevails. I was delighted to finally see a movie deal



"The Adoption."

with a "social" issue in artistically viable terms. It is the one film out of all I have seen at the Festival that I would recommend without hesitation.