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# Die Ortliebschen Frauen

(The Ortlieb Women)

(WEST GERMANY-COLOR)

Berlin, Feb. 18.

A Solaris/von Vietinghoff Film Production, in coproduction with Pia Frankenberg Music and Film Production, Hamburg, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), Cologne. Features entire cast. Directed by Luc Bondy. Screenplay, Bondy, Libgart Schwarz, based on motifs in Franz Nabl's novel, "The Grave of the Living;" camera (color), Ricardo Arnovich; music, Peer Raben. Reviewed at Berlin Film Fest (Forum), Feb. 18, '80. Running time: 106 MINS.

The Mother ..... Edith Heedegen  
Josefine ..... Libgart Schwarz  
Anna ..... Elisabeth Stepanek  
Walter ..... Klaus Pohl

After Peter Handke's "The Left-Handed Woman" (1977), based on his own novel, it's only natural that another literary adaptation of the same sort should come along — Luc Bondy's "The Ortlieb Women." Based on Austrian writer Franz Nabl's "The Grave of the Living," and with Libgart Schwarz of the Berlin Schaubuehne (also Handke's wife) playing one of the leads, this opener of the Berlin Forum's program attracted critical attention.

Tale, as book-title indicates, is a bloodless, pessimistic portrait of contemporary life, particularly the "inner world" Teutonic cinema and theatre are so fond of. Its time and place are almost irrelevant, although the costumes appear to be from the thirties and the area just might be Austria (the accents indicate West Germany).

The father of a closely-knit family has died, leaving behind a feeble-minded mother, a sick but strong-willed daughter, Josefine, and her sister and brother. Josefine decides that she has to keep the family together at all costs, and proceeds to force the others to do things as she wants. Thus the mother retreats into the background, the other sister becomes the maid, and the gimping, slow-

witted brother is finally locked into the celler (the symbolic "grave of the living") because it's supposed to be "best" for him.

Very much of a literary adaptation and directed with the heavy hand of a theatre helmer (Bondy, the son of writer-essayist Francois Bondy, is prominent in German theatre), "The Ortlieb Women" will probably bow at a couple more fests on the summer circuit, then succumb to the laws of gravity. On the stage the thesps might have saved a couple of scenes with their undeniable talent, but as a film "The Ortlieb Women" is clumsy and unimaginative, even downright embarrassing due to the subsidy bucks invested in it. —*Holl.*