

FUSE

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N.Y. INDEPENDENT CINEMA

Berenice Reynaud



Filmmaker Su Friedrich with her mother, from *The Ties that Bind*

Su Friedrich is another filmmaker who endeavours to bring together experimental filmic text and female/feminist discourse. *Gently Down the Stream* (1981) presents, in black and white, fourteen dreams, excerpted from eight years of personal diary. The dream's *latent content* is scratched word by word, sometimes letter by letter, on the surface of the film emulsion; the images ("*manifest content*") are not a commentary of these words but are there, according to the filmmaker, "to suggest certain desires or movements" (*Heresies*, No. 16). She recently completed *The Ties That Bind* (1984), a 55 min. experimental documentary. It is a questioning of the life history of her mother who, growing up in Nazi Germany, was forbidden to go to school and then brutally "drafted" in the middle of the night for having retained her friendship with Jewish classmates and refusing to join the Hitler Youth. Later,

having lived through the mixed blessing of the Allied Occupation, she marries an American; he takes her to New York where she ends up going back to work as a secretary to pay for his tuitions, and is eventually deserted after fifteen years of marriage. The filmmaker's presence is asserted as a void:

her questions to her mother are not heard but, as in her previous movie, scratched on the film. Friedrich tries to compare her mother's modest and stubborn rejection of Nazism to her more structured political involvement as a feminist and peace activist. This courageous and often disturbing film leaves some questions unresolved (the legitimacy of such a comparison, for example, or the role of the filmmaker's father), but it succeeds in juxtaposing formalist concerns, feminist awareness, and a reflection of Germany's place in history.