

FROM ZYGOTE TO GLOBAL CINEMA VIA SU FRIEDRICH'S FILMS

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In recent years, American independent filmmaker Su Friedrich has made a series of films that have exposed and interpreted intimate dimensions of her personal experience while, simultaneously, escorting viewers across various cinematic (and other) boundaries that define the public experience within which her personal development has occurred. In my view, no filmmaker of her generation—at least in North America—has more effectively used the discoveries of what has come to be called “avant-garde” or “experimental” cinema in the service of crucial contemporary issues. While Friedrich’s films are demanding, they are reasonably accessible to a range of filmgoers. Indeed, because of the compelling nature of their subject matter, her films are a valuable entree into a wide range of formal cinematic options that, whatever their potential value and their current interest for specialists, have normally seemed hopelessly effete and elitist to the “average viewer,” whose film education has come mainly from the commercial cinema and television.

While all of Friedrich’s recent films have much to recommend them, *The Ties That Bind* (1984) and *Sink or Swim* (1990)—films that explore, respectively, her relationships with her mother and with her father—are probably the most widely accessible. And they are the most useful of her films for my purposes here: to intro-

duce Friedrich’s work by exploring a few of its subtle intricacies and to suggest the relationship of her work to what seems to me one of the most fertile new developments to have emerged in independent cinema in recent years. Ultimately, I would argue that what is revealed by close textual analysis of her films is a microcosmic statement of a macrocosmic development.

Microcosm

1.

While Friedrich’s films can at first appear to be rather informal—in all of her films, hand-held, often gestural camerawork is the rule—in fact, they are constructed with tremendous care. Friedrich estimates she spent 700 hours editing *The Ties That Bind*, and she worked on the editing of *Sink or Swim* pretty consistently from November 1989 to April 1990. As a result, nearly any passage of either film is instructive to examine, and the beginnings of the two films are a particularly good place to start. Friedrich’s approach to style and structure is roughly the same in both films, and each is a useful instance of the two dimensions of her editing that require so many hours of intensive labor.

Sink or Swim uses an image track and a sound track that are consistently separate, and develops a range of intersections between them. The sound track is made up of brief stories about Friedrich’s relationship with her father, narrated by a young

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girl. The stories are arranged systematically within an alphabetic structure: the film is divided into 26 sections, each titled with a single word; the words are arranged in reverse alphabetic order (Zygote, Y chromosome, X chromosome, Witness, Virginity . . .). From the beginning of *Sink or Swim*, the intersections between visuals and sound are often precise, subtle, and suggestive. For example, the opening passage is a series of shots in which Friedrich intercuts between images of eggs and images of sperm, then shows an egg being fertilized and beginning to develop. As we see the physical reality of fertilization—the potential beginning of a family—recorded in microscopic enlargement, we hear the narrator describe the circumstances of one of Western culture's first mythical families, that of Zeus and Hera. Precisely when the child narrator describes how Zeus was married to Hera, we see the original cell inside a fertilized egg divide into two, and the narrator's brief review of Zeus's other extramarital relationships and offspring is emphasized dramatically by the cells continuing to divide in the egg.

The opening "Zygote" sequence, though only one minute and 43 seconds long, can be read as a witty encapsulation of conventional film history. The passage of intercutting that leads finally to the climax of fertilization and cell division provides a sly commentary on commercial cinema since D. W. Griffith. What is more central to conventional movie pleasure than a dramatic chase, expressed through intercutting, that leads to the maintenance and confirmation not only of the species, but of conventional definitions of gender and family. The fact that once the egg in "Zygote" is fertilized—we see the cells bifurcate again and again, in conjunction with the story of Zeus's love affairs and illegitimate children—extends Friedrich's comment on conventional cinema. In the decades since Griffith, adultery has become a key aspect of North American film. Indeed, as feminist critics and film-

makers have been telling us for two decades, the gaze in the movie theater is, for all practical purposes, gendered male: the pay off for the movie viewer, as often as not, is the eroticized female body, and the very fact of looking at conventional films becomes a form of repressed adultery. Just as so many men *in* films have sex with more than one woman, the male or "male" spectator comes to "know" the women in films in addition to whatever women they know in real life.

At the beginning of *The Ties That Bind*, Friedrich's interview with her German-born mother about her experiences growing up in Germany during the rise of the Third Reich is already underway; Friedrich's mother is describing her first awareness of the Nazis and Hitler. (Throughout the 50 minutes of the film, Friedrich's questions are presented as a series of texts scratched, word by word, into the celluloid; Lore Bucher Friedrich's responses are heard on the sound track.) As we listen to her comments, we see a subjective camera shot as the cameraperson walks from inside a tunnel into the light. The intersection of Lore Friedrich's spoken memory and Su Friedrich's visual memory creates a variety of implications.

Most obviously, perhaps, the visual imagery is a metaphor for young Lore Friedrich's developing awareness: she moves from darkness to light. If one thinks of the intersection as a reference to Su Friedrich, however, it seems to suggest *her* coming out of the darkness into the light about her mother's, and therefore her own, past. The "birth" implications of Friedrich's movement out of a tunnel are relevant in both a general sense (Su Friedrich is listening to the woman who gave birth to her) and in a more immediate sense. Friedrich's decision to make the film we are watching has been a rebirth for *her*; as the mother delivers the facts of her childhood to her daughter, the daughter's sense of her own past, and her current identity, is reborn.



Lore Friedrich in *The Ties That Bind*. Courtesy: Su Friedrich.

These particular parallels are emphasized by the more general parallelism between the intimacy of the mother-daughter discussion (we can hear in Lore Friedrich's voice that this is a personal conversation) and Su Friedrich's use of a super-8 camera to record this particular imagery. The approach is suggestive of home movies, though the grim inky black and white imagery is as far from the shallow, celebratory mood of most home movies, as is Lore Friedrich's discussion of her personal relationship to political events in Germany.

Throughout *The Ties That Bind*, Friedrich develops interconnections between her imagery and the sound track, though at no point in this film, or in any of her films, does she use the commercial convention of sync sound. Indeed, her refusal to avail herself of a mode of representation so fundamental to mass market cinema can

be read as a rejection of the apparatus of the industry and the forms of easily digested illusionism it is dedicated to.

2.

The intricate network of connections between sound and image (and the implications of these connections) is one of the two dimensions of Friedrich's recent films (her early films were silent) where her careful attention to editing is evident. The other is her use of a wide range of visual material. In both *The Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim*, Friedrich brings together visual imagery recorded in different ways, at different times, and by various filmmakers. *The Ties That Bind* includes footage shot by Friedrich in both 16mm and super-8, stock footage of the aftermath of the Allied bombings of Germany in World War II, home movies of Friedrich's fam-

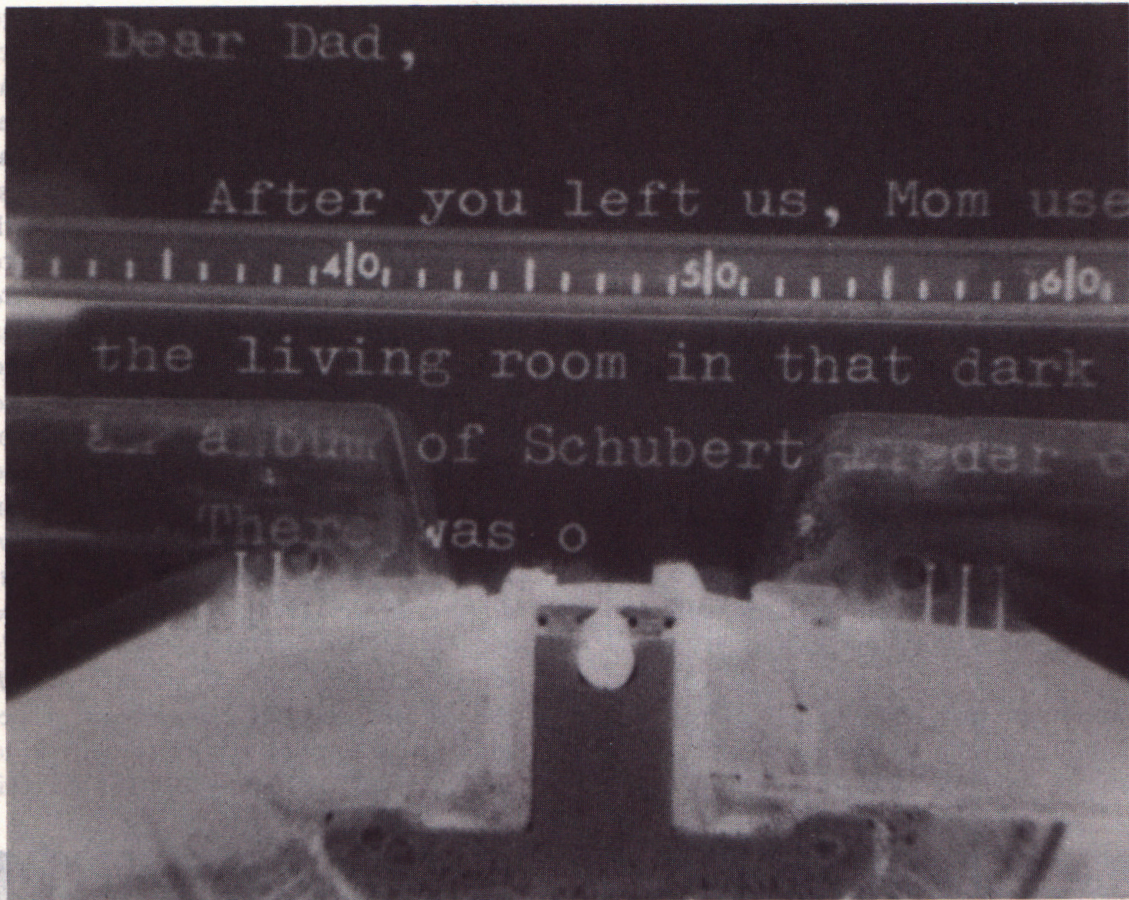
ily, a shot from an Edison film reproduced from a paper print at the United States Library of Congress, and imagery recorded directly off the television screen. *Sink or Swim* uses a comparable variety of image sources. In the first three minutes alone, Friedrich includes material from an old science film about conception and birth; home movie imagery of herself as a child, reworked on an optical printer (the pace of the imagery is carefully coordinated to the narrator's reading of a poem in the "Witness" section); as well as imagery she shot specifically for *Sink or Swim*. While we are aware that Friedrich is moving abruptly from one kind of imagery to another, her use of black and white, and her careful control of chiaroscuro and pace create a unity out of diversity.

More than just combining film material from a variety of historically separate sources, however, *The Ties That Bind* and

Sink or Swim combine elements of a range of North American independent film practices, including several traditions that have developed separately from one another and continue to be thought of, at least on this continent, as relatively distinct. Friedrich's candid interviews with her mother in *The Ties That Bind* are reminiscent of the school of *cinéma vérité* filmmaking so popular in North America (and elsewhere) during the 1960s and 1970s—especially that subset of *cinéma vérité* films in which filmmakers interrogate their personal histories, families, and current circumstances (as, for example, in Martha Coolidge's *David: Off and On* [1973], Amalie R. Rothschild's *Nana, Mom, and Me* [1974], Maxi Cohen's *Joe and Maxi* [1979], and Ross McElwee's *Backyard* [1982] and *Sherman's March* [1985]). Her gestural camerawork, especially in the Super-8 record of her trip to Germany and her 16mm record of her visit



Archival image from *The Ties That Bind*. Courtesy: Su Friedrich.



Friedrich types a letter in *Sink or Swim*. Courtesy: Su Friedrich.

to a woman's demonstration at the Seneca Army Depot in upstate New York, is related to the personal filmmaking tradition of the American avant-garde (e.g., Mekas, Brakhage, Baillie), and her use of texts scratched directly into the emulsion is reminiscent of Brakhage's scratched titles and the avant-garde tradition of direct imagery developed and maintained by Len Lye, Harry Smith, Carolee Schneemann, Paul Sharits, Diana Barrie, Roberta Friedman, and others. *The Ties That Bind* is both a documentary and an avant-garde film.

Sink or Swim combines separate traditions within the North American film avant-garde. Again, Friedrich's gestural camerawork recalls Brakhage, Baillie, and Mekas, and her exquisite use of black and white seems related to Andrew Noren and Peter Hutton. Her decision to arrange the stories of her childhood alphabetically

seems an allusion to what has come to be called "structural film," and in particular to Hollis Frampton's alphabetically organized *Zorns Lemma* (1970). Indeed her decision to use a rigorously formal structure for the new film relates to the desire of Frampton, Yvonne Rainer, and others to carefully control those dimensions of their emotional lives that find their way into their films. *Sink or Swim* is an expressionistic, personal film involving intimate aspects of Friedrich's family life and a rigorously structured, frequently self-reflexive formal film that exploits the sensual pleasures of the mechanics and materials of filmmaking.

Finally, Friedrich's combination of normally separate modes of avant-garde practice in clearly feminist films simultaneously critiques dimensions of this previous work and makes *The Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim* interesting addi-

tions to that series of feminist films that have redirected the formal options explored by earlier, mostly male avant-gardists: films such as Yvonne Rainer's *Film About a Woman Who . . .* (1974) and *Privilege* (1990), Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman . . .* (1975), and Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977).

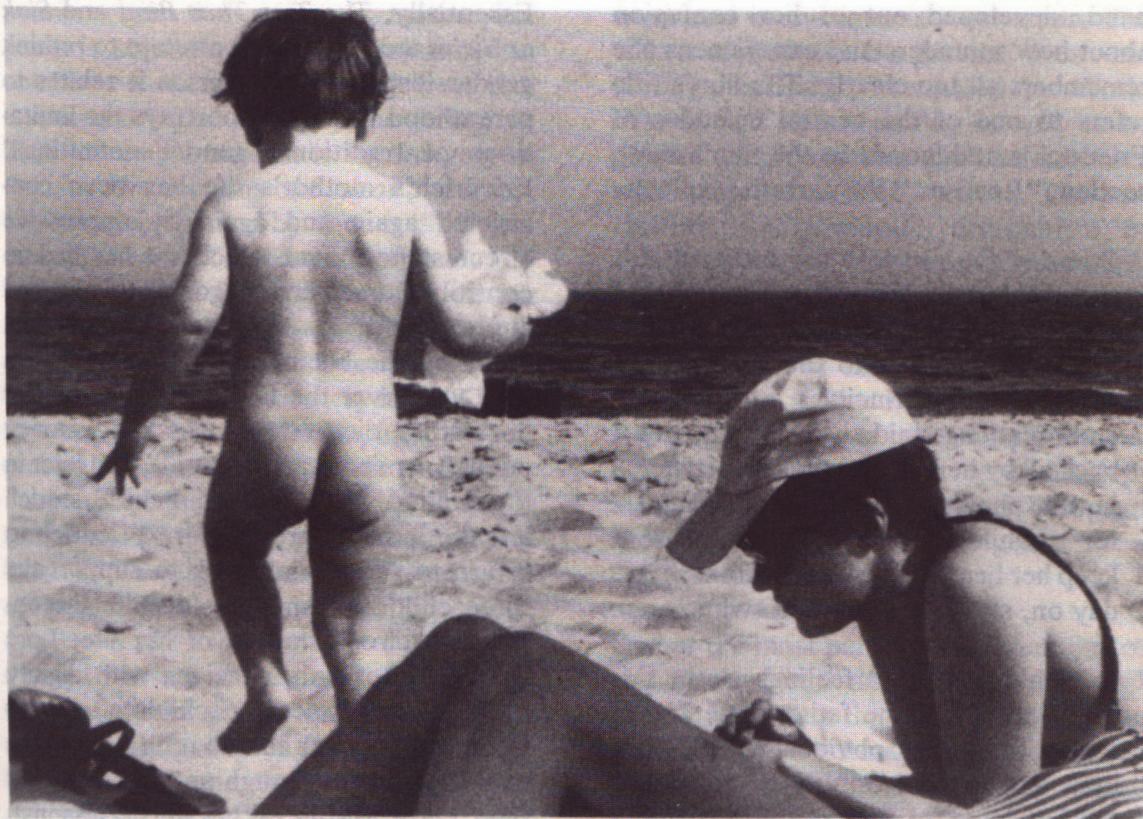
Friedrich's instinct and practice has been to critique all these previous traditions, to reject what seems counterproductive in them and to use their valuable dimensions in the service of progressive ends. Her films provide experiences within which we can discover the connections between what is conventionally thought to be separate—the unities within diversities—on every level.

3.

So far, I have focused on the stylistic and structural levels of Friedrich's work, but

the same pattern is evident if one explores *The Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim* as companion pieces that together elaborate Friedrich's critique of her parents.

Essentially, making *The Ties That Bind* was an attempt to break through the barriers between Friedrich and her mother created by the daughter's embarrassment with her German heritage and, specifically, by her suspicion that her mother might not have functioned in a noble, or at least respectable, way during the years that led to the Holocaust. (Those of us with German ancestry who grew up in the wake of the Holocaust almost inevitably feel conflicted: did our genetic inheritance render us complicit with the Nazis in some way?) Su Friedrich's interview with Lore Friedrich, her journey to Germany (to her mother's native Ulm, to Dachau, and to Berlin—symbol of her own divided psyche) was a means of breaking through to a deeper understanding of her mother's experiences (and her courage in remaining



Still from *Sink or Swim*. Courtesy: Su Friedrich.

anti-Nazi), as well as of her own childhood and her current political activities. While *The Ties That Bind* is the record of a personal struggle, it has considerable meaning for all of us who share Friedrich's German heritage, and really, for those of any heritage. The parallels and historical relationships Friedrich exposes between events in Germany in the 1930s and recent developments in the United States remind us that all modern nations have participated in holocausts and have the potential to instigate further horrors.

Similarly, making *Sink or Swim* was Friedrich's attempt to come to terms with the barriers between her and the father she saw little of after he divorced her mother, or more precisely, to penetrate the barriers within herself that had developed as a result of her parents' broken marriage. Before making *The Ties That Bind*, Friedrich had been separated from her mother and from her German heritage; there were dimensions of herself she didn't know. *Sink or Swim*, on the other hand, developed out of her confusion about how to understand experiences she remembers all too clearly. The film's title refers to one of the central episodes of Friedrich's childhood. In the film's ninth section, "Realism," the narrator explains,

One day the girl told her father that she wanted to learn to swim. That evening they went to the university pool. He took her to the deep end, explained the principles of kicking and breathing, said she'd have to get back all by herself and then tossed her in. She panicked and thrashed around for a while, but finally managed to keep her head above water. From that day on, she was a devoted swimmer.

Friedrich's conflicted feelings about this episode are clear: the father's method of teaching the girl is obviously cold, even brutal, and yet not only does the young Friedrich learn to swim, she remains a devoted swimmer all her life. In fact, in

the final alphabetical passage in *Sink or Swim*, she returns to a lake where, years before, the family had vacationed and she had seen her father swim all the way across. She decides to swim the lake herself, but halfway across she stops, and finally, in what appears to be a rejection of her father, swims back to shore and to her friends, while remembering her father, years before, beating "a slow and steady path away from her through the dark orange water." That Friedrich, as a mature woman, turns her back on what she had come to feel her father expected of her, suggests her coming to terms with herself, and yet, since swimming halfway across the lake and back is the same as swimming all the way across, the irony is that she has confirmed her father's accomplishment (and fulfilled his expectation of her) in the very act of rejecting him. This contradiction in her feelings about her father and his way of functioning in the world is evident throughout the film.

Essentially, *The Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim* are Friedrich's attempt to rethink gender, especially insofar as it relates to parenthood. Each film portrays the limitations of traditional gender definitions. Friedrich's mother's life has been constricted again and again by oppressive circumstances over which she has had no control. Her desire to go to college and study music was thwarted first in Germany by the Nazis (and by the guardian who took over the family's finances after her father died; there was only money enough for secretarial school), and later in the United States, when Paul Friedrich left the family, forcing Lore Friedrich to return to secretarial work to support the three children. And yet, despite the oppressive circumstances of her life, Lore Friedrich not only survives with dignity but successfully sees her children to better lives. She is never able to return to college to study music (though as *The Ties That Bind* ends, she is taking music lessons), but her children are able to attend college,

and indeed, her creative urges are embodied in Su Friedrich's filmmaking career. *The Ties That Bind* is, essentially, an emblem of Lore Friedrich's final victory.

On the other hand, Paul Friedrich's life, while also determined in important ways by circumstances beyond his control (he met Lore Friedrich while stationed in Germany immediately after World War II), is characterized by opportunity and achievement. He attends college and becomes a widely known figure in anthropology and linguistics (in "Discovery" the narrator describes Friedrich's trip to the library to read one of her father's articles, "The Linguistic Reflex of Social Change: From Tsarist to Soviet Russian Kinship," written the same year he left Lore Friedrich).¹ And yet, what his success reveals to his daughter is a pattern of callousness and self-indulgence that reconfirms the most conventional cultural stereotypes of "maleness."

For Su Friedrich, the only solution is to pursue a life that reiterates neither her parent's successes nor their failures, but combines elements of both their lives into a new and productive psychic amalgam. This solution is implicit in the imagery of the only two sections of *Sink or Swim* that are not accompanied by sound: "Y Chromosome" and "X Chromosome." The imagery for "Y Chromosome" is an exquisite textural shot of a white fluffy material, a close-up of a milkweed pod being opened by hand. The imagery in "X Chromosome" is a shot of an elephant's trunk picking up a peanut. On one level this imagery is fitting for the gender of the Y (male) and X (female) chromosomes: the hand in "Y Chromosome" is scattering seeds, and the elephant is ingesting a seed.

And yet, at the same time, the imagery defies standard gender expectations: the soft, textural quality of the imagery in "Y Chromosome" and the phallic quality of the elephant's trunk would, I expect, lead any viewer not clear about the gender of X

and Y chromosomes to identify the shots incorrectly. As these shots suggest, the crucial issue for Friedrich is not to privilege one gender over another, but to reconstruct our understanding of what gender means so that we can see that each woman and man combines both genders and that in this combination they are more fundamentally alike than different. Only by coming to terms with what unites us can we contribute to a societal evolution that will provide both the continuity and the breadth of options all healthy human beings require.

Macrocosm

On one level, macrocosmic dimensions of *The Ties That Bind* and *Sink or Swim* are, no doubt, already evident. In both films (or in the two films together, if one thinks of them as companion pieces), Friedrich makes clear that what has happened in the personal arena of her family life is both analogous to, and a part of, what has happened in the international arena. The trajectories of both her parents' lives were in large measure determined by World War II and its aftermath, as well as by gender definitions that are common to a wide range of modern cultures. The particular macrocosmic dimension of Friedrich's work I want to discuss here, however, has specifically to do with changes that are currently taking place in many sectors of the world (and indeed, that took us to the Flaherty Seminar in Riga) and the way in which these changes are embodied in a certain recent development in North American and European independent film: the emergence of a "global cinema."

One of the most pervasive conventions of film history, and one of the least questioned, is the fact that films are nationally defined: there are American films, Russian films, German films, Japanese films, Swedish films, etc. To some degree, this has been a function of language, but it

historically precedes and continues to defy the use of language in film: "Russian film," "American film," and "French film" precede the coming of sound; and films continue to be identified geographically, even when they are made in a language common to multiple nations. "Spanish cinema" doesn't include films made in Mexico, and films made in Quebec are not "French" but "Quebécois." Particular films made in particular nations may be exported to other nations, and in some instances may become as popular there as at home (Chaplin was a particularly good instance of this), but generally speaking, film history has not been international in any but the most limited sense. Insofar as the production process has been "international," it has involved directors and an army of technicians and performers arriving in a foreign, often Third World locale, having purchased the right to take over until they have achieved those ends necessary for the ultimate maximization of profits. The process has been analogous to any other form of imperial exploitation.

Of course, there are exceptions to the process I describe; and over the years various developments have been aimed at internationalizing cinema, particularly in the area of film exhibition and distribution. One of these is the film society (or ciné club) movement that developed in Europe in the 1920s, and subsequently in North America. Film societies were a reaction to the domination of the international film market by a few national film industries (and by Hollywood, most obviously). The early film societies in Paris, and their successful imitators in Amsterdam and London, as well as the long-lived New York film society, Cinema 16 (1947-1963), existed precisely for the purpose of exhibiting types of films that were commercially unavailable, either because of economic realities or because of censorship restrictions. Various factors have conspired to bring an end to the film society movement, though vestiges remain (for example, the network of alternative screening spaces in

major cities and at colleges and universities in North America).

Another important step in the direction of a more fully international cinema has been the proliferation of film festivals, where producers, distributors, and other film-interested people converge for brief periods to develop a more complete sense of what is happening on the international scene and, especially, which of these developments might offer profitable marketing opportunities. Many nations now sponsor international film festivals, and while the emphasis on the conventional and commercial remains pervasive, some festivals have made a substantial place for cinematic alternatives: the Berlin Film Festival's Forum des Jungen Films and Leipzig's D.O.K. (International Dokumentarund Kurzfilmwoche für Kino und Fernsehen), for instance.

In recent years, the movement toward internationalism has also had an effect on film production; a variety of films that reflect a desire for a more fully multicultural cinema have been appearing in North America and Europe. While it is far from the most extensively international instance of this development, Su Friedrich's *The Ties That Bind* is well worth mentioning in this context. Indeed, we might call the film a "premonition" of global cinema. The narrative structure of *The Ties That Bind* involves two related journeys across international borders: Lore Friedrich's journey from Germany to the United States after World War II, and Su Friedrich's journey from New York to Ulm, Dachau, and Berlin. The interpersonal boundaries between Friedrich and her mother could only be penetrated by Su Friedrich's willingness to confront what her mother's journey meant by retracing her mother's trek out of Germany. Su Friedrich's journey is, of course, simultaneously geographic and historical. She crosses the "borders" of both space and time and discovers that the connections between "there" and "here" and between

“then” and “now” are quite real, that she is part of a historical and geographic continuity within which all the issues that confronted the mother continue to confront the daughter. Friedrich’s journey allows her to be more faithful to the history of two individual women of a specific ethnic heritage living in particular areas of particular nations and to the commonality—among women, among people—revealed by their experiences. As Friedrich has said recently, “You get to something that’s universal by being very specific.”²²

The Ties That Bind is distinguished from Friedrich’s other films, and from most independent cinema I’m aware of, by the centrality of the idea of developing a filmic structure oriented to the crossing of geographic and historical boundaries toward a fuller understanding of both difference and commonality. But there are other instances of such a procedure, some of them considerably more elaborate than Friedrich’s. There are for example: Warren Sonbert’s *The Carriage Trade* (1972) and *Friendly Witness* (1989)—immense montages of imagery made by Sonbert as a “friendly witness” in various locations in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia—and Yvonne Rainer’s *Journeys From Berlin/1971* (1980), a film she developed and shot while living in Berlin and travelling in Europe, in which Rainer counterpoints a variety of journeys (and characters’ discussions of journeys) by revolutionaries of recent history (the Baader-Meinhof Gang in Germany) and the past (the American Alexander Berkman, who attempted to assassinate Henry Clay Frick, and the Russian Vera Zasulich, who tried to kill Trepov). Other examples include: Johan van der Keuken’s *The Way South* (1981), in which van der Keuken reveals his experiences meeting with disenfranchised people while journeying in the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Egypt; Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* (1982), a complex counterpoint of imagery recorded in Japan and in Africa; Trinh T.

Minh-ha’s *Naked Spaces: Living Is Round* (1985), in which Trinh exposes our ignorance of Africa by revealing cultural differences and continuities in Senegal, Mauritania, Togo, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Benin; Yervant Granikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi’s *From the Pole to the Equator* (1986), which recycles the global travel footage of Italian imperialist cinematographer, Luca Comerio, into a film which allows us to see through his imagery to dimensions of the European, African, and Asian cultures Comerio filmed that he himself was, apparently, unaware of; and Godfrey Reggio’s *Powaqqatsi* (1988), a paean to the beauty and dignity of physical labor in the Southern Hemisphere (specifically, in Peru, Brazil, Kenya, India, and Nigeria).

By far, the most extensive attempt at a global film, however, is Peter Watkins’s 14½-hour *The Journey*, which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in 1987. *The Journey* was conceived and executed as an international process, and the finished work is remarkably flexible and instructive. More than any of the films I’ve mentioned, *The Journey* was a conscious attempt at a global film. Historically it developed out of the suppression of Watkins’s *The War Game* by the British Broadcasting Company in 1966 because of that film’s explicitness in portraying a nuclear holocaust, and Watkins’s obvious attempt to use filmmaking to produce an immediate, major social change.

Nuclear holocaust is one major subject of *The Journey*, though in this instance the goal was not to dramatize such an event, but to use the process of filmmaking as a means of activating those who participated in the film to take personal and social actions that would help create a world in which nuclear holocaust would not be a concern. To produce the film, Watkins involved groups of people who had frequently shown interest in his films and developed other groups of collaborators in locations he had never visited.

When he was ready to shoot, Watkins had organized production groups in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Tahiti, Japan, Mozambique, the Soviet Union, Sweden, Norway, Germany, France, and Scotland. Fund raising was carried out in all the more affluent locations, and local collaborators helped arrange for Watkins to talk, at length, with at least one individual family in each country.

Before the shooting for *The Journey* had even begun, it was clear that Watkins had redefined the film director's job. In his view, the director should be a person who moves through international and linguistic boundaries to work with people in various nations on international problems. The arms race and the threat of nuclear holocaust was a central focus of the film because it was an issue that demonstrated the internationality of current problems with particular clarity. But many other issues are dealt with as well. Watkins assumes that in a modern technological world not only are each nation's problems everyone's problems, but that each problem is part of all other problems: the arms race relates to hunger; hunger relates to education; education relates to the environment . . .

Near the end of *The Journey*, the various families Watkins has spent time with see each other on video, and in one instance a Scottish family (the Smillies) begins to exchange videotapes and visits with the Kolosov family in Leningrad. As the film ends, these families are in the process of developing a lasting bond. For Watkins, this bonding *is* the issue. Modern media technology has given us the power to develop new forms of intercommunication that can allow average citizens to exchange views and concerns with other citizens throughout the world, *without* the mediation of governments or major film and television production companies. From Watkins's point of view, fundamental improvements in the problems that plague us can only be made if individual citizens come to know and value other

individual citizens throughout the world. *The Journey* challenges those of us who make and distribute film to develop the means whereby those with less access to technology than we have can use this technology to work with others to understand their commonality (while respecting their distinct ethnic histories and geographic differences), and ultimately to take action to ameliorate their common problems.

While *The Journey* is the preeminent global film to date, it only begins to suggest the possibilities of a global approach. One can easily imagine film projects that might effectively confront one important dimension of the Watkins film (and the other films I've mentioned in this section) that reconfirms rather than critiques convention. Though *The Journey* involved thousands of people in many locations, one man was in charge. Of course, the very far-flung nature of Watkins's project almost necessitated that; no matter how open Watkins was to those he worked with, someone would need to maintain a firm grip on the process. Nevertheless, Watkins's position as producer-director can be seen as a vestige of the very forces of imperialism and colonialism that have made new forms of progressive, global cinema important.

I can imagine at least two directions the urge toward global cinema might take. One is implied by the exchange of videotapes by the Smillies and the Kolosovs during the final reels of the *The Journey*: people in various parts of the world could develop forms of collaborative interchange. To a limited extent, the world of independent animation has modelled such interchange in the recent "jam" phenomenon ("jam," the jazz term, refers to various performers who make individual contributions to an overall effect that is equally the product of all the individual contributors). *Academy Leader Variations* (1987), which involved 20 animators from the United States, Switzerland, Poland, and China, and *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was produced in 1988 for Amnesty International to

accompany a touring rock concert (dozens of animators from around the world contributed segments) are distinguished instances of this phenomenon. Of course, *The Journey*, *Academy Leader Variations*, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and other jam films have been produced by individuals and (with the exception of *The Journey*) tend to assemble only "experts," animators with established reputations.

A second direction involves the recognition that in the modern world nearly every individual nation includes a range of racial and ethnic groups, each with its own heritage and identity. Filmmakers could tap into the international vein simply by developing projects that focus on the interaction of various *intra*-national groups.³ Watkins attempted to move in this direction in those segments of *The Journey* shot in upstate New York (in the community dramatization of an African-American family's evacuation to an all-white neighborhood), but without real success. Of course, the emergence of ethnic cinema and video in North America and elsewhere is an exciting recent development, but so far as I can tell, while this development has to some degree "internationalized" the general film/video scene, collaboration among ethnic groups has not yet become a significant pattern.

Notes

¹ Reprinted in Paul Friedrich, *Language, Context and the Imagination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1979).

² See my interview with Friedrich in *The Independent* (Dec. 1990), p. 29.

³ I am indebted to Christine Choy for this idea.

Film Availability

The Ties That Bind and *Sink or Swim* are available from Drift (83 Warren St. #5, New York 10007-1057; 212-766-3713) and Women Make Movies; *Nana, Mom, and Me* from New Day; *Backyard*, *Sherman's March*, *Joe and Maxi*, and *Film About a Woman Who . . .* from First Run; *Privilege* from Zeitgeist (200 Waverly Place, Suite 1, New York 10014), *Journeys from Berlin/1971*, *Riddles of the Sphinx*, *From the Pole to the Equator*, *Academy Leader Variations* from the Museum of Modern Art; *Jeanne Dielman, Sans Soleil*, *Powaqqatsi* from New Yorker; *The Carriage Trade*, *Friendly Witness* from Canyon Cinema and Filmmakers' Cooperative; *The Way South* from Cornell Cinema (104 Willard Straight Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853); *Naked Spaces: Living Is Round* from Women Make Movies; *The Journey* from Canyon Cinema; *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* from Amnesty International.