CHAPTER 2

Friendship

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Friendship is deep knowledge of another. Philosopher David Annis emphasizes that there is an “epistemic aspect” to friendship, a “sharing of information about one’s experiences, beliefs, values, and so on; friendship requires getting to know the person” (1987, 349). Friendship, then, is a relationship that aspires to be intimate, personal, caring, and empathetic; it is a practice of self-disclosure and vulnerability that aspires to attachment and connection.

While friendships can be underpinned by different pulls—convenience, shared location, mutual interest—philosophers have, for generations, celebrated friendships based on shared ethical orientations. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, for example, Aristotle (384–322 BCE) praised friendships based on shared virtue. In these relationships, friends are drawn to each other precisely because they share each other’s ethical orientation, and, as Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett note, in choosing a friend who shares our “virtues,” “friendship is based on self-love . . . [because] our choice of the friend is based on an appreciation of the similarity of the other to oneself” (1998, 506). For Aristotle, these friendships are noble, valuable, and worthy of time and care.

Other philosophers suggest that friendship is a particular ethical relationship because of its mutuality. Eric Hoffman, for example, notes that “friends . . . have thrown their fortunes together to some extent, and within the sphere of mutuality they have established might discharge their debt by the simple recognition that the other friend would do the same if the situation were reversed” (1984, 111). Friendship, then, binds us to another and makes us responsible to each other ethically. Other philosophers have argued that this makes friendship a unique relationship of vulnerability. As philosopher Sandra Lynch writes, “We are vulnerable to pain and disappointment in friendship, since friends have in common with enemies the capacity to hurt us” (2005, x). It is the capacity of friends to hurt each other, the “vulnerability and fragility” of the relationship, that makes friendship both potentially transformative and potentially risky (5).

This chapter builds on the philosophical literature concerning friendship’s challenges and pleasures to theorize and celebrate a different kind of friendship: that which requires us to unravel our assumptions and to clear the colonial, sexist, ableist, and racial debris from our perceptual apparatus to truly see one another. Friendship is imagined as a relationship that allows for the possibility of intimacy and affiliation across borders and boundaries, including gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nation. The chapter first introduces the concept of dissident
friendships and then examines a dissident female friendship as portrayed in the Indian film *Itihaash konna* (Daughters of history) (1999). The chapter ends with a section on transnational feminism, film, and ethical encounters.

**DISSIDENT FRIENDSHIPS**

Postcolonial theorist Leela Gandhi’s term *dissident friendship* describes friendships that cross boundaries and reveal that power does not monopolize our intimate lives (2006, 10). Gandhi’s concept of dissident friendship builds on Aristotle’s well-known insistence on *philia* (friendship) as a model for a political citizenship based on similarity and familial relations in the household. Gandhi also invokes the work of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) on friendship and reads the Aristotelian *philia* as a basis for modernity’s “logic of political similitude” that excludes “the Other” (Gandhi 2006, 28–29). The alternative she embraces derives from her reading of Epicurean *philoxenia*, or “guest friendship,” which explicitly welcomes the stranger and is thus open to “the Other” (29).

Some scholars have posited male-male friendships as particularly dissident. French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1926–1984), for instance, argues that where women have long had access to each other’s bodies, “man’s body has been forbidden to other men in a much more drastic way. … It’s only in certain periods and since the nineteenth century that life between men not only was tolerated but rigorously necessary: very simply, during war” (1997, 139). Foucault then celebrates the affective bonds and deep friendship that can emerge through male-male intimacy and suggests that these bonds can help forge new forms of political life. He thus advocates what he terms “friendship as a way of life” and celebrates the creative kinds of coalitions and affiliations that can emerge through the intimacy of friendship.

This chapter breaks from Foucault’s investment in male-male intimacy and friendship and instead focuses on friendships between women. Philosophical discourses on friendship in Europe and North America tend to draw on the concept’s origins in classical thought, which characterizes it as ethical, public, and exclusively masculine. Given this categorical exclusion, are all women’s friendships by definition “dissident”? Scholars have also drawn attention to “guest friendship”—friendship with “the Other”—raising important questions about the nature of affiliation: can cross-cultural friendships sidestep or even undo the effects of patriarchy and imperialism, or do they reinscribe them? Does friendship’s basis in affect offer a challenge to liberal individualism and neoliberal notions and practices of power?

Women of color and transnational feminists have focused on differences between, among, and within women, including cross-cultural differences. Feminist theorist Maria Lugones (1995) has described such friendships—when they are between women—as “bonding among women across differences” (141). For Lugones, such friendships are particularly powerful because they allow “the radical theoretical and practical reconstruction of the relations among women” (141). Understood as such, dissident friendship recognizes the logic of plural realities and remains open to the possibility of self-reflexivity and transformation in perception. That is, instead of the impulse to make the Other into an image of one’s own, in friendship “one comes to see oneself as constructed in that reality [the Other’s reality] in ways different from the ways one is constructed in the reality one started from. Thus pluralist friendship enhances self knowledge” (143). This “enhancement” involves a mutually meaningful and empathetic relationship with the Other. It is a demanding position because one dislodges one’s own centrality and strives to work across inequalities rather than
simply acknowledging them; but it is a rewarding, transformative, and politically revolu-
tionary position. In dissident friendship, then, lies the possibility of our resistance to the
divisive and fragmenting lies of structural power; the potential for global compassion,
generosity, and empathy and love; and the foundation of a world that works on behalf of life.

While alliance, community, and solidarity are amply discussed in literature dealing
with social change, friendship is often believed to be outside the realm of social and
political transformation. Consider instead the possibility that friendship—especially dis-
sident friendship—allows for the expression of crucially important emotions such as love
and vulnerability, which more formal political alliances often dismiss.

FILM STUDY: **_ITIHAASH KONNA_**

Bangladeshi feminist director Shameem Akhtar’s film *Itihaash konna* (Daughters of history)
(1999) is a visual representation of the political possibilities of dissident friendship. Akhtar’s
film represents the ideal of lasting social and political change through the practice of female
friendship. In particular, the film brings into focus the affective power of relationships
between individuals of heterogeneous backgrounds with discrepant power positions in
society, which can elicit a deeper understanding of human connection. *Itihaash konna* thus
makes visible the possibilities of dissident friendships and the radical transformative political
potentiality of intimacies between women.

*Itihaash konna* focuses on the Partition of British India, which in 1947 created two new
nation-states: India and Pakistan. The eastern part of the new Islamic state of Pakistan
suffered under the political, cultural, and economic domination of West Pakistan until
March 1971, when political discontent and cultural nationalism led to a military assault by
the West Pakistan army and the subsequent declaration of East Pakistan’s independence and
renaming as Bangladesh. Even though the two wings of Pakistan shared an Islamic religious
identity, they were vastly different in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. The
population in the eastern wing was predominantly Bengali, whom the West Pakistan state
perceived as insufficiently Islamic and too influenced by Hindu religion and culture. In
December 1971, Bangladesh became an independent nation after a nine-month war.
Akhtar’s film illuminates the complicated histories and politics of nation-states, war, and
gender as they impinge on interpersonal relationships, and it draws attention to seemingly
minor relationships between women that defy the logic of colonial and nationalist hierar-
chies. The film offers a range of insights about dissident feminist friendships that are
meaningful, empathetic, reciprocal, and ultimately transformative.

*Itihaash konna* centers on a dissident friendship between Lalarukh (Sara Zaker), a
Pakistani researcher working on war crimes carried out by the West Pakistan military on
Bengalis in East Pakistan during the 1971 war, and Monika (Rahnuma Ahmed), her Bengali
activist friend whose family survived the violence. In the film, both women experience
transformations of consciousness through their intertwined struggles. As a Pakistani, Lalar-
ukh bears the burden of the genocide unleashed in 1971 by her own government and its
military forces. Yet, with deep roots in East Pakistan and as a woman, she finds herself in a
conflicted position: on the one hand, she is empathetic toward the war-affected Bengali
families, particularly her childhood friend Monika; yet on the other, she must make sense of
the silence and sanctioned ignorance of her own family during the war. The two women’s
contrapuntal trajectories during and after the war—as part of the oppressor and oppressed
nations—form the basis of a dissident alliance.
Akhtar’s film is noteworthy because it emphasizes a reckoning with the Other, not at the state or juridical level, but through interpersonal relationships, through friendship. Bypassing recognizable visual representation of atrocities committed by the West Pakistan army and avoiding retributive violence, the film is more interested in human encounters where the self-Other relation generates not hostility but an obligation of love borne of politics, care, and reconciliation. The film thus opens up a conversation about a different self-Other relationship between the divided people of South Asia and about the restorative and transformative possibilities of friendship.

One of the few films about the Bangladesh Liberation War directed by a woman, and foregrounding the standpoint of women, *Itihaash konna* deals with genocide, rape, and war children through the lens of moral reckoning and responsibility on both sides. The reckoning is explored through the long and beleaguered friendship between a Bengali and a Pakistani woman, between Monika and Lalarukh. The intimate relationship—though severed at the bloody birth of Bangladesh—reflects the intertwined histories of two nations. Monika was born in Rawalpindi, West Pakistan, and Lalarukh in Dhaka, East Pakistan. They studied together in Dhaka until Lalarukh’s family left for West Pakistan in March 1971 only days prior to Operation Searchlight, the first massive and brutal strike by the West Pakistan army against Bengali civilians, including at Dhaka University.

Many years after the independence and formation of Bangladesh, the two friends reacquaint in London as adults and activists in a seminar on genocide. Lalarukh then comes to Dhaka to conduct research and stays with Monika, who is archiving an oral history project about the women survivors of the war. Lalarukh’s return to Dhaka, twenty-eight years after her family left on the cusp of the war, is bittersweet. She expresses her noble objective to a stoic Monika: “I intend to work for an apology [at the state level].” Monika is skeptical of Lalarukh’s intentions to learn about war-affected families in her brief one-week visit. And she is hesitant to rekindle their friendship.

In one scene, the two are seated on Monika’s bed. Monika looks fatigued, bearing the weight of the war’s devastation. Lalarukh probes, “I want to know everything. I have a personal stake in this.” This recalls an earlier scene in which Lalarukh insists that she has a right to return to this land, as her mother was Bengali. A stubborn Monika responds, “Two people can have totally different experiences of a war. These distinct experiences can change a relationship forever.” Monika presses her friend about Pakistani silence surrounding the atrocities committed during 1971. Lalarukh tries to defend her position, saying the then government had painted Bengalis as separatists in league with India. Her family was in the dark, says Lalarukh, given the news blackout about what was happening in East Pakistan. But Monika reminds her of the international movement on behalf of Bangladeshi liberation: Tariq Ali (1943–), a Pakistani intellectual, openly criticized the military repression. George Harrison (1943–2001) of the Beatles and Indian sitar maestro Ravi Shankar (1920–2012) organized benefit concerts in August 1971 at Madison Square Garden in New York, which were later featured in a 1972 documentary film. Monika admonishes Lalarukh for having no knowledge of these efforts and for her silence and complicity.

Lalarukh is further confounded by the unspeakable coldness of her friend’s family. The once lively house she used to visit in her childhood seems shrouded in damp and gloom. Monika’s father, Nanu (an affectionate term for the maternal grandfather), refuses to meet Lalarukh face-to-face, even though he otherwise ensures proper hospitality for the guest. The silence is finally broken as the family sits down for a feast on the day of Lalarukh’s departure for Pakistan. Once again, Monika and Lalarukh, seated across from each other, debate the merit of an apology from the Pakistan state and acknowledgment of war crimes; and then
Monika’s father, seated at the head of the table, confronts Lalarukh. He asks whether she would forgive the rape of her own sixteen-year-old daughter: “If she is raped, would you be able to forgive [the rapist]?” Lalarukh lowers her glance and admits, “No.” She adds, “But I would want a trial and punishment for the perpetrator.” Nanu (Abul Khair) responds, “What about the victim? How would justice be served for her?”

The confrontation leads to the revelation by Nanu that Ananya (Nasrin Siraj), daughter of his younger daughter, Konika, is a child of rape; Konika committed suicide months after the birth of Ananya. Konok Khala (Bonna Lohani), the adopted daughter of the family, who was in the same “rape camp” as Konika, quietly exits the frame during this encounter. It is she who raised Ananya following Konika’s suicide. A member of the Hindu community, Konok’s entire family was massacred in 1971, and her exit from the gathering and the frame during this scene is critical. Konok is a birangona, meaning “brave woman” or “war heroine,” and her departure emphasizes the question of acceptance and justice for the victims of sexual violence, a question that remained largely unresolved if not unattended in the social and political discourses following the Bangladesh Liberation War. During the war, thousands of women and girls were tortured in rape camps and army barracks. Rape as a weapon of war was deployed to terrorize the Bengali-speaking Muslim majority and the Hindu minority of Bangladesh. Following independence, the term birangona was bestowed on the survivors of sexual violence by the government of Bangladesh in order to honor the women for their role in the freedom struggle. The label frequently served to further ostracize the women, and their reintegration into society remained incomplete.

Akhtar’s Itihaash konna emphasizes a reckoning with the Other through suturing torn interpersonal relationships. An irreconcilable conflict was institutionalized at the moment of original trauma, that is, when “war babies” were declared tainted and ejected from the nation by state-sponsored postwar policies of abortion or foreign adoption. Lalarukh’s arrival opens up the conversation about Ananya, the war child, and Konika, her mother who committed suicide following her birth. Unlike the state, however, the family unquestioningly accepts Ananya (whose name means “exceptional”) as their own. Lalarukh’s mission is to write about the genocide and mobilize a movement for a national apology. Monika finds common ground in that objective, as it would imply recognition of war crimes—even though her father, the elder survivor of war, is not so sure if that would be meaningful for victims.

At Ananya’s first meeting with Lalarukh, when Lalarukh introduces herself as a foreigner (bideshi), Ananya corrects her by saying, “Not a foreigner, a Pakistani”—hinting at the intimacy and historical significance of her identity. Ananya becomes Lalarukh’s guide and research assistant during her stay, taking her on a tour of the various war memorials and museums in the city. Lalarukh is overwhelmed by the intensity and enormity of the wartime atrocities and consequent losses. Ananya comforts her and, in turn, Lalarukh urges her to address her as tumi—the less formal version of the pronoun “you” reserved for friends. Ananya ponders the request and says, “It will take time.”

Ananya’s brief association with Lalarukh leads to a different kind of reckoning between the younger woman and her aunt, Monika. It is as though the latter comes to see the former in a new light, transformed into her own person. “You’ve grown up. I’ve never heard you speak like this,” says Lalarukh when Ananya raises the question of the somber household and lack of festivities there. Even though Monika and Ananya have shared a household for Ananya’s entire life, Monika comes to know her niece anew through Lalarukh’s visit. Ananya says, not without a hint of reproach, “You did not want to realize it.” Here, “it” refers to both Ananya’s transformation and the family’s conflicted past that shaped her. She asks her aunt
about Monika’s childhood friendship with Lalarukh, when everything was different and more exuberant—the house, Nanu, Monika. The film raises the question of an (im)possible union between Monika and Ananya and between Ananya and Lalarukh.

It is noteworthy that Lalarukh’s arrival leads to the opening of memories, breaking the silence in the house and taking steps toward healing. Unlike the state, however, both Monika and Lalarukh unquestioningly accept Ananya as family. Ananya’s full story can only be sensible if developed along with Lalarukh and Monika’s (im)possible union. Rather than relegating Ananya to the periphery, the film develops the conflicted relationships between the three women as representative of the historical conflict between woman and nation. The source of the hatred hinges on the original trauma of the rape of Bengali women and forced impregnation as a war strategy. The desire to expunge the enemy through state-led policies of abortion and foreign adoption institutionalized hatred of the Other. In this sense, Ananya’s union with Lalarukh (and Monika) is a feminine revisioning of history that includes the acceptance of the war child and a rejection of masculinist war narratives.

Most of the scenes depicting the encounter between the three women are staged in the home, the women facing each other in dialogue and often resorting to historical artifacts, objects, books, posters, and newspapers as props for communication. In a scene in which Ananya and Monika discuss the oral history project, where Monika is bent over on the floor looking at old newspapers, there is an attempt to bridge differences of time, hurt, and violence. Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has said that the condition of postcoloniality has to be understood as an “enabling violence,” like a child of rape:

Rape is something about which nothing good can be said. It is an act of violence. On the other hand, if there is a child, that child cannot be ostracized because it’s the child of rape. To an extent, the postcolonial is that. We see there a certain kind of innate historical enablement which one mustn’t celebrate, but toward which one has a deconstructive position, as it were. (1996, 19)

Ananya is a child of rape, an act of terrible violence, yet she and Monika are bound by a love that is healing; Ananya and Lalarukh are bound by a love that seeks reconciliation. The friendship between these three women—minor actors in history—is borne of a politics of love, healing, and justice.

Lalarukh’s return to Bangladesh stirs up repressed emotions, opens old wounds, and instigates an intimate as well as political reckoning across time, space, and history. Ananya comes to know the truth about her birth and the identity of Konok Khala, her surrogate mother. Nanu confronts Lalarukh about her quest for “justice” and asks whether the victims of 1971 will be appeased by it. Following this encounter, he takes out a dusty old picture of his daughter and places it on the bureau. He is finally able to openly display the photo of his dead daughter and face that painful history. Ananya comes to terms with the story of her birth, and her realization is inextricably interwoven with the individual and collective journeys of Monika and Lalarukh. Following her departure from Bangladesh, Lalarukh writes a letter to Monika from Pakistan admitting her own—and her family’s—complicity by not speaking up against the atrocities of 1971. The question of women survivors may remain incomplete, yet the healing begins with these women: Ananya continues to work on the oral history project with Lalarukh and Monika, becoming the bridge between women separated by the burden of historical conflict. Monika begins to look at Ananya in a new light and the two women come to the realization of their shared struggle. Lalarukh leaves with a
heavy heart, asking Monika and her family “to take care of Ananya.” The film’s soundtrack, by Shimul Yusuf, plays, “Tears of yesteryears as life goes on . . .”

Iitisaam konna provides an opportunity to read the complex machinations of gender, nation, and patriarchy, particularly as they operate between women of opposing national contexts, while exploring both the limits and possibilities of friendship in spite of these forces. More specifically, it enables a discussion of circumstances in which women’s loyalty to family, nation, and specific community structures complicate an alliance based on a “common” gender-based oppression. The film thus explores the contrapuntal histories of the oppressor-oppressed and the possibilities of cross-cultural dissident friendship within that context.

TRANSCONTINENTAL FEMINISM, FILM, AND ETHICAL ENCOUNTERS

Philosopher Shari Stone-Mediatore’s (2003) definition of transnational feminism—an analytical and political project that confronts far-reaching relations of domination that span but are not limited to political, economic, and cultural spheres—is a useful frame for considering Iitisaam konna’s representation of dissident friendship. A transnational feminist approach understands that women are part of various groups and thereby part of different struggles. Additionally, this approach suggests that women’s myriad struggles, whether individual or collective, are often inseparable from structural oppressions shaping their and their communities’ lives, such as colonization, patriarchy, and poverty. A transnational feminist lens provides a way to understand the paradoxical dynamic of conflict and cooperation that shapes women’s relations with one another. Despite being located on opposite sides of the Bengali nationalist struggle, and having suffered tremendous violence and loss that render their friendship a betrayal, in Iitisaam konna both Monika and Lalarukh seek historical acknowledgment of war crimes through documentation of its victims’ experiences and mobilizing awareness and support in order to elicit an apology from the Pakistani state. In the process, however, both must confront their own silences and complicities and engage in critical self-reflection if not transformation.

Feminist filmmakers and scholars have long engaged the complicated relationship of woman to nation. Professor of film and critical theory Kathleen McHugh states,

Women’s worldly space [is] not independent of country, of the national, but based on spatial paradox: they [are] at once inside, marginal, in the private sphere of the nation-state (within patriarchal ideas, institutions, and histories in which women have no place) and, at the same time, not contained by, in excess of that state by reason of these internal and internalized exclusions and difference. (2009, 112)

Women are thus both insider and outsider in nationalist and colonialist struggles, and to understand this complex and contradictory position requires a layered perspective.

McHugh locates “women’s place in cinema within transnational influences and relationships” in order to generate a broader understanding of “structures of opportunity,” ideological underpinnings, production, reception, and circulation of films that are feminist (126). This allows for a deeper understanding of the “worldly space” women occupy and the “internal” exclusions and difference that are particularly critical to feminist filmmaking. Seen within a transnational framework, where women’s wartime experiences can be placed within a global movement for justice, Akhtar’s sensitive treatment in Iitisaam konna
of war’s consequences for women is instrumental in mobilizing awareness and action while developing collective critique and resistance. The film can be seen as transformative in launching a dialogue about women’s experiences during the 1971 events within and beyond a nationalist and national framework and beyond a narrowly constructed notion of liberation.

*Itibaash konna* is part of a new genre of cultural production in Bangladesh that centers on gendered experiences of the nation and the larger transnational movement of healing and reconciliation, wherein femininity is the location of caring and nurturing. Rather than retributive justice, the focus of much political discourse in Bangladesh, the film looks at internal tensions, interpersonal healing, and gendered justice. *Itibaash konna* provides an imaginary feminine healing through the reflective, contested, and difficult interactions between women across nations. The film is thus instrumental in opening a conversation about the necessity of an “ethical reckoning” of the 1971 genocide. It also shows that friendship might be a realm in which such reckoning can occur. Lalarukh and Monika offer a dissident friendship—which bears witness to conflict and trauma—between women across national divides. Their reckoning brings with it the chance to recuperate forgotten histories—particularly for women.

Let us now return to the question of dissident friendship, community, and solidarity between women and further explore the circumstances in which these types of relationships are or are not trumped by the loyalties women have to their families, communities, or nations. Ideas about friendship and community in feminist discourse are complex. In political and feminist theorist Penny Weiss and philosopher Marilyn Friedman’s collection of essays, *Feminism and Community* (1995), the contributors distinguish between “traditional” and feminist communities. In traditional settings, they argue, significant relationships of female support and acts of resistance can coexist with hierarchical and exploitative ones, whereas internal struggles can also inhibit feminist communities from achieving the desired political transformation on behalf of women. These two settings are neither mutually exclusive nor completely antithetical. Rather, Weiss and Friedman suggest that “both can be the sites of genuine friendship, social support, and collaborative political activism among women” (1995, xii).

The spheres that Akhtar highlights in *Itibaash konna* are conflictual—the Bengali nationalist, the naïve Pakistani researcher—yet both positions are motivated by political activism and a certain pursuit of reconciliation. There also exist within these settings collaborative relationships among women who come from opposite ends of the spectrum, forming unexpected alliances. Weiss and Friedman (1995) caution that we should not engage in uncritical celebration of women’s agency and resistance within traditional communities but instead should listen carefully to women to glean their specific insights as women in the larger struggle for social transformation. While Lalarukh and Monika may not have achieved much—in the sense of official or lasting peace between the two nations in question—through their sometimes dissident, always conflicted alliance (or friendship), viewers come to learn how the two women’s identities (or positionalities) are each constituted through specific national and gender locations. These positionalities dictate the limits of the women’s agency and the risks each can take on behalf of women’s freedom. In the final reckoning, even Monika admits the value in Lalarukh’s work, which aims to raise awareness in Pakistan and globally so that the state is moved toward acknowledgment and ultimately apology for war crimes.

Feminist political theorist Iris Marion Young (1995) has argued for a broad understanding of individuality and community that does not pit one in negative relation to the
other. *Itihaash konna* allows us to expand this debate and recognize that women’s relationships are heterogeneous, complex, and conflicting, even as women strive for solidarity. The transformative interpersonal relationship—or dissident friendship—between Lalarukh and Monika, and between Ananya and Lalarukh, carries the seeds of healing and reconciliation that perhaps revolutionary uprisings or mass movements may not be capable of achieving. The solidarity hinted through friendship is a demanding ideal to strive for. Moreover, its attainment can be ambiguous and fleeting. These ephemeral moments nevertheless allude to “disruptive possibilities” (Friedman 1995, 200) and can lead to transformations in female consciousness in the broader and ongoing struggle to create more enabling conditions of care.

**Summary**

This chapter describes the forging of dissident female friendship in the midst of divisive political structures and across spatial and temporal borders. In so doing, it shows the political possibility of connection across constraints and underscores the radical potential of care, openness, and friendship. The chapter supports Leela Gandhi’s (2006) insistence on paying attention to dissident friendships precisely because friendships between individuals of heterogeneous backgrounds and with discrepant power positions in society can elicit a deeper understanding of human connection. These connections can also challenge and even undermine existing structures of domination.

Set in historical and contemporary contexts of imperial and national structures of inequality, the ideas of dissident cross-cultural alliance and friendship provide transformative visions of transnational solidarity and praxis. The war-inflected transnational friendship represented in *Itihaash konna* is not devoid of politics and tensions, yet it fosters a mutual concern and care. This chapter is thus motivated by an interest in fostering a transnational analytic of care: one that does not play into the politics of accommodation; is not defensive, reactionary, or silencing; and forms the uneven and asymmetrical planes in which dissident cross-cultural friendships, alliances, and solidarity practices—particularly within the interpersonal realm—are ever more urgent.

**Bibliography**


Chapter 2: Friendship


**FILMS**

*Guerilla.* Dir. Nasiruddin Yousuf Bachchu. 2011. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, a woman searches for her missing husband and simultaneously awakens to and becomes involved in the nationalist struggle.

*Ithiash konna.* Dir. Shameem Akhtar. 1999. The story of a dissident and transformative friendship between a Pakistani researcher on war crimes carried out by the West Pakistani military during the 1971 war on Bengalis and her Bengali activist friend whose family survived the violence.

*Maatir moina.* Dir. Tareque Masud. 2006. A family experiencing social and religious turmoil in East Pakistan at the cusp of the Bangladesh Liberation War.

*Meherjaan.* Dir. Rubaiyat Hossain. 2011. Three women—a war child, a birangona, and an adolescent—fall in love with a Pakistani soldier, and another woman marries a freedom fighter.