

BESIDES FAMILY
Extending the Orbit
of Psychic Development

Edited by

***Salman Akhtar, April Fallon,
and Rama Rao Gogineni***



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*To my childhood neighbors: the Chowdhrys, the Mirzas,
the Ransoms, and the clan of Raja Saheb Ramkot*
SA

*To an early mentor and now much loved friend:
Virginia Brabender*
AF

*To the buddies of my adolescent days: Rama Narasu,
Phanindra, and Jalipudi Prasad*
RRG

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Acknowledgments

In a simultaneous confirmation and refutation of the spirit of this book's title, *Besides Family*, its editors and contributors are unrelated to each other while belonging to the same psychoanalytic institute, namely the Philadelphia Center of Psychoanalysis. The cohort thus exemplifies what a sense of "family" without blood relations can achieve. Celebrating this accomplishment, we express our gratitude to our Center's director Dr. Samuel Wyche, chief administrator, Ms. Madelaine Sayko, and its program coordinator, Ms. Ashlyn Ernest. We also wish to acknowledge the benevolent protection of our academic interests by the chairmen of the three departments of psychiatry where each of us are respectively employed. Thus, we are grateful to Drs. John Lauriello (Jefferson Medical College), Wei Du (Drexel University School of Medicine), and Anthony Rostain (Cooper University Health Center). We also wish to mention Dr. Benjamin Parker-Goos for his looking up certain important bibliographic sources for us. Finally, we are thankful to Ms. Kelsey Leon for helping us prepare the manuscript of this book and assisting us with the copyediting process. Above all, we are in debt to our patients, teachers, and supervisees who gave us the knowledge contained here as well as to all the dramatis personae who figure in the pages of this book.

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In addition, she has researched and written on the development of disgust in children and adults, body image and eating disorders, the effects of childhood maltreatment, and attachment and adoption. In addition to her academic appointments, she maintains a private practice in Ardmore, Pennsylvania.

Theodore Fallon, MD is a faculty member of the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia. He has been a physician for more than thirty-five years, trained in understanding and working with families, children, adolescents, and adults. Dr. Fallon obtained his medical degree from the Pennsylvania State School of Medicine and did his psychiatric training at the University of Pittsburgh Medical College and at the University of Rochester Medical Center. He completed his adult and child psychoanalytic training at the Western New England Psychoanalytic Institute, affiliated with Yale University. He has extensive academic, clinical, and community-based experience. His training in many different modes and modalities of therapy allows him to select what will be most helpful for any particular person and situation. Dr. Fallon has published many significant papers on mourning, child development, psychoanalytic listening, and, more recently, a co-authored book, *Disordered Thought and Development: Chaos to Organization in the Moment* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). He maintains a private practice of adult and child psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in suburban Philadelphia.

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Introduction

The wisdom inherent in the old African saying that “It takes a village to raise a child” mobilizes and sustains the conceptual passion at the core of this book. Like the aphorism, it contains material that pays humble and profound homage to this “village.” Collectively authored by psychoanalytic colleagues of multiple nationalities (e.g., American, German, Indian, Irish), ages, genders, religious origins (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Quaker), and meta-theoretical persuasions, the book goes far beyond the usual orbit of parents and siblings in order to explicate the vicissitudes of psychic development and functioning. Casting a wide net, the book addresses the roles played in an individual’s life by wet nurses, nannies, neighbors, schoolteachers, childhood playmates and friends, members of the clergy, adolescent peers, lovers, and professional mentors. Each member of this auxiliary ego group has been accorded the space of a full chapter which highlights both the beneficial and adverse possibilities implicit in one’s relationship with such a person. The following thumbnail sketches of these eight chapters should give the reader a sense of things to come.

- The book opens with a chapter on nannies. It traces the centuries-old history of wet nurses and nannies in the West, and after setting up such deep and three-dimensional familiarity with the practice elucidates the psychic residues of such relationships in the lives and careers of Sigmund Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, John Bowlby, and Wilfred Bion. The fascinating choice of renowned psychoanalysts in lieu of the customary reliance on clinical vignettes permits the author to link early childhood experiences, both of positive and negative kinds, to later-life theoretical and technical formulations of these great analysts.
- The next chapter is on neighbors. Citing material from religious texts, fiction, and poetry, the discourse nonetheless retains a psychoanalytic bent. The author deconstructs the origins of Freud's contentious rebuttal of the biblical edict to love one's neighbor as oneself. This leads to the important distinction between objecting to "loving thy neighbor" and rejecting "loving him or her as thyself." Evoking Emmanuel Levinas and Jorge Luis Borges, the author discusses the nuances of these differing perspectives while also noting that repudiated self-representations also constitute a sort of intrapsychic "neighbors." Finally, the chapter deals with the development-facilitating and psychopathology-inducing role of neighbors; this, of course, is a matter of considerable clinical importance in the treatment of children and adults living in crowded surroundings.
- The third chapter of our book deals with childhood playmates and friends. In this chapter, the author examines the nature of friendship and how it develops across the life span. He also considers how the capacity to play is an essential element of friendship, and relates both friendship and play to aspects of analytic treatment, including the concepts of rapport and positive "friendly" transference, the process of sharing confidences, and how the work of analysis occurs in the transitional space of play. He also considers how analysis differs from friendship, and wonders, if we cannot be friends with patients then can we be playmates?
- The fourth chapter is about schoolteachers. Recognizing them to be the first representatives of power and authority outside the nuclear family's orbit, the author emphasizes the formative influence of such individuals. Often they come across as mesmerizing and heroic

though the sagas of inept and even terrorizing teachers are also encountered in clinical practice. Reviewing a considerable body of literature on teacher–student relationship and synthesizing it with psychoanalytic developmental theory, the discourse correlates the variability of the impact of schoolteachers upon the child in accordance with the latter’s growth needs and burgeoning ego-capacities. Four clinical vignettes are offered to illustrate and underscore the theoretical proposals mentioned above.

- Dovetailing the discussion about schoolteachers is the chapter on the role of clergy in psychic development. Deftly blending her knowledge of Judeo-Christian religious customs with psychoanalytic developmental theory, the author underscores the ego-supportive functions performed by the clergy. Acknowledging that occasional breaches in the sacred covenant between the clergy and their congregants do occur, the author paradoxically strengthens her argument in favor of the otherwise salutatory functions of the former by making a brief foray into Freud’s fascination with Rev. Oscar Pfister, where she adds a delicious historical twist to her otherwise somber narrative.
- The next chapter tackles the developmental significance of adolescent peers. In this chapter, the author deftly blends neurophysiology, endocrine studies, behavioral observations, sociocultural vectors, and psychoanalytic insights in order to offer a deep and comprehensive portrayal of adolescent relationships. Both positive and negative outcomes of these bonds are explored.
- This chapter is followed by one on lovers. Solidly anchored in the psychoanalytic developmental understanding of early mother–child relationships, and the temporally later vicissitudes of oedipal triangulation, this chapter delineates the myriad ways in which romantic relationships help rework dyadic fixations and their attendant need–fear dilemmas. The possibility of oedipal acting out as well as the refining of oedipal boundaries and mourning unavailable objects is also discussed. A number of clinical vignettes are provided to illustrate the various points made, and the rejuvenating potential of new loves in late life is also highlighted.
- The final chapter highlights the role of mentors in the developing careers of their protégés. It offers a comprehensive review of the defining features of a mentor and traces the evolution of the

mentor–mentee relationship as it unfolds over time. Besides elucidating the growth-promoting aspects of this bond, the author also delineates pathological outcomes that unfortunately occur none too rarely; these include mutual exploitation, manipulateness, subtle or not so subtle theft of ideas, denial of autonomy, and misleading advice. The impact of age, race, and gender upon the mentor–mentee relationship is also discussed.

The psychoanalytic bent of these essays does not preclude their integrating material from history, anthropology, sociology, religion, literature, and film studies. Vignettes from clinical practice as well as day-to-day life are also included, wherever indicated and possible, to underscore the points being made. A well-rounded and harmonious gestalt of the broad spectrum of actual and imaginary object relations existing outside of the family is thus offered and this, in turn, enlarges the scope not only of our developmental understanding and human strategies of adaptation, but also enhances the reach of our empathy, transference interpretation, and reconstruction. It turns out what once resided beyond the boundary walls of the family and therefore appeared “besides family” is now a family of internal presences and a family of attachment, love, seduction, loss, sorrow, and psychic resilience and strength. Knowing this adds to our respect for the wider network of fellow human beings who surround us and make us more hopeful about the ongoing potential for psychosocial maturation and growth. Read the book and see for yourself.