Polyamory and Polytheistic Psychology:
Emergent Archetypal Dynamics of the Structure of the Psyche

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I certify that I have read this paper and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a product for the degree of Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

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Abstract

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The anima and animus are central concepts in Jungian psychology and play important roles in individuation, gender identity and presentation, and the experience and development of love and relationships. Although they are important concepts, the anima and animus (collectively called the syzygy) are limited in their capability to describe the psyche of many individuals who do not meet expectations set in place by current hegemonic normativity. Rather, the Jungian concept of the syzygy reflects a structured archetypal pattern that has emerged from a crystallization of archetypal constellations. This thesis uses hermeneutics to examine how emerging relationship configurations and dynamics in polyamorous relationships reflect and contribute to emergent archetypal patterns and dynamics. In doing so, this thesis suggests a reconceptualization of the syzygy drawing on concepts from polytheistic psychology, archetypal emergence, and other sources of knowledge.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter I
Introduction

Love, like so many other beautiful and terrifying human experiences, has become institutionalized and compartmentalized into distinct and well-defined categories. Cultural debates take place over which forms and expressions of love are considered legally valid and the state offers to legitimize a couple's love with the proper paperwork. "The language of love is of astonishing uniformity, using the well-worn formulas with the utmost devotion and fidelity, so that once again the two partners find themselves in a banal collective situation" (Jung, 1951/1979b, pp. 15-16 [*CW* 9, pt. 2, para. 30]). In Jungian psychology, falling in love is a constellation of the syzygy, the contrasexual archetype; the woman finds her animus in her partner who meets his anima in her. The archetype of the idealized lover is projected onto the partner, and by exploring and relating to these projections, an individual can integrate parts of their personality into the holistic Self.

James Hillman, the founder of the school of archetypal psychology, criticized the Jungian concept of the Self and the emphasis on integration as a monotheistic ideology, and proposed instead a polytheistic psychology that views individuals as made up by a "multiplicity of voices . . . without insisting upon unifying them into one figure" (1991, p. 39); he further stated, "each god has his due as each complex deserves its respect in its own right" (p. 40). If one accepts a diversity of anima/animus figures existing in an individual, and that anima/animus projections are a driving force in the experience of

love, then perhaps monogamy—a pillar of the values of institutionalized love—is burdened by the same monotheistic problems that Hillman has attributed to the emphasis on unity of the Self. It seems that a polyamorous approach to love, with fewer restrictions on the expression and exploration of love in its many forms, can provide a way to imaginatively acknowledge the archetypal drives of the polytheistic multiplicity of anima/animus.

It is through relations with others that one learns about oneself. There could be no self without other; in the absence of relationships identity withers.

> How can we know ourselves by ourselves? We can be known to ourselves through another, but we cannot go it alone. . . . The opus of soul needs intimate connection, not only to individuate but simply to live. For this we need relationships of the profoundest kind through which we can realize ourselves, where self-revelation is possible, where interest in and love for soul is paramount, and where eros may move freely. (Hillman, 1991, p. 284)

Can a predetermined formula for love provide such profound realization? The many facets of the Self do not lend themselves to formulaic rigidity; rather they are dynamic and fluid, moving and shifting to context and environment. Similarly, "love itself is malleable and ever-changing. Its intensity and nature varies, and this influences its flow, its mutable forms" (Veaux & Rickert, 2014, p. 18). To pay respect to the mutability of both love and self, to fully explore the multiplicity of archetypal drives through intimate connection, one could apply polytheistic psychology's emphasis on plurality to the expression of love. In polytheistic psychology, "focus upon the many and the different (rather than upon the one and the same) also provides a variety of ways of looking at one psychic condition" (Hillman, 1991, p. 39); in the case of love, focus upon the many can provide different paths to self-revelation through building and maintaining intimate connections. As Hillman stated, "Tell me for what you yearn and I shall tell you who you

are. We are what we reach for" (1991, p. 286). Polyamory would allow free movement of eros that monogamy would seek to bind.

> Polyamory allows us to let go of monogamy's predefined structures. One of the amazing things polyamory offers is the freedom to negotiate relationships that work for you and your partners. . . . We can build relationships that are free to develop however they naturally want to flow. (Veaux & Rickert, 2014, p. 18)

By giving room for the natural flow of love, a reimagining of relationships and self occurs that allows for the numinous figures that inhabit an individual to be expressed more freely.

Area of Interest

My area of interest for this thesis lies at the intersection between polyamory and the conceptualization of archetypes within depth psychological theory. Contained in the overlap between polyamory and archetypes is a source of knowledge that can help develop our understanding of the dynamics of both archetypes and relationships. This thesis will explore the concept of polyamory from an archetypal perspective as well as discuss the implications of polyamory on archetypal theory.

My interest in this topic is motivated, in part, by my own experience with polyamory, adding an element of self-exploration to my engagement with this research. Much of the foundation for this research has synchronistically coincided with my own developments as I engage archetypally with parts of my Self through my relationships with others.

Guiding Purpose

The aim of this work is to examine how polyamorous relationships reflect an emergence of archetypal patterning and how they may allow for an awareness of internal archetypal images and forces that express themselves through relationships with others.

The focus of this thesis on polyamorous relationships will allow for the examination of a multifaceted Self through the archetypal patterns that arise with different partners.

Rationale

There is sparse research on polyamory. The field of marriage and family therapy places its primary focus on monogamous couples with little acknowledgement of nonmonogamy as a legitimate relationship configuration. Further understanding of the dynamics of polyamorous relationships could reduce the stigmatization and pathologization of polyamorous individuals. By viewing the powerful and challenging emotions inherent in all relationships (but often amplified by, or at least brought into the foreground of, polyamorous relationships) as archetypal concepts, this thesis can explore archetypal ways of relating to those emotions. The polyamorous community has developed frameworks for addressing jealousy, envy, insecurity, and other difficult emotions; this community has also developed a new archetypal mode of emotional expression called *compersion*, defined as an empathic happiness about the love a partner feels for another partner. Studying these dynamics could allow for greater understanding of polyamory and help develop the field of marriage and family therapy to include polyamorous relationships. An understanding of the archetypal dynamics involved in polyamory could also be applied to therapy with monogamous relationships and individuals due to the universal potentiality of archetypal concepts.

Furthermore, an exploration of polyamory through the lens of depth psychology can illuminate the emergence of archetypes. The development of polyamory as a relationship structure reflects an emergence of a new mode of archetypal engagement with the Self and the other.

Methodology

In this thesis, I will address gaps in the conceptualization of archetypes and limitations in understandings of nonmonogamous relationship configurations. This is intended as an exploratory study on the intersection between polyamory and archetypal theory. With this in mind, my research question is as follows: How do emerging relationship configurations and dynamics in polyamorous relationships reflect and contribute to emergent archetypal patterns and dynamics?

For this thesis, I will be using a hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutics, or "the art of interpretive knowing" (Coppin & Nelson, 2005, p. 37), "consist[s] of placing different realms of literature and thought into a dialogue" (Coppin & Nelson, 2005, p. 132). I will be exploring the areas of intersection primarily between the culture and literature of polyamorous communities and depth psychological theory including classical conceptualizations as well as more recent developments. In doing so, I hope to illuminate unexplored aspects of depth psychology and to examine some possible archetypal dynamics of polyamorous relationships.

Ethical Considerations

Considering that I am writing from a polyamorous perspective, I do not wish to propose the superiority of polyamory over any other relationship orientation; in fact, I do not wish to compare, in any way, the merits or deficits of independently valid ways of being. Nor would I presume to prescribe polyamory for any problems in a relationship, as adding such a disruptive element to an already precarious situation is only bound to make matters worse.

Writing as an individual, I do not wish to speak on behalf of the polyamorous community as a whole. Polyamory is a broad term that encompasses many relationship configurations. The purpose of this thesis is not to propose any particular style of polyamory over another.

Some of the topics discussed herein pertain to the LGBTQ+ community; I address matters related to some identities to which I do not belong. I do not intend to speak on behalf of anyone other than myself, nor do I intend to co-opt, or appropriate, the experience of any other individual or group.

Overview of Thesis

The following chapters discuss archetypal dynamics as related to polyamory. Chapter II outlines relevant literature to the topics of archetype theory and polyamory. The chapter begins by defining the concept of archetypes, and particularly the archetypal constructs that comprise the personality and their relationship (especially that of the anima/animus) to individuation. The chapter then reviews limitations of the traditional Jungian structure of the psyche. Next, Chapter II gives an overview of some of the adaptations to conceptualizations of archetypes, including archetypal emergence and polytheistic psychology. Polyamory is introduced and defined, then the chapter discusses literature with implications to the connection between polyamory and archetypal dynamics.

Chapter III proposes a reconceptualization for the structure of the psyche. The chapter begins with a discussion of how archetypes are conceptualized, then explores possibilities for reconceptualizing the syzygy by parsing out the various functions served by the anima/animus; these functions are discussed as separate archetypal patterns that

can be constellated into the anima/animus. Next, Chapter III discusses some reconfigurations of syzygetic dynamics that can take place within polyamorous relationships. The archetypal dynamics of polyamorous relationships are placed in the context of polytheistic psychology. I next discuss the archetypal dynamics of jealousy, approaches to managing jealousy developed by the polyamorous community, and the psychological value of facing and exploring the complex emotional experience of jealousy. The relatively recently constructed emotion of compersion is defined and discussed as an emergent archetypal pattern and a syzygetic counterpart to jealousy. Chapter IV summarizes the previous chapters, discusses clinical implications, and offers recommendations for further research.

Chapter II
Literature Review

Structure of the Psyche

Over the course of his work, Carl G. Jung, the founder of the school of analytical psychology, developed a model of the psyche—no easy task, as "the psyche . . . is a thing of such infinite complexity that it can be observed and studied from a great many sides" (1931/1975, p. 139 [*CW* 8, para. 283]). Nonetheless, Jung took on this herculean effort and was able to develop an intricate model of the nature and dynamics of intrapsychic structures and describe how they relate to one another. His model of the psyche has had a lasting appeal and remains clinically useful, as it can provide a therapist with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of clients' unconscious drives and motivations (Singer, 1994).

Archetypes. Central to Jung's structure of the psyche is the concept of the archetype. This is a concept that can be difficult to define, and different theorists may have different definitions. Even Jung, himself, sometimes used the word in different ways, making his definition difficult to pin at times. A broad definition of archetype by Jung is "the contents of the collective unconscious" (1954/1980, p. 4 [*CW* 9i, para. 4]). These contents can take form in countless different ways, for example, in imaginative figures that represent and influence aspects of the personality. Archetypes have been likened to instinct (Jung, 1919/1975, pp. 133-134 [*CW* 8, para. 270]) and could be described as the subjective experience of instinct. An instinctual pattern may influence

behavior, emotions, and thoughts, but it is experienced as something archetypal, something arising from the unconscious and taking form in mythical imagery and figures. These patterns and figures are projected into fictional characters, creating common stories across cultures worldwide.

Among the most structured and well-defined archetypal constructs are Jung's archetypes of the personality. These are the archetypes upon which the structure of personality and the psyche are built.

Self. The concept of the Self is at the center of the personality. "The Self is the purposiveness of the organism, the teleological intention of becoming itself as fully as it can" (Hollis, 1998, p. 16); it is "the total personality which, though present, cannot be fully known" (Jung, 1951/1979a, p. 5 [*CW* 9ii, para. 9]). This is an archetype of holistic integration; it is the totality of one's being.

Ego. Whereas the Self is at the center of the whole of the personality, the ego is at the "centre of the field of consciousness" (Jung, 1951/1979a, p. 3 [*CW* 9ii, para. 1]). The ego is generally to whom one is referring when they speak in the first person. This is the *I* of the personality and forms the center of identity.

Persona. In order to fill societal roles and meet social expectations, individuals often must don different masks. The persona has been defined as "a functional complex that comes into existence for reasons of adaptation or personal convenience. . . . The persona is exclusively concerned with the relation to objects" (Jung, 1921/1976, p. 465 [*CW* 6, para. 801]). Examples of persona can be found in the way a person acts when trying to make a first impression, or in a professional persona that must be adopted for the workplace.

Shadow. The parts of Self that are not endorsed by the ego are pushed into the shadow. Here are contained all of the aspects with which a person does not identify. "It is what is inferior in our personality, that part of us which we will not allow ourselves to express. . . . These aspects are repressed to the unconscious" (Singer, 1994, pp. 164-165). This includes all of the dark parts of the Self, unacknowledged by the ego. It is everything that one think they are not. This can also include admirable traits that a person does not see in themselves.

Syzygy: Anima/animus. The contrasexual archetype of the personality is called the animus in women and the anima in men; collectively, they are referred to as the syzygy (Jung, 1951/1979b [*CW* 9ii]). The animus is a woman's internal, unconscious masculinity and the anima a man's internal, unconscious femininity. This archetype serves a balancing function to the psyche and can play an important role in drawing an individual inward toward the Self.

Individuation

Exploration and integration of unconscious archetypal content can result in a process of individuation, the development of the holistic Self through which an individual gains access to a vast potential contained within their unconscious mind.

Individuation "is the conscious realization and integration of all the possibilities immanent within the individual" (Singer, 1994, p. 136). Far from an easy task, individuation is a process that "requires a long laborious process of pulling together all those fragmented and chaotic bits and pieces of unconscious personalities, into an integrated whole which is conscious of itself and the way in which it works" (Singer,

1994, p. 143). The result of the process is a well-rounded, self-aware person with a cohesive and uniquely individual sense of Self.

Anima/animus and individuation. The anima and animus can play an important role in individuation; they "lead us on a path of recreating ourselves" (Haule, 1990, p. 23). Far beneath the surface of consciousness, "these figures stem from a very deep source in the unconscious" (Harding, 1973, p. 109); "they belong to the unknown inner world" (Harding, 1973, p. 103). The depth of their inhabitance in the unconscious gives the anima/animus a powerful connection with the Self, and makes their integration and exploration of great importance to the individuation process.

Part of this process of individuation is often externalized in the form of romantic love: "when we fall in love, we find ourselves caught in a flow of psychic energy that takes us passionately into life" (Haule, 1990, p. 22). The way this typically plays out in Jungian terms (though discourse on this is currently changing) is that "when we fall in love, the man unconsciously projects his anima onto the woman and the woman her animus onto the man" (Haule, 1990, pp. 15-16); "the projection of the anima to a woman, or of the animus to a man, always produces a peculiar fascination and a strong emotional involvement with that particular person" (Harding, 1973, p. 113). This usually happens at a deeply unconscious level. This experience of "romantic love is experienced and enacted at the level of Self, where coherence, consistency, balance, wholeness, and meaning are created" (Haule, 1990, p. 74); "in relationship we move not only with conscious intention but in concert with deeper, more ancient motions, chthonic motives, primal forces, and telluric patterns" (Hollis, 2010, p. 37). Thus, the experience and enactment of love is governed by unconscious processes with great individuative potential. John R. Haule, a

Jungian analyst, noted that romantic love can initiate a process of individuation in which

an individual meets an aspect of their Self in an other:

> In romantic love, our inner nature has been seeking us all along. In the first
> instance, it appears to us embodied in the person of our beloved. We do not yet
> know our inner nature—our anima or animus—but find it in projected form. This
> is why our meeting with our beloved seems so "meant to be," as though it were
> "destined," "fated," or "made in heaven." Our beloved seems to complete us, by
> bringing us into contact with this "inner nature" of ours that has been neglected
> and ignored. (Haule, 1990, p. 30)

One sees in a romanticized other a reflection of some unconscious part of the Self that

can place an individual in contact with their anima/animus via their connection with

another. In contacting and integrating the anima/animus, a process of individuation can

be initiated.

Romantic love does not necessarily lead directly to individuation, however; the

projective nature of anima/animus infatuation can create a potential obstacle to

individuation. An individual infatuated with their anima or animus can often fall into

> the fantasy of the Magical Other, the notion that there is one person out there who
> is right for us, will make our lives work, a soul-mate who will repair the ravages
> of our personal history; one who will be there for us, who will read our minds,
> know what we want and meet those deepest needs; a good parent who will protect
> us from suffering and, if we are lucky spare us the perilous journey of
> individuation. (Hollis, 1998, p. 37)

By falling into such a pattern of projection, an individual keeps their unconscious content

externalized, rather than bringing it inward and releasing the value that it holds. The

anima/animus must be understood as an internal structure of the mind if it is to contribute

to individuation. "Unless the individuals become more conscious of what is happening

and confront their own soul-figures within themselves, the values of the anima and

animus will continue to be projected" (Harding, 1973, p. 122). To challenge these

projections and embark on an exploration of the unconscious requires that individuals

observe themselves in relation to the other and begin to discover the other in earnest, without subjecting them to the projections of the anima/animus—the unconscious psychological condition cannot be fully challenged without an exploration of the unconscious (Harding, 1973, p. 34). During this process, "the anima and animus are realized step by step as an essential part of the individual's own psyche, which is consequently enriched by values formerly sensed only in projection" (Harding, 1973, p. 119). If projections can be withdrawn and an individual looks introspectively at the patterns that arise in relationship with others, "anima and animus need not always function as masks that hide the truth. They may act also as lenses that bring the truth into focus" (Haule, 1990, p. 18), and in doing so "they bring the Self and its designs into focus. This applies in two directions. On the one hand, we become centered ourselves; and on the other, the lens of anima brings the unique individuality of our beloved into focus" (Haule, 1990, p. 20).

Limitations to Psyche's Structure

The dynamics of Jung's anima/animus concept can be very illuminating and insightful to many individuals for whom the concept accurately describes their intrapsychic dynamics. Others may feel disenfranchised by the limited, cis-, hetero-, and mono-normative construction of the concept.

> Jung's anima/animus (A/A) thinking leads us into a trap of linear orderliness, fixed identities, androgynous symmetries, and archetypes that are differentially inherited, based on sexual anatomy, a breach in the universality of the collective unconscious. His gender theory does however allow for both genders to reside in an individual but posits a slow and sex-appropriate emergence of the contra-sexual from the unconscious. (McKenzie, 2006, p. 407)

The anima/animus may be an adequate description of archetypal gender dynamics for some, and was a groundbreaking concept at the time in which it was developed by Jung, but it does not adequately describe many expressions of gender and sexuality.

A traditional Jungian conceptualization of archetypes is challenged not only by emergent cultural shifts, but also by scientific knowledge. Developments in the field of biology, for example, have found that "the theorized existence of universal patterns [i.e., archetypes] can no longer be explained by genetics" (Roesler, 2012, p. 232), posing a challenge to the Jungian understanding of the means by which archetypes are transmitted, and also to the notion that anima/animus dynamics are statically determined by biological sex. Similar to the implications of modern genetics, Jean Knox (2004), a Jungian analyst and theorist, suggested that an understanding of neuroscience should be applied to our understanding of archetypal dynamics. The field of neuroscience has made advances that have greatly expanded knowledge on human psychology; depth psychology could develop profoundly by taking this knowledge into consideration. Further integration of depth psychology with neuroscience and other modern advances in psychology could provide deeper understanding of Jungian archetypal dynamics and may provide greater illumination to Jungian conceptualizations of gender:

> In light of current scientific knowledge it seems reasonable to imagine that one's conscious gender position involves a somewhat fluid set of complexes or internal working models that emerge from an interweaving of image schemas, attachment experiences, one's particular body biology, and culture. (McKenzie, 2006, p. 415)

A reconceptualization of archetypal dynamics that incorporates some of the factors listed above could address some of the issues inherent in the models of the anima and animus, and expand definitions of these structures to account for a more inclusive array of presentations of the psyche.

Archetypal Emergence

Rather than stable, innate structures that remain consistent across time and culture, archetypes may be understood as formative processes of pattern creation and emergence. James Hollis, a Jungian analyst and author, made reference to this emergent pattern creation process:

> The psyche has an apparent desire to render a raw flux of atoms intelligible and meaningful by sorting them into patterns. These patterns themselves form patterns, that is, archetypes create primal forms which are then filled with the contents unique to a particular culture, a particular artist, or a particular dreamer. (2010, p. 5)

Hollis also noted that an archetype is not easily pinned to a stable construct: "psychic energy cannot be fixed; its hermetic character is forever moving, dying, disappearing, reappearing in a new place" (1998, p. 56); he remarked that love (eros) in particular is prone to shifts in dynamics. The fluidly changing nature of this pattern-formation process suggests an emergent nature to archetypal dynamics; an archetypal pattern cannot be accurately described by an innate and stable conceptualization.

Knox made note that "developmental research supports the view that new meaning is constantly being created as a central part of the process of psychological development" (2004, p. 6). She went on to say that "some cognitive scientists are finding evidence that information is repeatedly re-analysed and re-encoded into ever more complex forms of representation, in pace with the increasing cognitive capacities of the human brain during the course of development" (p. 6). The limitations of an innate and stable conceptualization of archetypes in light of modern scientific knowledge has led some Jungian theorists to apply the concept of emergence to archetype theory. "Emergence is a modern concept used in different sciences today and means that if

elements interact and form a coherent system, this system can have completely new qualities which cannot be derived from the qualities of the original elements" (Roesler, 2012, p. 237). Applying emergence to understandings of archetypes allows for a much more fluid model, one that takes into account the ebb and flow of life, and the evolution of ideas and culture that has taken place throughout history. The following passage describes how the emergence of archetypes can take place:

> The emergence of archetypes out of the earliest stages of psychic development forms the foundation for the development of core meanings as we gradually construct mental models of the world around us, organizing day-to-day experience into patterns which can then guide our future expectations of life in all its aspects, including our expectations of relationships. (Knox, 2004, p. 16)

Knox stated that the central theme to archetypal patterns is the self-organization of the brain and that it is important to understand that the complex imagery and processes of archetypes cannot be encoded into genes; instead genes act as a catalyst for the processes from which archetypal structures emerge (2004, p. 4). This conceptualization of the archetype takes current scientific knowledge into consideration and "identifies archetypes as emergent structures resulting from a developmental interaction between genes and environment that is unique for each person" (Knox, 2004, p. 4)—an interaction in which

> innate mechanisms are activated by environmental cues, interacting with them and organizing them, leading to the formation of primitive spatial and conceptual representations (image schemas or archetypes). These form the foundation on which later more complex representations can be built. (Knox, 2001, p. 631)

The processes described in the above passage can provide a foundation upon which a reconceptualization of archetypes can be built. This model provides an explanation for how archetypes are constructed by cognitive processes, and accounts for both the fluidity of archetypal patterns that allows for change and emergence of new patterns, and for the common factors that create conditions for a convergent development of patterns and

images that creates the cross-cultural stories and symbols that give the appearance of universal innatism.

John Merchant, a Jungian analyst and theorist on the developmental/emergent model of archetypes, asserted that heightened emotionality also plays a crucial role in the emergence of an archetypal structure by lowering the threshold of consciousness and allowing for an emotional resonance that becomes constellated with the archetype (2009, p. 344). The development of archetypal structures is not simply a dry, mechanical process governed solely by dispassionate cognitive interactions; there is also a deep emotional resonance at the core of any archetypal experience. It is this emotional connection that gives archetypal patterns their potency.

An emergent model of archetypes may also help to bridge gaps between different schools of thought within depth psychology. Merchant (2006) suggested that a developmental/emergent model of the archetype is able to connect the interactions between biological, environmental, and psychological factors. The theory also draws a common thread between the developmental, classical, and archetypal schools of depth psychology. Archetypal patterns emerge from interactions between bio-structures and environmental factors, giving them a quality of innateness and numinosity. These bio-structures can account for a structure of the psyche as described by the classical school, and the model satisfies the importance of environmental experience emphasized by the developmental school by accounting for environmental factors in the emergence of archetypal patterns. The common ground between these schools may prove fertile for a comprehensive model of archetypes. In an effort to develop such a model, George B.

Hogenson, a Jungian analyst and archetype theorist, tied the developmental/emergent

model of archetypes together with the following definition:

> What we have in the theory of archetypes, therefore, is a combination of features that include ways of knowing the world (patterns of apprehension and intuition— a specific subset, it seems, of ways of acting in the world), patterns of behaviour, affective states that accompany these intuitions and patterns of behaviour, and finally, a notion of the image that appears to go beyond our common sense notion of the image as simply a picture or representation of some other state of affairs. (2009, p. 328)

At the root of the archetype is a pattern-generating process that constellates innate factors

such as genes with emergent factors such as those from the environment. Thus,

archetypes can be understood as a fluid process with certain universal factors that often

creates a convergence of structures and patterns.

Polytheistic Psychology

Polytheistic psychology is able to account for archetypal emergence by promoting

a model of archetypes that are not pinned down to stable images with dynamics

consistent across different individuals and cultures. As defined by the archetypal

psychologists James Hillman and Thomas Moore, "Polytheistic psychology refers to the

inherent dissociability of the psyche and the location of consciousness in multiple figures

and centers. A psychological polytheism provides archetypal containers for

differentiating our fragmentation" (1991, p. 44). Moore clarified this by asserting that

"psychologically we have many different claims made on us from a deep place. It is not

possible, nor is it desirable, to get all of these impulses together under a single focus"

(1994, p. 66). In this way, he challenged the notion that unification is necessary to

individuation, stating: "rather than strive for unity of personality, the idea of polytheism

suggests living within multiplicity" (p. 66). Inviting multiplicity into life provides the

psyche with a wealth of possibilities, and freedom from being pinned down into a single, unified structure; "by actively imagining the psyche into multiple persons, we prevent the ego from identifying with each and every figure in a dream fantasy, each and every impulse and voice" (Hillman, 1975, p. 31). The psyche is then free to move in different directions without closing off pathways and narrowing future possibilities. Because there is less emphasis on consistency in the psyche's presentation, more facets of the Self (or selves)[1] have room to be expressed and explored without any pressure to reconcile them with other aspects of one's personality.

> By providing a divine background of personages and powers for each complex, polytheistic psychology would find place for each spark. It would aim less at gathering them into a unity and more at interacting each fragment according to its own principle, giving each god its due over that portion of consciousness, that symptom, complex, fantasy, which calls for an archetypal background. It would accept the multiplicity of voices, the Babel of the anima and animus, without insisting upon unifying them into one figure, and accept too the dissolution process into diversity as equal in value to the coagulation process into unity. (Hillman, 1991, p. 39)

Conceptualizing the Self as a multitude of structures creates limitless potential for the emergence of personality presentations and pattern formation. The selves may develop and interact with one another, creating an interplay of astounding complexity that gives vibrancy and malleability to life.

Polytheistic sygyzy. The plural nature of polytheistic psychology suggests that the anima/animus can be conceptualized as multiple figures. Hillman, in reference to the anima, noted the "multiplicity of her forms" (1975, p. 43), and asserted that "emphasis upon many dominants would then favor the differentiation of the anima/animus. . . . This interest will more likely produce more insights into emotions, images and relationships"

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[1] Here and throughout this thesis, *Self* (capitalized) is used when referring to the Jungian concept and *selves* (lower case) when referring to the multiple selves described by polytheistic psychology.

(1991, p. 40). A multiplicity of anima/animus could allow for a more comprehensive and inclusive model of the psyche, one that provides more outlets for the expression of the multifaceted Self.

Jung (1951/1979b [*CW* 9ii]) referred to the anima/animus collectively as the syzygy. Polytheistic psychology could include a conceptualization of syzygy as a multiplicitous collection of figures. Rather than an individual's psyche containing a singular anima or animus based on their biological sex, a psyche may contain a community of syzygetic figures that, in communication with one another and with other archetypes, collectively serves the functions that in traditional models would be ascribed to the singular anima or animus.

Polyamory

Perhaps literalizing the polytheistic multiplicity of syzygy and the Self, polyamory has emerged as a style of structuring relationships that allows for an expression of the multidirectional pull of a plurality of syzygy. Although nonmonogamy is far from a recent invention, polyamory as a social construct and an intentional way of conducting relationships is a relatively recent development; the term *polyamory* was "coined in the early 1990s from the Greek poly, meaning 'many,' and the Latin amor, meaning 'love.' It means having multiple loving, often committed, relationships at the same time by mutual agreement, with honesty and clarity" (Veaux & Rickert, 2014, pp. 7-8). Differing from other forms of nonmonogamy, such as infidelity or polygynous polygamy (in which one man enters a patriarchal marriage with multiple women, commonly associated with religious institutions), "polyamory is consensual, openly conducted, multiple-partner relationships in which both men and women have negotiated

access to additional partners outside of the traditional committed couple" (Sheff, 2014, p. 1). This differentiates polyamory not only from nonconsensual nonmonogamy (i.e., affairs) but also from other forms of consensual nonmonogamy, such as open relationships or swinging, which are primarily agreements regarding sex and do not place an emphasis on multiple *romantic* relationships, as does polyamory.

Polyamory and disruption of archetypal structures. The experience of love evokes an archetypal process that forms patterns that have over time become crystallized into common forms. "The entanglements which Eros constellates . . . become reflections of archetypal patterns, patterns that appear in everyone's life" (Hillman, 1991, p. 273). Generally, the patterns that form consist of a monogamous configuration with a largely predefined structure.

The disruption of existing patterns can often facilitate the emergence of new ones. Taking a polytheistic view of the psyche can allow more room for disruption of archetypal patterns. "An attitude of polytheism permits a degree of acceptance of human nature and of one's own nature that is otherwise blocked by single-mindedness" (Moore, 1994, p. 67). This acceptance of one's own nature gives voice to the multiplicity of archetypal forces interacting within one's psyche. "When you find tolerance in yourself for the competing demands of the soul, life becomes more complicated, but also more interesting" (Moore, 1994, p. 66). A multifaceted expression of psyche increases the complexity of life and acts as a disruptive force to the crystallized structure of the psyche. Similarly, "starting a polyamorous relationship involves the movement from a context with clear social norms to a sphere of loose and indeterminate arrangements" (Domínguez, Pujol, Motzkau, & Popper, 2017, p. 186). This process acts as a disruptive

force to the structure of the anima/animus and of monogamy, both of which have become concretized by culture. Disrupting the structure to these constructs can add further complexity to life and allow new patterns to emerge and take form.

The following passage from Franklin Veaux, an author and sexuality educator and Eve Rickert, a professional author and editor, details how polyamorous relationships can disrupt the predefined patterns of monogamy:

> Polyamory allows us to let go of monogamy's predefined structures. One of the amazing things polyamory offers is the freedom to negotiate relationships that work for you and your partners. The possibilities are not always obvious, even for people who have lived polyamorously for years. For example, there's often no need to "break up" a relationship if something (or someone) changes. Maybe we can keep a connection and reshape it in another way. We can build relationships that are free to develop however they naturally want to flow. It helps to recognize that love itself is malleable and ever-changing. Its intensity and nature varies, and this influences its flow, its mutable forms. Monogamy tells us that successful, "real" relationships all look about the same. Relationships that last a long time are called successes, without regard to misery, and those that end are called failures, without regard to happiness. Anything that is not sexually exclusive, we are told, invites chaos, anarchy, the breakdown of the family. Monogamy tells us what to expect. Polyamory does not. There are no rigid templates, only nuance and shades of gray. This is both a blessing and a curse. Polyamory embraces the idea that relationships are, first and foremost, individual affairs, closely tailored to the specific needs of all the people involved. At the same time, it doesn't give us a clear path to follow, no royal road to "a good relationship." Abandoning the benchmarks of monogamy can be scary. Without them, how will we know what to do? (2014, p. 18)

By abandoning templates and embracing nuance, an authentic expression of archetypal forces can be pursued. This way of being—one that is enlivened by archetypal multiplicity—requires predefined structures for relationships to be dismantled, and preconceived notions to be set aside.

Tristan Taormino, a feminist author and sex educator, also took note of polyamory's tendency to disrupt established patterns by stating that "as a group, polyamorous people have the courage to think outside the box of monogamy and to live

outside the box. They recognize the importance of growth, for themselves as individuals, for their partners, and for their relationships" (2008, p. 73). Living outside of predefined structure is a value commonly discussed in literature on polyamory, a value that can facilitate the free movement of archetypal energy that may become solidified in the structure of monogamy.

Haule noted the importance of letting go of predefined structures for romantic relationships: "the course of romantic love is unique for every couple, so that practical precepts and guidelines are bound to be misleading. The one common denominator is that every couple must 'follow the relationship'" (1990, p. 226). Polyamory may provide an avenue to fully embody this sentiment, allowing an expression of love that disrupts archetypal patterns often crystallized by monogamy.

The crystallization of archetypal patterns has caused psychic energy to become trapped within concretized archetypal structures; per Hollis:

> Eros has often been further narrowed in our time to the merely erotic. Defined elementally, eros is the desire for connection. Surely sexuality may be subsumed under that motive, but eros is richly differentiated and may be found in many venues. (1998, p. 34)

This poses eros as an archetype of connection and intimacy beyond that found solely within romantic relationships, blurring the definition of erotic. Eros is similarly blurred by a loosening of definitions of relationships within polyamory, as it is "located within a social reordering where complication and pain are associated with a transformation of collective subjectivity. It constitutes a potentiality that needs to be unfolded along intimate normative transformations, for example, loosening the distinction between 'love' and 'friendship'" (Domínguez et al., 2017, pp. 192-193). In concurrence with this idea, Meg-John Barker, a psychotherapist and author on nonmonogamy, bisexuality, nonbinary

gender, and BDSM, has also remarked that "as well as questioning rules around fidelity, polyamory can be seen to challenge the supposed mutually exclusive categories of 'friend' and 'lover' inherent in the dominant version of heterosexuality" (Barker, 2005, p. 81). The challenge to the necessity of hard lines between categories of relationship is one of many disruptive factors of polyamory. Of course, polyamory does not have a monopoly on the disruption of archetypal structures.

> It could be argued that any relationship is in continuous transformation. Nevertheless, polyamory so far lacks a clear interactional framework and it faces constant social examination and disapproval. Practising polyamory under contemporary conditions inevitably engenders a number of intense and troubled emotional situations. Engaging in such relationships leaves participants adrift with regard to social responsibilities and demands, as there are no established frameworks to guide their interactions (see Barker, 2013). For this reason, participants in polyamorous relationships develop multiple and often divergent narratives of the self, and relational commitments are open to renegotiation as there is not a clear predefined and detailed model. (Domínguez et al., 2017, p. 185)

Thus polyamory, although not inherently more disruptive than other structures, is poised to upset the order that institutionalized monogamy seeks to impose. Due to its recency, the polyamorous community has not (yet) formed a consistent, predefined mode of polyamory in the way that monogamy has, and in fact, often seeks to avoid predefinition; these factors, in combination with others, reorganized archetypal patterns that are constellated in the formation of a relationship structure.

Polyamory and the emergence of archetypal patterns. The archetypal energy of love, when freed from a crystallized structure, is able to create new, emergent patterns. "Eros is dynamic and shape-shifting. As energy, it is always going somewhere, seeking to connect, to fill in, to transcend" (Hollis, 1998, p. 34). As a relatively recent result of

eros's dynamic grasping for connection, love's constellations emerged into the structures

of monogamy and marriage that have become dominant.

> As a matter of fact, only in the last century and a quarter has the vox populi claimed marriage and love as one and the same. This is not to say that happily committed people have not loved each other, but rather that for most of human history the purpose of marriage was to bring stability to the culture rather than make the individual happy or serve the task of mutual individuation. (Hollis, 1998, pp. 41-42)

The patterns of eros that have formed crystallized archetypal structures were, too, created

by a process of emergence; the energy may continue to shift, though many factors work

to keep the structure in place.

Polyamorous individuals are finding ways of disrupting the factors that have

formed eros into the structure that has become dominant; "they are living examples of a

shift in the way we do relationships" (Taormino, 2008, p. 296), a shift to a model that

promotes a diverse array of structures and styles of relationships.

> Poly relationships come in an astonishing variety of shapes, sizes and flavors, just like the human heart. There are "vee" relationships, where one person has two partners who aren't romantically involved with each other; "triad" relationships, where three are mutually involved; and "quad" relationships of four people, who may or may not all be romantically involved with one another. A relationship might be "polyfidelitous," which means the people agree not to pursue additional partners. Or it may be open to members starting new relationships. A poly person might have one or more "primary" partners and one or more "secondary" partners, or recognize no rankings. They might have a "group marriage," sharing finances, a home and maybe children as a single family. (Veaux & Rickert, 2014, p. 8)

The many varied forms of poly relationships can allow polyamorous individuals to

explore different facets of relationship, and different facets of themselves within

relationships. There is a "possibility . . . that [consensually nonmonogamous] individuals

value the relationship with their secondary partner because it fulfills a different set of

romantic and/or sexual needs than their primary relationship" (Mogilski, Memering,

Welling, & Shackelford, 2015, p. 9). For these individuals, polyamory provides a way to explore the emergence of dynamics of polytheistic selves. This is supported by Barker's research, which found that "some participants also spoke of being different selves, or at least different 'aspects' of themselves in different relationships" (2005, p. 85). The experience of different aspects of self readily fits within polytheistic psychology's concept of multiple selves. Having multiple partners carries a potential

> to help people to explore the different facets of themselves and perhaps come to a [*sic*] alternative understanding of self identity through the different ways they might see themselves reflected in the eyes of others they are closely involved with. (Barker, 2005, p. 78)

By engaging in multiple relationships, the multiplicitous selves are able to seek expression, developing and interacting with each other to form unique patterns constellated from archetypal components. This process allows new archetypal structures to emerge, creating a dynamic model of archetypes.

With many factors to facilitate archetypal emergence, "polyamory is located within a liminal space where complication and pain cannot be avoided without a transformation of our subjectivity at a collective level" (Domínguez et al., 2017, p. 190). This transformation marks a major cultural shift from which new archetypal patterns may emerge. The reconfiguration of archetypal components and emergence of polyamorous structures create a dynamic in which "monogamy and polyamory are two extremes within a spectrum of emergent orderings, all of which subvert established norms and diversify the landscape of available patterns of intimate relationships" (Domínguez et al., 2017, pp. 184-185). Released from the restraint of socially mandated, predefined form, eros is free to move along spectrums of expression, creating emergent constellations of archetypal content, patterns formed from life's ebb and flow.

Chapter III
Findings and Clinical Applications

Restructuring the Psyche

Jungian queer theorist Susan McKenzie (2006) explained that traditional Jungian models of the psyche—especially the anima/animus concept—are woefully inadequate for describing the psychic structures and dynamics of people with nonnormative (or anormative) sexualities, genders, relationship orientations, etc. (as noted in Chapter II). These models are useful for describing the normative psyche (if such a thing can be imagined) that has been structured and crystallized by culture, society, and countless other factors. Because of the hegemony of heteronormativity (as well as cis-normativity and mono-normativity), other ways of being—and other ways of organizing the components of the psyche—have been overlooked, ignored, and suppressed by the dominant cultural models. With emerging cultural shifts, many ways of being that previously would have lived in the cultural shadow are coming to the surface as they become more accepted and safer to express. This is reflective of emergent changes in the structure and dynamics of society and culture, which, in turn, contribute to an emergence of internal, psychic structures and dynamics. Expressing these archetypal patterns and giving voice to them allows for other intrapsychic patterns to change and emerge; existing patterns and structures that have been crystallized are able to be disrupted and the psychic energies held within them can be reorganized, allowing for further archetypal emergence.

Polyamory represents one type of restructuring, one type (or category of types) of disruption and emergence that can occur. Being that polyamory is such a broad term that includes many types of relationship configurations and dynamics, it opens up many possibilities for archetypal patterns to form and emerge. A single individual may have different dynamics at play in each particular relationship in which they are involved.

The following sections will explore different possible conceptualizations of psychic structures and patterns based on polyamorous configurations and dynamics. As the nature of this thesis is intended to be exploratory rather than definitive, the conceptualizations discussed herein are intended as hypotheses. A definitive and exhaustive explanation of each of the many different ways the psyche of a polyamorous individual could be structured is well beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conceptualizations of Archetype

In order to examine emergent shifts in archetypal patterns, it will be useful to define the word *archetype*. As discussed in Chapter II, the concept of the archetype can be difficult to define, as it is used in a variety of ways to describe different structures. Hollis (2010) suggested that the word *archetype* is better used as a verb than a noun. Doing so conceptualizes the archetype as an action to be carried out rather than an entity. For the purpose of this thesis, I prefer—when syntax allows—to use the word as an adjective; something is *archetypal* when it meets certain conditions, including that it constellates intrapsychic structures—the exact nature of the structures constellated is subject to discussion and exploration—and that it places the ego in contact with the unconscious. The unconscious contents being constellated may emanate from a collective unconscious but this, itself, is a construct that is subject to debate and may benefit from

reconceptualization. Such a task is beyond the scope of this thesis and, as such, it will be treated as a potential factor in the constellation of an archetypal pattern without comment on its necessity to the process.

The word *archetype* is used in a variety of different ways and can be applied to many constructs, as mentioned in Chapter II. Archetypal patterns and processes can be understood at different levels, or as different categories of archetype. There are archetypal images, figures, and symbols—these are among the more well-formed of archetypal structures and often take personified form (e.g., the Hero, the Trickster), or are associated with symbolic imagery (e.g. the mandala, the world tree); archetypal forces and drives, which often take form in base emotions and cognitive functions; archetypal complexes, which constellate different archetypal components to create patterns of behavior and thought—these are often named after figures or motifs (e.g., the Oedipal(/Electra) complex, the Napoleon complex, the messiah complex); as well as the archetype-as-such: the formless source of archetypal pattern generation, and the archetypes of the personality that have been defined in Chapter II. I often use the term *archetypal patterns*, which I mean as a broad term referring to constellations of intrapsychic, unconscious components and material. An archetypal pattern might fall under other levels and categories of archetypes.

An archetype—or that which is archetypal—is a constellation of mental constructs that may include parts, areas, and/or functions of the brain, mind, and/or psyche; these constructs may be a combination of literal and metaphorical concepts. Included in the constellation are base emotions, and combinations thereof to form more complex emotions (the combination process, itself, could be conceptualized as an

archetypal process), cognitive schemas, values, worldview, the figurative language and metaphor generation areas of the mind, and the narrative generating function of the mind. The constructs that could be constellated into an archetypal pattern are infinite.

Many of the constellated parts of an archetypal pattern can, themselves, be conceptualized as an archetypal pattern, revealing a recursive and self-referential nature to the formation of an archetypal pattern. They form a fractal structure with complex, interrelated patterns of configuration. Changing a part of a constellated pattern can have effects that ripple out to the larger structure and affect higher level patterns as different parts reconfigure themselves around the change. This is the means by which cultural changes and individual factors can disrupt well-established archetypal patterns to allow for reconfigurations of the psyche that may not align with traditional Jungian models.

In particular, the syzygy, Jung's anima and animus, is subject to disruption and restructuring due to polyamorous dynamics. I will also examine changes to archetypal emotional dynamics in relation to polyamorous models, namely changes to the dynamics of jealousy as viewed as an archetypal process.

Syzygy

What Jung (1951/1979b) captured in his conceptualization of the anima and animus can be understood as one particular structuring of an archetypal constellation (or perhaps a set of constellations) that plays a crucial role in individuation and the connection between the conscious ego and deeper parts of the unconscious. The anima and animus can perhaps be understood as part of a broader syzygy archetype.

The anima/animus as described by Jung (1951/1979b) is a common—perhaps even the most common—formation of the syzygy when looking at a normative

population. However, it falls short when applied to individuals that, in some way, do not conform to an aspect or aspects of normativity. By reconceptualizing anima and animus as a constellation within the syzygy, rather than the syzygy itself, the structure and dynamics of nonnormative psyches can be more accurately understood.

Functions of Syzygy

Jung's anima and animus seem to be a condensation of different archetypal functions. To serve the purpose of evaluating the anima and animus and developing a concept of the syzygy, it will be useful to differentiate the functions that anima and animus serve in the psyche. Rather than provide an exhaustive list of the functions of the anima and animus, I will highlight a few of the important functions that define the concepts.

Liaison between unconscious and ego. The syzygy plays an important role in mediating between the ego and the unconscious Self. If given care and attention, it can draw an individual's focus inward and provide a connection with the Self. This function plays a large part of the role the syzygy serves in individuation.

Object of desire. An individual's anima or animus is described as the reference point for that individual's desired traits in an ideal romantic partner. Fantasies about the ideal lover take form in an internalized figure that holds the romanticized traits of the Self. The phenomenon of love at first sight occurs when an individual projects these traits onto another person; a stranger comes into alignment with a syzygetic force, creating a resonation that draws the individual toward this stranger. A similar pattern of projection and resonation is common in romantic love, even continuing through long-lasting relationships.

Gender. The bipolarity of the relationship between anima and animus creates the basis for binary gender. Qualities and archetypal patterns become coded into gendered categories, with one gender being integrated into ego identity and expressed via genderized facets of the persona. These dynamics apply only to binary genders. Syzygy may take form without gender in a structure to which the terms *anima* and *animus* do not apply.

Axis of repression–expression. Similar to the shadow, the syzygy creates a fulcrum upon which some aspects of the personality are repressed into the unconscious and others are cultivated by the ego and form a central piece of one's identity. Generally, with the anima and animus, the fulcrum of expression and repression rests upon gender, though by parsing out the functions of syzygy, nongendered expressions of this axis may also be conceptualized.

Restructuring Syzygy

For the purpose of reconfiguring the aspects of syzygy described above, it will be useful to explore the etymology of syzygy, and look towards other uses of the term to help define its use in depth psychology. The term comes from Late Latin *syzygia*, meaning conjunction, originally from the Greek word *syzygos*, meaning yoked together ("Syzygy", n.d.).

In astronomy, the term *syzygy* refers to "the nearly straight-line configuration of three celestial bodies (such as the sun, moon, and earth during a solar or lunar eclipse) in a gravitational system" ("Syzygy", n.d.). The archetypal syzygy also forms a straight-line configuration, placing two archetypal structures in opposition with one another. Each

function served by the syzygy seems to create a similar straight-line configuration to that found in the astronomical syzygy.

The term *syzygy* is also used in Gnosticism. Gnosticism is a form of historically Judeo-Christian mysticism that seeks wisdom in mythology, union, and transcendence (Hoeller, 2002). This school of thought has had tremendous influence on many Jungian concepts (Hoeller, 2002, 2009). "In Valentinian cosmology [a school of Gnosticism] the thirty aeons of the universe are divided into fifteen syzygic pairs that relate to one another as masculine and feminine" (Saarinen, 2011, p. 72). The multiple pairs described here could be useful in developing a conceptualization of a polyamorous syzygy. The anima/animus concept condenses these archetypal constructs into a single syzygetic dyad centered around the archetypal constructs of masculinity and femininity. I posit that binary gender may not be the central characteristic of syzygy but rather a powerful, crystalized syzygetic formation upon which the concept of the syzygy was originally constructed in the psychological lexicon.

If gender is not the essential characteristic of syzygy, then perhaps it is the straight-line, oppositional configuration of the astronomical definition of the term that defines the archetypal concept, as well. The syzygy is an archetypal pattern of conjunction and opposition. It is the tension of opposites that has the ability to pull ego into the depths of the unconscious soul—or to unearth content from the depths of the unconscious out into the external world. It is an archetypal structure that pulls the individual in two opposing directions, requiring them to find a balance somewhere in between.

Archetypal forces can align in a way that places the individual in a syzygy formation. Syzygy creates a pattern in which aspects of the Self form a bipolar dyad with one side repressed into the unconscious and projected onto others and one side made conscious and turned outward toward the external world. A syzygetic resonation can occur when a person in external reality aligns with an individual's syzygetic complex. This resonation might come in the form of love, desire, hatred, projection, jealousy, or other archetypal patterns.

Polyamory and Syzygy

Just as Valentinian Gnosticism describes multiple syzygetic dyads, polyamory creates a multitude of syzygetic expressions for an individual. Syzygy becomes a plurality for the polyamorous individual, allowing multiple facets of the Self to be placed in syzygetic relationships with others. This provides the individual with multiple routes into the unconscious; different unconscious aspects can be explored within different syzygetic relationships. Romantic love is among the most powerful expressions of syzygy (Haule, 1990); polyamorous individuals can create complex configuration of syzygies, allowing for a complex network of syzygetic dynamics by which a process of individuation can take place.

Since there are many ways that polyamorous relationships can be configured, many archetypal patterns may emerge in polyamorous syzygy formations. An individual with multiple partners may be placed in multiple syzygetic constellations that illuminate and evoke different aspects of themselves that might remain unconscious in a monogamous syzygy. In a more complex configuration such as a triad[2] (Veaux & Rickert, 2014), each individual is in a syzygetic dyad with each other individual, and also

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[2] A mutual relationship between three individuals.

in nonsyzygetic formations with the triad as a whole and with their partners' relationships to each other. This can create incredibly complex structures in which archetypal dynamics entangle and create elaborate patterns. More moving parts are added into the system when factoring in *metamours*[3] (Veaux & Rickert, 2014), which can create intersections of archetypal constellations between overlapping *polycules*[4] (Veaux & Rickert, 2014). The potential for such complexity allows for more factors to contribute to the process of emergence.

Polyamorous syzygy and polytheistic self. According to Hillman (1975, 1991), the Self is not singular and monotheistic but rather a multiplicity of archetypal figures interacting with one another. A syzygy forms when these archetypal figures align with their counterparts in the unconscious minds of others. A syzygetic alignment amplifies the archetypal patterns and figures caught in it; this can create a process of individuation around these archetypal patterns. Polyamorous syzygies allow for multiple archetypal figures to be simultaneously amplified by syzygetic dynamics.

Polyamory's shadow. As a disclaimer to my points thus far: this paper is not intended to imply that polyamory is a perfect system or one that should be prescribed to each individual. Polyamory has a shadow side to it; it has potential traps and pitfalls. Just as in a monogamous relationship, a partner can remain the target of unconscious projections; the dynamics of syzygy can be externalized and never explored for their internal, unconscious value. Polyamory is not a solution to this problem—nor any problem in a relationship! Having more partners does not inherently make an individual more introspective; it is possible that they will just have more targets for their projections

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[3] An individual's partner's other romantic partners.
[4] This term refers to any polyamorous configuration; named for the similarity in appearance of diagrammed polyamorous relationships to diagrams of molecules.

without exploring the unconscious sources of these projections. Polyamory does not grant the ability to follow a relationship inward into the psyche, it only changes the dynamics by which this inward journey unfolds.

Polyamory does not have immunity from institutionalization. Currently, there are many factors to polyamory that help to prevent institutionalization, but as discourse unfolds about how polyamorous relationships *should* look, polyamory is pushed closer towards systematization. Neither polyamory nor monogamy inherently provides a consistent means to authentic archetypal expression;

> The greatest expression of spiritual freedom in intimate relationships does not lie in strictly sticking to any particular relationship style—whether monogamous or polyamorous—but rather in a radical openness to the dynamic unfolding of life that eludes any fixed or predetermined structure of relationships. (Ferrer, 2008, p. 58)

In either form, there is potential for archetypal energy to become trapped in institutionalized structure. Polyamory should not be used as a shortcut to the psychological work necessary to gain the value held within syzygetic patterns.

Jealousy and Syzygy

Jealousy is a very complex emotion that constellates many archetypal forces and can take many varied forms depending on who is experiencing it and in what context. "Jealousy tends to be mixed with other feelings including affection, love, fondness, sadness, pride, bitterness, anger, etc." (Deri, 2015, p. 14). For the purpose of this thesis, jealousy will be discussed in the context of romantic relationships, though it is worth acknowledging other forms of jealousy; jealousy is a complex archetypal constellation of emotions "including envy, competitiveness, insecurity, inadequacy, possessiveness, fear

of abandonment, feeling unloved, and feeling left out" (Taormino, 2008, p. 156) that can arise from a variety of contexts and situations.

Jealousy creates a unique syzygetic pattern. An external person, often one who evokes shadow resonance, aligns with a romantic syzygy. This can form an externalized syzygy in which unconscious content is projected from the individual onto their partner and this third other. This externalized form can often be blinding to the individual's ability to introspect and search for an internal source of their jealousy. However, with effort and practice these projections can be drawn back inward to reconnect ego and unconscious Self to provide a powerful introspective illumination.

Monogamy is structured to prevent or avoid potential sources of jealousy. When it arises, it is quelled by reassurances of fidelity. Polyamory has a way of insisting that jealousy is faced head-on, giving little space to hide from it. Because of this, the polyamorous community has developed ways of managing jealousy. These skills are, of course, useful in monogamy to have a healthy and fulfilling relationship, but they are absolutely necessary for a polyamorous relationship to function without imploding or withering from a lack of communication.

By creating a framework to explore and understand one's own jealousy and withdraw the projections that jealousy evokes, the polyamorous community has developed a powerful factor of archetypal emergence. Polyamorists have developed a strategy of examining and unpacking jealous feelings, looking inward for the source of their emotions; they attempt to separate feelings from actions and to communicate their feelings (Taormino, 2008; Veaux & Rickert, 2014). The use of this method of jealousy

management can allow individuals to explore the unconscious, archetypal potential of the syzygy, providing them with factors to facilitate a process of individuation.

Jealousy and individuation. Jealousy, although a challenging emotion to experience, can have immense psychological value if faced directly and explored in earnest. This is akin to exploring and integrating the shadow. In fact, the process of integration of the shadow often involves facing envy and jealousy, both of which are "rooted deeply in the soul" (Moore, 1994, p. 98). Jealousy forms a complex archetypal constellation, often with a deep connection with the unconscious;

> jealousy is archetypal, not completely explained by relationship or personality or family background. . . . The tension we feel in jealousy may be that of much greater worlds colliding than can be seen by looking only at our personal situations. (Moore, 1994, p. 99)

As with any archetypal constellation with unconscious roots, an examination of the internal sources of archetypal jealousy can be psychologically transformative.

Just as the difficulty of integrating the shadow can yield further understanding of the Self, so too can the pain of jealousy contribute to the process of individuation. Moore asserted the connection between jealousy and shadow: "In a culture that prizes individual freedom and choice, the desire to possess is a piece of shadow" (Moore, 1994, p. 107); it may be challenging to face, "but jealousy, like all emotions tinted with shadow, can be a blessing in disguise, a poison that heals" (Moore, 1994, p. 101). As difficult as it may be, facing one's shadow in the experience of jealousy can provide a contributing factor to the process of individuation.

The field of depth psychology and the polyamorous community seem to be in agreement that

the only way *out* of jealousy is *through* it. We may have to let jealousy have its way with us and do its job of reorienting fundamental values. Its pain comes at least in part, from opening up to unexplored territory and letting go of old familiar truths in the face of unknown and threatening new possibilities. (Moore, 1994, p. 101)

For the purpose of working through jealousy, the polyamorous community has developed strategies for facing and managing jealousy. This is not to suggest that no monogamous individual is capable of working through jealousy or that polyamorous individuals are inherently better at jealousy management, however, the tendency for polyamorous configurations to create situations that are likely to evoke jealousy has prompted "polyamorous culture [to] provide a framework for relationship structures . . . thereby cultivat[ing] more inclusive emotional experiences" (Deri, 2015, p. 143). This framework includes methods of jealousy management; this often involves looking inward towards "one's own insecurities or monogamous socialization, as opposed to the presence of another lover. When jealousy does arise, polyamorists try to address the emotion rather than the event that 'caused' the jealousy" (Deri, 2015, p. 143). In addressing jealousy internally and directly, an individual is able to strengthen the connection between ego and the Self. In the process of introspection lies immense psychological value; the multifaceted archetypal potentialities can be explored, allowing an interplay from which new patterns may emerge.

Jealousy–compersion. Developed by polyamorous communities, compersion is a relatively recent construct. Compersion is a sense of joy a person can experience from their partner's/partners' joy in their other relationship(s) (Taormino, 2008; Veaux & Rickert, 2014). Not every polyamorous individual experiences compersion, and it comes

easier to some than others, but it is possible for the pain and discomfort of jealousy to be replaced by a sense of happiness.

The transformation of jealousy into compersion that some polyamorous individuals experience gives rise to an emergent syzygetic pattern. Through the polyamorous community's exploration of jealousy, compersion has emerged as a previously unnamed archetypal construct; "in contrast to most other emotional states, jealousy has no antonym in any human language. This is probably why . . . a polygamous group . . . coined the term 'compersion'" (Ferrer, 2008, p. 54). Coining this term gives form to the concept and creates a syzygetic dyad—a tension of opposites—with potential for introspection and individuation.

In enantiodromic fashion, jealousy may become its opposite if it can be experienced with inward reflection. If a person can allow "jealous feelings and images [to] penetrate the heart and mind, a kind of initiation takes place. The jealous person discovers new ways of thinking and a fresh appreciation for the complicated demands of love" (Moore, 1994, p. 105). If jealousy is faced directly and its source to be understood as internal, a transformative process can occur and give rise to new archetypal patterns. Compersion is one such archetypal construct that has been given form by the inward exploration of jealousy. Similar to jealousy, compersion constellates many emotions, many of which form inversions of the feelings constellated by jealousy; pain, possessiveness, and insecurity give way to joy, trust, and confidence.

Compersion and jealousy form a recursive dynamic: "as jealousy dissolves, universal compassion and unconditional love become more easily available to the individual" (Ferrer, 2008, p. 55); "the closer you come to embracing the spirit of

compersion, the better you are at managing jealousy, letting go of possessiveness, and feeling positive about all your partner's relationships—even the ones you're not a part of" (Taormino, 2008, p. 178), yet "part of achieving compersion is letting go of any perceived control we have over our partners. When you do this, you give your partner the freedom and support to grow and change in whatever ways he needs" (Taormino, 2008, p. 178). The feedback loop that this dynamic creates can pose a steep learning curve for some, but once compersion is achieved, it can feed into itself, being experienced more readily and potently.

The recent formation of compersion as a neologistic emotion marks the emergence of an archetypal pattern. An interaction of cultural forces has aligned to disrupt systematized structures, allowing the archetypal components from which they are constellated to reconfigure in new form. Compersion is one such form that has been constructed from the reconfiguration of archetypal dynamics resulting from polyamory, providing a modern example of the emergence of archetypal structures.

Clinical Applicability

By exploring emergent archetypal dynamics that can unfold within polyamorous relationship configurations, a deeper understanding of archetypes can be further developed. Shifting the concept of the anima/animus to an emergent formation of a broader syzygy archetype allows for a more inclusionary understanding of unconscious dynamics. This thesis focused on applying syzygetic dynamics to the polyamorous psyche, for which the monogamous language used to describe the anima and animus is insufficient—the concept of a plurality of anima/animus may be more apt; taking a similar approach to the unconscious dynamics of gender nonconforming individuals may

also help to develop a more inclusionary approach to depth psychology. The ideas outlined in this thesis can be used both to further develop the field of depth psychology and widen its application to populations which are prone to being misunderstood under classic models of depth psychology. Furthermore, an examination of emergent dynamics of jealousy and compersion developed within the polyamorous community can be extrapolated upon and applied to other populations; doing so could prove useful for therapy with monogamous and nonmonogamous relationships alike, and with individuals regardless of their relationship orientation.

**Chapter IV
Summary and Conclusions**

Summary

In this thesis, I sought to address the lack of research on polyamory—especially

from a depth perspective—as well as to work towards developing depth psychology's

conceptualization of archetypes. In Chapter I, I established my intention to explore how

emerging relationship dynamics and configurations in polyamorous relationships reflect

and contribute to emergent archetypal patterns and dynamics. I used a hermeneutic

methodology to examine how polyamory intersects with a depth psychological

framework.

Chapter II provided an overview of relevant literature, beginning by defining and

discussing archetypes, particularly the archetypes of the Self with a focus on the

anima/animus and the role they play in individuation. I then highlighted the need for a

reconceptualization of the archetype that can take into account cultural shifts, modern

scientific knowledge, and developments in post-Jungian theory. Emergence was

discussed as a factor of archetypal dynamics that allows for more fluidity than classical

innate models. I introduced polyamory as a potential factor in archetypal emergence and

examined some of the ways in which it can disrupt established cultural trends.

In Chapter III, I hypothesized a way of reconceptualizing the anima and animus

by defining and parsing out the functions of an overarching syzygy archetype. The

dynamics and functions of syzygy were explored and it was suggested that anima/animus

are not necessarily wholly interchangeable with syzygy. Perhaps instead, anima/animus are a particular, and very common, formation of syzygy. The syzygy was discussed as a pattern of archetypal constellation that creates a tension of opposites that plays a role in many other archetypal structures and processes. Polyamory was examined as an example of how syzygetic dynamics might take place in a structure that is different from that which has become cultural hegemony. The relationship between jealousy and compersion within polyamorous relationships was explored as an example of an emergent archetypal constellation.

Clinical Implications

The field of marriage and family therapy focuses primarily on monogamous relationships. Furthering the research on nonmonogamous relationship dynamics will be beneficial to individuals practicing nonmonogamy and therapists working with them. Developing an understanding of archetypal dynamics within nonmonogamous relationships can help therapists provide poly-friendly depth psychotherapy to clients.

This thesis also helps develop the conceptualization of archetypes, particularly the anima and animus. The field of Jungian psychology is in need of revisioning; this thesis revisions the dynamics of the syzygy to better apply them to individuals with nonnormative relationship orientations. Extrapolating on the ideas discussed in this thesis can also apply an archetypal structure of the psyche to individuals with nonnormative presentations of gender and sexuality. The dynamics of syzygy that I have described can explain the formation of the anima/animus and account for the emergence of other structures. This reconceptualization allows for a more inclusive model of the psyche.

Recommendations for Further Research

The intrapsychic dynamics described in this thesis can be used as a foundation for further revisions to archetype theory. The reconceptualization of syzygy that I have proposed may have implications on other archetypal structures as well. If anima and animus can be explained through an overarching syzygy archetype, perhaps other archetypal structures can also be conceptualized as syzygetic constellations. Ego and shadow (or perhaps personae and shadow) could be viewed as syzygetic pairs. Exploring this avenue of research would likely have further implications on archetype theory and Jungian models of the psyche.

This thesis can also open the possibility of future research that applies my hypothesized syzygetic dynamics to other nonnormative structures of the psyche. Jungian psychology could benefit greatly from further research on presentations of intrapsychic dynamics that do not fit the cultural hegemony. A model of the psyche based solely on dominant presentations of psyche is limited and restrictive. A comprehensive model of the psyche will have to account for all presentations of psyche. I recommend continued research for the purpose of reconceptualizing the dynamics and structure of the psyche. Research on the archetypal dynamics described in this thesis as applied to LGBTQ+ individuals could prove a fruitful avenue of research that could help develop our understanding of the psyche. It would also be interesting to examine nonsyzygetic dynamics for gender and sexuality; research on syzygetic and nonsyzygetic constellations within the psyches of individuals with nonbinary genders would be an illuminating route to a more extensive understanding of archetypal dynamics.

Conclusions

Through the course of this research, I have found the topic to be expansive. The exploration of archetypes is a journey that yields many paths. Shifting the conceptualization of archetypes to a model of pattern creation with emergent properties allows for many possibilities to further develop our understanding of archetypal dynamics.

Nonhegemonic relationship structures, gender presentations, and sexualities demonstrate the emergent nature of archetypes, as does the fact that the cultural hegemony has changed over time. Separating anima and animus from syzygy and conceptualizing the pair as a syzygetic formation, rather than the syzygy itself, provides a model of the psyche with broader applications than the model as it exists in its current form. My application of this model of syzygy to polyamorous relationships demonstrated some of the ways emergent archetypal dynamics may unfold and gave examples of how syzygetic patterns may form within nonnormative structures. The possibilities for archetypal pattern formation are vast; it would be impossible to fully capture the infinite potentiality of the archetype. By examining common archetypal structures and paying attention to emergent cultural changes, the depth psychology community can continue to develop an understanding of archetypal structures and dynamics.

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