Metamour Connections as the Underpinning of the Fabric of Polyamory

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ABSTRACT: This paper has a double purpose. Firstly, it is meant to present an intellectual tool for analyzing the possibilities in the way relationships evolve; I call this tool *the tree model of proximity*. (The name comes from the fact that the development of this tool has been inspired by an Aristotelian idea, which has come to be referred to as *the tree model of reality*.) The tree model of proximity is a tool for modeling interpersonal closeness and understanding how closeness arises via consensual decisions. Secondly, this paper is an attempt to apply the tool to analyze a specific kind of relationship within the polyamorous conceptual framework: a metamour relationship, meaning a non-romantic bond between persons x and z, who are both romantic partners of person y. By focusing my analysis on metamour relationships, I wish to draw attention to them. I claim that although romantic bonds typically rouse more interest when discussing and defining polyamory, we should not underestimate the importance of non-romantic connections within the polyamorous network. Despite being less visible, these bonds are significant and constitutive of polyamory.

KEYWORDS: polyamory, metamour relationships, consensuality, modeling interpersonal closeness, tree model of proximity, proximity possibilities

This paper has a double purpose. Firstly, it is meant to present an intellectual tool for analyzing the possibilities in the way relationships evolve; I call this tool *the tree model of proximity*, or *the tree of proximity* in short. If I were to define the tree of proximity in two words, I would say it is a tool for modeling interpersonal closeness and

understanding how closeness arises *via* consensual decisions. Secondly, this paper is an attempt to apply the tool to analyze a specific kind of relationship within the polyamorous conceptual framework: a metamour relationship, meaning a non-romantic bond between persons x and z, who are both romantic partners of person y.

Aristotle and His Tree Model of Reality

The construction of the tool for modeling interpersonal closeness that I describe in this paper is inspired by an Aristotelian idea; therefore, I shall start by describing the original idea of Aristotle.

In Book IV of the *Physics*, Aristotle envisions time as composed of the past which is fixed, the future which is open, and the so-called 'moving now' which makes certain events actual (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E., Book 4, Part 10). The picture of time which emerges from this vision has come to be referred to as *the tree model of reality* (Horwitch, 1987, pp. 25–26), in which the future are the branches that stretch in many possible directions, while the past, rendered actual by the moving now, is the trunk – one fixed route of events that can no longer be altered. As the now moves, it singles out a particular branch and turns it into the prolongation of the trunk; the other branches, which were the alternatives to the chosen branch, cease to exist.

The Tree Model of Proximity

The Tree Model of Proximity: Modus Operandi

In this paper, I propose to see relationships in a similar fashion to the one in which Aristotle sees time. What stretches out before any two living individuals is a multiplicity of possible interactions that those individuals may or may not choose to make actual between them. If the individuals never come in contact, no trunk is formed; they stay at the level of proximity possibilities, none of which becomes actual. If they do come into contact with one another, this first contact becomes the first constituent of the trunk of the tree of proximity between them.

I assume the basic principle of the growth of the trunk of the tree of proximity to be consensuality. Therefore, the trunk of the tree of proximity can evolve if and only if both individuals agree to some proximity between them, whether this

means more proximity, less proximity, or the same amount of proximity as before. The same or a smaller amount of proximity than before need not imply that the relationship ceases to exist, only that there is no further growth of proximity between the two individuals. The amount of proximity may stabilize at a certain level, or it may decrease, but the relationship may very well continue. Consequently, we may talk of the relationship development in other aspects than closeness: for example, the relationship may become more and more stable without becoming closer. We can also say that the proximity between the two individuals who choose the same or a smaller amount of proximity continues to evolve, not in the sense of growing, but in the sense of changing shape, being recalibrated.

In the most minimalist version of the tree of proximity, the trunk can be constituted only by the first, incidental contact, and a decision on one or both sides not to pursue any more interactions.

It should be noted that apart from the situations in which consent or the lack of it is voiced by the parties involved, there could also be grey-zone situations in which, even though there is communication, consent cannot be satisfactorily established as either given or not given. Since – as has been stated above – the growth of the tree of proximity between any two individuals depends on consent being given by both sides, the grey-zone situations count as a standstill, meaning that the tree of proximity ceases to evolve, and the amount of proximity becomes 'stuck' at a certain level (which has been consensually established prior to the standstill) until the question of consent becomes resolved.

The Tree Model of Proximity: Applications

The tree of proximity is a tool that can be useful in two ways. First, it can be employed for observing a concrete relationship (a token) develop; let us call this type of analysis *the token analysis*. In such an analysis, we would observe how, at each forking of the paths, two people pick one path over other possible alternatives, which then close, never to become actual again; the path which is chosen opens new options to choose from, but these will always be slightly different than the options from before. Let me elaborate on this, so that it becomes clear. As mentioned in the last section, at each new forking of paths one can decide to choose more proximity with another person, less proximity, or the same amount

of proximity as before. If, following a chance encounter, two strangers consensually decide in favor of more proximity, this 'more proximity', which I propose to call 'more proximity1', will be different than 'more proximity52' that they might choose after five years of knowing each other. By the same token, if, after five years of proximity, they decide in favor of 'less proximity52', it will be a different 'less proximity' than the one they might have counterfactually chosen as 'less proximity1'[1]. To recap, there is always a qualitative difference between any two options within the tree model, even if these two options are of the same type – 'more proximity', for example.

The second way in which the tool of the tree of proximity can be utilized is not for observing a concrete relationship *token*, but for analyzing possible meanders of a relationship *type* and probing the boundaries of this kind of relationship. For example, the tree of proximity can be used to analyze the type of relationship which exists within the conceptual framework of polyamory and which is called a metamour relationship. This kind of analysis shall be the research goal of this paper. Such analysis – let us call it *the type analysis* – might be of use not only for philosophers who take interest in the ontology of relationships, but also for other social studies researchers. It is conceivable that the tree model of proximity could be applied to the qualitative research of psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists as a tool that helps to establish order within the gathered material. The gathered material could 1) fit into an already established tree model, 2) be used to theorize a completely new tree model of a relationship type, or 3) it could indicate new ontological alternatives (that have not yet been taken into account) within an already established tree model. Let me stress that even when a tree model of proximity for a particular relationship type is established, it is not meant to be a structure which is forever fixed. Psychology, anthropology, sociology, but also cultural studies can all provide new research material that makes it possible to create new tree models and reshape the existing ones. Since this paper includes some examples of cultural representations that are used to support my analysis of the metamour type of a relationship, it will be easy to see how a cultural studies analysis could be linked to the tree model of proximity.

Importantly though, the tree of proximity might also have potential applications outside academia, especially in psychotherapy: therapists could use the tree model of proximity as a tool in relationship counseling to help the clients in the

process of checking whether and to what extent they are 'on the same page' in their relationship. This is an example of *the token analysis*, where one particular relationship (a token) would be analyzed. First of all, the tree of proximity tool could be used retrospectively: the therapist could help the clients track back the important proximity steps they took in their relationship with one another. It is possible, for example, that some relationship problems might be rooted in the situation where one party assumed the other's consent for more proximity, whilst the other person did not intend to give such consent or felt somewhat forced or rushed into giving it. Realizing that at a given point in the past the clients were not exactly 'on the same page' regarding some proximity choice and they were not aware of this discrepancy constitutes a valuable therapeutic discovery, both for the therapist and for the clients. Second of all, the tree of proximity could be recommended for people in therapy as a tool to keep track of their present and future proximity choices and to make these choices more consciously. Being more conscious would consist in double-checking each consent with oneself and others, as well as openly weighting the alternatives and realizing that each of the alternatives has different consequences and opens up a different bundle of future choices.

It is also imaginable that – for the benefit of her clients – the psychotherapist might fuse the type analysis with the token analysis. For example, the therapist could analyze the unique tree of proximity of their clients, compare it with the type analysis of many different relationship types, and share their findings with the clients. It could turn out that the clients claim that they identify with one relationship type, but their actual proximity choices fit a different relationship type (or a fusion of two relationship types), and the frustration that they feel stems from trying to fit in with the relationship type they identify with instead of embracing the reality of their actual proximity decisions.

Apart from the use of the tree of proximity tool in therapy, one can also imagine a very private use by individuals involved in a particular relationship or a relationship network, without any help from a therapist. Since a polyamorous constellation typically involves a multiplicity of proximities – romantic, sexual, metamour – the tool might be particularly useful for polyamorous individuals. For example, it could allow a polyamorous person to keep track of all the consents given and received in different relationships this person maintains within their polyamorous constellation.

The Metamour Tree of Proximity

Context, Relevant Definitions and Reservations

In this paper, the tool that I call the tree of proximity shall be used in the context of polyamory to perform a type analysis of the beginning of a metamour relationship. Before such an analysis can be performed, certain definitions and reservations should be fleshed out.

First of all, when I use the word 'proximity', I do not intend to refer to the phenomenon of being in a close relationship or even aiming to be in such a relationship. As noted elsewhere, "[t]wo consensually chosen doses of interpersonal proximity between strangers may draw them nearer to one another, but they do not amount to a close relationship between them yet" (Iwanowska, 2016, p. 12). I regard interpersonal proximity as extended on a spectrum: at one extreme end people are total strangers to one another, at the other extreme end people are in a close relationship with one another, and between these two limiting cases "a range of interaction and relationship kinds are possible, and all of them involve a certain amount of interpersonal proximity" (Iwanowska, 2016, p. 12). Since the research topic of this paper is how *strangers* can start to draw closer to one another as metamours, I shall be concerned with the proximity possibilities which are near to the former extreme end of the spectrum. Therefore, becoming closer to one another in the metamour context shall be understood as taking such steps as manifesting the mutual willingness a) to communicate to one another (whether directly and indirectly); b) to be receptive of any reservations or limitations connected with the potential 'sharing' of a partner; c) to voice consent to 'sharing' a partner; d) to meet and get to know one another a bit; d) to put some kind of trust in one another (e.g. that the other metamour does not want to harm the beloved); e) to share some personal information with one another. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather illustrative of the process of creating interpersonal proximity in the initial stages of a metamour interaction.

Secondly, by a metamour relationship I shall understand a bond between persons x and z which is non-romantic and non-sexual, where both x and z are romantic or aspiring romantic partners (and possibly sexual partners[2]) of person y. This is a definition within the context of polyamory; a slightly different definition would

be the case for some non-monogamous relationships other than polyamorous relationships. In this paper, I wish to focus on metamour relationships which are part of polyamorous constellations.

Thirdly, as polyamory[3] I shall understand such an approach to forming relationships, according to which: 1) all the persons involved are open to the possibility of their partners having multiple romantic relationships, which may involve a sexual bond[4]; 2) the persons involved may[5] but need not be open to having multiple romantic relationships, which may[6] involve a sexual bond; 3) the simultaneity of romantic and sexual relationships is maintained with the full knowledge and consent of all the people involved (Aviram and Leachman, 2015, p. 297; Morrison, Beaulieu, Brockman, & Beaglaoich, 2013, p. 81; Strassberg, 2003, p. 439); 4) the minimum in the way metamours treat one another is acceptance.

As far as point 4 of the definition is concerned, I wish to stress that I am consciously using the word 'acceptance' in contrast with the word 'tolerance'. After van Quaquebeke, Henrich, & Eckloff (2007), I define tolerance as "a possible attitudinal reaction to the object's *presence* in the subject's environment" and acceptance as "a possible attitudinal reaction to the object's *membership* in the subject's group" (p. 188). Out of these two terms, tolerance implies more distance with the object: I can "*bear*" (Ibid., p. 189) this person's presence in my environment, but their *presence* is my limit in terms of interpersonal proximity; *a contrario*, I would not want this person to be a member of any group to which I belong. This is incompatible with what is meant by 'consent' in polyamorous situations, because consent in the context of polyamory entails agreeing to have direct romantic and possibly sexual connections with some individuals, as well as indirect, non-romantic and non-sexual, connections with other individuals. As far as the latter option is concerned, agreeing that one's beloved shall be romantically and possibly sexually involved with another person means agreeing to an indirect connection with this person and thus admitting this person into one's polyamorous constellation. This is equal to admitting a person to a group to which one belongs, and for this reason the term 'acceptance' is more appropriate in the context of polyamory.

Finally, I would like to make some reservations. In this paper, I have decided to focus on verbal communication and verbal expression of consent. This is justified by the fact that, as it has been observed by many authors, polyamorous individuals seem to place an emphasis on verbal communication as a means of ensuring

honesty and openness, checking in with others, undertaking the emotional work concerning the emotionality of oneself and others, maintaining an ongoing negotiation about the needs, desires, boundaries of oneself and others, etc. (Brunning, 2016; Gilmore and de Arcana, 2015; Barker, 2013; Barker, 2011; Easton and Hardy, 2011; Sheff, 2010; Anapol, 2010; Klesse, 2007). However, by choosing to focus on verbal communication, I do not wish to dismiss the possibility of non-verbal communication in polyamory, nor of this kind of communication being an interesting research topic (also in the context of polyamory). I only wish to say that based on the literature on polyamory, verbal communication seems to be more constitutive of the polyamorous practice and, thus, more relevant. This is the reason behind my focus on verbal expression and choosing to supplement the tree of proximity between metamours with a lot of verbal illustrations of metamour behavior.

Another reservation I would like to make is that even though all verbal illustrations of metamour behavior in this paper exemplify direct communication, in fact, they could easily be imagined as tokens of indirect communication, by which I mean that the potential metamours could ask the beloved (or another trusted person) to convey messages between them. By means of this reservation, I wish to say that although I have chosen to use the examples of direct communication, I recognize indirect communication as a legitimate way of exchanging messages between the members of polyamorous constellations.[7] I hold that as long as there is communicative initiative and the message is conveyed truthfully, then it does not make a significant qualitative difference whether the communication is direct or indirect.

As my last reservation, I wish to say that I purposely leave out of my considerations such situations in which people become closer to one another in an unconscious way. Generally speaking, this is justified by the fact that I am interested in how proximity is *constructed* by individuals, not how it might *happen* to them. I do not deny that certain chance happenings, which people do not choose or have control over, might draw these individuals closer to one another in an unconscious way. But my point of focus is such proximity that is built on two-sided consent, and the notion of unconscious consent seems inconceivable. Realizing that I consent to something need not be an intellectual operation: I might *feel* consent rather than think it, or feel it before I think it, but – either way – such felt consent assumes some kind of conscious contact with oneself; it assumes self-awareness.

In addition to acknowledging felt consent, I also recognize that consent – whether felt or intellectually processed – may be given non-verbally; a good illustration of such non-verbal consent is described in *the Zhuangzi* (2009), where an invitation to friendship is met with consent expressed through eye contact and joyous laughter (6:39, 6:44, 6:45). However, as mentioned earlier, I find it inconceivable that consent can be given unconsciously. The argument for this may be formulated in the following way: 1) since giving consent results from choosing between options – "giving consent" *versus* "declining consent" – one needs to consider these options; 2) it is impossible to consider options and choose between them unconsciously (even though the actions of considering and choosing need not be intellectual); 3) *ergo*, consent cannot be given unconsciously.

The analysis of proximity which is consciously constructed by individuals through two-sided consent is particularly well-suited for discussing polyamory. First of all, polyamory is premised on consent and knowledge of everybody involved, and both of these require consciousness. But more importantly, in the contemporary reality where "most societies are hostile to polyamory" (Brunning, 2016, p. 7), it would be difficult to imagine that someone becomes close to others in an unconscious and yet polyamorous way. With polyamory going so much against the societal norms and getting stigmatized for it (Sheff, 2016; Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013; Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, Rubin, & Conley, 2013), embracing a polyamorous identity and developing polyamorous bonds requires conscious non-conformity and affirmation of oneself, one's beliefs, needs, desires. Even those who decide not to live a polyamorous lifestyle openly are aware of their relationship choices going against the norms. Therefore, polyamorous proximity cannot help but be constructed consciously.

Initial Conditions and the Stimulus to Start the Metamour Tree of Proximity

Having explained the definitions and reservations that underlie the analysis undertaken in this paper, I can now go on to discuss the initial conditions of the tree of proximity between metamours.

What is interesting about the metamour tree of proximity is that it can be preceded by an already existing tree of proximity between two persons. To put it sim-

ply, the two people, x and z, who start constructing the metamour tree of proximity, may already be friends or acquaintances. Alternatively, they may not know each other at all and then the metamour tree of proximity arises *ex nihilo*. These are the different initial conditions in which the metamour tree of proximity may have the chance to sprout. What stimulates the transformation of those conditions into the possible beginning of the metamour tree of proximity is the presence of a third person, y, who is attracted to both x and z, and to whom both x and z are reciprocally attracted.

My analysis in this paper shall focus on the *ex nihilo* situation, in which the potential metamours start their metamour contact as strangers. Such metamour proximity which develops between friends and acquaintances has been analyzed elsewhere (Iwanowska, 2015).

In this paper, I shall assume that y has a prior romantic bond with x and that z is, romantically speaking, the 'new person'. However, with slight modifications, a similar tree of proximity could be developed for metamours who start their romantic involvement with y simultaneously.

The Figure of the Tree of Proximity and the Symbols

Before proceeding to the analysis proper, I wish to stress that this paper is accompanied by a Figure (see: Appendix A) which is meant to serve as a visualization of the tree of proximity between metamours who start their metamour contact as strangers. Therefore, it is important that the reader consults the Figure while consulting the textual part of the analysis.

As to the symbols used in the figure, x, y, and z are persons involved in the polyamorous constellation – a detailed description of the state of affairs between these three individuals is given in the next section. P indicates a polyamorous state of affairs, and ¬P symbolizes a non-polyamorous state of affairs. M means that a metamour type of proximity is possible, and ¬M means that it is impossible. In the case when no metamour proximity is possible, this does not mean that no interpersonal closeness can take place, but that a particular kind of closeness is blocked from occurring – the one that might happen only between persons who have the same romantic partner.

T stands for talking to one another. Thus, when the symbol T (x, z) appears, for

example, this means that x initiates a conversation with z; respectively, T (z, x) shall signify that it is z who initiates a conversation with x. In contrast, when the negation sign (¬) appears in front of the symbols described above, this means the lack of communication – for example, ¬T (x, z) stands for x refraining from initiating the conversation with z.

In addition, K stands for full knowledge concerning the state of affairs that obtains between the individuals involved, while ∧ and ∨ are logical symbols signifying 'and' (conjunction) and 'or' respectively. When using ∨ to signify 'or', I shall be using it to mean an exclusive disjunction – for example, K (x ∨ z) means that it is either x who has full knowledge about the state of affairs that obtains between everybody involved, or it is z who has such full knowledge; however, it is not the case that both have the full knowledge. When both have such full knowledge, this shall be indicated by K (x ∧ z) in a more detailed version, or by K in a simplified version. When the symbol ¬K is used, it shall signify that it is not the case that both x and z have the full knowledge concerning the state of affairs that obtains.

Furthermore, 'yes' stands for consent, 'no' stands for lack of consent, while 'yes, but' stands for consent with reservations. Whenever I shall mean such consent which has been issued by one person only, I shall make it clear – for example, Y(x) shall signify that the consent has been issued by x only. Otherwise, 'yes' and 'yes, but' mean a two-sided consent, issued by both x and z. In contrast, for the sake of simplicity, I assume that a one-sided lack of consent amounts to an overall lack of consent. Therefore, 'no' means that at least one person said 'no'. Finally, C signifies consensuality (between x and z), by which I mean that both x and z have had the opportunity to voice their consent or the lack of it, and they both did so.

The Beginning of the Tree of Proximity between Metamours (level 0)

Having established how to read the symbols in the Figure which depicts the tree of proximity, let us proceed to the analysis of the proximity possibilities between metamours that start their metamour interaction as strangers.

The initial set of proximity possibilities sprouts from the point which I have marked as level 0. The state of affairs at level 0 is that both x and z are attracted to one and the same person y, and y reciprocates the feeling of attraction to both

x and z. However, I assume that x and y are in an already established, stable romantic relationship, and therefore I shall refer to x as the stable romantic partner (of y) and to y as the beloved. In contrast, z and y do not have any romantic bond between them yet – they are strangers to one another. For that reason, I shall refer to z as the aspiring romantic partner (of y) or as the new person. As to the state of affairs between x and z, they are neither attracted to one another, nor do they have any preexisting bond between them – they are also strangers to one another. My analysis in this paper shall focus on the proximity possibilities between these two individuals, x and z, who do not know one another and are not attracted to one another, but who share attraction to one and the same individual (y). When talking collectively about these two people, I shall often refer to them as potential metamours.

The Initial Set of Six Alternative Options (level 1)

There are six proximity possibilities which I wish to single out as the basic options that might sprout from level 0. Starting from the left, one possible evolution from level 0 to level 1 is a situation (1.1) in which the two potential metamours (x and z) talk to one another directly, even before the aspiring romantic partner (z) signals their attraction to person y. This situation can take place at a poly meet-up or at a party, where all three above-mentioned individuals are present. The interaction between x and z can be initiated by the stable romantic partner (x) that notices the new person (z) who is attracted to the beloved (y). The stable romantic partner (x) could address the aspiring romantic partner (z) in the following way, for example: 'Hey, I've noticed you are attracted to my beloved. My name is Alex, by the way.' A good illustration of such communicative initiative of the stable romantic partner towards the aspiring romantic partner has been portrayed in the Czech film entitled *Svatá čtveřice* (Hřebejk, 2012), in which Vítek, the husband of Marie, asks Ondra openly: 'Are you attracted to Marie?', to which Ondra replies with honesty: 'Sure, I find her attractive.'[8] An alternative option to this one is that it is the aspiring romantic partner that makes the first communicative move towards the stable romantic partner; these are the words that the aspiring romantic partner could use to initiate the conversation: 'Hey, I'm Marco. You have a stunning partner. Would it be ok if I flirted with her a bit?' Notice that if either of these options are actualized,

in the end both potential metamours (x and z) have full knowledge of the state of affairs that obtains – this is marked as K (x Λ z), where Λ is a conjunction symbol meaning '*both* x *and* z'.

An alternative possibility (1.02) that presents itself at level 1 is a situation where it is the beloved (y) who makes the first communicative move and addresses both her stable romantic partner (x) and the aspiring romantic partner (z) (the order in which the beloved addresses the two individuals may vary). When talking to her stable romantic partner (x), she (y) could phrase what she wants to express in the following way: 'Sweetheart, I need to share something with you. There is this new guy at the university and I am so attracted to him. How would you feel if I asked him out on a date?' Conversely, when talking to the new person (z), she (y) could address him along the following lines: 'I feel so tempted to ask you out on a date, but you need to know I'm polyamorous, and I have a stable romantic partner. How do you feel about it?' In this scenario, like in the previous one, both x and z end up having full knowledge of the state of affairs that obtains. A cinematic illustration of such communication is realized in the film *Splendor* (Araki, 1999), in which Veronica is attracted to both Zed and Able, and she informs both men about it[9].

However, it might also be the case that the beloved (y) addresses only one of the two individuals she is attracted to and, for some reason, fails to talk to the other. This possibility is indicated on the tree of proximity as option 1.03. Notice that in this situation, the end result is that only one potential metamour (x or z) has knowledge of the state of affairs that obtains – this is marked as K (x V z), where V signifies an exclusive disjunction, meaning '*either* x *or* z'.

Apart from the above-mentioned three possible options, there are two other alternative possibilities that can be grouped together as beforehand – *a priori* – arrangements (between x and y). One possible *a priori* arrangement can be an *in blanco* consent of the stable romantic partner (x) by means of which the stable romantic partner expresses their approval of the beloved (y) acting on the mutual attraction she might experience with other people (1.04), even before those people (such as person z) appear. This is what an in *blanco* consent issued to one's romantic partner might sound like: 'Feel free to hook up with whoever you want to. I'm good with that. You don't have to check in with me every time you feel attracted to a new person.' Similarly, an *in blanco* consent might also be expressed to people other than one's partner. For example, one might talk to others about it

at a poly meet-up: 'As far as my needs and my comfort go, my partner doesn't have to check in with me each time she feels attracted to a new person. She can act on her attraction to others freely, without consulting me.' It is interesting to note that, in the case of an *a priori* arrangement of this type, depending on the agreement between the partners in the stable romantic relationship, the full knowledge condition need not be fulfilled in order for the state of affairs to be compatible with polyamory. If the stable romantic partner (x) issues a beforehand consent and underlines that they need not be informed about the new romantic contacts of the beloved (y), the beloved might act on the attraction she experiences with other people without informing her stable romantic partner about the new people she is attracted to, and this conduct shall still be compatible with polyamory. The reason for this is that this kind of unfulfillment of the full knowledge condition does not block the stable romantic partner (x) from voicing their consent – the consent is issued *a priori*. A good example of an *a priori* arrangement can be found in a documentary film *POLYAMORY - Journalism major project* (Anderson, 2012), where all three partners in a 'vee'[10] relationship decide together that it is most convenient to them to tell one another about the new flirtatious connections only after something has already happened between them and the new people from outside the 'vee'. Similarly, a sort of an *a priori* arrangement seems to be the case between Françoise and Pierre in Simone de Beauvoir's *L'invitée* (1972). Although sometimes the new romantic and sexual connections with others are discussed by Françoise and Pierre before anything happens (this is the case with the connection between Pierre and Xavière), at other times these new connections are discussed only afterwards – like the connection between Françoise and Gerbert. The latter solution is portrayed as perfectly acceptable; in fact, it is expressly said in the first chapter of the novel that Pierre does not impose any constraints on Françoise's behavior, as a rule.

The second possible *a priori* arrangement (between x and y) is an *en bloc* lack of consent for dating others by means of which the stable romantic partner (x) expresses a prior lack of approval of the beloved (y) acting on the mutual attraction the beloved might experience with other people, no matter who they are (1.05). It is important to stress that such lack of consent does not automatically signify the absence of polyamory. The reasoning behind this statement goes as follows: 1) The two main pillars of polyamory are consensuality and the knowledge of all

persons involved about the state of affairs that obtains between them (Aviram and Leachman, 2015, p. 297; Morrison et al., 2013, p. 81; Strassberg, 2003, p. 439), 2) the lack of consent to date others on which all parties involved agree is a form of consensuality (however, this is consensuality which obtains between x and y, and not between x and z), and thus 3) if all parties (x and y) are aware of the state of affairs that obtains and all parties agree to it being so, then polyamory is not automatically excluded. There are polyamorous couples who might for various reasons (sickness, pregnancy, a need to solve an intra-relationship issue, etc.) temporarily agree to not date other people. There are also the so-called polyfidelitous relationships (Aviram and Leachman, 2015, p. 299; Labriola, 2003), where there are more than two people, for example a, b, c, and d, who all temporarily or permanently agree not to date any other people outside their polyamorous constellation.

The last possibility on level 1 is no communication between the parties involved (1.06), and thus the metamour proximity is blocked from evolving (¬M). Moreover, where there is no communication, there is typically no realization of full knowledge of all parties involved (¬K), but even more importantly there is no space for expressing consent or the lack of it. This amounts to a lack of consensuality (¬C). For this reason, no matter if the beloved (y) and the aspiring romantic partner (z) decide to pursue the mutual attraction or not, the state of affairs that follows is not polyamorous (¬P).

The above-mentioned options at level 1 are possible paths that might sprout from level 0. Each of the options at level 1 opens a new set of paths onto level 2. It is level 2 (and above) that shall now be the focal point of the analysis. In other words, let us explore what might happen next in each of the above-described variants.

What Happens after a Direct Conversation between the Potential Metamours

The first variant at level 1 was a direct conversation between the stable romantic partner (x) and the aspiring romantic partner (z). I wish to describe three possible options that might ensue; I shall refer to the phase in which these three options might take place as *the transmission of consent*. First of all, in the course of the conversation, two potential metamours might both voice their acceptance of the state of affairs in which they are attracted to one and the same person (y). The

variant that I have marked as 'yes' (2.01) obtains if and only if both of them say a straightforward 'yes' to the situation they find themselves in. If at least one person says 'no', this amounts to the overall lack of consent between the two potential metamours (2.03). The third option (2.02) that might follow is that, although both potential metamours voice their consent, at least one of these consents shall be a consent with reservations ('yes, but').

Let me provide plausible communicative examples of these three possible variants (2.01, 2.02, 2.03) in order to make them less abstract. A straightforward 'yes' coming from the stable romantic partner (x) might go as follows: 'Sure, you have my full acceptance and support in dating my beloved' or 'I want you to know you have my full blessing to follow your connection in whatever form it takes.'[11] A straightforward 'yes' coming from the aspiring romantic partner (z), on the other hand, might go along the following lines: 'I fully respect the fact that you are a very important person in y's life.' In contrast, a 'no' issued by the stable romantic partner might be formulated like this: 'My gut tells me that you don't really accept my presence as my beloved's stable partner; for that reason, I can't agree to you dating her.' Conversely, a 'no' stated by the aspiring romantic partner might go as follows: 'I feel that there is a lot of tension in your couple. I don't want to be a part of that.' As far as the consent with reservations is concerned, such a 'yes, but' voiced by the stable romantic partner (x) might be a message of this sort: 'Me and my partner have been through a really bad break-up with some folks recently. I am not sure how much we can handle right now. Would you be ok with starting things really, really slowly between you two?'[12] In contrast, a 'yes, but' issued by the aspiring romantic partner (z) might go as follows: 'I am really attracted to your beloved and you seem like a great guy. The problem is I live so far away, and I am afraid this may not work. Could we agree upon some trial period and see how it goes?'

Finally, let me comment by saying that the 'yes' and 'yes, but' variants both open up the possibility for x and z to become metamours (M), while the 'no' variant makes the metamour relationship between x and z impossible (¬M). However, it is important to stress that all the options, including the 'no' variant, are compatible with the polyamorous conceptual framework (P), since in all variants both x and z have had full knowledge of the state of affairs that obtains, and both have had an opportunity to voice their consent or the lack of it (C).

What Happens after the Beloved's Conversation with Both Potential Metamours

I shall now move on to discussing what might happen on level 2, when we follow an alternative path – that in which there was no direct conversation between potential metamours, but instead, the beloved (y) has talked to both her stable romantic partner (x) and her aspiring romantic partner (z) in order to make them fully aware of the state of affairs that obtains. Once the two potential metamours have been informed by the beloved (y) that she is attracted to both of them simultaneously, there are two possibilities that might follow: they may either decide to talk to one another (2.04) or decide in favor of no communication (2.05). If they decide to talk to one another, the phase that I have referred to as *the transmission of consent* follows (3.01, 3.02, 3.03), and this turn of events is compatible with polyamory (P). If no communication takes place (2.05), not only is the metamour proximity blocked from developing (¬M), but also such a situation is incompatible with polyamory (¬P). This is because where no communication takes place, no transmission of consent is possible, and where no transmission of consent is possible, there is no consensuality (¬C). Consequently, no consensuality amounts to the impossibility of polyamory to be the case.

What Happens after the Beloved's Conversation with Only One Potential Metamour

A similar palette of options is characteristic of another alternative – the one in which the beloved does not talk to both potential metamours, but only to one of them, while excluding the other (1.03). In this situation, the person with whom the beloved has had a conversation (either x or z) can now take the matters into their own hands and talk to the other potential metamour (2.06). If this happens, again the phase that I call *the transmission of consent* shall follow (3.04, 3.05, 3.06). However, the person (either x or z) who is able to initiate the first metamour contact can also decide in favor of no communication (2.07). When this is the case, the same is true as what has been explained in the previous paragraph: the metamour proximity is blocked from evolving (¬M), and such a turn of events is incompatible with the polyamorous conceptual framework (¬P) due to consensuality being blocked

from obtaining (¬C) and the knowledge condition not obtaining for one of the potential metamours (¬K).

What Happens after the A Priori In Blanco Consent

Another alternative path which has been described on level 1 is a situation in which there is consent *in blanco* issued beforehand by the stable romantic partner (x). Let us now discuss level 2 development of this particular variant in which the beloved (y) is given consent by her stable romantic partner (x) to act on the mutual attraction she might experience with other people, whoever they may be. Once such a consent has been voiced and the beloved has met a concrete individual with whom she experiences mutual attraction – person z – there are two possible options that might follow from that: 2.08) the beloved may either decide to talk to z about being in an already established relationship with her stable romantic partner (x) and also about the consent *in blanco* she has received from her partner; 2.09) the beloved may decide in favor of no communication regarding her current romantic situation. If the beloved chooses the no-communication option, her choice will have significant consequences. First of all, she is responsible for blocking any metamour proximity between x and z from growing (¬M). Second of all, she is responsible for making the state of affairs incompatible with the polyamorous conceptual framework (¬P), because although her stable romantic partner (x) has had an opportunity to voice his consent, the aspiring romantic partner (z) is denied the opportunity to do so. Denying a person the opportunity to voice their consent or the lack of it amounts to the lack of consensuality (¬C). Furthermore, the aspiring romantic partner (z) is also denied the full knowledge concerning the state of affairs that obtains (¬K).

However, if the beloved (y) decides to communicate with the new person (z) regarding her current romantic situation, the consequences just described are avoided: the new person (z) has full knowledge about the state of affairs that obtains (K), and it is possible for that person to voice their consent or the lack of it. The options that might follow from such a situation are the following: 3.07) the new person (z) might either choose to communicate with the stable romantic partner (x), 3.08) or the new person (z) may decide in favor of no communication. If the former option is chosen (3.07), then the *transmission of consent* phase follows

(4.01, 4.02, 4.03). If the latter option is chosen (3.08), then we are dealing with one of the grey-zone situations, in which consent cannot be satisfactorily established. Notice that this state of affairs does not involve blocking anybody from voicing their consent; however, one person (z) has refrained from voicing their consent or the lack of it. Therefore, we can neither say that the consensuality condition is fulfilled nor that it is not. The status of the consensuality condition is unclear (C?). Consequently, even though all persons involved have the full knowledge of the state of affairs that obtains (K), we cannot say that this situation is compatible with polyamory. Intriguingly though, we can neither claim that this situation is incompatible with polyamory. Rather, until the question of consent becomes resolved, we are left hanging, both in terms of the state of affairs being compatible with polyamory (P?) and in terms of the further evolution of metamour proximity (M?).

In fact, the further development of events may go in either direction. Whilst it may occur that the aspiring romantic partner (z) is fully accepting of the stable romantic partner (x), it may also transpire that the lack of communication on the part of the aspiring romantic partner (z) has been indicative of the lack of acceptance of the stable romantic partner (x) and that the aspiring romantic partner (z) has been exploiting the consent of the stable romantic partner (x) in a very instrumental way. For example, the aspiring romantic partner (z) might have been using the situation to make the beloved (y) fall in love with them, and once the stakes have gone up in terms of emotional commitment, z presents the beloved with the either-or monoamorous choice: 'it's either me or him'. This is more or less what happens in the polyamorous web series entitled *Family: The web series*. Ben, who is in a stable relationship with Gemma starts a new relationship with Miley. In the very first conversation with Miley, Ben tells Miley he has a pre-existing romantic relationship with Gemma; he also informs Miley that Gemma has given him an *in blanco* consent for dating other girls (Greenan, 2008–2009, episode 7). Miley develops a romantic relationship with Ben, and although she never voices her consent in a verbal way, she lets Ben think that she does not mind Gemma's presence in Ben's romantic life. It seems that Miley accepts Gemma, since whenever she meets Gemma she acts in a friendly way and does not have a problem hanging out with Ben in the house where he lives with Gemma (Greenan, 2008–2009, episode 13). It is only later when Miley starts to fall in love with Ben that she reveals to him that she is in fact monogamous and wants Ben exclusively for herself. It becomes

clear that Miley lacks consent for the presence of Gemma in Ben's romantic life (Greenan, 2008–2009, episode 18).

The intriguingly unclear status resulting from the partial lack of communication (in which only the new person, z, withholds from communicating their consent) is definitely an area worth exploring, and therefore I wish to point it out as an area for future investigation, especially for the researchers interested in non-verbal communication in polyamory.

What Happens after the Lack of Consent En Bloc or after No Communication

Taking into account that the main topic of this paper is metamour relationships, the possible development of variants 1.05 and 1.06 does not invite any further analysis. The option of the lack of consent *en bloc* (1.05) is where the tree of metamour proximity touches a limit; the same is true for the option of no communication (1.06). Both paths, if chosen by the parties involved, result in the blockage of growth of metamour proximity (¬M). However, it needs to be stressed once again that while the lack of consent *en bloc* may (under certain conditions discussed above) still be compatible with polyamory (P/¬P), the option of no communication is incompatible with the polyamorous conceptual framework (¬P).

Further Development of Metamour Proximity

In the main body of this paper, I have presented the initial set of proximity possibilities between metamours who begin their relationships as strangers. I have also pointed to some further sets of possibilities that arise from this initial set. In my analysis, I have stopped at the phase I have called *the transmission of consent,* and I have not attempted to draw a complete and exhaustive tree of proximity between people who start their relationships as strangers. Such an analysis would take up too much space. However, I wish to stress that the analysis could continue, and many further sets of possibilities could be depicted in the Figure of the tree of proximity. The tree would grow and develop, more and more possibilities would arise, and the parties involved would be able to keep choosing between these possibilities as they progress in creating metamour proximity.

Nevertheless, even though I will not explore these further development possibilities in detail, I wish to point to certain general directions in which the metamour proximity depicted in the Figure could evolve. There are at least five such general directions: first, the metamours who started as strangers might end up as distant acquaintances; second, they might end up as friends or close friends – this scenario is portrayed in the film *Cesar et Rosalie* (Sautet, 1972); third, there might be a break up of one of the romantic bonds, which brings the metamour relationship to an end; fourth, the metamour relationship might end as a result of the death of the beloved – this is the case in the classic Truffaut picture *Jules et Jim* (1962), based on the novel under the same title (Roché, 1953); and finally, the metamours might fall in love with one another, thus transforming their metamour relationship into a romantic relationship. This last scenario is explored in the film *Splendor* (Araki, 1999), in which the main protagonist, Veronica, and the two men she is dating voyage through instantiating the polyamorous relationship model called 'vee'[13] into being the exemplification of the polyamorous relationship model called 'triad'[14]. A similar sequence of events unfolds in the film *Dieta mediterránea* (Oristrell, 2009), although in Oristrell's picture Toni and Frank who are both romantically involved with the main protagonist, Sofia, begin their polyamorous journey as friends, not strangers.

Conclusions

As it could be observed on the graph of the metamour tree of proximity, where there is no metamour communication[15], the message about the consent cannot be transmitted, and this amounts to a lack of consensuality. Where there is no consensuality, there can be no polyamory either. For this reason, my definition of polyamory stresses not so much the openness to having multiple romantic relationships, but the openness to having metamour relationships with other people. It is this second kind of openness – the openness to metamour contact and communication – that singles out a polyamorous person among other people who might be open to a multiplicity of romantic and/or sexual relationships, e.g. from such a monogamist who leads a double life.

Since my 2015 presentation at the 1st NMCI conference, which constitutes the basis for this paper, there has been new research corroborating my thesis about

the significance of metamour connections. In a paper that appeared in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Luke Brunning (2016) writes that "the presence of a third party is a *constitutive* feature of polyamory" (p. 9), and the third party is typically one's metamour or a potential metamour. Brunning argues that whilst in a monogamous relationship the presence of a third party – a secret lover, a child, a therapist – is contingent, a polyamorous relationship is distinct in that it involves "sustained and intimate confrontations with third parties" (p. 8). Even when one is single and only considers the possibility of entertaining a polyamorous attitude to relationships, one cannot ignore the prospect of an imaginary metamour, a person one's next partner could be dating or could wish to be dating (p. 8). In short, being polyamorous means exposing oneself to regular confrontations with the figure of a metamour – whether real or imaginary – and thus to experiencing a whole range of emotions which are specific to, and some of them even unique to, relating to one's metamour, e.g. compersion (p. 11).

In addition to that, I argue that accepting the prospect of one's partner dating another person entails agreeing to be in a relationship with this person, even if this relationship might remain indirect: this could be the case, for example, when one partner issues an *a priori* consent, the two partners never meet in person, and the only thing that bonds them is that they are dating one and the same person. Why should such an indirect link between two people constitute a kind of a relationship and a non-negligible one? The answer could be given in the form of the following argument: 1) being in a relationship consists in "influencing each other's behavior" (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto,, 2004, p. 81), and closer relationships shall have more influence on one's opinions, beliefs, moods, desires, actions etc. than the more distant ones (the closest relationships shall go as far as impacting one's moral agency and narrative identity; see: Iwanowska, 2016); 2) relationships that involve intimacy (emotional and possibly sexual) are closer than the ones that do not involve intimacy; 3) through being intimately involved with y, x has quite a significant influence on the way y carries herself, and – due to being intimately involved with z – y has quite a significant influence on the behavior of z; 4) the same is true the other way round – in virtue of the intimacy of their bond, z quite significantly influences y's behavior, and y quite significantly influences x's behavior; 5) thus, even when x is not intimately involved with z, x has an indirect, but non-negligible influence on the behavior of z, and *vice versa*, since they are both intimately

involved with one and the same person, y. Having such impact on one another amounts to x and z being in a relationship even in the most minimalist version of the metamour contact between them (like the one that has been described in the example above), and – more importantly – the impact of such a relationship should not be underestimated.[16]

When Seneca wanted to warn Serenus about the connection between interpersonal proximity and the influence people have on one another in terms of character and behavior, he used a metaphor of being easily made sick by a person sitting close to us. By inviting a sick person to sit close – the philosopher said – one invites sickness into their own body (Seneca, 2007, p. 124). Even the healthiest person (like the Stoic sage with a self full of the inner calm and harmony) cannot resist sickness if the sick person sits sufficiently close and the exposure is sustained.[17] A metamour is a person who is not our direct neighbor on the bench where we are sitting, but by agreeing to them dating our partner, we invite them to sit (in a continuous manner) on the same bench next to our partner. Non-metaphorically speaking, we invite them to join the interpersonal structure that we belong to, meaning our polyamorous constellation. Thus, keeping with Seneca's metaphor, if the metamour is "sick", with time this "sickness" shall affect our partner, and finally we ourselves shall also be affected. Even though this is a gloomy metaphor, what it says is important and compatible with Brunning's observations: choosing a polyamorous lifestyle entails opting for intense emotional work; but this emotional work shall never concern just ourselves, or just ourselves and the person closest to us. In Brunning's words: "[p]olyamory requires one to intimately engage with the emotional lives of more people than if one was monogamous, especially if one's partners themselves have multiple partners" (Brunning, 2016, p. 11). In other words, the emotional lives of our metamours and the problems they face shall always somewhat affect us, and they shall demand some emotional work on our side.

In conclusion, a polyamorous constellation consists of more than just the romantic (and possibly sexual) relationships; beneath this more obvious network of connections there is yet another network: a network of metamour connections with its respective consents, proximities, influences, perks and challenges, emotions and emotional work. The two networks are closely intertwined and co-dependent: for example, the consents given by metamours pave the way for the

aspiring romantic partners to start constructing an intimate relationship with one another, but it is the willingness of the aspiring romantic partners to build the intimate bond that provides a reason for the potential metamours to consider issuing their consents in the first place. Therefore, a full picture of one's polyamorous constellation should involve the fusion of these two networks.

As a final remark, I hope that my paper will make my fellow academics realize that although romantic bonds typically rouse more interest when discussing and defining polyamory, we should not underestimate the importance of non-romantic connections within the polyamorous network. The choices made in forming metamour relationships are crucial to creating successful polyamorous constellations and to the whole conceptual framework of polyamory[18]. Metamour connections are the underpinning of the fabric of polyamory, and they deserve as much academic attention and research as the polyamorous romantic connections.

Appendix A: The tree of proximity for metamours who start their relationship as strangers
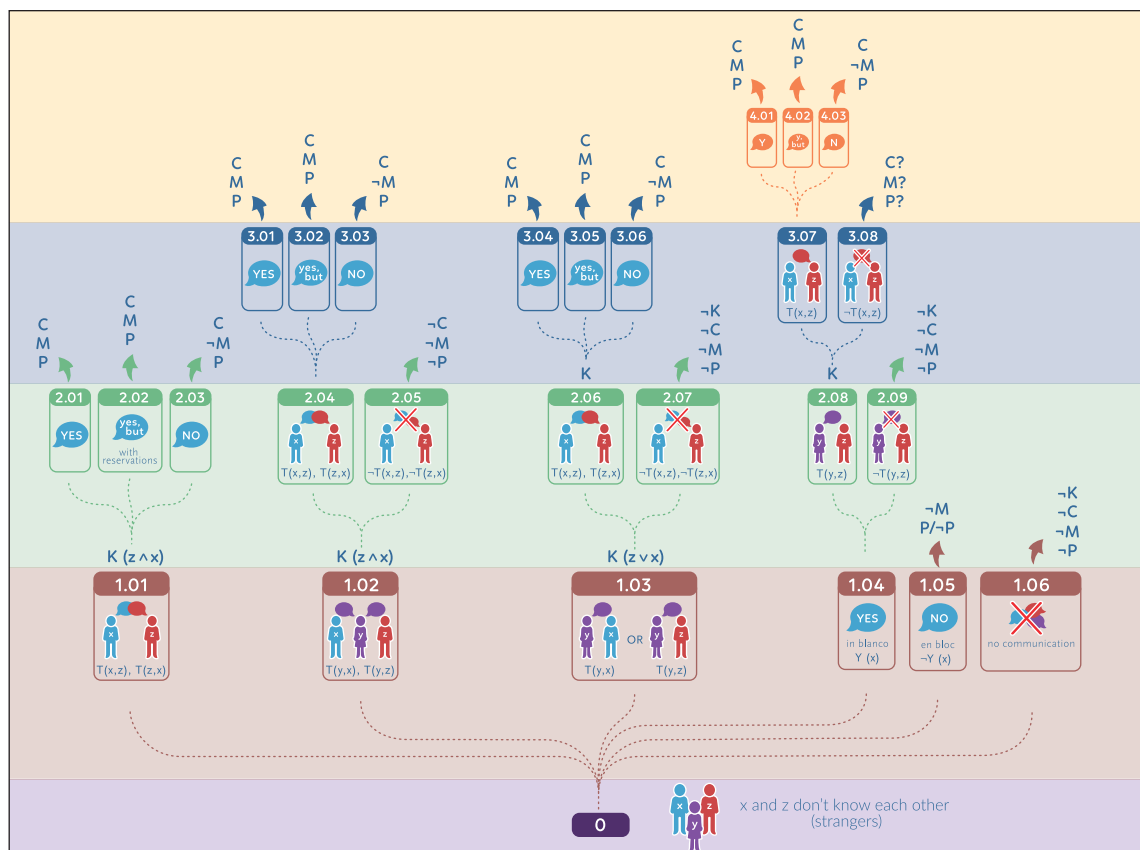
(I wish to thank Maria Jagodzińska, a graphic designer and a close friend, who contributed her work to transform my pencil sketch into this figure.)

Endnotes

1   Somebody can ask at this point how do we explain the functioning of individuals who are capable of equalizing 'proximity52' with 'proximity1', meaning such people who have been quite consistent in choosing 'more proximity' with you for five years, and then one day they are able to bring you down to a level of a complete stranger. To that I would reply that I do not deny that such people exist, but my understanding of this phenomenon is such that either they are lying to themselves and to you about what they feel (and then, in fact, they do not think that 'less proximity52' equals 'less proximity1'), or they have never been genuinely implicated in the 'more proximity' choices that you thought you two were making together during those five years. In the latter case, there has never been any genuine proximity between that person and you, and the other person has in fact remained on the level of the first bunch of forking paths; I would call such a person a 'proximity fraud'. The tree of proximity is a good tool to understand the phenomenon of the existence of 'proximity frauds'.

2   Sex need not be part of the equation between x and y or between z and y for those connections to count as romantic connections within the polyamorous network; one of the romantic partners of y (x or z) could be asexual. See: infra footnote 6.

3   To compare this definition of polyamory with a slightly different one, see for example: Anapol, 2010, pp. 1, 4, 14. Notice however that Deborah Anapol also stresses that the openness to having multiple romantic (and potentially sexual) partners is not a necessary condition for polyamory to be the case.

4   The consciousness of the importance of this condition in defining polyamory is something I owe to numerous discussions with Mirosław Sajewicz, attorney-at-law.

5   This use of the word 'may' makes the definition inclusive of individuals who may be a part of the polyamorous constellation, even if they themselves are unwilling to have multiple romantic relationships.

6   The word 'may' in reference to the sexual aspect of a relationship in conditions 1) and 2) is of high importance, as it stresses that a polyamorous relationship does not require a sexual bond – this makes my definition inclusive of asexual individuals living in polyamorous relationships. For a paper exploring this under-represented topic in the research on polyamory, see: Scherrer,, 2010.

7   The indirect communication, however, has been commented on as less advisable by Wolf, for example. See: Wolf, T. (January 13, 2016). Have you ever been the go-between in a metamour conflict?. In T. Wolf, Kimchi cuddles: A webcomic spreading awareness about poly, queer, and genderqueer issues in the most hilarious way possible. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/137205048190/have-you-ever-been-the-go-between-in-a-metamour; Wolf, T. (February 18 2014). See also: ASK KIMCHI. In T. Wolf, op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/77065350633/ask-kimchi-if-you-want-your-question-featured.

8   In the film, however, Vítek and Ondra are friends, not strangers. A further nuance which makes the situation in the film somewhat different from the one portrayed in this paper

is that immediately after this initial exchange about Ondra being attracted to Vítek's wife, Ondra asks Vítek whether Vítek, in turn, is attracted to Ondra's wife, Dita.

[9]   In the cinematic example, like in my own example, both men are strangers to one another. However, in the film, it is not the case that one of them is already a stable romantic partner of Veronica. Veronica meets the two men on the same day and the two romantic relationships develop pretty much simultaneously.

[10]   "VEE: … A polyamorous relationship involving three people, in which one person is romantically or sexually involved with two partners who are not romantically or sexually involved with each other." See: Veaux. Another name for this kind of relationship is a hinge relationship. See: Anderson, 2012.

[11]   This is a direct quote from: Wolf, T. (February 16, 2014). The other woman. In T. Wolf, op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/76854731495/the-other-woman.

[12]   Another example, but in the situation where the potential metamours have a preexisting connection with one another, can be found in the already mentioned web comic Kimchi cuddles. In this example, Sherman, who is romantically connected to Kim, is talking to Lilly who wants to be dating Kim as well. Sherman says to Lilly: "I have some judgments of you after our break-up, and have some concerns about you dating Kim. I see you as impulsive and I'm worried you'll hurt her (…) I'd never tell Kim who she can/cannot date, but can this be an ongoing conversation between us, as things progress between you two?" See: Wolf, T. (August 2, 2013). Communication. In T. Wolf. op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/57156471344/communication.

[13]   See: supra footnote 10.

[14]   "TRIAD [or TROUPLE] : … generally, the word **triad** is most often applied to a relationship in which each of the three people is sexually and emotionally involved with all the other members of the **triad**, as may be the case in a **triad** consisting of one man and two **bisexual** women or one woman and two **bisexual** men …" See: Veaux.

[15]   My original input consists in explicitly underscoring the importance of communication between metamours, and not only between romantic partners or the importance of communication in general, which is typically the case in academic literature and research on polyamory. A non-academic source which explicitly stresses the importance of metamour communication is a web comic by Tikva Wolf. See in particular: Wolf, T. (January 25, 2016). Communication is key!. In T. Wolf, op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/138021858840/communication-is-key-15-minute-check-ins-can; Wolf, T. (November 3, 2014). Third wheel. In T. Wolf, op. cit.. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/101680264395/do-you-ever-feel-like-the-3rd-wheel; Wolf, T (February 16, 2014). The other woman. In T. Wolf, op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/76854731495/the-other-woman.

[16]   When a metamour relationship evolves beyond this most minimalist version in which the relationship is indirect and mediated by the intimacies with the beloved, there is a whole range of intimacies that are possible between the metamours themselves; for an exploration of polyamorous intimacy possibilities other than the romantic and the sexual kind, see: Gilmore and de Arcana, 2015.

17   This is a detail often overlooked in the Stoic teachings of Seneca. Whilst Seneca claims that the Stoic sage is invulnerable to the insults and injustice coming from strangers and that exposing himself to such treatment constitutes good spiritual practice (Seneca, 1928), the philosopher gives very different advice concerning the near and dear: since interpersonal proximity makes the tranquility of one's mind an easy prey, one should be wary when inviting another person into a closer bond (Seneca, 2007).

18   The importance of metamour connections in polyamory is stressed in the already cited non-academic resource. See in particular: Wolf, T. (October 28, 2014) Metamour love. In T. Wolf, op. cit. Retrieved from http://kimchicuddles.com/post/101191438440/metamour-love.

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