

# The models of love in TV fictional series. Case study: *Porca misèria*<sup>1</sup>

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- *Television provides us with insights into our society's discourse on what is considered to be love and on the relationships of couples: audiovisual fiction feeds off reality to facilitate viewer identification and, at the same time, ends up being a source of information. In this way, the model feeds back on itself. We are therefore presenting a model to analyse discourse and we apply this to the fictional series Porca misèria. Of the three levels proposed by the analytical model this article focuses on the second (the narrative structure of romantic feeling, NSRF), analysing the narrative discourses of the three main couples from the series and drawing basic conclusions.*

## **Keywords**

Fictional series, discourse analysis, romantic relationship, romantic stereotypes.

## **1. The inter-subject construction of emotions and their representation in the media**

A fertile concept to study emotions, their inter-subject construction and how they are represented in the media is that of the 'structure of feeling' by Raymond Williams. As pointed out by Nightingale (1999, 89), "the structure of feeling became a means to achieve the purpose of explaining consumption (why we consider the texts are agreeable), instead of a way of understanding culture". For Williams (1975, 64-65), the structure of feeling is "the culture of a specific period: it's the specific consequence of how all the elements are experienced that occur in the general organisation [...] This does not mean that the structure of feeling, to a greater extent than social character, is shared in the same way by all individuals in a community. But I believe that it constitutes a very deep and extensive property, in all contemporary communities, precisely because communication depends on this." We should remember that, for Williams (1975, 63), social character is an important system of behaviours and attitudes that is learned both formally and informally. For this author, the dominant social character conditions the structure of feeling but each new generation will construct its own structure of feeling that, obviously, does not appear *ex nihilo* but is a different way of interpreting and experiencing everyday realities. So this structure of feeling becomes evident, from the different types of dress to different musical tastes, in the idea proposed by Nightingale (1999, 88) when talking

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of “the structure of sensibility” of an era. Along these lines, Ang (1996, *passim*) applies Williams’ concept to the genre of TV melodrama and talks of the tragic structure of feeling. Viewers of TV soap operas recognise and share the structure of feeling of the melodramas they consume and that is why they feel attracted by these programmes and are gratified by them. Following this same argument, Ang (1996, 87), in his analysis of the reception of the TV series *Dallas*, arrives at the conclusion that “at least what these fans like is the sense of emotional realism. More specifically, this realism is related to the recognition of a tragic structure of feeling, which is considered real and which makes sense for these viewers.”

For our part, being inspired partly by Williams and Ang, we would like to propose a number of concepts that help us to analyse the representation and appropriation of TV romantic stories. That is why we will focus, with regard to the structure of feeling, on romantic models and relationships in television fiction.

### Levels of analysis of the structure of romantic discourse

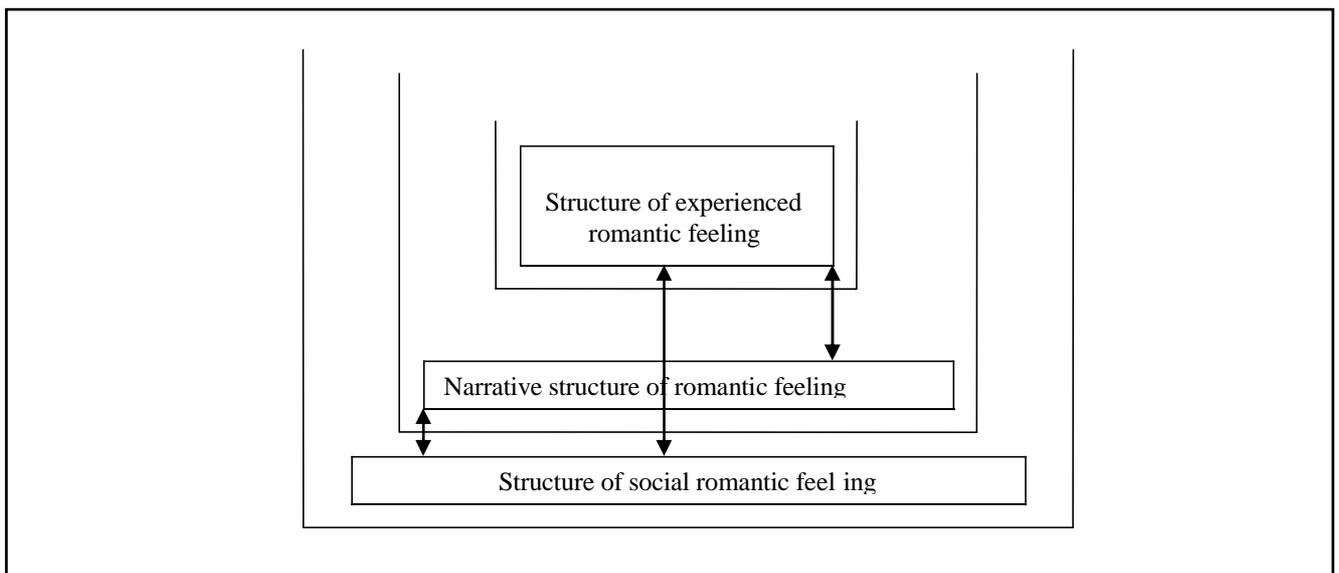
Our proposal focuses on the specific study of romantic

feeling based on three levels of analysis. Firstly, there is the **structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF)**, the general framework shared by most people and that forms part of the dominant feeling. Here we come close to the concept of Williams, although more specifically for the aspect we are studying (romantic feeling). Evidently, we are at the socio-cultural level of a specific community where there can be different ways of making sense of romantic feeling. Notwithstanding this, we can readily agree that the hegemonic model, although it might not be accepted, is definitely the most well-known by all members of the community.

Secondly, there is the narrative structure of romantic feeling (**NSRF**), the romantic models that appear in the media stories analysed. In other words, the idea is to recognise what the structure is of the feelings narrated. At this level would be the analysis of the romantic representation specified in the media story. Due to the characteristics of mass culture, the representation of this romantic structure is usually easy to recognise by viewers as, except in highly alternative television programmes, it forms part of the hegemonic model of the “structure of social romantic feeling”.

Finally, there is the **structure of experienced romantic feeling (SERF)**; i.e. how media stories are interpreted by

**Table 1. Levels of analysis of the structure of romantic discourse**



Source: In-house.

specific social actors. Consequently, firstly we can appreciate how they react to the television narrative and, secondly, how they creatively re-interpret the structure of social romantic feeling.

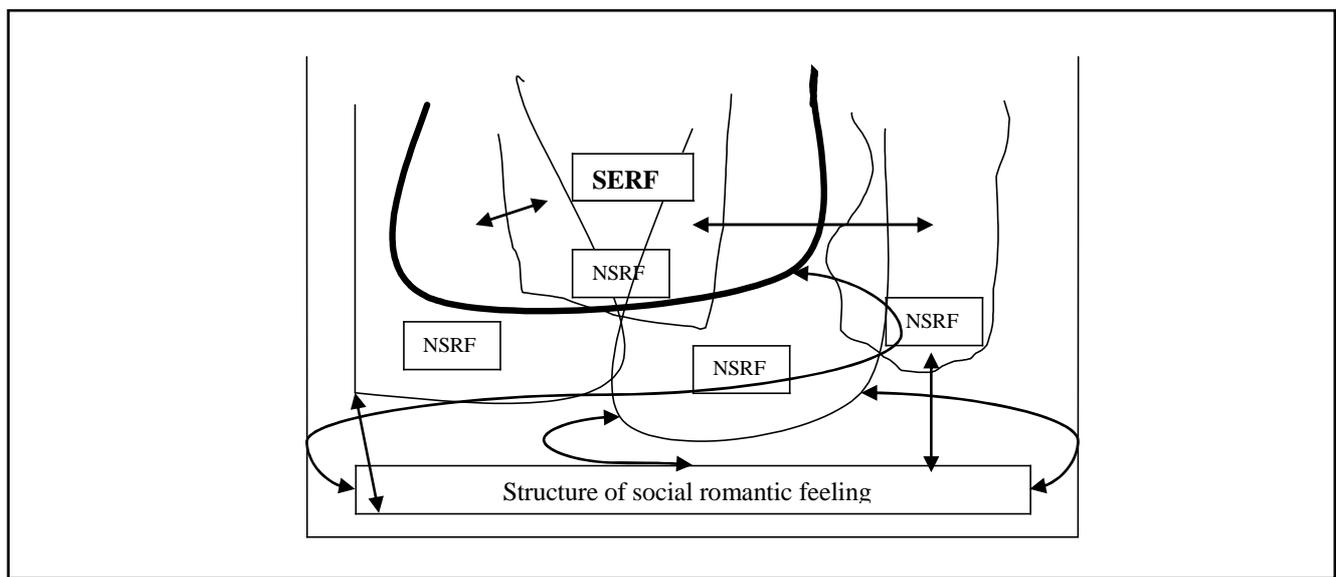
As can be seen, these three levels are interconnected. Although the schemas are a poor approximation of complex phenomena, we can establish some of the relations between these three levels. We can therefore consider that the first level is the most general and the third level the most specific. As if it were a *matrioska* or Russian doll, the structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF) holds the narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) while this, in turn, holds the structure of experienced romantic feeling (SERF).

The structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF) conforms to the spirit of an era, subjecting to norms and sanctioning different ways of loving. It's a social text of undefined contours and sometimes contradictory content. This structure, like any open system, ranges from preserving the system to the changes that will modify the same system. In other words, this is not a written, closed social text but a text that is continuously being written and rewritten and that, at the same time, has permanence. This social text would in fact be a palimpsest.

The narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) is made up of different narrations and self-narrations. Narrations come from different genres and subjects of the narrative enunciation. They are fictional stories, stories that refer to reality and hybrid stories that refer, directly or indirectly, to romantic relations. Here many different heterogeneous stories are involved, from films to novels or traditional tales narrated orally and a whole heteroclite group of narrations within the narrative genre of fiction. These stories establish the narrative structures of romantic feeling, which may be different in each narration.

On the other hand, we must recognise that, at a general level, it is difficult to establish the structure of experienced romantic feeling (SERF) in each specific case. It's complex to establish how the structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF) and the narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) are experienced in each person and in all their nuances. But it is also difficult to clarify which story of the narrative structure of romantic feeling has the strongest influence on the structure of social romantic feeling and how the different stories interact in the narrative structure of romantic feeling; i.e. their intertextual relations and how they achieve extratextual relations with the self-stories of each person.

**Table 2. Relation of the different stories in the narrative structure of romantic feeling**



Source: In-house.

In spite of this difficulty, we can note a couple of elements we consider to be significant. Firstly, the narrative structure of romantic feeling of a specific story (in our case, the fictional series *Porca misèria*) can be a trigger for interpreting romantic self-stories. Hence its influence on the structure of experienced romantic feeling. Secondly, fictional works can have a modelling effect. In their narrative structure of romantic feeling, they offer models of romantic relations that can frequently be sanctioned, positively or negatively. Below we detail some aspects in the series under study.

## 2. Narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) in *Porca misèria*

In accordance with the analytical model proposed, we now present the application of the second level of the model (NSRF) to a specific audiovisual product: the series *Porca misèria* (first and second episode). For evident reasons of space, we are focusing this analysis on three of the four narrative structures of romantic feeling (NSRF): the relationship between Pere and Laia, the relationship between Roger and Sònia, and the relationship between Natàlia and Jordi, and we will leave for another occasion the analysis around the narrative structures of Àlex, as well as reflections resulting from the first level of analysis of the model (the narrative structure of social romantic feeling, SSRF).

### a. *Confluent love. "We're a team": Pere and Laia*

In addition to being the central characters in the series, the narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) of the relationship between Pere and Laia appears as the ideal prototype that needs to be achieved in our new times of post-modernity (Lipovetsky 1999). It is a relationship full of commitment and romanticism, albeit adapted to the sign of the new times, with spaces for certain moments of idealism but very rooted to the reality of everyday demands. The ideals of romantic love shown by the characters are framed within the ideals of personal freedom, where a person feels free to commit him or herself to another. A relationship that includes sexuality and passion, although also going beyond these. Starting with falling in love, Pere and Laia arrive at a romantic relationship of real commitment to each other, along the line

that makes us think of the concept of "pure relations" or "confluent love" as discussed by Giddens (2000): "In a pure relationship, confidence does not have external supports and must develop on a basis of intimacy. Confidence means trusting the other and also believing in the capacity of the respective ties to withstand future traumas. [...] Trusting the other is also putting your faith in the individual's capacity to *act with integrity*" (Giddens 2000, 128; our italics).

However, the character of Pere reminds us that the social changes in relations between men and women are only feasible if both (men and women) change. In other words, that Laia also finds a man, Pere, in her biographical path, who has managed to distance himself from the *corset* of a male identity that focuses on virility or, as pointed out by Connell (2003), on "hegemonic masculinity". Badinter (1993) says this in a more radical and provocative way, adapting the formula of Simone de Beauvoir: "like a woman, a man is not born, he is made". This new confluent-romanticism is based on the premise of an active relationship of equality in what is given and received emotionally and that is no longer based on desire and the promise of eternal future. Unlike the romantic love of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on "that special person", confluent love has more of a chance to become established because it looks for a "special relationship" with that specific person. While the role of the man in the romantic forms of the past was relegated to a role of emotional distancing and inability, in confluent love he is expected to be able to show and talk about his emotions and also to be able to give affection.

Pere and Laia's relationship is an example of seeing relationships as a joint task of mutual emotional collaboration. For Giddens (2000), this idea of emotional collaboration is precisely one of the great transformations of modern society as it represents the incorporation of emotional intimacy into the sphere of matrimonial ties. In this respect, the characters give life to a renewed concept of emotional intimacy understood as "a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equal people... The intimacy entails the absolute democratisation of the interpersonal domain" (Giddens 2000, 12-13). Bauman refers to this more poetically, which we particularly like: "Without humility or courage there is no love" (Bauman

2005, 22). And Pere does this in a more direct and commonplace way: “Hey! As far as I’m concerned we’re a team”. In the words of Beck and Beck-Gernseim (1998), this is not, at any time, a call to return to the tranquil past of traditions but a detailed, critical analysis of the elements of risk entailed by an increasingly individualistic society in the economy-based demands of the employment market which, however, do not protect the individual from loneliness or rootlessness. As proposed by the authors, one of the questions implicit in the couple made up of Pere and Laia is related to the difficulty in uniting two *self-planned biographies* (Beck and Beck-Gernseim 1998, 98).

The more complicated it is to make sense of external pressures (self-realisation, struggles regarding work, advancement, success [...]), the greater the need to find in the world of relationships a personal sense of bond, of being rooted, of security and the prevention of loneliness. In these everyday conversations between Pere and Laia on their respective jobs, we can see an example of intimate conversation, intimate if you will, in their arguments but full of complicity. Without doubt, being able to share with a partner one’s headaches of pressure at work is one of the current indicators of emotional intimacy. Reality reminds us of the importance of being flexible, autonomous and independent in the world of work, but the human need remains to find in another (in this case one’s partner) the companion in life who listens to all our fears and weaknesses.

With regard to sexuality, for Giddens (2000) monogamy is no longer an undeniable requirement imposed *a priori* but has become a way of demonstrating (albeit a particularly relevant way) mutual trust. This is perhaps the other great change introduced by the author in addition to his claim for a democratic conception rather than a more traditional view of love: the alternative that a relationship of emotional intimacy contains sexual exclusivity not as a predetermined obligation but as evidence of the trust placed in the other. In some way, we are reminded of the fact that what causes harm in terms of unfaithfulness is not infidelity per se but the pain of having been deceived and the difficult consequences this has for mutual trust (which, without confusing this with blind or puerile trust, does represent the peace of

mind of not having to suspect or doubt one’s partner). In fact, *Porca misèria* is also sensitive to this new possibility: while Laia is in Utah she meets John, with whom she has sexual relations (or perhaps we should call it “sexual contact” since, while he shows himself to be interested in a more continuous relationship with Laia, she rejects this possibility). However, the context in which this sexual contact is shown does not come from a pact of sexual freedom between Pere and Laia. If Giddens perhaps is noting a future possibility, *Porca misèria* shows us a more present and contemporary reality in our real life streets: infidelity as a result of confusion, anger and loneliness, with the subsequent price to pay the morning after: remorse and feelings of guilt. These emotional precedents (confusion, anger and loneliness) and their results (remorse and guilt) are the elements that establish a radical difference between this kind of infidelity and that of the character of Roger, to whom we dedicate the next section.

b. *Narcissistic love. A zapping relationship: Roger and Sònia*

Although the main characters in the series are Pere and Laia, the narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) of Roger and Sònia is interesting as an example of how Sònia puts herself into risky situations with the internal belief that she is in love (but blind to the external evidence). On the other hand, Roger embodies a new format of romantic relations characterised by weak, loose commitment that must not interfere with other one-off, pleasurable or uncommitted experiences. Hence the word *zapping*, in the same way that a viewer who prefers a certain programme still doesn’t hesitate to “jump” to other programmes (and, extending the metaphor, to other people, experiences, jobs, etc.) that are more interesting at that moment... Why fidelity?

As we are reminded by Lasch (1991), narcissism has spread as a prototype of social functioning. Unlike the Victorian times when Freud could note the importance of guilt and emotional repression, today is a time of desire and impulsiveness. In a society where all dreams might come true, sacrifice no longer means what it used to. In narcissistic functioning one is entitled to everything and personal pleasure ends up being the driving force

behind one's actions. Roger is the image of the successful person who is proud of/satisfied with himself and who does not hesitate to show this to others. There are no weaknesses or doubts but desires that are satisfied voraciously and impulsively.

Together with addictive behaviour, narcissism is one of the typical diseases of our time. In some way, the narcissistic style unconsciously believes that, if everything outside might fail, the best solution is to focus on the unrepeatable marvels of oneself. Feeling oneself to be someone who is superior, dividing up the world into strong and weak people is an unconscious attempt to overcome the fear of being abandoned or rejected. Narcissistic people (Roger) cannot achieve intimacy with another person because this would mean having to expose their own pains and fears with the internal confidence that the other loved one will know how to resolve them and will know how to protect their importance. A narcissistic person cannot share with another except in situations of extreme conflict and personal collapse, because to communicate with another person one first needs to recognise pains and weaknesses in oneself. Hence the importance of the narcissistic protective shell: there is nothing to communicate because there are no weaknesses or pain.

While internal anxieties are mollified via a narcissistic structure, Roger represents an egotistical narcissism that is more focused on impulses and desires, features that, as noted by Lipovetsky and Charles (2006), would more properly characterise our "hypermodern" time. In this narcissism, there is no room for scruples or remorse. And this he puts into words when his brother recriminates him for having sporadic sexual relations with other women while married to Sònia.

Under his or her soft, superficial sociability, the narcissist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century hides difficulties in psychological intimacy and relational commitment. Like a child, nothing can be definitive because they always hope and long for the possibility of new exciting adventures and new appetising gifts (in the form of consumer products but also as relationships to be consumed), which must not be sacrificed. Only weak people make sacrifices and only frustrated people commit themselves, using the argument of commitment as an excuse to hide their

failure and the impossibility of continuing on the path of adventure. Roger is neither weak nor frustrated, he is not a social loser because he knows perfectly well the rules to "selling yourself" and voraciously looks for pleasure both at work and in love. But this is *zapping*, in the sense of giving the external appearance of commitment (in this case with Sònia) but with the intimate internal belief that this commitment does not justify sacrificing adventure with other people and situations where Sònia is not involved.

One of the questions that must be asked is how individual narcissism can overcome the examination of romantic commitment with another person. And Roger gives us the answer: by transforming emotional ambivalence ("it's either one or the other, but not both at the same time") into emotional division ("he's in love with Sònia but that has nothing to do with his sexual relations with other women. They're two different things"). If earlier we remembered the Freudian times of guilt and repression, now is the time of a divided I where there is no chance for remorse or guilt to arise because the aim is to keep each parcel of joy separate from the rest.

Sònia represents the dangerous force of love when it is blind and deaf to the numerous signs of risk appearing at so many times in her relationship with Roger. Seeing how she behaves with Roger's imperative and demanding requirements, it reminds us of the romantic female ideology of sacrifice and abnegation. It's not hard to give in because it's all in the name of love. And personal sacrifice for love continues to be a great social predicament, from which thinkers are not always immune. We have an example of this in Bruckner (2002, 182) when he writes: "Above all, love supposes that we accept to suffer because of the other and because of his indifference, ingratitude or cruelty" and that, out of context, this can even be understood as a defence for abnegation, in spite of the suffering.

Returning to sacrifice, one of the basic characteristics in sacrifice is the dynamics of power. Roger always ends up imposing his will and Sònia consciously gives in. The trick is the unconscious belief on the part of the woman that constantly giving in to the desires of her partner shows just how strong her feelings are for him and, at the same time, shows "subtle" dominance because,

since she allows herself to be dominated, in reality she is the one that dominates. But we must not forget that believing yourself to be free while in a trap does not mean that you are not entrapped.

It should be noted that Sònia is aware of her submission to the imperative demands of her partner but, if this doesn't put her on the alert, it's because she is in love with Roger and, in some way, "the sacrifice doesn't matter if it's because I love him". As this is voluntary sacrifice, not forced, there is no possibility of complaint (in the mind of Roger, but also in Sònia's own mind). If she has decided to make the sacrifice then it's because she wants to and this eliminates any chance of protest because she could have always fought more to defend her own position. This is one of the great situations of risk in the female romantic ideology.

When talking about this female romantic ideology, we must also talk about the role played by a number of beliefs and expectations concerning falling in love and romanticism. Sònia is not the only woman in the series who values romanticism (remember Laia's words "I believe that, if you're in love, you know for certain... If you doubt, then you're not in love... because falling in love is something physical, when you see him, I don't know... your heart jumps and your legs tremble and... What's happening?! I really believe it!"). But we are interested in highlighting the character of Sònia because her romantic expectations hinder her capacity to realise that the partner she has chosen cannot commit in the same way that she is prepared to commit. Although a romantic relationship can arise based on mutual friendship, the western prototype instilled since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (the structure of social romantic feeling of the model we have proposed, SSRF) emphasises the role of romantic passion as a fundamental ingredient, especially for women. There are many ways of starting and maintaining a romantic relationship but it seems that there is one that prevails over the rest: the one that comes from falling in love, from the intense thrill in discovering the other and one's own thrill

in the discovery.

However, we should make an important proviso here: before we spoke of the *zapping* of Roger as an unconscious shell that protects him from possible disappointment, but interpreting his unconscious mechanisms is one thing and excusing him the pain he causes to others (in this case Sònia) because he is unaware of this is quite another. Confluent love between two adults must be based more on the emotional resources each one is capable of contributing to the relationship than on the weaknesses and/or lacks once has and that the other might feel the unconscious need to protect and justify. Through Sònia's suffering, it is easy to understand the risks of an emotionally unbalanced relationship.

c. *Love-friendship. Natàlia and Jordi: affection without passion*

The narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) acted out by Natàlia and Jordi is, in some way, the confirmation of the importance given in today's world to passionate falling in love as a basic element to consolidate a relationship.

We should remember that Natàlia has fallen deeply in love with Roger, is aware of her feelings but has decided to take it no further with him because, as she herself says, she has suffered with him and is afraid of suffering again. It's within this emotional context that the character of Jordi appears, a good man, sincerely in love with her and ready to commit himself seriously to the relationship. In this respect, it is interesting how *Porca misèria* treats the male characters. Unlike other series studied,<sup>2</sup> the personal relationship the different male characters in *Porca misèria* have with love, their expectations in terms of their relationships and their romantic demands are complex and not very stereotypical (in some cases not at all). The character of Jordi is a clear example of this. A man appears who is sincerely in love and sincerely committed to his romantic relationship, capable of verbalising his feelings, his needs and his fears, sensitive enough to realise Natàlia's moods and respectful

2 "Estereotips del món de la parella i la seva representació en les sèries de ficció. Implicacions per a la construcció de la identitat en la jove preadolescent i adolescent" (research focusing on the series *Los Serrano*). Research subsidised by the Institut Català de les Dones (2005, file U-55/05). Unpublished report.

enough to observe and wait, capable enough to be ashamed of his own attack of jealousy... Why does Natàlia have any doubts? Surely because *affection* without passion is not love, or at least it doesn't seem so to us within our contemporary context (Castillo and Medina 2007; Medina, Castillo and Davins 2006).

If we take the romantic models proposed by Sternberg (1989), we understand that, while Jordi is capable of giving Natàlia (and feeling with her) the three basic factors according to the model for a romantic relationship -passion, emotional intimacy and commitment- she needs to deceive herself and she commits to him and to the relationship (the "commitment" element of the model) because she feels cared for and valued by Jordi (element of "intimacy" that she feels towards him) although her passion lies, more or less consciously, with another man, Roger. Far from the stereotypical views of the role of *self-deception*, that of Natàlia is not at all stereotypical nor is it far from what we might observe in the real lives of real people. But how many real couples could start from this unbalanced base? When a relationship starts, unless it's an adolescent one, it does not start from an *even playing field*; we all, to a greater or lesser degree, start a new relationship with our own *romantic baggage* on our backs, but it's not always baggage of bad memories. There is also the possible melancholy for a relationship that couldn't go on. We look at the new relationship from this personal circumstance, from our own baggage, and there are some who will have a go and succeed, while others will always drag the initial imbalance with them, to a greater or lesser degree, and others won't be able to overcome this and the couple will break up. What does all this depend on? The series opts for this last possibility and leads the couple made up of Natàlia and Jordi to their break-up, based on the fact that Natàlia continues working with Roger and therefore continues to see him every day. There is no possibility of distance (in time and/or space) which might help the memory to become diluted and fade away. The passion can be created anew every day by going to work and, the option chosen by the script, the passion towards Roger could end up being stronger than the intimacy and commitment towards Jordi. We should be thankful that the series does not present this path as the classic

triumph of love (in the quaint manner of romantic novels) but a more human, more ambivalent Natàlia appears, capable of recognising the value of Jordi and his sincere feelings and of knowing she is guilty of her own contradictory feelings. It shouldn't be easy to sacrifice passion with the feeling of making do with intimacy... Or at least it's not easy at a time when passion is so championed.

In short, romantic passion has fallen out with compassion. Natàlia seems to agree with Bruckner (2002, 184) when he says "A demanding freedom is not a freedom that is preserved but a freedom that exposes itself to burn-out. Passion is perhaps condemned to misfortune; but never feeling passion is an even greater misfortune". This is the possibility but also the tyranny of our new romantic scenarios.

### 3. Conclusions

The system, against the proposed romantic models of the different narratives, opposes its ability to integrate (as non-hegemonic, possible, minority, marginal, etc.) or not these models into the structure of social romantic feeling. The different difficulties and romantic plots of Pere, Laia, Sònia, Roger, Natàlia, Jordi, etc. help us to understand how the romantic constructs form part and are a manifestation of a cultural symbolic world. This fiction has helped us to analyse and reflect on the symbolic keys to how romance functions in today's society.

Without conflict there is no story and the romantic plot has always been a good source of dramatic conflict for scripts and this is taken into account in many successful fictional series in Spain (for example *Médico de familia*, *Los Serrano*, *Cuéntame cómo pasó*, *Aquí no hay quien viva...*). Remembering the words of Fuenzalida (1992, 161), "the couple and family also appear as a social space in which emotion is valued, since conflicts of feeling and affective reactions to life are expressed there". *Porca misèria* moves away from the family as a stage for members of different generations to come together and opens the doors of the script to a specific social reality: *couples* and their specific discourses.

With the proposed model with three levels of analysis, we are interested in *Porca misèria* because, among other rea-

sons, the script figures strongly in the romantic narrative, so that we can easily make the jump from the first level (structure of social romantic feeling, SSRF) and the second level (narrative structure of romantic feeling, NSRF) of the theoretical model we have produced. Following Morin (1972), we can state that), as a system, the structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF) imposes interpretive and evaluative power on romantic media stories. In fact, we can interpret the models offered in the narrative structure of romantic feeling (NSRF) because we have interpretative powers that are provided by the system. In this way, the system opposes the whims of the external world with its determinism. In other words, it offers us the interpretive and evaluative keys and provides a context for the romantic proposals of the narrations. Homeostasis occurs in the power of the new romantic realities to define and provide a context. Via this power to define and classify, the disruptive power is diminished of the new elements arising in romantic relations. The structure of social romantic feeling (SSRF) tends to impose itself as an interpretative matrix, even integrating those narrative structures of romantic feeling (NSRF) that it initially rejected or ignored (as has happened, for example, with the incorporation of homosexual couples as another narrative element of the script). In this way, the structure of social romantic feeling changes based on the narrative structures of romantic feeling that circulate in society and in the media. The different narrative structures of romantic feeling (NSRF) presented in the series are the representation of how, in our new times of individualism, a romantic couple attempts to place themselves on an equal footing emotionally (Pere-Laia; Roger-Sònia; Natàlia-Jordi). Feelings are also a key element to the survival of the relationship: romanticism, sensuality, passion and happiness form part of this new “romantic demand” that is so attractive and, at the same time, so tyrannical.

In his reflection on the new role of intimacy, Giddens (1998, 47) wrote that “someone said that romantic love was a plot by men against women to fill their minds with impossible dreams”. We agree, but with some provisos, all those awoken in us by observing the male and female characters of *Porca misèria*. Beyond the conditioning factors imposed by the demands on femaleness or maleness, our characters offer us the chance to see non-stereotypical adults who try, with more or less success, to live their lives

in company. Neither the women of *Porca misèria* seem dazzled by the myth of “Mr. Right” that does so much harm and that still awakens so many sighs of love, nor are the men in the series a vulgar representation of a maleness focused on virility and the absence of emotional complexities. Almost without realising it, we live together reproducing the asymmetries in affective roles. Taking as “natural, essential and consubstantial” the female condition of taking charge of affective relations, and considering “sentimental illiteracy and emotional coarseness” to be the male condition of all men end up being an exercise that impoverishes the mind of any person, at the same time as limiting their personal potential if these beliefs are taken on without being capable of questioning them. In this respect, we must not forget that one of the interests of the research team and around which this work was structured has always been the role of romantic stereotypes and their representation in audiovisual fiction. Finding audiovisual material that refuses to abide by these archetypal approaches was no easy task and that is why *Porca misèria* has been the ideal material for analysis for our objectives.

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