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Fame and Professional Success in «Operación Triunfo» and «Fama ¡a bailar!»

Fama y éxito profesional en «Operación Triunfo» y «Fama ¡a bailar!»

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to identify the values conveyed by «Operación Triunfo» and «Fama ¡a bailar!». Their popularity (especially among young people) and prescriptive nature (they convey life models by means of identifying problems and proposing objectives and solutions) make them relevant study objects. This paper focuses on how work and fame are depicted in «Operación Triunfo» and «Fama ¡a bailar!», two areas that have hardly been studied in Spain. In order to fulfil the objectives of this paper, these programmes were analysed using a methodology that combines narrative semiotics, audiovisual style and narrative form analysis, as well as ludology and game design theory. The analysis shows that these programmes depict professional success as personally and socioeconomically rewarding, although it is extremely difficult to achieve. To obtain this success, the contestants are transformed through education and celebritisation. Finally, in these programmes there is a conflict between talent and fame. This paper concludes that «Operación Triunfo» and «Fama ¡a bailar!» present fame as a life aspiration and also show the mechanisms used to produce it. The programmes depict modern society as meritocratic and evidence the importance of image in the modern workplace. Finally, they describe a «good worker» as someone passionate about their work, adaptable and capable of sacrificing his/her personal life.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar los valores vehiculados por «Operación Triunfo» y «Fama ¡a bailar!». Su relevancia como objeto de estudio reside en su popularidad (especialmente entre los jóvenes) y su carácter prescriptivo (transmiten modelos de vida a partir de la identificación de problemas y la propuesta de objetivos y soluciones). Este artículo explora cómo representan el ámbito profesional y el concepto de la fama «Operación Triunfo» y «Fama ¡a bailar!», dos temas poco analizados hasta ahora en España. Para ello, se propone una metodología que combina la semiótica narrativa, el análisis de la enunciación audiovisual y el estudio de las reglas del concurso. El análisis revela que en estos programas se representan el éxito profesional como gratificante a nivel personal y socioeconómico, aunque también muy difícil de conseguir. Para alcanzarlo, los concursantes son transformados mediante el aprendizaje y la «celebritización». Finalmente, hay en estos programas una fuerte tensión entre el talento y la popularidad como formas de llegar al éxito. El artículo concluye que «Operación Triunfo» y «Fama ¡a bailar!» son programas que prescriben la fama como aspiración vital y reflexionan sobre su proceso de producción; transmiten una visión meritocrática de la sociedad actual; ponen en escena la importancia de la imagen en el entorno laboral y definen un buen profesional como alguien apasionado, maleable y capaz de sacrificar su vida personal.

KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVE

Reality TV, entertainment, semiotics, audiovisual narrative, audiovisual style, game rules, values, fame. Tele-realidad, entretenimiento, estudios semiológicos, narrativa audiovisual, lenguaje audiovisual, reglas de juego, valores, fama.

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1. Introduction: study object and objectives

«Operación Triunfo» debuted in Spain in 2001, setting a new trend in «reality game shows»¹ in this country. This format combines the characteristics of «Pop Idol» (United Kingdom, ITV, 2001) and «Big Brother». Like «Pop Idol» it is a contest in which young people who are unknown to the public and who can sing well compete with each other over several weeks for a recording contract, and in which the audience (after a pre-selection process by a panel of judges) chooses which contestants continue through each round until a winner is finally chosen. Like in «Big Brother», the contestants live together in a closed, isolated, purpose-built house full of cameras while they receive classes; the programme is organised into weekly shows in which the contestants are nominated or evicted, with daily summaries of the «everyday life» of the participants in the academy; and the content expands over different time slots and media following the logic of the «killer format» (Pérez Ornia, 2004: 81-84).

In Spain the «Operación Triunfo» format was emulated by other programmes following the innovation/repetition/saturation cycle characteristic of the media: «Academia de actores» (Antena 3, 2002); «Popstars» (Telecinco, 2002); «Supermodelo» (Cuatro, 2006-08); «Fama» ¡a bailar! (Cuatro 2007-11); «Circus» (Cuatro, 2008) and «El aprendiz» (LaSexta, 2010). Of these, only «Fama ¡a bailar!» gained a certain degree of success and was broadcast for several seasons. In this reality TV show, young amateur dancers compete with each other for a study grant. The programme is based on the «Operación Triunfo» formula but includes some modifications: although it is an individual contest, the contestants compete in pairs; new contestants enter the programme after the weekly evictions; the teachers are also judges; the programme is broadcast daily, including performances, nominations and evictions; and the weekly shows only begin after a few weeks.

These programmes have had a strong impact on the Spanish television panorama and the social imaginary, especially in relation to the redefinition of fame and the way of understanding work. The aim of the present article, therefore, is to analyse the values conveyed by «Operación Triunfo» (henceforth «OT») and «Fama ¡a bailar!» (henceforth «Fama») in relation to these two areas.

In Spain «OT» has been analysed from different perspectives. Studies have been carried out on its interactivity and the role the audience plays (Selva, 2003-04; Castañares, 2006; Fouce, 2008), its multimedia expansion strategy (Cebrián, 2003) and the values it

conveys (Cáceres, 2002; Sampedro, 2002, two analyses that are similar to the one proposed here). However, not very much theoretical attention has been paid to this programme's discourse on fame (a perspective that can be revealing and productive, as shown by Holmes (2004a), Ouellette and Hay (2008) and Redden (2008), nor has the programme been related to other similar formats such as «Fama».

In this article we bring together the main research results and conclusions of a doctoral thesis that was presented at the Department of Communication of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in September 2010 (Oliva, 2010), which analysed «Cambio Radical», «Desnudas», «Esta casa era una ruina», «Supernanny», «Hermano Mayor», «Ajuste de Cuentas», «Operación Triunfo» and «Fama ¡a bailar!». This article summarises the main results and conclusions of the chapters devoted to the last two formats.

2. Material and methods

To answer the main analysis question (What values do «OT» and «Fama» convey in relation to work and fame?) we used textual analysis (Casetti & Di Chio, 1999: 249-292), that is, a detailed study of the elements that make up the audiovisual work in order to understand its organisation and meaning. The text itself, regardless of the personal readings that can be made of it, is the base of the viewer's interpretation, it is what centres and guides their reading. Therefore, although the viewer's capacity to decode the text freely is important, we cannot forget the responsibility the text has in relation to the values conveyed and endorsed.

To carry out this study we have developed an analysis protocol² that combines two consolidated perspectives of textual analysis that are not usually found together in the same study: narrative semiotics and the study of the narrative form and audiovisual style.

Narrative semiotics consists of analysing the story structure. First, we analysed which narrative roles the characters (applicants, contestants, teachers, judges and viewers) play in the story. The roles identified are: subject of doing (hero), subject of state (benefits from the actions of the subject of doing), object of value (that which is desired), sender and receiver of the contract (sets and receives a mission respectively), opponent (hinders the actions of the subject of doing), helper (helps the subject of doing), rival (wants the same object of value as the subject of doing), sender and receiver of sanction (gives and receives recognition or punishment respectively). Second, we analysed the

states of the actants (initial and final states, states of conjunction or disjunction with respect to the object of value or competence of doing), their actions and the transformations of state as a consequence of these actions.

For the analysis we took into account the contributions of Greimas (1971) and Courtés (1980), founders of the discipline, as well as Ruiz Collantes (Ruiz Collantes, Ferrés & al., 2006; Ruiz Collantes, 2009), who adapted this methodology to the analysis of audiovisual texts. As Ruiz Collantes shows in his studies, systematically assigning certain roles and states to certain social groups has consequences in relation to how these collectives are represented.

To these more abstract elements we have added the study of the characters' traits (gender, age, social class, habitat, physical appearance) and the spaces the programmes are set in (structure and design of the environment in which the action takes place (Cassetti & Di Chio, 1999: 274-279).

We completed the semio-narrative analysis by studying the narrative form and audiovisual style with the aim of identifying the meaning that emerges from «how» the story is told, how the text guides the viewer's interpretation and how it constructs a model viewer (Eco, 1981)³. The audiovisual language has been analysed in detail (types of shots, camera angles and movements, sound and music, editing, computer graphics, lighting), as well as the narrative form: plot organisation (narrative acts, climaxes, turning points), time (order, duration and frequency), point of view (how the information is distributed between the viewer and the characters) and the presence of explicit narrators and narratees (receivers of the narration present in the text, for example, the on set audience). The analysis of the narrative form and audiovisual style was based on the contributions made by Bordwell and Thompson (1995); Gaudreault and Jost (1995); Kozloff (1992); Cassetti and Di Chio (1999: 249-292); and Aranda and De Felipe (2006).

In addition, given that «OT» and «Fama» are contests, we have added a third analysis methodology to these first two that is less used for studying television: the analysis of the game rules. As Pérez Latorre (2010) shows, the rules of a game also convey meaning and

values. The analysis protocol is based on the contributions of the canonical authors and works of ludology and game design theory (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Heide Smith & Pajares Tosca, 2008; Juul, 2005; Salen & Zimmerman, 2003). We analysed the programmes' explicit rules that organise how the contest functions, guide the actions of the contestants, teachers, judges and viewers (permitted actions, prohibited actions, compulsory actions), and determine the conditions of winning (how to win) and losing (how to lose) as well as the design of the contest difficulty.

Both «OT» and «Fama» are complex and contradictory texts. On one hand, they convey and legitimise a naïve definition of fame: stars as unique individuals, chosen by the public for their talent and effort. And on the other hand, they reveal the mechanisms involved in the manufacture of fame.

This analysis protocol was applied to a corpus made up of audition episodes, daily programmes and weekly shows of «OT 2008» and «OT 2009» (Telecinco)⁴ and the first season of «Fama» (Cuatro)⁵.

3. Results

This section summarises the main results of the analysis of «OT» and «Fama» using the methodology outlined in the previous section. For reasons of clarity, the section has been arranged thematically, relating the results of the semio-narrative, formal (narrative form and audiovisual style) and ludic analyses.

3.1. Professional success as the object of value

In «OT» and «Fama» professional success is the object of value (main OV) pursued by the participants and prescribed to the viewers. Significantly, these programmes equate professional success with fame, that is, public recognition and renown. It is also represented as a form of personal fulfilment and as a way of rising socially and economically.

Therefore, the applicants/contestants are identified as incomplete characters because they have not yet achieved professional success (they cannot work as a professional singer/dancer and/or they are not

famous). «OT» and «Fama» are presented as «institutions» able to give the contestants the necessary competencies for achieving it. Consequently, participating in the contest and winning it are the instrumental objects of value. However, in the programme's discourse a direct relationship is established between achieving the instrumental and the main OV, so that the importance is transferred from the second to the first. This is made clear in the auditions, in which it is shown that for the applicants getting onto the programme (and winning it) is in itself a dream.

In the audition episodes, the long queues, the

In both programmes analysed, success does not only depend on talent and effort, it is also a question of appearances (physical appearance and the way of dressing and speaking). Therefore, we can relate «OT» and «Fama» to the concept of «phantasmagoric labour» (Sternberg, 1998), that is, the importance of appearances in the current work environment and the need to apply «branding» strategies to individuals.

inclusion of applicants with no talent in the final editing and the diversity of applicants and contestants in relation to social class, education, habitat, sex, and, to a lesser degree, age⁶, conveys the idea of democratic and universal access to the opportunity of obtaining the instrumental (and main) OV. However, only a small number of applicants can become contestants and only one of them will win the contest. Therefore, while everyone has the opportunity, only the «best» can obtain the OV.

The audition episodes also legitimate the main, and especially, the instrumental OV and load them with positive connotations, which also helps to legitimate the actual programme. In order to do this the process for selecting the contestants is based on a ritualised structure of rounds, tests and verdicts that maximises the applicants' emotional responses, which are emphasised in turn by the narrative form and audiovisual style: close ups, extradiegetic music, slow motion, internal focalisation with respect to the participants to generate intrigue, superimposed texts and narrative dilation.

3.2. Methods prescribed for obtaining the object of value

Once the contestants have been selected, their transformation process begins. This is carried out in two ways: training and education (improving their dancing and singing abilities), and «celebritisation» (their construction as stars to gain popularity and commercial value). These are the two «solutions» prescribed by these programmes for achieving professional success.

3.2.1. Training and education

«OT» and «Fama» are not just simple talent contests; their objective is to transform the participants through training and education. Significantly, both formats use a school-related vocabulary to name the spaces and the activities performed by the participants. Below we outline the values that guide this dimension of the programmes.

Firstly, effort and sacrifice. The design of the academy/school is significant. In this space there is no strict separation between the spaces for the contestants' personal life

and those for their professional life. The extreme case is «Fama», in which any room can become a rehearsal area, which shows how the professional sphere expands and colonises the personal space. In addition, the contestants have to bear a large work load (especially in «Fama»), which is emphasised in the daily summaries thanks to their serial structure and a plot centred on classes and rehearsals. Finally, the isolation the participants are subjected to during the contest suggests the sacrifice of the personal and family life in favour of the quest for success.

Secondly, constant pressure. This is often disguised as the expectations the teachers place on the participants, so that disappointment is usually invoked when a contestant does not reach the required level. For example, in «Fama» this constant pressure is evidenced by the contest rules, which do not take into account the progressive increase in difficulty and are the cause of «the curse of the newcomers»⁷. At the same time this pressure provokes emotional responses in the participants (shown and emphasised by the narrative form and audiovisual style), which once

again serve to show the importance that the instrumental (and main) OV have for them.

Finally, discipline is another characteristic element. The participants must obey the teachers' orders and the judges' comments (which are often humiliating) without questioning them, not even in private given that they are under constant video-surveillance and are also evaluated for the attitude they show in their «private life». In this way a strong inequality is established between the teachers/judges and the contestants, especially when the participants do not have any control over their own training process and their public image and identity as a dancer or singer. Both programmes impose on the contestants which pieces they will interpret, the attitude they should adopt on stage, how they should move and how they should dress.

This leads to an ambiguity in the roles assigned to the characters: although it could seem that in the plot of «OT» and «Fama» the contestants play the role of subject of doing (heroes)⁸, in reality these programmes focus their attention on «the hero's journey» (which is a narrative subprogramme that tells how the contestants achieve the competences necessary for becoming the subject of doing), while the main narrative programme of the story (in which the contestants, transformed into heroes, obtain the main OV) is omitted. This also reinforces the confusion between the instrumental OV (winning the contest) and the main OV (becoming a star).

3.2.2. «Celebritisation»

As well as training, «Fama» and «OT» use another method for transforming the contestants: representing them as stars⁹ (celebritising them).

First, this means portraying them as extraordinary people worthy of admiration. For example, in «OT» this is done in the weekly shows, in which the contestants demonstrate their remarkable singing abilities that differentiate them from ordinary people. The contestants' physical appearance and televisual representation are also exceptional: dressed up and made up like stars the contestants perform in a space designed to mimic a pop concert, with an elaborate and spectacular set design and visual aesthetics. This reference is not trivial, given that concerts are a ritual in which fans can show their commitment to the singer they admire, and the singer can establish a more direct and emotional relationship with their fans (Marshall, 1997: 158-159). Significantly, below the stage on which the contestants sing there is a large pit full of spectators standing up. Thanks to this stage design, the contestants are shown acting for an enthralled audience, who

surround the stage and raise their hands towards them, which they also do when the contestants cross the bridge to the judges' area. This is a way of representing the visibility gained by the contestants (we see them being watched and admired)¹⁰.

The weekly shows and live performances show the unique and extraordinary qualities of the contestants, but «OT» and «Fama» also include contents that try to answer the question of what the contestants/stars are «really» like (Dyer, 1986: 8-18). Therefore, the contestants are also portrayed as «normal» people (constructing in this way the ordinary/extraordinary dialectic on which the discourses on stars are traditionally built (Dyer, 2001: 55-68; Marshall, 1997: 79-94).

This is done mainly through the daily programmes, which show the everyday life of the contestants in the house/school. In these programmes we see everything that is hidden behind the performances (rehearsals, suffering, nerves) with the aim of showing the hidden side of the participants in order to enrich the public image created in the weekly shows (they have an equivalent function to gossip magazines). In this sense, it is significant that the aesthetic conventions of «Big Brother» are used to emphasise the authenticity of the images and that the contestants' feelings are revealed through confessions. Both in «Fama» (in the diary room) and «OT» (in the videoblogs on the programme's website), the contestants express their feelings or they communicate with their fans through monologues, establishing an intimate relationship with the viewers based on the expression of «authentic» emotions (Aslama & Panti, 2006).

Finally, another way of «celebritising» the contestants is to construct the model viewer as a fan. Firstly, this is done through the game rules: the voting is in favour of the contestants (to save them, not to evict them), and therefore appeals to their followers (this happens in «OT» throughout the entire programme and in «Fama» in the last part of the contest). Second, the structure of the programmes, with contents that spread over different time slots and the Web, constructs a model viewer that gathers information to create a consistent identity of the two sides of the contestant (on and off the stage). Finally, the repercussions the programmes have in the outside world are included in the text, showing images of fans that go to CD signings and performances, yelling, holding up signs and wearing T-shirts with supportive slogans. In this way the programmes try to go beyond the limits of the pure textuality on which the contestants are «celebritised».

3.2.3. The formula for success

These programmes establish a dialectic/tension between talent and popularity as the foundations of professional success (in this case of a singer/dancer). It is in the contest rules where these tensions are shown most clearly, specifically in the power shared by the judges/teachers (guarantors of talent) and the viewers (indications of popularity).

In «OT» there is a self-conscious and reflexive discourse on this dialectic, given that the programme's rule design facilitates conflict between these two poles. The decision about the contestant's future is shared by four groups of characters who use different criteria: the judges, the teachers, the contestants and the viewers. Consequently, disagreements are constantly arising between them. Therefore, although the characteristics that identify a good singer seem clear (be in tune, interpret correctly, vocalise, have a unique style, be versatile, have charisma), the balance that should be established between these is less obvious, especially in relation to the need to be competent at the vocal level and have the «x factor» necessary for generating fans (which is not necessarily linked to the first). It is through the game rules that «OT» tips the balance in favour of this second element: although mechanisms are established so that the judges and teachers can safeguard talent, the rules give more power to the audience, for example, through the figure of the public's «favourite», who cannot be nominated by the judges, or the system for choosing the finalists and the winner, in which the judges have no power at all. A good example of this is Virginia, who won «OT 2008» after overcoming numerous nominations and the explicit opposition of the teachers and some of the judges.

However, in «Fama» there is an attempt to present talent and popularity as causal: popularity is a direct consequence of talent and work. In this programme the teachers are also judges and have a lot of power (they can nominate and evict contestants), while the viewers vote to evict contestants, which makes it easier for the worst dancers to be eliminated. Only in the last week is all the power given to the audience to choose their favourite dancer. However, this does not prevent disruptions and conflicts from arising within the programme; an example is Paula and Jandro, who reached the final thanks to the audience vote although their dance technique was not as good as the rest of the finalists.

4. Discussion

In «OT» and «Fama» professional success is directly related to public recognition, and anonymity is

represented as a problem that needs to be solved. Therefore, fame is prescribed as a life aspiration and the programmes legitimise the idea that «being famous appears to offer enormous material, economic, social and psychic rewards» and that stars are at the «centre» of things, so that «if you are not famous then you exist at the periphery of the power networks that circulate in and through the popular media» (Holmes & Redmond, 2006: 2).

The two programmes tell the story of the metamorphosis of ordinary young people into stars, and apparently they both enter completely into the debate on the democratisation of fame implied by reality TV (Holmes, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Bennett & Holmes, 2010; Turner, 2004: 71-86). Although the traditional definition of a «star» is based on a combination of talent, hard work and luck, programmes like «Big Brother» disassociate fame from work and talent (Biressi & Nunn, 2005: 144-155). However, «Fama» and «OT» are based on this conventional definition and this is, perhaps, one of the reasons behind the great acceptance of this format (Cáceres, 2002).

The fact that the reality TV shows analysed adopt the traditional definition of fame leads us to identify two more values. First, the representation of a meritocratic society, in which there is an equal access to opportunities but an unequal result in function of talent and effort. That is, anyone, thanks to luck, talent and hard work, can be a star, but at the same time the need to have talent limits the possibilities of success (Marshall, 1997: 79-94). Second (and linked to the meritocracy), stars are paradigms of the individualism on which capitalist societies are based: they are individuals with power and freedom who have arrived to where their talent and work has taken them independently of their origins.

However, in «OT» and «Fama» this emphasis on meritocracy and individualism is made compatible with the subordination of the participants: they have little power within the plot (remember that they are still not «heroes») and a strong inequality is established between them and the other characters of the programme (teachers, judges and viewers). In conclusion, these programmes do not value the individual entrepreneur as much as the «good worker» who is capable of adapting without complaining to the demands of a changing work environment, which calls for constant updating and reinvention (Ouellette & Hay, 2008: 99-133). Therefore, although the programmes promote the idea that each participant needs the «x factor» which marks them out from the rest, their objective is to model the contestants. Therefore, these program-

mes enter the debate on authenticity and artifice that hangs over the concept of stardom (Marshall, 1997: 150-184; Gamson, 1994: 40-54).

In fact, both «OT» and «Fama» are complex and contradictory texts. On one hand, they convey and legitimise a naïve definition of fame: stars as unique individuals, chosen by the public for their talent and effort. And on the other hand, they reveal the mechanisms involved in the manufacture of fame (following the current trend in the media identified by Gamson, 1994: 40-54). Thus, these programmes allow a distanced reading of fame and its generation process and, at the same time, they can create stars.

In relation to work, as well as being an opportunity for social mobility (which is also related to fame), work is represented as a means to self-fulfilment, and the programmes suggest that to be successful you must devote all your energy and sacrifice your personal life. In fact, the two programmes analysed propose a «return to authority», where discipline is the best way of achieving professional goals¹¹. Although the emphasis on effort and discipline can be viewed positively, we can also identify a danger: the approach to work prescribed is that of the romantic ideal of the artist, which «provides an ideal rationale for encouraging labour without compensation» (Hendershot, 2009: 249-250), so that «the passion of work is presented as substitute for material compensation, security, pension plans, and so on» (Ouellette & Hay, 2008: 130)¹².

Finally, in both programmes analysed, success does not only depend on talent and effort, it is also a question of appearances (physical appearance and the way of dressing and speaking). Therefore, we can relate «OT» and «Fama» to the concept of «phantasmagoric labour» (Sternberg, 1998), that is, the importance of appearances in the current work environment and the need to apply «branding» strategies to individuals (Ouellette & Hay, 2008: 99-13; Hearn, 2006). The two programmes analysed go into this aspect in depth: the participants are stars because they look like stars. This emphasis on the construction of a marketable image is directly related to the adaptability of the «good worker» mentioned above: it is in the area of appearances where this continual renewal can take place more easily.

In summary, «OT» and «Fama» reveal some of the tensions involved in the current work market. First, work is represented as a form of personal fulfilment and a way of moving up the socioeconomic ladder, and fame is a measure of success and a life aspiration. Second, these programmes convey a meritocratic vision of society in which each individual's destiny is

determined by their talent and effort; however, they also advocate the importance of constructing an image that could compensate for the lack of these. Finally, they define obedience and adaptability as desirable qualities in the workplace, while at the same time promoting the pursuit of uniqueness and individuality.

Notes

¹ Reality TV shows that combine the features of documentaries, TV series and contests. The subgenre was born at the end of the 90s with «Expedition: Robinson» (Sweden, SVT, 1997) and «Big Brother» (Netherlands, Veronica, 1999).

² The analysis protocol can be consulted in Oliva (2010: 183-191).
³ The model viewer is the viewer planned and created by the text: «A text is a product whose interpretation should form a part of its own generative mechanism: to generate a text means applying a strategy that includes the forecasts of the movements of the other» (Eco, 1981: 79). Obviously, an empirical viewer could interpret a text in different ways to the one proposed, but this type of interpretation is not considered in the present study.

⁴ «OT 2008»: weekly show 8 (03.06.2008), 11 (24.06.2008) and final show (22.07.2008). «OT 2009»: «El castings» (19.04.2009 and 26.04.2009), weekly show 0 (29.04.2009), 1 (06.05.2009) and the daily summaries of the third week (14.05.2009-20.05.2009). The rest of the weekly shows of the two editions have also been viewed.

⁵ Audition episodes: Madrid (26.12.2007), Valencia (01.01.2008) and Final audition (06.01.2008). Daily programmes: week 1-2 (07.01.2008-16.01.2008); week 9-10 (05.03.2008-11.03.2008) and the last week (21.04.2008-25.04.2008). Weekly shows: show 2 (30.03.2008), semifinal (27.04.2008) and final (28.04.2008). The rest of the shows of the first season have also been viewed.

⁶ Although only young people can participate in these programmes, the audition episodes include adult applicants.

⁷ The new couples that join the programme cannot keep up with the imposed rhythm and are eliminated, with few exceptions, a week after entering the programme.

⁸ See Cáceres (2002), an article that analyses «OT» as the story of a «quest».

⁹ It is important to remember that the present analysis is confined to the limits of the text, and does not analyse the effects the programmes have in the real world (that is, fame as the effect of media representation).

¹⁰ Part of the importance and significance of this set is constructed by the long path the contestants in the auditions need to follow, which portrays the story of the journey from anonymity (invisibility) to popularity (visibility).

¹¹ The legitimization of authority and discipline is also a fundamental aspect of other contemporary reality TV shows like «Supernanny», «Hermano Mayor», «Ajuste de Cuentas» and «Cambio Radical». See Oliva (2010).

¹² This can be related to the labour exploitation allegations made by Víctor Sampedro (2002) in relation to these programmes.

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