

Vacuous interlocutors as hieratic proxies in the sacrosphere of Andalusian flamenco *saeta*

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Abstract. *Saeta* (Spanish: ‘arrow’) is nowadays identified as a religious modality of flamenco singing, performed during Holy Week celebrations. The textual fabric of a *saeta* comprises both melody, manner of singing, and verbal texts, as well as the inherent spatiality of a communicative act. Due to the multifaceted nature of this cultural phenomenon, the semiotic perspective is optimal to capture “a psychosocial connection” through investigated signage. In particular, the analysis will draw on Juri Lotman’s concept of the semiosphere, focusing on its fraction relating to religious experience, namely, the sacrosphere. The results point to transactional tectonics and posit an analytical entity of a vacuous interlocutor as a hieratic proxy, having the status of being in a floating structural position within the posited level of what we shall call here [saeta]₂.

Key words: sacrosphere; Spanish religious music; *saeta*; vacuous interlocutor; spatiality

1. Introduction

Spanish religious music linked to Holy Week and the processions is very rich and varied. For the most part, it comprises instrumental works without singing: *motetes*, marches, etc.³ At other times there are religious songs of cultured origin,

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³ This is an upgraded and extended version of some threads that were presented at the following conferences: (1) *Pieśń i piosenka religijna w ujęciu lingwistycznym, teologicznym i artystycznym* [Religious chants and songs from linguistic, theological and artistic perspectives] Wambierzyce, Poland, 24–26 September 2019, in the paper “Wewnątrztekstowa i pozatekstowa

sometimes with lyrics in Latin. *Saeta* (Spanish for ‘arrow’)⁴ is identified as a modality of flamenco singing (a *palo*, to use a technical term), performed before an ambulant dais (Spanish: *pasos procesionales*, or simply *pasos*) during Holy Week celebrations. It is one of the main channels for the transmission of Andalusian folk religiosity (Arrebola 1995: 64). This highlights the importance it has for Andalusian culture. Despite its significant role, however, this type of religious singing is under-researched, especially when it comes to its semiotic dimension.⁵

Saetas are performed *a capella* at a particular moment during Holy Week processions, not by the participants in the processions, but by a person from the audience expressing their emotions when seeing an image of Jesus Christ or the Madonna. As a short prayer, a *saeta* usually consists of four or five verses, the main themes of which are the pain suffered by Jesus Christ during His Passion, penance for sins and divine judgment after death. On the one hand, a *saeta* can be considered an individualized act of *lamentatio*, similar to, for example, Polish Lenten chants; on the other hand, this singing type is also grounded in the specific Spanish organization of Catholic experience – *hermandades* or *cofradías* (‘religious brotherhoods’ or ‘confraternities’) – i.e. it also functions as a determinant of a local religious community, fostering the social cohesive function of religion (cf. Hobbs 2021: 33ff). Finally, *saetas* also connect the participants and audience of a procession communicatively, promoting a special interaction between producers and spectators of such a religious performance. The textual fabric of a *saeta* thus comprises both melody, the manner of singing, and verbal texts, as well as the inherent spatiality of a religious communicative act.

przestrzenność andaluzyjskiej saety” [Intra-textual and intertextual spatiality of Andalusian *saeta*]; (2) Language in the Social Semiotic – 11th International Conference of the Tertium Society: Language of the Third Millennium, Cracow, Poland, 2–4. December 2020, in the paper “Indexicality and deixis in Andalusian *saeta*”; (3) From Language to Communication and Beyond – 12th International Conference Language of the Third Millennium, Cracow, Poland, 23–25 March 2022, in the paper “Transactional tectonics in the performance of Andalusian flamenco *saeta*: Vacuous interlocutors as hieratic proxies”.

⁴ All the translations in the text are by the authors of the article. In the text, we provide *saeta* lyrics in the original, giving English glosses in brackets. For some key translations from Russian, we also include the original version.

⁵ Obviously, the literature on flamenco music is vast; by comparison, the attention paid to its religious subtype (i.e. the *saeta*) is rather scarce, as Payán (2005) underlines. To cite but one example, the most ambitious publication on flamencology ever, coordinated by Navarro and Roperó (2002) in six large, lavishly illustrated volumes, only includes two chapters specifically focusing on it: Casado (2002) pays attention to traditional, liturgical *saetas*, whereas the short contribution by Rioja (2002) is the only one which centres on modern flamenco *saetas*. Additionally, it is worth noting that in many cases the research on flamenco is not developed and published in academia, which hinders access to it and its international dissemination.

This type of religious message has been analysed mainly from musicological (e.g. Kramer, Pleckers 1998; Rioja 2002) or ethnographic points of view (e.g. Rincón 1984; Castón 1992). Worth mentioning amongst historiographic studies are, for example, Aguilar y Tejera 1928;⁶ Valencina 1948; Melgar, Marín 1987; Arrebola 1995; Gómez-García Plata 2004 and Payán 2005. However, as we have managed to establish, linguistic or semiotic analyses of the *saeta* are missing.⁷ We hereby propose to fill that lacuna by conducting an analysis of spatial relations in the visual and textual layers of the *saeta* as taking place in the semiosphere.⁸

According to Marcel Danesi (2010: ix), “[s]emiotics is ultimately a form of inquiry into how humans shape raw sensory information into knowledge-based categories through sign-interpretation and sign-creation.” In addition, Boris Uspenskij has emphasized the advantages of a wide epistemological scope of the semiotic approach, pointing out that when we look at the surrounding world, some phenomena appear to the subject as important and some as negligible. Accordingly, culture can be seen as a system of relations that humans establish between themselves and the world (Uspenskij 1994: 6).

Semiotics, in particular cultural semiotics in the version developed by the Tartu-Moscow School (TMS), thus seems to be an ideal perspective from which to approach such a multifaceted phenomenon as the *saeta*, since it allows tracing inherent psychosocial linkages on the seam of ethnology, sacrality, anthropology, visuality and linguistics. The psychosocial linkages which we want to discover translate into signifying patterns; thus, semiotics has provided us with a sort of a virtual hand, similar to performed calculus, to transpose a visual and elusive maze of mundane substantialities into analytical entities that can be manipulated and compared.

In particular, we focus on directionality (the vectorial and reciprocal aspects) and indexicality⁹ (e.g. the semiotic aspect). We posit that the vectorial aspect

⁶ This is the second, widely extended edition of a book previously published in 1916 under the title *Saetas recogidas de la tradición oral de Marchena*.

⁷ Ironically, one of the seminal works on flamencology published at the end of the 19th century was written by Hugo Schuchardt (1881), a famous linguist who analysed flamenco songs compiled by Demófilo (1881) from a philological and dialectal approach. Unfortunately, this research line was not subsequently pursued.

⁸ A *caveat* needs to be added here. It is the initial stage of prospective research on *saetas*; it can be called a preliminary and exploratory study. New lacunae for exploration are constantly appearing as our research corpus grows. In this report, due to space limitations, we will not focus for example on diachronic changes in the texts of *saetas* or on specific regional differences. We have also narrowed down the subject to include only scenes related to the Passion.

⁹ The concept of *indexicality* was developed by Kaplan (1989) within the framework of formal logic (cf. Heal 1997). It was incorporated into linguistic research and other connected

is already inherent in Lotman's definition of the semiosphere; hence, in our analysis, we derive the semiotic reflection of a vector directly from there. In our understanding of the analytical term 'vector' we proceed directly from Lotman's semiosphere as enhanced by Marcel Danesi's semiotic work on directionality (cf. Danesi 1998, 2009; Sebeok, Danesi 2000). The analytical corpus for the study is a collection of 900 traditional flamenco *saetas* edited by Aguilar (1928), of which we study 650 transcribed items relating to Holy Week processions. We also include the *saetas* contained in research papers published in the magazine *Candil*,¹⁰ as well as material collected in course of participant observation conducted by the first author. The results point to the marked saliency of the deictic dimension (personal, locative and temporal), which may be connected to the primarily verbal channel of transmission of *saetas*, and with the spatial tectonics of those communicative events.

2. The sacrosphere as a semiotic domain for religious messages in the form of chants

Saetas appear in the sphere of research not only as examples of religious songs, but also at the intersection of the themes of Andalusian music itself, with the subject of mysticism associated with the Holy Week processions, i.e. Pentecostal textuality and symbolism, as well as the topic of passion sermons.¹¹ The *saeta* also plays a crucial role at the intersection of the *sacred/profane* dimensions of culture, here related to secular Spanish fraternities, which makes it a social semiotic

areas as part of the so-called *classical near-side pragmatics* – cf. Korta, Kepa; Perry, John 2020[2006]. Pragmatics. In: Zalta, Edward N. (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online edition. Spring 2020 version (first archived file: Winter 2006), available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatics/#Near2.1> (accessed on 20 August, 2021), as well as Korta 2020: 22f. Sample references for the indexicality aspect in linguistics and semiotics are e.g. Beaugrande, Dressler 1990; Dressler, Barbaresi 1994 and Berdychowska 2002. See also the visual grammar as elaborated in e.g. Kress, van Leeuwen 1996, Chilton's (2010) *Deictic Space Theory* (DST) or Charles Fillmore's (1982) frame semantics. Due to the nature of our data, we nonetheless opted for a canonically semiotic perspective.

¹⁰ *Candil* was a bimonthly magazine published in Jaén by the *Peña Flamenca* (a sort of club for flamenco music lovers) of this city. It included not only academic papers, but also general information, opinion articles, interviews, traditional flamenco lyrics, etc. It was the main publication specializing in flamenco between 1978 and 2006 (160 issues in total). After a long period of silence due to economic difficulties, it has been developing a new format as a quarterly journal since November 2019.

¹¹ Which has a paradigmatic correlation with, for example, Polish Lenten Bitter Sorrows' mysticism.

community-based event. It is thus a complex, multichannel communicative act. Hence, a semiotic paradigm bringing to the fore the nested web of relations that Juri Lotman (2001[1990]: 123ff) termed a semiosphere – a sort of a cultural space, seems analytically ideal to capture the multifaceted aspects of those communicative acts. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is thus vital to establish some analytical points that will serve to provide coordinates to the specific analytical path we pursue.

The *sacred* and the *profane*, as dynamic points of reference, do not exist in a cultural vacuum, they mark some of the dimensions of ‘cultural space’, in particular, a specific religious cultural space. The term ‘semiotic space’ (Russian: *семиотическое пространство*) was introduced in the works of scholars who gathered together at the TMS of structural semiotics in the 1970s.¹² Its more modern formulation, ‘semiosphere’, coined by Juri Lotman in 1984 and elaborated in detail in Lotman, J. 2005[1994], is probably the most oft-cited domain-specific lexeme. It has become a canon of a line of semiotic description focusing on the pragmatic aspect of semiotic enquiry. However, it is less often recalled that Lotman also ascribes certain features and properties to that concept.¹³ The ones most relevant to the present analytical scope can be listed as thus:

(1) *Hierarchical structuring*: mono-semantic systems exist and function on a particular semiotic continuum, “which is filled with multi-variant semiotic models situated at a range of hierarchical levels. Such a continuum we, by analogy with the concept of ‘biosphere’ introduced by V. I. Vernadsky, will call the ‘semiosphere’” (Lotman, J. 2001[1990]: 123, 2005[1984]: 206).

(2) *Emergent nature*: this ensues from the axiomatic hierarchic nature (implying a hierarchy of levels) of the semiosphere as conceived by the Russian scholar, which can be related to Whitehead’s “logical typing”. As Mihhail Lotman observes, signs form texts, texts in turn constitute cultures, and particular cultures make up a semiosphere. Semiosphere is at the same time “the culture of all cultures and the environment that provides the possibility of their emergence and existence”¹⁴

¹² For example, in the coauthored paper by Lotman and Uspenskij (1978[1973]), we read that culture creates around a human being a special sphere which, analogously to the biosphere, makes life possible – although not an organic, but a social one (Lotman, Uspenskij 1978[1973]: 179).

¹³ See also the analysis of the Lotmanian move from *peripheral spatiality* to the frame of dislocated temporality in Hwan Kim 2014, as well as the exposition of Lotman’s trailblazing aspects of semiosphere in Machado 2011, with the stipulation that “semiotic space emerges inside the experience of transforming information into sign systems” (Machado 2011: 83).

¹⁴ “Знаки образуют тексты, тексты – культуры, культуры – семиосферы. Подобно тому как пространство культуры ообразуется всеми текстами, созданными и могущими быть созданными в данной культуре, так и семиосфера – это культура всех культур и среда, обеспечивающая возможность их появления и существования.”

(Lotman, M. 2002a: 20). Semiosphere thus *emerges* through the interplay of particular culture-specific synchronic preferences.

(3) *The existence of a boundary (boundedness)*. “The isolated nature” of the semiosphere is grounded in the fact that it cannot be contiguous to any extra-semiotic entities. In order for (cultural) texts to be realized, they must be translated into one of the languages of its internal space. The inherent requirement for the existence of the semiopshere is thus the fact that it must be delimited. This inherent border is envisaged as a sum of filters, which are inter-translatable (Lotman, J. 2005[1994]: 209). The function of any border or film is specified as having membrane-like properties, “a limitation of penetration, filtering and the transformative processing of the *external to the internal*” (Lotman, J. 2005[1994]: 210; our emphasis, V. S.-G., M. H.-G.).¹⁵ For Lotman, a border has the character of a cultural universal.¹⁶

We can thus see a dynamic aspect of the epistemological framework, implicit in the concept of the semiosphere. This has been elaborated on by Anti Randviir (2007), who, pointing out some descriptive frames grounded in binaries (e.g. *the own – the alien*), admits that the dynamic treatment of transcurent processes points to the immensity of the functionality and processual teleology of the Tartu-Moscow semiotic model.

All of the facets exposed above converge in the aspect of the semiosphere that is usually referred to as its dialogical nature. The focus of interaction is often cited as a paramount determinant of signing activities of a human being. Irene Machado (2011: 86; see also Lotman, M. 2002b) points out that “[t]ext fills the essential feature of the meaning generation movement because of its dialogic condition.”

Within that general tectonics of Juri Lotman’s concept of the semiosphere, we also rely on a specific conversational configuration, framed as *a third interlocutor*. As Mihhail Lotman points out, the issue of communication via the I–I channel in culture (autocommunication) was one of the cynosures attracting the attention of Juri Lotman in connection with his theory of communication (Lotman, M. 2002a: 19). The notion of autocommunication, which implies the fusion of the

¹⁵ There are various levels implied in that processing. Here, Lotman gives examples such as “the division of self from other, the filtration of external communications and the translation thereof into its own language, as well as the transformation of external non-communication into communications, i.e. the semiotization of incoming materials and the transformation of the latter into information” (Lotman, J. 2005[1994]: 210). Unity in relation to the border, i.e. the unambiguous division into interior and exterior, is the basic condition for the unity of the semiosphere itself, despite its inherent internal heterogeneity (Lotman, J. 2005[1994]: 206ff).

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the Lotmanian concept of the semiosphere, cf. e.g. Haładewicz-Grzelak 2018.

addresser and the addressee, is grounded in the absolute ontological primacy of the text (Lotman, M. 2001[1990]: 102). Accordingly, communication should not be viewed as emerging, but as a generative factor, as it “creates unity, *communia*. Communication produces ‘me’ in ‘the other’ and ‘the other’ in ‘me’” (Lotman, M. 2001[1990]: 102).

Although Juri Lotman never openly disagreed with Roman Jakobson in his publications, it is clear that the Tartu communication model was far more comprehensive and elaborate than the canonical Bühlerian-Jakobsonian one. The pivotal aspect of Lotmanian communication model did not rely on language-centredness (*лингвоцентризм*), but on the fundamental pluralism of cultural codes (Lotman, M. 2002a: 19). Accordingly, even from the point of view of prelinguistic communication, the Jakobsonian model was shown to be inadequate:¹⁷

Already Yu. V. Knorozov, adducing examples from communication in the animal world, showed that along with the addressor and the addressee, the third participant in the communicative situation, whom he called the interceptor, is of fundamental importance. It is even possible to orient the text towards the interceptor, which can also be interpreted in the spirit of Jakobsonian functions (cf. at least Aesopian language). (Lotman, M. 2002a: 16)¹⁸

We might add here that other scholars from the TMS also worked towards extending the canonical communication model. For example, Alexander Piatigorsky and David Zilberman (1976), in their analysis of the lexeme ‘*Lakṣaṇā*’ in Hindu and Buddhist philosophical traditions, introduced the seminal category of a *vacuous interlocutor*, while assuming an epistemological category of the ‘non-sign’. The possibility of non-sign usage allowed for the natural inconceivability of sign-understanding as well as the concept of ‘unsemiotics’, as “logically opposed but in fact entwined (in a matter of understanding) with the ordinary ‘semiotics’” (Piatigorsky, Zilberman 1976: 255). This elaborated investigative perspective permitted them to show that, during the period which they call the “polemic”

¹⁷ Current linguistic research, in a narrow sense, has also distanced itself from the classic Bühler’s (2004[1934]) and Jakobson’s (1960) model of language functions. Halliday’s (1970) alternative proposal, based on ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, is more widely accepted nowadays.

¹⁸ “Еще Ю. В. Кнорозов, приводя примеры из коммуникации в мире животных, показал, что наряду с адресантом и адресатом принципиальное значение имеет третий участник коммуникативной ситуации, названный им перехватчиком. Возможна даже ориентация текста на перехватчика, которая может быть также истолкована в духе Jakobsonовских функций (ср. хотя бы эзопов язык). Роль перехватчика и важность защиты сообщения от перехвата особенно возрастает в электронных системах связи.”

Upaniṣads, the sudden surge of the lexeme ‘*Lakṣaṇā*’ was due to the intrusion of an invisible interlocutor, intruding in the process of ritual Brahmanical tutelage. This invisible interlocutor, as an unseen polemist and ideal opponent, was “capable of stimulating the disputing potency” (Piatigorsky, Zilberman 1976: 257).

The interceptor or vacuous interlocutor is thus one of the categories with which the TMS scholars aimed to enrich Jakobson’s canonical model. It is also of pivotal importance for our analysis. In our understanding, though, the focus is not so much on enhancing oppositional values, but on polarizing the epistemic positioning and *sacrum* saliency¹⁹ of actors. In other words, the general tectonics for our epistemological thrust is similar to that which drove Russian researchers to posit a non-exponential entity at the pragmatic level. The gist is to bear in mind that such a vacuous interlocutor is not posited *a priori* but emerges as an analytical entity from a specific configuration of cultural codes within the semiosphere.

Finally, in sketching the motivation for spatial hermeneutics, it should be pointed out that even staying within the semiotic epistemological horizon, spatial modelling has been undertaken by several fruitful attempts.²⁰ The most notable one among these, and also of immediate relevance to the present analytical scope, is an inspiring framework developed by Marcel Danesi (1998). Danesi heuristically puts forth the notion of ‘directionality’ as an organizing principle of semiotic analysis. In short, directionality consists in modelling several dimensional spaces in terms of a tri-axial matrix, with the goal to investigate how “firstness, secondness and thirdness constitute and interact within all representational systems” (Danesi 1998: 47; cf. also Merrell 1997: 167).²¹

Danesi starts from the premise that one of the crucial teleological aspects of semiotics “is to understand semiosis and the knowledge making activity it allows all the human beings to carry out. This activity is known as representation. It is characterized by the deliberate use of signs to probe, classify and hence, know the word” (Danesi 1998: 43). The underlying premise of his model is the assumption that there is a coaction between the three canonical aspects of the sign that were captured by Peirce as firstness, secondness and thirdness. He subsequently

¹⁹ By *sacrum* (Latin ‘sacred’) saliency we mean positioning a given material exponent or an agent in relation with the Durheimian cultural opposition of *sacred–profane*. The sacred is assumed to be a marked part of the opposition. That means, the closer and more prominent the sacred dimension is, the more salient it is in the default ‘profane’ (mundane).

²⁰ See for example Lagopoulos, Boklund-Lagopoulou 2014 for the exhaustive research on the importance of space for the semiotic theory.

²¹ We might note in passing that Juri Lotman himself advocated creating dynamical models as explanatory schemes (cf. e.g. Lotman, J. (1977[1975]), 1975). See also Lotman, Uspenskij (1978[1973]) for exploration into the culture–religion dimension through linguistic reflection.

constructs a blueprint of a three-dimensional coordinate diagram in which the target concept emerges as a designational point. Our analytical proposal liaises with that overall premise, although, rather than focussing on canonical Peircean aspects, we “delaminate” the communicative event in the form of the *saeta*, extracting the leading subjectivities within particular epistemic horizons.

On the one hand, the proposed *sacrosphere* defines that aspect of the semiosphere in which religious discourse is created and received. On the other hand, this dimension inevitably has its own ontological directionality. That is, when we assume the existence of the sacrosphere as a zone contained within a wider cultural space, the religious aspect of discourse always appears to be constructed from the inside, towards the periphery.²² Nonetheless, all the features and specifications concerning the semiosphere developed by Lotman necessarily apply to its section – the sacrosphere. That space has been studied from various perspectives: theological, historical, ethnographic, anthropological and semiotic ones.²³ In the present article, the analytical thrust is of a semiological nature, and all the conclusions reached are only valid for the realm of semiotics. Within a space thus defined, we position particular communicative situations in the form of religious messages defined as *saetas*.

3. Pragmatic and historical aspects in the development of *saeta* chanting

3.1. Historiographic vicissitudes: the emergence of the traditional *saeta*

As for the etymology of the word ‘*saeta*’, there is general agreement that its origin should be included in the Latin word SAGITTA(M),²⁴ which means ‘arrow’ or ‘dart’ (Yerga 1982: 17). In this sense, its use is already documented in the works of Gonzalo de Berceo (mid-13th century) (cf. Corominas, Pascual 1980–1991: vol. 5, 124, *sub voce* SAETA) and it has survived as an archaism to this day. When was the term ‘*saeta*’ first used to refer to poetic, recited or sung compositions? Everything

²² Hence, it is socially conditioned subjectivity that determines the existence or absence of a sacred reference in a given discourse stretch, which means that for example the Virgin Mary’s sanctuaries and intercession prayers, proper to Catholicism or Orthodox Christianity, are not considered sacred for Christian denominations that do not admit the Marian cult.

²³ See for example Jacoviello 2011 on the interrelations of phonic and verbal textual matter of the *qawwālī* music or the intermodal translation, also involving biblicalisms, in the semiotic work by Dinda Gorlée (2016: 594) on operatic narratives.

²⁴ With few exceptions, Spanish words from Latin derive from the accusative forms. In the singular, the accusative ending {-m} was lost very early on. That is why it is put in parentheses.

indicates that this happened much later.²⁵ The first clear and sure testimony of this use of the word '*saeta*' appears in a book by Fray ('Brother') Antonio de Ezcaray (1691: 8, 11).²⁶ Generally speaking, the first *saetas* were short prayers consisting of two, three or four verses, whose main theme was repentance for sins and divine judgment after death. They were commonly known as *saetas penetrantes* ('piercing arrows') (Valencina 1948: 24). It is not known whether *saetas penetrantes* were created to be set to music or were recited in the beginning, and it was only later that music was added to them. In any case, already in the 18th century they were frequently sung by religious brothers from the so-called mendicant orders – Dominicans and Franciscans (in the latter, the Capuchins clearly took the lead) – in the course of various religious activities. Thus understood, the *saeta* was associated with another type of similar prayer, called *jaculatoria* in Spanish – an ejaculatory prayer or aspiration; it is a very short prayer often said as a form of pious devotion.²⁷ The difference is that the *jaculatoria* ('a soaring act') was in prose and the *saeta* was a poem.

Since the 18th century, evidence of such *saetas penetrantes* began to grow in number. Most are found in the texts of the Capuchin brothers. Here, the books *Luz Apostólica* (1741) by Fray Feliciano de Sevilla, and *Aljaba mística o exhortaciones y saetas* (1791) by the Blessed Diego José de Cádiz (1743–1801) stand out (Casado 2002: 306). The *saetas* appearing in these works were for the most part compositions by the same friars of the mendicant orders who would sing them. Their dissemination amongst the people was an important activity in the missions that these religious brothers undertook in many places. The spread of this type of composition meant that the fourth edition of the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy (*Real Academia Española*; RAE 1803: 768, *sub voce* SAETA) already contained an appropriate entry for this sense of the word '*saeta*'.

From the above, some interesting conclusions can be drawn. The most vital for the present thematic scope is that, initially, *saetas* were widely distributed and created by the brothers of mendicant orders. This means that they did not

²⁵ Payán (2005: 307) claims that there have been sung *saetas* in Andalusia since at least the 15th century, but such a hypothesis has not gained widespread acceptance.

²⁶ It is worth noting that, contrary to common belief, the name of this author is written on the title page of the book as *Ezcaray* instead of *Escaray*. In addition, his reference to the singing of *saetas* is not located in Andalusia, but in a Franciscan mission of Zacatecas in the then Viceroyalty of New Spain, present-day Mexico. See Ezcaray, Fray ['Brother'] Antonio de 1691. *Vozes del dolor, nacidas de la multitud de pecados, que se cometen por los trages profanos, afeytes, escotados, y culpables ornatos, [...]*. Seville: Imprenta de Tomás López de Haro. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/A098083/page/n3/mode/2up?q=reverendos> (accessed 20 August 2021).

²⁷ A resemblance is even found on the etymological plane. '*Jaculatoria*' comes from the Latin IACULU(M), which also means 'arrow' (Lat. *actus iaculatoriae*).

emanate from the people, but came to the people through extensive and conscious missionary activities on the part of the clergy involved. At the same time, those forms known as *saetas penetrantes* were still very far from modern flamenco *saetas*.

It is beyond the thematic scope of this paper to present in detail the subsequent changes that led to the current form that the *saeta* chant has assumed (for more details, cf. Arrebola 1995; Aguilar 1928; Gómez-García Plata 2004, among others). Some general aspects that should be taken into account in order to comprehend the specific semiotic dimension are the following:

Most probably, the transition from the form of *saeta penetrante* of the 17th and 18th centuries to the modern *flamenco saeta* began with the adoption by the common people of the piercing *saetas* transmitted by friars. This would presumably have taken place through certain groups of devotees, especially the brotherhoods of *Ánimas* and that of *Rosario de la Aurora*.²⁸ Members of the brotherhoods of *Ánimas* used to sing the so-called *saetas del pecado mortal* ('mortal sin arrows') in the street at night. Their topic and purpose were similar to that of the piercing *saetas*, but, unlike the latter, they were sung by laypeople, not clergymen. We include here one of these *saetas del pecado mortal* which is quite popular because it appears in a famous Sevillian legend (cf. Buendía 1982: 12):

Mira que te mira Dios; / mira que te está mirando; / mira que te has de morir; / mira que no sabes cuándo. [You see, God looks at you; / you see, God is looking at you; / you see, you will die; / you see, you don't know when.]

The transition from piercing and mortal sin *saetas* to a new form linked to Holy Week celebrations could in all probability have taken place at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Such a new type is called *saeta tradicional* ('traditional arrow'), *saeta llana* ('plain arrow') or *saeta popular* ('folk arrow') to distinguish it from previous varieties, and it soon became a genuine component of Andalusian culture (it is hardly found elsewhere).²⁹ Although the traditional *saeta* has already been lost in many places, it is still preserved in certain enclaves in the interior of Andalusia: Puente Genil, Cabra, Castro del Río, etc. (cf. Valencina 1948: 31).

²⁸ The brotherhoods of *Ánimas* ('souls') were religious associations whose main aim was to pray for the salvation of souls spending time in Purgatory. The brotherhoods of *Rosario de la Aurora* ('dawn Rosary'), promoted by friars of the Dominican order, publicly pray the Holy Rosary at the crack of dawn on some designated days. Both kinds of confraternities still survive in several places in Spain, mainly in rural areas, but with less social and religious prominence.

²⁹ Nevertheless, some authors, e.g. Casado (2002), categorize every ancient, non-flamenco *saeta* under the common label of *saeta litúrgica* ('liturgical arrow'), independent of its sub-categorization as a *penetrante* 'piercing', *del pecado mortal* 'mortal sin', or *tradicional* 'traditional' *saeta*.

Although it is fairly similar in all these Andalusian localities, it also shows some subtle differences that give rise to the existence of specific varieties, sometimes with their own denominations: *saetas cuarteleras* ('barracks arrows') in Puente Genil, *saetas de Pasión* ('Passion arrows') in Álora, etc.

As for the literary sources of *saeta* lyrics, these are quite varied, and combine cultured (sacred) and popular origins. Thus, for example, the lyrics of the aforementioned *saetas cuarteleras*, 'barracks arrows' from Puente Genil (sung as a duet, at least currently) are in many cases authentic paraphrases of evangelical texts (especially the Gospel of Saint Matthew). Some of the *saetas* that have been sung in Marchena for centuries seem to be almost literal translations of some passages from the *Miserere*,³⁰ and thus suggest what is essentially cultured transmission, perhaps by clergymen of the mendicant orders. Other texts seem to have a more popular origin and are certainly older as well. For example, many traditional *saetas* collect fragments (four or five verses, of special relief and depth) from old romances of the group known as *romancero de la Pasión y Muerte* ('ballads of Passion and Death'; cf. Arrebola 1995: 95; Aguilar 1928; Gómez-García Plata 2004; Payán 2005: 298f).

Throughout the 19th century the traditional *saeta* must have been enriched in both its literary as well as musical aspects. Along with the musical basis of the *toná*, other modalities related to the *martinete* and *carcelera* were incorporated.³¹ Following Valencina (1948), Melgar and Marín (1987: 57) as well as Arrebola (1995: 123), consider that, in the middle of that century, when the first flamenco singing professionals appeared, a transitional modality must have emerged. They call it '*saeta aflamencada*', that is to say, a *saeta* that still retains the musical pattern of the traditional *saeta*, yet already incorporates important voice inflections and

³⁰ The *Miserere* ('have mercy') is the 50th Psalm of David, which, in the Latin translation, begins with that word. It is a psalm that asks God for the forgiveness of sins. For this reason, it is closely associated with Holy Week, since it is sung in the *Oficios de Tinieblas* ('Offices of Darkness') that take place at various times during that week. Versions of the *Miserere* also exist for choir and orchestra. The most famous ones are the two that Hilarión Eslava (1807–1878) composed in the mid-19th century, one for the Cathedral of Seville and the other for the Cathedral of Baeza.

³¹ The *martinete* and *carcelera* are *palos* (specific varieties of flamenco singing or *cante*) without the use of the guitar that derive directly from a previous one: the *toná*, which is an Andalusian dialectal term that comes from the standard Spanish word '*tonada*' ('tune'). In fact, many experts consider them to be simply a subgroup of the latter. The *martinete* was at its birth the characteristic *cante* of blacksmiths. For this reason, its execution is accompanied by the sound of a hammer striking an anvil; it is that sound that sets the rhythm or beat. The word '*carcelera*' derives from '*cárcel*' ('jail'), because this kind of *cante* was quite popular among incarcerated prisoners, who used it to express their suffering or the injustice of their imprisonment.

melismas that are typical of flamenco singing. These would have been introduced by those *cantaores* ('singers'; sg. '*cantaor*')³² who would have incorporated *saetas* into their repertoire.

Narváez (1990) highlights the role played by Marchena, a small town about 60 kilometres east of Seville, in the evolution of *saetas*. This place has a wide sample of different styles of traditional *saetas*, each of them normally associated with one single Holy Week confraternity. As mentioned earlier, some of these *saetas* show cultured content and have even been attributed to the Blessed Diego José de Cádiz (cf. Arrebola 1995: 93), but some others show a clear popular origin. Thus, it is plausible to think that Marchena was one of the first places where the original type of the piercing *saeta* evolved into a different, popular one, which was adopted within the context of Holy Week celebrations. Although these *saetas* are normally performed by members of the confraternity involved in the procession, some of them are sung by one or more observers who do not directly participate in it. In particular, it is worth noting the existence in Marchena of a specific kind of *saeta*, dedicated to *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* ('Our Lady of Loneliness'), which was originally performed by prisoners in jail through the windows of their cells (Gómez 1984: 24; Narváez 1990: 18). Could the origin of the prototypical modern *saeta* spatiality, with the *singer* located on a balcony, lie here? This suggestion is rather speculative and difficult to prove, but it seems to us very thought-provoking.



Figure 1. Music score of a folk *saeta*, published by Calvo (1992: 965). Courtesy of the *Diputación Provincial de Jaén* (Jaén Provincial Council).

³² '*Cantaor*' is a dialectal Andalusian word used to specifically denote a singer specializing in flamenco songs. It comes from old Spanish '*cantador*', currently unused. Modern standard Spanish words meaning 'singer' are '*cantante*' and '*cantor*', among others, but they never apply to flamenco singers.

3.2. Historiographic vicissitudes: the emergence of the flamenco *saeta*

It is generally assumed that the complete and definitive incorporation of the *saeta* into the field of flamenco took place at the beginning of the 20th century, probably between 1910 and 1930 (cf. Rossy 1960: 59; Melgar, Marín 1987: 58–63; Rioja 2002: 337).³³ It was in Seville that the full adaptation of the *saeta* to the melodic and rhythmic pattern of the *seguiriya*³⁴ finally took place, although preserving its *a cappella* singing character. Thus, the *saeta flamenca* or *saeta por seguiriyas* was born, which is what is generally known today. It must be understood essentially as a variant of the *seguiriya* and therefore it deserves to be included within the so-called *cante jondo* ('deep song'), i.e. the set of the most serious modalities of vocal flamenco music. Its performance is not exclusive to men; masterful female singers are attested starting the beginning of the flamenco *saeta*,³⁵ and their number has been increasing in recent times.

From an anthropological and even devotional point of view, it is indisputable that the traditional *saeta* retains an enormous value, which compels us to make an effort so that it does not disappear permanently. Nonetheless, we must also admit that, in strictly musical terms, the flamenco *saeta* is much richer, more complex and brilliant, and that its appearance was a discovery that enriched the panorama of flamenco songs. According to Casado (2002: 320), the traditional *saeta* was in decline at the beginning of the 20th century and the emergence of the flamenco *saeta* was a salutary shock to Andalusian religious folk music. Without doubt, its greater musical quality is the key that explains why the flamenco *saeta* has displaced the traditional *saeta*, in such a short time, in almost all of Andalusia. In addition, its musical wealth allows new variants and innovations to emerge from

³³ García Reyes indicates that the Sevillian local press reported the singing of flamenco *saetas* for the first time during the Holy Week of 1915. His text is available as García Reyes, Alberto 2014. Las diez mejores saetas de la historia de Sevilla. *ABC de Sevilla* (14 March, 2014, online edition) at the address:

https://sevilla.abc.es/sevilla/20140313/sevi-mejores-saetas-sevilla-201403121131_1.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fsevilla.abc.es%2Fsevilla%2F20140313%2Fsevi-mejores-saetas-sevilla-201403121131_1.html (accessed on 20 August, 2021).

³⁴ These adaptations are motivated, among other reasons, by the fact that the lines of the *seguiriya* are heterometric (each of different length) while those of the *saeta* are all octosyllables. The word '*seguiriya*' (sometimes also '*siguiriya*') is an Andalusian term derived from the standard Spanish '*seguidilla*'.

³⁵ For instance, Pastora María Pavón Cruz (1890–1969), whose artistic nickname was *La Niña de los Peines* ('The Girl of the Combs'), and Rocío Vega Farfán (1901–1975), whose artistic nickname was *La Niña de la Alfalfa* ('The Girl of the Alfalfa'). It is worth noting that many flamenco performers (singers, dancers, guitar-players), even amateurs, are normally known by a hypocoristic or nickname.

it, each with its own traditional imprint. Most of these innovations are based on a combination of *seguriya* rhythm with that of *cantes* that inspired the traditional *saeta* (that is: the *toná*, the *martinete* and the *carcelera*). But there is no shortage of other musical influences, even from outside of flamenco.³⁶

Of course, the flamenco *saeta* is much more difficult to sing compared to the traditional one, and it requires a greater effort on the part of the performer. In fact, in its early days, only professional singers with very well-honed technique and sufficient vocal capacity were capable of properly executing this type of *saeta*.³⁷ On the other hand, the traditional *saeta* was conceived to be sung by common people, and does not require unusual musical skills. Quiñones (1964: 106) considers it simply a “*primitiva, llana, sosa*” (‘primitive, plain, bland’) sung prayer. It is a more sober *saeta*, and less prone to the personal display of the *cantaor*. Therefore, the traditional *saeta* is closer to the authentic devotional meaning of Holy Week³⁸ as originally it was sung by members of the brotherhood or devotees who, on many occasions, accompanied the processional image in its penance station. Of course, they never expected their *cante* to be rewarded with applause or any other type of expression on the part of listeners. A flamenco singer, on the other hand, does not accompany the procession, but stands on a balcony and waits for the arrival of the

³⁶ As a clear example of these innovations, which appeared (or were at least consolidated) after the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), it is worth mentioning the *saeta malagueña*, which consists of a *saeta por seguriyas* topped by a *martinete* (Durán 1993: 1307), that is sometimes sung in duet (Arrebola 1995: 131). Recently, other forms of musical experimentation have appeared, although they do not always find true acceptance. Thus, it is still considered inadmissible in a Holy Week procession to sing with a guitar accompaniment. Still, I [V. S.-G.] have had the opportunity to verify that, when it is sung in theatres, flamenco festivals or recordings, some *cantaores* have dared, at least occasionally, to add an instrumental accompaniment.

³⁷ To illustrate this, we include links to some videos available at You Tube. We can see there professional singers performing *saetas* with an unusual vocal virtuosity:

Link 1. Diana Navarro sings to Jesús de Medinaceli (‘Jesus of Medinaceli’), during its extraordinary procession that took place in Madrid, October 9th 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-HA5aOslUI>

Link 2. Diana Navarro sings to María Santísima del Mayor Dolor (‘Our Lady of the Greatest Sorrow’) from a balcony of the Hotel Larios, with the famous actor Antonio Banderas as a privileged witness. Málaga, Holy Wednesday evening 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0HHdxt5_kY

Link 3. Laura Gallego sings to María Santísima de la Esperanza de Triana (‘Our Lady of the Hope at Triana’). Seville, Holy Friday morning 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FR1IVD_TRY

³⁸ This is the reason why the great Sevillian composer Joaquín Turina (1982[1928]) expressed a long time ago his dissatisfaction with the loss of traditional *saeta* and the emergence of a new, flamenco one.

image to start singing.³⁹ Although in many places applause or shouting (the most typical is: *jolé!*, but there are some others like it) continues to be frowned upon, the truth is that in many others this is already a normal occurrence.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the clearly erroneous conclusion that the flamenco *saeta* is something frivolous or alien to the most authentic roots of the hallmarks of Andalusian Holy Week should not be drawn from this. Quite the contrary, its success and dissemination would have been impossible if it had not been from the beginning fully connected with those roots, which is ultimately from where it stems.⁴¹ This can be seen very clearly if we analyse the lyrics that *saetas* have been composed from over recent decades. None of them strays in the least from the depth of religious feeling, concentrated in the figures of Christ and Mary, in different moments that make up the Passion. On the contrary, these lyrics (some written by renowned poets, others by anonymous authors from among the people) go even deeper into this feeling, and sometimes reach levels of expression and poetic quality that are difficult to surpass.

3.3. The *saeta* and modern Spanish poetry

We end this section by taking into account the noteworthy impact of the *saeta* on modern Spanish poetry. Certainly, the lyrics of many *saetas* have an exceptional poetic quality and their influence is not limited to flamenco compositions, but is also felt in other cultural domains. We can find three main connections between the flamenco *saeta* and canonical poetry:

(1) *Cantaores* who sing their own texts. Although many of them have no academic background, their artistic sensitivity and personal involvement in Holy Week celebrations sometimes produce high-quality poems. In the early stages of the modern *saeta*, the most significant examples of this were probably Manuel Centeno (1885–1961) and Manuel Vallejo (1891–1960). It is worth noting

³⁹ Occasionally, the *cantaor* sings at street level, in particular if it is an impromptu performance, but the prototypical location for a *saetero* is a balcony.

⁴⁰ This is also conditioned by the nature of every Andalusian Holy Week brotherhood. Roughly speaking, there are two main types: *hermandades de negro* ('confraternities in black'), which organize very sober and silent processions, and *hermandades de bulla* ('confraternities in ruckus'), whose processions have plenty of music and are quite bustling. Applause and shouting after the performance of a *saeta* are more acceptable in the latter than in the former.

⁴¹ We will add here some links to videos showing *saetas* performed by amateur singers, but with a significant artistic quality. They are representative of the spread of this phenomenon among the Andalusian common people: Sebastián Moreno (nickname: *Cañón* 'Canyon') sings to Jesús Nazareno de la Vera Cruz ('Jesus Nazarene of the True Cross'). Baeza, Holy Friday morning 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezm7Qgx_SpU and Inmaculada Moreno sings to María Santísima de las Lágrimas ('Our Lady of Tears'). Baeza, Holy Wednesday evening 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gjQZ9Oby7o>.

that Vallejo frequently collaborated with the lyricist Emilio Mezquita, yet this collaboration was restricted to songs belonging to other *palos*. As far as the *saeta* is concerned, Vallejo sang his own texts only, refusing the verses of other authors. Urbano (1982) edited a few selected lyrics texts written by this singer. During the second half of the 20th century, Antonio Mairena (1909–1983) and Alfredo Arrebola (1935–) stood out for their multifaceted approach to flamenco in the capacity of singers, songwriters and researchers; both of them wrote very intense *saeta* texts (cf. Rincón 1984; Arrebola 1995: 137–149).

(2) Canonical poets who write *saetas* to be performed by flamenco singers. Many poets specialize in writing *saeta* lyrics, sometimes compiled in the form of a book. This kind of poetic collection has its own technical term – *saetario*, and it constitutes a specific sub-genre of current Andalusian literature. By way of illustration, we can mention García Solano (1990), whose work directly aligns with the rich set of traditional *saetas* from Marchena.

(3) Canonical poets who do not write *saetas* as such, but write poems inspired by the religious, poetic or emotional feelings that this kind of flamenco song produces. The number of authors that could be named here is huge, including, for instance, Manuel Machado (1874–1947), Concha Lagos (1909–2007), José Manuel Caballero Bonald (1926–2021), etc. (cf. Urbano 1976: 287–303).

Within this latter group, two outstanding writers deserve particular notice: Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) and Antonio Machado (1875–1939). The former paid attention to the flamenco *saeta* in *Poema del cante jondo* (“Poem of the deep song”). Although it was published as a book only in 1931, it was finished ten years earlier and had a wide manuscript circulation. It is divided into eight sections, each of them dedicated to a flamenco modality (*palo*). The third section, comprising eight poems, specifically deals with the *saeta* and the emotional context of Holy Week celebrations in Seville (cf. García Lorca 1967[1921]: 35–45). In addition, this constitutes evidence that, at that moment, the *saeta* was already perceived as a true variety of the so-called *cante jondo*, the core of flamenco singing. For his part, Antonio Machado (1989[1914])⁴² is the author of the poem “*La saeta*”, a masterpiece which was originally published in the magazine *Nuevo Mundo* and later included in the first edition of his *Poesías completas* (“Complete poems”) in 1917 (cf. Macri 1989: 61, 261). Nowadays, this poem is widely known thanks to Joan Manuel Serrat’s sung version (1969).⁴³

⁴² Machado is one of the best Spanish poets of all time; however, unlike Federico García Lorca, he is insufficiently known outside the Spanish-speaking countries. He was the brother of Manuel Machado, also a very talented poet, and son of Demófilo (pseudonym of Antonio Machado y Álvarez), one of the founders of flamencology.

⁴³ As a tribute to Antonio Machado, the Catalan singer-songwriter Joan Manuel Serrat

The starting point is a four-verse folk *saeta* ([2]) that Machado inserted as a preamble for his poem ([3]) which contains four stanzas (16 verses in total). Initially, the poet exalts the *saeta* as a way to express profound compassion for Christ's suffering, as a sign of the religious faith of his people and a true mark of Andalusian identity. Nevertheless, the last stanza builds on such an attitude and introduces a new, surprising approach: the poet dissociates himself from all that because he does not want to sing to the dying Christ, but to the risen Christ "who walked over the sea"; thus, he proclaims a Christianity based on life, not death:

[2] *¿Quién me presta una escalera, / para subir al madero, / para quitarle los clavos / a Jesús el Nazareno?* [Who will fetch me a ladder / so that I can climb that log / and remove the nails / from Jesus the Nazarene] Folk *saeta*

[3] *¡Oh, la saeta, el cantar al Cristo de los gitanos, / siempre con sangre en las manos / siempre por desenclavar! / ¡Cantar del pueblo andaluz, / que todas las primaveras / anda pidiendo escaleras / para subir a la Cruz! / ¡Cantar de la tierra mía / que echa flores / al Jesús de la agonía, / y es la fe de mis mayores! / ¡Oh, no eres tú mi cantar! / ¡No puedo cantar, ni quiero / a ese Jesús del madero, / sino al que anduvo en el mar!* [Oh, *saeta*! The chant to the Christ of the Gypsies,⁴⁴ / [who is] with hands always covered in blood / [who is] always to be unnailed! / The chant of the Andalusian people / who every spring / go entreating the ladder /to climb up the Cross! / The chant of my land, / that tosses flowers / at Jesus in agony / and that is the faith of my ancestors! / It is not You whom I praise in my chant! / [yet] I am neither able to nor willing, to sing / to the Jesus of the log / but [to praise] the Jesus who walked on the sea]

In summary, thanks to artists and poets such as García Lorca, Machado and Serrat, among others, the fame of the *saeta* as a religious modality of flamenco singing has spread beyond the borders of Andalusia.

As evident from the exposition in this section, the *saeta* is a multidimensional (although we refrain from calling it multimodal) event, spanning and crisscrossing

published a studio album setting some of his poems to music in 1969. The sixth track, corresponding to "La saeta", was selected as the B-side of a promotional single. The memorable success of this song exceeded all expectations and, over the years, it has become one of the landmarks of modern Spanish culture (cf. Calvo 1992: 964).

⁴⁴ It is worth noting that, at least in Andalusia, that is, the Spanish region which is analysed here, the term '*gitano*' ('Gypsy') has no negative connotations and is the preferred option even by the members of the community. The term '*romani*' ('Romani', 'Roma') is very formal and unusual. Hence, opting for a symmetrical and faithful translation, we chose the term 'Gypsy' as best reflecting the original pragmatic context. Similar *caveat* is in order regarding the caption under Fig. 2. The Spanish denomination of this image is '*Cristo de los Gitanos*', not '*Cristo de los Romanies*', thus, 'Christ of the Gypsies' is the best translation.

societal issues (*hermandades* – small group dynamics), musical, poetic as well as hieratic layers of human experience. Hence, semiotic analysis seems the most suited and powerful framework to approach such an object. As an illustration of its sophisticated artistic and hieratic aspects, the photos in Fig. 2 show sample documentation of the processions as they took place in Andalusia in the mid-20th century.

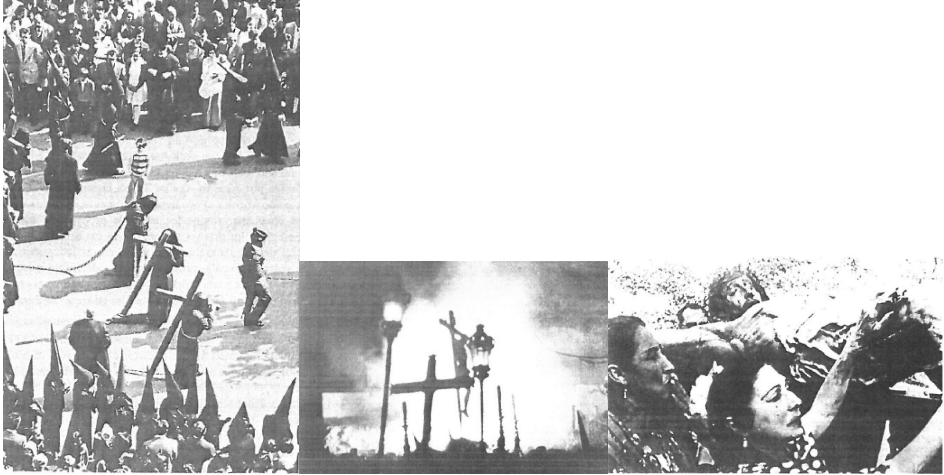


Figure 2. Pictures of Holy Week processions in the mid-20th century. Left: penitents in a procession in Jaén, published by Buendía (1982: 14). Centre: procession of the Christ of Consolation (*Cristo del Consuelo*), known as the ‘Christ of the Gypsies’, by the light of bonfires in the Sacromonte district of Granada (Calvo 1992: 962). Right: Christ of Consolation carried by Roma women (Calvo 1992: 966). Courtesy of the *Diputación Provincial de Jaén* (Jaén Provincial Council).

4. Vectorial anchorage of the *saeta*, or the spatialization of epistemic positioning

Directionality is implicated in both the verbal and the visual discourse of the *saeta*. First and foremost, the strong indexicality aspect of the *saeta* already emerges in the name itself. As etymologically indicated in the previous section, ‘*saeta*’ basically means ‘arrow’. An arrow is, after all, a canonical index and a vector, implying a subjective act of pointing out from a deictic centre, and in one of the early stages of its development, the *saeta* was given the additional qualification *saeta penetrante* – Spanish for ‘piercing arrow’. Aguilar’s 1928 collection of *saetas* opens with such a rhetorical affirmation:

Who gave the name ‘saeta’ to those couplets that the people sing to Christ, seeing him in agony? No other word would be more appropriate to describe those verses that are nothing but arrows, shot straight into the heart of the crowd to open wide and deep the wounds of emotion and devotion. With all their sweet ingenuity, with all their rustic simplicity, these verses are perhaps the richest treasure that religious poetry possesses in Spain. (Aguilar 1928: vi; our translation [V. S.-G., M. H.-G.]

It has also been mentioned that *saetas* were referred to as “voices of pain born for the enormity of sins committed”, according to Ezcaray’s book title from 1691. Let us also remember that, in general, those first *saetas* were short prayers the main theme of which was penance for sins and divine judgment after death. This explains, in a way, why they were given the name ‘arrows’: these prayers were to be like arrows or darts pointing cogently towards the sinner’s heart, piercing that heart to make them repent and change their ways. We can thus definitely classify them as a discursive agitation strategy. This is why the directionality we are studying can be called *teleological*: the dominant directionality emerging at this point is of course the vector *towards* the sinner’s emotions.

While the aspect of dynamics and movement seems quite cogent, anchoring a *saeta* in the kernel of the sinner’s selfhood, a specific semiotic positioning within the semiosphere (and the implicated sacrosphere) remains to be established. In fact, the mapping of the communicative exchange implies several loops of directionality and temporal deixis. In trying to disentangle the web of saliency asymmetries formalized here as a vectorial aspect, let us recall the form of the communicative situation in question.

A *saetero* (i.e. a *cantaor* who usually sings flamenco *saetas*; feminine form: *saetera*) is a solo performer who remains on the balcony⁴⁵ and awaits the arrival of a hieratic image on the dais. Upon seeing this hieratic image, s/he starts performing a *saeta*. While every prayer is undoubtedly a dialogue on some level, nonetheless, here we are dealing with a spatialized, deferred dialogue, that is, the communicative event itself is given a three-dimensional positioning by specific discursive and pragmatic measures. The procession is an integral part of the *saeta* itself – the chant of the flamenco *saeta* does not exist beyond the communicative event of the procession.⁴⁶ Hence, in contrast to chants performed, for example, jointly by

⁴⁵ Sometimes paid, or at least invited, by the owner of the house. He or she can also be paid by the confraternity (*hermandad* or *cofradía*) whose procession is taking place at that moment.

⁴⁶ We can even speak of cases of inability to reproduce the *saeta* without direct contact with the hieratic image. Gómez-García Plata (2004: 46) mentions a situation when she was interviewing a *saetero* and asked him to perform a *saeta* just for her, for scholarly documentation. The *saetero* was unable to comply, saying that he was unable to chant a *saeta* without the presence of a hieratic image.

the congregation in church during Lent (as in Poland), there is an immanent and immediate communicative exchange between multiple subjects distributed within the semiosphere of the event.



Figure 3. Left: Bienvenida León, nicknamed *Bienve*, sings a *saeta* to the *Santo Cristo de la Expiración* ('Holy Christ of the Expiration'), a 17th-century image of Christ expiring on the Cross. Baeza, Holy Friday evening, 2018.⁴⁷ Photo courtesy of Antonio Jesús García. The hieratic image is not visible here, except some candles of the candelabra that illuminate it in the foreground. Right: singer known by the nickname *Borreguito* ('Little Lamb')⁴⁸ is singing a *saeta* in front of a hieratic image of the *Santo Cristo de la Humildad* ('Holy Christ of the Humility'), a 16th-century *Ecce Homo*. Baeza (Province of Jaén, northeast Andalusia), Holy Thursday afternoon, 2018. Photo courtesy of Rafael Alarcón. The platform is visible, passing under the balcony.

⁴⁷ This is an interesting image because the singer wears the habit of this brotherhood, with the obvious exception of the conical headwear used to cover the face. On her chest we can see both the medal and badge of the brotherhood, which corresponds to the Mercedarian badge (this is because this confraternity was founded in a monastery of friars of the Order of Mercy in 1603). In sum, all this means that this woman participated in the procession as a *penitent*. She abandoned it momentarily in order to sing the *saeta* on a balcony. After that, she probably returned to her place in the procession. This is an uncommon but permitted situation, at least in some brotherhoods. Anyway, it is worth noting that she would not have performed both functions (*penitent* and *singer*) *simultaneously*. For members of the confraternity, singing a flamenco *saeta* from inside the procession is not allowed at all.

⁴⁸ As we have mentioned earlier (cf. n. 35), many flamenco performers are normally known by a nickname. In many cases like this, their official names remain private.

In specifying the semiotic grid of the communicative act, we need to take into account two criteria: (1) the participants and (2) the types of the semiosphere – the unmarked one (semiosphere – the profane) and the marked one (the sacrosphere). The latter criterion is one of the reasons why it is Lotman's concept of the semiosphere that serves our analysis best, rather than Chilton's DST (e.g. Chilton 2010; Evans, Chilton 2010) or a simple analysis in terms of the Bühlerian-Jakobsonian communication model. The semiosphere, as a system of nested spheres, allows us to defer that communicative act, taking into account the sacrosphere as a key vantage point. In compliance with the overall objective, we focus in this report only on selected patterns, positioning the sender in the polarized semiosphere (in relation to the sacrosphere). This can help specify the asymmetries within the involved nested web of spheres. More refined discursive and functional mappings are left for follow-up reports.

Non-textual pragmatic (physical) spatiality is implied by:

- (1) introducing the material, moving a hieratic image inside the communication act;
- (2) moving the sender of the message beyond the procession (indirect recipients) and outside the platform with a hieratic image (direct recipient of the message)/addressee. We refer to this layer of the analysed subject matter as [saeta]₁. Direct participants of the [saeta]₁ (disregarding the preparatory phases of the event) are:
 - the crowd (people watching the procession)/watching the performance in real time;
 - the procession: *costaleros* (people carrying the platform);⁴⁹
 - penitents (people preceding or immediately following the platform as procession members, normally wearing the official habit of the confraternity);
 - a *saetero* placed on the balcony above the procession with the platform;
 - hieratic objects (hieratic image).

We propose to visualize the level of the immediate experience of the performance ([saeta]₁) analytically as shown in Fig. 4:

⁴⁹ We use here '*costalero*' as a common label. In fact, the procedure of carrying the platform varies from one location to another, receiving different technical denominations: *andas*, *trabajaderas*, etc. The terms for the people carrying it vary, too. The first author [V. S.-G.] has had the honour of participating in two particular processions, in one as a *costalero* and in the other as a penitent.

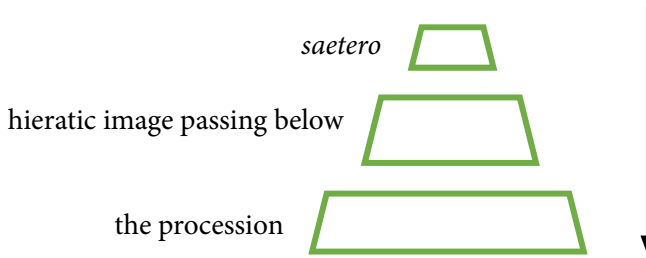


Figure 4. The stratification within the semiosphere of the [saeta]₁ level.

The graphic interpretation in Fig. 4 is to be read as follows: the *saetero* is physically the most elevated (uppermost) element of that communicative act and the one highest above the procession and the hieratic image. The point of location represents the upper bounds of the semiosphere. This location is the most precise and salient. The intermediate part of the pyramid is the passing hieratic image, located below the *saetero*, but high above the procession and spectators of the event. The most distributed, bottommost part, is the procession, with the carriers, penitents and spectators, which delimit the lowermost layer of the semiosphere.

Passing on from the level of immediate physical bearings, let us now enumerate the main categories of participants based on discursive exchange. The collected database shows the following types of senders (the vector's initial point)⁵⁰ seen as participants within the phenomenologically embodied space. Selected *saetas* from the database are given for illustrative purposes as [4–8].⁵¹ This analytical level is denoted as a phenomenological entity [saeta]₂:

Hieratic senders:

A hieratic voice of Mary [words can be consistent with the Gospel, but added elements predominate]:

[4] ¡Oh ingrata muerte atrevida! / Me dejas sin mi Hijo amado / ¡Ay qué sola me he quedado, / sin el Hijo de mi vida! [Oh ungrateful daring death! / You are leaving me without my beloved Son ... / How alone have I remained, / without the Son of my life!]

⁵⁰ At this stage of the research, we opted for a qualitative analytical path for the simple reason that, even if we included all the *saetas* without exception from Aguilar's book in a specific range – the *saetas* were grouped thematically already, from the last supper to the grave – each set consisted of a number of variative repetitions.

⁵¹ We have adapted the Spanish text to the current prescriptive orthography.

[5] *En el cristal de alabastro / dibujaba tu hermosura. / Ahora te veo en mis brazos / hecho quinientos pedazos / para darte sepultura.* [On the alabaster crystal / your beauty I was drawing / now I see you in my arms / torn into five hundred bits, / to bury you.]

[6] *¡Oh cadáve[r] ensangrentado!, / ¡oh el Hijo de mis entrañas!, / ¡oh qué muerte tan extraña / sufriste por el pecado!* [Oh bloody corpse / oh the Son of my entrails / oh what a strange death / you suffered for sin!]

A hieratic voice of Jesus the Nazarene:

[7] *En esta cruz enclavado, / Madre, ya voy a morir / de todos desamparado / por hacer al hombre feliz.* [To this cross nailed, / Mother, I am dying / deserted by everyone / for making man happy.]

[8] *Hoy te verás, buen ladrón, / conmigo en El Paraíso / ten paciencia / pues me pediste perdón / confesaste sin temor / mi Inocencia.* [Today you will see yourself, you good thief / with me in Paradise / be patient / for you asked me for forgiveness, / you confessed without fear / my innocence.]

Non-hieratic senders: direct participants of the Passion events:

Apostrophes to Virgin Mary:

[9] *Vas, Madre, caminando / al punto frío y solitario / donde la Muerte imperiosa / en la cumbre del Calvario / se levanta tenebrosa.* [You are, Mother, walking on foot / to the cold and lonely place / where the Imperious Death / at the summit of Calvary / rises darkly.]

[10] *¿Dónde vas, Madre y Señora, / con tan doloroso llanto? Que ya se acerca la hora / que tu hijo sacrosanto / expire y te quedes sola.* [Where are you going to, Mother and Lady, / with such painful crying? The time is approaching / that your sacrosanct son / expires and you are left alone.]

Double epistemic mapping: a participant in passion events, and empowering with hindsight a contemporary sinner:

[11] *El puñal que guarda tu pecho / te lo han clavado los hombres / y tú lloras y tú ruegas / por todos los pecadores.* [The dagger that is stuck in your chest / it is people who stuck it into you / and you cry and pray / for all sinners.]

Apostrophes to Jesus the Nazarene: (single positioning):

[12] *¡Señor, acordaos de mí! / –pronunciaba el buen ladrón / arrepentido–. / Hoy confieso desde aquí / de que vais a redimir / al desvalido.* [My Lord, bear me in mind! / Thus spoke the good thief / repenting. / Today I confess from here / that you are going to redeem / the helpless.]

[13] *Con cuerdas atirantaban / tus brazos descoyuntados / sobre la cruz / y con clavos traspasaban / tus manos y pies sagrados / ¡Oh buen Jesús!* [With ropes they were pulling / your arms out of joints / on the cross / and with nails they were piercing / your hands and sacred feet / Oh my good Jesus!]

Double positioning:

[14] *Yo, Señor, puse en tus hombros / la cruz con que vas cargado. / Mucho pesa, Jesús mío, / la labré con mis pecados.* [It was me, my Lord, who put on your shoulders / the cross which you are carrying / much that it weighs, my Jesus / I carved it with my sins.]

[15] *Pecador, mira a Jesús / con la cruz que le has cargado, / que te dice lastimado: / “Tus pecados son mi cruz”.* [Sinner, look at Jesus / with the cross that you have burdened Him with / who is saying to you, castigated: / “Your sins are my cross.”]

Subject [Sub-P] to the sinner in the presence of a hieratic entity:

[16] *¡Oh, cadáver misterioso! / En ese leño enclavado / mira, pecado’ horroroso / cual han puesto tus pecados / a un Dios todopoderoso.* [Oh, mysterious corpse! / To that log nailed down / look, you dreadful sinner / which have put your sins / to an almighty God.]

[17] *Mira este cadáver frío / pendiente de ese madero. / Ese del cielo ha venido / a salvar el mundo entero / con la sangre que ha vertido.* [Look at this cold corpse / pending of that log. / That one from Heaven has come / to save the whole world / with the blood that has been shed.]

[18] *.No hay quien me de limosna / para ayudar a enterrar / al Hijo de esta Senora / que se quea desampará / güérfana, viuda y sola?* [Is there no one who would give me alms / to help me bury / the Son of this Lady / who is left homeless / orphan, widow and alone?]

This selection of addresser/recipient patterns shows some peculiarities. Sometimes the ‘sinner’ merges with the subject, sometimes he is the recipient. The exchanges within the sacrosphere thus have an asymmetrical and vectorial relation to the sinner. While we can undeniably specify that *saetas* of the types 4–8 reflect the standpoint of a hieratic figure, specifying the sender in the remaining examples is more difficult. First of all, texts 4–8 are not direct quotes from the Gospel, although they definitely remain within Christianity’s hermeneutic horizon. They can at best be described as the voice of a hieratic proxy, although determining whether this is religious language or not falls beyond the present thematic scope.

5. Epistemic transfer within the semiosphere

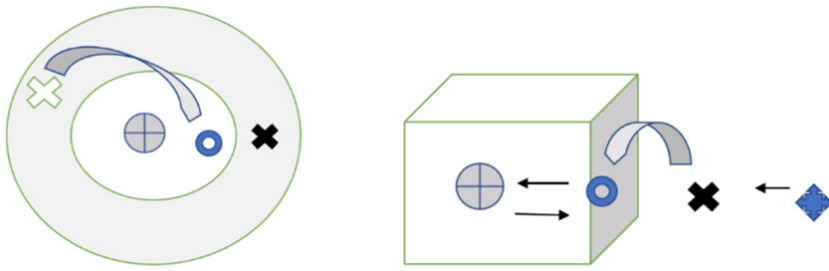
The key to establishing a more fine-grained actantial aspect within the sacrosphere can be found in the wording of this *saeta*:

[19]

/1/- <i>de mi boca a tu costado</i> /2/- <i>va volando una saeta;</i> /3/- <i>de tu costado a mi alma</i> /4/- <i>sangre de perdón me llega.</i>	From my mouth towards your side / a <i>saeta</i> comes flying / from your side to my soul / blood of forgiveness reaches me.
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1. *Saetero* as the sender → 2. The message reaches the hieratic figure → 3. The message causes a sacred exchange → brings in a gift / elicits that gift – the blood of forgiveness.
 4. The gift of forgiveness of sins reaches the sinner / through the *saeta* performance.

Through the initial effort – the act of sending a hieratic text – there occurs a performative transformation. Performative power arises through the spatialization/reciprocation which causes transformation at the level of the selfhood of x (profane subject) [Sub-P], which means inscribing it into the order of grace. A graphic visualization of the processes active are shown in Fig. 5, left and right.



⊕ – Hieratic image; ⌘ – [saeta]₁ level: a saetero as a performer (profane level), phase 1; ● – [saeta]₂ level: saetero as a vacuous interlocutor [VI], ‘a hieratic proxy’; ✕ – a profane subject in the saeta semiosphere (outside the sacrosphere): a sinner, receiving a transformation, parallel positioning; ◆ – addressor outside the epistemological horizon of [saeta]₂; the addressor of [saeta]₁; circled arrows – spreading relations.

Figure 5. Left: mapping of the *saetero* (skeletal) position of [saeta]₁ onto the level of [saeta]₂ – vacuous interlocutor (a hieratic proxy). Right: an interpretation of the *saeta* communicative event, taking into consideration the embedded layering of the semiosphere. The box denotes the part experienced as the sacrosphere. Notations: Outer grey circle – semiosphere. Inner white circle – sacrosphere embedded within a particular semiosphere.

The left-hand part of Fig. 5 shows the first stage of mapping the skeletal position of the performer of [saeta]₁ onto the level of [saeta]₂, who thus becomes a vacuous interlocutor (a hieratic proxy). A *saetero* [S] – the sender of the [saeta]₁ of the profane space of the semiosphere – relocates on the [saeta]₂ level as a hieratic proxy [VI]. Using the terminology of Piatigorsky and Zilberman (1976), this proxy is non-exponential but, refining their analysis, we can call it a ‘floating entity’, that is, it is not specifically anchored to any predetermined epistemic stance within the communicative exchange at stake. That is why, as a skeletal position within the sacrosphere, [VI] can serve as a proxy for a hieratic image, for a spectator at the scene of the Passion as it took place 2000 years ago and, at the same time, it can relate back to the epistemic position of a contemporary sinner. In the latter case, there occurs an epistemic fusion (double epistemic positioning), shown in Fig. 5 on the right. Through the proxy, the [Sub-P] can also relate to the sacrosphere, as a secondary fusion – hence [S x] – the *saetero* becomes a vacuous interlocutor which, as a type of epistemic stance, can spread onto the skeletal position created within the sacrosphere of a [Sub-P]. Then, a discursive exchange with a hieratic image can be effectuated.

The crucial thing to bear in mind is that the first step, that is, the relation located in the sacrosphere as [VI], is not an indispensable act as to initiating a

discourse of sacred exchange. The best example within the same thematic realm is, for example, Polish Lenten Songs (Bitter Sorrows), performed during a special Lenten ministration in church by a priest and a congregation.⁵² What emerges at this point is rather a reinforcement of the vectorial aspect of the *saeta* exchange through the intermediation of a vacuous interlocutor in comparison to similar chants performed by a congregation in church, rather than a qualitative difference.

If Fig. 5 (right) was three-dimensional, then the profane subject [x] would be positioned parallel with the [VI], and the exact boundary of the sacrosphere would run between the two. This is how there are two parallel epistemic attitudes:⁵³ a participant of a communicative event during the Passion, and a participant of a communicative event at the moment of performing the *saeta*. That is how textual and temporal layering proceeds in our interpretation, facilitated by the specific properties of the semiosphere.

6. Conclusion

In this work we set ourselves several analytical goals. First of all, we systematize referential elaborations in the pragmatic conditioning and changes in the form of the *saeta*, a variety of flamenco singing (in technical terms, a *palo*) with a religious theme, linked to the Passion of Christ, which is sung *a cappella* at a specific moment of the procession. We also propose an exploratory semiotic analysis of the *saeta*, opting for a perspective relying on the structuring of the semiosphere as developed by the TMS, in order to capture the immanent spatiality of *saetas* as communicative acts taking place in the sacrosphere. The power of the semiotic approach enabled us to link together a plethora of aspects of that phenomenon, that go far beyond multimodality, since the relevant dynamic intersections subsume e.g. the sacred *versus* the profane, small group dynamics (phatic communion), indexicality, the sonic dimension in relation to the verbal and the poetic.

In this way, amongst the extracted psychosocial linkages, non-textual spatiality is created by (1) introducing a hieratic image inside the communication act; and (2) bringing the sender of the message beyond the procession (indirect recipients) and outside the platform with a hieratic image (direct recipients of the message),

⁵² The methodical comparative study of the two is underway as one avenue of follow-up research.

⁵³ It should be emphasized that this is a staple strategy of medieval painting, where religious scenes always present hieratic figures of Christianity dressed in the then contemporary attires and are set among *realia* of the time of painting. The canonical teleology of that is assumed to emphasize the immediacy and relevance of the Gospel.

which extends the communicative act to include a new participant. The analysis showed that the sacrosphere, as one of a nested web of spheres, is a polarized phenomenological discursive space: at one pole, at the positive and kernel end, the message is received by the hieratic image; at the other one, which can be called a negative pole, there is a sinner/penitent, impersonated by a procession following the platform.

The subject is always a participant in a communicative situation, having at least one of the following functions:

- an observer in real time;
- an observer in epistemic transfer;
- the sender of a verbal message;
- performs/sings/carries out the actions described in the message/urges others to act (persuasive function).

In particular, we proposed formalizing the regularities encountered using the TMS notion of a vacuous interlocutor, a non-exponential entity at the pragmatic level. At the level of the sacrosphere, this *skeletal position* is filled with a functional sacrosphere [saeta]₂ corresponding to what is performed at the [saeta]₁ level. Once this position is filled through mapping, it becomes a floating segment of the sacrosphere, indicating subjectivization, and can act as a proxy for hieratic senders, for particular figures – participants of the Passion events and even for a [Sub-P] as a participant at the same time of the Passion events and a procession in real time.

We have also shown the vectorial aspect involved at the preliminary level in major exchange types, that is, a vector whose trajectory targets the sinner's selfhood, and vectors aimed at hieratic images. When the vector is targeted directly at the [Sub-P], it is anchored in a hieratic proxy position: the teleology is to move the [Sub-P] directly to the order of grace. When the vector is targeted at a hieratic image, it acts as a prism, spurring a sort of sacred transaction: a vector directed at a hieratic image is meant to trigger a vectorized act of grace, eventually directed towards [Sub-P]. Particularly important are the changes passing into the sacrosphere area (a semiosphere, in its Lotmanian conceptualization, being a nest of overlapping membranes). In our analysis, the category of a hieratic proxy emerges as a floating category, adding markedness and prominence to specific subjects. On a meta-analytical level, the study has shown the immense potential of the concept of the semiosphere, and the possibilities to refine the existing analytic grid to include its subcategory – sacrosphere.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ We would like to thank *Sign System Studies'* anonymous reviewers and editors for their comments, which have greatly improved the final quality of the text. We would like to express

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our gratitude to Rafael Alarcón, Antonio Jesús García, Javier Ruiz Olivera and Paula García Ramírez for letting us include visual material of their authorship in this paper and in the repository. The text is also informed by archival material that was first published in the *Candil* journal (<https://www.dipujaen.es/revistacandil/catalogo>). We are grateful to the *Diputación Provincial de Jaén* (Jaén Provincial Council) for granting us courtesy permission to include their archival material in this article.

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Interlocutores vacuos como apoderados hieráticos en la sacrosfera de la saeta flamenca andaluza

La saeta se identifica actualmente como una modalidad religiosa del cante flamenco, interpretada durante las celebraciones de Semana Santa. El entramado textual de la saeta incluye no solo la melodía, la manera de cantar y los textos verbales, sino también la espacialidad inherente a todo acto comunicativo. Debido a la naturaleza poliédrica de dicho fenómeno cultural, la perspectiva semiótica resulta adecuada para atender “una conexión psicosocial” al hilo de la señalización investigada. En concreto, el análisis aprovechará el concepto de semiosfera formulado por Yuri Lotman, poniendo el foco en su vertiente relativa a la experiencia religiosa, conocida como sacrosfera. Los resultados apuntan a la existencia de una tectónica transaccional y postulan la entidad analítica de un interlocutor vacuo en calidad de apoderado hierático, que tendría el estatuto de posición estructural flotante dentro del nivel de lo que daremos en llamar aquí [saeta]₂.

Tühjad kaaskõnelejad hieraatilisuse esindajatena Andalusia flamenko saeta sakrosfääris

Tänapäeval kutsutakse *saeta*'ks (hsp 'nool') suure nädala tähistamisel esitatavat religioosset flamenkolaulu laadi. *Saeta* tekstikoosse kuuluvad meloodia, esitusviis ja sõnaline tekst ning ka kommunikatiivsele aktile omane ruumilisus. Selle kultuurinähtuse mitmetahulise olemuse tõttu sobib „psühhosotsiaalse ühenduse“ uuritud märgilooma kaudu tabamiseks kõige paremini semiootiline vaatenurk. Analüüs lähtub eelkõige Juri Lotmani semiosfääri mõistest, keskendudes selle religioosse kogemusega seostuvale osale, nimelt sakrosfäärile. Tulemused osutavad transaktsionaalsele tektoonikale ning pakuvad hieraatilisuse esindajana välja tühja kaaskõneleja kui analüütilise suuruse, mis asub muutlikus struktuuralses positsioonis tasandil, mida käesolevas artiklis nimetame [saeta]₂.