



THE PROCLAIMED CITY

The Representation of Seville in the Discourse of the Official Holy Week *Pregón* in the Twenty-First Century

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ABSTRACT

The Official Holy Week pregón of Seville constitutes a key event in the city's cultural and religious projection. This oral discourse not only announces the celebration but also constructs and reconstructs an image of Seville that encompasses urban, historical, social, and devotional dimensions. This article examines how Seville is represented in the pregones of the twenty-first century. To this end, it employs a semi-automated discourse analysis combining quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to identify the principal rhetorical and narrative strategies used by the speakers. The findings show that Seville is not merely presented as the setting for the processions, but rather emerges as the protagonist of the cofrade narrative, personified, endowed with human emotions, and evoked as a mystical and sacred city. The study concludes that the pregón constitutes a space of collective narration in which discourse, tradition, and popular religiosity shape Seville's urban imaginary.

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1. Introduction

Holy Week is one of the most deeply rooted celebrations in the culture and traditions of many Spanish cities (Ramos Ruiz, 2018). This festival is not only a religious manifestation but also a sociocultural event that articulates multiple dimensions of urban identity. Although Holy Week originated in the fourth century (Floristán, 2002), its development took shape especially from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, when episodes from Christ's Passion were staged inside churches (Romero Mensaque & Domínguez León, 2003). In Seville, this process of consolidation was particularly significant. Following the conquest of the city by Ferdinand III in 1248, Seville underwent a profound religious and social reorganisation in which the *hermandades* (religious brotherhoods) played a fundamental role, first in charitable and guild-related contexts and later as penitential corporations (Luque Teruel, 2016). In the mid-fifteenth century, the introduction of public penance decisively transformed the nature of the celebration, giving rise to the first *cofradías* (penitential confraternities), which incorporated the penitential procession into the liturgy, a process that became firmly established in the sixteenth century (Sánchez Herrero, 1995). Since then, Holy Week in Seville has attracted strong popular devotion and has become a major cultural phenomenon which, over the centuries, has consolidated a network of brotherhoods, an exceptionally rich artistic heritage, and a set of rituals that shape urban life and collective identity.

As a result of this historical development, Seville has become an international point of reference for Holy Week. Each spring, the city is transformed into the setting for a large-scale ritual theatre in which faith, the public, and the urban environment converge. The character of a "total social fact", in the Maussian sense, is particularly evident in the Andalusian capital, where Holy Week involves different social sectors, articulates economic and political dimensions, mobilises major artistic expressions, and produces an identity narrative projected both within the community and beyond it (Moreno Navarro & Agudo Torrico, 2012b). Seville recognises and reinvents itself through the festival, dramatising within its urban space a collective discourse in which tradition, modernity, popular religiosity, and symbolic tensions intertwine.

Within this context, the *pregón* (ceremonial Holy Week address) assumes particular prominence. This oral form is one of the oldest modes of communication and was historically used to transmit news and public announcements (Seijas Muñoz, 2006). However, it was from the 1930s onwards that the *pregón* acquired a more intellectual dimension and greater social prestige (Mira Ortiz, 2006). It was during that decade that the first Holy Week *pregones* emerged in Andalusia, including those held in Seville. Over time, the *pregón* has gained religious, social, and cultural relevance within the world of the brotherhoods, and the organisation of such events has increased accordingly. As a result, it has become a major event within *cofrade* culture because of its informative, literary, and symbolic character (Ramos Ruiz, 2024). It has also established itself as an essential vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of this celebration (Ramos Ruiz, 2018). In Seville, the Official Holy Week *pregón* has become an event that transcends the strictly religious sphere and has developed into an act of cultural projection for the city.

Delivered by a wide range of figures, including poets, journalists, politicians, academics, and artists, the official Seville *pregón* constitutes a literary discourse that, year after year, constructs and reconstructs a representation of the city. Through it, not only processional imagery and devotional fervour are evoked, but also historical Seville, its urban landscapes, its neighbourhoods, and its people. Holy Week thus provides an ideal framework for examining how Sevillian identity is articulated in a context shaped by both tradition and modernity. In this sense, the *pregón* becomes a discursive space in which different perspectives on Holy Week are presented and synthesised, offering a narrative that reaffirms the city's identity while projecting it outwards. Like other public discourses, the *pregón* not only conveys information but also configures and reflects reality, shaping the way citizens perceive and understand their surroundings (Arévalo et al., 2018). In this respect, the words employed by the speakers function as a means of describing and representing lived experience, thereby becoming instruments of social construction (Labbé & Monière, 2008).

Despite its relevance, there are still very few scholarly studies devoted to the analysis of *pregones*. Among the most notable are Mira Ortiz's (2006) work on the *pregones* of Murcia and Lipari's (2014) study of Valladolid. In the Andalusian context, some recent studies have focused on Granada, where Ramos Ruiz (2018, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025b) has examined the history, poetics, and functions of this oratorical form. In the case of Seville, although studies specifically devoted to the Official *pregón* remain scarce, some partial approaches have begun to emerge, focusing on particular dimensions of the discourse, such as the discursive construction of the Virgin of the Macarena (Ramos Ruiz, 2025a), *cofrade* poetry as a stylistic resource (Ramos Ruiz, 2025c), or the identity-based construction of the Triana neighbourhood in Sevillian *pregones* (Ramos Ruiz, 2025d). However, the discursive representation of the city of Seville as a whole has not yet been specifically addressed. This gap remains striking, especially if one considers that, as an international point of reference for this celebration, the Andalusian capital hosts each year a *pregón* with considerable media, social, and cultural impact, one that also plays a decisive role in shaping the city's urban imaginary.

Against this background, the present article aims to analyse the representation of the city of Seville through the discourse of the Official Holy Week *pregón*. To this end, it undertakes a semi-automated discourse analysis of the official Sevillian *pregones* of the twenty-first century in order to identify the rhetorical and narrative strategies used to represent the city. This analysis makes it possible to understand how Sevillian identity is configured within the framework of Holy Week, as well as to explore how this *cofrade* event functions as a platform for reinforcing and disseminating a specific image of the city. More specifically, the study examines how these discourses articulate a narrative in which the religious, artistic, historical, social, and urban dimensions converge, and how that narrative contributes to projecting a particular image of Seville.

The article is structured as follows. First, it presents a theoretical review of the concept and characteristics of the Holy Week *pregón*. It then describes the corpus of selected texts and explains the discourse analysis methodology applied. The results of the research are subsequently presented and discussed. Finally, the conclusions are offered.

2. The Holy Week *pregón*: Definition and Characteristics

The *pregón* constitutes one of the longest-standing discursive traditions in Hispanic culture, with a history that begins in the Middle Ages and extends into the present day, undergoing profound transformations in both form and function (Pérez-Salazar, 2016). In the absence of mass media, the spoken word was the principal means of transmitting beliefs, ideas, and news in a largely illiterate society (Ramos Ruiz, 2018). *Pregones* thus emerged as acts of announcement or public address directed at a social group, composing, in Bajtin's (1990) words, the sound portrait of the crowd. These *pregones* were used in various spheres of society, including politics and commerce, with the purpose of disseminating relevant events or important announcements (Seijas Muñoz, 2006). However, the occupation of *pregonero* was among the least esteemed within the social hierarchy (Domínguez Ortiz, 1990). With modernity, the *pregón* developed into a festive and ceremonial genre (Pérez-Salazar, 2016). Above all, from the 1930s onwards, it acquired a more intellectual dimension and greater social prestige (Mira Ortiz, 2006). Since then, the *pregón* has been associated primarily with the opening of popular celebrations, including patron saint festivities, carnivals, fairs, and Holy Week, and it is typically delivered by figures of cultural, political, or social prominence (Pérez-Salazar, 2016).

The *pregón* has been defined in various ways within the Spanish lexicographical and academic tradition (Alonso Pedraz, 1986; Covarrubias, 1611/2006; Real Academia Española, 2014; Sánchez, 2000). All these definitions emphasise its public and solemn orality, that is, the idea that it consists of a proclamation delivered aloud, in public spaces and before a collective audience, with the aim of ensuring that the information becomes known to all. However, if we focus specifically on the Holy Week *pregón*, the definition that best fits this *cofrade* event is, in our view, the one proposed by Ramos Ruiz (2024), who defines it as follows:

the *pregón* is a solemn speech, generally literary and religious in nature, delivered at a public event before the beginning of Holy Week. Its principal aim is to exalt and disseminate the spiritual, cultural, and artistic significance of this celebration, while also highlighting the value of the confraternities, the sacred images, and the traditions associated with the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The *pregón* is usually entrusted to a prominent figure from the world of the confraternities, whether by virtue of their *cofrade* trajectory, their cultural standing, or their connection to the faith, and it becomes a symbolic act marking the beginning of the preparations associated with Holy Week in a given city. (p. 53)

Moreover, the significance of the Holy Week *pregón* can only be understood from a dual perspective: as an expression of popular religiosity and as an element that shapes collective memory. On the one hand, it forms part of Andalusia's intangible heritage, where orality shares prominence with sacred imagery, music, and processional aesthetics. By condensing poetic language, personal testimony, and ritual evocation, the *pregón* constitutes an essential element of this heritage. On the other hand, it stands as a manifestation of memory, since, through literary devices, the city narrates itself, recalls a shared past, reaffirms collective symbols, and projects horizons for the future. In this sense, it fulfils the function that Moreno Navarro and Agudo Torrico (2012a) attribute to Andalusian cultural expressions that act as markers of identity in which tradition, innovation, and social cohesion converge.

Like any artistic work, the *pregón* unfolds in three stages (Lipari, 2014). The first corresponds to the creative process, in which the speaker writes the text and defines a personal position in relation to the festive event. During this stage, writing not only establishes the speaker's temporal context, reflecting the period in which they live, but also situates them within a broader historical dimension, in which the work acquires lasting significance (Lipari, 2014). Formally, the *pregón* takes shape as a plural text that accommodates different genres, including prose, poetry, and dramatic writing, as well as combinations of these, which gives it considerable expressive richness (Ramos Ruiz, 2022). Thematically, *pregones* announce the confraternities and the processional parades while also exalting the religious and spiritual values associated with Holy Week (Lipari, 2014). Yet beyond this function, these texts often incorporate a strong autobiographical component, including the speaker's personal memories, experience of the city, and lived relationship with popular religiosity. This subjective dimension gives the *pregón* a testimonial quality that reinforces both its authenticity and its closeness to the audience.

The second stage is the public delivery of the *pregón*. At this point, the text comes to life through the speaker's voice and becomes a ritual act. Whether recited or read aloud, oral delivery gives the *pregón* a unique and unrepeatable character, since it is an ephemeral piece marked by the intensity of the live event and by the direct connection with the audience (Lipari, 2014). Although it is generally an individual speech, it may at times be complemented by other resources that enrich the performance, such as live music, lighting effects, audiovisual projections, or sound design, among others (Ramos Ruiz, 2022).

The third stage corresponds to the subsequent publication and circulation of the *pregón*. The printed edition allows the audience to reread the text and engage with it more reflectively, beyond the moment of public oratory. In this way, the impact of the piece is extended and its continuity and circulation over time are ensured (Lipari, 2014). This durability gives the *pregón* considerable value as a historical chronicle, since it serves as a testimony through which one may trace the evolution and transformation of a given Holy Week over time (Ramos Ruiz, 2025a). A balance is thus established between the ephemerality of the live event and the durability of the written word. Within this dialectic, writing seeks to preserve, in a form of semi-eternity, that which, by its oral nature, is fleeting and ephemeral (Ong, 1993).

The *pregón* may therefore be understood as a synthesis of orality and writing, of the spoken and the written word, two elements that are inseparably intertwined. The text acts as a script for what is to be communicated, while oratory, that is, communication with the audience, constitutes the core of the event itself (Ramos Ruiz, 2022). Orality is thus what gives the *pregón* its essential character. Through it, the speaker establishes an immediate and ephemeral connection with the

audience. This gives rise to a space of encounter between speaker and listeners, between the speaker's thought and the expectations of the public (Lipari, 2014). In this way, the *pregón* transcends the framework of a simple literary discourse and becomes a ritual practice laden with shared meanings. It is precisely in that moment of encounter that the *pregón* is fully understood.

The analysis of this duality is enriched when the *pregón* is situated within the broader framework of Andalusian cultural expressions. As Moreno Navarro (2012) argues, such manifestations carry memory and function as markers of identity, since they articulate the anthropocentric, egalitarian, and relativist elements that characterise Andalusian culture. In this context, the *pregón* may be understood as a symbolic space in which shared values are reactivated, while tensions between the local and the universal, and between tradition and modernity, are also expressed. Like processions or flamenco, the *pregón* is not mere folklore, but rather a cultural device that conveys profound meanings related to belonging and identity.

Finally, it should be noted that the *pregón* may also be understood as a narrative expression situated within the sphere of popular religiosity. As a literary and testimonial form of narrative, it shares the fundamental features of these manifestations, particularly the combination of doctrinal elements with cultural and emotional traditions that give the celebration a sense of community (Fernández de Paz, 2000; Moreno Navarro, 2023; Rodríguez Becerra, 2011). In *pregones*, personal memory is thus seen to merge with collective memory in an exercise of identity reaffirmation renewed year after year. In this way, the *pregón* stands at the intersection of art, ritual, and memory, consolidating itself as a distinctive discursive genre that is indispensable for understanding not only Holy Week, but also Andalusian culture as a whole.

3. Corpus and Methodology

To meet the objectives of this study, a purpose-built corpus was compiled consisting of the texts of the Official Holy Week *pregones* of Seville delivered over the last twenty-five years (2000–2025). Although earlier *pregones* have been documented since the late 1930s, the corpus was deliberately restricted to this more recent period in order to allow for a clearer and more systematic observation of contemporary *cofrade* discursive trends. The temporal breadth of the sample provides the study with a diachronic perspective, making it possible to analyse the evolution of discourse over time. It should be noted, however, that there are two exceptions within the period under consideration, namely 2020 and 2021, when the *pregón* was not delivered as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection of the corpus was guided by criteria of representativeness, balance, and suitability to the aims of the research, all of which are regarded as fundamental in the design and evaluation of linguistic corpora (Biber, 1993; Egbert et al., 2022). These principles constitute essential parameters in the construction of any corpus within the social sciences. The final corpus consists of a total of 24 *pregones*, comprising 309,087 words, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Year, name of the official speaker of the Seville Holy Week *pregón*, and word count.

Year	Name and surname of the official Holy Week <i>pregón</i> speaker	Number of words
2000	Joaquín Caro Romero	10,257
2001	Carlos Herrera Crusset	12,210
2002	Francisco J. Ruiz Torrent	10,539
2003	Francisco José Vázquez Perea	11,855
2004	Rafael de Gabriel García	13,848
2005	Antonio Murciano González	9,761
2006	Ignacio Jiménez Sánchez-Dalp	10,652
2007	Enrique Esquivias de la Cruz	10,893
2008	Antonio Burgos Belinchón	12,668

2009	Enrique Henares Ortega	21,319
2010	Antonio García Barbeito	9,618
2011	Fernando M ^a Cano-Romero Méndez	11,589
2012	Ignacio José Pérez Franco	24,104
2013	Francisco Javier Segura Márquez	12,378
2014	Francisco Berjano Arenado	13,771
2015	Lutgardo García Díaz	13,703
2016	Rafael González-Serna Bono	10,104
2017	Alberto García Reyes	12,005
2018	José Ignacio del Rey Tirado	15,608
2019	Rosario Padilla Hoyuela	12,381
2022	Julio Cuesta Domínguez	10,313
2023	Enrique Casellas Rodríguez	10,395
2024	Juan Miguel Vega Leal	14,714
2025	José Joaquín León Morgado	14,402
Total		309,087

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

For the analysis of the *pregones*, this study adopts a methodology previously employed in similar works by Ramos Ruiz (2024, 2025b). This analytical procedure is grounded in the principles of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), as formulated by Partington (2004). This methodological approach enables a dual perspective on discourse analysis, since it integrates both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. In this respect, the combination of Corpus Linguistics and Discourse Analysis techniques (Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013; Taylor & Marchi, 2018) constitutes a particularly valuable resource for researchers, as it makes possible not only the identification and quantification of discursive phenomena, but also the calculation of their absolute and relative frequencies within the corpus. To this must be added the interpretation of the semantic and pragmatic values associated with different linguistic uses (Baker et al., 2008). The study also draws on the combination of two methodological perspectives, namely corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). The former begins from previously defined categories and phenomena, that is, from a deductive approach, whereas the latter remains open to the identification of new patterns and meanings emerging from the textual data of the corpus itself, that is, from an inductive approach (Ramos Ruiz, 2025b). This complementarity of approaches allows for a more detailed and nuanced exploration of the discourse contained in Seville's Holy Week *pregones*.

The analysis was carried out using Sketch Engine® (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), one of the leading tools in Corpus Linguistics. This software made it possible to determine accurately the frequency of the word "Seville" within the corpus. In addition, the Word Sketch function allowed for the semi-automated retrieval of the co-occurrences associated with the term "Seville" in the texts under study. These data provided an accurate and contextualised view of how this word is used in the discourse of the *pregones*, thereby making it possible to analyse the key linguistic and semantic patterns underlying the representation of the city in these texts. This detailed analysis made it possible to identify not only the frequency with which "Seville" appears, but also the most recurrent and significant discursive associations linked to the term. This, in turn, has contributed to a richer understanding of *cofrade* discourse and of its relationship to the city's cultural and religious identity. The same analytical procedure was also applied to other urban elements of particular relevance during Holy Week and therefore reflected in the text of the *pregones*, such as the Cathedral, the Giralda, and the Plaza de la Campana. Finally, the diachronic dimension of the study was ensured through the application of the model of "chronological textual series" formulated by Salem (1988).

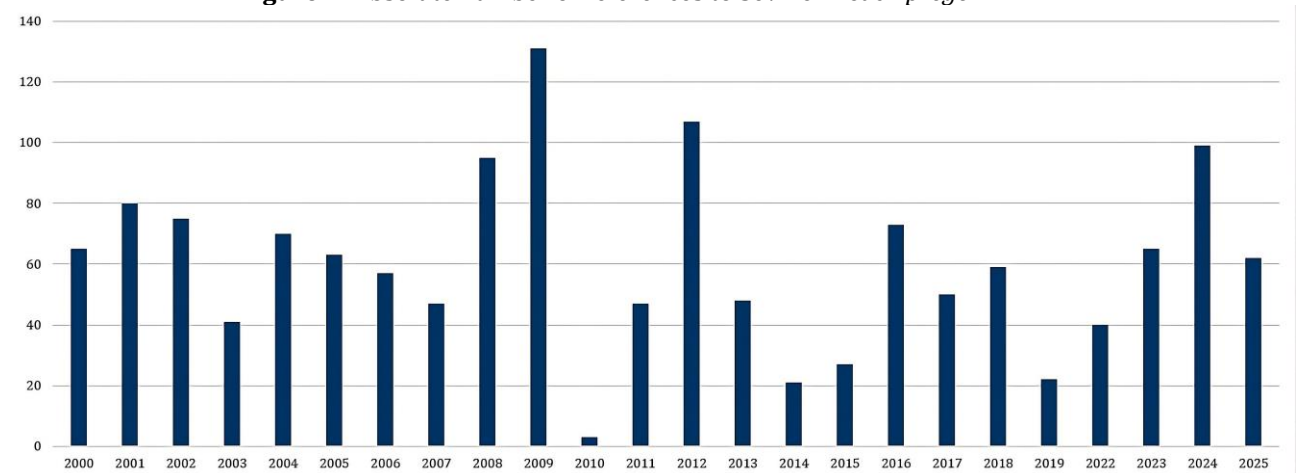
4. Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis of the representation of the city of Seville in the discourse of the Official Holy Week *pregón* during the twenty-first century are presented below. The discussion of these findings is divided into two parts. First, the quantitative data are examined. Second, the qualitative results are addressed, offering a more detailed interpretation of the study.

4.1. Quantitative Results

To begin with, it should be noted that references to Seville amount to a total of 1,446 occurrences in the texts analysed. This figure is relatively high when several factors are taken into account. The first is the origin of the *pregoneros*. Most of the speakers are natives of Seville or, if not, have spent a substantial part of their lives in the Andalusian city, participating very actively in its civic life and, in particular, in the activities of its brotherhoods and confraternities. It is also important to bear in mind that Seville is the setting in which the Holy Week celebrated and exalted by these speakers takes place. For this reason, it is hardly surprising that the word “Seville” occupies such a central position in the *pregones*, since it functions not only as a key axis of *cofrade* narrative, but also as a recurrent and essential element in the discursive construction of these oratorical texts. Moreover, as will be shown later in the qualitative section, the prominence of Seville in the *pregones* goes beyond mere urban or geographical reference, becoming instead a symbol of *cofrade* and religious identity. As can be seen in Figure 1, the study incorporates a diachronic perspective, which makes it possible to trace the evolution of references to Seville across the *pregones* delivered so far in the present century.

Figure 1. Absolute number of references to Seville in each *pregón*.



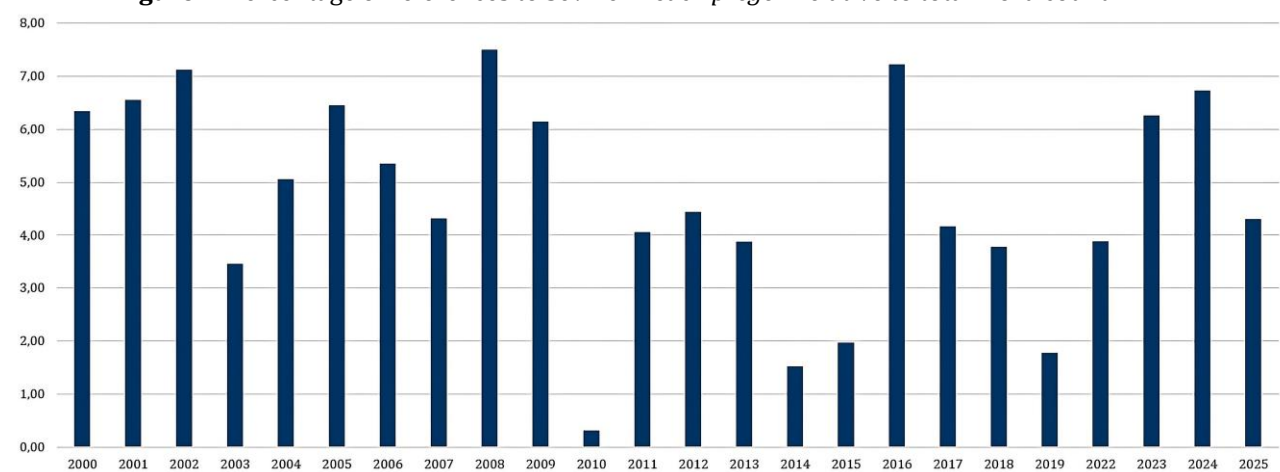
Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

As shown in Figure 1, the presence of the word “Seville” in the *pregones* remains constant from one edition to the next, although clear differences can be observed in the ways in which individual speakers refer to the city in their texts. The *pregón* containing the highest number of references to Seville is that delivered by Enrique Henares Ortega (2009), in which the city is mentioned 131 times, followed by the address by Fernando M^a Cano-Romero Méndez (2011), with 107 occurrences. These are the only two texts to exceed one hundred references. They are followed by the *pregones* of Juan Miguel Vega Leal (2024) and Antonio Burgos Belinchón (2008), with 99 and 95 references respectively. By contrast, one text stands out for the particularly low number of direct references to the city. This is the case of Antonio García Barbeito’s *pregón* (2010), in which the word “Seville” appears only three times. It is followed by the addresses of Francisco Berjano Arenado (2014), Rosario Padilla Hoyuela (2019), and Lutgardo García Díaz (2015), none of which exceeds 30 references. This variability reflects not only the stylistic particularities of each *pregonero*, but also the different ways in which the city is placed at the centre of the narrative. The fact that almost all the texts contain several dozen references shows the extent to which the

pregón is conceived as an emphatically Sevillian discourse, in which the city becomes not merely a setting, but the true protagonist.

However, if we calculate the proportion of occurrences of the word “Seville” in relation to the total number of words in each *pregón*, we obtain a relative frequency that allows us to qualify the results derived from the absolute frequencies. Whereas the latter reflect expressive intensity in numerical terms, the former offer a perspective more closely adjusted to the overall length of each speech. This makes it possible to assess more precisely the symbolic and thematic weight attributed to the city in each text, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Percentage of references to Seville in each *pregón* relative to total word count.



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

As Figure 2 shows, the analysis of the relative frequency of the word “Seville” in the *pregones* reveals notable changes in comparison with the absolute figures discussed above. Broadly speaking, the first decade of the twenty-first century shows a higher percentage of references to the city than the years that follow. In this case, Antonio Burgos Belinchón’s *pregón* (2008) ranks first, with 7.5% of its total word count corresponding to references to Seville, followed by Rafael González-Serna Bono (2016) with 7.22% and Francisco J. Ruiz Torrent (2002) with 7.12%. At the other end of the scale, Antonio García Barbeito’s text (2010) once again occupies the lowest position, with just 0.31%. It is followed by the *pregones* of Francisco Berjano Arenado (2014), Rosario Padilla Hoyuela (2019), and Lutgardo García Díaz (2015), none of which exceeds 2%. It is noteworthy that these same texts also occupy the lowest positions in absolute terms.

This contrast reveals that not all *pregones* assign the city the same degree of prominence in relation to the length of the text. In some speeches, the emphasis on Seville is constant and recurrent, occupying a central position within the speaker’s narrative, whereas in others it is more muted, probably in order to accommodate other thematic dimensions. Taken together, these quantitative data suggest that although the city is always an unavoidable point of reference, the way in which it is integrated into the discourse varies according to the sensibility, style, and communicative intention of each speaker.

4.2. Qualitative Results

Following the quantitative analysis, the qualitative findings are presented below. This stage of the study has shown that the discursive representation of Seville extends far beyond mere geographical reference. The city appears invested with multiple meanings, becoming an active subject within the Passion narrative and acquiring a strong symbolic and spiritual charge. The word “Seville”, frequently repeated throughout the texts, functions as a semantic and rhetorical axis around which different imaginaries of the city’s identity are articulated. Through anaphoric repetition, bodily metaphors, and parallel structures, the *pregoneros* project onto the city a set of attributes that condense the religious, the historical, and the emotional.

One fundamental feature is the tendency to personify Seville as the subject of the Passion drama. In the most intense passages, the city transcends its role as a mere setting and assumes that of an evangelical character. Thus, Herrera Crusset (2001) states:

Cae Dios tres veces y otras tantas le levanta Sevilla. Pierde Dios sus vestiduras y Sevilla le arropa desde Molviedro. Ora Dios sus penas en San Jacinto y Sevilla le acompaña en su inmensa soledad. Muere el Dios de Ortega Brú en Santa Marta y toda Sevilla le traslada al Sepulcro [God falls three times, and three times Seville lifts Him up. God loses His garments, and Seville clothes Him from Molviedro. God prays through His sorrows in San Jacinto, and Seville accompanies Him in His immense solitude. The God of Ortega Brú dies in Santa Marta, and all Seville carries Him to the Sepulchre]. (p. 26)

The parallel and repetitive structure “Dios... Sevilla...” [“God... Seville...”] reveals a clear pattern whereby the city is identified as a collective Simon of Cyrene, a community that sustains and accompanies the Redeemer. This rhetorical operation confers a sacred protagonism upon Seville, turning it into an indispensable actor in the Passion. This identification is made even more explicit in another passage: “Sevilla es Nicodemo, y José de Arimatea ante la Quinta Angustia de su madre, María Santísima. Y Sevilla es quien resucita con él cuando con la Aurora primera del domingo recibe a un Dios victorioso sobre la muerte y el descreimiento” [“Seville is Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea before the Fifth Sorrow of His mother, the Most Holy Mary. And Seville is the one who rises with Him when, with the first dawn of Sunday, it receives a God victorious over death and disbelief”] (Herrera Crusset, 2001, p. 26). The total metaphor “Sevilla es...” [“Seville is...”] collapses the distance between the biblical characters and the people of Seville, presenting the city as the heir to, and continuator of, sacred history. In this way, the discursive construction reinforces Seville’s religious legitimacy: the city does not merely observe from the outside, but also acts, suffers, and even rises with Christ.

In other cases, the personification of the city does not seek to equate Seville with a biblical character, but rather attributes to it human qualities that turn it into another spectator of the Passion narrative, endowed with a capacity for emotion and feeling comparable to that of any ordinary *cofrade*. This is how Ignacio José Pérez Franco (2012) expresses it: Cuánto llora, Sevilla el Jueves Santo / en el Valle de tu pena enamorada [How Seville weeps on Holy Thursday / in the valley of your love-stricken sorrow] (p. 53). Along the same lines, Ignacio Jiménez Sánchez-Dalp (2006) intensifies the poetic device when he proclaims: “Todo era llanto en tu Valle, / llanto en la torre y la ojiva / porque al sentir en tus sienes / el fuego de las espinas, / cinco gotas de rocío / rodaron por tus mejillas / y al verte llorar, Señor, / ¡lloraba de amor Sevilla!” [“All was weeping in your Valley, / weeping in the tower and the ogive, / because, on sensing upon your temples / the burning of the thorns, / five drops of dew / rolled down your cheeks, / and on seeing you weep, Lord, / Seville wept out of love”] (p. 31). In both cases, Seville is presented as a symbolic representation of the devotees who inhabit it, endowed with the ability to weep and tremble, and transformed into an amplified reflection of the intimate sorrow experienced by the anonymous *cofrade*. This line of representation continues in other passages in which Seville once again acquires these human traits, as in the following example: “Y, aunque sepa a confitura / tu llanto por calle Feria, / Sevilla se puso seria / para llamarte Amargura” [“And although your weeping along Calle Feria tastes of sweetness, / Seville grew solemn / in order to call you Amargura”] (García Díaz, 2015, p. 23). The colloquial turn “se puso seria” [“grew solemn”] suggests the city’s capacity to respond to the character of each penitential image, modulating its expression and adopting the gravity or jubilation appropriate to each moment.

At the same time, another representation emerges, one that portrays Seville as an eternal and mystical city, one that dies and is reborn in an annual cycle inseparable from Holy Week. One *pregonero* states: “Sevilla que muere y vuelve a nacer cada año, como un sueño de una Noche de Primavera. Sevilla Eterna, Sevilla, siempre Sevilla, ciudad que cautivas, ciudad cautivada, ciudad que maltratas, ciudad maltratada, así te querremos siempre, Sevilla soñada” [“Seville, which dies and is reborn each year, like a dream on a Spring Night. Eternal Seville, Seville, always Seville, city that captivates, captivated city, city that wounds, wounded city, thus shall we always love you,

dreamt Seville”] (Esquivias de la Cruz, 2007, p. 27). Here, the repetition of the proper noun and the accumulation of adjectives (“Eterna”, “siempre”, “soñada” [“eternal”, “always”, “dreamt”]) construct a timeless image shaped by the rhythm of circular time. Furthermore, the use of rhetorical devices such as antimetabole and paradox, for instance in “ciudad que cautivas, ciudad cautivada” [“city that captivates, captivated city”], reinforces Seville’s ambivalent condition as a city that is at once proud and vulnerable, admired and suffering, an object both of praise and of criticism. The rhythmic litany of the fragment conveys an almost liturgical cadence, placing the city within a symbolic horizon of eternity. Another example appears in the words of José Joaquín León Morgado (2025), who describes “En la Sevilla oculta y mística, junto a los patios silentes, los retablos barrocos y los murmullos que llegan de las calles, se eleva un reguero de plegarias al Santísimo” [“In hidden and mystical Seville, beside the silent courtyards, the Baroque altarpieces, and the murmurs drifting in from the streets, a trail of prayers rises to the Blessed Sacrament”] (p. 34). In this case, the spatial and sensory enumeration through which the city is described moves beyond the merely descriptive level in order to convey the idea that the whole of Seville is placed at the service of devotional experience.

To this mystical dimension is added a conception of Seville as an intimate and everyday space. The *pregoneros* insist that religiosity is not confined to churches, but instead permeates daily life, domestic objects, and family memory. One fragment reads: “En la estampa que encuentras / por los bolsillos / o en latas que guardaron / carne membrillo. // Metida entre las ropas / de las camillas / o guardando los sueños / en las mesillas” [“In the holy card you find / in coat pockets / or in tins that once kept / quince paste. // Tucked among the blankets / on the table-cots / or keeping dreams safe / in bedside drawers”] (Casellas Rodríguez, 2023, p. 79). The city’s *cofrade* devotion is thus inscribed in everyday objects, such as pockets, drawers, bags, and tins. In this way, Seville appears as a city-home, a place where spirituality inhabits the folds of everyday life. Yet it also appears as a collective space, in which streets, squares, and neighbourhoods constitute a devotional map, as Casellas Rodríguez (2023) explains:

“La misma Sevilla. Hay calles, puentes, plazas, barrios rotulados con nombres que hacen referencia o los vinculan a nuestra Semana Mayor. Cristos, Vírgenes, Santos, pero también sacerdotes y seglares, personas que han dejado huella y contribuyeron a que esta manera nuestra de vivir la fe siga presente en el sentir de la ciudad” [“Seville itself. There are streets, bridges, squares, and neighbourhoods bearing names that refer to, or are linked with, our Holy Week. Christs, Virgins, Saints, but also priests and lay people, individuals who left their mark and helped ensure that this distinct way of living the faith remains present in the city’s sensibility”] (p. 81).

Urban space is thus presented here as embodied memory, through a toponymy that recalls both *cofrade* devotions and the protagonists of popular religiosity. The city therefore simultaneously displays the duality of an inward, domestic spirituality and a public, collective expression of faith.

Another particularly fertile core of meaning is the theological metaphorisation of Seville. Some *pregoneros* present the city as a place chosen by God, as a land in which sacred history extends into the present day. This is the case with Joaquín Caro Romero (2000), who recites:

Donde la Escritura cuenta / la historia del pueblo hebreo, / Sevilla va y la completa / con sus pasos de Misterio, / con sus Cristos y sus Vírgenes, / sus santos, sus monumentos, / sus jardines, sus mujeres, / sus hermanos costaleros (...) / Porque Sevilla está en gracia, / en constante jubileo [“Where Scripture tells / the history of the Hebrew people, / Seville comes forth and completes it / with its *pasos de Misterio*, / with its Christs and its Virgins, / its saints, its monuments, / its gardens, its women, / its *hermanos costaleros* (...) / Because Seville abides in grace, / in constant jubilee”]. (p. 64)

The lexicon of grace and jubilee confers upon the city a theological status that places it in continuity with Scripture. In another *pregón*, Seville is conceived as a new Paradise, when it is said that “Perdido el Paraíso Terrenal (...) escogió [Dios] una amplia llanura al pie de una colina, bañada por un caudaloso río que hiciera fértiles sus tierras (...)” [“Once the Earthly Paradise had been lost (...) [God] chose a broad plain at the foot of a hill, bathed by a mighty river that would

make its lands fertile (...)” (Cano-Romero Méndez, 2011, p. 7). The narrative alludes to the Guadalquivir and to the city’s geographical setting, reinterpreted as a chosen landscape through which Edenic beauty is renewed. Seville thus becomes a second creation, a blessed place where the earthly and the divine converge.

As may be seen, this discourse of praise addressed to the city contrasts with the exaltation of suffering discussed earlier. That is to say, Seville’s emotional register is not confined to sorrow, but also encompasses jubilation. A clear example of this appears in a fragment by Rafael González-Serna Bono (2016), who recites: “Estampa de sevillanía, / tú eres mi calendario, / itinerario que guía / el sentir más sevillano, / ¡ole las cofradías!, / con sabor eterno a barrio” [“Image of Sevillian identity, / you are my calendar, / an itinerary that guides / the most Sevillian of feelings, / olé to the confraternities!, / with the eternal flavour of the neighbourhood”] (p. 42). The exclamation, the use of diminutives, and the “¡olé!” convey a festive emotion, a particularly characteristic way in which the city experiences a celebration as momentous as Holy Week. In some cases, in response to the pain and suffering embodied in the devotional images, *cofrades* and the people more generally respond with expressions of joy, with acclamations and exuberance that coexist with solemnity and recollection. In this way, Seville interweaves sorrow and joy without undermining the theological background of the Passion.

At the same time, the discourse of the *pregones* contains a number of urban references within Seville that play an important role in the city’s symbolic configuration during Holy Week. The first of these is the reference to the Cathedral. It should be recalled that all *hermandades* and *cofradías* make their *estación de penitencia* to the city’s *Seo* (Cathedral), which turns this religious building into the true epicentre of faith during those days. Seville Cathedral is thus presented as a space of passage for the penitential corporations, which move through it in fulfilment of their penitential station. This is reflected, for example, in Esquivias de la Cruz (2007), who recounts: “Tras cruzar y dejar atrás la Carrera Oficial, salíamos de la Catedral y a la hora en que la mayoría de Hermandades iniciaban su estación, nosotros ya íbamos de vuelta” [“After crossing and leaving behind the *Carrera Oficial*, we came out of the Cathedral, and by the time most *Hermandades* were beginning their station, we were already on our way back”] (p. 19). At other times, the Cathedral is discursively configured as a refuge for the brotherhoods, whether in relation to the weather, as when it is said that “La Catedral resguarda a la Esperanza del frío cortante de la noche, y ya suele ser de día cuando la abandona” [“The Cathedral shelters the Esperanza from the cutting cold of the night, and it is usually daylight by the time she leaves it”] (Vázquez Perea, 2003, p. 32), or on the spiritual plane, as suggested in the words “comprobadlo mejor, por contraste, con esas otras cofradías populosas que al acceder a la Catedral parecen renunciar —no es cierto— al clamor que las rodea” [“This may best be seen, by contrast, in those other populous *cofradías* which, upon entering the Cathedral, seem to renounce, though not in truth, the clamour that surrounds them”] (Vázquez Perea, 2003, p. 31).

In this respect, the Cathedral’s bell tower, popularly known as the Giralda, also assumes a particularly prominent role. This structure has become a symbol of the city and a key element in the urban discourse of Holy Week. The Giralda functions as a privileged witness to the brotherhoods, since they all pass beneath it after leaving the Cathedral. It is not only the tower that marks the passage of time through the ringing of its bells, as Juan Miguel Vega Leal (2024) notes in the lines “en el reloj da la hora, / en la Giralda ya suena / la campana que lo anuncia y / todo a su luz despierta” [“the clock strikes the hour, / in the Giralda already sounds / the bell that announces it, and / everything awakens in its light”] (p. 17), but it also becomes a poetic emblem of the city, invoked, in the words of Gerardo Diego, as “prisma puro de Sevilla” [“the pure prism of Seville”] (Vega Leal, 2024, p. 39). The ringing of its bells is associated with the jubilation of the great days of Holy Week, for instance Palm Sunday or Easter morning, as Antonio Murciano González (2005) vividly describes: “la Giralda ha festejado / —volteado, repicado— / por Él su campanería. // ¡Qué gozo, qué algarabía // en la tierra y en el cielo!” [“the Giralda has celebrated / —swinging and pealing— / with all its bells for Him. // What joy, what rejoicing // on earth and in heaven!”] (p. 79). Elsewhere, it is presented as a witness that shares in the city’s memory, as in Rafael de Gabriel García (2004), who writes: “era el aire de Sevilla / el testigo de la escena / y lo contó a Giralda / y lo contó a las estrellas” [“it was the air of Seville / that witnessed the scene /

and told it to the Giralda / and told it to the stars”] (pp. 9–10). The tower, as the city’s visible symbol, thus appears endowed with voice and feeling, as though it were both chronicler and participant in Holy Week, projecting Seville beyond the urban realm and towards the sacred and the poetic. At the same time, the Giralda becomes a metaphor of Sevillian identity, described as “torre de la fe / por la fe que la remata” [“tower of faith / through the faith that crowns it”] (Segura Márquez, 2013, p. 7), or as the image that, even from a distance, continues to be recognised as the city’s ultimate emblem. In this way, the *pregones* consolidate the Giralda as a symbol that gathers within itself the history, religiosity, and universality of Seville.

Like the Cathedral and the Giralda, other urban enclaves also acquire notable relevance in the *pregones*, especially those places that form part of the *Carrera Oficial*, the official route followed by all *cofradías* on their way to the Cathedral. Among them, Plaza de la Campana stands out. It is there that the platform of the Council of Brotherhoods is located, and it marks the starting point of the official itinerary; as such, it is a setting charged with expectation. It is therefore hardly surprising that it is evoked through expressions that highlight its emotional intensity, as when Ignacio Esquivias de la Cruz (2007) writes:

Quisiera hacer llegar mi voz a los que no saben cómo es el rugido de expectación de otra Campana, después de la larga espera, cuando seis ciriales doblan la esquina de la antigua Farmacia Central, confirmando que la Más Hermosa entre las mujeres ya está parada en El Duque, a punto de dar la Madre de todas las *Chicotás* [“I would like my voice to reach those who do not know the roar of expectation at another Campana, after the long wait, when six candles turn the corner by the old Central Pharmacy, confirming that the Most Beautiful among women is already standing in El Duque, on the verge of beginning the Mother of all *Chicotás*”]. (p. 7)

The square thus appears as the space in which the city’s emotion and fervour are concentrated, for in La Campana, as Joaquín Caro Romero (2000) observes, “el pueblo de Sevilla va a tener reacciones que sólo pueden explicarse y entenderse desde la sevillanidad y el sevillanismo” [“the people of Seville will display reactions that can only be explained and understood through *sevillanidad* and *sevillanismo*”] (p. 33). As this suggests, the city’s idiosyncrasy is here closely linked to urban space, since the emotion experienced in La Campana can only be understood through Sevillian cultural identity itself. Moreover, the square is conceived as a spatial and temporal point of reference within the processional narrative, one marked by the regular and measured passage of the different brotherhoods. Antonio Burgos Belinchón (2008) offers a good example of this when he writes that “el *palio* de San Esteban ya tiene que estar entrando en la Campana (...) Ahora irá el Cristo de los Estudiantes por la esquina de Trifón, camino de la Campana” [“the *palio* of San Esteban must already be entering La Campana (...) Now the Cristo de los Estudiantes will be passing by the corner of Trifón, on its way to La Campana”] (p. 26). Nor are there any shortage of invocations framed in terms of popular fervour, in which the square is transformed into a space of shared prayer. This is how Antonio Murciano González (2005) expresses it: “Toda Sevilla oración: / que al borde de la mañana / está mi Presentación, / presente por La Campana” [“All Seville is prayer: / for at the edge of morning / my Presentación stands, / present in La Campana”] (p. 61).

In summary, the qualitative analysis of the *pregones* shows how Seville transcends the condition of a mere setting and becomes a central element in the narrative of Holy Week. The city is represented in multiple ways: as an active character within the Passion, as a symbolic reflection of popular devotion, and as a space in which the religious becomes integrated into both the everyday and the urban. Through rhetorical devices such as personification, parallelism, and paradox, the *pregoneros* endow Seville with attributes that condense the spiritual, the historical, and the emotional. The discursive construction of the city is articulated around a series of complementary images. On the one hand, there is Seville-as-character, assuming biblical roles or expressing human emotions, thereby reinforcing the identification between the sacred and the popular. On the other hand, there is Seville-as-place, manifest both in the intimacy of the home and in public space, through toponymy and through emblematic urban sites such as the Cathedral,

the Giralda, and Plaza de la Campana. These urban spaces become symbols of local identity and points of reference for the processional experience. The result is a portrait of Seville as a sacralised city in which the divine and the human intertwine. The *pregones* not only evoke the specific religiosity of Holy Week, but also contribute to reinforcing a collective imaginary through which the city recognises itself and reaffirms its identity. Thus, year after year, Seville is discursively reconstructed in these oratorical texts, consolidating itself as the protagonist of a narrative that integrates memory, urban space, and devotion.

5. Conclusions

The present study has sought to analyse the representation of the city of Seville in the discourse of the Official Holy Week *pregón* during the twenty-first century. Its principal objective was to identify the rhetorical and narrative strategies employed by *pregoneros* to evoke and construct the image of the city, as well as to assess the role played by this oratorical genre in shaping Seville's urban and religious imaginary. In this respect, it may be affirmed that the initial objectives have been satisfactorily achieved, offering a broad and nuanced view of the phenomenon.

First, the quantitative results clearly demonstrate the prominence of the city within the *pregón*. With more than 1,400 mentions across the corpus analysed, "Seville" emerges as a genuine narrative axis around which much of the discourse is structured. Both absolute and relative frequency show that, despite notable variations depending on the style of each speaker, the city is always present as a central point of reference. This numerical prominence corresponds to the qualitative dimension, since Seville is not merely mentioned but invested with symbolic, religious, and emotional meanings that turn it into an active subject within the Passion narrative.

The qualitative analysis has shown that the city is represented from multiple and complementary perspectives. At times, it is personified to the extent of assuming biblical roles or human emotions, becoming a "collective Simon of Cyrene" who accompanies Christ in His Passion. In other passages, Seville is projected as a mystical and eternal city, one that dies and is reborn in an annual cycle inseparable from Holy Week, or as an intimate space in which the sacred is embodied in everyday life. The analysis has also highlighted the significance of certain urban enclaves, namely the Cathedral, the Giralda, and Plaza de la Campana, which appear in the *pregones* as places charged with memory and devotion, symbols of shared identity, and points of reference for processional experience. The result is a polyphonic image of the city: Seville as character, as place, and as popular devotion.

From a methodological perspective, the study makes a significant contribution through its integrated application of the approaches associated with Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS). The combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques has made it possible not only to identify and quantify references to the city with precision, but also to interpret their semantic and pragmatic values in specific contexts. Moreover, this is a methodology that has already produced positive results in previous studies, and which this work confirms as a robust and effective method for discourse analysis. It has proved especially useful for a genre that, until now, had received only limited scholarly attention in the Sevillian context.

The study has thus shown that the Official Holy Week *pregón* of Seville constitutes a discursive genre of considerable richness, in which tradition, memory, popular religiosity, and literary creativity converge. Through their rhetorical resources, the *pregoneros* have turned Seville into the undisputed protagonist of a narrative that transcends the religious sphere and is projected as a symbol of collective identity. In this way, the present study helps to address a gap in academic research while also opening new avenues for the analysis of a phenomenon that, far from being exhausted, is renewed each year in the voice of a new *pregonero*.

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