

Allitteratio, *onomatopoeia* and imitative harmony: differentiation and conceptual frontiers¹

Marina Salvador Gimeno²

Recibido: 3 de junio de 2022 / Aceptado: 14 de septiembre de 2022

Abstract: Our aim in the following pages is to clarify the confusion existing between the concepts of alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, which are currently used without rigour. In fact, the differences between onomatopoeia and imitative harmony have now become dimmed (and blurred). The two figures have been reduced to the category of function, having become specific manifestations of alliteration, a resource to which an iconic/expressive purpose has been wrongly attributed.

The incorrect synonymy between alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony is also reflected in practice, where it is possible to observe the indiscriminate use of the three terms. An important factor to take into account in the erroneous identification of these techniques is the subjectivity of scholars, who, in our view, tend to attribute an iconic/expressive value to purely rhythmic sound repetitions. Given this, we call for rigour and objectivity from scholars to avoid confusions of this type.

Keywords: *allitteratio*; *onomatopoeia*; imitative harmony; iconic/expressive; rhythm

[es] *Allitteratio*, *onomatopoeia* y armonía imitativa: diferenciación y fronteras conceptuales

Resumen: Nos proponemos en las siguientes páginas aclarar la confusión que existe entre los conceptos de aliteración, onomatopeya y armonía imitativa, empleados sin rigor en la actualidad. En efecto, hoy en día se han desvanecido (y borrado) las diferencias entre onomatopeya y armonía imitativa, dos figuras que se han visto reducidas a la categoría de función al convertirse en manifestaciones concretas de un recurso al que se le ha atribuido un fin icónico-expresivo que no le es propio, la aliteración.

La incorrecta sinonimia entre la aliteración, onomatopeya y armonía imitativa se refleja también en el plano práctico, donde es posible observar un uso indiscriminado de los tres términos. Un factor importante a tener en cuenta en la identificación errónea de los recursos es la subjetividad del crítico, tendente a atribuir un valor icónico-expresivo a recurrencias sonoras puramente rítmicas. Con dicha constatación exhortamos al rigor y objetividad del crítico con el fin de evitar confusiones de este tipo

Palabras clave: *allitteratio*; *onomatopoeia*; armonía imitativa; icónico/expresiva; ritmo

Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. Onomatopoeia and imitative harmony. 3. Alliteration compared with onomatopoeia and imitative harmony. 4. Subjectivity in the interpretation of sound repetitions. 5. Conclusions. 6. Bibliography.

¹ This work is part of the research project ‘Poetas romanos en España’ (Roman Poets in Spain) (Ref.: PID2019-106844GB-I00) financed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation. I would like to express my thanks to the directors of my doctoral thesis, Vicente Cristóbal López and Juan Luis Arcaz Pozo for their revisions and helpful comments

² Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

E-mail: marisalv@ucm.es

Cómo citar: Salvador Gimeno, M. «*Allitteratio, onomatopoeia* and imitative harmony: differentiation and conceptual frontiers», *Cuad. Filol. Clás. Estud. Lat.* 42.2 (2022), 171-185.

1. Introduction³

Currently, numerous dictionaries and works specialising in literary terms display a general confusion between alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, to the extent of not discerning their limits clearly. Some establish a hierarchy between the three figures with the aim of making their limits more precise. This gives rise to two different views:

1. The first makes imitative harmony a more complex figure that includes, among other procedures, alliteration and onomatopoeia (Cordier, 1939; Estébanez Calderón, 1999)⁴
2. The second presents alliteration as a more general phenomenon that can be manifested both in the form of onomatopoeia and as imitative harmony (Beristáin, 1995⁷; Rodríguez Guzmán, 2005)⁵

The lack of unanimity in the definitions of *allitteratio*, *onomatopoeia* and imitative harmony is due to their similarity, a similarity that is evidenced when the same sequence is used to illustrate each of these three techniques. By way of a clear example there is the Ennian verse *At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit* (*Ann.* 83)⁶, defined as:

Alliteration

«*At tuba*, etc.: this verse is said to be partly taken from Ennius: *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*. It is interesting to notice the moderation with which Virgil has used the *alliteration* as compared with the older poet», Greenough (1884, 42).

«... it is difficult to see how any one can deny this large presence [*sc.* of *alliteration*] who comes upon such passages as these from representative writers: “... *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*”», Peck (1885, 60).

«... la *aliteración* en latín, ironizada por el mismo Ennio (vers. 452) en aquello de: *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*, es, generalmente, lúdica», Maldonado de Guevara (1965, 59).

³ The editions we have used in this article are, for Livius Andronicus and Ennius: TRAGLIA (ed.) (1986); for Virgil: the edition of the *Classical Latin Texts* website prepared by The Packard Humanities Institute: <https://latin.packhum.org/> [accessed 07.05.2021]; for Donatus: Keil (ed.) (1864, 355-402); for Charisius: Keil (ed.) (1857, 1-298); for Diomedes: Keil (ed.) (1857, 299-529); for Pompeius: Keil (ed.) (1868, 81-312); for Pontano: Gaisser (ed.) (2020).

⁴ «Lorsqu'elle [*sc.* l'*allitération*] sert à mettre en relief une image sonore, elle ressortit à l'*harmonie imitative*», Cordier (1939, 67); «la *armonía imitativa* en sus diferentes modalidades: *aliteración*, evocación, *onomatopeya*, etc.», Estébanez Calderón (1999, 56).

⁵ «La *aliteración*... relaciona entre sí palabras que ofrecen identidad parcial de sonidos. Si éstos producen o resultan equivalentes a otro sonido o ruido, se produce *onomatopeya*», Beristáin (1995⁷, 37); «[*sc.* la *armonía imitativa*] consiste en una *aliteración* que, al mismo tiempo, pretende reproducir con el sonido repetido una especie de *onomatopeya* alargada», Rodríguez Guzmán (2005, 598).

⁶ «But the trumpet with terrible tone roared taratantara», trad. Pomeroy (1999, 17, n.27).

«... the *alliterative* lines “*At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*”... or “*O Tite , tute , Tati, tibi tanta , tyranne , tulisti*”», Pendergast (2003, 322).

«... Ennius does employ *alliteration* with gusto on occasion, as in lines such as... *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Damond and Farrell (2020, 194)⁷.

Onomatopoeia

«An instance of *Onomatopoeia* suggested by that of Ennius: “*At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*”», Wilstach (1884, 352).

«Ennius’s bold *onomatopoeia*: “*At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*”», Wight Duff (1960, 112, n.2).

«*Onomatopoeic* lines describing the war-trumpet occur frequently in hexameter verse: cf. Ennius’ notorious *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Gransden (ed.) (1976, 78).

«For the *onomatopoeia* in more extreme form, cf. Ennius, *Ann.* 140 V: *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Pomeroy (1999, 17, n.27)⁸.

Imitative harmony

«L’*harmonie imitative* ne s’arrête pas à ces onomatopées de mots ou de phrases dont toutes les langues offrent des exemples... *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Baron (1853: 251).

«La siguiente prueba de *armonía imitativa* produce una sensación de ridiculez: *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*» (fr.95), Lugaresi (1944, 164).

«Poco vorrei soffermarmi su casi estremi di *armonia imitativa* come il fin troppo noto *at tuba terribili sonitu ‘taratantara’ dixit* di *ann.*», Timpanaro and Narducci (2005, 232)⁹

Onomatopoeic or imitative Alliteration

«La *aliteración* está combinada con una búsqueda pueril del *efecto imitativo* en: *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Meillet (1973, 73).

«Uno de los más antiguos es el que consta en un fragmento del poeta latino Ennio: “*At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*” (“Y la tuba con terrible sonido dijo taratantara”), donde hay una *aliteración iconizadora* de (t)», Rivalora (1991, 57).

«... serían en realidad *aliteraciones onomatopéyicas* como la famosa de Ennio *at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*», Álvarez Pedrosa Núñez (1994, 190).

⁷ The italics are mine.

⁸ The italics are mine.

⁹ The italics are mine.

«... la conocida *aliteración con armonía imitativa* de Ennio. *Ann.* II 140 V) *at tuba terribili sonitu tarantantara dixit*», Rivero García; Estévez Sola; Librán Moreno and Ramírez de Verger (eds.) (2009, CXXXVII)¹⁰.

The above suggests that alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony are techniques that seem to be used interchangeably. We do not share this approach and present our argument below.

2. Onomatopoeia and imitative harmony

In modern times, the terms ‘onomatopoeia’ and ‘imitative harmony’ are frequently used as synonyms: «The following is a pair of literary examples of onomatopoeia or imitative harmony» (Pérez-Rioja, 1967, 69); «onomatopeya o armonía imitativa» (Luque Moreno, 1982, 45)»; «one other important device is onomatopoeia, or imitative harmony» (Stott, Raymond and Bowers, 1993, 21); «L’onomatopèa... detta anche armonia imitativa...» (Canton, 2021)¹¹. The identification of onomatopoeia with imitative harmony is based on the functional equivalence of the two procedures, whose ultimate purpose is to express through sound what is described or mentioned: the terms used in the definitions are those of ‘reproduce’ (Abrams and Harpham, 2014¹¹[1957])¹², ‘evoke’ (Lázaro Carreter, 1962; Bacry, 1992)¹³, ‘imitate’ (Platas Tasende, 2000; Marchese and Forradellas, 2013; *Enciclopedia Treccani*)¹⁴, ‘recall’ (Marchese and Forradellas, 2013)¹⁵ acoustically the object or action referred to. It is precisely their apparent equivalence which is the reason why the term ‘imitative harmony’ is not always included in some specialised dictionaries¹⁶.

Taking into account that the two figures are identical in function and not different in the type of sounds used (as they can be vocalic, consonantal or syllabic), we will focus our attention on the scope of the two devices; or to put it another way, in the number of words needed for these to take place. With respect to this point, there does not appear to be a clear distinction between the two figures, as they are defined as stylistic phenomena of variable extension, which oscillate between lexical unit and statement.

- Imitative harmony can occur in «una sola palabra, en una frase o verso y en todo un periodo» (Martínez Conesa, 1972, 2); «una palabra, expresión o enunciado» (Estébanez Calderón, 1999, 56).
- Onomatopoeia can be found «in un gruppo o in una successione di gruppi fonici (*brrr, crac; bau bau, tic tac; din don dan*), in una serie di sillabe in

¹⁰ The italics are mine.

¹¹ Canton, 2021 [online], in: «<https://books.google.es/books?id=DsgWEAAAQBAJ&pg=PT107&dq=onomatopea>» [05.06.2021].

¹² Abrams and Harpham (2014¹¹, 264), *s.u.* «onomatopoeia».

¹³ Lázaro Carreter (1962: 35), *s.u.* «armonía imitativa»; Bacry (1992: 204), *s.u.* «l’harmonie imitative».

¹⁴ Platas Tasende (2000, 591), *s.u.* «onomatopeya»; Marchese and Forradellas (2013, 302), *s.u.* «onomatopeya»; La *Enciclopedia Treccani* [online], in: «[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/onomatopeia_\(Enciclopedia-Dantesca\)/>](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/onomatopeia_(Enciclopedia-Dantesca)/>)» [05.06.2021], *s.u.* «onomatopeia».

¹⁵ Marchese and Forradellas (2013, 35), *s.u.* «armonía imitativa».

¹⁶ Imitative harmony does not appear in Marouzeau (1933); Beristáin (1995⁷); Platas Tasende (2000) and Cuddon (2001).

unità grafica (*patapum, taratàt, chicchirichì*), o anche in una successione di più complesse unità ritmiche, per es. interi versi» (*Enciclopedia Treccani*)¹⁷; «...en sílabas (glu-glu), palabras, frases y aun oraciones» (Beristáin, 1995⁷ [1985], 368-369).

In practice the term ‘onomatopoeia’ is normally used to designate sound correspondences that affect a line or statement. We will cite relatively recent comments here to note how this practice is current.

«Los versos están repletos de... onomatopeyas más eufónicas “en su pasar le susurraba el viento”», Mateo (ed.) (1990, 104).

«La onomatopeya: *Quadrupedante putrem sonitu patuit ungula campum*, Lugones», (1999, 195).

«Entre los casos famosos de onomatopeya figuran los que se transcriben a continuación: *en el silencio sólo se escuchaba / un susurro de abejas que sonaba* (Garcilaso de la Vega)», Platas Tasende (2000, 592).

«Sí anotaré el uso oportuno de la onomatopeya vocálica, por ejemplo, en las nueve oes cavernosas de su *Reclamo al Apóstol*: “y somos como sótanos con odio”, y de la onomatopeya consonántica, por ejemplo, en su poema *Sadat*: “ojalá que tu gesto amortaje a la roja jauría”», Casas (2001, 56).

«Onomatopeya. La reiteración cacofónica de la *littera canina* -r- reproduce el rugido amenazador de un perro [*sc. et terror Auernus | decretus*]», Navarro Antolín (2020, 185).

However, as far as we understand, the use of ‘onomatopoeia’ in these contexts to be incorrect; we are in favour of the formula ‘imitative harmony’ in these cases, taking into account that in the ancient Latin grammarians onomatopoeia was already restricted to the scope of the word:

Onomatopoeia est nomen de sono factum, ut tinnitus aeris, clangor tubarum (Donatus, p.400, 30-31).

Onomatopoeia est dictio ad imitandum sonum uocis confusae ficta, ut cum dicimus hinnire equos, balare oves, stridere ualuas et cetera his similia (Charisius, p.274, 24-26).

Onomatopoeia est dictio configurata ad imitandam uocis confusae significacionem, ut tinnitus...; item ut dicimus ualuas stridere, oves balare, aes tinnire et cetera his similia (Diomedes, p.460, 1-6).

¹⁷ La *Enciclopedia Treccani* [online] in «[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/onomatopoeia_\(Enciclopedia-Dantesca\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/onomatopoeia_(Enciclopedia-Dantesca))» [05.06.2021], s.u. «onomatopoeia».

«*Onomatopoeia dicitur nomen de sono factum. Habemus apud Vergilium miles et apud alios poetas: 'tinnitu galeae': non hoc ipsum uerbum exprimit etiam sonum ipsius aeris? Tinnitus sic sonat, quem ad modum ipsa res sonat. Si dicas 'clangor tubarum', clangor sic paene resonat'»*», (Pompeius, pág.308, 10-14).

In fact, the four definitions limit onomatopoeia to the lexical unit: Charisius and Diomedes talk about *dictio*; Donatus and Pompeius, about *nomen*, and give as examples isolated terms that they designate as animal sounds (*hinnire*, *balare*) and noises (*stridere*), such as those derived from musical instruments (*tinnitus*, *clangor*). They also allude to the iconic and expressive function of this procedure in the following terms: *ad imitandum sonum uocis confusae* (Charisius); *ad imitandam uocis confusae significationem* (Diomedes); *de sono factum* (Donatus and Pompeius).

The limited extension of onomatopoeia explains why it may form part of imitative harmonies. But we cannot say that imitative harmony may be represented as part of onomatopoeia, given that the former exceeds the lexical unit, and the second is restricted to it.

If we look at the line of Ennius *At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit*, we can see that the newly invented noun '*taratantara*' contributes with its particular phonic configuration to the expressive sonority of a whole sequence. We use the term imitative harmony to describe the voiceless dental occlusive /t/ and /a/, including those of the onomatopoeic '*taratantara*'. However, we do not call imitative harmony the phonemes /t/ and /a/ which form part of the substantive *taratantara*, given that they are included within the limits of the lexical unit, a characteristic inherent to onomatopoeia.

In light of the above, we define onomatopoeia as 'a word used to reproduce the sound or noise it refers to'. We do not admit in the case of this group of terms that, without having been created for this purpose, they are similar to the sound expressed by the general procedures of phonetic derivation, composition and evolution¹⁸.

And we define imitative harmony as the 'evocation of one or more lines or statements by the sonority of their constituent elements'.

3. Alliteration compared with onomatopoeia and imitative harmony

We consider that there is perhaps a major confusion in the term 'alliteration', which frequently is assimilated into the concepts of onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, as a result of a conceptual error that attributes to alliteration an imitative value similar to that of onomatopoeia and imitative harmony.

With respect to alliteration, there are numerous studies in which imprecise definitions have been created, lacking unanimity on certain points, such as those relating to the position that should be occupied by a repeated sound in a word (start, internal or final), their nature (vowel, consonant, syllable), the type of repetition (identical or similar sounds) and the number of terms needed for this procedure to be developed (one or more words, which may be next to each other or close)¹⁹. According to

¹⁸ Mayoral (2005: 93).

¹⁹ On Latin alliteration, cf. Naeke (1829); Keller (1896); Evans (1921); Ferrarino (1938); Cordier (1939); Ronconi (1939); Herescu (1960); Barchiesi (1962, 300-310); Grilli (1965); Valesio (1967); Greenberg (1980); Ceccarelli. (1986); Margolin (1992) and Facchini Tosi (2000).

the operational definition we proposed in one of our papers, alliteration consists of the ‘repetition of vocalic, consonantal or syllabic sounds at the start of two or more adjoining words or words that are close to each other, i.e. forming part of the same metrical or syntactic unit.’²⁰

With respect to the essential function of the figure, once more there is a lack of consensus among scholars: alliteration is presented as a stylistic technique with purely rhythmic purposes; and also as a procedure of sonic evocation, i.e. with an iconic and expressive purpose that identifies it with onomatopoeia and imitative harmony²¹. The latter approach is represented by Valesio (1967, 156) and Ceccarelli (1986, 6)²².

The consideration of alliteration as an iconic and expressive phenomenon remains current today to the extent that it proliferates in most prestigious dictionaries and encyclopaedias. In them we find expressions that make this technique a figure that ‘reproduces’, ‘evokes’ and ‘represents’ the reality it designates:

«La sonorité répétée (qu’elle soit vocalique ou consonantique) permet parfois d’évoquer, d’imiter une réalité particulière», Bacry (1992, 204).

«Klassische Typen von Alliteration... bei denen das Spiel mit Phonemen und ihrer Wiederholung annäherungsweise das Bild der Szene oder des Gegenstandes wiedergeben soll, die order den die Wörter beschreiben», Margolin (1992, 407).

«En sentido amplio, la aliteración consiste en la repetición acusada de un fonema en un estrecho margen de texto... cuando los elementos repetidos pretenden imitar algún sonido de la naturaleza, estamos ante ejemplos de *aliteración onomatopéyica*», Azaustre and Casas (1997, 96).

«La aliteración... puede, en ocasiones, potenciar y resaltar dicho sentido cuando el poeta se sirve, perceptiblemente, de ciertas reiteraciones o combinaciones de fonemas para *sugerir la correspondencia entre estos sonidos y el significado del texto*», Estébanez Calderón (1999, 27).

«... allittera... ottenendo *effetti di volta in volta onomatopeici*», Bussolino (2006, 16).

«It [*sc.* alliteration] can (amongst other uses) be *emphatic or onomatopoeic*», Auger (2010, 11).

«Alliteration is characteristically used also for *onomatopoeic effects*, to suggest by the association of sounds what is being described», Wales (2014³[1990], 15).

²⁰ Salvador Gimeno, M. (2021: 84). Regarding the limits of alliteration in the initial part of the word, cf. Salvador – Gimeno, M. (2022).

²¹ Scholars who attribute to alliteration a merely rhythmic function include Gitlitz (1973, 90); Palacios Martín (1983, 172); Hervey, Higgins and Loughridge 20054, 34), García Calvo (2006, 836), Osimo (2015) and Salvador Gimeno (2021)

²² «L’allitterazione appare come insistenza di tipo iconico», Valesio (1967, 156); «funzione onomatopoeica dell’allitterazione», Ceccarelli (1986, 6).

«Répétition voulue et expressive de certains sons pour obtenir un *effet d'harmonie imitative* ou pour donner une forme plus frappante à la pensée», *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*²³.

«Repetición de sonidos en un verso o un enunciado *con fines expresivos*», *RAE*²⁴

However, we think that the expressive value that makes alliteration a technique of sonic imitation is alien to the figure itself, whose primary purpose is rhythmic. We should therefore distinguish it from onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, and be clear that the use of the three concepts as synonyms is incorrect.

We justify the lack of an iconic/expressive functionality in alliteration by a study of the dialogue *Actius* by Pontano, a fifteenth-century humanist who is attributed with coining the term *allitteratio*. He assigns to the figure an intrinsic rhythmic value *numeris affert*, based on the repetition of sounds and geared exclusively to auditive pleasure (*allusione*, p. 164; *iocis... illis*, p. 166; *delectat*, p. 164). At no point in the dialogue is alliteration associated with an iconic / expressive effect, so this must be rejected in the definition of the resource.

Placet autem nominare allitterationem, quod e litterarum allusione constet («Well then, this figure or embellishment adds a certain seasoning to rhythm. It seems right to call it alliteration because it consists of a play on letters») ²⁵.

Pontano distinguishes clearly between alliteration and other iconic and expressive techniques, as can be deduced from the transition passage with which he ends the study of *allitteratio* to tackle a type of stylistic procedures which, unlike alliteration, do not deal so much with rhythm (*Neutique... ad numeros*) as with the imitative skill of the poet (*exprimendis*):

Neutique fortasse ad numeros quod subdam, sed magis ad poetae prudentiam spectabit... Hoc autem tale est ut numeris ipsis fiat satis etiam cum dignitate exprimendis effectibus... («Perhaps what I am going to add pertains not at all to rhythm, but rather to the skill of the poet... it is a kind to make rhythms alone sufficient to imitate particular qualities appropriately...») ²⁶

There are two expressive procedures which appear most frequently in Pontano's dialogue: rhythmic (referring to the scansion of the line) and sonic (relating to the phonic configuration of the words in it). Both are manifested in Virgil's line *Atque leuem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis* (*Georgics* 1.85), as indicated by Pontano:

uolucrum illum flammae strepitum his uerbis ac numeris explicuit: "atque leuem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis" («he showed the quick popping noises of the fire with these words and rhythms: 'and to burn the light stubble with crackling flames'») ²⁷

With respect to the rhythmic procedure (*numeris*), the presence of dactyls in the hexameter (six in succession: *ātquē lēvēm stīpūlām crēpītāntībūs ūrērē flāmmīs*)

²³ *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* [online], in «<https://academie.atilf.fr/9/consulter/ALLIT%C3%89RA-TION?options=motExact>» [31/05/2021].

²⁴ *RAE* [online], in «<https://dle.rae.es/aliteraci%C3%B3n>» [31/05/2021]. The italics are mine.

²⁵ Gaisser (ed.) (2020) Latin text on page 164 and translation on page 165.

²⁶ Gaisser (ed.) (2020) Latin text on page 172 and translation on page 173.

²⁷ Gaisser (ed.) (2020) Latin text on page 174 and translation on page 175.

evokes the speed with which the action described takes place (*numerus ipse, quoniam celeritate constat ac tarditate, quarum alteram dactylus, alteram spondeus secum habet*, pág.182, 55)²⁸; and with respect to the phonic procedure (*his uerbis*), the consonant group *ST* in *stipulam* and *CR* in *crepitanis* reproduce the noise of the flames, according to Pontano himself at the start of his dialogue:

[*sc. Atque leuam stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis*] *ut strepitum quoque accensarum referret stipularum, selegit etiam syllabas interstrepentes, quales sunt primae stipulae et crepitanis* («in order to recall the crackling sound of burning stubble, he chose crackling syllables like the first ones in *stipulae* and *crepitanis*»)²⁹

In the technique of *allitteratio* there is no semantic correspondence of this type, which is why it does not appear among the imitative procedures described; and its purpose, exclusively rhythmic, is not described by words which presuppose an association with the content, such as *exprimere*, *explicare*, *expressare*, which however are present at other points in the dialogue. All this invalidates the presence of iconic/ expressive purposes in the current definition of the device, and thus its equivalence with onomatopoeia and imitative harmony³⁰.

Once the three concepts have been clarified from the theoretical point of view we have to point to the dangers involved in subjective interpretations that find iconic/ expressive values in the texts which in reality they lack. This incorrect attribution means that purely rhythmic repetitions are analysed as examples of imitative harmonies³¹.

The risk of making arbitrary judgments of this type is expressed in Cejador y Fauca, according to which «everyone believes that the words they use express of themselves and naturally the idea they attribute to them; but usually this is simply an illusion, a mirage, by which the subjective consonance that use has consolidated in the mind is assigned to the word, but objectively it does not exist»³².

This practice continues into the present, as can be seen from the argument in section 4.

4. Subjectivity in the interpretation of sound repetitions

We will give nine examples that, we believe, demonstrate the arbitrariness in the interpretation of purely alliterative sequences. At this point we would like to note the

²⁸ According to Pontano, Virgil expressed the speed of Camila by the recurring use of dactyls in *fērrēt ūtē; cēlērīs nēc tīnguērēt aēquōrē plāntās*: “*Virgilius Camillae uellet pedum celeritatem exprimere, pedum quoque ac syllabarum usus est celeritate*”, Gaisser (ed.) (2020, 174).

²⁹ Gaisser (ed.) (2020) Latin text in pp.70 and 72 and translation in pp. 71 and 73.

³⁰ It has to be noted that the absence of synonymy between alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony does not mean that they cannot converge in the same sequence (Martínez Conesa [1972, 42]): in *Pallida ... Pulsat Pede Pauperum ...* (Hor.C.1.4.13) there are imitative harmony (since the poet pretends to acoustically imitate the steps of Death) and alliteration (since the initial bilabial consonant /p/ is repeated in four next words).

³¹ The fact that alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony do not always appear in the same sequence further reinforces their status as related but independent figures.

³² Cejador y Fauca (1902, 278); Adams and Mayer (1999, 47).

importance of analysing sound repetitions with the greatest objectivity possible to avoid confusions such as the following:

The sequence *la tenace pece* imitates acoustically two tactile feelings: the viscosity and stickiness of pitch:

«Allorchè in questo curioso squarcio l'attento Lettore pronunzierà quell'emistichio *la tenace pece*, non potrà certamente sfuggirgli quanto il suono di esso imiti il viscoso, e l'attaccaticcio di quella sostanza», Flaxman (ed.) (1817, 105).

The vowel 'a' imitates laughter, and at the same time, complaint:

«... la a evoca... las convulsiones de la risa: II, 976: *scilicet et risu tremulo concussa cachinant*. Queja: V, 1384: *dulcis didicere querella*», Andrés (1953, 133).

For the same author, 'i' also evokes a smile:

«... el sonido agudo, impresiones de dolor. El movimiento suave de las olas evoca una sonrisa: 1, 8: *tibi rident aequora ponti*», Andrés (1953, 134).

Joy is reproduced acoustically by a fricative:

«La alegría está subrayada por: -la frecuencia de la vibrante, sola o agrupada: *frigoribus parto agricolae plerumque fruuntur*», Verg. *Georg.* 1.300, Muller de Inda and Gladis Villalba (1983, 52-53).

For Oroz Reta, in Virgil, *Georgics*, 3.219, the accumulation of 'a's'

«... puede evocar... los pasos lentos de una novilla que pace en el campo: *páscitur in magná siluá formosa iuuenca*», Oroz Reta (1990, 166).

For González Martínez, 'i' reflects pain:

«[sc. "yo mismo de mi mal ministro siendo"]: la /i/ penetra en nuestros oídos como una aguja acerada provocando un efecto cercano al dolor, a la tristeza y al horror que siente el poeta ante su desolada situación», González Martínez (1991, 45).

The voiceless dental occlusive /t/ and the rolled /r/ express confusion:

«Los fonemas consonánticos /t/ y /r/... insinúan el sobrecogimiento que el poeta experimenta interiormente al tomar conciencia de haber errado el camino de su vida convirtiendo ésta en un peregrinaje tan largo y doloroso como estéril», González Martínez (1991, 44-45).

The vowels 'e' / 'i' evoke proximity and friendship with their timbre:

«Podemos observar el uso predominante de las voces /e/, /i/, para demostrar cercanía, amistad, en este pasaje: *tunc et amicitiam coeperunt iungere auentes /finitimi inter se nec laedere nec uiolari* (1019-1020)», Albornoz (2006, 11).

The confluence of liquids evokes the brilliant colour of the sun, the feeling of heat and its expansion across the earth:

«Seneca also alliterates the liquid consonants, thus intensifying the effect: *quid iLLe Rebus LuMeN iNfuNdeNs suuM*. Thanks to this simple, yet efficient device, Seneca's depiction of the shining sun in the passage quoted above appeals to more than just one of the senses as the audience is encouraged to imagine not only the bright colour of Titan's rays, but also to 'feel' the 'liquid' warmth of sunlight being poured all over the earth», Pyplacz (2017, 79).

On the basis of the above interpretations, in our opinion, subjective, we arrive at results that are difficult to accept:

1. The same phoneme can express very different sounds and denote contradictory emotions:
 - The vowel 'a': laughter, but also complaint for Andrés (1953, 133)
 - The vowel 'i' laughter for Andrés (1953, 134), but pain for González Martínez (1991, 45)
2. Very different phonemes can reproduce identical sounds:
 - The vowels 'a' and 'i' (open and closed, respectively), according to Andrés (1953, 133-134), as well as 'r' (consonant, compared with the two preceding vowels), according to Muller de Inda and Gladis Villalba (1983, 52-53), evoke laughter
3. Certain consonants and vowels express viscosity («*tenace pece*»: Flaxman [ed.] [1817, 105]), the slowness of a calf in walking (the 'a': Oroz Reta [1990, 166])³³, the brightness and heat (liquids: Pyplacz [2017, 79]) and friendship ('e' and 'i': Albornoz [2006, 11]), feelings that as such lack sound³³.

So we consider that we have to be as rigorous as possible when it comes to identifying expressive values in the phonetic repetitions in a text in order not to lapse into contradictory judgments that lead us to consider what is a purely rhythmic insistence to be imitative harmony.

5. Conclusions

We believe we have clarified here the concepts of alliteration, onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, whose differences have not been properly perceived until now, as can be seen in relatively recent dictionaries, encyclopaedias, manuals and textual commentaries that deal with these figures as different denominations for the same phenomenon. The difference between onomatopoeia and imitative harmony lies in their respective scope or extension, as whereas onomatopoeia is limited to the lexical unit, imitative harmony extends beyond the limits of the word; the difference between alliteration, on the one hand, and onomatopoeia and imitative harmony on the other, is functional in nature, as in the case of alliteration, repetition of sounds

³³ We therefore adopt the critical approach of Cristóbal López (1992, 79-81), according to which «sounds by themselves do not produce sadness or melancholy, or joy or brilliance», p. 80.

does not respond to iconic/expressive purposes, as happens, in contrast, with onomatopoeia and imitative harmony, but to entirely rhythmic purposes. In this article we also make clear the need to use objective judgements when identifying the three figures, given the tendency to attribute imitative functions to phonic sequences that lack an expressive value.

6. Bibliography

- Abrams, M. H. and Harpham, G. G. (2014¹¹[1957]), *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Stamford, Cengage Learning.
- Adams, J. N. and Mayer, R. G. (eds.) (1999), *Aspects of the language of Latin Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Albornoz, V. D. (2006) «*Sonitu et sensu*. Analysis of sound as meaning effect creator in Lucretius, *De Rerum natura* v 925-1027», *Praesentia* 7, 1-16.
- Álvarez Pedrosa, J. A. (1994), «La aliteración como recurso poético en las lenguas indoeuropeas», *CFC (G)* 4, 189-204.
- Andrés, G. (1953), «Armonía expresiva en Lucrecio», *Helmantica* 4, 123-137.
- Auger, P. (2010), *The Anthem Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*, Londres, Anthem Press.
- Azaustre, A. and Casas, J. (1997), *Manual de Retórica española*, Barcelona, Ariel Letras.
- Bacry, P. (1992), *Les figures de style et autres procédés stylistiques*, París, Belin.
- Barchiesi, M. (1962), *Nevio epico: storia interpretazione edizione critica dei frammenti del primo epos latino*, Padua, CEDAM.
- Baron, A. (1853), *De la rhétorique, ou De la composition oratoire et littéraire*, Bruselas, Alexandre Jamar.
- Beristáin, H. (1995⁷[1985]), *Diccionario de retórica y poética*, México, Editorial Porrúa.
- Bussolino, C. (2006), *Glossario di retorica, metrica e narratología*, Milán, Alpha Test.
- Canton, M. (2021), *Metrica* [online], available in: «<https://books.google.es/books?id=4f-cEAAAQBAJ&pg>» [05.06.2021].
- Casas, L. A. (2001), «Luis Mario: poeta en verso y poeta en prosa», *Círculo: publicación del Círculo de Cultura Panamericano* 30, 51-56.
- Ceccarelli, L. (1986), *L'allitterazione a vocale interposta variabile in Virgilio*, Aquila-Roma, Japadre editore.
- Cejador y Frauca, J. (1902), «El lenguaje instintivo del hombre: la onomatopeya y armonía imitativa», in *Los gérmenes del lenguaje: Estudio fisiológico y psicológico de las voces del lenguaje como base para la investigación de sus orígenes. II*, Bilbao, Sociedad de Artes Gráficas, 269-280.
- Cordier, A. (1939), *L'alliteration latine. Le procédé dans l'Énéide de Virgile*, París, Librairie Philosophique J.Vrin.
- Cristóbal López, V. (1992), «Introducción», in J. de Echave-Sustaeta (ed.), *Virgilio. Eneida*, Madrid, Gredos, 11-130.
- Cuddon, J.A. (2001), *Diccionario de Teoría y Crítica Literarias A/L*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Docencia Agüero.
- Damon, C. and Farrell, J. (2020), *Ennius'Annals: poetry and History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* [online], available in «<https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/>» [31/05/2021]

- Enciclopedia Treccani* [online], available in: «<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ricerca/enciclopedia-treccani/>» [05.06.2021]
- Estébanez Calderón, D. (1999), *Diccionario de términos literarios*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial.
- Evans, W. J. (1921), *Adlitteratio Latina*, Londres, Williams and Norgate.
- Facchini Tosi, Cl. (2000), *Euphonia. Studi di fonostilistica (Virgilio Orazio Apuleio)*, Bologna, Pàtron Editore.
- Ferraro, P. (1938), «L'allitterazione», *RAIB* 4, 93-168.
- Flaxman (ed.) (1817), *Le principali cose appartenenti alla Divina commedia, cioè il rimario ne suoi versi intieri*, Roma, Stamperia de Romanis.
- Gaïsser, J.H. (ed.) (2020), *Giovanni Gioviano Pontano. Dialogues: Actius* (Cambridge – Londres, The I Tatti Renaissance Library).
- García Calvo, A. (2006), *Tratado de rítmica y prosodia y de métrica y versificación*, Zamora, Lucina.
- Gitlitz, D.M. (1973), «Hacia una definición empírica de la aliteración», *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 22.1, 85-90.
- González Martínez, D. (1991), «Fonosimbolismo y aliteración: Francisco de Aldana frente a la palabra poética», *Scriptura* 6-7, 41-50.
- Gransden, K. W. (ed.), (1976), *Virgil. Aeneid VIII*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Greenberg, N. A. (1980), «Aspects of Alliteration: a statistical study», *Latomus* 39, 585-611.
- Greenough, J. B. (1884), *Last six books of the Aeneid, and the Georgics II*, Boston, Ginn, Heath & Co.
- Grilli, A. (1965), *Studi enniani*, Brescia, Paideia.
- Hervey, S.; Higgins, I. and Loughridge, M. (2005⁴), *Thinking Translation: A course in translation method: French to English*, London / New York, Routledge.
- Herescu, N. I. (1960), *La poésie latine: étude des structures phoniques*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres.
- Hernández Vista, E. (1968), «La aliteración en Virgilio: una definición estilística», en *Actas del III Congreso Español de Estudios Clásicos*, Madrid, Sociedad Española de Estudios Clásicos, vol. II, 342-349.
- Keil, H (ed.) (1857), *Grammatici Latini I*, Leipzig, Teubner.
- Keil, H (ed.), (1864), *Grammatici Latini IV*, Leipzig, Teubner.
- Keil, H (ed.), (1868), *Grammatici Latini V*, Leipzig, Teubner.
- Keil, H (ed.), (1874), *Grammatici Latini VI*, Leipzig, Teubner.
- Keller, O. (1896), «Alliteration», in *Zur lateinischen Sprachgeschichte: grammatische*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1-72.
- Lázaro Carreter, F. (1962), *Diccionario de Términos filológicos*, Madrid, Gredos.
- Lugaresi, M. (1944), «La poesía lírica: los poëtae Noui», *REC* 1, 141-177.
- Lugones, L. (1999), *Obras completas de Leopoldo Lugones: la misión del escritor; el ideal caballeresco II*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Pasco.
- Luque Moreno, J. (1983), «Una lectura de la Bucólica cuarta», *Estudios de Filología latina* 3, 65-68.
- Maldonado de Guevara, F. (1965), «Knittelvers 'verso nudoso'», *Revista de Filología Española* 48, 39-59.
- Marchese, A. and Forradellas, J. (2013), *Diccionario de Retórica, Crítica y Terminología literaria*, Barcelona, Ariel.
- Margolin, J. C. (1992), «Alliteration», in G. Ueding (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 406-413.

- Marouzeau, J. (1933), *Lexique de la terminologie linguistique*, París, Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- Martínez Conesa, J. A. (1972), *Figuras estilísticas aplicadas al griego y al latín: manual práctico para el comentario de textos literarios*, Valencia, Editorial Bello.
- Mateo, M. A. (ed.) (1990), *Rafael Alberti, Antología comentada (poesía) II*, Madrid, Ediciones de la Torre.
- Mayoral, J. A. (2005), *Teoría de la literatura y literatura comparada: Figuras retóricas*, Madrid, Síntesis.
- Meillet, A. (1973), *Historia de la lengua latina*, Reus, Ediciones Avesta.
- Muller de Inda, C. and Gladis Villalba, D. (1983), «El ritmo y el simbolismo de los sonidos en la pintura invernal de Hesíodo y Virgilio», *Cuadernos de literatura: Revistas de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios* 2, 45-58.
- Naeke, A. F. (1829), «De allitteratione sermonis Latini», *RhM* 3, 324-418.
- Navarro Antolín, F. (ed.) (2020), «Comentario filológico», in *José Mariano de Iturriaga, S. J. Californiada: Épica Sagrada y propaganda jesuítica en Nueva España (1749)*, Huelva, Universidad de Huelva, 139-248.
- Oroz Reta, J. (1990), *Virgilio. Vida, obras y fortuna*, Salamanca, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.
- Osimo, B. (2015), *Dizionario di scienza della traduzione*, Milano, Ulrico Hoepli Editore; available in: «<https://books.google.es/books?id=DJuRDwAAQBAJ&pg>» [16.12.2022].
- Palacios Martín, A. (1983), «Consideraciones acerca de la enclítica -que en *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio», *Anuario de Estudios Filológicos* 6, 171-190.
- Peck, T. (1884), «Alliteration in Latin», *TAPhA* 15, 58-65.
- Pendergast, S. and Pendergast, T. (2003), *Reference Guide to World Literature: Authors*, Michigan, St. James Press.
- Pérez-Rioja, J. A. (1967), *Estilística. Comentario de textos y redacción: teoría y ejercicios prácticos*, Bilbao, Ediciones Liber.
- Platas Tasende, A. M. (2000), *Diccionario de términos literarios*, Madrid, Espasa.
- Pomeroy, A. J. (1999), «A man at a spring: Horace, *Odes* 1.1», in W. Scovil Anderson (ed.), *Why Horace? A collection of interpretations*, Wauconda, Bolchazy-Carducci, 1-19.
- Pyplacz, J. (2017), «Seneca and synaesthesia. The sensory aspect of the tragedies», *SPhP* 27.1, 69-82.
- RAE* [online], available in: «<https://www.rae.es/>» [31/05/2021]
- Rivarola, J. L. (1991), *Signos y significados: ensayos de semántica lingüística*, Perú, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial.
- Rivero García, L.; Estévez Sola, J. A.; Librán Moreno, M. and Ramírez de Verger, A. (eds.) (2009), *Virgilio. Eneida I-III*, Madrid, Alma Mater.
- Rodríguez Guzmán, J.P. (2005), «El texto literario», in *Gramática gráfica al juampedrino modo*, Jaén, Carena.
- Ronconi, A. (1939), «Allitterazione e ritmo», *SIFC* 15, 297-321.
- Salvador Gimeno, M. (2021), «Alliteration as a rhythmic device in Latin literature: general clarifications and proposal for a new vertical variant, alliteration before or after the caesura», *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 8.2, 80-107.
- Salvador Gimeno, M. (2022): «In primis et ultimis locis... in mediis quoque (Pontano's Actus 49): the limits of alliteration», *Myrtia* 37, 169-176.
- Stott, J. C.; Raymond, E.J. and Bowers, R. (1993), *The HBJ Anthology of Literature*, Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada.

- Timpanaro, S. and Narducci, E. (2005), *Contributi di filologia greca e latina*, Florencia, Università degli studi di Firenze.
- Traglia, A. (ed.) (1986), *Poeti latini arcaici I: Livio Andronico, Nevio, Ennio*, Turín, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese.
- Valesio, P. (1967), *Strutture dell'allitterazione. Grammatica, retorica e folklore verbal*, Bologna, Zanichelli.
- Wales, K. (2014³ [1990]), *A dictionary of Stylistics*, Londres – Nueva York, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Wight Duff, J. (1960), *A Literary History of Rome: From the origins to the close of the Golden Age*, Londres, E. Benn.
- Wilstach, J. A. (1884), *The Works of Virgil II*, Boston, Cambridge University Press.