

EMENDATION AND USAGE: TWO READINGS OF PROPERTIUS

Most modern editions of Propertius print the exclamation *a!* in two passages where it has been introduced by emendation:¹

1. 9. 30 quisquis es, assiduas *a fuge* blanditias!
 aufuge O, corr. Bolt
1. 11. 5 nostri cura subit memores *a! ducere* noctes?
 ah ducere Scaliger: *adducere* O (Vo. del. alt. d)
 educere Barber²

The use of the exclamation in these lines appears contrary to patterns of usage which emerge from an examination of Propertius, the Tibullan corpus, and all the elegiac verse of Ovid (see table 1).

The most noticeable fact revealed by these figures is the marked preference for *a!* to begin the line. Turning to the lines themselves, the exclamation is found to occur in a remarkably small number of phrases. The fifty-eight examples under column 3 can be grouped as follows: (*a*) *a quotiens* (sixteen times³), to which add the variations "a mea contemptus quotiens ad limina curres" (Prop. 1. 5. 13), "a mea tum qualis caneret tibi tibia somnos" (Prop. 2. 7. 11), "a, Neptune, tibi qualia dona darem" (Prop. 2. 16. 4), and "a quantum de me Panthi tibi pagina finxit" (Prop. 2. 21. 1). We see here a progression from the standard phrase *a quotiens*, through a change of word order, to the introduction of other correlatives. (*b*) *a peream/as/ant* (eleven⁴), to which add the variation *a potius peream* (Ov. *Her.* 19. 105).⁵ (*c*) *a nimium* (seven⁶), to which add *a nimis* (Ov. *Amor.* 3. 9. 4) and *audax a nimium* (Prop. 1. 15. 27, a variation *metri causa*, and one of the five

TABLE 1

	Lines	Frequency of <i>a!</i>		
		Total	First Word	Other Position
Propertius.....	4,008	21 ^a	19	2
Tibullus	1,710	8	7	1
Ovid.....	22,020	34	32	2

^a The figures per book are 7 (Book 1), 10 (Book 2), and 4 (Book 3). I do not include the two readings here questioned, nor the very doubtful reading *a speculo* (3. 25. 14), on which see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 215. D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 73, includes these readings when he gives the figures for *a!* as 9 (Book 1), 10 (Book 2), and 5 (Book 3).

1. The text is that of E. A. Barber (Oxford, 1960).
2. W. A. Camps (ed.), *Propertius. "Elegies" Book 1* (Cambridge, 1961), prints *adducere*.
3. Prop. 1. 18. 21, 2. 33. 11, 3. 15. 13; Ov. *Ars am.* 1. 313, 2. 567, 3. 481, *Amor.* 2. 19. 11, 2. 19. 13, *Her.* 5. 49, 9. 79, 16. 241, 16. 243, 17. 81, *Tr.* 1. 3. 51, 1. 3. 53.
4. Prop. 1. 6. 12, 1. 11. 30, 1. 17. 13, 2. 23. 12, 2. 24. 15, 2. 32. 27; Tib. 3. 4. 62; Ov. *Ars am.* 2. 272, 3. 494, *Fasti* 4. 240, 4. 241.
5. We find a similar usage in *a potius serves* (*Her.* 3. 1. 49), where some manuscripts read *at* or *aut*. Indeed, this line of investigation might well have some bearing on several readings in Ovid. E.g., at *Her.* 8. 104 "munus et hoc nobis diruta Troia dedit," Ehwald prefers *munus et a!*, an emendation which seems highly unlikely.
6. Prop. 2. 21. 15; Ov. *Amor.* 1. 3. 3, *Her.* 5. 123, 11. 43, 16. 287, *Pont.* 1. 8. 71, *Fasti* 2. 45.

examples from column 4). (*d*) *a pudet* (four⁷). (*e*) *a miser* (three⁸), to which add *a miseri* (Tib. 2. 1. 79). There now remain nine examples from column 3. Four of these are concerned with cruelty: *a dolor* (Prop. 1. 20. 32), *a lapis est* (Tib. 1. 10. 59), *a crudele* (Tib. 3. 4. 61), *a ferus* (Ov. *Tr.* 2. 77). Three express wishes (cf. the *pereo* group): *a valeat* (Prop. 3. 1. 7), *a gemat* (Prop. 2. 6. 31), *a nolim* (Ov. *Fasti* 4. 122). The final two examples, both from the Tibullan corpus (3. 4. 82, 4. 11. 3), also introduce wishes with the words *a ego*.

Of the five cases where the exclamation does not begin the line, the first, *audax a nimium* (Prop. 1. 15. 25), has already been discussed. The remaining four I quote in full: “quo fugis a demens? nulla est fuga: tu licet usque” (Prop. 2. 30. 1), “quid precor a demens? venti temeraria vota” (Tib. 3. 6. 27), “quid loquor a demens? ipsam quoque perdere vitam (Ov. *Tr.* 5. 10. 51), and “quid facis a demens? cur si fortuna recedit” (Ov. *Pont.* 4. 3. 29). The formulaic nature of this exclamation will now be quite obvious.

The emendations here questioned conform to none of the patterns of usage which the Augustan elegists evidently favored, a fact which, I think, must raise a doubt as to the validity of these emendations, whatever the difficulties of the manuscript readings.⁹

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7. Ov. *Ars am.* 3. 804, *Amor.* 3. 7. 19, *Pont.* 4. 1. 6, 4. 13. 19.

8. Prop. 3. 7. 61; Tib. 1. 9. 3; Ov. *Her.* 11. 110.

9. I gratefully acknowledge the help of J. P. Sullivan and the anonymous referees of *CP*.