is often qualified and may be introduced by pro or o but not always so. Some examples:

pro di immortales, quot ego voluptates fero, 
quod risones, quot iocos, quot savia... (Plaut. St. 657-58)
di immortales, quae superbia, quanta ignoratio sui, 
quam gravis atque intolerabilis adrogantia! (Cic. Clu. 188.1)
o di quam ineptus, quam se ipse amine sine rivali! (Cic. Q Fr. 3.8.4)  
oscula, di magni, qualia quotque dabat! (Ovid Am. 2.19.18)
qualis nox fuit illa, di deaeque, 
quam mollis torus! (Petr. Sat. 79.8.) 
hui, quam pauc3, di, locuntur Attici! (Auson. 13.5.3)

And, with yet further variation, Propertius himself writes 

di melius, quantus mulier foret una triumphus! (4.6.65)

If, then, in our passage he wrote, 

munera quanta dedi, di, qualia carmina feci!

di after dedi will have been lost by haplography. Vel is the filler which makes position, avoids elision, and renders sense of a kind. Finally, di separated from dedi by the main caesura would not offend the ear4).

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MISCELLANEA

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2) A (somewhat playful!) illustration suggested to me by my colleague Joseph Cotter.
4) Cf. (e.g.) mox ubi bulla rudi dimissast aurea collo (Prop.4.1b.131); quid nisi possedi dives avarus opes (Ovid Am. 3.7.50); Hippolytum pavidi diripuistis equi (Ovid. A.A. 1.338). For (vocative) di at caesura cf. Virgil: di, prohibete minas; di, talem avertite casum (Aen. 3.265).

INNOCENT ON THE FACE OF IT: AN OVERLOOKED OBSCENITY IN MARTIAL (6.6)

Martial presents us with an epigram which seems at first curiously flat (6.6):

Comoedi tres sunt, sed amat tua Paula, Luperce, 
quattuor: et σωφρόν Paula πρόσωπον amat.

There are three actors in a comedy, but your Paula, O Lupercus, loves four: Paula also loves the ‘silent face’.

The usual view among the few commentators or translators who choose to print this epigram is that it ‘intimates that Paula’s paramours were more than usually numerous’1). However, this is to miss not one but two

levels on which this poem operates. Martial’s epigram is a witty conceit. The passion of women for actors was a well-known theme in satire (cf. Juv. 6.60-75, 395-397; Petr. 126.6; Ov. Ars Am. 3.351-352). Martial’s first joke is to take this stock situation and insist that the conventions of the theater will apply in real life. Thus, the point is not that Paula has too many actors as lovers but rather given that she has four actor lovers in the erotic play she is staging, by the rigid application of stage convention only three can have speaking roles and the fourth must be a silent part (κωφόν πρόσωπον). As usual, Friedländer is exactly to the point: “Da Paula vier Männer liebt, muss man zu jenen noch einen Statisten hinzurechnen”).

However, a second joke has gone unremarked. The purpose of the epigram is not to number Paula’s lovers or to mock her (or her husband) because her passion for the theater extends even to the bit players, but to be able to make an obscene pun on the phrase κωφόν πρόσωπον. Translations using modern theatrical terms such as ‘walker-on’, ‘spear-carrier’, ‘l’attore muto’, ‘le personnage mute’ miss the dirt joke). The Greek is indeed a technical term for ‘non-speaking role’ but it also means literally ‘mute/silent face’. Paula has three actor lovers; she also loves ‘face’. We have here, then, a clear (if overlooked) and clever reference to oral sex, that is to cunnilingus.

Probably no joke in Latin, whether in books or on walls, was more frequent than the accusation of the os impurum, “the unclean mouth that supposedly results from oral intercourse”). Martial himself has over sixty epigrams on oral sex, either fellatio or cunnilingus or both). The field of ideas was so powerful that even the mere mention of kissing or of various words for ‘mouth’ could serve as a direct allusion to oral sex. This metonymy is found throughout the language on every stylistic level and has been thoroughly explored by Amy Richlin). Further, the obscene possibilities of the os impurum were such that they extended as well to words for ‘head’, ‘face’ and the like. Cf. for caput (the most common): Cic. Dom. 83, Cat. 88.8, 116.4, Sen. QNat. 1.16.4, Ben. 4.31.4, Suet. Jul. 22.2, Tib. 45, Mart. 2.42.2, 2.70.5, 3.81.5, 6.26.1, 14.74.2, Juv. 6.49, 6.301, Priap. 22.2; for facies: Mart. 3.87.4, Auson. Cent. Nupt. 104 (216 P.); for vultus: Aur. Vict. Caes. 5.7; cf. also the synecdoche of bucca, ‘cheek’ at Varro Men. 282, Mart. 2.28.4, 3.75.5, 11.61.2, and barba ‘beard’ at Juv. 9.49). Thus, there is a type of double remove, or two-layered allusion, where ‘head’, ‘face’, and related words serve as metonyms for os, which is itself a metonym (less a euphemism) for oral sex).

Paula’s love for ‘face’, recalls the obscene English usage in such slang phrases as ‘sit on my face’ or ‘give head’, or the French (mettre) la tête à l’état, to refer to oral sex. The pleasure of the joke lies in undoing the puzzle and working out the nested allusions: πρόσωπον means os, and os means oral sex. The adjective κωφόν also contributes to the obscene context, for the face is silent because the tongue is otherwise engaged. The