

ON OVID *REMEDIA AMORIS* 756

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at tanti tibi sit non indulgere theatri,
dum bene de uacuo pectore cedat amor.
eneruant animos citharae lotosque lyraeque
et uox et numeris bracchia mota suis.
illic assidue ficti saltantur amantes: 755
‡quid caueas auctor qua iuuat arte docet.†

In these lines, cited here following the extremely useful second Oxford edition by Prof. E. J. Kenney, Ovid advises the lover, who is in the process of getting over a disappointment, to refrain from going to the theatre (ll. 751-2), as he may encounter there a show put on by mime artists¹, who may weaken his resolve through music, song and dance (ll. 753-4), since in these shows dances are performed by actors pretending to be in love (l. 755), whose lascivious movements call for caution on the part of the spectator (l. 756).

*Multi viri docti*² have attempted to clarify this passage of the *Remedia*, perhaps the “più tormentato e più confusamente tradito”, to

¹ On mime, see the comments of A.A.R. Henderson (1979: 131); Chr. Lucke (1982: 321-6), with an extensive bibliography and illustrative passages from early authors; P. Pinotti (1988: 316-7); see also Luc. *salt. passim*, esp. 2, 5, 25, 67-8, 70-2, 79; R. W. Reynolds (1946: 77-84); G. Wille (1967: 178-85); J.C. McKeown (1979: 71-84).

² Cf. N. Heinsius (1661: 286, 478): *quid caueas actor, quid iuuat, arte docet*; and in his notes he also proposed: *quos caueas actor, qua iuuat arte, docet*; P. Burmannus (1727: 763): *qua [quas in notes] capias, actor, quod iuuat, arte docet*; R. Merkel (1881 [= 1852]: 250): *quid caueas, actor, quid iuuat, arte docet*; L. Müller (1861: 116): *quid caueas actor quid iuuat arte docet*; G. Némethy (1921: 62, 65-6): *qua caueas actor, quid iuuat, arte docet*; W. A. Camps (in G. P. Goold [1965]: 106-7): *quod caueas, actor, quam iuuat, arte docet*; Chr. Lucke (1982: 326-9): *quod caueas, actor, qua iuuat, arte docet*; G. Milanese

cite the perceptive comment of Pinotti³. However, no convincing solution has yet been found for this *locus desperatus*.

The problem lies in the fact that the pentameter ought to complete the sense of what has been set out in the hexameter, and therefore the term *caueas* does not seem to fit here, as Kenney noted in his first edition of Ovid's amatory works, in which he obelizes *quid caueas*. The pentameter should therefore make it clear just what would be so attractive to the lovesick spectator as to make it advisable for him to shun spectacles of this kind, namely the *mimos obscaena iocantes* to whom Ovid himself refers in *trist.* 2.497⁴. Lucian reminds us that pantomime could serve as a medicine to overcome one's lovesickness (*Salt.* 79). Yet, clearly to be avoided by anyone striving to achieve this is anything which might fire the flames of the past affair with the sorely-missed *puella*. As Prof. Kenney observed⁵, "if Ovid was to seem to want to see his pupils out of the theatre, would he not have been more direct and unambiguous?" And there can be no doubt that Ovid, both here and in his work as a whole, is nothing if not clear and direct.

First of all, the mime artist enjoyed the unconditional support of his audience, especially when he was playing the role of the lover tricking the foolish husband, as is clear from *ars* 1.501-2:

et plaudas aliquam mimo saltante puellam,
et faueas illi, quisquis agatur amans.

and *Trist.* 2.505-6:

cumque fefellit amans aliqua nouitate maritum,
plauditur et magno palma fauore datur.

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Accordingly, the lover who was almost cured of his disappointment should avoid identifying with the actor playing the part of the lover of the *puella*, for he would be obliged to support him (cf. *ars* 1.146) and

(1983: 31-7 y 1986: 231-2): *qui caueas? actor, qua iuuat arte, nocet*; E. J. Kenney (1995: 259): *quod (uel id) caueas: actor, qua iuuat arte, nocet*; J. B. Hall (1999: 103): *ni caueas, actor qua iuuat arte nocet*.

³ In his commentary cited above (1988: 317).

⁴ See G. Luck (1977: 150-1) on 2.497-8.

⁵ E. J. Kenney (1959: 260). One year previously (1958: 173, n. 1) he had also noted that "it is the dangers of the theatre, not its possible utility (implicit in *quid caueas*), that must be stressed".

would also see himself reflected in him. Now then, let us go back and read *faueas* plus the required dependent dative⁶ (*cui*) instead of the *quid/quod caueas* which does not really fit here. It should be mentioned in passing that there is frequent confusion in the manuscripts between *fauere* and *cauere*, as occurs for instance in line 695 above (*fauebis/cauebis*).

And secondly, what is it that the actor depicts with such ability that it arouses the expectations of the audience and the lover is therefore obliged to avoid? *Quod iuuat*, and, needless to say, what pleases the lover is the *puella* and his amorous recollections of her, whether real or imagined. The erotic expressions *quid iuuat/quod iuuat* is frequent in Ovid: *ars* 3,803 (*quid iuuat*)/*am.* 3.2.6; *ars* 1.674, 2.308, 515 (*quod iuuat*).

If I am not mistaken, the distich (ll. 755-6) should read as follows⁷:

illic assidue ficti saltantur amantes:
cui faueas actor quod iuuat arte docet.

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⁶ See *ars* 1.146: *nec mora, quisquis erit cui fauet illa, faue*; *am.* 3.2.7: *o, cuicumque faues, felix agitator equorum!*, and 67: *cui studeas, uideo; uincet, cuicumque fauebis*.

⁷ I am very grateful to Mr. J.J. Zoltoswki for the English translation. This paper forms part of a Research Project (BFF2002-02113) financed by the MCYT.

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