

# Actively Passive: Homoeroticism and Morigeri Slaves in Plautus

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## Introduction: Wives, Slaves, and Homoeroticism

Character: Alcmena, the wife, who unknowingly sleeps with Jupiter and is accused of adultery

1.) Plautus, *Amphitruo* 839-42:

non ego illam mi dotem duco esse quae dos dicitur  
sed pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupidinem, 840  
deum metum, parentum amorem et cognatum concordiam,  
tibi morigera atque ut munifica sim bonis, prosim probis

For my part, I do not consider that to be a dowry which is called a dowry,  
But chastity, modesty, composed desire,  
Fear of the gods, love of my parents and harmony with my relations,  
And that I be *morigera* to you and generous to the good, beneficial to the upright.

## Persa's Paegnium: *Morigerus* as a Means of Achieving and End

Characters: Sagaristio and Paegnium, two bantering slaves, the latter younger and more sexualized  
Toxilus, a slave and the lover of the play

Dordalus, the wicked pimp who is holding Toxilus's beloved hostage

2.) Plautus, *Persa* 284-86:

**Sag.** video ego te: iam incubitatus es. **Pa.** ita sum. quid id attinet ad te?  
at non sum, ita ut tu, gratis. **Sag.** confidens. **Pa.** sum hercle vero. 285  
nam ego me confido liberum fore, tu te numquam speras.

**Sag.** I see you: you have already been topped. **Pa.** So I have. What's it to you?  
But I have not done it for free, like you. **Sag.** Confident. **Pa.** I am indeed, by Hercules.  
For I am confident that I will be free, but you never hope to be.

3.) Plautus, *Persa* 804-810:

**To.** vin cinaedum novom tibi dari, Paegnium?  
quin elude, ut soles, quando liber locust hic. 805  
hui, babae! basilice te intulisti et facete.  
**Pa.** decet me facetum esse et hunc inridere  
lenonem lubidost, quando dignus <es>t.  
**To.** perge ut coeperas. **Pa.** hoc, leno, tibi  
**Do.** perii! perculit me prope. **Pa.** em, serva rusum. 810

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All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Reference throughout will be to the Oxford Classical Text edited by W.M. Lindsay.

**To.** Do you want to be given a new plaything, that is to say, Paegnium?  
Why don't you play, as you are accustomed, since this is a free place.  
Oh yeah! You have carried yourself fine and kingly.

**Pa.** It is proper for me to be fine and it's a pleasure to mock this  
Pimp, since he deserves it.

**To.** Go on as you began. **Pa.** This to you, pimp, whappow!

**Do.** I'm undone! He nearly struck me down! **Pa.** Pow, watch out again.

### **The Puer in Pseudolus: Morigerus so as to Maintain Agency**

Character: the *puer*, presumably a young slave, who laments his lot but matters not to the plot.

4.) Plautus, *Pseudolus* 777-78; 781-82:

*si quis non hodie munus misisset sibi,  
eum cras cruciatu maxumo perbitere*

If anyone has not sent a present to him today,  
Tomorrow he will perish with the greatest torture

*nunc, nisi lenoni munus hodie misero  
cras mihi potandus fructus est fullonius*

Now, unless I will have sent a present to my pimp today,  
Tomorrow I'll have to drink fuller's product

5.) Plautus, *Pseudolus* 785-87:

si quispiam det qui manus gravior siet,            785  
quamquam illud aiunt magno gemitu fieri,  
comprimere dentes videor posse aliquo modo

If anyone may give (something) by which my hand may be heavier,  
Although they say it to be done with much groaning,  
I think I'd be able to clench/hold back my teeth in some way.

### **The Slaves in Casina: Wifeliness, Sexual Arousal, and Being Willingly Morigerus**

Characters: Pardalisca, a maid of the wife, Cleostrata

Olympio, the steward of the horny senex, Lysidamus

Chalinus, the slave of the absent son, under the authority of Cleostrata.

6.) Plautus, *Casina* 896-914:

**Pa.** quid intus agitur? quid agit Casina?  
satin morigera est? **Ol.** pudet dicere. **Pa.** memora ordine, uti occeperas. 897-8  
**Ol.** pudet hercle. **Pa.** age audacter. 900

<post>quam decubuisti, ind' volo. memora[re] quid est factum?

**Ol.** flagitium est. **Pa.** cavebunt qui audierint faciant.

**Ol.** \* \* \* hoc magnumst. **Pa.** <rem> perdis. quin tu pergis? **Ol.** ubi

\* \* \* \* us suptus porro. 904-5

**Pa.** quid? **Ol.** babae!

**Pa.** quid? **Ol.** papae! 906a

**Pa.** \* \* \* est? **Ol.** oh, erat maxumum.

<ferrum ne> haberet metui: id quaerere occepi.

dum gladium quaero ne habeat, arripio capulum.

sed quom cogito, non habuit gladium, nam esset frigidus. 910

**Pa.** eloquere. **Ol.** at pudet. **Pa.** num radix fuit? **Ol.** non fuit. **Pa.** num cucumis?

**Ol.** profecto hercle non fuit quicquam holerum,

nisi, quidquid erat, calamitas profecto attigerat numquam.

ita, quidquid erat, grande erat.

**Pa.** What is going on inside? What is Casina doing?

Is she *morigera* enough? **Ol.** It shames me to say it. **Pa.** Recount it in order, as you began.

**Ol.** It shames me, by Hercules. **Pa.** Come now, boldly,

After you lay down, I wish you to go from there. Recount it, what happened?

**Ol.** It's a outrage. **Pa.** They, who have heard, will avoid doing it.

**Ol.** This was big. **Pa.** You're losing the matter. Why don't you go on?

**Ol.** When...next, underneath.

**Pa.** What? **Ol.** Ay ay ay!

**Pa.** What? **Ol.** Oh me, oh my!

**Pa.** ...is it? **Ol.** Oh, it was the biggest thing.

I feared she might have a sword; I began to search for it.

While I'm searching lest she have a sword, I take hold of the hilt.

But when I think about it, she didn't have a sword, for that would be cold.

**Pa.** Get out with it! **Ol.** But it shames me. **Pa.** Was it a horseradish? **Ol.** No. **Pa.** A cucumber?

**Ol.** Surely, by Hercules, it wasn't any vegetable;

Except, whatever it was, blight surely never touched it.

Whatever it was, it was so very big.

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