

Actively Passive: Homoeroticism and *Morigeri* Slaves in Plautus

This work explores the homoeroticism that arises from a male owner's sexual objectification of his male slaves, providing a detailed analysis of specific slave characters in Plautus's plays, the homoerotic relationship that they have with their owners by being *morigeri*, and the potential motives behind this *morigerus* behavior.

Plautus describes a variety of situations in which slaves actively play this submissive role for a purpose: *Persa*'s Paegnium admits his owner has mounted him, but knows that this will mean his freedom in the future; the *puer* in *Pseudolus* chooses to sell himself in order to purchase a gift for his owner's birthday, and thus avoid his owner's ire; Olympio, the bailiff in *Casina*, describes himself using wifely adjectives (*obsequens* and *morigerus*), and seems to have acquired his position as bailiff due to this "submissive" behavior; Chalinus, also in *Casina*, cross-dresses and plays the *morigera nupta* up through the wedding night, and even after being discovered, to seemingly annoy Olympio and Lysidamus.

The slave is in a constant state of negotiation between willingness and even eagerness to fulfill an order that aligns with the slave's own interest, on the one hand, and resentment at carrying out a degrading act that nevertheless may prove beneficial to the slave, on the other hand. In the same way that the term 'passive' can incorrectly connote inactivity, a slave does not behave in a *morigerus* way blindly. The motives behind that *morigerus* behavior are constantly changing and being negotiated, so that, even though the public transcript may suggest that the slave is submissively accommodating to his owner, the hidden transcript reveals that this *morigerus* slave is by no means inactive or unaware of the power dynamics occurring between him and his owner.

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