

The *servus callidus* is generally understood as a skillful puppeteer and master tactician in control of his surroundings, but when we look at Pseudolus, we find a very different type of clever slave. While Palaestrio in *Miles Gloriosus* ensnares his victims through an exceptional ability to predict his target's every action, Pseudolus manages to get the girl through his ability to improvise a plan, knowing that he may need to develop new plans as situations change. Looking at Pseudolus' need to replan, scholars have made attempts to explain how Pseudolus really is in control of the plot, skirting the fact that Pseudolus himself admits a certain lack of control over what is happening. Such treatment hides the potential Plautus finds in his clever slaves. In *Pseudolus*, Plautus produces a character who finds success not by manipulating the others on stage, but through his skills in adapting and improvising. The clever slave does not need to have all the answers from the start if he is ready to improvise when he needs to. This paper seeks to view Pseudolus as a different kind of slave, a successful one, though not entirely in control.

By emphasizing Pseudolus as the poet-playwright, Slater (2000) finds a slave who controls his own destiny. In sitting outside of the drama he creates, Slater's Pseudolus is immune to the onslaught of obstacles that he admits he faces, and admits he must change his tactics to avoid. Recognizing Pseudolus' lack of strong control on the drama, Sharrock (1996) finds an alternative method for keeping Pseudolus in a position of control. By looking at the "metacompositional" level, where Pseudolus as playwright knows how it will all turn out, Sharrock maintains a slave in control of his drama by claiming that Pseudolus may pretend not to have a plan, even though he must, since he is the *servus callidus* at the center of the play. By taking a prescriptive view on the stock role of the *servus callidus* as the slave who controls the drama, these approaches limit the potential Plautus unpacks in creating Pseudolus.

Plautus presents his audience with a slave who finds success despite his tenuous grasp over those around him. The plot is simple enough -- get a girl from a greedy pimp so the young man can enjoy her -- but this plot is complicated by the fact that Pseudolus must change plans at least three times. Each time Pseudolus finds his current plan at an impasse, he quickly shifts gears, making the most of the new situation. When Harpax arrives, Pseudolus appears confident he can swindle the soldier's messenger (600-603), but Harpax manages to escape, recognizing what Pseudolus is after, the wallet (641-644). As confidently as he proclaimed his plot on Harpax, Pseudolus announces his new plan (667-691). His initial plans are not perfectly crafted, but this is no problem. Pseudolus' skill is not in excellent planning, but improvisation. Each bump in the road is an opportunity to display a bit of creativity. A stumble along the way does not trip Pseudolus up, but gives him a new way to proceed toward his goal. This play presents a *servus callidus* of a different sort, a slave who revels not in his sense of masterful control over his environment, but his ability to adapt to any new challenge that comes his way.

Scholarship on *Pseudolus* has tended to focus its treatment on the overall trajectory of the plot, emphasizing Pseudolus' control on the final outcome. However, we must ask whether Plautus focuses on what Pseudolus' "control" on the plot ultimately brings about, or how Pseudolus maneuvers within the play through improvisation. Through Pseudolus, Plautus broadens the range of the *servus callidus*. Pseudolus is a failure if we measure him by the standards of Palaestrio, unable to bring his scheme to easy fruition, yet he manages to achieve his ultimate goal, despite needing several schemes. This suggests that the role is not so much about heavy-handed manipulation of others, but rather a flexible and adaptable attitude to the world, keeping open at any given moment several possible avenues to pursue.

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