1974

The Suitors, a Rhymed Farce in Two Acts

Derryl Barr

THE SUITORS

A RHYMED FARCE IN TWO ACTS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Derryl Barr

August 1974

ABSTRACT

THE SUITORS

A RHYMED FARCE IN TWO ACTS

Derryl Barr

July 26, 1974

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

The Suitors is an original two act rhymed farce that emulates but does not imitate the comedies of Plautus and Terence. Although the play retains many of the basic features native to Roman comedy, its author has modified or disregarded other features deemed less significant, according to the needs of his play.

The plot of the play is concerned with the traditional young lovers of Roman comedy, Zero and Blusha, overcoming the obstacles placed between them and the realization of their love. These obstacles include: Zero's impoverishment, which is compounded by his wealthy uncle, Doctor Pomo Pena Cyllicus who, at one-hundred-nine, has perfected a youth-love potion, and instead of properly dying and willing his wealth to Zero, has won the reputation as Rome's leading ladies' man; and Blusha's father, Glutius Maximus, who regards his daughter as a long term investment that can only realize a profit by winning him a wealthy son-in-law, which he is determined to obtain by selling his daughter's hand at an auction.

To assist them in overcoming these obstacles, Zero calls upon his slave, Minus to devise a witty scheme like those created by

clever slaves that they've seen in plays. Unfortunately, Minus is the antithesis of the clever slaves of Roman comedy, and the plan he devises only compounds the lovers' problems by making Blusha a candidate for a virgin sacrifice.

Inspite of Minus' blunders, fate moves to rescue the lovers. Blusha's two suitors, Zero's uncle, Pomo Pena Cyllicus, and Cyrillus Harmlus, a eunuch priest of Cybele, suffer a reversal of fortunes when Pomo's love potion and Harmlus' sacrificial wine become exchanged. The love potion considerably alters the personality of Harmlus, which leads the High Priestess of Cybele, a female thunderbolt named Sebore, to doubt his authenticity as a eunuch priest. And unfortunately for Pomo, alcohol, as he had informed his assistant and student, Inturnus, earlier in the play, reverses the potion's power, and while only temporarily indisposes a younger man, kills a man as old as Pomo. Thus, with the competition removed, Zero and Blusha are free to wed.

The text of the play is preceded by a discussion of the similarities and differences between <u>The Suitors</u> and original Roman comedy, and followed by a description of the methods and techniques employed in the writing of the play.

THE SUITORS

A RHYMED FARCE IN TWO ACTS

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Derryl Barr

August 1974

This Study by: Derryl Barr

Entitled: THE SUITORS, A RHYMED FARCE IN TWO ACTS

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

George Glenn

7/24/74 — Date
Chairman, Thesis Committee

Louise Forest

7/25/74 — Date
Member, Thesis Committee

Stanley Wood

7/25/74 — Date
Member, Thesis Committee

Upon recommendation of the Thesis Committee, accepted by

Gordon J. Rhum

Dean of the Graduate College

July 26, 1974 — Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORIGINAL ROMAN COMEDY AND THE SUITORS

The Suitors is an original rhymed farce that strives to emulate but not directly copy the plays of Plautus and Terence. I have freely employed, modified, or discarded the basic elements and features of Roman comedy according to the needs of my play. The result has hopefully produced a play that, while not being a literal Roman comedy, transmits a vestige of the comic spirit found in the works of Plautus and Terence in a form that is playable before a modern audience.

It is only natural then that The Suitors will differ considerably from true Roman comedy. An example of this difference is found in the play's setting. In The Suitors the action is set in Rome, while in the plays of Plautus and Terence the action is always set in a Greek city, usually Athens:

> You know our comic writers have a way
> Of claiming that what happens in the play
> Takes place in Athens, that it may appear
> To have a truly Grecian atmosphere.[1]

As shown above, Plautus was usually very careful to draw his audiences' attention to the Greek setting. Such prologues licensed for the stage

> . . behavior that was ordinarily forbidden. The censorship of Cato might prevail in every corner of the city of Rome, but it could not restrict the revels on the comic stage.

---

[1]Plautus, The Brothers Menaechmus, in Plautus: The Pot of Gold And Other Plays, trans. and intro. by E. F. Watling (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 103.

> Plautus therefore delivers to his spectators a taste of that other city, condemned by Cato as a place "filled with every sort of illicit enticement."[2]

Today, the censorship of Cato is long gone, and between the present era and Stoic Rome lies one of the most hedonistic and corrupt ages in history -- the age of Imperial Rome. No reverence for the Roman Ideal prohibits on the modern stage a master who is wearing a toga from being outwitted by his slave. Therefore, to reinforce the "Romanness" of the comedy, the setting for The Suitors is Rome and not Athens.

Another basic difference appearing in The Suitors is the relationship between Zero and Blusha, and social conditions generally reflected in Roman comedy.

> Young ladies did not appear in public; their parents married them off to men whom they had never seen. Consequently, if a young gentleman is to fall in love, it must be with some girl who is of inferior social class, and whom therefore he will not be allowed to marry; and a young lady cannot fall in love at all. A costly sacrifice is offered by society at the altar of female chastity. Young gentlemen dangle after always expensive and sometimes heartless courtesans; they purchase slave-girls with money which has to be extracted from the grasp of cantankerous parents by intriguing slaves; or else they fall in love with some modest girl in humble circumstances and form illicit, unstable unions which only the fairy wand of Comedy can turn into real marriages by revealing the glad secret that the girl is of better birth than she seemed to be.[3]

In The Suitors this situation is slightly reversed. It is Zero who in the eyes of Glutius Maximus is not "good enough" for his daughter, although they are seemingly from the same social class. The introduction of a free young lady into the action of the play does, however, have an

---

[2]Erich Segal, Roman Laughter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 40.

[3]W. Beare, The Roman Stage (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1965), p. 54.

antecedent in Plautus' Persa where

> . . . the plot of the comedy requires that a free and unmarried woman act the part of a Persian captive; she is a parasite's daughter, hence from a lower social level but her character is delineated with unusual skill. . .[4]

Still, in the overall social context of Roman comedy, such a defiant and free-willed character as Blusha is unique. In part her function is not unlike that of the courtesan found in many Roman plays in that she is held against her will by a guardian whose only concern is that she will produce him a profit. To a certain extent this relationship explains her unconventional behavior.

While not directly conflicting with any of the social or literary principles of New Comedy, the function of Minus in The Suitors does at least provide a contrast to the typical clever slave present in most of the plays of Plautus. The clever slave, a cunning master of intrigue who invariably is called upon to rescue his master from a dilemma, is a creation of Plautus. The extant fragments of Greek New Comedy contain nothing similar to him.[5]

In his role as a blundering intriguer whose plans fail, Davos in Terence's Andria seems to be the precursor of Minus. But Davos is not just a stupid blundering slave loyal to his master. Terence describes him as having an "evil nature and evil mind."[6] And Simo, the master whose

---

[4]George E. Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 254.

[5]Duckworth, p. 270.

[6]Terence, Andria, in Phormio and Other Plays, trans. by Betty Radice (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 27.

son Davos is assisting, is certain that his plans are made "more to annoy me than please my son."[7]

Thus Terence's creation is a rather sinister character, more concerned with doing harm than lending assistance. The use of such a character is in direct contrast to Plautine comedy where "even the cunning and unscrupulous slaves act out of faithfulness to their masters."[8]

It is this Plautine model of loyalty made simple rather than the model of Terence in Andria that Minus emulates. His loyalty and desire to help are unquestioned. It is his stupidity alone that stands as a barrier between this desire and its achievement. And as the plot progression in Plautus frequently depends upon the wit and successful machinations of the clever slave, the plot of The Suitors is equally dependent upon the failures and stupidity of Minus for its advancement.

The differences enumerated and described above are primarily academic. They serve only to demonstrate the fact that The Suitors is not a true Roman comedy, but only a view of Roman comedy from a Twentieth Century perspective. The elements of similarity, on the other hand, are more basic to the fiber of comedy itself and provide, if not an understanding of, at least a clue to the nature of the universality of the humor found in the Roman plays, and echoed in The Suitors.

The first of these more basic similarities is the employment, in both the original and the modern imitation, of comic irony.

> . . . Comic irony begins with Roman comedy. Among the fragments we have of Menander there are two in which irony is evident, but in neither passage is it used humorously. It is found so used for the first time in

---

[7]Terence, p. 28.

[8]Duckworth, p. 251.

> Plautus . . . Irony is his chief source of dramatic interest and he is a master of it . . . His usual way is to explain the action of the piece in a very long and exceedingly tiresome prologue, but the result of the detailed explanation is that the spectators are free to give their entire attention to the absurdities they are now in position to see through.[9]

Although The Suitors avoids the use of the prologue in favor of less obvious and less direct methods of delivering exposition, the audience is always better informed about the state of events than the persons in the play. They know Harmlus is on his way to tell Glutius that he does not want to buy Blusha when Minus accosts him with his clever plan; they know that alcohol reverses the effects of Pomo's love potion; they know that the cart has been turned reversing the order of the urns; and if they cannot always guess the results of the events (such as Harmlus' transformation) they do at least know that things are not progressing as the characters on stage believe.

A truly masterful stroke of comic irony occurs in Plautus' The Pot of Gold when Lyconides speaks of his seduction of Euclio's daughter, and Euclio thinks he is confessing to robbing his gold. The comedy comes from the audience's awareness that each character is speaking about something completely different from what the other character believes he is speaking about. Irony in a similar situation is also employed in The Suitors. The first encounter between Lotta and Inturnus is based upon the different manner in which each views Pomo: Lotta seeing him as the king of love, and Inturnus seeing him as his instructor in medicine. Thus Inturnus' boasts about his skills surpassing Pomo's means something quite different than he intends in Lotta's ears. The resolution of the

---

Edith Hamilton, The Roman Way To Western Civilization (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1932), p. 37.

conversation is quite rapid without any loss of the irony of the situation. Instead of a gradual resolution of conflict as mutual understanding occurs, Inturnus and Lotta never truly understand each other (indeed, later the confusion still provides humor) but are swept along beyond their discussion by the newly revealed passion of Inturnus. But even Inturnus' hypocritical display of passion is ironic. Pomo had warned him earlier:

> Beware young man, for he whose chosen path
> Forsakes his heart has earned the vengeful wrath
> Of love's sweet goddess, Venus, who finds it fit
> To prove each man of too much wit a doting hypocrite.

At the conclusion of this ironic scene, the prophesy is rapidly moving towards its fulfillment which comes two scenes later. Such comic irony, though somewhat streamlined, is Plautine in nature and origin.

Plautus' technique of characterization, the next basic element of similarity to be considered, is also a vehicle for his comic irony. Stock types abound in his plays, and the audience usually knows, upon a character's entrance, his nature and role. But within the confines of such stereotypes as: the clever slave, the braggart soldier, the penurious pimp, the callous courtesan, the youthful lover, the doting old man, the shrewish wife, and the hungry parasite, there exist numerous variations "and a wide range of human virtue and frailty."[10]

It is this ability to create interesting variations of the stock characters without violating their universal essence that enables Plautus' people to possess an animated uniqueness that gives life to his plays even today. Euclio, for example in The Pot of Gold, without ever

---

[10]Duckworth, p. 236.

becoming Roman, exemplifies all the Roman virtues of thriftiness to a comic extreme.[11]

Even Plautus' clever slaves show considerable variety within the stock form that Plautus himself created. A comparison of Tranio in The Haunted House, Pseudolus in the play of the same name, and Tyndarus in The Captives illustrates the great amount of variety this stock character can possess. Tranio is a scoundrel. The wild revels of his master's son were all begun at his prompting. His cleverness is also questionable. After his master's return, his clever schemes, one after the other, lead him into a continuously more awkward situation that can only result in the discovery of the truth and his punishment (punishment that he escapes thanks to Plautine deus ex machina). Pseudolus proves himself far more clever and somewhat less a scoundrel. His machinations start with a request for assistance from his young master and evolve into a plan that not only wins Calidorus, his master, the girl he desires, but also freedom and considerable money for himself. He carries all triumphantly before him, and unlike Tranio can quickly modify his plans to improve his chances of success. Tyndarus is completely different from either Pseudolus or Tranio. His clever plan unselfishly rescues his master from captivity, and when caught, he goes to what seems certain death proud that his dying will save his master. He proves comical only in moments of dire necessity, and on the whole is quite serious minded.

Such a varied collection of clever slaves illustrates how Plautus alters a stock character to suit the needs of his play. Not one

---

[11]Segal, p. 55.

of the three slaves mentioned above would prove suitable in the action of the other plays.

In The Suitors the modification of stock characters to fit the needs of the play is also found. The character of Zero is a prime example. At the opening of the play he is a typical young lover of Roman comedy: "compliant and invertebrate."[12] But Zero undergoes a transformation. He inherits not only Pomo's wealth, but also something of his uncle's ability to dominate the situation. The contrast between Zero's first encounter with Glutius and their encounter in the final scene clearly illustrates the change that has taken place in Zero's character. Although fate, so to speak, had set up the situation, it is Zero who must cross the last hurdle to win his love.

The character of Sebore also provides an interesting view of modification of a stock character. The matrona of Roman comedy is usually presented as "shrewish, hot tempered, suspicious and extravagant."[13] In Sebore's character these traits are clearly revealed, but the modification that makes her unique is not found in her nature, but in her role. She is not a matrona, but a high priestess, and the victim of her wrath is not a senex, but the seemingly faithless Harmlus.

Still another similarity is found in the general setting requirements for both the original Roman plays and The Suitors. The Suitors could have easily been played on the stages used for the productions of the original plays. Although performed a century before the construc-

---

[12]E. F. Watling (trans. and ed.), The Pot of Gold and Other Plays, by Plautus (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 150.

[13]Duckworth, p. 255.

tion of the first permanent theatre in 55 B.C., the plays of Plautus and Terence provide adequate information for the construction of a description of the typical setting employed:

> The actors performed on a long narrow stage which represented in most plays a city street. . . The normal background consisted of boards painted to resemble the fronts of one, two or three houses, with doors providing a means of entrance to the stage from the houses.[14]

The Suitors requires two houses along a street with an up center entrance from a garden. Even this garden entrance is not without an antecedent on the Roman stage.

> "At right angles to the main street a lane, known as an Angiportum, sometimes, if not always, ran back between the houses. By this angiportum access was had to the back or garden part of the houses. ."[15]

The settings for the original plays and The Suitors both require similar spatial outlines and relationships. But since the set for The Suitors will serve only one play, as opposed to the Roman settings that had to accommodate several plays during a festival, more individual detail can be given to set pieces to enhance the spirit of the play and reflect qualities of character. Thus Glutius' house can appear run down to reflect his miserly nature while the house of Harmlus can appear rather Oriental and effeminate to suggest the influence of Cybele.

The final element of similarity between original Roman comedy and The Suitors to be discussed is the employment of comic exaggeration. Plautus frequently employs exaggerated boasts as a comic vehicle,

---

[14]Duckworth, p. 82.

[15]C. Knapp, The Roman Theatre, A & A I (1915), p. 196, cited by Duckworth, p. 87.

especially in the person of the miles:

> The braggart warrior has an exaggerated idea of his charm or of his wit and his account of his military exploits soars to the realms of fantastic impossibility.[16]

In The Braggart Soldier not only the exaggerated nature of Pyrgopolynices' claims, but also the exposure of the extreme falseness of these claims provides humor. The contrast between his boasting about slaughtering seven thousand enemy soldiers in one day and his humble begging for mercy from Periplectomenus' cook when confronted with the severe punishment for attempted adultery, heighten the absurdity of his previous claims.

This well deserved exposure and punishment of the hypocritical braggart finds a parallel in the fate of Inturnus in The Suitors. But even more than "the brave and charming" Pyrgopolynices, "the man-of-mind" Inturnus proves his boasts to be false and himself a hypocrite by his own decisions and actions. Claiming love to be a base emotion, and Pomo's potion to be phony, it is only fitting that once Inturnus decides to make love with Lotta and drink the potion to assist him, he should be the first to fall victim of the switched urns.

The discussion above, in pointing out and explaining basic elements of similarity and difference between the original examples of Roman comedy and The Suitors, has sought to reveal that the essential fiber of the Roman plays consists of universal comic elements and concepts that can be successfully emulated, while elements dictated by the needs of the times, such as setting, social relationships and moral tone, can be altered without destroying the spirit of the comedy.

---

[16]Duckworth, p. 322.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beare, W. The Roman Stage. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1965.

Duckworth, George E. The Nature of Roman Comedy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.

Hamilton, Edith. The Roman Way to Western Civilization. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1932.

Knapp, C. The Roman Theatre. A & A I, (1915).

Plautus. The Brothers Menaechmus in The Pot of Gold and Other Plays, trans. and intro. E. F. Watling. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965.

Segal, Erich. Roman Laughter. Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1968.

Terence. Andria in Phormio and Other Plays, trans. Betty Radice. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967.

Watling, E. F. (trans. and intro.). The Pot of Gold and Other Plays, by Plautus. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965.

CHAPTER 2

THE TEXT OF THE SUITORS

Persons in the Play

Glutius Maximus	An Arch-Miser.
Blusha	His Daughter.
Lotta	A Slave in his Household.
Pomo Pena Cyllicus	One-Hundred-Nine Year Old Doctor and Suitor for the Hand of Blusha.
Inturnus	His Student.
Zero	Pomo's Nephew and Lover of Blusha.
Minus	Zero's "Clever Slave" and Lover of Lotta.
Cyrillus Harmlus	Chief Priest of Cybele and Suitor for the Hand of Blusha.
Sebore	Chief Priestess-Elect of Cybele.
Minor Priests of Cybele	Assistants to Harmlus.

The creative work referenced in this graduate thesis, consisting of pages 13-80, currently is not being made available in electronic format through UNI ScholarWorks.

Chapter 3

THE WRITING OF THE SUITORS

In the early stages of writing The Suitors, frustrated by the snail-like progress imposed by rhymed verse composition, I attempted to discard the couplet and convert the whole play to prose. The results were disastrous. What had already been completed in verse simply refused to be altered, and the new prose sections seemed flat — the characters lost individuality, and the humor inherent in the scenes evaporated in the syntax. On the whole, the prose sections lacked the time, thought, and effort that, after months of work, had given the opening a "rightness" that rendered it unalterable. Obviously, no "instant play formula" could be substituted for the time consuming process of etching word after reluctant word into metered rhyme.

It is this necessity of exerting thought and effort over an extended period of time, plus the succinct nature of verse, that leads me to believe that for my own purposes, composition in rhymed dialogue is the most effective means of dramatic expression. Ideas, characters, and situations have to be more carefully considered and verbally shaped and reshaped when they are to be expressed in verse.

I begin the process of versification with the composition of an original prose scenario that provides a working outline of the play. The scenario is revised until the plot line seems suitable, and then notes on characters, incidents, and character relationships are made. Occasionally, if difficulties arise, a more detailed scenario for a specific scene is written. It is from this assorted collection of

ideas, some written out, and others only carried in my mind, that the verse that is to actually be the play is shaped.

A look at the construction of a scene from The Suitors through its various stages will illustrate how these many ideas are formed and arranged into a functioning part of the play. The scene used for this examination will be the first meeting between Lotta and Inturnus.

Originally, in the first scenario (January, 1973) Lotta was called Mosta. Inturnus, whose character at this time was undetermined except for the fact that he was the doctor's assistant, had left the stage to fetch the doctor's love potion:

> Enter Inturnus out of breath carrying the jug of potion. Mosta opens the window in the house at right. Inturnus sees her. Fond remarks — Mosta asks for a kiss — Inturnus agrees and sets the bottle down on cart. Stops and takes quick swig of the potion. Runs to Mosta — embrace — hold.

By the Fall of 1973 enough of the character of Inturnus had emerged for it to be apparent that this scene held much more potential than the scenario indicated. But it was not until January of 1974, when full time writing of the play resumed, that his prudish, pseudo-intellectual nature clearly revealed itself. The scene in question then began to be regarded as the moment of truth for Inturnus, as the scene where he would impale himself on the shaft of his own hypocrisy.

The employment of comic irony seemed the most effective method for achieving this goal. The concept was simple: Let Inturnus carry on about how his own skills surpassed Pomo's, until Lotta, to whom Pomo's name was synonymous with virility, had to sample this new self-proclaimed champion. Inturnus, "the man of mind," would be led to the first embrace by his own naive stupidity. But the second embrace could only

result from the prompting of his newly discovered passion which he would enhance with a drink of Pomo's potion.

The task of setting all of this to verse proved challenging. The entrance into the scene in question was achieved through a shared couplet that served as a transitional element that briefly emphasized the character differences between Inturnus and Lotta:

Inturnus: My mind seeks only truth, and truth's above
The earthy facts one finds in love's pursuit.
(Above Inturnus, Lotta opens the window and looks about, finally seeing Inturnus below her)
Lotta: Well, hello . . .
Inturnus (looking up): Oh! er . . . hi.
Lotta: Say, you're kind of cute!

The opening line of the next couplet, the premise for the conversation that is to follow, came readily and needed no alterations except metric corrections and shortening:

"I don't recall my ever having seen you around before,"

was modified to read:

"I don't remember seeing you around before."

But the concluding line, Inturnus' reply, proved more difficult. Obviously, for quick development and accurate reflection of Inturnus' character, the reply had to be delivered as some sort of boast. The first idea considered was concerned with his being a student:

"Well, I'm a student and I haven't any time for"

Besides the meter being off, the idea of being a student didn't seem to be something about which Inturnus would boast, whereas the work he did would. The line was modified to read:

"Well, my work keeps me far too busy for
Much social life."

Lotta needed only to play the "my, I'm impressed" female role:

"My, you must be important!"

So far the conversation had proceeded in a manner similar to that of a normal courtship. Although courtship was not on his mind, Inturnus had attempted to impress Lotta with his significance in the male world of work, and Lotta, with typical female cunning, had led him on. It was now time for Inturnus to enhance his own significance with a little impressive name dropping. It was also here that the comic irony entered in:

Inturnus: Yes!
I really am. Although right now I must confess
I'm just a student of that famous man
Pomo Pena Cyllicus!

The last two lines caused problems. "Man" proved unsatisfactory for rhyming, Inturnus seemed far too humble, and no hint to the misunderstanding, so important to the scene, was inherent in the lines. Compounding all of this was a need for a quick rhyme as a reply from Lotta since the name "Pomo Pena Cyllicus" had already used up four of the allotted six feet. "Famous physician" was substituted for the closing of the line, and although alliteratively nice, it also failed to be suitable for a rhyme. Finally, "working under" was tried. This proved suitable for a rhyme, and enabled Lotta to provide the clue to the misunderstanding, so very necessary, in the several syllables left:

Inturnus: I'm just a student working under
Pomo Pena Cyllicus.
Lotta: Oh, no wonder
You're busy nights! A student of Pomo Pena Cyllicus!

The problem of Inturnus' seeming too humble was simply solved by adding the adjective "brilliant" before "student:"

"I'm just a brilliant student working under
Pomo Pena Cyllicus!"

But Inturnus' name dropping had worked too well. Lotta was more impressed with the mention of Pomo's name than she was with him. Somehow Inturnus had to get back as number one in her thoughts. This provided an ideal situation for enlarging upon the misunderstanding. With only minor alteration, the next several lines came quite quickly:

Inturnus: Well yes, but just between the two of us,
I'm really better at our art than he!

Now Lotta was truly impressed:

Lotta: Oh! Better yet than Pomo!
Inturnus: Oh, much! You see,
For half a year or so, Old Pomo's fame
Has largely rested on work I've done in his name.

The quick series of lines abruptly stopped at this point. The misunderstanding was now completely presented, but how was it to be developed?

The original ideas were mere repetitions of the basic premise stated in the preceding couplet:

Inturnus: In fact, I make all his house calls these days,
But he alone gets all the praise.

This going around in circles led the scene nowhere. Comic irony, if it is to be truly comic, must present a situation that is as conceivable from one view point as it is inconceivable from the other. With this in mind, the line was reshaped to read:

Inturnus: In fact, for each house call he makes these days,
I make no less than five, but he gets all the praise.

But the couplet was still needlessly burdened with the repetition of the idea stated in the preceding lines. Therefore, the line was once again modified. The redundancy was removed, a new rhyme incorporated, and the word "days" was made singular to exaggerate the inconceivability:

Inturnus: Why, for each call he's made a day, I know that I've
Surely made no less than four or five!

In the original draft Inturnus continued:

"But I don't mind. At work I'm quite inspired."

To which Lotta replied:

"Oh, my! Well, after work like that, I bet you're tired!"

Unfortunately, such an arrangement of thought seemed to complete the exchange, making no further development, at a vital instant, possible. By altering the remarks a little, and reversing the two lines, a sense of building and continuity was achieved:

Lotta: Oh, my! Well after feats like that, I bet you're tired!
Inturnus: Not me! Work only leaves me more inspired!

Not only did the rearrangement of the lines prove more suitable, but the simple replacing of the word "work" with the word "feats" in Lotta's line, greatly clarified the two divergent concepts.

This new arrangement easily led Inturnus into another boast that proved even more inconceivable to Lotta:

Inturnus: Why once my calls are done I often demonstrate
On Pomo all I've learned so he can evaluate
My skill.

Although this might prove jarring to Lotta's ears, it lacked somehow the vanity of Inturnus. A word change without altering the rhyme remedied the situation:

"On Pomo all I've learned so he can imitate
My matchless skill."

It also created an opening for Lotta. She'd be glad to help:

Lotta: Well, next time you want to show
Old Pomo all your skill, just let me know,
And you can demonstrate on me all night!

At this juncture care had to be taken not to destroy the effect or the momentum. Somehow Inturnus had to get into Lotta's arms without ever knowing that they had been talking about two different things.

The decision was made to keep the final line of Lotta's speech:

"And you can demonstrate on me all night."

and find a suitable rhyme for "night:"

Inturnus: How nice! I'm sure you'll expedite
My study.

This seemed suitable, but again didn't lead anywhere. Somehow the indefinite "you can demonstrate on me all night." had to be converted into definite action in the present. Several other approaches were tried and rejected before the idea of "practicing" occurred. This idea was shaped into a line by Lotta:

"But first let's practice to make sure I do things right."

But Lotta had no need for guarded conversation, and Inturnus, not Lotta, was the perfectionist. Therefore, the line, slightly altered, became Inturnus':

"That's fine! But first, let's practice so you do things right."

Presented in this sequence, Inturnus unwittingly propositioned Lotta.

The next two lines were very important. Somehow the comic irony had to be sustained through and beyond the kiss that divided the couplet. Surprisingly, the solution came after only several experiments:

Lotta: Practice? Oh! A good idea! Come here and we'll begin.
Inturnus (standing):
Out here? Alright, I'll check. . .
(Lotta grabs him in a tight embrace and plants a firm kiss on his lips. For a fleeting instant Inturnus fights, but soon succumbs to Lotta)
Oh, wow! What medicine!

Thus, without ever realizing the duality of their dialogue, Inturnus was lured into the embrace with Lotta. But even more important, he enjoyed the embrace without ever distinguishing this duality, as indicated by his lines immediately after the kiss:

"Oh, wow! What medicine!"

The stage was finally set for Inturnus to prove himself a hypocrite. All that was needed was for attention to be called to the love potion that he was still carrying, and an opportunity provided for him to use it. All this, of course, was readily supplied by Lotta in the final lines of the scene:

Lotta: That's nothing. Set that silly jug someplace,
And lover, I'll show you a real embrace.
(Inturnus is quick to comply, setting the urn of Pomo's love potion on the stage right end of the virgin cart. He then turns back towards Lotta but after several steps, stops, and with a strange gleam for the eyes of Inturnus, quickly looks back and forth between Lotta and the love potion. Suddenly he darts back to the potion, takes a quick swig and springs back to Lotta. They kiss in an embrace that lasts for several minutes)

The preceding description outlines only the major steps and considerations involved in transforming a section of prose scenario into an effective scene of verse dialogue. The evolution of the characters, the dialogue, and the very nature and significance of the scene itself is a process involving many long hours of thought and effort. Usually, acceptance of an idea or a line occurs only after the rejection of innumerable others. Although time-consuming, the method illustrated above has proven to be the only effective method that I have found for converting the loose ideas of a scenario into the tight limitations of rhymed verse comedy.