

CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED PLAY:

KOBINA SEKYI'S *THE BLINKARDS*

Introduction

The Playwright's Profile

Kobina Sekyi was born in 1892 in Cape Coast, Gold Coast, now known as Ghana. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, grandson of Chief Kofi Sekyi and had the name William Esuman – Gwira Sekyi. He had a sound education that Gold Coast had to offer the growing native elite of the time. He attended Mfantsipin Boys' School, renamed Wesleyan High School. Cape Coast was then the cradle of Gold Coast nationalism. He was brought up to believe that European culture was superior to African culture.

Sekyi had a fair exposure to European education and culture. He went to study English Literature at the University of London. There, he was persuaded by a fellow African student to give up English Literature in favour of a degree in Philosophy. He had a first hand exposure to British values in England but was thoroughly disappointed with the civilization. He returned to Cape Coast in 1913 and re-integrated himself into Akan-Fanti ways of life.

Sekyi returned to England in 1915 to study Law and had another contact with Europe. The contact added to his disappointment with Europe. On the voyage out, his boat, the SS Falaba, was attacked by a German U-boat and some lives were lost. Sekyi managed to get to a life boat but a European shouted at him to get off. The white man said that Sekyi, a black man, had no right to be alive when white men were drowning. The experience was painful for him and led him to reject Europe. Sekyi was convinced that African values and interests were unable to coexist with those of Europe.

Sekyi had an M.A. in philosophy and qualified also as a barrister. He questioned the European idea of "progress" in many essays. In them, he wrote on the confusion of civilization with "progress" and the latter with culture. He rejected Christianity (and Islam) when the vast majority uncritically accepted the religions. He listed many contradictions in the colonial society of the time. Sekyi wrote many poems between 1918 and 1952 to examine many of the questions he raised in the essays. The playwright wrote *The Blinkards* (1915). He died in 1956, the year before Ghana's independence.

Plot

In colonial Cape Coast, educated or anglicised Africans are made to believe that all things African are old-fashioned and are to be hated while European values are to be highly valued. The value placed on English culture makes Africans eager to acquire the culture. They do so in mainly two ways. One way is for the African to travel to England for some time. In England, he or she acquires English culture by interacting with the natives. The other way to acquire English education is by attaching oneself at home to somebody who has been to England and taking instructions from the 'been to'. A 'been to' is a slang for anybody who has been to England.

In *The Blinkards*, Mrs. Borofosem, a leader of fashion and wife of a merchant, travelled to England to acquire English values. After the woman's return from England, Mr. Tsiba, a cocoa trader takes his daughter to Mrs. Borofosem to give her English education. Also, Okadu approaches Mr. Onyimdzze to be taught English values. Onyimdzze had studied Law in England and returned to Cape Coast to practise the profession.

Certain books of social ethics are recommended to Miss Tsiba and Okadu. Both are exposed to read the same books. Okadu's objective for the training is to become smart and acceptable to Mr. Tsiba as a son-in-law and he works towards having a relationship with Miss Tsiba and succeeds.

Miss Tsiba and Okadu fall in love and get engaged the English way by following the rules of the book of ethics of relationship among the English. Each of them then goes ahead and tells his or her instructor. Mrs. Borofosem is pleased about it and convinces Mr. Tsiba that Miss Tsiba and Okadu's engagement follows the pattern in England. Mr. Tsiba, Mrs. Borofosem, Parson and several others are blinded by Europeanism and half education and continue with the wedding plan in English style. But several things go wrong with the marriage eventually.

Nā Sompa, Mrs. Tsiba struggles against the wedding but develops a heart disease and dies of heart failure. Tsiba goes against the tradition of the widower's confinement and allows the wedding to be conducted a week after her death. The couple proceeds from Halleluyah Church to Hamilton House for refreshments.

When news get to Nā Sompa's mother that her daughter has died, the old woman travels from the village to Cape Coast only to learn that her son-in-law and his daughter are attending a wedding when the son-in-law should be in the widower's confinement. She grieves over this, storms Hamilton House and discovers more sadly that it is her grand daughter's wedding.

Nā Sompa's mother, Nana Katawerwa, creates hell at the wedding reception. She tells everybody there that they are drunk on wine to consider the ceremony a wedding. According to her, nobody has asked her granddaughter's hand in marriage. She describes the English style wedding as strange and the people as barbaric for conducting wedding in the said manner. She takes Miss Tsiba from Okadu's grip and leaves with her to the village. According to tradition and in the old woman's words, she is Miss Tsiba's mother's mother and Tsiba belongs to her family.

Miss Tsiba is subsequently given out in marriage and Okadu reports a case of bigamy to the Commission. Bigamy is committed when a married person goes into another marriage. Nana Katawerwa is arrested and Miss Tsiba is sued for bigamy in the case of Rex V. Okadu. Lawyer Onyimdzé stands in as the defence counsel in the case. The plaintiff counsel refers to the Marriage Ordinance of 1884 in his argument but Onyimdzé argues that the ordinance has nothing to do with Miss Tsiba's case. He argues further that Okadu had not got properly engaged to Miss Tsiba but has only seduced her. He pleads successfully for Miss Tsiba and defends her. Judgment is entered in favour of Miss Tsiba in the case.

After winning the bigamy case, Onyimdzé becomes famous and is celebrated. People begin to follow the Lawyer's positive attitude to Fanti culture. People now take after him to wear native dress, sandals and respect native customs. Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem, Mr. Tsiba, 1st Man and 2nd Man are not left out in the cultural nationalism.

Subject Matter

The Blinkards is, according to its subtitle, a comedy. The comedy is a satire. The play focuses on a social epidemic and unthoughtful acceptance of the English values by African elite. Among the elite laughed at are

business men, cocoa merchants and opinion moulders produced by colonialism. The play condemns and laughs at Africans whose eyes are shut completely to the values of the African system. It looks at Africans who foolishly accept foreign social systems. The play attacks this vision and in its title suggests that these Africans have no vision. They are the Blinkards.

The Blinkards discusses the dangers of Europeanism. The play cautions that modernization is not to be equated with civilisation, or tradition with primitivism. The play is preoccupied with Europeanism, its mode of dressing, choice of diet or language of communication, and type of marriage ceremony. The play draws attention to the dangers and problems Europeanism creates for Africans. It lays emphasis on this, especially, where Europeanism is not approached and controlled by the creative and integrative elements of traditions.

Themes

The themes of the Blinkards are:

- (i) Conflict between European and Fantis marriage ceremonies and culture
- (ii) Disregard for African values and culture for European ones
- (iii) Love for English language and disregard for local language.

- (i) **Conflict between European and Fantis Marriage Ceremonies and Culture:** One theme of *The Blinkards* is the problems of European-style of marriages among the Fantis. The play treats a marriage contracted by anglicised or semi-anglicised Africans and the follies of those involved in it. The play laughs at those who conduct such marriages without creatively relating it to African traditional values. The play lists some categories of people involved in the follies of Europeanism and European – style marriages as African fashion leaders, business men, cocoa merchants and ministers of the church and certain professionals.

The marriage between Miss Tsiba and Okadu in the European style of marriage raised many problems. The requirements of marriage among the Fantis are different from those of English, and the law guiding marriage is different in each case. Under the native law, witnesses to an engagement are certain relatives of both parties; under the English law, the parties themselves, that is the man and the woman, may be the witnesses to their engagement. The people who conducted Tsiba and Okadu's wedding did so after an improper engagement, and so this rendered the wedding null and void.

In addition, an engagement requires the prospective husband to pay the earnest money to the relations of the wife-to-be. After the earnest money for the engagement has been paid and accepted, the woman is then released, especially by her mother's family, to her husband. If the couple then decide to proceed to the Church to further solemnize the relationship, they may do so. The people who conducted Tsiba and Okadu's wedding did not separate the values of the two marriage cultures.

Okadu, Kwasia and their sympathizers did not understand the Marriage Ordinance of 1884. They fail to realize that it cannot be used to charge Miss Tsiba with bigamy. According to Okadu, by marrying another man under the native law, she has committed bigamy. But Okadu with his sympathizers failed to realize that neither the ordinance nor the native law applies to his relationship with Miss Tsiba in the given circumstance. The requirements of the native law on wedding are missing in the relationship as stated earlier and so no valid marriage took place and Miss Tsiba cannot be charged with bigamy.

2. Disregard of African Values and Culture by Some Africans: Another theme in the play is that the tastes for certain foreign values can be disagreeable or funny. The play exposes the new class of Africans who were born and bred within African traditional cultural system but want to live like members of another race. It also examines African elite who mislead others into the same false values and irritating social pretensions. This class of Africans develops taste for English diets, dressing and language. Their taste for these however makes them ridiculous. They are uncomfortable with the values and only struggle with them.

Mr. Tsiba sees everything that is English as good and anything that is native and African as bad. The cocoa magnate prefers anything English to anything Fanti. He wants English dishes but he himself admits that he neither enjoys eating them nor knows how to take them. Mr. Tsiba's wife does not even know how to prepare these foreign dishes.

Mr. Brofosem is forced to put on English wears like pyjamas and shoes but says he feels uncomfortable in them. 1st Man and 2nd Man are not left out in the love to wear English dresses. But they too are not comfortable in these dresses. Mr. Borofosem, 1st Man and 2nd Man complain so much about the dresses and shoes. In the end, they begin to wear native clothes and sandals and speak of how free the feel in them.

Mr. Tsiba wants his daughter to be raised like an English lady. He takes her to Mrs. Borofosem to be given English education and made a white lady. Miss Tsiba is exposed to many things English. Books on English social ethics are recommended for her and she follows instructions in them to get herself engaged to Mr. Okadu. But Mr. Tsiba finds the procedure wrong and is not comfortable with it.

Mr. Okadu's experience is hardly different from Miss Tsiba's. The young man goes into the employment of Lawyer Onyimdzé so that the lawyer might teach him to be English. He seeks to be taught some European things to make him be like a white man. He makes the motive of seeking his training somewhat clear. According to him, he likes Miss Tsiba and wants to marry her. He adds that her father will consent to the relationship only if the man knows he, Okadu, is with somebody who has gone to England and is raised a white man. The lawyer agrees to train the young man and exposes him to many English values.

3. Love for English Language and Disregard for Local Language: Another theme in *The Blinkards* is the African's love to speak in the English language. The play mocks Fantis who imitate English public speech life but whose knowledge of the language is poor. The examples are to be found in the life of Cosmopolitan Club and its members. The members use English but fail to communicate most of the time.

Characterisation

Characterisation in *The Blinkards* has many sides to it. There are characters who represent Fanti traditional people and there are those who are social hybrids. Characters in the second group are a merger of Anglo – Fanti culture. In between the two classes are alienated Fantis. These are half-educated in English and also separated from Fanti customs. Characters in the play may also be categorized along those produced by the colonial economy, its education, social life and religion.

Characters can be categorised into major and minor characters, depending on how visible they are in the play. Mrs. Borofosem, Mr. Onyindze, Mr. Borofosem, Mr. Tsiba, Miss Tsiba, Mr. Okadu, Nana Katawerwa, Dr. Onwiewie and Nā Sompa can be described as the major characters in the play. The other characters are minor characters but they are also important in the play.

Mrs. Borofosem

Mrs. Borofosem is represented in the play as ‘a leader of fashion’. She is married to Mr. Borofosem, a merchant. She is a high society woman. She married her husband in the church and is semi anglicised. Mrs. Borofosem is semi-educated and not fully informed about the English way of life. She thinks her short stay in England sufficiently makes her educated in the western way.

Mrs. Borofosem uncritically copies British culture. After her trip from England to Cape Coast, she sets life in her home by English standards. She allows her husband wear pyjamas and slippers in the house, when the family has no visitors. She tells the husband to smoke cigar and spread the ashes about.

She is a fairly beautiful woman and is respected in social circles. Her beauty is suggested in her husband’s statement that ‘she jumps to the eyes’. The husband adds that nobody could help not looking at her. The much air of respect she has about herself and her English tastes reflect at the garden-party in Victorian Park and the girls’ response to her personality.

Mrs. Borofosem rules her husband. Her husband understates this fact by saying that he had to allow her travel to England so that she would not make his life miserable. She confesses her domineering nature in her speech to the women at the garden party. She states that she learnt her domineering nature in England.

Mrs. Borofosem is the modern woman. She has no time for domestic chores and hardly stays at home. She is out most of the time. She is either attending one social function or another, or calling on friends. She says she hopes Onyimidze does not like his wife to go to the kitchen.

Mrs. Borofosem alienated to African culture. She considers everything about her native culture as primitive. She seeks to anglicise every aspect of Fanti culture. She dislikes people speaking Fanti, bearing native names or taking native diets.

Mrs. Borofosem prefers English culture but her understanding of the culture is very low. She speaks incorrect English and pronounces English names wrongly. She prefers to call Miss Tsiba by her English name. She pronounces ‘Ermyntrude’ as ‘Erimintrude’. She follows English ways of life which does not fully understand.

Mrs. Borofosem grows in the story. In the end, she follows Mr. Onyimdze’s philosophy and begins to reverse her imitation of English values. She now learns to wear native dress and sandals and speaks about the comfort they give. She gives up her madness about being kissed or called ‘duckie’ by her husband. She makes up her mind too to speak Fanti to Fantis from then on.

Mr. Borofosem

Mr. Borofosem is the husband of Mrs. Borofosem. He is a merchant. He works hard to earn the money that keeps up the wife's expensive taste. He is a social hybrid. He was born by parents who set out deliberately to make him European. He was brought up learning foreign ways at home. Subsequently, he was sent to England.

Mr. Borofosem is a tolerant husband who values the peace of his home. To obtain this peace, he agreed with the wife to go to England. After doing that, he admits that he made a mistake and blames himself for allowing the wife to go there. He regrets the action when the wife came home and insisted that they must live the English way.

Mr. Borofosem loves singing. Whenever he appears in the play, he has a song on his lips. He appears to be a student of music in England. He reported that he had a voice training. He switches with ease from English songs to Fanti ones. He also plays the piano.

Mr. Borofosem is not a blind imitator of the European ways of life. He was born into the life of imitation but showed early in life some resistance to aspects of European life that he found uncomfortable. He reports how he was often caned for not wanting to wear boots and thick stockings. He confesses he always used to take them off when he was 'beyond view of the parental eye'.

Under the influence of his wife, Mr. Borofosem imitates European manners. He starts to resist his wife in this regard later. He becomes bold and learns how to wear the native dress. According to him two events make him to begin to do this. One is Onyimdzé's success in Okadu's daughter's case. The success is interpreted as the triumph of Fanti tradition over English culture. The second event is the trouble Nyamekye got the wife into. The trouble also led Mrs. Borofosem to review her love for Fanti culture.

At the end of the play, Mr. Borofosem is Kobina Sekyi's spokesman. He instructs 1st Man and 2nd Man on Fanti lore. He teaches them to be reasonable and adopt European tastes that are not harmful to them but are suitable to African climate. He observes the need for Fantis to follow their customs and adopt the ways of other races a little less. He suggests Fantis should do what will keep the present generation of Fantis as healthy as the people of the old days were.

Mr. Onyimdzé

Mr. Onyimdzé is a Fanti elite and a social hybrid. He was born in the Cape Coast and was brought up there till he was seventeen. After, he was sent to England. He spent many years in England and studied Law there. After his education in England, he came back to Cape Coast to practise.

Onyimdzé is a nationalist. He realized that he was more anglicised home than in overseas. He took steps to reverse the trend and become a Fanti man who has a mixed education. While in England, he took time to keep up his Fanti. Back home he takes native diets (*ahe, boredze ntoetoe*) and puts on native dress.

Onyimdzé is a respectable leader in the society. Okadu seeks to be identified with him so that Mr. Tsiba might consent to his (Okadu's) relationship with Miss Tsiba, the daughter. Onyimdzé accepted to be Okadu's instructor and mentor without any secret motive. He objects seriously to Okadu's missteps in the matter relating to Miss Tsiba and instructs Okadu to correct it. When Okadu fails to do so, Onyimdzé stands in court against Okadu. He

objects to Okadu's English-style engagement, tells Okadu to engage properly to Miss Tsiba and when he refuses to, Onyimdzee defends Mr. Rex against Okadu in the bigamy case.

Onyimdzee shows much respect for Fanti tradition. He states that there are many people who have not set foot out of Cape Coast but who are worth ten thousand of those who have lived in some Whiteman's land.

Onyimdzee is a very humble but firm person. He shows Parson some respect, and takes and stands the priest's hat and umbrella in a corner when the minister visits him in his office. The lawyer replies the priest on 'point of the Bible' and clears the priest before Nana Katawerwa on his evidence in the witness-box. However, when the priest becomes too proud, the lawyer calls him to order.

Onyimdzee accepts he is also to blame for the affair between Okadu and Miss Tsiba. He works to correct the situation and charges no money for doing so. He does not capitalise on Mr. Tsiba's generosity or Nana Katawerwa's but pleads with them to rise that he is glad to defend them.

Onyimdzee is Kobina Sekyi's alter-ego. He is the author's voice and model in the play. He reflects Sekyi's key ideas in the play and his mode of presenting them. Like Sekyi, Onyimdzee regards characters like Mrs. Borofosem and Kwasia with a mixture of pity and contempt. At the end of the play, Onyimdzee becomes, for most characters, a model cultural nationalist and they begin to follow his example.

Dr. Onwiegie

Dr. Onwiegie is another Fanti elite and social hybrid in the play. He is a physician and surgeon. He studied in England. He returned to Cape Coast and started a private practice. Initially he had some difficulties before he could have patients to operate on. Fanti people were afraid to be operated or said he could not do it, because he is not white, and black surgeons were scarce. After sometime, patronage to his hospital increased, especially after he has operated successfully on so many people. The success of his surgical operations earns him the name 'the Ripper'.

Dr. Onwiegie practises according to the oath he is sworn to as a medical doctor. He has pledged to save as many lives as he can and stands by the oath. He refuses, against all inducements, to destroy a life or place another life in danger. He refuses to be lured into anything unethical by the school-girl sent to his clinic by Mr. Seehon. He tells her to go and come with her mother, if the girl wants to be examined. He turns down Mr. Tsiba's offer to give him two hundred and fifty pounds to have Miss Tsiba's pregnancy aborted.

The medical doctor appreciates Fanti culture and steers clear of any suspicion in the conduct of his practice. He examines women patients only in the presence of their female relations or their husbands. This practice boosts his personality and gives him the confidence to invite Mr. and Mrs. Wompem to clear his name from any suspicion from the woman's husband.

Onwiegie is a law-abiding citizen and hates to be blackmailed. When Mr. Tsiba keeps increasing his offer to the doctor to get the latter to agree to terminate Miss Tsiba's pregnancy, the medical doctor tells him that if he does not go, he, the medical doctor, shall be forced to send for the police. His law-abiding nature and hatred to be blackmailed reflects in his manner of responding to Mr. Wompem's letter. In the letter, Mr. Wompem pleads with him, the medical doctor, to leave Mrs. Wompem, his wife, alone. The doctor tells Mr. Wompem's that if the latter

says he, Dr. Onwiewie, is fooling around with Mrs. Wompem, he will take it for blackmail, because if it was true, the man would prosecute him for it. The doctor finally warns that he shall hand to a lawyer any person who seeks to blackmail him.

Dr. Onwiewie is a firm person and does not mix pleasure or family matter with his practice. When Kwesi, against the doctor's instruction, uses a knife in the operating room, the doctor asks the dispenser why he let Kwesi go into the room. When the dispenser clears himself on the matter, the doctor warns Kwesi, his cousin, never to take anything from the operating room again or else he gets a good whipping.

Dr. Onwiewie is observant and current about developments around. He discovers Kwesi's swollen hand without being told. He is aware of the developments in Tsiba's family; he knows of the relationship between Miss Tsiba and Mr. Okadu that goes wrong.

The medical doctor represents the Fanti professional class that has been able to mix European culture and Fanti culture in the right proportion .

Okadu

Okadu is a major character in the play. He is a Fanti young man of a marriageable age. He was formerly working at Chutney's and Co Store, but was dismissed from there. Okadu was dismissed from there for calling Ipay 'a white savage' when the white man kicked him. Okadu then pleads with Onyimdzé to employ him as a clerk.

Okadu approaches Onyimdzé that the lawyer might teach him some European things to make him be like a whiteman. The young man admits that he does not have enough money to travel to England. Serving as Onyimdzé's clerk therefore provides Okadu another way to acquire European civilisation.

Okadu is a smart fellow. He is interested in Miss Tsiba and likes to marry her. Knowing that Mr. Tsiba will not support the relationship unless the cocoa magnate knows that he, Okadu, is with somebody like Onyimdzé who has gone to England, he finds a way around the problem. Okadu pleads with Onyimdzé to employ him and the lawyer does and Okadu thus overcomes the problem.

Okadu is fairly intelligent. He takes instruction from Onyimdzé and learns fairly fast much about English life. He adopts easily English social life and in a 'lightning way' gets himself and Miss Tsiba engaged English fashion. The young man has pre-marital sex with Miss Tsiba and lays himself open to the charge of seduction. He is *so charged* and found guilty. He pays Mr. Rex *ayefar*, the fine imposed by customary law on a seducer.

Okadu is a member of the Cosmopolitan Club. Like most members of the club, he finds superficial things about the Europeans to thank them for. He lists many things to thank Europeans for. Among them are churches, lorry-weddings and making public speeches. He represents those people Grandfather Akodee describes as swayed by outward appearances to conduct their wives into churches.

The young man is disrespectful to elders when he is under any pressure. When he takes a policeman to effect the arrest Nana Katawerwa, he engages Mr. Tsiba in a fight. When Old Fisherman mediates that Mr. Tsiba should see

Okadu's behaviour as the sign of the times, Okadu tells the old man that he is 'old savage stupid'. Also, he threatens to have the old man arrested.

Okadu represents the upcoming elite and their blind imitation of European values. He willingly and blindly embraces foreign values. He demonstrates this willingness by approaching Onyimdzé to be trained to be like a white man and by joining Cosmopolitan Club. As a member of the club, he adopts the names Alexander Archibald Octavius Okadu. He loses so much in the end. Miss Tsiba is married to another man according to the native law. Okadu goes to court to challenge the validity of the marriage but loses the case. He also pays Miss Tsiba's husband a fine.

Mr. Tsiba

Mr. Tsiba is a cocoa magnate. He is one of the characters produced by the colonial economy. He belongs to the Fantis who have bought the idea that all things African are conservative and to be despised and that a thorough anglicisation and Christianization is 'civilisation and progress'. The cocoa farmer went up to standard seven and the education must have anglicised him much the way he is. He got the name of her daughter from a book he saw the day the girl was born. He gave her a name which he confesses that he cannot pronounce correctly. He calls the name 'Erinmintude' instead of 'Ermyntrude'.

The cocoa farmer takes his daughter against her wish to Mrs. Borofosem to be trained and given 'English education'. He requests that the fashion leader teach her daughter all that she, the fashion leader, has learnt in London so that the young girl might be a fine lady like the Fashion Leader.

Mr. Tsiba is wealthy and loves to show off his wealth. He shows off his wealth many times in the play. He organizes an elaborate society wedding for his daughter. He tells Mrs. Borofosem that he has 'some money' and 'many cocoa land' to be able to pay her to train his daughter. Also, he tells the doctor that he is ready to pay so much to have his daughter's pregnancy aborted.

Tsiba is a ridiculous character. He recognises the difficulty he has, observing many western cultures. He finds it difficult eating with fork and knife but concludes that he has to come to terms using them. He feels at home in native dress and eating native food but does not want people to see him doing so. He orders that his native dishes be put away whenever somebody who detests *that* comes to visit him. When visited by Mrs. Borofosem and Okadu, he tells Kofi his son to hide the native food in the cupboard and goes ahead to change into pyjamas before he attends to his two guests.

Mr. Tsiba is easily deceived by Mrs. Borofosem's foolish imitation of English values. He is pushed to agree to the English fashion engagement between his daughter and Okadu and goes ahead with the church wedding. Na Sompa resists the wedding and states that the earnest money for engagements has not been paid but Mr. Tsiba's eyes are blind to the distortions and cultural confusion in the relationship between the young people.

The cocoa magnate's imitation of English culture makes him an idiot and alienated African. This blind imitation has some demoralising effects on his character, especially when he loses his wife. Because he wants an English wedding for his daughter, he forgets that the girl belongs to her mother's family. Because he desires a European style wedding be done quickly, he leaves the widower's confinement to attend the wedding a week after the death of his wife.

Mr. Tsiba's character suggests that he is a failed Christian. He discovers Miss Tsiba is pregnant and pleads with the doctor for 'Christ's sake' to abort the pregnancy. The persuasion fails eventually. Mr. Tsiba overlooks the reason he gives the doctor that being pregnant before wedding defiles the church but allows the wedding to go on.

Tsiba grows in the end. He eventually overcomes his alienation and dances to the tune of Nana Katawerwa on Miss Tsiba's marriage to Mr. Rex. Mr. Tsiba confronts Okadu and fights him when the latter attempts to arrest the old woman. The cocoa magnate joins the team who visits Onyimdzé to thank him after the lawyer has won the case against Okadu. In Tsiba's characteristic display of wealth, he pleads with the lawyer to 'charge even a big amount' for the case won.

Nana Katawerwa

Nana Katawerwa is the mother-in-law of Mr. Tsiba and the mother of Akosua Nā Sompa. She is fairly aged. She lives far off hinterland and speaks Fanti. Following the death of her daughter she comes down to Cape Coast to see her son-in-law and granddaughter but learns that both are at a wedding. She rushes to the wedding and expresses shock at Mr. Tsiba that he neglects his wife's obsequies. She also expresses her disappointment at Miss Tsiba that she fails to observe her mother's funeral custom. The woman realises at the wedding reception that it is Tsiba's wedding.

Nana Katawerwa confronts all the people at the wedding that nobody has asked her granddaughter in marriage. She frees Miss Tsiba from Okadu's hand and leaves the hall with her. Nana Katawerwa understands what Fanti customs *are*, acts on their requirements and cuts Okadu to size.

It is significant to note that Nana Katawerwa comes into the play after Grandfather Akodee has been given the floor to speak at the reception. The man speaks in Fanti and stresses the importance of native tradition in a marriage. Nana Katawerwa is thus introduced to establish other things about the place of tradition in wedding and how age groups relate. The woman distinguishes English culture from Fanti. She affirms that she is Tsiba's mother's mother and that in Fanti the child belongs to the woman's family.

Nana Katawerwa is arrested in connection with the bigamy case. But after the case is won, she is released. After winning the case, she and representatives from the extended family visit Lawyer Onyimdzé to show their gratitude.

Miss Tsiba

Miss Tsiba is the daughter of Mr. Tsiba and Na Sompa. She is by nature a shy young lady. She reveals this side of her at the first meeting with Mrs. Borofosem and Onyimdzé respectively. She is a very obedient daughter and this reflects much in her undertaking to do many things her father tells her to do even when she does not like to do them. She undertakes to be given 'English education' against her will and shows her reluctance to it severally. She loves Fanti and her ways. She speaks in Fanti against all directives in her first meeting with Mrs. Borofosem.

Miss Tsiba learns fairly fast in her training in English way of life. But she retains Fanti values that are essential to her well-being and gives reasons for her choice too. She shows this part of her at the visit to the lawyer. She rejects Onyimdzé's offer of wine and states that he does not like the wine because it smells like Elixir. She

rejects cake and chocolate for *boredze ntotoe*. When she is persuaded to take a creamy chocolate, she says she dislikes it because something inside it is like *that* inside cockroaches and beetles.

Miss Tsiba learns fast English social values. The progress shows in her interaction with Okadu at the garden-party in Victoria Park. She understands Okadu's 'business trip' or fall and interacts with Okadu accordingly. Miss Tsiba is able to evaluate Okadu's intention and love advances. She gets engaged to Okadu the English way. She gets married to Okadu at Hallelujah Church.

Miss Tsiba recognises initially only the outward appearances to her engagement and wedding to Okadu. The deep issues about the social contract between her and Okadu become clear to her at the reception. She realizes the problems with her marriage when Nana Katawerwa appears there. At that point she cries for placing her wedding above her mother's funeral custom. Asked what the white dress she is wearing is *for*, her confidence to speak deserts her and her statement drowned in sobs: '(Sobbing) I – am – a – bride'.

At Nana Katawerwa's instance, Miss Tsiba is taken away from Okadu and is married according to the native customs to Mr. Rex. Subsequently, she is sued for bigamy. She appears in court but is discharged and acquitted by the court of law. She is a part of the team that visits Lawyer Onyimdzé and expresses gratitude to him for defending her and winning the case.

Miss Tsiba is fondly called by Mr. Tsiba by the name 'Barbara'. The father gave her in addition the name 'Ermyntrude', which he saw in a book the day she was born. The young lady announces herself however as 'Araba Mansa', the names by which her mother and grandmother call her throughout the play.

Setting

Setting in *The Blinkards* appears scanty. The playwright's submission on the place where the play is set is very thin: '*Place Cape Coast. Time The Present*'. More can however be brought out about the setting of the play.

The play is set during the colonial period. The time is apparently when Fanti culture and English culture are struggling for dominance. Cape Coast of the time is under the King and is semi-urban, administered by Indirect Rule. The major occupations are suggested as *farming* and fishing. Mr. Tsiba is a cocoa magnate, and there are many fishermen in the play.

The colonial nature of the setting is arrived at in many ways. One is the existence of the colonial hospital. Dr. Onwiegie advises Mr. Tsiba to go to Colonial hospital to confirm the diagnosis made by him. Doctor Onwiegie had diagnosed that Miss Tsiba is pregnant. Another is the presence of the western legal system. Lawyer Onyimdzé refers to the existence of an English law-court for natives. According to him, the court was established by white men 'who came here of their own free will, and tampered with our national life'.

There are two levels of government in *The Blinkards*. Matters come for settlement either before the King or the different law courts. The bigamy case, Rex Vs. Okadu, goes before one of the law courts. Dr. Onwiegie tells the man who brings him the letter of 'blackmail' to inform its writer to come with his wife to explain the content of the letter or else that he, the doctor, will bring him before the King.

The Cape Coast of *The Blinkards* is semi-urban. There, native custom is still very strong, even when there is the rising influence of foreign values. The existence side by side of the native law courts and colonial ones explains this. Characters like Mr. Tsiba and the wife are still struggling to understand foreign diets and how to prepare or eat them. European twine exists in stores and some fishermen still make some twine themselves for their fishing nets.

The cultural setting of *The Blinkards* is matriarchal. Children in the marriage belong to the family of the wife. Okadu alludes to the system in his statements to Onyimdzé. The youngman says that his mother gives him everything he wants. The matriarchal culture is set in clear terms in Nana Katawerwa's declaration at the reception. She states that Miss Tsiba belongs to her mother's family and takes the young lady away from the reception.

Language and Style

Language in *The Blinkards* can be discussed from many angles. These include the bilingual approach to characterisation in the play, the playwright's use of an epigraph or poetry and malapropism. Sekyi introduces *The Blinkards* with the use of an epigraph. The epigraph is from Robert Burns(1759-1796):

O, wad some pow'r the giftie gi'e us
To see oursels as others see us!

The language used in these lines is Scottish, an English dialect. Burns' lines appear to be from his collection, *Poems, Chiefly in Scottish Dialect*. Burns wrote in the period following the Augustan or Neo-Classical Age. The Age is believed to be the culmination of the literary and critical modes of classicism whose mode is dominantly satire.

Therefore, a satirical mode is at the heart of Burn's lines, the epigraph in Sekyi's *The Blinkards*. The prayer is that one's faculty gives one the power to see oneself as others see one. This prayer is ridiculous. It stresses that blackman's imitation of the white man suggests that the black man is seeing himself through the lens of the white man. This idea holds up the black man up to ridicule.

Bombast and Malapropism

The Blinkards focuses on clear and unintended wrong use of diction or grammar by many characters. Characters mistakenly use words, phrases and idioms incorrectly or in place of other ones that the expressions resemble. The effect is generally comic. Mr. Tsiba says that 'the blackest ladies are most beautifullest'. This is comical and shows his incomplete understanding of the English language. Mrs. Borofosem says: 'So to kill one bird with two stones, I have returned your call, and at the same time introducing Miss Tsiba to you.'

Mrs. Borofosem's understanding and interpretation of the idiom, 'to kill two birds with a stone' is highly comical. The members of Cosmopolitan Club are, in the main, associated with wordy and inflated diction. Take for example, the toast proposed by Mr. Nkuntee to the health of the bridesmaids at the reception. The use of bombastic language and its comic effect in the toast are clear:

My eyes are effusive of their joyful lachrimosity to perceive *coram* us this reception, and its bride and bridesmaids of amazing pulchritudity. I harbour expectation that they too will be espoused, and not recommend

celibacy to youngmen, and will be led to the hymeneal altar.

Poetry in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*

Kobina Sekyi is recognized to have written many poems. Famous among them is 'The Sojourner', a long poem. The poetic instinct in Sekyi is evident in *The Blinkards*. The evidence is in the recitations by Okadu and Mrs. Borofosem respectively. The recitation by Okadu is said to have originally appeared in 'The Sojourner' while Mrs. Borofosem's song 'I'm glad I've been to England' is also a poem.

Revision Questions

1. Examine three ways by which Kobina Sekyi establishes that the society in *The Blinkards* is matriarchal.
2. Compare and contrast the characterisation of Okadu and Miss Tsiba in *The Blinkards*.
3. Discuss three episodes that are at once serious and comical in *The Blinkards*.
4. Examine Kobina Sekyi's portrayal of the professional class in *The Blinkards*.
5. How has Kobina Sekyi portrayed two Fanti Christian converts in *The Blinkards*?

Objective Questions

1. The epigraph that introduces *The Blinkards* is from a poem by _____.
A. Robert Burns B. Robert Frost C. Robert Browning D. Robert Browne E. Robert Lowell
2. The name of the servant to Mr. Onyimdzé is _____.
A. Nyamekye B. Atamfurafo C. Half-crown D. Akosua E. Ahyentarfo
3. The name of the person who married Okadu and Tsiba is _____.
A. Oyemfew B. Oehubi C. Kyerewfo D. Odziekyir E. Akodee
4. *The Blinkards* is set in _____.
A. Gold Coast B. Cape Coast C. Slave Coast D. Ivory Coast E. Coal Coast
5. One character produced by the colonial economy in *The Blinkards* is _____.
A. Mr. Beehon B. Mr. Tsiba C. Dr. Onyimdzé D. Dr. Owieye E. Mr. Okadu
6. *The Blinkards* is about the _____.
A. beauty of colonialism B. uncritical acceptance of Europeanism C. evils of modernisation D. dangers of civilization E. ills of Christianisation
7. *The Blinkards* is _____.
A. an epic B. a mock-epic C. a satire D. a burlesque E. a farce
8. _____ is Kobina Sekyi alter-ego.
A. Onyimdzé B. Oyenifew C. Onwieye D. Mr. Borofosem E. Okadu
9. The social club famously the umbrella for many characters in *The Blinkards* is called _____.
A. Metropolitan Club B. Cosmopoli's Club C. Metropolis Club D. Cosmopolitan Club E. Oligopolitan Club
10. The matriarchal figure in *The Blinkards* is _____.
A. Mrs. Borofosem B. Miss Tsiba C. Atamfurafo D. Nana Katawerwa E. Nana Abireku

Answers to Objective Questions

- (1) A (2) B (3) A (4) B (5) B (6) B (7) C (8) A (9) D (10) D