

KOBINA SEKYI'S THE BLINKARDS AND JAMES ENE HENSHAW'S MEDICINE FOR LOVE- A STUDY IN THE MANNER OF COMIC PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at analysing how Kobina Sekyi and James Ene Henshaw use satire to produce comedy in The Blinkards and Medicine for Love respectively. Since both plays are satires, comedy and satire are defined. This is followed by a discussion of each play, looking at their synopsis, themes, characterisation and style. Finally, there is comparison of the two plays and a conclusion drawn. The conclusion is a reflection that satire is one of the controlling elements in African comedy. The two dramatists have looked at what goes on in the society as a source of motivation to come out with their comic plays. They possess the ability to provoke laughter in the audience and in the end give them pleasure. One can categorically state that The Blinkards and Medicine for Love satisfy the characteristics of comic plays.*

KEYWORDS: Comedy, Satire, Invective, Dramatic Irony, Comic Effect

INTRODUCTION

Scholars are not capable of giving a sufficient explanation to the term comedy. Styan (1968) states in *The Dark Comedy* that:

Ideas about the comic have never been expressed as abundantly as those about tragedy, both because the seriousness of comedy has not been as evident to writers as its more impressive high toned counterpart, and because the ways and intentions of comedy may be tiresome to explain. (38)

Some people have, however, made some attempts to define the term “comedy”. Holman and Harmon (1980) in an attempt to define comedy, in *A Handbook to literature*, juxtapose it with tragedy and state that “compared with tragedy, comedy is a lighter form of drama that aims to amuse and that ends happily.”

In common present day use, the word comedy almost refers to the creation or presentation of humour with the intention of provoking laughter. The most obvious reference is that more often comedy elicits laughter. In contrast to classical tragedy, comedy usually concerns the lives of everyday people and revolves around their conflicting values and beliefs. These characters are seen as social beings with humorous foibles than as solitary figures isolated from the rest of the world by flawed character or fate. According to Costello and Tucker (1989) in, *Forms of Literature*,

Comedy allows its audience to maintain a certain distance from the events it depicts. For in this dramatic mode, we are

comfortably assured of a happy ending, we can laugh at the mishaps and misunderstandings on the stage, since we know they are bound to be temporary.

Most comedies contain variations on the elements of surprise, incongruity, conflict, repetitiveness and the effect of opposite expectations. There have been many recognized genres of comedy and they are basically classified in terms of the various functions of the different forms. Satirical comedy uses “ironic comedy to portray persons or social institutions as ridiculous or corrupt, thus, alienating their audience from the object of humour.”

Comedy of manners “typically takes as its subject a particular part of society (usually upper class society) and uses humour to satirize the behaviour and mannerism of its members. Screwball comedy derives its humour largely from bizarre, surprising and improbable situations or characters. Black comedy is defined as dark humour that makes light of so called dark or evil elements in human nature. Romantic comedy is a popular genre that depicts burgeoning romance in humorous terms and focuses on the foibles of those falling in love. It is worth stating that this list does not exhaust the recognized genres of comedy, there are a lot of others. Holman and Harmon add another genre which is farce comedy and explain it as ‘a term sometimes applied to comedies that rely for their interest chiefly on farcical devices but that contain some fully comic elements elevating them above most farce.’”

It could be deduced from the above genres that the element of humour which runs through the definitions makes them rightly fit in the primary definition of comedy.

Having defined comedy, it is important that satire is defined since it is the medium through which selected works produce comedy. ‘a satire is a literary genre in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement.’ (Elliot, R.C. 2004). Elliot adds that although satire is usually meant to be humorous, the purpose of satire is not primarily humour, but criticism of an event, an individual or a group in a witty manner. Satire usually has a definite target which may be a person or group of people, an idea or attitude, an institution or a social practice. Often the target is examined by being held up to ridicule, ideally in the hope of shaming it into reform. A very common almost defining feature of satire is a strong vein of irony or sarcasm. A good example of a prose satire is George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* which is in a form of fable. It tells of a group of farm animals who revolt against their human masters and organize to run the farm themselves on equalitarian principles. “*Animal Farm* represents Orwell’s final disillusionment with Soviet Russia in the Stalin period.” (Ward 1970)

One common feature of satire is irony. Elliot quotes Northrop Fryre in his essay “the nature of satire” that “in satire irony is militant”. This irony often professes to approve values that are the diametric opposite of what the satirist actually wishes to promote.” He adds that parody, burlesque, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy and double entendre are devices frequently used in satirical speech and writing. One other device used in satire is invective. For the purpose of this discussion, however, focus will be on the way in which the writers use irony, invective and exaggeration to present their satire.

Synopsis of the text, *The Blinkards*

The Blinkards is a play which tries to illustrate through the semi-educated Mrs. Borofosem how many “been tos” behave when they return from abroad. Most of these people try to imitate English mannerisms and reject things African.

Mrs. Borofosem returns from Europe and does her thing the European way. She transfers this idea to her husband who seems not to be comfortable with her behaviour. Mr. Tsiba, a cocoa farmer, on the other hand, is easily taken in by Mrs. Brofosem’s ludicrous imitation of English mannerisms. He sends his daughter, Miss Tsiba, to Mrs. Borofosem to be taught English ways.

Mr. Okadu, a young man in the play is in love with Miss Tsiba and thinks that, in order to win her love he also needs to be trained by someone who has been to Europe. He goes to Mr. Onyimdzi, a young barrister, to be trained. Okadu and Miss Tsiba fall in love and Mrs. Brofusem arranges for them to marry in the European style. Nna Sumpa, Miss Tisba,s mother disapproves of this marriage and this eventually leads to her death. Mrs Brofusem who initially rejects everything African, is finally seen to have changed from her ways, and begins to embrace things African.

Synopsis of *Medicine for Love*

Ene Henshaw’s play *Medicine for Love*, is also a satirical comedy. It talks of a young man, Ewia Ekunyah, the hero of the play, whose relatives have married three wives for him without his consent. In the introduction to the play, the reader is made aware that Ekunyah faces three problems. The first is the question of who traditional wives are; the second is that of achieving his public ambition of winning an election and finally, whether to employ the methods dictated to him by his reason, education and religion to solve his domestic and public problems or to employ traditional methods which are represented by a medicine –man.

The three wives married for him become a great burden to him. He calls on the medicine-man, Agatarata, to help him solve this problem and also help him with his political ambition. Ekunyah sells his three houses and dishes out a lot of money to his voters through Joss, his political agent. With all these efforts and money spent, he loses the election because his name is unfortunately not included in the list of nominees. As a result, his counterpart is elected unopposed. He collapses on hearing this message but later recovers and realizes how stupid he has been.

Ekunyah’s aunt Dupeh gets married to, Bonga, the man who buys Ekunyah’s houses. The man restores Ekunya’s houses to him. Two of his wives Bekin Wari and Ibiere Sua leave his house to marry other men. Ekunyah then settles down with his third wife, Nene Katsina, who he truly loves.

Comedy in the Two Plays

With the idea of what the plays are about, it is necessary at this stage to turn to the analysis of the first play. *The Blinkards* is a satirical comedy. H. V. H. Sekyi states in the foreword to the *Blinkards* that:

It satirizes, thoughtfully but mercilessly, a kind of social epidemic which first appeared along with the missionaries in the lives of our forebears in the eighteen fifties, gathered

strength through the rest of the nineteenth century and raged in the opening decade, of the twentieth. It began with the total rejection of African religious belief in favour of Christianity; it went on to the total confusion of Christianity with Christendom-of all that was good with all that was European.

Kobina Sekyi creates the comedy in his play through the use of themes, characterization, language and some devices like dramatic irony, invectives and exaggeration. In our discussion, we will occupy ourselves with the way in which he presents his satire through these devices.

Sekyi discusses the themes of the alienated African and warns against the dangers of excessive Europeanization. Mrs.Borofosem is the character around whom excessive Europeanization is woven. She is a semi-educated woman who has been to Europe and she is now back to Africa.

She thinks everything African is evil. She objects to native dressing, food, marriage and the use of local language. For instance, she together with Miss Tsiba, visits Mr.Onyimdzi, the young barrister. Mr. Onyimdzi gives options for serving them a piece of cake or chocolate or "buredzi tutui," that is, roasted plantain. Miss Tisba opts for "buredzi tutui."Mrs.Borofosem who objects to local dishes says: "Do behave, Erimintrude. A cake is more genteel than buredzi tutui. Or else, take a chocolate. I recommend creamy ones. All young ladies in England chop creamy chocolates" (Act I sc.I p.42)

Mrs.Borofosem insists that her husband wears pyjamas and slippers in the house. She makes him smoke and spread the ashes on the carpet because she claims "she heard in England that cigar-ashes were good for carpet." Sekyi is by this behaviour criticizing people who overindulge in things European and see them as the best to the detriment of things African. Dr Ohweyie confirms this attitude of Ghanaians, when he says to Mr. Onyimdzi the lawyer:

When you come to think of the difficulties I have passed through before I could have patients to operate on, you will get headache. At first some said they were afraid, others said I couldn't do it, because only white men could operate. True to a certain extent! When a white surgeon is unfortunate in an operation nothing is said. If it had been a black man who had such bad luck, the outcry would be loud and long (Act II sc. III p.76)

Her husband, Mr. Borofosem, on the other hand, is upset with her insistence on things European and wishes he could be allowed to do things in his own way.

Mr Borofosem: I heartily curse the day my wife decided England for a while. Ever since then, I have had nothing but we must do this, because it is done in England, we mustn't do that, because it is not done by English people and so on. It serves us jolly well right for allowing ourselves to be dazzled by all the flimsy foreign frippery.....The worst of it is that some of us got into this foreign ways through no fault of our own. We were born into the world of imitators, worse luck...and blind imitators at that. They see a thing

done in England or by somebody white then they say we must do the thing in Africa. (Act I sc. I pp. 21, 22)

These speeches depict the kind of lifestyle Mr. and Mrs. Borofosem lead. They are alienated in their own home and this is what Sekyi attempts to warn against. Here Sekyi is satirizing the manners of these characters and this brings out the comic effect in the play.

Again, Sekyi criticises the follies and problems of European styled marriages, contracted by semi Anglicized Africans. Miss Tsiba a daughter of Mr. Tsiba, a cocoa farmer, is brought to Mrs. Borofosem by her father to teach her European ways.

Mr. Tsiba; I have bring my girl for English Education....
You make her behave like a white lady. Teach her all the things you have learn at London. By the grace of the big one in the sky, I get some money. I have many cocoa land. I want you to make her English. (Act I sc. I p. 32).

Tsiba is engaged to Okadu without the knowledge of her parents. Mrs. Borofosem comes to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Tsiba only to introduce Okadu to them that he has engaged Tsiba. This goes contrary to the African custom. Mr. Tsiba is initially furious, but when Mrs. Borofosem explained that, that is the way it is done in England he readily accepts it.

Mr. Tsiba: (Disappointed) oh! So, in England, the news that your daughter has dashed herself to a man is good news? And they spend so much money on she-male education?

Mrs. Borofosem; Yes

Mr. Tsiba: then it must be good I didn't know that before.
(Act II sc. p. 67)

Miss Tsiba's mother, Nna Sumpa, and her grandmother, Nana Katawirwa, are vehemently opposed to this proposal, and this eventually leads to the death of Nna Sumpa. This also confirms what Costello and Tucker state that: "Rarely are comedy and tragedy to be found in their unadulterated form in life or in art." Sekyi has set out to write a comedy, but has brought in a tragic incident and this brings in the idea of tragi-comedy. In spite of this, Mrs. Borofosem and Mr. Tsiba still go ahead to conduct the wedding ceremony between Tsiba and Okadu in the English manner without informing the extended family members. This among the Fanti people, where the play is set, is unheard off. Under normal traditional circumstances the death should have been attended to before the marriage contracted. Consequently, it is not surprising that Nana Kat enters furiously.

Nana Kat: Where is Tsiba? They said he is here. Get out of my way. Where is Tsiba? Now Tsiba, do you wish me to understand that you are here merry making... O man of ill omen. What are you doing here? Give me back my daughter. Where is Sumpa? Have you not killed her with your heartlessness? And where is Araba? Do you want to kill her too? That I will prevent... Tsiba I am surprised at you. Have you, whose wife died a week ago, left the room of widower's confinement to attend a wedding? (Act III sc. I p. 102)

Sekyi puts these words in the mouth of Nana to depict the follies in marriage contracted in the European manner. In our Ghanaian context, marriage involves both families of the couples, therefore, before any marriage is contracted both families must be in the know to avoid problems. Sekyi uses these scenes to bring out the demoralizing effect of Christianity on African womanhood.

Besides the themes, characterization constitutes part of Sekyi's technique to bring out comedy in *The Binkards*. The names of characters like Mr. Tsiba, Mrs. Borofosem and others, help Sekyi to satirize some manners of individuals in the society. The name Mrs. Borofosem itself, which literally means Europeanism, is a source of comedy. She behaves in accordance with her name, and her behaviour makes her a comic character. She actually creates humour by her behaviour. For instance, she insists that her husband calls her "duckie".

Mr. Borofosem: well ducks?

Mrs. Borofosem: don't say "ducks" say "duckie". Mr. Gush always have said "duckie" not "ducks". Say "duckie" and I will call you "darling" as Mrs. Gush do (Act I sc. I p. 23)

Her husband sings in English language and this she very much admires, because she claims 'it is like a white man's voice.' When she again sings in Fanti language she exclaims:

Mrs. Borofosem: (looking shocked) oh, Jim!

Mr. Borofosem: (surprised) Hello, what's up.

Mrs. Borofosem: How can you sing such a thing? It is only Bushmen and fishermen and stupid and rascals who sing that sing (Act I sc. I P. 25)

Her husband yawns and she thinks it is impolite because Mrs. Gush a white lady says so:

Mrs. Borofosem: Mrs. Gush says if a man yawns when a lady is speaking to him, his manner is shocking. It is good I returned from England the time I have come. If I was stopping only three months more, you become bushman: you have gone out in native dress when I was in England. You have eat native chop all the time I am away. Scandalous! Shocking. (Act I sc. I p. 29)

She is involved in a lot of humorous incidents and with these, Sekyi has rightly named her and made her the true comic character.

One other comic character is Mr. Tsiba. He sees everything that Mrs. Borofosem does as right. He even goes to the extent of sending her daughter to Mrs. Borofosem to teach her English manners. Mr. Tsiba represents people in the society who copy blindly and this Sekyi criticizes. Mr. Tsiba views Mrs. Borofosem as all-knowing and perfect being. Therefore, whatever she does or says is right. Through his interaction with Mrs. Borofosem, one sees him as a comic character. For instance, when he brings her daughter to Mrs. Borofosem to be trained, he is seen off after their long conversation. He then re-enters and says:

Mr. Tsiba: Mrs. Borofusem, some book I have reading say: "all modest young ladies blush at certain times". I look in the dickhendry and I see "blush" means to redden in the face. Also I look modest and see "chaste", I know "chaste" the minister explain this to me. But I think "blush" is an English powder for face. I have never seen it here order some for my daughter I have my cocoa farm. (Act I sc. I p. 32)

This utterance by Mr. Tsiba, gives the audience an idea that he is a semi-literate black person, struggling to be European.

One other interesting scene which depicts Mr. Tsiba as a comic character is where his daughter is indisposed and he sends her to the hospital, only to be told that the girl is pregnant. This remarks makes the audience laugh. The following conversation ensues:

Mr. Tsiba: (Wildly) impossible! It can't happen! My girl is virginity.... Hello, Barbara, why you cry? Doctor says you get a baby. You are not well; all the concerts and picnics and balls make you tired.... Speak what's matter with you.

Miss. Tsiba: kookoo

Dr, Ohw: (To Mr. Tsiba) if you doubt my words, take her to a colonial hospital. You will find a white doctor there and perhaps you will be satisfied with his diagnosis. I should add that the thing is four months old.

Miss. Tsiba: only three mo-

Mr. Tsiba: eh! What you say? What is three months? I am sadness. I am grief. (Act III sc. I p. 85)

Nyamekye, the servant of Mrs. Borofusem, is another comic character that Sekyi creates.

He is portrayed as a typical village boy who is not conversant with the European ways. He enters walking towards the door of Mr. and Mrs. Borofusem; he sees them kissing and stands still for a while with his mouth wide opened. He raises his hands in surprise and shouts: "Meewoo! Kyire minguan. Abendazi na m'ebohui." (Good Lord! I'll run back. What is this that I have seen?)" (Act I sc. I p.25) he then jumps back towards the door as if he has seen something extraordinarily fearful. The audience is likely to laugh at this situation, hence, Nyamekye's suitability as a comic character.

Apart from this special crafting of character as a source of comedy. From the language of most characters, it can be deduced that even those who profess to be "Europeans" are half baked; and this is also portrayed in the kinds of grammatical mistakes they make. Such class like Anglo-Africans is what Sekyi regards with a mixture of pity and contempt. Alexander Pope once said: a little learning is a dangerous thing. Drink deep or test not the Pierain Spring. There are shallow draughts intoxicated in the brain. And drinking largely sobers us again... "This quote can be a nice advice for Mrs. Borofusem. Mrs. Borofusem herself, who claims to know everything about the language and encourages ladies to speak the language, has a lot of

shortfalls in the speaking of the English language. On one occasion when she is conversing with Mr. Onyimdzi she says:

Mrs. Borofusem: Well, I am surprised! Fancy being able to talk Fanti like that, when you have spent many years in England. How can you remember! Most young men don't able to understand vernacular when they return from England. (Act I sc. I p. 41)

She again remarks in act one scene one, when she was conversing with Mr. Tsiba: "Your daughter can't be able to blush. I mean her skin don't allow it to be clear when she will blush." These and other statements prove that Mrs. Borofusem herself is not a perfect example of Europeanization. Mr. Tsiba also says this after her daughter's marriage. "Praise touch God for the kindness he has taken to show me Amen! I am glad that my daughter has marriage English fashion"

Another manner in which comedy is created through the use of language is Sekyi's ability to tailor language to suit the characters. Mr. Onyimidze is portrayed by Sekyi as a learned man; therefore, he speaks Standard English. Half crown, Mr. Onyimdzi's servant, on the other hand, is an illiterate and he is always using pidgin language. For this reason, Mr. Onyimdzi also uses the pidgin language when he is speaking to Half-crown. There is a visitor at their door and the following conversation ensues between the two:

Half: Some man day, sah

Mr. Onyimdzi: What kind man?

Half: E get plenty fine clo'es, big collar, boots shine all same glass.

Mr. Onyimdzi: All right; tell him say come.

Half: Yas sah.

Mr. Onyimdzi has the ability to blend Standard English with pidgin. Mrs. Borofusem and Mr. Tsiba on the other hand, are seen always forcing themselves to speak the English Language but with a lot of grammatical and expressional mistakes. Sekyi uses Mrs. Borofusem and Mr. Tsiba to depict the follies in excessive Europeanization. They become objects of ridicule since whatever words they utter elicit laughter from the audience. Nyamekye, Mrs. Borofusem's servant is always heard speaking Fanti. Since he is portrayed as an illiterate, his use of the Fanti language suits him.

One device worth mentioning under Sekyi's use of language is his use of invectives. Invectives are harsh, abusive language. Mrs. Borofusem is first introduced insulting Nyamekye, her servant, because he has swept away some dried leaves in her book. This she claims is the European way of drying leaves.

Mrs. Borofusem: Look here, you idiot, what are you up to? Give me those leaves (.....) you are too much of a bushman. Haven't I told you that, in England, leaves are placed in books to dry the books when the leaves are dry, being placed in the drawing rooms? (.....) And what have you swept

those ashes for? How often do you want me to tell you that cigar ashes are good for carpets? Do you know that, in England, cigar ashes are used to kill the moths in the carpets? (...) You are great nuisance. Get out of this room. How sweet this room looks. When I reflect that our forefathers had only Ntwima to scour their floors with, and had no pretty washes for their walls, I feel glad that I was not born in their days, when they lived their lives in darkness. I am particularly glad to have been born in the period when Religion had brought us refreshment. (Act I sc. I p. 18).

The girls who are also learning from her are portrayed in Act Two, insulting each other.

1st Girl: You are imitating me, aren't you?

3rd Girl: You are too silly.

1st Girl: Your clothes do not suit you.

3rd Girl: Your conduct does not suit your clothes. (Act II sc. I p. 56)

From the use of these abusive words, the audience is able to decipher the kind of woman Mrs. Borofusem is. She herself is not polite, and therefore has nothing good to offer the girls learning from her. The irony of the matter is that, Mrs. Borofusem claims she was born in the period of refinement, yet, she is worse than those born before her so-called period of refinement.

The use of the Fanti language is also worth mentioning as a good style. Sekyi retains the Fanti translation of the English language in some sections of the play to prevent the loss of the dramatic effect and of the meaning, since he has a cape coast audience in mind. His use of Fanti proverbs and allusions enriches the play with morals. Perhaps Sekyi's aim is not to entertain but also to instruct and to provoke debate on major socio-cultural problems. In a conversation between Parson and Mr. Onyimdzi in Act four, Parson uses a lot of biblical allusions which seems to be didactic. For instance, he quotes bible texts as: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." "Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." These texts serve as pieces of advice to the audience.

Apart from language, Sekyi uses some principal devices of satiric comedy. One of the devices that Sekyi uses is dramatic irony. With this device,

The words or acts of a character in a play may carry a meaning unperceived by the character but understood by the audience. Usually, the characters' own interests are involved in a way they cannot understand. The irony resides in the contrast between the meaning intended by the speaker and the different significance seen by others." (Holman and Harmon, 1986)

In the play the audience together with some other characters have an idea of the engagement between Miss Tsiba and Mr Okadu, but Mr. Tsiba is not aware until Mrs Brofusem brings Mr Okadu to Mr Tsiba.

Mrs Brofusem: I have bring you good news

Mr Tsiba: good news? Anybody want cocoa land to buy?

Mrs Brofusem: oh no! Not that kind of good news! It's about your daughter: Mr Okadu and she are engaged.

Mr Tsiba: Engaged to do what?

Mrs Brofusem: To be married of course

Mr Tsiba: What! I don't know anything about it. (Glowers at Mr. Okadu) He lie....

Who gave you my daughter? Liar! Scorpion. (Act 2 sc. 1 p.67).

The dramatic irony is also evident even before Miss Tsiba and Mr. Okadu meet each. The audience and Mr Onyimdzi are aware that Mr. Okadu is in love with Miss Tsiba. Miss Tsiba also expresses interest in Mr. Okadu when she sees him approaching. She says:

Oh! There is that young man who look too much at me at chapel last Sunday. He look fine. I think I have seen him coming out of Mr. Onyimdzi's house the day we have called there. Oh! He is coming here! I hope he will want to speak to me. I will drop my handkerchief when he gets near; then he pick it up, and we can talk without being introduction. That's what the girl has done in the book I read last night till morning (Act 2 sc. 1 p.49)

Meanwhile, each of them is ignorant of the love each has for the other but the audience is aware through some statements made by Tsiba to Mr Onyimdzi. It is because of his love for Miss Tsiba that he goes to Mr Onyimdzi to teach him English.

Mr Okadu: I mean to say I have no money to go to England like you. So I want to beg you to train me. I like MissTsiba, and I want to marry her. But her father will not consent unless he know I am with somebody like you who has gone to England. She has been took to living with Mrs. Brofusem, and she is becoming very smart, so I want to be smart, too, sir. (Act I sc. I p.38))

The comic effect is produced even through his words. Here humour and wit have been applied. Tsiba proves his wisdom by using this plan in order to get married to Miss Tsiba. Mr. Onyimdzi replies: "you are getting too wise for your years; so you want to get round the old man?"

In addition to the irony. Sekyi uses exaggeration in his play. I think that Mrs Borofusem as a character has been exaggerated. It is true that when people return from abroad, they tend to do things the European way. Looking at Mrs. Borofusem's total rejection of everything native seems to be an exaggeration of her behaviour and this Sekyi has effectively used to come out with the criticism of the social and cultural consequences of colonialism. In the final analysis satire which is to ridicule and in the end bring about a reform or improvement is achieved. Readers realise right from the beginning how Mr and Mrs Borofusem and their other supporters

are so much entangled with things European, as Mrs Borofusem puts it. “We have gone to England: so we must do English things. English things are nice.” Okadu also confirms this ideology in his soliloquy at the garden party at the Victoria Park.

...i speak English to soften my harsher native tongue. It matters not if I often speak the Fanti wrong I'm learning to be British and treat with due contempt the worship of fetish, from which I am exempt... all native ways are silly, repulsive, unrefined. All customs superstitious, that rule the savage mind. (Act 11 sc.1 p.46, 47).

This statement by Okadu, gives the audience an idea of how Okadu and his contemporaries rank things European, higher to the detriment of things native. To them, all things native are disgusting. In the end, they come to realize how stupid they have been. Mrs Borofusem now appears in a native dress which she so much despised. She resolves to stop imitating things European since she has not benefitted in any way by doing so.

Mrs. Borofusem: I have made a big fool of myself. But I don't look a fool, I hope. I wonder why I feel so comfy? Why I have forget that I wear native dress. It suits me, isn't it? Oh! What nice long toes I get! They look sweet in sandals. D'you know I don't mind if my husband does not call me “duckie”, now I have remember that Mrs Gush was fat and she walk lie a duck. I have made up my mind to give up kissing. I remember, in future, to speak Fanti to Fanti's Goodbye. (Act4 sc. iii pp.135, 137)

Mr Borofusem in his final remarks also states:

Well, I'm blest! Really, Onyimdzi was right all along the line. If only we were rational, we should be more rational and infinitely more respectable. Our ways and our things suit our climates. For one thing, our drinks have not the same maddening effect on our people as European drinks have. The people of the old days were wise indeed: if only we would follow the customs they left us a little more, and adopt the ways of other races a little less we should be at least as healthy as they were. (Act iv sc. iii pp. 147-148)

These final words of Mr Brofusem, is Sekyi's message for the audience.

In Henshaw's *Medicine for Love*, he discusses as his central theme, a man of two cultures. Ewia Ekunyah is the principal character around whom this theme revolves. The conflict of culture lies in the fact that Ekunyah is a Christian but whenever he faces a problem concerning the three wives who have been sent to him, without consent, he sends Olu Ita, his servant, to call Agatarata, the medicine man.

Olu: is there anything I can do sir?

Ekunyah: go and call me Agatarata

Olu: (surprised) the medicine-man, sir?

Ekunyah: (impatiently) go and call him, I say

Olu Ita: but you've just spoken to the chaplain, Sir

Ekunyah: will you stop arguing, and do what I tell you?

From Olu Ita's speech, we realize that Ekunyah has spoken to the chaplain about his problem. Though he is a Christian, he believes that something good could also come from a medicine man. With this behaviour of Ekunyah, Henshaw criticizes people who claim to be Christians, but fall on medicine men for their solution of their problems. Such people, he claims, are men of double standards. Before colonialism the Ghanaian had no issues of double standards as far as religion was concerned. It is believed in many circles Christianity has turned the African into a hypocrite.

Henshaw again looks at the theme of marriage in the African tradition. Polygamy is an accepted African tradition just as marrying for a relative is also accepted. The young ladies in the play, Bekin Wari and Ibiere Sua, agree to marry a partner they do not love, but who they hope to love later on. They are, however, not prepared to accept a polygamous household. These are representatives of people who do not accept African tradition whole heartedly. I agree with these people because it is not everything traditional which is good. Certain things need modification. We cannot, therefore, accept tradition wholeheartedly.

Henshaw further criticizes the ills that go on in our political scenes. Ekunyah is a politician who is looking forward to winning an impending election. Joss deceives him into selling his two houses in order to get money to pay or perhaps bribe other voters so that they would vote for him. Henshaw is criticizing what goes on between politicians and their eligible voters. The voters think that in order for one to win an election he or she has to "grease their palms". The people of Koloro and Udura send a message to Ekunyah to "pave the road between their two villages" because his election depends on whether he "paves the road or not."

Ekunyah asks of the number of voters in those villages and when he sees that they are many, he promises to do it for them. He again signs a cheque of a hundred and twenty pounds for the church to buy an organ. Meanwhile, a beggar comes to his door to beg for alms, but looking at the insignificant number of beggars in the community he turns him down.

Henshaw criticizes politicians who put all their trust in fetish priests in order to win an election. Ekunyah and his committee members consult Agatarata who claims, he will use medicine or charm to help Ekunyah win the election. He claimed he would let his opponent step down so that Ekunyah is elected unopposed.

Bekin W: Mr Joss, what has really happened?

Joss: it's terrible, simply terrible Sonrillo, Mr Ekunyah's opponent, has been elected unopposed.

Agata: impossible! My medicine, my ink. It's a mistake. It's a mistake.
(Act iii sc. I p.80)

With this scene, it may seem that Henshaw is advising his audience to desist from using juju especially in politics because it may finally lead one to failure.

Henshaw uses dramatic irony extensively in his play. In Act one Scene One, Bekin Wari is introduced quarrelling with Ekunyah over a woman she does not know.

Bekin Wari: Look here, Mr Ekunyah, if you think I shall stay here and let that woman....

Ekunyah: What woman? Do you mean Ibiere Sua? It is entirely my fault that I have not yet introduced you to each other. That woman as you call her is Ibiere, and she says, just as you do, that she is my wife. (Act I sc. I p. 18)

Whereas Ibiere is ignorant of this fact, Ekunyah is aware. This scene is effective in the sense that introduces another character who the reader has not yet met. Again, Ekunyah is not aware that Ibiere's mother is in the house but Bekin is.

Ekunyah: Now, what has happened again?

Bekin w: Don't pretend you don't know her mother has arrived

Ekunyah: (Jumping up) her mother?

Bekin: (Mimicking him) her mother? As if you didn't know, yes her mother.

She's come to make medicine for her daughter against me. (Act I sc I p. 19)

This dramatic irony also serves as a source of information to both Ekunyah and the audience.

Another incident of dramatic irony is where Nene Katsina, the lady Aunti Dupeh, that's Ekunyah's aunt, marries for him, comes to the house of Ekunyah without the knowledge of the two rivals. The following conversation ensues between the two:

Ekunyah: Who's there?

Nene's voice: (offstage) It's me please

Ekunyah: Expecting you? Why the dickens should I be expecting you?

Voice: I have a letter for you from Auntie Dupeh.

Ekunyah: No, thank you I don't receive letters delivered by hand, send it by post.

Voice: (quite cheerfully) well, dearest, I'll see you again sweet prince. (Act ii sc. P.6)

Olu Ita tells Bekin that he heard Ekunyah call himself sweet prince meanwhile both of them do not know the reason behind it. It is the audience and Ekunya who are aware of the incident. This scene in effect introduces Nene to the readers. Later in Act one scene three, Auntie Dupeh enters Ekunyah's house shouting Nene's name. She thinks that by that time Ekunyah has accepted Nene and therefore, she should be in the house. The audience and Ekunyah are aware that he has turned Nene Katsiana away; meanwhile, Auntie Dupeh is unaware of this fact. She shouts: "Nene, Nene Katsina! Where is that girl? Is that the way she intends to marry Ewia by not appearing smartly to meet visitors? Is there no one in this house?"

This scene depicts the kind of trust Auntie Dupeh thinks Ekunyah has in her and she therefore expects that Ekunyah will accept anything she proposes. She is eventually disappointed.

Auntie Dupeh creates an ironic situation when she organizes a birthday party for herself and invites Bekin, Ibiere and their parents. She had an ulterior motive; she has been looking for a means of trying to drive them away from her nephew's house. She therefore decides to poison the glasses they will be using. The irony of the matter is that they bring their own glasses and force Auntie Dupeh to drink from those poisoned glasses. Meanwhile, Auntie Dupeh has sent for an ambulance which is going to transport Ibiere, Bekin and their parents after they have finished drinking from the poisoned glasses. She is the one who is finally put in the ambulance to be taken to the hospital. As Shakespeare says, the point that the evil that men do lives after them. Henshaw is by this, perhaps, advising that man should think well towards all men in order to avoid any bad consequences.

To make the use of irony more effective in the play, Henshaw creates humorous scenes through his characters. The success of characterisation as a source of comedy in *Medicine for Love* lies in the variety of comic characters that populate it. I shall discuss a few people like Mama Ebunde, Ibiere Sua, Bekin Wari, Aunt Dupeh and Ekunyah, the main character. When we first meet Mama Ebunde, Ibiere Sua's mother, the conversation which ensues between her and Ekunyah definitely makes the audience laugh. A mother-in-law, who is visiting her son-in-law for the first time, claims that she will not stay long because she does not want to inconvenience them, and then proposes to stay for only three months.

Ekunyah: Welcome, Madam.

Mama. E: thanks for the welcome. I only came to meet you and to see my daughter. I shall not stay long. I do not want to inconvenience your household I shall stay for only three months.

Ekunyah: (shouting) Three months?

Mama. E : All right, if you consider three months too short I shall stay for six months..... (Act 1 sc 1 p. 21)

Here Henshaw employs verbal irony. The actual intent of mama Ebunde is expressed in words that carry the opposite meaning. To visit an in-law for a period of three months is a very long duration. Ebunde claims that she does not want to create any inconvenience; therefore, she will stay for only three months. If Mama Ebunde refers to three months of visit as a short period, then her long visits may be for a number of years. These and other utterances she makes portray her as a comic character.

Ibiere and Bekein can also be described as comic characters. Henshaw portrays them in a humorous incident which elicits laughter from the audience. This is the scene where Ibiere and Bekin are fighting over a man who does not love them.

Bekin : Don't talk to me, Ibiere Sua. I've told you that we have nothing in common. I was born beautiful. You were born ugly, though it wasn't your fault...you don't belong to this house and you know that. Why don't you quietly pack out of here? No one will notice it. Even Ekunyah won't mind. You know quite well that he doesn't love you. It's me that he loves. It is for me that the wedding bells will ring.

Ibiere: Bekin Wari, they say that goats are stupid. But you are so stupid that if you were a goat and they killed you, I would never eat your meat.

Henshaw employs invective, one of the principal devices of satire, here. He makes the two ladies use abusive language. This helps the audience to decipher their character, since one of the ways of knowing a person's character is through what the person says. In the course of their argument, Nene Katsina the supposed third wife, comes in to look for Ekunyah. Bekin and Ibiere team up and throw her out. They sit close to each other only to remember again that they were fighting before Nene intruded. They suddenly realize the proximity of their seats and jump up, each seating down in a chair farthest from each other. The audience is likely to laugh at the behaviour of these two ladies.

Auntie Dupeh is another comic character that Henshaw creates in *Medicine for Love*. She is revealed in a humourous scene in Act One scene three. Here, Ekunyah has called on the medicine man to perform some form of juju to help solve his problem. Just after he finishes, the chaplain enters and Aunt Dupeh pretends that nothing unusual is at stake.

Auntie D: Good evening Reverend. So long since I met you.

Chaplain: Not really, madam. It was only last week.

Auntie D: I mean that last week seems so long ago.

Chaplain: Madam, there are still seven days in the week.

The chaplain sounded sarcastic. Meanwhile, Auntie Dupeh goes ahead to answer questions which are not meant for her. She does all these to cover up so that the chaplain will not realize that they have consulted a medicine man. Auntie Dupeh explains that Agatarata is her cousin who "suffers from attacks of forgetfulness." The great Agatarata also tries to introduce himself to the chaplain which Auntie Dupeh will not allow. This scene is really a source of laughter to the audience.

Ekunyah, the hero himself, is portrayed as a comic character. He faints after the news of his defeat. Olu rushes to the table, gathers some papers and whatever he can lay hands on, and starts to fan Mr. Ekunya furiously. Joss looses Ekunya's clothing at the neck and bends down unlacing Ekunya's shoes. Ekunya starts shaking his legs while he moans: "Hm, hm, hm, hm!" he protests the removal of his shoes. Olu Ita gives a reason that he may be wearing torn socks. BekinWari also faints on hearing the news of Ekunya's defeat. She is carried by Joss, Agatarata and Papa Garuka, hence they all exeunt leaving Ekunya alone on the stage. Ekunya who claims to have fainted, licks the drops of brandy on his lips and again, waves his hand above his leg as if to request that his shoes be left alone.

In another instance, when the doctor instructs the nurse to inject Ekunya, he takes to his heels while the nurse pursues him. This scene is used to ridicule the person of Ekunya. For a man who reacts to a simple medical procedure this way, to be seeking political power is absurd. The audience is greatly amused by such a behaviour. Henshaw appears to be making the statement that most political office seekers in Nigeria are clowns. If a person like Ekunya wins a political office; what will be his reaction in the face of a gun?

It is important at this stage to discuss Henshaw's use of language. His characters use excessive abusive language. This means that Henshaw employs invectives to produce the comic effect. For instance, in Act one, just after Mama Ebunde finishes introducing herself to Ekunya as Ibiere's mother, Bekin Wari and her father enter.

BekinW: (pointing to Mama Ebunde) I suppose I've met the old woman somewhere around here.

Ibiere S: do you call my mother an old woman? Is she older than this bearded old fogey here?

Mama E: (to Ekunyah) do not stand there, sir, and allow this chimney to talk like that to my dear daughter.

In this short scene, Henshaw uses invective to portray the character of Bekin, Ibiere and Mama Ebunde. The audience can deduce that they are all quarrelsome and therefore, their long stay in Ekunyah's house will create confusion. Again, when Ekunyah loses the election, Joss uses these abusive words on Agatarata, the medicine man: "imbecile, idiot, swine, nonsense, fraud and embezzler." The use of these words, depict the angry mood in which Joss is.

The diction of the characters in Henshaw's drama is the Standard English. Unlike Sekyi, he does not differentiate between that of the illiterate, semi-literate and the literate. This makes the book simple and easy to understand.

Another means, by which Henshaw creates comedy, is the nature of the ending of the play. The play very much fits into the traditional definition of comedy which is "a play that ends happily." Henshaw's play ends happily with the marriages among almost all the characters. Olu Ita and Bekin Wari; Dr. Marsey and Ibiere Sua; Auntie Dupeh and Mr. Kuidu Bonga, one of the leaders of Sonrillo's party, and last but not least, Ekunyah and Nene Katsina. Mr Bonga changes Ekunya's misery to happiness by giving him back his houses that he bought. His opponent's party also sends him a letter which is appointing him as chairman of the committee for the drainage and sewage. Olu Ita is also offered the post of secretary. This makes them all finally dance to the tune of music very happily.

After a critical look the two plays, a short comparison will be done at this stage. One similarity between the two texts lies in the dramatists' ability to criticize the follies of society through their plays. In Nancy Cunard's anthology, *Negro*, readers are made aware that Sekyi was brought up as an Anglo-African in a society whose educated members were brought up to believe that all things African were retrograde and were to be despised, and that thorough Anglicization (and christianisation) was the passport to civilization and progress (J. Ayo Langley). Ayo further states that he was informed by the late C. H. Hayfron Benjamin, a close friend of Sekyi, that Sekyi underwent an identity crises and ideological transformation within a short time of his arrival In London. Britain swiftly disillusioned him and he discussed his disillusionment and the implications of his increasing sense of identity with his fellow African students. I believe that Sekyi's experiences form the basis of his ideas to criticize the notion of total rejection of African culture in favour of European culture. In the final analysis, Mrs. Broofusem who totally rejects things African is portrayed as a reformed person. Sekyi uses Mrs. Brofusem to represent people who are anglo centric. He uses her again to criticize such behaviours and to bring them to a reformation. Ene Henshaw in the same way, uses Ekunya and Aunt Dupeh to depict how people feel about things traditional. They invite Agatarata, the traditional medicine man to help solve their problem. As soon as the reverend enters, Aunt Dupeh, especially, pretends Agatarata is a sick relative. Because they claim to be Christians, she does not want the reverend to know that they are involving themselves with things traditional. By this behaviour Henshaw tries to criticize the hypocritical behaviour of people who claim to be Christians and yet seek refuge in other gods when they are faced with difficulties.

Another similarity between the two plays is their didactic nature. Both Kobina Sekyi and Henshaw try to teach their readers a kind of moral lesson. Sekyi uses his characters, most especially Mr. and Mrs Borofusem to come out with the fact that Africans need to return to the dignity of the old order of the ancestors. I believe that Sekyi did not totally reject modernisation but he thinks that modernisation should be tempered with the elements of tradition. This is evident in one of his characters in the play called Onyimdzi, a barrister. He is a British trained lawyer who has lived in Europe for many years but when he returns home, unlike Mrs Borofusem, he accepts the African way of life. For instance, it is stated that he wears his native togas and also speaks the native language whenever he does not have to speak English. When he is introduced in Act 1 scene 2, he gives us an idea of his attitude when he says:

The court has risen, I have a case tomorrow. I have taken off the European sacks and the inns-of court gowns which are my working clothes. I have put on the native garb. I have withdrawn my feet from boots, I have put on sandals....(Act1 sc.ii p.35)

In his conversation with Mrs Borofusem when she visits him with Miss Tsiba, his attitude and what Sekyi seeks to give as a piece of advice are revealed.

Mr Onyimdzi: On the whole I think the girls will be better off if they just stuck to sewing and other forms of womanly employment. They should at least know how to cook. It is more important than embroidering or doing drawn-thread work.

Mrs. Borofusem: I hope Mr. Onyimdzi, you do not think that you would like your wife to go to the kitchen.

Mr. Onyimdzi: dear no: such a thing simply couldn't enter her head; fact is, I do not intend to marry.

Mrs. Borofusem: you mean here, I suppose. I expect you get nice white girl in your sleeves.

Mr. Onyimdzi: White girl? No thanks I do not want any such thing as a wife of course, if I wanted to marry, I should marry here. I do not see the sense in bringing out a white girl, when one can marry here. (Act 1 sc. ii p.39)

Henshaw, like many African writers, has drawn attention to the double cultural impact that the modern African is exposed to. Because of modern day Christianity, Africans find it very difficult to adhere to tradition. He is by this play trying to advise people not to totally throw African culture away because there are some good things which can be upheld. He again uses his satire to criticize African politicians who want to win elections through foul means. The lesson to be learnt here is that politicians should be aware of people who would want to exploit them in the name of winning elections. A character like Joss exploits Ekunyah, meanwhile he loses the election. If politicians use the right channels, I think they can win elections rather than bribing people to vote for them.

On the other hand, Henshaw criticizes some aspects of African culture, especially marriages

contracted by relatives without the consent of the would be couples. This creates a lot of problems for Ekunyah who finds himself in such a mess. It is good that older relatives think of their young ones to the extent of finding them a wife or a husband. But I think that the would be couples concerned should be in the know before such marriages are contracted to

avoid any confusion. I think it is the same opinion being expressed by Henshaw when he puts these words in the mouth of Ekunyah: “what can I do when you all decided to marry for me without even the courtesy of asking for my opinion? At least I could have been asked to state whether I wanted them tall or short, fat or thin.”(p.32)

It is evident that both plays discuss some aspects of African marriage. In *The Blinkards* too Sekyi upholds African marriages and condemns the kind of marriage contracted between Mr. Okadu and Miss Tsiba which goes against African tradition. From these two ideas one can realize that there is an admonishing to follow African traditional way of marriage and to eliminate some aspects which are not favourable.

The difference between the two plays lies in the fact that *The Blinkards* introduces some aspects of tragedy. This aspect is where the disapproval of the marriage between Mr. Okadu and Miss Tsiba leads to the death of Nna Sumpa. This means that, whereas, Sekyi sets out to write a comedy, there is a little evidence of sadness which makes the happiness diluted. Henshaw’s play, on the other hand, is a purely comic production. It begins with an exposition stage where things begin to go wrong or get out of hand; some characters behave in slightly foolish ways. At the end of the comedy, which is the resolution stage, the problems are solved. It ends with marriages and a dance.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it could be concluded that satire is one of the controlling elements in African comedy. The two dramatists have looked at what goes on in the society as a source of motivation to come out with their comic plays. They possess the ability to provoke laughter in the audience and in the end gives them satisfaction. This is evident in how the two plays end on a happy note. One can categorically state that *The Blinkards* and *Medicine for Love* satisfy the characteristics of comic plays.

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