

**HYPER-SEXUALITY, CULTURAL VALUES AND DEBASEMENT IN CLEMENT  
IDEGWU'S *LIFE IS A TEMPEST***

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**Abstract**

This paper examines hyper-sexuality, African values and character debasement in Clement Idegwu's *Life is a Tempest*. It engages the uncontrollable sexual behavioural patterns that seem to overwhelm traditional principles and standards in contemporary societies. This study is designed to expose the compulsive sexual behavioural disorders of characters, their purpose, and resultant effects of their hypersexual acts in society. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory was adopted. Since all the poems contained in the poetry collection cannot be examined, the researchers purposively selected ten poems based on their thematic thrusts and relevance to the study. The poems were subjected to literary analytical. Scholarly works that are related to the current study were also consulted and utilize to support points raised during our discourse. The findings reveal contemporary societies that have become morally bankrupt in terms of sexual promiscuity. The poet exposes characters who indulge in incestuous relationships, sexual addictions, rape, homosexual lifestyle and so on, which are aberrational behaviours in traditional African societies. The above hyper-sexual lifestyle pervades a seemingly lawless societies whose leaders and citizens are desperately in quest of political power and material wealth while moral values continuously degenerate on daily basis. The study recommends appropriate drastic measures to curb the prevalent hyper-sexual behavioural patterns and relationships in contemporary societies.

**Keywords:** Hypersexual, debasement, poetry, African values

**Introduction**

The exceptional sexual behaviours in contemporary societies have contributed to the devaluation of African cultural values and debasement of characters in recent times. Literary writers and researchers in various fields including cultural studies, literature, legal studies, medicine, banking and finance, environmental sciences, and so on, have interrogated this subject matter with a view to curtailing the ugly trend. Instinctual sexual drives are aspect of human personality that are not peculiar to a particular gender and society. They are primordial insatiable

desires which appear more prominence in contemporary societies, downplaying morality and promoting aberrational behaviours which negate African cultural norms, ethical standards and values. According to Nahole (2023:208), African traditional values refer to “those social ideals that pertain to and are indigenous to African people, which have either enhanced or hindered inter-communal relations.” The researcher further notes that “the values of a society are significant because they determine the contents of its norms, which help in maintaining social order.” Awoniyi (2015:4) states that values imply “attitude, beliefs, behaviours and actions that are cherished and acceptable standards of behaviours which each society expects that the members should abide by.” These are ethical standards that are integral aspect of culture which must be transferred to successive generations. Puke and Shaibu (2001:56-58) defines culture as “a whole body of knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, norms, customs, values, habits and other capabilities acquired by Nigerians as members of their society. In essence, Nigerian cultural heritage as a result is an embodiment of values and meanings constructed by cultural group or societies with high standards of originality.” Studies have revealed that women consciously and/or unconsciously contribute to debasement of female characters in society through prostitution. Odeke and Onuoha (2021:29) defines prostitution as “an act of having sexual intercourse for money. In other words, it means engaging in some belittling or dishonourable sexual deeds for monetary gains when some noble engagements are deliberately overlooked and avoided”(29).

Some scholars have traced the moral bankruptcy in contemporary society to the influence of western culture. According to Amouzou (2007:333) “Africa’s cultural collision with Europe has involved the loss of a certain part of the traditional heritage, while western cultural elements have been absorbed.” Sari *et al* (2020:44) acknowledged the findings of Levine (2003) that “sexual desire is formed by interaction in neuroendocrine system which provokes urges,

cognitive process causing desire, and motivation that can cause someone to want to perform sexual behaviour.” Whatever be the motivation for sexuality in society today, individuals should be conscious of the consequences of such ignoble behaviour. Sari, *et al* (2020:43) argue that “self-control can prevent individuals from engaging premarital sexual behaviour.” The scholars affirmed that “premarital sexual behaviour may occur due to sexual desire and reversely sexual self-control is able to repress sexual desire so that the behaviour can be avoided”(44). The thrust of this study, therefore, is to examine hyper-sexuality from African cultural background with a view to establishing how characters are debased in contemporary societies as portrayed in Clement Idegwu’s *Life is a Tempest*.

### **Literature Review**

Studies abound on sexuality and African culture which deserve critical review in order to illuminate the thrust of the current research. Okafor (2018:001) observes that, “societies world over have different interpretations and values for sexual union such that, while others see it as sacred and impinging on group’s norms and value, many more see it as an individual affair which has little or nothing to do with group norms especially in the modern societies.” Owuamanam and Bankole (2013:172) found that there is “weakening of traditional structures and the slackening of the control by the elders over the younger members of the family. Thus, new born attitudes are geared more towards personal satisfaction and emotional gratification than towards family responsibility.” The study of Waters (1995:3) reveals that “a globalized world would lead to a single society and culture in the planet earth which will not be harmoniously integrated. Rather, it will tend to high levels of differentiation, multicentricity and chaos.” Waters’ assertion is corroborated by Odeke and Onuoha (2021:25) who state that, “modern globalization has compressed people of diverse backgrounds, cultures, aspirations and expectations into a small global village where what affects one section affects all sections.”

Globalization as a concept connotes “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding (Waters, 1995:3). Despite the degree of moral decadence caused by globalization, people should endeavour to demonstrate their internalized cultural values and beliefs on daily basis. Awoniyi (2015:5) affirmed the foregoing by stating that, “African people have various moral and societal values meant to regulate interpersonal relationship and to perpetuate the entire community. Africans have certain standards or norms to be observed.” In advance of his submission, the scholar maintains that, “these standards or norms are meant for social cohesion and smooth running of the community. They are to prevent members of the community from becoming rebellious and thereby endanger the welfare of the society.” The research carried out by Lopang (2014:79) has also shown that “African writers take a very extreme Afrocentric view of homosexual seeing it not as an individual choice with which to explore one’s sexuality but a western aberration that is part of the psychological baggage of colonialism.” The researcher maintains that “situations existed in African societies where gay and lesbian relationships occurred prior to colonialism and which could not be explained as imported taboos.” According to his final submission, “such practices were understood as an intrinsic part of tradition in that they formed important checks and balances within heterosexual marriages”(81). In reacting against the practice of same-sexual orientation and relationships, Altman (2001:26) asserts that, “homosexuality is no longer considered an expression of “really” being a woman in a man’s body (or vice versa), but rather as physically desiring one’s own gender without necessarily wishing to deny one’s masculinity/femininity.”

However, the study of Kim, *et al* (2013:640) reveals that sexual drives could be a source of energy for nonsexual pursuits. This implies that “unacceptable sexual or unacceptable aggressive urges could be defensively sublimated into socially appropriate pursuits.” The

findings of the scholars established that “forbidden sexual or aggressive thoughts and desires are suppressed and shuttled into the unconscious, where they are redirected, disguised, transformed, or otherwise channeled and expressed in activities that are more conventional and considered socially appropriate” (641). Subliminal strategy helps in alleviating psychological and emotional pains so creative writers adopt this method consciously or unconsciously to improve their wellbeing while they also contribute to social change. In the opinion of Ghazvini, *et al* (2010:1811), “when mental health problems of human are expressed and drawn, it will result in alleviating emotional pains and inner pressures and in unconscious mode.” They affirmed without mincing words that, “sublimation is revealed in activities including painting, writing, gardening, musician and poetry and dancing” (1814).

The study of Devardhi (2009:437) shows that “literary criticism has used psychoanalytic theory to interpret literature and literature has also attempted to exploit and use psychoanalysis for creative purposes.” this correlates with Amouzou’s (2007:330) view that, “the creative African writer must make sure he presents his community to both itself and to others. It should be a community that discusses its experiences with itself, commenting, for entertainment and enlightenment, upon the world in which it finds itself.” African writers must be abreast with the culture of their people and be determined to expose weaknesses or foibles in society. The writers should also understand that “culture embraces a wide range of human phenomena, material achievements and norms, beliefs, feelings, manners, morals and so on” (Idang, 2015:98). In summation, Stishin (2018:154) states that, “the writer with his intuition and imaginative power penetrates into the soul of man and discloses his findings to the public. This is the literary text.” The above studies provide insights into the current research that is designed to examine sexuality and human debasement in relation to African culture and values.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted qualitative research design since non-numerical data was involved. Since all the poems contained in Clement Idegwu's *Life is a Tempest* cannot be examined, the researchers purposively selected the poems from the diverse sections based on their thematic thrusts and relevance to the research aim and objectives. The poems were subjected to literary analysis. Being a library based research, the researchers also consulted scholarly works that are related to the current study and they were employed to support points raised during the discourse.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted Sigmund Freudian Psychoanalytic theory, exploring the underlying factors responsible for the compulsive sexual behavioural disorders among female characters, their purpose, and resultant effects of their hypersexual act in society. Shahwan (2017:1) emphasizes Freudian view that "the mind is responsible for both conscious and unconscious decisions based on drives and forces. Unconscious desires motivate people to act accordingly." The study of Bhuvanewari (2017:49) reveals that "the state of repression, being between preconscious and unconscious state, functions like a storehouse of all the unfulfilled desires or traumatic past events and experiences. The reflections of this storehouse have a powerful influence on all the human actions." Azadkhan, *et al.* (2019:36) acknowledged Hossain (2017) who posits that Psychoanalysis as a modern theory is used in literature and serves as "methods of treating mentally disordered people" and also "to explain human mind and its various complexities." As regards literary creativity, Hamidreza (2012:49) established that "a literary work is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind or the characters of the text." Kumari (2016:34) asserts that, "psychoanalytic reading helps us to understand human behavior on the basis of theories given by Sigmund Freud." On the significance of psychoanalytic criticism and theories, the scholar argues that they are "applied to literature to understand human relationship at conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious level. Moreover, it helps us to decipher

the hidden motif in the text” (34). According to Al-Dmour (2019:48) “literature builds on Freud theories of psychology, which helps readers simply interpret literary texts.” The application of psychoanalytic theory has become necessary “because it helps us to understand the nature of human mind” (Ritamani, 2014:13). The submission of Ritamani is affirmed by Kumari (2016:34) who states that, “the psychoanalytic approach helps us to understand the psychological development of a character and the author’s personality. Therefore, psychoanalysis deals with motives which are hidden or disguised.” The literary theory is relevant to this study because it will expose the writer’s motivations, character behaviours in the selected poems.

### **Analysis of Clement Idegwu’s *Life is a Tempest***

A critical exploration of Clement Idegwu’s literary writings shows his disposition towards the enthronement of social justice, sanctity, egalitarianism, and morality, to mention a few. In this study, the researchers examine hyper-sexuality in modern African societies as portrayed in *Life is a Tempest* (2022). They explore how the instinctual sexual drives lead to debasement of characters. The discourse of this research is presented under various divergent sections.

### **African Culture and Sexual Disorders**

In African traditional societies, there are social norms, beliefs and practices that were established from time immemorial to regulate sexual conducts of individuals. These are imbibed and exhibited as they shape lifestyle. However, the advent of new technologies and globalization has aggravated moral debasement through hyper-sexual activities. Clement Idegwu’s poem, “Dogs everywhere”, exposes characters in modern societies who indulge in hyper-sexuality for pleasure, financial benefits, disregarding their cultural norms, values and standards. In the poem, the poet laments over the alarming rate of sexual behavior patterns in contemporary societies and

describes the prevalent hyper-sexual promiscuity as worse than the era of the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah thus;

Ours, modern Sodom and Gomorrah  
Topsy turvy, the word  
Fathers dig the well in between their daughters  
thighs  
Mothers spread their bushy thighs for their sons to  
dance in  
Married women tango with strangers like dogs in the  
market square

The poet captures a society where incestuous sexual intercourse is committed by parents and married women who are supposed to promote sanctity and moral uprightness. These sexual activities are aberration in decent society which the poet-persona condemned out rightly. Idegwu condemns the Oedipal and Electra complexes, and incestuous relationships that characterized human life. His position correlates with the findings of Azadkhan, *et al.* (2019:36) which affirms that “the Oedipus complex is for Freud the core of longing, restraint and sexual personality. Its buildup is a deep rooted uncertainty towards the keeping and infringing upon of taboos and laws.” Apart from the incestuous relationship and adulterous act of married women, gay and lesbian practices, sex with animals and same sex – marriage are also captured in the poem;

Men dig their fellow’s arose  
Women their fellows conjugate with  
Our women with dogs just for hard currency.  
Young boys octogenarians wed  
Just for mere fall-outs from these grandmothers  
And all these before officiating priests  
And the children from these are christened by  
priests



In this poem, the poet indicts “priests” who promote sexual immorality, like homosexuality, sex with aged mothers, called “sugar mummies” and other unholy acts in their various churches. The altars of God are being desecrated by sexual addiction and incestuous relationships in societies today. To the poet, the social immorality in modern society is much worse than the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. Even Priests and other religious leaders who should condemn homosexual promiscuity and incestuous taboos are at the centre stage of the unholy marriage ceremonies done in supposed sanctuaries of God, officiating;

Before a large congregation of “saints!”  
And like celebrities post on social media  
The few who ponder call it end time  
Is this end in tune with the beginning?  
If God keeps silent beyond now  
Then publicly he should appease the old Sodom –  
Gomorrah

For they were holier than we are  
Dare to think otherwise?

The poet alludes to the Holy Bible, where people describe the signs of the end time where homosexuality and incestuous relationships would characterized human existence. He wonders why God remains silent over the high level of abominable acts in modern times compared to the era of Sodom and Gomorrah. He describes the destruction of the foregoing cities in the Bible as miscarriage of justice if nothing is done by God in present societies. The poet concludes that the people in Sodom and Gomorrah “were holier than we are” and challenges reader to prove him wrong. Idegwu decries moral debasement in its entirety and adopted poetry as expository, purgatory and reformatory instrument. This affirms view that “the work of literature reveals unconscious desires and repressed wishes that can be found in many forms in a text, characters, symbols as well as offensive and defensive writings” (Shahwan, 2017:2).

### **Objectification of Women**

Clement Idegwu employed poetry as a medium to expose modern trend where women are used as sexual objects in patriarchal system. In the poem, “Occupy till I come”, the poet through autobiographic technique presents the horrible and devastating condition of victims of human trafficking who are sexually abused in foreign land. According to the victim and narrator: “We are everywhere occupying till he comes/ The brothels of Athens, Dubai, Prague and Istanbul/ Our presence and perseverance makes them great/ tourist centres” (lines 1-4). The poem presents major places or cities in the world where prostitution is predominantly practiced. Such places are famous for tourism according to the narrator because of their “presence and perseverance”, panderers (Pimps) and traffickers often economically exploit sex-workers, acting as their managers. While the prostitutes languish in sexual diseases, and die of ill-health challenges, the traffickers are mostly preoccupied with the financial benefits. In this poem, the pimps and traffickers ironically are religious leaders whose duty is to mould characters against abnormal sexual orientation and relationships. The narrator reports their psychological trauma as prostitutes in Dubai before her escape;

Though I escaped after being wounded and wrecked  
The sight of a camera reminds me  
Of our being gang raped to break us psychologically  
When we realized that our pastor lied  
That our serving in his sister’s empire in Dubai is  
Prostitution (lines 5-10)

The prostitutes in the narrative poetry are psychologically imprisoned with the memory of their gang rape experience recorded and stored as evidence of their sexual acts in foreign land. Again, the prostitutes are psychologically traumatized when they realize that their pastor, who is their supposed shepherd is among the syndicates for human trafficking. The decision of the victims of human trafficking to resist sexual exploitation led to their violent harassment and mental and physical torture, thus; “We religiously vowed never to cooperate/Our resolve angered

our traffickers and pimps/The camera and our being gang raped./For two weeks at mid-day we were/Blessed, videotaped while being beaten and gang raped” (lines 11-16). The traumatic experience of the victims captured above could trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the minds of the characters. The poet has through this creative work activated the consciousness of reader and the entire society about the heinous acts perpetuated by some Nigerians who lure female citizens to foreign countries for illegal sexual activities. In this case, the victims are trafficked to overseas by their pastor who they had confidence in as a man of God. In the poem, the victims are both physically and emotionally brutalized by their rapists who were merciless. According to the poet-speaker’s confession they were, “Raped by men whose eyes were burning coals/And their things as strong as iron/it was hell when the one that replaces the other/appeared deadlier” (lines 17-20).

The poem further presents an experience that could make horrible memories resonate in the minds of the victims even after the escape. In the words of the narrator; “At dawn we watched how we were defiled the day/before/We were not even fed to gain strength for the mid/day assault/Then the warning: “if you escape, your parents will/watch these videos” (lines 21-26). The statements of the traffickers and pimps reveal their level of cruelty, inhumanity and bestiality towards debasement of womanhood. The threat of releasing the videos to the public especially the victims’ parents is meant to subject them to perpetual psychological torture and enslavement. The only escape route for such victims is suicidal attempt, hence, the narrator states that, “Severally I sought for an object to slit my throat/Finding none, I plotted our escape with like minds/It is better our parents watch our abuse engineered/by our pastor”(lines 27-30)

The poet vividly presents a picturesque society that is being overwhelmed with hypocrisy, dehumanization and evil machinations by supposedly clergymen and shepherd in the vineyard of God. Some pastors do not only indulge in extortions, sexual assault, robbery, and

swindling, they are also involved in human trafficking as exposed in this poem. Their dubious acts have resulted in the death of several victims of trafficking who they were supposed to guide and protect from sinful acts. The poet-persona reports at this juncture, that; “Their pastor at home in Nigeria/Than die while being used by these drugged/For those who died while the digging was on/Are quickly tossed aside and replaced with others/Indeed with apologies” (lines 31-35). Victims of human trafficking who are indulged in prostitution are sexually abused by drug addicts while those who could not withstand the hyper-sexual act die in the process. Ademilokun (2012:76) states that “communication is essential to the survival of humankind as all living creatures have the need and capacity for it. This veritable human activity manifests itself in symbolic and verbal forms.” Women in contemporary societies are deployed as economic tools by men without collective struggle to dismantle this ugly trend. Those who are privileged to correct the abnormalities display sexual behaviours that are counterproductive as evident in Idegwu’s poetry.

### **Nudity and Mental Disorders**

In African society, there are moral values, norms, beliefs systems and practices which individuals must internalize right from early stage till adulthood. So antisocial behavioural patterns are regarded as manifestation of psychiatric problems that require immediate traditional or spiritual intervention. The emergence of the new technologies, particularly the social media (facebook, Youtube, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) has also contributed to the debasement of characters in modern societies. In the poem, “Madness”, the poet describes women who expose their bodies naked as being mentally ill and so they deserve psychiatric treatment. The poet laments;

What on earth, thou immortal God  
A woman posts her nude images on social media?  
An over enlarged boobs and buttocks  
Husband/ only a certifiable will husband such

Where is that demented, the psychotic  
Who will street walk?  
A woman whose nude images are posted obituary

The poet reports buttocks augmentation and breast implant surgery which are currently in vogue and also condemns women posting their pornographic pictures on the social media. He presents these as being “demented” and so they should be “better kept in healing homes/And there domiciled till healing perfected/For Africa is of pure breeds.” The upload and sharing of nude (pornographic) images on the social media is unAfrican hence the poet describes such women as lunatics. People whose mental health condition is unstable are not conscious of themselves, and their social environment. Pictures communicate volumes about people, events and society where they originate from. Research has shown that “although the verbal means of communication is generally perceived to serve better communicative purposes than the non-verbal one, the non-verbal has been confirmed to have as much capacity for meaning transmission as the verbal” (Ademilokun, 2012:76).

### **Indecent Dressing and Mental Dysfunction**

Idegwu’s poetry further interrogates widespread indecent dressing among female characters which according to him depicts their state of mental health disorders in socio-cultural settings. Research has shown that the behaviours and emotions of individuals are the true reflections of their psyche at a particular time. By implication, mental dysfunction can influence the actions and feelings of people. In the poem, “Dress to kill” the poet personal describes the confusion a female character caused with her seductive dress. She recounts that her sexy dress-type and their patterns of design are purposely meant to convey seductive meaning to their male counterparts and arouse their sexual promiscuity. Research has shown that among other means, “meaning can be communicated through clothing, hairstyle and architecture”(Unuabonah (2010:62). According to the poet-speaker; “I either deliberately walk to my lecturers’ offices,

move around the campus/Or dress to kill and take a walk around town/There and then you find ‘honourables’/Behave stupidly/Because of my boobs and buttocks I greatly regret enlarging” (3-9). The abnormal behavior of the “honourables” is not only triggered by the seductive dress of the speaker but also her natural endowments- “boobs and buttocks”. She recounts the psychological effects of her sexy dressing on her victims, thus;

Those I allowed into me speak in tongues  
making endless promises, signing blank cheques  
abandoning their wives and children for one who will never give any.  
They behave as if my boobs are a take-away  
And their lives on them depend  
And for this non-detachable they give all  
Their very all for that whose pleasure is transient  
Always kneeling down as if eternally bond slaves  
Even when they eat me  
What a shame (10-20).

The poet exposes a generation of ladies who have been disconnected from societal ethical standards and moral values, indulging in uncontrollable instinctual sexual venture for personal gratification. The sexually promiscuous female characters in the above poem portrayed men as caricatures of psychologically imprisoned beings whose thinking faculties malfunction during sexual intercourse. The poet-speaker describes men as parasites who depend on her “boobs” that are “non-detachable” but enchanting and emotionally subjugating.

### **Conclusion**

The research examined hyper-sexuality among characters in modern societies as portrayed in Clement Idegwu’s *Life is a Tempest*. The sexual orientation and relationships of the characters, mostly the females, are interrogated in relation to African cultural values and beliefs. Some of the characters are indulged in the sexual promiscuous act for pleasure while others are desperately in quest of political power and material wealth. The emergent of the new media such

as the television, Internet, and social media platforms has aggravated the level of sexual behavioural problems such as rape, incestuous sexual intercourse, homosexual and so on in most societies. There should be appropriate legal framework and effective implementation to curb the prevalent aberrational sexual relationships.

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