

A Review of Eziwho Emenike Azunwo's *Harvest Thanksgiving*

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Introduction

In *Harvest Thanksgiving*, Eziwho Emenike Azunwo portrays himself as a socially conscious playwright who is deeply concerned by the entrenched unethical practices within the Ivory Towers and their corrosive effects on students and the credibility of university governance. The play, while emotionally gripping and thematically compelling, serves as a bold indictment of academic institutions that are expected to uphold high moral standards but have, due to the actions of a corrupt few, succumbed to moral atrophy. Azunwo explores the abuse of power by certain lecturers in higher institutions and the resultant psychological, emotional, and financial trauma inflicted on innocent students. This abuse contributes to systemic delays and widespread frustration. Set within a university environment, the play employs relatable characters and straightforward dialogue to expose the multidimensional exploitation that undermines educational values. Through its conflicts and themes, the play raises critical questions about leadership, integrity, and institutional responsibility. The broader consequences of academic corruption are captured in this assertion;

Education is one of the most powerful tools for shaping the future of a nation. It plays a crucial role in instilling values, ethics, and skills in young people. However, when corruption infiltrates the system, it distorts these values, leading to a generation that prioritizes shortcuts over hard work. Many students graduate with a weak moral foundation, believing that success is based on manipulation rather than merit. This mindset poses a serious threat to the country's progress (Omoluogbe, 2025).

Plot Summary

Harvest Thanksgiving takes us through the experiences of Mr. Edem and Mr. Tolu, both PhD students struggling under the supervision of Professor Cecilia, a domineering and unyielding academic, who will stop at nothing to humiliate her students in a manner that can be likened to gas lighting. With every effort made, Prof. Cecilia made sure that these men face constant humiliation and setbacks from her, ranging from cancellation of topics, unlawful demand of finance, psychological and emotional manipulations were all part of the strategies deployed by Prof. Cecilia. Professor Cecilia being an

influential figure, she reveled in the control and intimidation of students especially the ones under her supervision and this calculated vigorous act of her eventually drives one of her students Mr. Edem to abandon his goal of pursuing a higher level of degree which he so desires. The narrative *Harvest Thanksgiving* reaches the climax, when accountability is demanded of Prof. Cecilia as she was summoned before the Governing Council through Professor Didia the head of department following series of complaints from students under her supervision.

Themes

The central theme of the play is abuse of academic power. Professor Cecilia's behavior as seen in the play depicts a disturbing habit where authority is abused and used as a tool for oppression and manipulation rather than been exercised responsibly. Other themes include mental health struggles, this could be seen in the scene where Professor Cecilia cancelled Mr. Tolu's project;

CICI: Do you know why I was assigned to you as your supervisor?

TOLU: (Upset and confuse) Prof...

CICI: Mr. Tolu, I understand... as anyone else will do... I hate to have cancel your topic but given the numbers of my experience behind this table and been crown with the honor you swap for Ma, which I have forgiven you for that ignorance... That topic will have no impactful contribution to this department and I urge you to move quickly and consider something and come back as soon as possible...

TOLU: (Speechless and drain) Prof, when should I come back? (Azunwo, p.19-20).

In the same vein, reduced Mr. Edem's confidence and finally led him to abandoning his utmost dream of becoming a PhD holder;

EDEM: (Gets up and carry his bag) Thank you prof.... (walks out of the stage frustratingly)

CICI: (Surprise) Is that an acceptance to the offer? (Edem says no words) God have mercy on you...

(Azunwo, p.58).

Additionally, the themes of student resilience, corruption, and the quest for justice were depicted in the text. The play when critically assessed, serves as a call to reform the institutions in our country, emphasizing the need for ethical mentorship and a more supportive academic environment.

Character Analysis

1. Professor Cecilia with her thirst for authority is the pods of institutional toxicity, a poignant distress on students mental state especially the ones under her supervision. Her manipulative and often exploitative actions give a clear contrast to the values academia should hold.

2. Mr. Edem and Mr. Tolu represent countless students who suffer in silence. Edem's emotional breakdown and his withdrawal from the program show the toll such systems can take.

Supporting characters like the Course Rep and Professor Didia help in making the story a complete academic digest. The Course Rep's sincere concern with Didia's act of responsibility serves as justice and institutional response showing that a sanitised and a conducive atmosphere for learning are possible.

Language and Style

The play is written in a simple, conversational language that captures realism as it clearly shows the day to day realities of the academic interactions. The dialogues carry the characters' frustrations and emotional states. The use of monologues and stage direction heightens the intensity of each scene.

Structure

The play leads a clear structure, with well-defined scenes that build tension gradually as they convey a powerful message of boldness and morality within the walls of academic. Every action contributes to character development and theme advancement. Professor Cecilia's confrontation with institutional backlash, serves as a powerful and fulfilling resolution that underscores the consequences of unchecked power.

Conclusion

Harvest Thanksgiving is must read and compelling play that highlights on the inner struggles so many students go through and the schemes within academic institutions. It is both an instructional narrative and an outcry, giving voice to those who are often silenced. With its honest portrayal of cracks in the University system and its emotional decline, the play succeeds in kindling critical reflection and deliberates on moral, wise counseling, and student welfare. It is a powerful piece of literature work deserving of both scholarly attention and theatrical performance.

Recommendations

I strongly recommend *Harvest Thanksgiving* to university administrators, academic staff, postgraduate students, theatre directors, and policy makers in the education sector. This play is relevant for anyone involved in academic mentorship, as it challenges educators to reflect on their responsibilities and moral conduct. It is also valuable for students attaining postgraduate studies. It gives proof and awareness of the challenges they might face in the system. For those that love theatre, Harvest Thanksgiving presents a powerful script for stage and even on screen performance with potential to raise meaningful dialogue and advocacy for reform in educational.

Reference

- Azunwo, E. E. (2025). *Harvest Thanksgiving: A play*. Covenant Daystar Publishers.
- Omoluogbe, R. (2025). *The Impact of Corruption on Nigeria's Education System*.
<https://fmino.gov.ng/the-impact-of-corruption-on-nigerias-education-system/>