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Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban, a Sculptural Discourse

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Abstract

Aided by the reportage of photography, *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban* investigates the radical turn in the reality of motherhood and aggressive feminism in Nigeria. Grounded on Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (2007); *Mi Eka Iban* is at the telos of a narration of the lives of real mothers of my country. Engaging the photographic image as the censure on which the passing memorial of the discourse of the day to day lives of real women, this essay attempts to expose the temerity of neo-femininity in a new epoch of Nigerian history. Adopting Emecheta's novel as the synchronic take off point for the discourse of feminist radicalism, the writer asserted that history and culture are not single narratives, instead together struggle to come to terms with the relations of power. Engaging Michel Foucault's Power/Knowledge and Kobena Mercer's cosmopolitanism hyped on the reality of a counter narrative of global contemporaneity the essay explicates the impact of media saturation and globalisation on society, particularly womanhood in post 1960s Nigeria. These influences reveal the reality of Mercer's "dialogical principle" of cross-cultural interface (2016) that transformed perceptions of motherhood. A simulacrum of Foucauldian "*capillary modes of power*" narrates how the media saturation of postcolonial/post-independence climes inflects Mercer's "dialogical principle" of cross-cultural interface. This transforms perception of motherhood and narrates that radical turn.

Key Words: sculptural discourse, reportage of photography; temerity of neo-femininity, simulacra; "capillary modes of power"

Introduction

Motherhood marks the departure from spinsterhood to full-fledged womanhood saddled with the responsibilities of caring for the family. Akujobi (2011) claimed that motherhood may also be perceived as a moral transformation whereby a woman comes to terms with being different; in fact, she ceases to be an autonomous individual because she is one way or the other attached to another, her baby. Being a mother is a social function that is affirmed as the female child

matures to puberty, signifying the readiness of the body mechanisms to accept an additional responsibility of procreation. Being a mother and accepting the responsibilities of motherhood automatically begin at this point in the life of a woman, who becomes pregnant. Akujobi further claimed (2011, pp. 2-7) that motherhood may also be defined as an automatic set of feelings and behaviors that is switched on by pregnancy and the birth of a baby. Remi affirms that it is an experience that is profoundly shaped by social contexts and culture.

Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban, conveniently translated from the *Ibibio* reflects “the stress of a mother engaged in academic pursuits” (Felix Obot’s Interview, 2018) sets out by firstly framing motherhood on groundings in Buchi Emecheta’s modernistic novel *The Joys of Motherhood* (2007). Grounded on that discourse the essay dares to unravel motherhood in Felix Obot’s (henceforth, F O/ F O’s) artwork as a crystallisation of departures from Emecheta’s tales of “the turmoil and anguish of women who long for children and of mothers who worry about their children” (Emecheta: 2007). Indeed, the story foists the problems of motherhood readily in “a calm framework of a symbol” (Beat Wyss: 1958) candied in the narratives that it makes visible in Images of a sculptural artwork. These legible imageries depict a radical symbolic new dawn on the reality of motherhood. *Mi Eka Ibang* is at the telos of a cosmopolitan narration of the lives of real mothers of my country. Engaging the photographic image, however, as the sensor on which the passing memorial of the discourse of the day to day lives of the real women folk of Nigeria this essay would attempt to expose the temerity of neo-femininity in a new epoch of Nigerian history. Drawing attention to the social contexts that frame the processes of cultural change, the essay couches the narratives that shape that culture and society; those narratives that conceal and reveal, and that work to oppress as much as to enable human action. Taking Emecheta’s novel as the synchronic take off point for the discourse of the temerity of feminist radicalism, this essay affirms that history and culture are not single narratives, but are conversations which struggle to come to terms with the relations of power (Lyotard, 1979; Foucault, 1972). In fact, the photographic image is here perceived as the symbolic referent that finds signification in the framework of time and space, the two-basic means of experiencing history. Addressing cosmopolitans, not provincials, F O’s artwork castigates and boldly tells us that women are increasingly uncontrollable in spite of the role matrimony traditionally allots them. In fact, they have rebelled and cast it all asunder!

The sensor of photography is an invaluable tool in accessing the phenomenology of the condition of the Family as a primary institution in society and an accounting for the place of motherhood, in postcolonial Nigeria. Employing a reading of F O’s perspectives for an accounting of the dynamics of the radical turn in femininity, the essay explores the themes and ideas that underlie the images. In fact, through an analysis of specific images and their intertextualisation with words and gestures alluded to in both Emecheta’s novel and Obot’s *Ibibio* linguistic interventions; I hope to access a reading of the lives of the *real mothers* in the Nigerian condition.

Mi Eka Iban, a Sculptural Discourse makes possible the framing of the foregoing narratives from the standpoint of a story crystallised for all time in stone. Beat Wyss (1998:194) writes, artworks fix unto the mind’s eye the actuality of fleeting memorials in our lives. Art, therefore, makes all spatially visible for all times sake what may go un-noticed in the din of our existential everyday lives in a profound calm structure. That reality is readily framed in the commonplace artworks of traditional African and modern African motherhood. In Herbert Skip Cole’s *Maternity Sculpture* (1972) traditional African motherhood is conceptualised as a caring and strong-willed woman, bursting with love for her off springs. In a radical departure F O’s *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban* (2018) speaks for a new dawn in motherhood in the reality of pluralistic climes.

Locating the discourse on the groundings of *The Joys of Motherhood* (2008) connects the decentering ever-changing present in the glittering spectacle of the city in modern Nigeria. Hence, the essay draws attention to notorious displacements of authority and the overarching notions of culture/ cultural practices and production. This is the traditional breaking spirit of the late 1950s and 1960s Nigeria. *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban* draws attention to the break-neck pace of revolutionary motherhood's parting stances of the culture of the late 1960s, the collapse of patriarchal regimes of the 70s and the shattering spectacles of the cosmopolitan world.

Narrating a condition of life in a media saturated global village, to borrow the words of the cultural critic Hal Foster (1983) that artwork empathises with the contexts of the shifting class and culture formations of a society at the tropes of post-traditionalism but hunched with definite industrialisation. Nigeria and its cleavages to the Colonial and the industrialised West, shaped by the Enlightenment's theories of rationality and progress; was under the spell of the dominant multicultural ways of thinking about the world of the time.

The Narrative of Woman's Battery

In the traditional African world woman was doomed to a life of perpetual servitude: a domestic servant suited to the toils and travails of family life; baby maker grudgingly elevated to the status of farmhand and bedmate. Indeed, the Sierra Leonean writer and critic, Eustace Palmer (1983:67) affirmed the traditional commonplace reality: a man had the license to scold and put his wife like his *pikins* and siblings to a beat up; and even the cane from time to time. This was the order of the day! A woman is, therefore, forced to direct her interests and desires to the collective will of the husband, albeit the community. Emecheta (1979, p.71) affirmed that a subordination of her interests, dreams and desires are the narrow social norms that constrain the woman to annihilate her "self", her individuality and identity Daring to rewrite an integral part of women's modern history of invisibility and marginalisation, Buchi castigated that world! *Joys of Motherhood* is a sure throw back for a location of the space of that time and place in the story of women's struggle for equality, justice and emancipation. It is a definite source of knowledge of the history of modern women's struggles against patriarchal oppression and domination. Grounded, however, in Emecheta's world this discourse is also framed in the capital politics and colonial patriarchal regimes in Third World women's marginalisation and domination. This, not only echoes Emecheta's story but clearly demonstrates Chandra Talpade Moharty's Feminist Theory (2003).

The Audacity of a Counter Narrative

A *Sculptural* depiction of motherhood *mi Eka Iban* (2018) speaks volumes on the audacity of contemporary motherhood's departures from Emecheta's modernistic dicta. The new speaks of a revolutionary mother, who in spite of breaching children dares to achieve self-actualisation and personal fulfilment in education. Obot's narrative is the story of a young woman who in spite of keen interest in academic pursuits is forced into marriage as a result of traditional family demands and patriarchy; male chauvinism and an unfair oppressive system.

Felix, instead, narrates a visionary story of a woman in spite of that world; Third World women's oppression, banishment and domination in the traditional and colonial world; but plumed in long-suffering "forces on" an academic pursuit in the lore for the Golden Fleece. F O's account breaks from the Mobius strip of the old order of things in *Joys of Motherhood*. That story unfolds events in Nigeria during the period of her invasion and colonisation by Imperia "in the 1930's and moving forward to the time of independence from colonial rule" (Killam, 2004, p. 42).

Engaging the characteristic writer's throwback mechanism to locate the story, Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* (2007) is the sure spring board for the discourse of *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban*. Emecheta foists Nnu-Ego's story as the iconic tale of the "confusion and grief of women who long for children and of mothers who worry about their children" (Emecheta, 2007, p. 212) as the conditioning of modern motherhood. Beyond all else, *mi Eka Ibang* takes a sharp break from Emecheta's world view. Obot's mother in modern Nigeria fulfils her traditional role by becoming a mother but that motherhood in her particular situation remained an unrelieved agony until she too found emancipation in the quest for personal desires and choices of a future in the real world. The break-neck pace of that parting of ways is the hallmark of a synchronic recitation of another discourse of motherhood itself.

That channel of communication is shaped by the cosmopolitan world imploding a condition of life in a media saturated global village, to borrow the words of the cultural critic Hal Foster (1983). The artwork empathises with the contexts of the shifting class, culture formations and the epistemic cultural appropriations of post-independence. That reality is characterised by Media saturation and the casting of the dye on a neo-colonial elite via the phonographic Vinyl Record industry: indeed, visualise the gestures in Philips West Africa music Record Company's old tune *O'Baby Pan Cake* (1960), the High Life music that emerged in the twilight years of the late 50s and 60's: Ghana's E.T. Mensah's *Esi Nana Araba Nana*, Cameroonian O.K. Jazz *Samba* high vibes music and a host of *Rock 'N Roll* from the neighbouring Francophone; the emergent Euro-centric Pop culture from the former colonial masters' capitals and the impassion of American style Rumba and Jazz. All these deafening mementos symbolically chronicled the spectacle of radical change.

Remarkable and most spectacular was the photographic media and its tabloids: *The Nigerian Teacher*, *The West African Pilot*, *West Africa Magazine*, and the photographic multinational tabloid *The African Drum* (1951) renamed *Drum* (1984). Hence, the emergent "city-mix" inflected counter narrative on the mind, heart and soul of people in the postcolonial time and place. In offer were alternative lifestyles and departures from the traditionalisms abounding in patriarchal systems and the unbinding of even the slavery and impositions that the colonial system supported in order to keep on top. Revelling in that mix of influences point to Kobena Mercer's (2016) "dialogical principle" of cross-cultural interfaces that have transformed perceptions of motherhood today. In *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practices since the 1980s*, Mercer presents a diasporic model of criticism that gives close attention to aesthetic strategies while tracing the fleeting political and cultural grounds in which black visual arts circulate. Enough for now, we shall see how this scenario sited in the Black diaspora is similarly played out in the post-colonial world of West Africa.

That meteoric media saturation of the post-independence epoch affected an epistemic shaping, empowerment and radicalisation of life styles in modern Nigeria.

Indeed, that ground breaking epochal power and its fleeting memorials of empowerment sufficiently grounds the discourse of motherhood that *Mi Eka Ibang* recites. This paper, therefore, looks at the muscle that coexists with the social body and is interwoven with other kinds of power relations to force a metamorphosis in the condition of motherhood. For example, that muscle forced a ground breaking departure from Emecheta's Nnu-ego's dream of the joys of motherhood (Emecheta, 2007:212, 71) and even underscores Adaku's outright jettisoning of the marriage institution itself (Emecheta, 2007:168-9). Indeed, the writer and critique Eustace Palmer (1983) observed that Adaku became the forerunner of women's liberation in Africa. Palmer further remarked that to gain autonomy:

Adaku had to sell her body and live like a prostitute. Though it is an imperfect and hollow choice, Adaku achieves everything: success as a trader, education for her female children; independence from her husband etcetera. She was goaded into self-sufficiency and self-determination largely by the tragedy of barrenness in the sense that she bore no son (Emecheta 2008, pp. 188-9).

Adaku openly narrates that tale to Nnu-ego as the reason that impelled her to leave the house.

Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban recites the break-neck pace of revolutionary motherhood's parting stances of the culture of the late 1960s, the collapse of patriarchal regimes of the 70s and the shattering spectacles of the emergent realities of the cosmopolitan world. In fact, in a Foucauldian diesis, this is history based on power relations. Hence, transformational history from a mere development of meanings and communications to a micro-physics of power (Michel Foucault: 1972). Power is perceived in its tangible and local effects and its everyday exegesis. In *Power/ Knowledge* Foucault clearly analyses this dimension of power; engaging a simulacrum of a biomorphic process "*capillary form of existence*" to make a tangible pulsing effect, almost liquid-like flow at which the implosion of the reality of power affects the masses of people's actions and attitudes in a population. Hence, a people's learning processes, their actions and discourses in the typical every day is thusly shaped by this overwhelming consciousness (Foucault, 1972).

Mi Eka Iban adapted a backdrop and a stream of consciousness technique typical of discourse narratives to establish a chronological frame. Citing Adaku's departure from Nnaife's house in Emecheta's work (above) as the synchronic take off point for radical feminist liberation in the Nigerian novel (Eustace Palmer, 1983). That backdrop graphically pictures the traditional and cultural time and place that appropriates the mechanics of male domination and womanhood was under the chains of man's captivity and hierarchical impositions endorsed by tradition and upheld by the Colonial/ Imperia. Community corporeally endorsed man's domination and power. Man was the measure of power and the hope of woman's liberation and emancipation from the hardship and monotony of rural life to a future in the urban! Indeed, Nwakuzor openly castigates Nnu Ego's suicide attempt (Emecheta, pp. 64-5). It was the time of man's domination of women. However, it was the age of the White man (Emecheta, pp. 36-9). Kobina Mercer recounts that it was the epoch of the inevitable cross-cultural influence in the new cosmopolitan centers in the independent nations. These places no longer at ease with the old dispensation became the anvil that forged the new womanhood.

It is on the foregoing tapestry that Michel Foucault's metaphor "*the capillary modes of power*", bio-power can be hinged. While giving impetus to the politics of everyday life in the new cosmopolitan centres, Foucault's thoughts provide abundant insight into the mechanisms of power at the micro-political level with his interpretation of the body as the direct locus of social control. He emphasises the specificity of the body as something directly aimed at and fashioned by historically variable regimes of bio-power. Readily the echoes of the traditional time and place and its belief systems, practices of social control are incorporated here as nodes of real political control. The term society or social have to be understood only as a convenient way of connecting specific interests and practices. Foucauldian genealogy suggests the subject and disciplinary society in terms of a political history of the body is appropriate for an analogy of power that *Mi Eka Iban* recites.

Photography, Cosmopolitanism and the Temerity of Femininity

Ufen nwet Ketu mi Eka Iban (Fig. 1)

The discourse is centered on a towering seated stern-faced matronly figure with combative shoulder curves; clad in a deep stream-line neck blouse Top with a deep low back fashionable casual European style dress. That dress amply displays drooping breasts propped up in high fashion Cossets. She wears no typical blouse Top and wrappers that shrouds the provincial woman's body. Instead her casual European style attire displays her lanky youthful body. With embodied experiences and objectification of the body, the subject matter of Obot's hard-working and long-suffering mother becomes newly shocking and potent. Posed against a backdrop of school blocks and an array of late model cars, very popularly nick-named *Tokunbo* in the *Yoruba* language (Fig. 3) this larger than life figure of the typical mature college student leaves the viewers in no doubt of her urbane status. She is snugly posed between a ready-to go school bag and a giant hard-cover bound book.

In spite of the distractive infants, she concentrates on a page in this book, a *simulacra* of Library Reference stock publications. Despite children demanding attention, the woman's beady eyes are hard-nosedly fixed on a giant book page; aloof and framed in her intellectual gaze! Despite the interferences of her two infants, *Ekaete* and *Uwahg*; in serenity and calm she is undaunted in study. With one book firmly fixed in her hard-matronly grasp, she persists in her study in spite of distractions: one child busily picking at threads in her upper shoulder sleeve (Fig. 2) and the other busily "pinching away" on the Hemmings of her skimpy attire (Fig. 3). A book lying open on the concrete bench suggests a keen study session in the open air. She wears no signage ring that could suggest an iota of marital status. In western cut dress, a symbolic rejection of the atypical African all over wrapper and head-gear, popular in the 60s, the young mother emphasises her modern western middle-class status. Indeed, the hand-weave hairstyles of the seated figure and the two infants, echoes atypical restatements of africanite! This mother departs from popular images of mothers in Africa, imbedded in popular images of a supreme caring ever attentive mother "*suffering for the children*"; depicted by Emecheta (2007) and popular novels of the time. For example, Nguigi Wa Thong's *Weep Not Child's* (1964) image of a mother small, bold and smiling, even though a little worn out. In fact, atypical African writings depictions of the African mother as the symbol of security and dignity is openly lampooned. The picture presents a woman not crushed in spite of her struggle with a hostile environment.

MI IKAN IBAN represents aggressive feminism *writ large* in the gestures that the images display: a woman's independence from husband and freedom from patriarchy achieved with self-sufficiency and self-fulfilment as the ethos. Indeed, there is accommodation for female children, the most derided of a wife's children in the traditional patriarchal family (Emecheta 2011, p.158).

The artist presents the gestures of a stern no nonsense woman aggressively in pursuit of the Golden Fleece, all reminiscent of Emecheta's Adaku initiation of a strike by refusing to present her husband, Nnaife, Supper unless he increased the Chop Money (Emecheta 2007, pp. 148-150ff). This is an aggressive self-seeking woman like Adaku, reminiscent of Emecheta's way of initiating the discourse of Feminism in *The Joys*, a ready comparison draws attention to the reality of a new generation of young mothers at college today. Engaging the censure of images culled from the artwork and alluding to these shapes as profiles of the condition of womanhood, the artist subtly creates a narrative that embodies diverse contexts. Inflecting, thereof the identity and history of the Nigerian woman, the artwork is the censure on which the fleeting memorial of the discourse of the everyday life of the real Nigerian Mother at school is

grounded. A reading of the artwork creates possibilities for mentally stimulating conversation, discussion and informative analysis.

With distinct masculine broad shoulders, saggy breast-line propped up in corsets and bold manly grips on the book; rugged limbs emphasising disproportion as appropriation of strength, Obot leaves his viewers to locate this woman in the class of the heavy grind of the everyday. Despite the simplicity of a well-cut modern attire, the woman's disproportionate giant legs framed in over-sized Court shoes that define the shapes of the cones of her tired knuckles, all spell out her working-class background. Her handpicked attire, suggestive of the popular *Okrika Wake Up Clothing, alias OK*, brands fished out of the open-air bails that dot Nigerian marketplace, though echoes of war time Salvation Army style clothing handouts; the independent modern woman, reports the aggressiveness of the cosmopolis.

Indeed, with definitive European style skimpy summer sun-shine dress, reflecting a sharp departure to the standard wrapper and blouse style typical city attire, this young mother blatantly breaks the dress code. The young mother's dress engages her body as a leitmotif of liberation from traditionalisms. Instead, her suggestive gestures and dress code, which are used to make the body sexually appealing inflects the global culture. With trimness of poise and keen fitness looks, this female figure positions the body as the most marketable of commodities. The keen viewer recognises the materiality of the body in this context. In fact, the keen attention this young mother gives her body, beyond health reasons is a distinct inflection of modern culture. These framings of the reality of the cosmopolitan's yearnings is a clear pointer to the rebellious break from the moulds of modern motherhood projected by Emecheta's iconic Nnu-Ego, a name ephemerally translated as priceless piece made up of ten cowries in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Ekan Iban's statements on the radical revolution epitomised by young motherhood at school "thunders down on the viewers like a sergeant-major to a recruit"! (Theodore Ardon, 1995:198). Forced to read the subtle details of gestures, dress code and body-language replete in the artwork, the viewers now begin to look and learn as the images unspool a new dawn in womanhood!

The viewers, especially the womenfolk, confront *EKAN IBAN* firstly as a rude reminder of the reality of women's discomfort with tradition, the hegemony of a patriarchal system of marriage and the assumptions of women's new roles. Indeed, like Emecheta's Adaku (2007, pp.168-9) pulling out of marriage thereby questioning the patriarchal value system in the era of globalisation, *EKAN IBAN* narrates the tale of the cosmopolitan independent aggressive single-minded woman. However, as a reel of real-life images mentally flash the mind simultaneously, a fantasy about the real situation unravels. The exposition jolts the viewers to the realm of fictionalisation. In the process a narrative and the discourse of each picture ensues. By recognising what has been defined by time, Obot assumes his own space in the discourse of the Nigerian woman's condition. Obot's initiative approximates to a reflection on the artist and the value of the artwork. Seizing the commonplace experiences of real women, transient in the existential every day; the camera captures these twilight moments making them significant and crystallised for posterity. Photography makes the perception and experiences of Nigerian time spatially discernible by an act of coercion that forces the event the camera has captured, which otherwise, may have gone unnoticed, in the Nigerian existential indifference to fate and memory; into a composed agenda or a symbol (Beat Wyss, 1998, p.194).

Obot's narrative records the ordeals of a young mother who dares to seek the Golden Fleece of academe, the prized gift and pearl of modernity, emancipation and self-actualisation. That dialog lends itself to a discourse of neo-feminist temerity at radical change. This Mother struggles to break from the conditioning which frames her to act the role that brings little

personal uplifting and fulfilment. Like Emecheta's Nnu-Ego, Obot's character evokes radical feminist ideologies in her quest for abundant life. After experiencing both the pains and joys of motherhood, Emecheta's character, Nnu Ego realises that children do not always bring fulfilment. In the story she ponders, "*God when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being not an appendage?*" (Emecheta, 2007, p.186). Emecheta presents a picture of an African woman's reaction to a universal problem: children often fail to honor their parents. Reciting this idea through the traditionalist Nnu Ego, the novelist draws the ire of traditionalists and the colonial order that enshrined women's appendage ship to their husbands and the male folks. Emecheta makes it imperative that women folks have the social responsibility to criticize and participate in the social order.

Nnu Ego in Emecheta's novel knows her identity and its only fulfilment in having many children especially the prized pearl, a male child. Obot's story reflects the joys of motherhood differently. Unlike Nnu Ego she enjoys children but the gestures on her face (Figs. 1, 2 & 3) reflect a picture of mental peace, clear-headedness and intense engagement not with the little lasses, named *Ekaete* and *Uwahg*; but in the business of study and its attendant reflections! Obot christened the lasses *Ekaete*, in memory of a deceased grand-father and *Uwahg*, in memory of a late grand-mother, in spite of nuancing echoes of tradition; in fact, he registers a protest against that traditional notions of preference for male children. *Ekaete* and *Uwahg*, little girls are attired in smart commonplace late 1960s style children's kindergarten clothing with giant lapels and simple apron-strings belts. Both characters metaphorically enflame a time gone by while inflecting a new dawn of change!

Unlike Adaku pulling out of marriage (Emecheta, 2007, pp.168-9) in protest at the patriarchal system and its values, here is a picture of a mother who circumvents that system while finding excitement and fulfilment in academic endearments. In spite of the attention that the little lasses demand, she does not find them as necessary in building up her joys as a mother like Nnu Ego (Emecheta, 2007, p. 224). The image presents a spartanly attired woman with no extra-baggage of coiffure and trinket but indifferent and careless of the seemed distractions of two lasses nibbling and pinching at her body seeking attention (Figs. 1, 3 & 4). Indeed, with pursed lips with lean-faced mien; and very professional cross-legged poise, she busies herself in a world of study, mental excitement and intellectual exactitude (Figs. 3 & 4). One giant Reference book in her grip with another dog-eared from so much fingering lying open with another volume as a Page-stopper, within arm's reach, on the platform (Fig. 2) completes the image of scholarly engagement. Indeed, as Walter Lippmann (2003, p. 25) puts it, the psychic agency of Pictures has the kind of power over mind's eye today which the printed word had yesterday, even the spoken word before that: seem absolutely real!

The overall impression one takes away is that of an aggressive woman ready to take sharp risks. Indeed, reminiscent of the bold traditional woman suggestive of Eustace Palmer (1983), ready to even break all moral bounds becomes a prostitute to train her children and make ends meet. *EKAN IBANG* alludes to the self-same aggressive characteristic of bolting away from traditional society, man-dominated hierarchical system encouraged and promoted by the colonials. A self-seeking, skimpily attired middleclass woman wearing no sign ate ring (the affirmation of matrimonial status) aggressively poisoned in posture leaves the readers and viewers to reflect on the spate of disruption to authority this kind of personality suggests.

However, the pictorial gestures explicit in specific Images, for example: the zipped tote bag that accessorises "madam's grip and take-off"; the giant reference books in varied states of use (Fig. 3); and the very skimpily attired matronly figure cross-legged with tight-fitting court shoes, in aggressive concentration in spite of the lasses' distractions (Figs. 3 & 5). Silhouetted against

a background of cars in a college parking space (Fig. 1) hooked on that ground, each object stands out but are laced together Damask-like in accordance to the principle of surface and colour. In offer a tell-tale language of aggressive modernity. This reportage signifies the new condition of motherhood. In symbolic gestures embedded in the textual surfaces of the artwork; the pictures before the visitors thunder down the unravelling of reality *rite large* in the sculptural work, while remaining fully indecipherable to the uncouth eye. So mutely the artist speaks to us in symbolic language of the unfamiliarity in which we encounter the reality of a new generation of womanhood and the ever more unfamiliar existential world. These are all concentrated in the simplicity of gestures.

Symbols facilitate recognition. Recognition is the kernel of all symbolic language, says Hans-George Gadamer (1986:76). All art remains a language of recognition. Obot's mute gaze presents the viewers with such disturbing enigmas. In his artwork, the viewer encounters the undecipherability of our world. That artwork enwrapped in pictorial codes; and in seemed inexplicable and undecipherable sign language demand to be read and the meanings expressed therein unravelled. These are all wrapped in surface elements of line, shapes and discernible forms. With these the artwork lures the viewers to realities of Motherhood that the sculptural work alludes to. In ludic subversion, these elements appear intangible, beyond words, overwhelming and incommensurable to the coarse gaze of the rude and commonplace. Their meanings await unlocking.

Conclusion

This paper set out to discourse the temerity of change and the audacity of motherhood that implicates that discourse. Grounded in *The Joys of Motherhood* as its synchronic take off point, but hinged on a Foucaultian meteoric pattern of repeats, breaks and ceaseless recalibrations of the human phenomena, the paper engaged the photographic image to establish that reality. However, a simulation of Foucauldian "*capillary modes of power*" narrates how the media saturation of postcolonial/post-independence climes inflects Mercer's "dialogical principle" of cross-cultural interface. These transformed perceptions of motherhood and narrates that radical turn.

Drawing attention to the social contexts that frame the processes of cultural change, the paper firstly emphasised via a simulation of Emecheta's story-lines as background for the genesis of the narratives that shape culture and society. Concealing and revealing, while working to oppress as much as to enable human action, *The Joys of Motherhood* served the purposes of a synchronic reference to the sculptural discourse. However, engaging a corroborative discourse framed on the photographic image, the paper established a Foucauldian genealogy that traced the subject and disciplinary society in terms of a political history of the body. That appropriately analysed the concept of power that *Mi Eka Ibang* recites.

Using the censure of images culled from the artwork, emphasising these shapes as profiles of the condition of a major sculpture on the Rumuolumeni Campus I have employed them as vestigial to a narrative that embodies diverse contexts. These inflect the identity and history of the new generation woman in Nigeria. The art work is the censure on which the fleeting memorial of the discourse of the everyday lives of the real womanhood is grounded. Corroborating discourses from the social sciences and contemporary social analogies like Kobena Mercer's (2016) "dialogical principle" of cross-cultural interfaces, intertextually inform reflections on the transformation of commonplace perceptions of motherhood today. These realities dare us to rethink the entangled history of modernity, itself! In *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practices since the 1980s*, Mercer presents a diasporic model of criticism

that gives close attention to aesthetic strategies while sketching the shifting political and cultural grounds that inform consciously/ unconsciously the visual arts.

Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Iban draws our attention to why art cannot be isolated from everyday experiences. Reflecting and gleaning the realities that abound in society, indeed, while telling the stories it makes visible power relations in the representation of real-life drama. Art engages, never aloof; the artist sees things and makes his reflections in choice media. A keen to the meteoric zest of the python's eye Obot reminds us "*Anya diali bu anya Eke*, the eye of the keen observer reflects the keenness of the python's eye (*Ekwere* metaphor). The artist's choice makes visible a narration of problems, ideas, but explores the external conundrum of the human condition. This essay, however, awaits the readers' commentary on the place of corruption in academe. Hinged on assertive philosophical principles and cultural traditions, it is up to the readers to explore and engage discourses already put in line: Adaku asserted "*I am going to be a prostitute. Damn my chi!*" (Emecheta: 2008: 188). Does a deeper reading of the gestures on the face and body of *mi Eka Iban* lead a revelation? Wait and see, for eye!

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Fig. 1: *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Ibang*, Felix Obot
Medium: Fibre glass
Specification: 6 ft tall

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Fig.2: *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Ibang*
(Back view), Felix Obot,

Medium: Fibre glass,
Specification: 6 ft

© Vivian Okagbo, 2018.



Fig. 3: *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Ibang*
(Left side view), **Felix Obot**

Medium: Fibre glass

Specification: 6 ft tall

© Vivian, Okagbo, 2018.



Fig. 4: *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Ibang*
(Right Side View), Felix Obot

Medium: Fibre glass

Specification: 6 ft tall

© Okagbo, Vivian, 2018.



Fig. 5: *Ufen nwet ketu mi Eka Ibang*, Felix Obot

Medium: Fibre glass

Specification: 6 ft tall

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