

IHUNANYA (TO SEE, TO LOVE) Emmanuel Uchendu-Onu

Enamored of the gift of sight,
The Igbo man loves with his eyes.

He says to his love, I see you,
and by that, he means *I love you*.
He calls her *the one I see*,
and by that, he means *the one I love*.

When his brother seeks a wife,
The Igbo man tells him to go with his eyes.
And when he returns with a graceful fiancée,
His brother says, *iji kwa anya* — you have eyes.

When the Igbo man warns his friend to be careful,
he says, *le ru anya* — look well.
When his friend embarks on a journey,
the Igbo man says, *ka anya gi ru ala* — let your eyes reach the ground.
And by that, he means, be smart.

The Igbo man understands that his eyes are an entrance into his mind.
Whatever exists in his mind first enters through his eyes, through his vision.
His eyes are both an entrance and an object of endearment.

And so the Igbo man despises those with large eyes,
for if the windows —
the entrance to the mind — are too wide,
then everything enters that leads to greed.
Thus, an Igbo man calls a greedy person *anya ukwu* — big eyes.

But despite all the marvels the Igbo man attributes to his eyes,
the most peculiar of all is what he calls *ihunanya*:
love — to see.