Travel Gone Awry: Cosmopolitan Love and Female Ordeals in *Games Women Play*

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The designation of the present age as a “restless epoch” is evident in many ways across space; but it is perhaps best validated in the unique form of cosmopolitanism which Africa’s citizens exhibit particularly in their travel and quest for survival in the West. Against this backdrop, this paper first reflects on the socio-economic crisis of the 1980s and how it laid the foundation for the mass exodus of Africans to the West. It explores further how this exodus in turn today provides a false sense of cosmopolitanism to a number of Africans as they try to cope with the treacherous and precarious situations of economic survival in the West and the constitutive elements of instability and mobility of locale. Turning to the Nigerian movie industry, the paper focuses on *Games Women Play* (2007) by contending that rather than seeing Emerald’s (Stella Damasus) ordeals in the movie as direct consequences of the “games women play”, they should be seen instead as the awry fallouts of the overwhelming but deceptive allure of migration, especially of the cosmopolitan strand. This is in the way young Africans are taken by the prospects of living fulfilled career lives in the West, without any knowledge of the migratory imagination and its contradictory realities. I argue that if the socio-economic conditions of the homeland and its attendant dystopia are vectors for migration of Africans (male and female) to the West, the envisaged largess of utopia in the West is mostly elusive, making a pawn of African migrants from both ends of spatial travel. However, it is the female gender, as in the case of Emerald, that is at the worse receiving end when travel goes awry. Therefore, Emerald’s plight, which is evident in the multiple scandals of her double marriage to two friends in Northern Ireland, and USA, and the traumatic consequences of the eventual knowledge of this to the friends on return to Nigeria, should be seen not as an attempt to be smart, as is suggestive in the title of the movie, but must be conceived as a culmination of the socio-economic ramifications of migration for the African female folk within the logic of contemporary travel and return.
The global transformation brought about in the screen art has meant a major push for the extension of Africa’s horizon of mimetic performance in a manner that places it on an accelerated pedestal. The evidence of the transformation is the invention and development of the now celebrated Nigerian movie industry, whose critical reception within a relatively infant evolution, places it in the class of the big three in the world. This Nigerian movie industry, better known as Nollywood, continues to exhibit various tendencies—ranging from generic delineation to thematic preoccupation. The tendencies in so many instances come with impressions of their relativity to the African world. Nevertheless, quite a number of other such tendencies instantiate the connectivity of the movie industry to issues which continue to have ramifications for humanity, irrespective of location. In the particular case of the home movie under study, perhaps a convenient point of departure will be the explication from the outset that while *Games Women Play* is easily located in the genre of love and romance, it is better understood when more specifically designated as playing out against the backdrop of cosmopolitanism, a concept and practice which, in the wake of what some perceive to be the death of globalization, has emerged more vigorously in demonstration of the predisposition of the current age towards a non-ending, cyclical movement. To that extent, the video touches on one of the issues that have ramifications for human beings all over the world no matter where they are located; this is the contemporary understanding of cosmopolitanism. There is, moreover, a strong reason to include cosmopolitanism in the list of concepts that touch all us also because of its capacity to involve all categories of humanity, whether as willing or reluctant collaborators. As a phenomenon reputable for manifesting both in its idealism and materiality, cosmopolitanism is apprehended as ramifying all endeavours of human activities and thoughts. The notion of movement/mobility which is pivotal to its apprehension is witnessed in all ways—from the analogy of an African sit-at-home whose eyes are glued to the satellite television channels of American programmes and news presentations, to the ubiquity of Coca Cola bottles and cans from one end of the world to the other, to the Euro-American holiday makers’ naked bodies in tourist zones including safe and unsafe spaces like Indonesia, to the circulation of arms and ammunition in war-torn zones without any pedigree or reputation for technological inventions, to millions of people from Third World spaces whose struggle for survival is expressed in the voluntary pursuit of careers through various migration impositions in the developed North of the world, to the now politicized notion of terrorism. The multiple perspectives to the apprehension of cosmopolitanism also accounts for the call for a methodological approach that yields itself to a pluralism that is best exemplified in an analytic logic that “can and must observe and investigate the boundary transcending and boundary-effacing multi-perspectivalism of social and political agents through very different ‘lenses’” (Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider 2006:18). Thus cutting across spaces and multiple ontological modes and cultural practices, cosmopolitanism comes across as a concept whose analytical appeal lies, among other things, in its discursive suggestions.
The centrality of movement or mobility to the notion of cosmopolitanism also privileges the teleology of a voluntary movement especially of peoples. In this voluntary and unstoppable movement of ideas, materials and peoples Stefan Rossbach’s (2007:27) view is assigned cogency about the naming of the present age as “restless”. What is, however, not often admitted in the celebration of an unending voluntary movement across space is the original location of the people involved in this movement, the motivation for their movement, and the extent to which the voluntary register in the conceptualization of cosmopolitanism can be taken seriously. As location is pivotal to the understating of the conduct of peoples and nations, the cosmopolitanism of the African postcolonial world will be best understood in terms of the memories and the imaginaries it invokes. With respect to the cosmopolitanism of most Africans, especially where movement to the West is concerned, the dystopia that is constitutive of the apprehension of most Africa nations must be privileged in determining the texture of African cosmopolitanism. The attribution of dystopia to the condition of the African homeland, as I have argued elsewhere (Senayon Olaoluwa 2009: 175), must also be seen as a direct consequence of the various political and economic manoeuvres to which the evolution of independence has been subjected on the continent. But more specifically, the apparently innocuous interventions of proponents of untrammeled market capital economy which found coherent and firm articulation in the various versions of Structural Adjustment programmes of the 1980s cannot but be mentioned in the present vulnerability of Africans to their restless movement around the world. The level of dysfunctionality left in the wake of the practice of the Adjustment Programmes imposed on the continent by the ostensibly interventionist template of western economic experts produced a second phase of post-independence disillusionment. Yet it must be admitted that the question of dystopia which began to rear its head from the 1980s in particular, found collusion in the local corrupt leadership that the African political elite exhibited. The consequences in their long term epiphany have sanctioned a forced search for greener pastures in the North, as the realities on the ground in the homeland offered little or no hope for survival. For the youths in particular, educational qualification at any level offered the opportunity to move out of the homeland with a desperation to survive and return someday with some level of financial comfort that could earn one some sense of dignity. As this was and still is the motivation of an average African cosmopolitan, the voluntary register to the discourse of cosmopolitanism is at best a euphemism for economic exile.

The desperation that is constitutive of African cosmopolitanism is validated by the ordeals of those who are ordinarily perceived to be highly educated and located in the comfort zone of the elite, who nevertheless are dispersed to the North only to realize how devalued their status as elite becomes; this is in view of the nature of the jobs they have to undertake for survival. The question of survival for Africans is also tricky precisely because of the racial dimensions to it. As the desperation to seek legitimate integration into their host societies becomes the only option to transform their status from the perils of exile to the pleasures of cosmopolitanism, there is no form of job offer that does not radiate with hopes of survival. In many instances, such offers come with inherent dehumanizing capacities, with tragic and traumatic consequences for the cosmopolitan personalities involved. For instance, there is a sense in which the search for gender justice is frustrated in matters of love where a category of undertakings requires that a previously married man will have to deny this status in order to live legitimately with another female partner who is a citizen in the host country.
Games Women Play is a representation of the consequences of Africans’ desperate cosmopolitanism and the precarious position in which it places women, even when we must admit that African men, and indeed the entire family unit are amenable to the perils of cosmopolitanism as a phenomenon with a capacity for multiplications of woes across space and time. But the discussion of this video film must begin with a clarification which contests the dominant narrative perspective in the production beginning with the suggestive gender bias of the title, Games Women Play. This contention is needful in view of the understanding that even the idea of “visual esperanto”, that allows for an “analogy between the word and the shot” does not automatically translate into a credible meaning making exercise, since “simply stringing words together does not produce intelligible discourse” (Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (2004:1). Therefore, the narrative perspective poses a problematic in the sense that it seeks an objectifying view which privileges a particular story as against the embeddedness of other stories in the movie. Determined to expose some of the tricks or “games” played by women on men, an average audience is tempted to ignore the other parallel narrative which is interwoven with the objectified game motif. What is more, in a bid to grant centrality to the narrative of “games” the word, mostly in the singular, is used by various characters. The emphasis to foreground the intent of some women, especially those whose brief it is to pursue an agenda of mischief in a bid to ascertain the extent of love which a professed male lover has for his fiancé, and on the other, the desperation of another (Ada) to win the heart of her boss and husband to her close friend Emma. This is in spite of the seriousness the Damian instantiates with respect to his commitment to his wife. Exhibited among the ladies in a fashion that constrains us to term their motif an instance of the “gross”, to echo Linda William (2004:278), we are almost tempted to consign to the dustbin of viewership the seriousness of the third level of narrative which involves Emma, her husband, Damian, their set of twins John and Jill, and Bill, who also happens to be a friend of Damian and Emma’s legal husband too, a situation which makes Emma guilty of bigamy. The tendency to sideline this third level of narrative is perhaps also stems from the prequel competitiveness of the production with another movie with the title Games Men Play (2007). This form of competitiveness is commonplace in Nollywood, as where there is for instance, Tears of A Prince (2008) there is also bound to be Tears of a Princess (2008). The singling out of each gender for representation has also thus played a role in the objectifying, but questionable nature of the narrative of Games Women Play.

Therefore, to come to terms with the narrative logic of cosmopolitanism in the movie, the dominant narrative suggestion is replaced with the interpretive viewpoint that is less critical of Emma or Emerald in order to tackle the enormity of the gender concern raised in the movie. To begin with, both Emerald and William have met first in Northern Island, having left Nigeria after their studies for the purpose of making the best of their youth and expertise. Apparently the several years stay has yielded little or nothing as a result of which they both leave for the United States, landing specifically in New York. The migration to New York is significant for a number of reasons. However, it will suffice to dwell on two of these reasons. The understanding of New York is that of the commercial capital of the United States, and in it is for many the symbol of material success in the country, especially in the estimation of a number of people migrating to the States. The second and perhaps stronger reason centres on the depiction of New York as one of the top five global cities of the world. To a very large extent, Saskia
Sassen’s conception of the features of the global cities continues to play a major role in the way this understanding continues to influence opinions about New York (Andrew Hassam 2009:45). This remains so even when other intellects on the conceptualization of cities argue for the commonality of city features, perhaps as a way of challenging the discrimination that categorization of cities encourages.

From their account, the country that is often nationalistically branded as the land of opportunities is not after all automatically so for migrants and cosmopolitans whose only motivation for landing there from their African countries is their expertise and the hope of encountering institutions that will be willing to patronize this expertise. As things turn out, the only sure guarantee for a dignifying stay is the possession of the green card. Ordinarily this should mean applying and getting it on the merit of one’s reason for applying. But in the case of William, as is the case for many, hospitality, which is part of the advocacy for a credible practice of cosmopolitanism (Anthony Appiah 2006:153), remains an elusive element of this concept. So, for William to obtain the green card, the only pragmatic option available to him is to accept to go into a marriage of convenience with Annette, a citizen of the States who takes advantage of the desperation of William to literally snatch him from his truly legal wife Emerald. In no time, William finds himself relocating from New York to San Francisco where Annette is based, and where he spends all the days of the week but one, which he now reserves for Emerald. Confronted many years later in Nigeria about the propriety of abandoning his wife for a marriage of convenience, William’s response and argument is instructive for the precarious situation into which African cosmopolitans and other cosmopolitans from the South are forced: “what will I tell the social security people if they come to our apartment in the night and they don’t find me there?” This in fact speaks to the helpless condition of people who are forced to live against their wish and deny people for whom they have strong emotional feelings. In his bid to justify his action further, William returns to the question of the green card and the prospects it holds for the survival of both of them in the States: “I needed the green card, baby. I need the green card to make it as easy for you and I back in the States.” Even when Emerald argues that “people marry everyday for papers, but they don’t have to live together”, the impression one has is that even Emerald has been part of the arrangement because they both need the papers to get along in the states without immigration harassment and other related matters: “we had an agreement and you were part of that arrangement. We were married (William and Annette). The marriage was for our convenience.”

From this point on, the bars are raised for both of them especially because the situation in which they have found themselves holds the scary prospects of mutual suspicion precisely because, the quotidian experience of family life has to be sacrificed, as William moves around with Annette in hope of obtaining the green card. But more particularly, it is Emerald who is at the worse receiving end because William gets all the satisfaction he needs from both women, except that where his Italian-American wife sees him as an object of sex, together with all the pornographic images that the idea conjures, the one-day-a-week satisfaction he gets from Emerald highlights the tantalization of the ideal as symptomatic of the elusiveness of the pleasures of cosmopolitanism. As Linda Williams (2004:726) contends, the fleeting value of the pornographic lies is its gratuitous power to excite. The view is amplified in the comparison of Grodal, Torben (2004:26) who contends that while the notion of the pornographic in films is associated with an
exhibition anonymous desire, romantic love is however focused “on the establishment of personalized, exclusive relations--bonds of love”. This is why it does not come as a surprise when in the end the incident of a bomb blast which claims Annette is eventually found to have been planted by another man with whom she has also been simultaneously going out. For both men, she has no feeling on account of the anonymity of her relationship with them; whereas the ideal that is desired by both William and Emerald escapes them for the fact that they are strangers in the States. Not only does this raise questions about ethics which continues to dominate the attempts to crystallize acceptable conceptualizations about cosmopolitanism, it also raises questions about the thoughts that inform the attitude of people to strangers in local set-ups.

If cosmopolitanism, among others, is said to be concerned with a boundary-transcending and mutual quest for knowledge and expertise (Katharyne Mitchell 2007:706), then one would have expected William to be accorded the dignity of his expertise in the US without having to be subjected to the humiliation of denying his legally married wife in order to go into a forced marriage with Annette. The consequences of his marriage of convenience are as sobering as they are revealing, especially in the way they help to highlight the implications of a failed cosmopolitan practice for its victims. The death of Annette in the bomb blast presupposes that William is a prime suspect. He is immediately tried, convicted and sentenced to jail guilty, which puts paid to his desperate search for the green card and the hope to live and do business legitimately in the States with his wife Emerald. But it is from the angle of Emerald that we come to terms with the consequences of the blast and indeed cosmopolitanism in their negative transcendentality. The only report she has is of the blast in Annette’s apartment and the pronouncement of Annette as killed in the blast. To her mind, since William too was supposed to be with Annette during the blast, he too can as well be taken for dead. What is more, she has no contact whatsoever with William after the blast, which goes to confirm her fear, and which throws her into quandary, and afterwards, a disconcerted mood of mourning. Her condition is worsened by the fact that the individualism that comes with the pursuit of cosmopolitan practice has previously made William to throw all decency of African communal practice to the winds, as he has not introduced Emerald to any of his relations: “not in Dublin, not in America, not even in Nigeria” . Not only do these issues render Emerald helpless, they also make her completely vulnerable in a country where it is still hard to come to terms with cosmopolitan espousals that make a case for the cessation of exclusionary practices against strangers. It then explains why she easily falls in love with Damian, a Nigerian businessman who is on a trip to the States. For offering to show concern which she cannot get in New York on account of her status as stranger, Emerald only three weeks after William’s supposed death, finds herself accepting the proposal of another man. And because he comes sweeping her off her feet, she is overwhelmed by the comfort and care Damian provides, concluding that her unpleasant past of cosmopolitan pains are now consigned to an irrevocable past. Thinking William is truly dead, Emerald who since the other marriage to Damian has chosen to be known and addressed as Emma, continues to live a happy life consummated by a set of twins who are also growing healthily and happily in a home where the father figure is excellent in terms of his commitment to family life and business.

Putting behind the ugly experience of a failed cosmopolitan adventure, the return to Nigeria appears to be an excellent option with a capacity for making for her previous
losses and dashed hopes, Emma-- the name by which Emerald is now exclusively known by her new husband and others—is the source of envy among her friends. The envy is in view of the uncommon care and love Damian showers on her and Damian’s stupendous affluence, which explains why Emma is satisfied with being a housewife in order to give the children full attention. Candy during one of their meetings confirms this envy when she playfully retorts in response to Emma’s advice that she should slow down on her professional acting in order to find time to do other things. Candy’s reply is simply that she cannot afford to rest as she is not a millionaire’s wife. On her part, Emma in Nigeria as Damian’s wife does her best to run the home in ways that complement Damian’s efforts. She takes the children to school at the right time, assists them with their homework, gives their magnificent apartment an excellent internal decoration that the husband is proud of, and dotes on the husband in a way that gives us the impression of an excellent wife. But it is perhaps in Emma’s sense of decency that her level of commitment to her matrimony is best exhibited. Told for instance by Candy that flirting is healthy and she can try it sometimes, Emma’s reply is a reminder to Candy that she remains absolutely committed to her marriage to Damian: “I am married for Christ’s sake”. Damian too on his part reciprocates the matrimonial commitment in the way he keeps his guard especially against Ada, his company public relations manager, who in spite of being Emma’s friend, is bent on luring him into an affair. As Ada’s desperation increases, in a dialogue during which she says she has just discovered that Damian is her “Mr Right”, his reply goes to confirm the airtight nature of his matrimony, which rests on the assurance of Emma’s commitment to the union:

I am not interested in you romantically...You are also my wife’s good friend...I am married, and I intend to remain so... I love my wife and kids and nothing will ever come between us

However, all this is soon to change between Damian and Emma, as an old childhood friend of Damian known as Bill and who has just been released from jail in the States after seven years is to return to Nigeria and put up in the couple’s apartment. Damian is prepared to assist “him to pick up the pieces of his life”. However, an irony is discernible in this statement by Damian because it is to be realized shortly after the arrival of Bill in the apartment that he was the same William to whom Emma was married in the United States and whom Emma had previously taken for dead. On another plane, Damian’s statement is significant in the way it speaks to the physical and psychological disintegration to which African cosmopolitans are subjected in the process of realizing their dreams. Usually when the cosmopolitan adventure goes awry, the necessity of picking up the “pieces” of one’s life results in a return to the homeland, where things do not automatically become rosy, as the motivation to pursue a cosmopolitan adventure in the first place— and as stated earlier— obtained from the hostile/harsh economic conditions at home. On yet a third plane, there is a sense in which the notion of “pieces” ramifies the perils of cosmopolitanism from the perspective of the nominal and by implication identity fragmentation with which its victims are plagued. Damian and Bill have been high school friends, but in the several border crossing experience of Bill in the North, he has changed his name from Bill to William.

Emma’s shock and exclamation of “Jesus!” upon realizing that the Bill Damian has told him about is the same William to whom she was previously married and whom she had
taken for dead give an indication of the troubles ahead in the rest of the movie. The series of events that ensue thereafter are best limned as validating the ramifications of trauma in filmic conception, which is why we may return, once again, to the conscious sense in which the “pieces” of Bill’s life yields itself to multiple interpretations. In this instance, his appearance in the matrimonial home of Damian and Emma points to some kind of in-transparency in which all the three parties involved have been caught. Indeed, it is needful to link Bill’s appearance with the constellation of accident, coincidence and factuality in the formulation of traumatic optics in filmic actions. The nominal fragmentation observed earlier now has grave implications for the three characters’ past actions, which are now set to determine the course of subsequent events. As Gertrud Koch (2005:141) observes while reflecting on Macho’s notion of accident, there is the possibility to:

reconstruct the internal connection between the case and the accident, between coincidence and factuality, as the epochal mark of a world that has fallen to pieces and that is no longer transparent to itself. It is a structure that also appears in the picture theory of trauma.

The nominal conundrum that becomes for the three characters, and later a number of other characters in the movie, as a kind of nightmare can be linked to the symptomatic “pieces” of Bill’s life as both Bill and William at the same. As a result, neither Emma nor Damian can tell that the “guest” returning from the US is actually going to be the cause of their divorce, which until this time is the last thing on their minds. In the same vein, the crisis of the “pieces” extends to the mutation of Emerald into Emma upon his marriage to Damian, for which William cannot reckon or guess that his friend’s wife is actually the same lady, Emerald to whom he is married, even if he has been away in jail. As mentioned earlier, at the core of the inability of putting these “pieces” together before the “accident” of meeting is the question of cosmopolitan perils. For both Emerald and William must have at some point in their movement across spaces of the North decided to change their names, meaning different things to different people for the negotiation of their survival and liminal space.

As a prefiguration of the series of impending crises and the traumatic extent for the characters, especially Emma, the soundtrack as a “composed score”, to borrow from Jerrold Levinson (2004:483), serves at every point in time to foreground the enormity of the experience under representation. The seriousness and significance of the music, apart from its aesthetic value, are perhaps best measured against the yardstick of the functionality of music as either diagetic or nondiagetic or both in films. Some of these functions are conceived as:

Indicating or revealing ...something about a character’s psychological condition, including emotional states, personality traits, or specific cognitions, as when the music informs you that the heroine is happy, or that the hero has just realized who the murderer was...foreshadowing of a dramatic development in a situation being depicted on screen...imparting to the viewer of a sense that the happenings in the film are more important than those of ordinary life—the emotions magnified, the stakes higher, the significances deeper (Levinson 493)
The various lyrics of the music do all the above in view of the meanings and significances they generate with respect to the turn of events. The music comes on at critical moments in the movie and serves to foreground above observations about the significances mentioned earlier mentioned. The lyrics are diverse, but most importantly they are composed to speak more to the situation of Emma than to that of any other character in the movie. Citing some of the lines from different scenes will be apt: “What you do will come back to you; I am tired of playing games…” [later] if I knew my past would come forth again… I am so distressed… now I find myself in disarray… All I see is complication… Yesterday is haunting me.”

The trouble that we smell with the return of Bill to Nigeria and arrival in Damian’s matrimonial home does not only begin to materialize immediately, but also puts Emma in a helpless situation. Truly she is faced with a haunting a “past” that has “come forth”, but to what extent can she be held responsible? The issue of bigamy that William or Bill holds up against her deserves further critical attention. While a lot is revealed in the course of the first round of argument and counter-argument between Emma and Bill, it is the fact of the previous marriage that becomes for Emma an albatross, which in spite of her eloquent justification, she may not easily wriggle out of. The real challenge and which Emma cannot handle is the question of bigamy. For when at some point Emma reminds Bill that he cannot talk to her with so much audacity in “my husband’s house”, Bill’s response is quick and straight to the point: “I am your husband too… I’ve got all the papers… I can’t remember giving you divorce way back in the States”. Thereafter Emma sincerely fights to keep her marriage to Damian, by sticking to him and the children with absolute faithfulness. Unfortunately, the slips of her past together with her emotional attachment to Bill and which the former exploits to advantage by continually reminding her that he is also legally married to her, cannot guarantee her to hold out against Bill for long, especially as he remains a guest in Damian’s house. In no time, she finds herself wrapped in the arms of Bill again once Damian is off to work and the children are away in school. Caught in the web of the law, and a moral responsibility to satisfy the emotional feelings of both men to whom she still remains legally married at the same time, the clouds thicken around Emma. The advice she seeks from her friends, yields no solution, especially when considered from Candy’s view that they both are her legal husbands; that is, in response to her comment that “I love my husband”. The sorrow, tears and pains she goes through resonates with the reflection of Appundurai on the idea of the “scape” in the context of global flow: “a borderless hermeneutical landscape in which local concerns meet, support and sometimes clash with global flows of culture and commerce” (Russell Meeuf 2007:733). In this particular instance however, the “concerns” are those of culture and ontology which forbid bigamy, at least in spaces where there is a prohibition by law. Bigamy is frowned upon by law in the US as it is frowned upon in Nigeria. The question then is why Bill (William) was not guilty of this offence while in the US and why is he holding the same offence up against Emma? Perhaps another way of putting the question is why did Emma (Emerald) agree to William’s bigamy in the US as an accomplice to the crime?

The only reason for Emma’s complicity in her own marginalization and abuse is best located within the desperate quest to gain legitimate acceptance as a cosmopolitan in the US, knowing that she agreed to Bill’s bigamy because of the promise this illegality seemed to hold for their stay in the country. That the situation did not sit well with her
in actuality is evident in her compliant to a female African American friend who is aware of the situation. During the conversation that ensues Emma makes it clear that she is tired of the lack of fulfilment in America and expresses her frustration in the emphatic desire that “But I just want to go home; I just want to go back to Nigeria”. The friend’s response however feeds into the utopia about America and its many cities as the place of fulfilment and incomparable opportunities. It is a widely held view that contributes to the continual search for cosmopolitan pleasures where there may be none, particularly when the stakes are high against strangers in societies of the North where exclusionary practices are targeted at strangers. So, against her wish, she decides to suffer from the non-fulfilment of the appreciation of her professional expertise, while suffering neglect from her husband who has “eloped with another woman to San Francisco”. This is all because according to her friend:

Let him get his papers and everything will be fine. You know how ambitious William is. He is trying to get his papers so he can do his business properly and get you everything that you need...the sooner he gets his papers, the better...This is America, land of opportunities...Be patient, everything will be fine.

The understanding then is that it is only the man who can go out there and pull through all the adventures to make the woman happy, thus painting the woman in the image of an-all-pleasure-seeking consumerist. It is the same impression we have of her during her second marriage to Damian, as she does nothing apart from keeping the home and relying on Damian for everything. This is why when Damian eventually throws her out, she is found having to mount a motor-bike all over town to see her children at school, as against when she has different cars to cruise around town.

Caught red-handed by Damian while making love to Bill, the “pieces” of Bill’s life can now be put together and the three parties for the first time are aware of the reality of bigamy through a spatial mediation of co-location in Damian’s sitting room. Again, the picture that is painted is that of a woman trying to pull a smart one on two men at the same time. However, further critical ponder on Emma’s situation reveals that she has been a victim of cosmopolitan adventures. In her explanation to Damian on why she did not put him in the know in all the years of her marriage, her explanation that she did not feel it was necessary since she thought Bill was dead in the bomb blast did not help matters. In a fit of pique, Damian declares the marriage over, having concluded that Emma ought to have kept him in the loop no matter the situation. Recounting her ordeal through a technique of flashback, which instantly takes us from Nigeria to the United States and back to Nigeria, where she passionately pleads with Damian not to call off their marriage, there is an instant loss of the sense of time, as memory registers as a fusion of past and present meant to achieve an aim. At the core of this aim is the nexus between memory and trauma, in which case:

With the loss of any reference to time, the traumatic image also loses the historiographic thread that self-narration provides, and then returns over and over not as a recollection, but — suddenly and abruptly — as a pure present (Gertrud Koch 2005: 140).
Engaging the question of memory and trauma with respect to Emma’s predicament can further be enhanced by a further exploration of memory as a “multidirectional” phenomenon. According to Michael Rothberg (2009:4), “multidirectional memory considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post-World II present”. The question of World War II may be said to be specific to Rothberg’s attempt to reflect upon the Jewish identity in the context of commemorating the persecution of a race, but there is also a sense in which the discourse of African cosmopolitanism cannot be fundamentally engaged without reference to World War II and its consequences on the African continent. The war is implicated in the nationalist agitations; it is implicated in the grave consequences of the Cold War; needless to say, the Cold War had a bearing on the ramifications of the Structural Adjustment programmes on the continent in the 1980s and to a large extent contribute to the mass dispersal of African citizens to the North for economic survival. It is precisely on account of the above that the “changing present” of Emma from her “pasts” is said to exemplify the workings of “multidirectional memory”. Her trauma must not only be seen as individual but must also be construed as collective and connecting spaces. That is, apart from the shame and anguish she faces right from the time William abandons her in the US for Annette, to the feeling of bereavement in New York, to the sudden realization 8 years after that William is actually alive, there is also a sense in which the trauma is said to be borne by a number of other characters in the movie. But we must first locate the drift of the trauma as primarily individual in order to fully appreciate what Emma has to pass through, for instance, within the scene that puts Damian in the know. As intimated earlier, Bill reaches out from a position of the law to emotionally crush Emma by reminding her that he is also her husband. By pestering her intermittently to the point of convincing her that the set of twins John and Jill “could as well be my kids”, going by the period of conception, Bill on the fateful day wants a joint decisive decision that will mean abandoning Damian after telling him that they were legally married before Damian met her in the US and she might have been pregnant for him before Damian met her. To get the cooperation of Emma is ordinarily difficult because she is in a strait from many angles with respect to her marriage to Damian. It is therefore horrifying to see Bill not only threatening but attempting to strangle her to extricate an assurance of love from her. At this point she can only yield to him as her life is under threat. While they are both lost in their world of passion in broad daylight in the sitting room, Damian returns from office, stepping in and faced with what he takes for an act of infidelity from her wife and betrayal from his friend. In reaction, it becomes more horrifying to see Damian trying to strangle Emma on account of her “shameless” affair with “my friend”. The action of attempted strangulation on the same lady within the space of thirty minutes actual time goes to show the extent of Emma’s traumatic travails. It is also at this point of Damian’s attempt to strangle her that Bill surprisingly comes to her rescue, telling Damian, the hard truth that she is also his wife, in fact, “our wife”. The result is the instant expulsion of both Emma and Bill from Damian’s home. What follows provides the ground for further exploration of memory from the angle of the collective, paying attention specifically to how this is implicated in the discourse of cosmopolitanism.

In the explication of Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider (2006:45), when the collective memory of trauma becomes transcendental in the sense that it is taken up by others beyond its immediate community, such experience can be said to be “cosmopolitan”.

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On this score, the trauma to which both Bill and Emma were subjected in their quest for survival in the North can now be said to be transcendental in the way it rubs off on Damian, who on the one hand finds it difficult to believe that he has lived with Emma for eight years without knowing that she still remains legally married to another person. On the other hand, he feels particularly crushed by the knowledge that a trusted friend like Bill, whom he has been helping to “pick up the pieces of his life”, stays right under the roof of his house, making love to his supposed legally married wife. Moreover, the cosmopolitan texture/drift of the trauma is best illustrated with the interventions of the children in court when their paternity becomes an issue. As John begins to make her observations before the judge, the whole floor is overwhelmed by the weight and innocence of the remarks. This is particularly so as in his conclusion, hints at the likely verdict in which case their paternity may be swapped, making their erstwhile “father” become their “uncle”, and vice versa. As the camera is moved around to capture the mood in the courtroom, not only Emma, Damian and the children are in a lachrymal mood; even the defence counsel Arnold (Desmond Eliot) is also caught shedding tears. This is for me a filmic moment that permits another way of talking about the “hook” experience in a manner that is contrary to the familiar, as everybody is swept off their feet by the strong emotional feelings produced by the intervention of the children.

It suffices therefore to conclude that although there are other instances of “games” predicated on mischief, deceit and other sharp practices by women in the movie, Emma’s case is far from being so, as we need to concede that she is a victim of cosmopolitan misadventures for which her love dealings went awry. Her situation can thus be said to have provided yet another angle to ways in which we may construe the notion and practices of cosmopolitanism, especially the ramifications of its perils as transcendental and most unsympathetic to women in the Global South.

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