
“My shoes are English shoes ... they’re not for savage people”:
Footwear and Social Status in Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson*

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Abstract

An obvious leitmotif running through Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* is the eponymous character’s shoes. A number of critics have alluded to the prominence of Johnson’s shoes in the novel, yet none have seen them as sufficiently significant to merit more than a passing nod. It seems all apparently fail to recognize the irony behind Cary’s use of the shoes. The social significance the character attaches to footwear is actually less a Western priority than it is a value and practice shared across many West African societies. It is, therefore, ironic that Johnson seeks to validate in the eyes of his fellow West Africans his claims to superiority as an English gentleman in part through appeals to a material value characteristic of the same West African cultures he rejects as uncivilized. That is, in the very act of asserting his Western social superiority through his shoes Johnson is in fact behaving in a most West African fashion. This paper will briefly explore the significance of footwear in West African cultures and then examine Cary’s metonymic use of Johnson’s shoes in the text.

An obvious leitmotif running through Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* is the eponymous character’s shoes. For Johnson his patent-leather shoes—“English shoes—the very best—they’re not for savage people” (23)—are the mark of an English gentleman. Whenever attention is drawn to them, the shoes function alternatively to reaffirm for Johnson his claims to English civility and to underscore the social gap he perceives between himself and his fellow West Africans whom he holds in disdain. A number of critics have alluded to the prominence of Johnson’s shoes both in the novel and in the 1990 film version

of the story, yet none have seen them as sufficiently significant to merit more than a passing nod. For example, Arnd Witte proposes a Fanonian reading of Johnson, pointing to his dress in particular and mentioning the shoes but not focusing on them, while suggesting that this absurd picture makes him “a laughing stock for the European reader” (128). Chantal Zabus, in turn, calls Johnson a “mimic man,” pointing to his “Christian customs as well as his European-like dress” as things that mark him as colonized (129). Reviewing the 1990 film, John Simon parenthetically refers to the character’s relationship to his shoes as “one of the sublime leitmotifs of the film” (56), but says nothing more. D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, in turn, suggests that Johnson’s shoes are “a recurring symbol of his Westernization” (224), while otherwise leaving the observation unexplored. B. R. Smith does go a step further, noting that the shoes are “perhaps the most repeated reminder of [Johnson’s] aspiration” for the respect and deferential treatment normally reserved for Westerners (103). This is an astute observation, yet Smith apparently fails to recognize the irony behind Cary’s use of the shoes. Simply put, the social significance the character attaches to footwear is actually less a Western priority than it is a value and practice shared across many West African societies. It is, therefore, ironic that Johnson seeks to validate in the eyes of his fellow West Africans his claims to superiority as an English gentleman in part through appeals to a material value characteristic of the same West African cultures he rejects as uncivilized. That is, in the very act of asserting his Western social superiority through his shoes Johnson is in fact behaving in a most West African fashion.

Cary is often criticized by contemporary readers for perpetuating stereotypes of Africans. Such criticism is certainly not unjustified, for as Abdul JanMohamed points out, Cary was very much a man of his times, “accepting the myths and attitudes prevalent” concerning Africans and the colonial project, particularly among the members of the Nigerian colonial service in the first decades of the twentieth century (22–23). As a young officer in the service Cary saw the British presence in Africa in altruistic terms: Britain’s role was to foster freedom and development in order to prepare Nigerians to govern themselves in the future as participants in the modern world. Initially an enthusiastic supporter of Frederick Lugard’s policy of indirect rule, like many of his contemporaries Cary had a deep mistrust of the so-called Christianized or educated Africans who were products of the mission schools. Too often, he felt, such Africans had “all the European

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vices and none of the virtues” (JanMohamed 23). That is, like Johnson they don the veneer of European civilization, but remain essentially children dominated primarily by their unrestrained passions and emotions.

Still, such contemporary criticism often fails to appreciate Cary’s keen powers of observation. Cary was stationed in Nigeria from 1913 to 1919. His diaries and journals, his correspondence, and the many drafts and fragments of stories started and abandoned during this period are filled with detailed descriptions and sketches of the landscape, the peoples, and the customs and practices he observed during his colonial service. Although he later acknowledged that these observations were “completely useless from a scientific point of view,” they nevertheless earned him the praise and encouragement of his superiors who valued “the very close scrutiny which has been brought to bear upon local conditions” (cited in Mahood 47). For his superiors the detailed descriptions and sketches of the physical environment and the religious, social, and cultural practices of the peoples under colonial jurisdiction were valuable resources for the training of the next generation of officers in the colonial service. For his art, in turn, these materials would ultimately provide him with detailed physical descriptions of a Nigerian landscape and Nigerian societies that would lend to Cary’s fiction a greater feeling of authenticity which would ultimately appeal to his cotemporary casual and critical readers alike. His use of footwear in *Mister Johnson* is most likely one such product of these observations.

Scholars generally agree that, prior to the fifteenth century, closed footwear such as shoes and boots was largely unknown among the cultures of sub-Saharan West Africa (DeMello 10, Akinwumi 185). Prior to this, because of the tropical climate with its warm-to-hot temperatures year-round, Margo DeMello suggests that to the extent that footwear was used, the most common form throughout the region was sandals (9). Made of leather, bark, or wood, these simple forms of footwear would provide protection from the ground while also keeping the foot cool. Sandals could be very simple, just a sole attached to the foot by a strap or toe loop; or they could be ornate, the work of highly skilled craftsmen, dyed in henna and decorated with such items as beads, and commanding a prohibitively costly price. Although such footwear did exist, Tunde Akinwumi suggests that it was normal for the peoples of sub-Saharan west Africa to go about barefoot. Pointing to intricately detailed wood carvings, stone sculptures, and bronze-works

which pay meticulous attention to the fine details of dress and body adornment, he notes how these artifacts also reveal that the feet of their subjects—almost exclusively members of the ruling and privileged classes—“are unshod” (185). The absence of footwear in these representations, he reasonably concludes, is indicative of the normal lifestyles of the peoples and cultures of the region, from peasantry to nobility. That is, in their daily lives these West Africans were normally barefoot.

The arrival and rapid expansion in the fifteenth century of trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic trade brought with it increased familiarity with and interest in the sartorial cultures of the Arab and European worlds, notably concerning footwear. From Arab and Hausa traders and merchants West Africans were introduced to, among other things, footwear ranging from simple and inexpensive slippers to expensive embroidered sandals made for the wealthy and ruling classes and to the sort of boots associated with camel riding, and other forms of closed footwear in common use across North Africa (Akinwumi 185, DeMello 10). About the same time trade with Europeans was also affecting change in the material cultures of West Africa, including forms of dress and usage of footwear. Akinwumi, for instance, notes that it was around this time the local peoples began using footwear more frequently and that historic evidence suggests platform shoes such as chopines were introduced by Portuguese traders (186). However, if trade brought increased awareness of and interest in footwear to West Africans, Akinwumi suggests this did not necessarily translate into increased usage by the general population. Rather, he says, “a tradition of ‘shoelessness’ persisted” in the region, and particularly among the Yoruba of present-day Nigeria, long after the arrival of Europeans and their sartorial fashions and practices (185). Quite simply, although exposure to European and Arab fashion and senses was having an impact on the sense of materiality of West Africans, “only a small portion of the population could afford to buy such products” (Akinwumi 186). Footwear, thus, was quickly becoming tied to class and social status.

Osifakorede, an early nineteenth century freed slave living in Paris, noted that among his Yoruba people footwear was not worn by commoners, but was “reserved for important men” (quoted in Akinwumi 191). Cost, of course, was one factor that often “reserved” footwear to the privileged classes. In these primarily agricultural societies farmers simply did not have sufficient resources

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with which to engage in trade for such luxurious items. More often, however, the restrictions were statutory. As DeMello points out, many West African societies had sumptuary laws “that forbade certain classes from wearing certain types of footwear or wearing footwear at all” (310). This is not all that unexpected since shoes, Akinwumi notes, like fans or umbrellas or certain types of headgear, were often associated with the paraphernalia of what in Western terms would be considered the royalty and the religious elite, regardless of their particular economic status (191). Consequently, such associations between footwear and social status often excluded even wealthy commoners from the privilege of wearing shoes. In the nineteenth century, as trade began to make shoes affordable, there was increased resistance to and defiance of sumptuary laws, initially by the local rulers and their warlords for whom such restrictions were symbolic of the politics of power and submission; by the growing class of successful traders who were quickly emerging as the *nouveau riche*; by the gradually emerging Western-educated elite who would form the new elite of colonial society; and also by the small but slowly increasing numbers of culturally displaced and alienated products of mission schools who made up the native core of the colonial service (Akinwumi 191–194). Yet despite this resistance, the vast majority of the population continued to go barefoot, a fact that did not really begin to change until well into the twentieth century (DeMello 310, Akinwumi 194–195). Even then, though shoes were becoming more common, among the peasantry who comprise the largest segment of the population they long remained associated with wealth and the social elite. And it is these tensions between the attitudes of the general population regarding traditional values and the attitudes of a small but emerging population of pseudo-Westernized and culturally alienated natives forming the core of the local colonial authority that Cary knits into the character of Mister Johnson.

Cary’s novel is set in the fictional village of Fada in the northern region of Nigeria with which Cary would have been familiar. The European presence in Fada is limited to Rudbeck and Blore, the district officers, and to Gollup, a soldier-turned-merchant-trader. Like the Europeans, Johnson too is an outsider to Fada. A probationary clerk in the colonial service, he is about seventeen years old and freshly recruited out of a mission school somewhere in the south, presumably for his rudimentary literacy in English. Far from a well-rounded character, Johnson

is a buffoon, what Kwaku Larbi Korang calls a “classic colonial stereotype of the African caught in the pathos of cultural confusion that makes him at once a distorted English copy and a denatured native” (11). That is, he drapes himself in the fineries of gentility, dressing in a white suit with trousers and patent leather shoes, frequently wearing a white pith helmet, and carrying a characteristically British umbrella. Yet, as JanMohamed observes, Johnson is nevertheless “irrational, hyperemotional ... he perceives himself an English gentleman yet cannot avoid breaking into wild, improvised song and dance at the slightest provocation,” behavior in which no self-respecting English gentleman would engage (32). Though he is ridiculous, it is doubtful that Cary intends Johnson to be merely an object of ridicule for the entertainment of his Western audience. Rather, I agree with Korang that the character represents for Cary “the botched African product of the imperial civilizing mission” (11). That is, Johnson and his obsessive pursuit of English gentility represent for Cary the negative consequences of colonial intervention in Africa. He becomes Cary’s all too simplistic personification of the African alienated from his traditional world by exposure to “superior” European culture yet still too developmentally immature to successfully integrate himself into that superior culture. In turn his obsession with the significance for social status that the character attributes to his shoes becomes Cary’s primary vehicle for highlighting what he sees as Johnson’s failure to truly grasp the meaning of civility and gentility.

Throughout most of Cary’s novel Johnson, like all of the other African characters, goes “barefoot” (62, 163, 204, 223; also “bare feet” 10, 11, 45, 226). It is only on what Smith calls “important occasions” (103) that he puts his shoes on his feet. Otherwise, when the shoes appear in the text they are either being carried in Johnson’s “hand” (4, 18) or tied together and dangling around “his neck” (208, 221). Although Smith does not specify what these important occasions might be, they inevitably involve scenes in which Johnson interacts not with Westerners, but rather fellow West Africans to whom he wishes to demonstrate and validate his claims to English gentility. These include interactions with such fellow residents of the Fada post as company store clerk Ajali, who dismisses “dat poor boy” Johnson as a pretentious fool (11); a visit to Bamu and her family to negotiate her bride-price (18–24) and later dealing with her father over a delinquent installment (63); a party with residents of Fada (30); his wedding (35); interviews with the

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Waziri, the local emir’s chief advisor (78, 208); and finally his being marched as a prisoner through the villages to the Fada courthouse where he is detained while awaiting his appointment with Western justice for killing a white man (223–227). In each of these scenes the shoes serve in the character’s mind as the visible manifestation of his status as an English gentleman. In three in particular they in fact mark him as one of what Frantz Fanon would later call colonized individuals “in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created” and who seeks to elevate themselves by adopting the cultural standards of the colonizer (18).

The first focus on Johnson’s shod feet comes early in the text and centers around the highly comic scene of Johnson’s bridal negotiations with the family of Bamu, the beautiful young ferryman’s daughter he is smitten with. Dressed in his best white suit and with his shoes notably “in one hand” (18), he runs barefoot along the trail to Bamu’s village. Arriving at the village and putting the shoes on becomes for the character a transformative act, filling him with a sense of superiority that expresses itself as movements akin to “the dignified steps of a governor-general in full uniform, picking his way among the rubbish” (18). However, if Johnson is fortified by the shoes, the villagers are hardly impressed. To them he is merely “a stranger ... a foreigner” to be fleeced of whatever they might be able to gain from him (22). Bamu’s father, Brimah, conveys his disdain for Johnson through the casualness of his posture at their first meeting, “present [ing] his hand to be shaken, and then thoughtfully scratch[ing] his left armpit with his right hand” while “stand[ing] on one leg and gaz[ing] at the river” (19) —a rebuff he later repeats when Johnson, this time delinquent in his payment of the bride price, again seeks to intimidate the old man with his well-shod feet (62–63). As negotiations over the bride price unfold, Bamu’s kin feign interest in having Johnson’s shoes, which he stubbornly rejects, declaring they are “not for savage people—bad thievish people like you” (23). As he defends his shoes they proceed to strip him one by one of his various other Western trappings—umbrella, watch, trousers and shirt, pit helmet—until by day’s end he is “naked except for a loincloth” yet nevertheless bragging to his associates at the Fada post about how he outwitted “Dem pagans [who] tink day tief ma shoes, but I too much for dem” (24). As ridiculous and pathetic as he appears, for Johnson, at least, continued possession of the shoes is the defining characteristic that still sets him apart from and above his fellow West Africans.

A second significant scene unfolds around Johnson's claims to moral superiority over the Waziri, the local Islamic emir's most trusted administrator, concerning the issue of bribery. Offered "the custom [ary]" arrangement of remuneration for regular access to the content of government reports (29)—the sort of systemic corruption in colonial Nigeria that Cary often decried as a district officer but which JanMohamed points to as allowing local rulers to stay one step ahead of colonial officials (25)—Johnson initially rejects the suggestion, dismissing the Waziri as a "Damn old rascal" and a "tief" (30). Declaring himself "fo de King" and "Mister Rudbeck's frien'," Johnson "walks up and down in the compound and every moment his walk becomes grander; it is like the walk of the royal guard ... as [he] walks among his guests, he makes a few dance steps, and sings through his nose, 'England is my country, dat King of England is my king'" (30). Expectedly, the Waziri is neither impressed nor intimidated by Johnson or his behavior. Rather, when faced with Johnson's rebuke he simply answers "in a flat voice" and mouths a wish that "God prolong you" as he graciously withdraws from the scene (30). Full of himself and his sense of moral superiority—and further fueled by gin—in a fashion uncharacteristic of the English gentleman he believes himself to be Johnson once again "take[s] off all his clothes *except his bright shoes,*" and with the "*thin moon glittering on the shoes,* on an empty bottle of gin and the dregs of beer in scattered calabashes" he continues in a frenzied fashion to sing about his devotion to England and to the King (30; emphasis added). The attention brought to the shoes as his only remaining article of clothing hints at them as being the source of inspiration for his song; a song which at once catalogues the depraved state of the uncivilized African—"drunk ... *play de fool ... dirty ... black trash ... spit all over de carpet of [the King's] great big heart...*"—and also celebrates Johnson's personal election by the magnanimous English king, who recognizes and elevates "*my faithful clerk from Fada*" out of the depths of such crudity (32). Significantly, the only one paying Johnson any attention is an "old Yoruba trader" with a similar rudimentary mission education. Both, that is, are outsiders to Fada and products of a system that, intentionally or not, transmitted in the classroom what Edward Said has described as "ideas about unequal races and cultures" that often persuaded the native of his need for European edification and which served as the justification for the civilizing mission of the colonial project (131). While this Yuroba man, "very drunk, ... sings the chorus with

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Johnson, and utters loud sobs” in seeming empathy, the few true locals left at the party, those not really affected by the civilizing mission, are otherwise off in the corners “talk[ing] about their own affairs,” occasionally clapping softly in time with Johnson’s tune and all the while blissfully ignorant of its content (31). Once again, his claims to English gentility fall on deaf ears.

Hereafter, attention continues to be drawn to Johnson’s shoes as the novel unfolds. There are, for instance, numerous minor references to him putting on, slipping off, or carrying the shoes (e.g. 39, 45, 51, 116, 194, 208). In other more substantial references it is noted that: for his wedding he dresses “in a white suit, starched to the consistency of planks; a blue tie, blue silk socks and new patent shoes” (35); that later, following his theft for the Waziri of government letters from Rudbeck’s safe he “puts on a clean suit and his English patent-leather shoes to celebrate his triumph” (78); and still later, having lost his clerical position for embezzlement but subsequently regaining Rudbeck’s favor in a new position as a road gang supervisor he “buys himself a new canopy chair, a white helmet and a pair of patent-leather shoes” which he only wears on Sundays (163). Each of these references draws further attention to Johnson’s pretentious claims to English gentility, but in each of these references the shoes primarily serve to satisfy Johnson’s own ego rather than to impress others. However, following his arrest for killing the English merchant Sargey Gollup and subsequent imprisonment as he awaits trial, the shoes once again function for Johnson as implements intended to impress upon his fellow West Africans his claims to superiority as an English gentleman. And, as before, these claims are once again dismissed or ignored by the locals for whom they are intended.

The depiction of Johnson on the run and hiding in the bush is at once ridiculous and pathetic. When he appears at Bamu’s village seeking shelter, the narrator notes that everything about him is in a shambles. The contrast between his ragged clothes—“His trousers are two legholes in a rag of cloth and his coat has lost its back. It is two sleeves held together by a collar”—and the patent-leather shoes that “still dangle from his neck” is once again comic (221). A pathetic wretch, for Johnson it seems the shoes are the only articles of his wardrobe that really matter. Indeed, as in the earlier scenes, for him being “almost naked” in public is acceptable as long as he is still in possession of the shoes, whereas in reality among these people, whose society is under the strong Islamic

influence typically found even among traditionalists in northern Nigeria, unshod feet are the norm while public nakedness would usually be an affront to local morality (see, for example, Kolig 212ff).

Even as he is marched along the road to jail, Johnson is less concerned with the degree of his nakedness than with his unshod feet. For example, as a crowd of travelers hurriedly tries to get out of the way of the approaching police procession, Johnson is again filled with delusions of grandeur, this time imagining himself “a remarkable man” who is so dangerous that he must “have an escort of four” (223). Rather than demanding a cloth with which to cover himself, he instead insists that he must put on his shoes, declaring once again that he is “not the son of a dog, but an English gentleman. If you were not rubbish, you would not propose to take a gentleman barefoot through your disgusting town.” Surprised by his forcefulness, one of the guards “even stoops to tie his laces, which he cannot manage, one-handed, for himself” (223). The shoes thus once again become a source of fortification: with his feet now shod Johnson is again “revived” and even “swaggers” and waves at what he perceives as an “awed crowd ... enjoy[ing] his last triumph” (223).

If this is a triumph for Johnson, it is short-lived. He is soon “thrown into the old common dungeon of the jail” with thirty other chained prisoners who show no “interest or curiosity” in Johnson or his shod feet. Indeed, only he continues to admire them, sitting in a corner and “turning his feet sideways to catch the light on the varnish” (223–224). To the rest of the inmates he is just another condemned man in rags awaiting the hangman’s noose. In fact, the only character among the prisoners who does show any interest in Johnson or his shoes is Saleh, a youth who had been the object of the Waziri’s homosexual attentions but has since fallen out of favor. Like Johnson, for Saleh the shoes represent status. Having floated as a male courtesan on the peripheries of courtly life he has become somewhat accustomed to the fineries of class and privilege. Now deprived of the frivolous material comforts and pleasures he had enjoyed, now filled with a monstrous sense of self-pity, obtaining possession of Johnson’s shoes becomes for Saleh a way of regaining some sense of his former status, just as they have been for Johnson. The shoes thus become for the two a contested prize, Saleh imploring Johnson to “Give me your shoes” out of pity’s sake for all of the indignities that Saleh has had to endure, while Johnson continues to insist that “I need them” (225). Ultimately Saleh prevails, slowly wearing down Johnson’s

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resistance by calling him “selfish,” “cruel,” and “a brute” with “a heart of stone” (225), all epithets intended to undermine Johnson’s sense of gentle superiority by in fact appealing to those same sentiments, coupled with reminders that his fate is already sealed—he will soon be hanged for killing a white man. Johnson eventually succumbs, removes the shoes and hands them to Saleh, and in the process symbolically relinquishing his claims to English civility. It is for Johnson a moment of epiphany. Whereas just moments earlier he sat in the corner admiring his shod feet and how the light reflected off the shoes, now he sits “looking at his bare feet for a long time, with an air of surprise” (226). The surprise, at one level, is at how low Saleh has fallen from a position of privilege in the emir’s court to a common prisoner. In Saleh’s fall, at the same time, Johnson recognizes his own inferiority and vulnerability. That is, he arrives at an epiphanic realization that he is not the English gentleman he had imagined, but rather just another of the “known criminals” (227) that the police, the other residents of Fada, and many of the Europeans he so admiringly mimics have all along perceived him to be. The novel then rushes towards its climax, ending with Johnson’s death at the hands of his former boss, Rudbeck. The assistant district officer, feeling in some ways at least partly responsible for the plight into which Johnson has fallen, chooses to honor the African’s request and shoot him himself, much like a cherished sick dog being put out of its misery by a loving master, rather than subject him to the public indignity of the gallows. Ultimately he justifies himself, telling his wife that “I couldn’t let anyone else do it, could I?” (255), affirming the unbridgeable gap between colonial master and subject which will never permit the sort of egalitarian relationship that was supposed to be the eventual goal of the colonial project.

Most contemporary critics agree that Cary’s Africa fiction is built upon and perpetuates commonly held stereotypes of the continent as a primitive and hostile environment and its peoples as arrested at an equally primitive stage of intellectual, social, cultural, and scientific development. What is often lost is the fact that these novels in general, and *Mister Johnson* in particular, are actually critiques of British colonial policies in Africa from one of its agents entrusted with implementing that policy. Initially an enthusiastic supporter of the stated aims of the colonial project and the approaches outlined by Frederick Lugard’s “dual mandate,” Cary gradually became disillusioned with what he began to see as an ineffective colonial bureaucracy; a corps of officers preoccupied with grand projects such as road and

bridge building but who failed to see the local Africans as persons; and a policy of minimal socio-cultural interference that over time he began to see as, on the one hand, preserving “tribalism” and preventing the development of “superior” socio-economic structures, and on the other producing a class of detribalized mimic men (to borrow V.S. Naipaul’s title) who too often adopted the superficial trappings of Western material culture but none of its virtues. Cary in fact was always critical of colonial mimicry. Whereas Homi Bhabha has suggested that mimicry can at times be a form of resistance through which the colonized subverts the colonizer’s self-superiority by reflecting back at the colonizer a distorted image of himself (86–87), for Cary it was always an act of cultural appropriation by detribalized colonial subjects still too burdened by the primitive culture in which they were weaned to understand or appreciate the forms they were, at best, aping (see “African Freedom,” 72–75).

Johnson is just such a mimic man. His mission education, his exposure to Christian religious ideas, and his limited English fluency have turned him into what Arnd Witte calls one of the detribalized “trousered negroes” (128)—or in this case, well-shod Africans—of which Cary so disapproved. Johnson’s preoccupation with his patent leather shoes and the status he mistakenly believes they imply points to what for Cary was a superficial understanding of Christian Western European culture. More importantly, it clearly highlights Johnson’s failure to recognize the hypocritical gap between the egalitarian ideals articulated by this culture he so admires and the latent racist realities that will prevent him from ever being accepted as an equal. Additionally, his mistaken assumption about the degree to which shoes of and by themselves will enhance his status in the eyes of his fellow West Africans indicates the degree to which he is also alienated from these indigenous cultures. His assumptions demonstrate that he has only appropriated the material symbolism of footwear from local culture without appreciating or internalizing its significance at the deeper levels.

That Cary’s Africa novels have fallen by the wayside of literary studies is to be expected. He was, after all, an imperialist who believed in the ideals of the colonial mission, and such ideals have been roundly discredited in this postcolonial world. However, if we take up Abdul JanMohamed’s suggestion and read these texts not as realistic novels but as romances (15), the mimetic problems they present can be easily gotten around. Such an approach would allow critical readers

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to better appreciate the artistry and craftsmanship of Cary’s work and his keen powers of perception. If we can get beyond the stereotypes and recognize the critical eye being cast upon the colonial mission perhaps the reader can then more clearly understand the idealism, the hesitations, the self-doubts, and the pangs of conscience echoing in the minds and souls of the individuals charged with carrying out that mission.

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