

L Martin

I **T** is now some four decades since Chinua Achebe played his part in exposing the inadequacy of the colonialist narrative by the way in which he recorded the decision of the District Commissioner in *Things Fall Apart* to devote 'a reasonable paragraph' to the 'story of a man (Okonkwo) who had killed a messenger and hanged himself.' British writers, some of them district officers, had written too many 'reasonable paragraphs' about Africa, distorting the continent's history for too many for too long. By the Fifties, a shift was long overdue and Achebe's voice was among the most eloquent of those raised to write the new history. However, it is now appropriate to look at some examples of the anti-colonial narratives, and the cultural nationalist narratives that occasionally accompanied them, to see how adequately they presented events. This is a vast topic, but my concern is very narrow. It involves, as my title indicates, Martin Banham and the links between Leeds and Ibadan. The intention is to assemble a variety of voices in order to challenge some of the over-simplification and misrepresentation that has affected the writing of literary history in Nigeria.

According to the book which prompted my title, *Toward The Decolonization of African Literature* (hereafter *Decolonisation*), Martin Banham was a reactionary influence in West

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Banham & the Scandalous LEEDS Ibadan Connection

Africa and played a decisive role in the 'inculcation of Euromodernism in Nigerian poetry.' Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemei and Ihechukwu Madubuike, the authors of the influential study, incorporate imagery and biographical details into their analysis so as to suggest Banham was a British agent working against the evolution of a confident, positive and progressive African tradition of writing. The University of Leeds and University College, Ibadan, of the late Fifties and early Sixties are presented as institutions promulgating narrow, reactionary ideological dogmas, with students at the latter as intellectual infants.

While it must be recognised that Wole Soyinka is the real target of the three Nigerian critics, Banham (the focus of my attention) comes under intense fire. Chinweizu et al., 'out' him as an agent of neo-colonialism and 'other him' as a reactionary force. They regard the kind of work he encouraged as a 'poison', and write:

A search for the fountainhead of this poison leads to an examination of the Leeds-Ibadan connection, personified in the roles of Martin Banham and Wole Soyinka. (Chinweizu, et al.: 1980, 196.)

I want to use the points made in *Decolonisation* as a way into presenting a quick sketch of Banham from the mid-Fifties to the early Sixties. In the process, I shall challenge several of the

assumptions made by Chinweizu and his collaborators, and draw attention to some of the problems involved in writing literary history. I hope to set the assertions made in *Decolonisation* against the evidence provided by Banham's writing and against statements made by African writers.

First, more about the 'fountainhead of the poison'. The triumvirate of authors of *Decolonisation* continue from the sentence quoted above with information and images that repay examination. A lengthy quote but an important one:

In 1954 Soyinka left Ibadan and proceeded to the University of Leeds to complete his undergraduate studies. There he was a contemporary of Martin Banham who was then working for his MA. In October, 1956, Martin Banham joined the English Department at the University of Ibadan, and during the following school year he, in his own words, 'persuaded (the undergraduates) to start a small cyclostyled verse magazine,' The Horn, under the founding editorship of J.P. Clark.

For the next several years, the pages of The Horn would serve as the weaning ground for the most prominent members of the Ibadan-Nsukka school of poetry. Soyinka on his return from Leeds in 1960 used the pages of The Horn to publish both poetry and assorted pieces of cultural propaganda. Several lesser members of the Ibadan-Nsukka school would make their appearance in The Horn and also make their indoctrinating pilgrimages to Leeds at various points in their careers. Thus, both the Leeds-Ibadan conduit of ideas, and the magazine through which its influence was most sharply brought to bear upon a coterie of nascent poets and critics, deserves serious examination.

The two principal impacts of tutelage on The Horn are easily traced in the records. They are (1) the dominant cultivation of England's poetic tradition, especially the anglo-modernist sensibility and mannerism; (2) a determined fight to wean the poets away from any stirring of African nationalist consciousness and to indoctrinate them with a universalist-individualist outlook (Chinweizu et al.: 1980, 196-7)

There are statements in this passage that might confuse: at Leeds, Soyinka did a full undergraduate degree - he did not 'complete' a degree already embarked on, and Banham did not take up a post at 'the University of Ibadan' since the institution did not exist. He was employed by 'University College, Ibadan' that only subsequently became a fully-fledged university.



Professor Martin Banham of Leeds University (middle) at the Theatre for Development workshop in Ibadan

These, however, are relatively minor points. Of greater interest is the unjustified and tendentious tone of the passage. I object, for example, to 'weaning ground,' and 'indoctrinating pilgrimages.' And I note the way in which the ideas embodied in these inaccurate expressions reappear. For instance, we encounter references to '(weaning) the poets away from,' to 'assorted pieces of cultural propaganda,' and 'to indoctrinate them.' The impression created is that African poets were babies who came under the sway of propaganda agents skilled in the arts of waging a war for cultural domination. This is patronising towards the African writers, and the passage creates a mischievously inaccurate portrait of Banham, the University he attended, the University College he was employed to teach, and his colleagues.

In the pages that follow, I want, while dallying on occasions to point out career developments, to look at Banham at Leeds, and to examine the young lecturer's research interests while in his first teaching post. I will go over his involvement with *The Horn*, and examine the charges levelled against him. This discussion will take me through some eight pages of *Decolonisation*, and will continue up to the reference to Wole Soyinka being parachuted in (1960) from Leeds and the Royal Court Theatre... and (going) into action to flush out and swat the remnant of the native resistance to Anglo-Saxon pseudo-universalism.

I have already engaged in a controversy with Chinweizu over those lines and the paragraphs that follow.



The famous West Yorkshire Playhouse, Quarry Hill, Leeds

(Chinweizu: 1986 a, b; Gibbs: 1986 a, b) Here my concern is with the presentation of Martin Banham.

Martin Banham at Leeds, some glimpses

Banham was a student of English at Leeds during a period of considerable excitement. The staff of the English Department was particularly stimulating, the presence of Bonamy Dobree, Arnold Kettle and George Wilson Knight ensuring lively controversy rather than comfortable orthodoxy. Undergraduate life offered variety and creativity: student elections were hard fought, the Theatre Group pioneered productions of adventurous continental work, during Ragg Week the carnivalesque annually erupted into the streets of the post-war city, and the debating society ensured that every idea was dissected - before being voted on. In this community, Martin Banham was a busy, prominent, and appreciated student.

When, at the beginning of 1955, he stood for the post of 'Junior Vice-President', Alan Smith a notable debater, confidently and eloquently recommended him to the student electorate:

Martin Banham is the embodiment of reliability. He exhales confidence and quiet common sense as lesser men exhale cigarette smoke. Calm and unruffled in a crisis, resourceful in extremity, his immense fund of good humour and tact enable him to rise to any occasion with unassuming dignity.

(*Union News*, 4 March 1955, p.1)

The interest of this paragon were not confined to student politics, and the following month found him reviewing 'A Mighty Othello,' (*Union News*, 29 April 1955, p. 2) This provoked a rejoinder by Roderick Knight, and the following month Banham waded back ('calm and unruffled') into the controversy with 'Othello Discords'. (*Union News*, 13 May 1955, p. 6) He was clearly a man of ideas with an interest in the theatre, and a critic

with opinions he was prepared to defend.

Banham was a member of the Rag Committee and, not surprisingly given his theatrical interests, part of the 'admirable team' that was responsible for the 1955 Rag Revue, a 'Magnificent Production.' (*Union News*, 20 September 1955, p.2.) Incidentally, the full production line-up consisted of 'the Misses Buckle, Bear, Goldring and Statman and Messers Banham, Cryer, Gill, Green, Robinson and Tate.' 'Cryer', Barry Cryer, made distinctive contributions to Leeds Rag Revues for several years and his wit has been enjoyed, mostly thanks to radio programmes, by generations of listeners. A photograph taken during Rag Week 1955 show Banham collecting money for rag with a member of an earlier generation of broadcasters, Wilfred Pickles. (*Union News*, 4 October 1955, p.1)

During the Autumn of 1955, Banham was part of a different kind of team, one that defeated a Hull University debating squad that included Roy Hattersley, (*Union News*, 11 November 1955.) Two months later an item entitled 'Debaters win again' indicated the future professor's move from the local derby towards national competition. The student paper reported that:

*Mr. Alan Smith and Mr. Martin Banham, well-known figures in the Union and regular speakers for the Debating Society, are to go forward as the Leeds team to the Northern Semi-Final at the end of this month. (*Union News*, 20 January 1956)*

That, however, seems to have been the end of that particular road for young, Banham. Alan Smith, however,

won his way to the NUS Debating Tournament Final. (Union News, 3 February 1956.)

Wole Soyinka, with whom Banham was much later to be linked in 'The scandalous Connection,' was, incidentally, also involved in the areas of University life with which I have associated Banham. From 1954 to about 1958, the Nigerian writer was a student in the Leeds English Department; he acted with the Theatre Group, sang in the Rag Revue and was a member of the Debating Society. Furthermore, both he and Banham were part of the community that produced a modest, weekly magazine, *Poetry and Audience*, the publication that provided the model for *The Horn*. In its pages, poems appeared beside articles discussing such basic literary issues as the function of poetry. This controversy was characteristic of Leeds in the mid-Fifties where there was an acute awareness of ideological issues. Given the presence of Kettle, a card-carrying member of the British Community Party and a major Marxist literary critic-historian, this could hardly have been otherwise. It was however, a nuanced debate: Kettle himself being the quickest to expose criticism by numbers or 'vulgar Marxism.'

The suggestion, put forward by Chinweizu et al, in the passage quoted above, that studying at Leeds was like an 'indoctrinating (pilgrimage)' to a citadel of 'Anglo-Modernist pseudo-universalism' is nonsense bred of ignorance. In this context, the experiences of Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o are so illuminating that brief quotations are apt.

Soyinka has written of the importance of Leeds in introducing him to materialist debates. In a paper given in 1977, he said:

The author of Death and the King's Horsemen first encountered Marx (apart from name) through Dr. Arnold Kettle, an avowed communist who taught at the University of Leeds. The year was 1955. In response to a remark in which I called his attention to the threats posed to individual freedom by any form of totalitarian state - Dr. Kettle quietly reminded me of the far more devastating encroachments on individual self-fulfillment by the private exploiter of others' labour. The revelation was that simple and total. (Soyinka: 1988, 111.)

Soyinka continued by describing the interest he took in 'Dr. Kettle's circle of communists,' and the reading list he struggled with. The University of Leeds offered a broadening of horizons through a series of confrontations with a starkly contradictory, firmly anti-colonial force. One of the influential African writers who followed Soyinka to Leeds was Ngugi wa Thiong'o. He went there to study Caribbean writing and left, without completing his degree, having improved his radical, nationalist credentials by writing *A Grain of Wheat*. In the 'Foreword' to a collection of Ngugi's essays, Homecoming, Ime Ikiddeh, himself a contemporary of Ngugi's at Leeds,

wrote:

...it was the experience of social and economic relations in Britain, more than Kenya, that actually settled Ngugi's socialist convictions. Starting from a common sense appraisal of the situation in his country at independence, in particular, the need for a redistribution of wealth in the interests of a deprived peasantry. Ngugi arrived in England in 1964 and settled into the revolutionary atmosphere of Leeds University where he studied for the next few years. Extensive travels around Britain and Europe, acquaintance with some eminent British socialist scholars, including his supervisor, Dr. Arnold Kettle, and discussions with the radical student group led by Alan Hunt - these revealed that the root cause of incessant industrial strife in Britain was no more than the old inter-class hostility inherent in the capitalist system. Thus Leeds provided an ideological framework for opinions that he had already vaguely held. (Ikiddeh in Ngugi: 1972, xiii).

So much for the 'shrine' to which the authors of Decolonisation write in such condescending terms of students making 'indoctrinating pilgrimages'. In Ngugi's Leeds, the atmosphere was 'revolutionary,' the supervisor 'socialist,' the students 'radical'.

As for Banham, to return to the main narrative, it is worth listening to his account of the attitudes he took with him when after completing his MA, he took up a teaching post in Ibadan.

He is on record as saying:

I went out there as a young socialist, fire in the belly and all the rest of it, thinking that I was going into a situation with all the cliches of colonialism... (Wren: 1991, 32.)

The quotation is taken from an interview with Robert Wren, one of a series that appears in an investigation into the source of 'the common energy that Achebe, Soyinka, Okigbo and Clark drew on,' the energy that established Ibadan between 1948 and 1966 as the crucible of Nigerian Literature. Why were those, in the phrase that Banham used in his interview and that Wren took for his title, *Magical Years?* I will draw repeatedly on Wren's transcriptions, convinced that, while memories are fallible, his volume is a much more honest and reliable guide to the Ibadan of Banham, Soyinka and *The Horn* than Decolonisation.

Martin Banham at Ibadan, more glimpses

The brief list of publications at the end of this paper, based on bibliographies prepared by Bernth Lindfors and B. Olukeni Toye, indicates some of the young lecturer's areas of interest. An early project involved an examination of Nigerian students' reading habits, from which emerged cause for concern about 'the lack of' reading habits and fascination with the position enjoyed by British authors, particularly by

the near-universal admiration for Shakespeare. Clearly anything that was to take place would be against a background of respect for English literature. University College, Ibadan, was at the pinnacle of an Education system that involved English students in reading Chaucer's 'Tales,' Macaulay's 'Lays of Ancient Rome' and selections from *A Pageant of Longer Poems*. The volume included work by Gray, Crabbe, Coleridge, Browning, Lawrence, and, the examiners' favourite, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Those who were allowed to study for English degrees had proved they were familiar with the English tradition.

The ambitions of these graduates are found in a continuation of the quotation about 'the clichés of colonialism.' Banham said that he discovered he was

in the middle of a body of very elite young men and women whose main concern in life was how soon they could get their car allowance, and their car, and take over this or that position. (Banham: 1958a)

In other words, the young socialist was surrounded by students in whom the individualist outlook was already deeply rooted.

Banham's interest in what was happening around him soon began to express itself in response to the Nigerian cultural scene, particularly to drama. The list of his publications soon takes a strongly theatrical flavour. Some of the contributions are to University College's newly established flagship publication *Ibadan*, others to new foreign journals, such as *New Theatre Magazine* (Bristol), *African Forum* (New York), *The Bulletin for the Association of African Literature in English* (Fourah Bay) and *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (Leeds). He also sent a number of reviews of texts to *Books Abroad*, published in Norman, Oklahoma. However, while drawing the attention of a wide readership to what was going forward in Nigeria, he did not neglect the local debate: he wrote play reviews for *The Horn*, and he had



Wole Soyinka in the late '50s

a piece on the Nigerian theatre in *Flamingo*.

Looking back on what was happening in Nigeria during the late Fifties and early Sixties, it is easy to be aware of the role of Ulli Beier as editor, of Geoffrey Axworthy as director, of Chinua Achebe as novelist, of J.P. Clark and Christopher Okigbo as poets, and of the sheer versatility of the new Nigerian Renaissance figures. While admiring the richness and energy, it is appropriate to recognise Banham's role as a critic and promoter. The bibliography is the skeleton; the flesh is the writing itself: crisp, positive, serious but not solemn, confident but not arrogant, excited by developments but not uncritical or condescending. Thus, writing of *A Dance of the*

Forests, The Lion and the Jewel and *Three Plays for Books Abroad* in 1964, he expressed a view that he has repeated down the years:

These three volumes will serve to introduce Wole Soyinka to the wider audience he merits. A Dance, which I see as a pageant, has certain deficiencies of organisation but remains an imaginative feat of considerable stature - a great, rolling, strident play. (Banham: 1964a)

At the same time, and responding to a talented playwright, poet and editor, he described the author of *A Reed in the Tide*, as 'a writer of wit and sensitivity.' Balancing censure with praise he added,

Whilst in some of his work a slight strain of imagery is noticeable, (Clark) nevertheless compensates for this by the easy use of the natural and everyday, presented with startling force... (Banham: 1964b)

In a typescript review headed 'For the Daily Times' that may not have actually reached the Nigerian reading public, Banham was appreciative and authoritative in writing of a production of Clark's *Song of a Goat*. Prepared to draw

attention to shortcomings with wit and untempered censure, he included the following:

The mad aunt...Francesca Pereira deserved make-up that would have given her greater age (she looked more like a mad niece)... the lighting was badly mishandled and distracting. (Banham: 1964b)

The Banham who emerges from these and other reviews is open, frank and encouraging. The fact that he championed Soyinka's work from a very early point will not impress Chinweizu and his colleagues, indeed for them such approval is confirmation of the 'Scandalous Leeds-Ibadan Connection.' Many of the rest of us will, however, be impressed. Banham was sensitive to a creative and progressive use of indigenous material by a clutch of authors. His subsequent appointment as Deputy Director to Geoffrey Axworthy in the newly-founded School of Drama was just reward for his achievements and commitment.

Martin Banham and *The Horn*

Having glanced at Banham while he was at Leeds and having drawn attention to some of his work at Ibadan, I want to return to the allegations made against him by Chinweizu et al. in relation to *The Horn*. Banham promoted and (initially) funded *The Horn*, which, it will be recalled, was described in Decolonisation as a 'weaning ground,' as containing 'assorted pieces of cultural propaganda,' as cultivating, through 'tutelage,' 'the anglo-modernist sensibility,' and as providing the base for 'a determined fight to wean the poets away from any stirring of African nationalist consciousness and to indoctrinate them with universalist-individualist outlook.'

Anyone wishing to make a 'serious assessment' of *The Horn* has to start with an essay by W. H. Stevenson entitled 'The Horn. What it was and it did.' But research must not end there. The authors of Decolonisation quote extensively from Stevenson and, there is no evidence that they went further. They do not, for example, mention the fact that Banham had his own poetry published in the magazine - even though this could be seen as serving his neo-colonial turn. The 'decolonisers' do not appear to have analysed the publications for themselves, nor to have consulted the two Nigerians closest to the birth of *The Horn*, both men of stature in the world of African literature. The founding editor was J. P. Clark, and a successor was Abiola Irele. Fortunately for the more dispassionate and more curious researcher both have put relevant thoughts and recollections on record.

By 1957, Clark was already a practised writer - he had completed a novel even before embarking on his undergraduate career and then published poetry in *The Beacon* and *The Bug*. His independence of spirit was well known, and the editorial in the first issue of the magazine was a call to Negritude. Decolonisation quotes Stevenson at some length

at this point:

The editorial in the very first issue, presumably written by J. P. Clark, declared, 'We venture to submit "Negritude" as a most compendious word!... it stands for ... that new burning consciousness of a common race and culture that black men in America, the West Indies, and Africa are beginning to feel towards one another.' Later he says, 'It is to arrest such subtle imperialism (i.e. by Western education) that we join those already fighting to preserve our heritage by launching this magazine.' (Chinweizu, et al.: 1980, 200.)

The triumvirate acknowledge that this 'sounds a positive and welcome note on Negritude and on black cultural consciousness.' But then continue to summarise the publication's position thus:

Two issues later, John Ramsaran (the British 'house nigger' from another part of the Third World), promptly weighs in with all his professorial authority and issues an encyclical, warning the restive undergraduates against this 'heresy.' Then, two issues later, properly chastened, J. P. Clark surrenders before the authority of the encyclical and publishes his recantation. However, a few others, notably Abiola Irele, persist as dissenters before foreign professorial pressure, and proceed to state and restate the 'heretical' position. (Chinweizu et al.: 1980, 203)

Chinweizu et al. acknowledge the persistent calls to the banner of Negritude, while assailing the ears with the sound of axes being ground. Quite simply, Ramsaran and Clark are both misrepresented. For example, Ramsaran was not a professor and Clark was not the sort to be impressed by authority. 'Encyclical,' which introduces into the debate the weight of the papacy, the authoritarianism of the Catholic Church and the odour of infallibility, is characteristically provocative, an attempt to bamboozle. It is heavy-handedly reinforced by the use of 'heresy' and 'recantation'. The facts are more awkward and the personalities involved less compliant than Decolonisation allows; readers are, surely, not impressed by such manipulative language.

The Decolonisation tie themselves in knots, desperate to have everything every way. They argue that *The Horn* was reactionary, even though they admit the first editorial was pro-Negritude. They argue that it went on being reactionary even though Irele and others persisted in stating and restating the case for black cultural consciousness.

Had *The Horn* really been established as an anti-Negritude forum then Clark and Irele would have been among last people to whom editorial authority would have been the allowed to pass. To discover what really happened is impossible, but versions of events that avoid the tortuous special pleading of Decolonisation emerge from the interviews conducted by Wren during 1982-3. Banham questioned in Leeds, is quoted on *The Horn*.

The little magazine which J. P. and I started together - my money, his editorship... The creation of *The Horn*. That was something that I'm really proud of. It did so very much to concentrate the minds of some of the youngsters on writing. And you know there's an interesting range of people represented on the pages of *The Horn*, Soyinka, of course, and Clark himself. (Banham quoted in Wren: 1991, 29).

This statement brings out the pedagogic intent and the pleasure that a teacher took in a project that provided a focus, that '(concentrated) minds.' Inevitably, Banham had hopes and aspirations for the little magazine, he must also have had preferences and, perhaps, even prejudices, but there is no evidence that he had a 'hidden agenda'.

Clark provided Wren with a paragraph on Banham and *The Horn* that underlines the (readily acknowledged) Leeds inspiration of the idea of a student literary magazine and reinforces the idea of 'concentration' - putting things together in one place. Only the full interview does justice to the pugnacious Clark, a writer quick to take and to imagine offence, author of the prickly *America, Their America*, and a man for whom a challenge from a lecturer was like a proverbial red rag to a proverbial bull. He told Wren:

Banham, Martin Banham, for instance, was a young tutor there, a young lecturer. He brought the idea of starting this magazine, and has never liked me calling myself the 'founding editor' and for refusing him my poems when he compiled his collection of Nigerian Student Verses out of contributions to *The Horn* of which I was the major contributor. My objection was that I wrote poetry not 'student verse.' (*The Horn*) was an idea he brought from Leeds: with all these things we were doing, couldn't we put them all together in one place? And we said, yes, fine. We chose an editor straightaway, and I was the first editor, and I gave it the life it had.

He added: 'Banham's a good man; he wasn't much older than many of us students. We got on very well.' (Wren: 1991, 101-2) *The Horn* came up at other points during Wren's wide-ranging interview with Clark and it is worth quoting relevant assertions to set beside the narrative presented by the decolonisers. For example, Clark said:

We were Negritude poets ourselves, in our own way. You recall some of the editorials we wrote in *The Horn*. They were fighting editorials, and our English teachers didn't like us for it. (Wren: 1991, 100)

He maintained that he was writing of political poetry from an early stage:

You'd see certain things some of us were beginning to assert belonged to us. Nationalism. When you wrote about a girl bathing in a stream (Clark's 'Girl Bathing') you were making a statement. They were all political poems. (Wren: 1991, 109. Wren's parenthetical comment.)

Clark states his case forcefully, occasionally wandering

into a battlefield that bears a superficial resemblance to that conjured up by Decolonisation, an area in which, for example, teachers, 'didn't like us' for our 'fighting editorials.' But there is little ground for agreement between Clark and the authors of Decolonisation: he reports that the professor of English, Molly Mahood, repeatedly queried him about his extraordinary fondness for Keats. Clark was obviously not a babe in swaddling bands, Mahood not his wet nurse, Banham not his ideological minder.

For a calmer recollection from a less embattled source, it is a relief to turn from Clark to Abiola Irele whose recollections of events surrounding the establishment of *The Horn* are lucid and have the ring of authenticity:

Well, what happened was this: I remember this very well. Martin Banham made this proposal (to start a literary magazine). He called a meeting and we discussed it. And it was unanimous that J. P. would edit it. And we all got together and worked on it and called for poems. There was no vote or anything - he stood out and was the obvious choice for the editor because he had already started writing poetry anyway, on his own. He was more or less designated by general acclamation. And we agreed on the format and things like that. Actually, I wasn't on the editorial board in the first year, that first year, '57. When he finished, then he handed it over to me. It was the pragmatic English tradition - you don't vote - things just emerge. I'm sorry that many of those poets who wrote quite good stuff during that period - they've sort of gone into oblivion now. They didn't keep it up. Molly Mahood provided the material support, in the form of paper and stencils and so on (after Banham's start-up money). And we typed the things ourselves and did the stencilling. (Wren: 1991, 115. First parenthetical insertion by Gibbs, second by Wren).

At that point, Wren pertinently asked 'Was Mahood a good influence?' And Irele responded in a manner that entirely supports the impression created by Clark and completely demolishes the relationship imagined, and proclaimed, by Decolonisation:

Well, there was absolutely no direction from them; I mean we ran it the way we felt like. And all we did at the end was to give her a copy for herself, in recognition of her support. But there was absolutely no interference from the staff. It was a purely student affair. No dictation as to what to put in, no suggestions whatsoever. The thing just grew by itself that way. (Wren: 1991, 116.)

Had Banham really been trying to fund a publication that would wage a cultural war on behalf of imperialism, he would have been well advised to keep it out of the hands of, first, Clark and then Irele. To argue, as Chinweizu and his colleagues do, that he had fashioned some incredibly devious plot, and was effectively 'teleguiding' - to use a term once

popular in West Africa - intelligent Nigerians is hard to credit. Proof certainly requires much closer analysis than Decolonisation provides.

It would be comforting to feel that Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike were minor figures in the writing of Nigerian literary history. Unfortunately they are not: the vigour with which they have presented their conspiracy theory has impressed many. There are some who think that Leeds was a right-wing think-tank, that University College, Ibadan, was an educational maternity ward, that Banham was a cultural warrior running Joes in the neo-colonial battle for hearts and minds through poetry. An indication of the status of the critics is provided by the correspondence printed after the essays that form Decolonisation began to appear in *Okike*. Dennis Brutus singled out the contribution for special praise, (Brutus: 1957) and Andrew Salkey wrote:

I am very, very impressed by Chinweizu. We must treasure him along with his two other brothers. They are our new truth-sayers, and with them we will all find our way back home, I believe. The things Chinweizu says badly need saying. I am very happy about his clear alternative voice. A new broom, at last! (Salkey:1957)

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 1962 c 'Review of A.L. MacLeod: The Commonwealth Pen', *Ibadan* 35-36.
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Chinweizu has been given access to the pages of international publications and the Times Higher Educational Supplement has welcomed him as a commentator. (Chinweizu: 1989.) The praise and the support were misplaced, the research on which the reputation rested is inadequate; the chapter in which 'The Scandalous Leeds-Ibadan Link' was 'exposed' does not stand up to close reading. The presentation of Banham is a travesty.

For a description of Martin Banham, the reader is advised to avoid the vituperation of Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike, to recognise his progression from Leeds, where he was 'the embodiment of reliability,' debater, critic, and rag revue artiste, to Nigeria, where 'the fire in the belly socialist,' was reviewer, essayist, researcher, teacher, and, most importantly here, initial supporter of the *The Horn*. Somewhat surprisingly even the founding editor, the irascible J. P. Clark, got on well with him, describing him as 'a good man.' Clark's successor, the immensely respected Abiola Irele, was even more generous: when he set up an independent publishing house, he called the venture, with a glance back over the years, 'New Horn Press.' **GR**

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