CHAPTER VI

THE HEALERS:
The Griot and Re-rooting

Armah's last and fifth novel, The Healers, is a work in which many of the ideas and themes that have preoccupied Armah in his earlier novels find their finest expression. The cohesiveness of The Healers is quite extraordinary. It returns to the past to explore contemporary African political disharmony. In this novel, Armah's theme is once again cultural disintegration. The root source is perceived as tribal disunity - a "disease" that plagued African societies before the coming of the Europeans. Though the focus is upon the Asante Empire, Armah wants us to regard this tribe emblematically. Its confrontation with the West reinterprets the age-old question of power and leadership. The West is allowed into the kingdom of Asante because of the collision of the Asante royal family and the already existing divisions among kindred societies. The strength of the past is maintained by a small band of healers, many of whom are the main characters of the story who strive to restore a vision of wholeness to their people.

The disintegration of the Asante Empire during the last quarter of the nineteenth century because of British aggression and the lack of
unity among the native tribes provides the background against which Armah's fictional imagination places the healing community and presents it as a regenerative force. It also provides a necessary frame of reference for the exposition of the problem of good and evil. The heroic struggle and the subsequent defeat of the Asante army by the invading British army forms an obscure part of the history of the blacks. Armah uses this for analysing and examining the strengths and weaknesses of a group ethic from a historical point of view.

If Two Thousand Seasons offers Armah's theory of history, The Healers is an adumbration of the theory, using actual recorded events as proof of the hypothesis advanced. Armah takes the fall of the Asante Empire as emblematic of African destruction. He attributes the calamity not only to the rapacity of the West but also to the disunity within Africa itself. Armah contends that it is towards the reunification of Africa tomorrow that Africans must work together if they wish to repair the ruins of yesterday. Any manifestation of division in society is regarded as a symptom of the malady, a crippling indisposition requiring a cure. We can notice in the novel the use of the imagery of illness to elucidate Armah's underlying political philosophy:

Healing an individual person — what is that but restoring a lost unity to that individual's body and spirit?
A people can be diseased the same way. Those who need naturally to be together but are not, are they not a people sicker than the individual body disintegrated from its soul? Sometimes a whole people needs healing work. Not a tribe, not a nation. Tribes and nations are just signs that the whole is diseased. The healing work that cures a whole people is the highest work, far higher than the cure of single individuals. The ending of all unnatural rifts is healing work. When different groups within what should be a natural community clash against each other, that also is disease. That is why healers say that our people, the way we are now divided into petty nations are suffering from a terrible disease. (82-83).

There are a few hermits living a pure life on the fringes of this sick society and who are devoted to the art of healing. They function simultaneously as physicians, psycho-analysts, and social theorists. They are committed not only to restoring the physical and mental health of ailing individuals but also to the purging of the body politic of all its ills. Because they possess the ability to see, hear, understand, and act more truly than ordinary human beings, they are the seers and prophets who can lead Africa back to wholeness. Armah writes:

A healer needs to see beyond the present and tomorrow. He needs to see years and decades ahead. Because healers work for results so firm they may not be wholly visible till centuries have
flowed into millennia. Those willing to do this necessary work, they are the healers of our people.

(84)

The characters in The Healers are Asamoa Nkwanta, a general and a ruler of battles opposed to his own nation at war; Densu, a staunch believer in the healers; his mentor and the healer, Damfo, the princess Araba Jesiwa, and the advocates of falsehood such as Ababio and Buntui who are the manipulators. The action of the novel consists of the clash between the healers and manipulators within the Asante.

Each of Armah's books is dominated by a hero who not only steers away from the disease but who also tries to lead society to the life-giving path. But he is almost destroyed by the same society he seeks to save, as in the cases of Baako in Fragments and the man in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. In the case of Modin and Isanusi of Why Are We So Blest? and Two Thousand Seasons respectively, the heroes actually die in their attempt. But there is a major difference between these novels and The Healers as far as the action of the hero is concerned. In The Healers the pattern changes, and the hero not only survives but triumphs over the forces of evil in the society. In this way we can say that the beautiful ones are born, at least in the fictional creation of Armah. In all the novels, the journey has always been the underlying motif and the destination has always
been the way, the path to self-discovery. The Healers engages in a practical demonstration of the process of spiritual healing which has dominated all of Armah’s novels. In The Healers Armah’s emphasis is on the constructive, positive, regenerative forces. In Fraser’s words:

Like most of Armah’s books, but more boldly so, it is a therapeutic work which aims to close the wounds left over and festering from centuries of implied cultural abuse. The Healers too is germane to this enterprise – indeed its very title suggests a propensity to cure.²

In this novel, much of the wound is inflicted not by colonialism but by the process of self betrayal. Armah holds Africa accountable for this reason. These wounds are inflicted by kith and kin craving for power. The healing process takes place on the physical and psychological levels and is closely associated with the search for one’s true self. Densu, Ajoa, and Jesiwa are all involved in this search for wholeness without which the individual remains restless, unhappy or psychologically destroyed as in the earlier novels. Densu's search and eventual self-discovery determine the structure of the work.

Densu, a bit younger than most of Armah’s puritanical protagonists, is introduced to us an unsullied boy scout. He is a typical Armah hero in his loneliness and sensitivity. He recalls Baako in these two basic characteristics. Although he lives at court at Esuano, he is totally alienated from the interests, values and preoccupations of those
he lives with. These were the same values that dominated the annual games, celebrations and festivals, formerly rituals of unity and togetherness. Now they are symbols of

competitions, struggles of individual against individual, faction against faction, the sharpening of knives, the search for allies, the deception of bystanders and enemies, the readiness of professed friends to betray those already used in the unending search for more power. (49)

These observations intensify Densu's loneliness and quicken his restlessness. The gulf between Densu and his immediate community is apparent in their reaction to the "ceremonial games" which are elaborately described in the novel. In village games, which test physical and mental process, Densu is invariably the overall champion. He loses only when he defaults by refusing to participate in wrestling and pigeon shooting, violent sports that would not match with his higher moral principles. Even though he is a consistent winner, he dislikes such competitions because they set one individual against another, indeed, against his whole community. Densu is the personification of a comprehensive vision, revolutionary ideology, and militant action. In this respect, he embodies the non-corruptible vision of the anonymous man of The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, the ideological fervour of Baako in Fragments, and the revolutionary action of the militant group in Two Thousand Seasons. With a
sound physique and sharp actions, he could have easily become the champion of the various games and eventually the King of Esuano. But he does not believe in individual glory. Densu believes in equality, brotherhood, and reciprocity but not in individual achievement. For Densu, communal welfare takes precedence over personal benefits and his story is a continuous search for a social order.

Densu wants to enter into the profession of healing. To do this he even refuses the chance offered by Ababio, his childhood guardian, to place himself “on the right side of things as they come” (29). Ababio wants Densu to win all the ceremonial games to become the King of Esuano. But Densu dislikes the games and decides to move into the eastern forest in search of Damfo, the master-healer. The external situation also precipitates the decision of Densu to leave for the eastern forest. Ababio does not leave him alone and persists with his proposal of unlimited money and power if Densu agrees to serve the Britishers. Ababio encourages him to win the games so that the path would be cleared for his coronation as the King of Esuano in place of Appia, heir-apparent of Queen Araba Jesiwa, who had to win all the games to prove his merit:

“And don’t let Appia worry you. Yes, he is the heir, but power does not always go to those who most expect it. Those who decide these things have been watching you. They know, for instance, what
everybody knows: that you'll be the winner of these games, and these things are important; you have no idea just have important.”

"Do you mean the games have something to do with the holding of power at Esuano?” Densu asked, surprised.

"More than you think,” Ababio laughed a totally relaxed laugh. “For more than you thank. You'll see soon enough. After you win the games, many a surprise will be waiting for you, along whichever path you walk. All you have to do is to be yourself, Densu and win. I envy you.” (38)

But, in Densu's mind there is already another world. He visualises a society in which “there would be no competitors, only participants. It was an ideal world in which the community members would be free to work together in the cool of the morning; they would be free to run, swim, jump, play, to celebrate health and strength in the late afternoon; they would dance to their own songs in the quiet of evenings” (39). Ultimately Densu shows little interest in water games and shooting competitions, having firmly decided on his choice of work. “He was eager to see the healer Damfo again, eager to talk to him about the future he had already chosen in his mind, a life spent devoted to the work of healing” (46). Even as a child, Densu took a liking for the vocation of healers and constantly wished to be in the company of Damfo. He meets Damfo on one of his visits to Araba
Jesiwa’s house. The child’s inquisitiveness apart, the dialogue between Densu and Damfo brings into sharp focus the sense of purpose on the part of the master-healer and the healer-initiate:

‘Can anyone become a healer?’
‘Few ever want to be healers?’
‘But could everyone be a healer?’
‘No.’
‘Why not?’
‘The healer must have a healing touch.’
‘What is that?’
‘I can’t tell you what it is, just so,’ said Damfo.
‘But for a beginning he who would be a healer must see great value on seeing truly, hearing truly, and acting truly.’ The healer laughed at himself.
‘You see why healing can’t be a popular vocation? The healer would rather see and hear and understand than have the power over men. Most people would rather have power over men than see and hear’ (80-81).

Densu’s decision to join the healing profession worried Ababio to a great extent and he warns Densu about the things that are going to happen if Densu does not co-operate with him:

‘You know my secrets. A man who shares your secrets is your friend. There is no other thing he can possibly be – except your enemy. He works with you. Or he works against you.’ (47)
Ababio, true to his words, acts very fast. He is like Chief Nanga of Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Chui and Kimeria of Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*, in that he exemplifies the disruptive nature of modern individualism. He plots the murder of the Prince Appia with the intention of throwing it on Densu in order to make him the culprit.

The death of Appia delays Densu's preparation for the journey to the eastern forest. But he could not remain at Esuano for "the very air of Esuano had come for him charged with hostility and the slightest contact with it agitated his mind" (61). He could not resist his anxiety any longer. He travels through the forest and finally meets Damfo. But Damfo advises restraint on Densu's part in his desire to become a healer and explains to him the seven rules which a learner had to follow. He also advises him to go to Esuano to take leave of the near ones and spend one year there.

In Densu's absence Ababio creates an impression among the people of Esuano that Densu might be the murderer of Appia. The pieces of muscle from the dead prince's arms, his strong legs and his eyes were stolen probably out of jealousy. Consequently, Densu was captured by a team appointed by Ababio on his way to Esuano and was forcefully imprisoned in a house for the ensuing trial. When alone, Ababio himself confesses that he had arranged for the murder of Appia
by the giant Buntui and he would certainly enjoy the trial the next day. But at the trial, Anano, who has all along been guarding Densu, pretending to be one of the men of Ababio, rescues Densu, and both of them disappear into the darkness. The people of Esuano chase them with the intention of capturing them dead or alive. Both of them try to escape to the eastern forest, but Anano dies on the way, and Densu, severely injured, falls unconscious in the forest where Damfo picks him up. After his recovery, Densu finds Araba Jesiwa in one of the safe places in the forest, severely paralysed and without speech and consciousness. The murder of her son, Appia, to which she was a witness shocks her so much that she remains unconscious for a long time.

Densu also finds the General Asamo Nkwanta in the forest under the treatment of Damfo. Asamo Nkwanta's problem is a psychological one. In the wake of the death of an Asante King, one of the nephews of Nkwanta was offered as sacrifice. The gruesome killing of his nephew makes Nkwanta reluctant to serve Asante royals any more. He decides to retire from the Army, and comes to Praso seeking mental peace. The healers at Praso decide that Damfo would be the right person for the job and send word to him. Damfo sees the possibilities of making Nkwanta the instrument of a new social order. The psychological therapy offered by Damfo has a remarkable and soothing effect on the mind of Nkwanta:
'Have you thought of the future? The past steals energy from your soul because it forces you to think of a loss you're important to prevent. The future may bring you energy – if it can show you ways to work against that kind of loss.' (178)

Under the watchful eye of Damfo, Araba Jesiwa, and Asamoa Nkwanta recover slowly. Araba Jesiwa gradually regains her speech and shows marked improvement in her response to the treatment. Simultaneously Nkwanta also positively responds to the healing touch provided by Damfo and he decides to resume his duties as the General of Asante army.

After the recovery of Densu in the eastern forest, the team of Damfo, Araba Jesiwa, Densu, and Damfo's daughter Ajoa, travel across the river Pra and reach Praso. With the immediate invasion of the British, Nkwanta decides to send Densu to Cape Coast to keep a watch on their strategies. Nkwanta returns to Kumase where the Asante royals urge him to give the warriors “the spirit they need” (240) and also to lead the army against the impending assault by the white men. Nkwanta agrees to it and works hard to detain the white army in the forest. Densu's splendid job of spying at Cape Coast is followed by his trip to Ada where another British General, Captain Glover, was making trials to launch the attack on the Asante. Densu also collects vital information that Glover has received orders from Wolseley at Cape Coast and that they would be launching their attack
in a month’s time. But Asamoa Nkwanta remains unaware of the behind-the-door intrigues going on among the royals. According to the original plan, the net of the army would retreat as a trap for the white invaders in order to bring them deeper into the forest where the warriors from Juaben, under Asafo Adjei, were expected to circle round behind the whites and bring up the end of the net. But in the last minute the strategy was changed fully by the Asante royals and Asamoa Nkwanta was kept out. Due to this, the white march ahead without much resistance leading to the inevitable fall of the Asante.

After the defeat of the Asante army, Densu returns to Esuano to expose the crimes of Ababi, now King of Esuano, and Esuman, the court priest. Ababio is rejoiced to see him and arranges a trial for Densu by a white judge. But the trial proves counterproductive with the dramatic appearance of Araba Jesiwa in the court hall and her witness providing clinching evidence of the heinous crime of Ababi, Buntui, and Esuman. The white judge frees Densu and sends the two culprits to Cape Court for trial.

At the end, the resounding words of Ama Nkroma, the healer at Cape Court, sharply focus the resonant and comprehensive vision of the novel. During the victory celebrations of the whites, blacks from different countries and communities are brought to one place, thus symbolically forging unity among the blacks. Ama Nkroma, with tears
in her eyes, sees the possibilities of unity and the healing touch even as the whites try to divide and rule them.

"It's a new dance all right," she said, "and it's grotesque. But look at all the black people the whites have brought here. Here we healers have been wondering about ways to bring our people together again. And the whites want ways to drive us farther apart. Does it not amuse you, that in their wish to drive us apart the whites are actually bringing us work for the future? Look!" (298)

In Armah's fictional creation, healers have a significant role both in a literal and a symbolic sense. The healers have a dual purpose in the context of social transformation. Their concern is with the healing touch at the physical level and the preparation of the natives for the long and arduous struggle to restore the precolonial system of a just and egalitarian social order. They look back to their roots and live in forests as a result of their refusal to become attached to and participate in the process of disintegration. Their therapeutic value brings out the essence of the social change that Armah's visionary ideal projects. The restorative process of healing is slow and the practitioners of the art, the healers, know it better. Damfo, the master healer, tells Densu:

"There will be always work for healers,
   Even when the highest work is done."
That highest work, the bringing together
Again of the black people, will take centuries.” (83)

Densu begins to undergo a process of initiation and apprenticeship required to join the profession of healing under Damfo, the supreme scout master. Damfo teaches Densu the seven commandments of the healer’s faith and helps him to distinguish between two crucial concepts – “inspiration” and “manipulation”:

“... the healer devotes himself to inspiration. He also lives against manipulation... It’s a disease, a popular one. It comes from spiritual blindness. If I’m not spiritually blind, I see your spirit. I speak to it if I want to invite you to do something with me. If your spirit agrees to it, moves your body and your body acts. That’s inspiration. But if I’m blind to your spirit I see only your body. Then if I want you to do something for me I force or trick your spirit’s direction. That’s manipulation. Manipulation steals a person’s body from his spirit, cuts the body off from its own spirit’s direction. The healer is a lifelong enemy of all manipulation. The healer’s method is inspiration.” (81)

The problem of good and evil which is central to Armah’s fictional credo and which underlines his moral vision is represented in The Healers in the categorization of “manipulators” and “inspirers,” representing opposite sets of values. The manipulators are those who
intend to arrest the freedom of the natives and initiate the process of colonization. Ababio is the classic example of a “middleman.” Governor Glover, General Wolsely, and the other local court politicians and foreign imperialists are those whose greed divides Africa against itself. Discord and disunity are seen as by-products of the political system. Even the healers are cautioned by Damfo against the dangers of elitism and power politics in their own work:

“We healers do not fear power. We avoid power deliberately, as long as that power is manipulative power. There is a kind of power we would all embrace and help create. It is the power we use in our work. The power of inspiration. The power that respects the spirit in every being, in every thing, and lets every being be true to the spirit within. Healers should embrace that kind of power. Healers should help create that kind of power. But that kind of power – the power that comes from inspiration – can never be created within manipulators. If we healers allow the speedy results of manipulation to attract us, we shall destroy ourselves and more than ourselves, our vocation.” (250)

The “inspirers,” whose vocation is to awaken the people to participate in the process of regeneration, include the protagonist Densu, the master-healer Damfo, the General of the Asante army, Asamoa Nkwanta, the princess of Esuano, Araba Jesiwa, and a host of the
healers. The communal voice attempts to offer a positive note, a synthesis of the past model and a future course of action out of the dialectic between these two conflicting attitudes.

The Healers offers a fine fusion of theme and structure. Recorded fact and fiction constitute the plot of this novel. The fragmented narrative of the earlier novels is replaced by a carefully ordered narrative. The novel is divided into six parts with sub-titles providing a hint of the story-line. Far from making the plot episodic, the divisions contribute to the novel’s richness of narrative levels and techniques. Oral narration, epic mode, the use of time patterns and repetition, as Ahmed Saber observes, “are used to enhance the communal theme of the novel.” The Healers is a striking example of the preoccupation of the African novel with the historical past as a theme and the time-honoured technique of oracular narration.

Armah uses the narrative technique of the “griot” in The Healers. The term, “griot,” according to Ruth Finnegan, “was presumably originally a translation of Fulani gaolo (wandering poet or praiser) or wolof gewel (poet and musician), it is now popularly used as a term to refer to almost any kind of poet or musician throughout or atleast the French-speaking areas of West Africa.” The griots are the narrators of genealogies, reflectors of public opinion, and professional freelance poets. Armah states that, “the griot was thoroughly
professional artist trained to use the subject matter of his people's history as the raw materials of his art. The artist, the griot, was therefore the historian and story-teller, both."⁵

The oral method of narration brilliantly serves the exposition of the group consciousness in the process of realizing the "highest work" – the bringing together of black people. The story line is exposed by the story-teller in the beginning itself. The omniscient narrator in The Healers is more eloquent and impressive than in the narrator in Two Thousand Seasons. Armah's novelistic method avoids the exact enumeration of dates. However, a series of clues dropped near the beginning of the text enable us to fix the action precisely in both time and place:

Did you remember to tell your listeners of what time, what age you rushed so fast to speak? Or did you leave the listener floundering in endless lime, abandoned to suppose your story belonged to any confusing age? Is it a story of yesterday, or is it of last year? Is it from the time of the poet Nyankoman Dua, seven centuries ago? ... Is it of that marvellous black time before the desert was turned desert, thirty centuries and more ago? or have you let the listener know the truth; that this story now is not so old just a century old? (2)

According to Robert Fraser, the reader will be able to observe that Armah's method in The Healers is more narrowly historical than
that exercised in Two Thousand Seasons. Armah says that the historical method in Two Thousand Seasons was deductive. Starting from certain clearly defined tenets or premises, it sets out to establish their relevance, taking the entire span of the racial memory as its ground. The Healers, on the other hand, is an inductive work.

Taking as its field of inquiry a particular moment when the stresses to which one society was habitually subject arose to overwhelm it, it sets out to demonstrate the reasons for this failure and to illustrate something about the nature, not only of this culture, but perhaps also of all comparable societies which succumb to external pressure in this way. It thus tells us something very important about the whole colonial experience.⁶

Armah makes an effective use of invocation, flashbacks, and disgression in the course of the narrative in keeping with the oral tradition. In The Healers Anoa is the griot who claims to be a "descendent of masters in the art of eloquence" (2). He keeps invoking his master of eloquence for words:

Send me words Mokopu Mofolo. Send me words of eloquence. Words are mere wind, but wind too has always been part of our work, the work of someone for the future, the work of story-tellers, the work of masters in the arts of eloquence. (52)
We notice that the novel does not open at the beginning of Densu's life. Like an epic it starts its action in medias res: “In the twentieth year of his life, a young man found himself at the centre of strange, extraordinary events” (1). The characters in The Healers do not present a mere ensemble of chronological events, but they are reflectors, interpreters, and participants in a collective life. The queen mother Efua Kobri who accepts a state of surrender to the British says, “we have done so many things to bring the curse of God on our own heads, and the God is punishing us” (279). She interprets a historical event in terms of causes and effects based on African faiths and beliefs. The narrator's sense of history expresses itself not only in terms of the collective past but also in terms of the personal past. The latter is brought out by the characters themselves or the narrator's accounts about them. This can be noticed in Araba Jesiwa's account of herself to Densu: “Do you understand Densu? I had been told it was the right thing to do, that I should marry one of the royals because I was one myself. Had I listened to my real self, I might have wondered why. But I was not in the habit of listening to myself. I feared I would go wrong. I did what the others said was right” (69).

In the novel the personal past and the historical past are blended so well that the very function of the griot seems to be one of maintaining a sense of continuous flux. While remembering his boyhood, Densu tells of the appearance of the first white man at
Esuano. "This too is remembered; in his twelfth year something strange had happened. A white man had arrived at Esuano. He was not an official from the castle at Cape Coast, so people were astonished to see him there at all" (157). The griot thus is a repository of historical event, a transmitter of historical consciousness, and one who conveys the individual's link with a personal past steeped in fear and anxiety, as is the case with Densu. These constant interactions in the individual consciousness serve to convey Armah's perception of history as a continuous flux of competing social forces.

The narrative technique of the griot includes several traditional stylistic forms of expression such as oral histories, folk tales, and customs of the Asante people, all endowed with an aesthetic as well as a didactic purpose. The griot's technique of repetition achieves a blending of these purposes. Repetition is the rhetoric of the epic in The Healers. There is an expression of invective and irony in the portrayal of certain characters. For instance, in describing Glover, the narration runs as follows:

Glover the God like, Glover the whiteman descended among the black people to do magical wonders. The whiteman looked immensely happy, fulfilled this Saturday morning. Why should he not be? Here he was, a god, a god among mere men, a beloved father - god among infant men... Here he was, Glover, the father of the Hausa fighters,
protector of loving slaves. Here he was, Glover, he whose word was alone sufficient to inspire thirty thousand black men to rush delirious into the open jaws of death... Here he was, the great whiteman. No need for the searcher to time himself searching. Glover was visible as the sun this Sunday morning. (255)

Thus by adopting the technique of repetition, Armah adds yet another dimension to the range of oral patterning and to the effectiveness of the rhetoric of the epic. Besides, in The Healers, the griot uses grandiose language, epithets, statements of morals, invocations and proverbs. Some of the characters like Damfo and Densu are of the heroic proportion. We read catalogues of kings, chiefs, tribes, rivers and kingdoms in the novel.

The Healers is an epic of the entire African consciousness as reflected in the griot's stylistic patterns. The griot is the detached narrator as well as the sharer of the collective life portrayed in the novel. He speaks from the consciousness of the roots of African creative expression. His orature expresses the continuum of African life in cyclic patterns. In The Healers the griot also vindicates truth and justice and the role of the healers and their believers or followers. We hear his voice of authority in the passage on the role of the healers; it is a call for collective involvement: "Healing is work not gambling, it is the work of inspiration, not manipulation. If we the healers are to do
the work of helping bring our whole people together again, we need to know such work is the work of a community. It cannot be done by an individual. It should not depend on any single person, however heroic he may be. And it can't depend on people who do not understand the healing vocation…” (270). Bernth Lindfors says thus:

It is clear that Armah himself wants to assist in the healing process. The role of the writer, he seems to be saying, is to inspire Africa to be true to its own spirit, so, it can be reunited as the harmonious community it once was before the predators and destroyers came. This is a noble goal, even if the ‘paradise lost’ theme is rather naïve as an interpretation of history. Armah is evidently trying to do something constructive in his fiction, something far more positive than he had done in his first three novels.⁷

The technique of a collective voice addressing itself to the audience introduced early in Two Thousand Seasons is refined in The Healers with consummate skill and artistry. These two novels are concerned with the African past and sustain the ideological stance initially projected in the earlier three novels through a depiction of the morbidity of contemporary African society. The exposition of the collective consciousness through the communal voice and the oral tradition is at once a contrast and a complement in the first three novels. The development of the collective voice observable in the later
books amounts to a revolution not only in Armah's art in particular, but for the African novel in general.

The Healers takes us back to the African oral tradition only to reaffirm the need of the African people to stand and speak collectively. The novel speaks to the African readers with an authentic African voice, the voice of the griot. This oral method of narration gives a new dimension to the art of fiction in English. Coupled with its thematic concerns, the novel remains, like the healing vocation, a path-finder.
REFERENCES:


