

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF SPACE IN AMINATTA FORNA'S
*THE DEVIL THAT DANCED ON THE WATER***

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To God and to humanity, this work is dedicated.

Philo, Lyonn and Laetitia, I love you.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The focus of this study is to give a critical analysis of the use of space in AminattaForna's memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. This first chapter sets out to provide the background to this study.

AminattaForna is a Scottish writer who has authored a memoir and three novels including the award-winning *The Memory of Love* (2010), *The Hired Man* (2013) and *Ancestor Stones* (2006). She is Scottish by nationality but very much an African woman by virtue of being the daughter of the late Dr Mohamed SorieForna, a Sierra Leonean professional and politician who was executed by his own government and whose story she has written in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* (2002).

This chapter outlines the objectives of the study as guided by the research questions and hypotheses we had. We have provided an overview of the memoir by engaging the works of other scholars through a literature review on the subject of space and criticisms to *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, and the author, AminattaForna.

In this chapter the use of space as a tool of exploring human relations in a text has been analyzed through the establishment of a theoretical framework. The deployment of Geocriticism as well as space and spatial literary theories as conceived by Michel Foucault, Edward Soja, Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre among others has been considered. In order to give the subject of space an intensive treatment, the scope and limitations of this study have been stated and explained. The chapter further establishes the methodology to be employed in conducting the study.

Forna's memoir delves on the political and historical landscapes of Sierra Leone by tracing the growth and development as well as the fall of a nation from the pre-colonial to the post-independence era. Whereas Sierra Leonean literature provides an array of concerns worth analysis, this study focuses on

Forna's use of space in underpinning human experiences and concerns at a particular time in the history of Sierra Leone. This memoir is of particular interest in the manner the author isolates specific spatial imagery to explore characters and themes reflective of a post conflict society. Of particular concern is the author's attention to most of the story taking place around the forest, the beach, the school, the clinic, the palace, the court and the prison. These locations have broad meanings. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, these will be analysed as spatial metaphors that are representatives of broader operations within the society in which the memoir is set.

Undoubtedly, there exists an intersection between life writings and history. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, this intersection is best demonstrated through the lives of the characters presented and especially the author and her subject, Dr Mohamed SorieForna. To bring the concerns of Forna to perspective, this chapter takes note of the fact there is a clearly inadequate attention given to space as a tool of analysing the memoir with more priority being given to time. In this study, we intend to contribute to the body of scholarship by establishing that Forna's memoir presents a platform where space, and especially spatial metaphor, has been employed as an index of character growth and development as well as a site for the exploration of themes.

Forna has presented her characters engaging within space and due to space, be it real or imaginary. These spaces are represented in the physical locations the events take place as well as the psychological perceptions of space by the characters themselves and the others they come into contact with. The events in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are woven around specific spaces whose recurrence points at their significance.

The Devil that Danced on the Water is primarily an autobiography of the author which could be read as the biography of author's father as well. The memoir is organized in two books written in a non-linear plot producing a passionate and vivid account of an idyllic childhood which became the stuff of

nightmare. As a child the author witnessed the upheavals of post-colonial Africa, danger, flight, the bitterness or exile in Britain and the terrible consequences of her dissident father's stand against tyranny. Part of the memoir is hence the recollections of childhood memories while the other part is the product of investigation that she set out to conduct. The story spans across ten years but within which so much takes place. These are the first ten years of the author and incidentally the last ten years of her father. It is within these ten shared years that the author shares with the reader a decade of socio-political turmoil that saw the young nation collapse at the hands of greedy leaders who use every means including grave violence to suppress the ruled. The author identifies the major players in this discourse through the characters she chooses to write about and the locations the events of the story take place.

Sierra Leonean's story has been told variously and in many forms including theatre and film, history and fictional writings. The bottom line in these presentations is the depiction of a country that was ravaged by civil wars leading to collapse. Aminatta Forna's memoir is however not a story of despair. She has retold the familiar story differently and this distinction will be made clear in the course of this study.

The armed conflict in Sierra Leone strands through Forna's memoir. It is this armed conflict, its causes, courses and consequences that the memoir addresses and which this study locates its relationship to space. The political class, represented in the memoir by characters such as Siaka Stevens, occupy spaces that they use to determine, influence and manipulate power relations among people. Power becomes a major factor in human existences as will be seen through a critical analysis of characters and thematic concerns in the later chapters of this study.

Each of the spaces captured by the author presents their own distinct complexes of attributes or characteristics. David Harvey notes that "space" is to be perceived as a very multi-layered and multi-faceted terms in our language. (1993: 4). In this study we argue that the author presents a spatial paradigm that is not just influenced by human activities but that which also influences human activities. Authors

present human activity through the engagement of characters. These activities take place at particular locations or within particular geographical contexts. Without a doubt, there is an essential link between man and the earth. There exists an established framework for human-spatial interaction. The nature and intensity of relationships between people and between the locations they occupy are shaped by the differences from place to place and in terms of other features such as climate, economy, language, wealth, and culture.

My interest in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* is founded on the basis of the author's passionate account of the squalid situation of Africans in Post-colonial Sierra Leone. She uses space as a critical factor that fashions characters' identities and their engagements with each other and with their surroundings. She further emphasizes that production of spaces is linked to the construction of human relations which include hegemony, subjectivities, violence and trauma as depicted in the memoir. Forna articulates the point that the identities and existences of characters emerges from the spaces they occupy and from their relationships to them. In the memoir, Forna underscores the temporal nature of space in which individual subjectivity becomes unstable and temporal. Character growth and development is hence a journey towards a character's identity formation by retracing, recapturing, or reconfiguring identities. This study will analyze the characters and demonstrate how space has been used to portray the dynamics of human relations in a post conflict society. In the memoir, the characters' attempt at reconfiguration of their identities is based on their awareness of the spaces they occupy. These spaces could be enabling or limiting factors in the characters' interactions with each other and with their surroundings.

The spaces occupied by the characters in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are both physical and psychological. They can also be viewed as private or public. By the very existence of these spaces, we have physical and psychological boundaries that define them. Both the spaces and the boundaries define human relations as depicted in the characterization as well as the interplay of concerns represented in the

themes in the memoir. Characters' identities and stature are defined in relation to existing spaces. In the text, as this study explains, space has been used by the author as a tool to develop characters and explore the themes of power, violence, trauma and dislocation just to mention but a few.

Space is neither static nor permanent. It is instead recurrently shifting and mutating. Spaces are often temporal and an individual may occupy several spaces at the same time or in progression. Spaces alien to an individual presently may be under the dominion of the same person later and vice versa. Other than individuals occupying spaces, institutions, ideologies, communities or even entire societies also do. This is the interplay that Forna readily captures in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. She narrates the story of her father Mohamed Forna, a man of unimpeachable integrity and enchanting charisma. As Sierra Leone faced its future as a fledgling democracy, he was a new star in the political firmament, a man who had been one of the first black students to come to Britain after the war. He married Aminatta's mother to the dismay of her Presbyterian parents and returned with her to Sierra Leone. After practising medicine for some time, he joined the military and later plunged into politics with an ambition to better the lives of his people. Soon, Mohamed Forna was a respectable cabinet minister who was admired and loathed in equal measure. It was not long before Mohamed Forna languished in jail as a prisoner and was eventually executed. It was this execution that the author set out to investigate. Determined to break the silence surrounding her father's fate, she ultimately uncovered a conspiracy that penetrated the highest reaches of government and forced the nation's politicians and judiciary to confront their guilt.

Aminatta Forna has taken note of critical spaces with far-reaching implications as regards characterization and exploration of themes. She has dedicated space and time to narrate events that took place in the forest, at the clinic, in courtrooms and prison, at the beach and at various homes she has lived in. These locations carry more meaning than simply places where actions take place. This study will demonstrate that these locations are spatial metaphors representative of broad operations within the Sierra Leonean society. *The Devil that Danced on the Water* might not have received as much critical attention as other works by

Forna such as *The Memory of Love* but this study demonstrates the powerful significance of space in human relations as expressed by the author's presentation of characters and exploration of themes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Aminatta Forna's memoir was published in 2002 but has not received elaborate scholarly review. The political story of Sierra Leone has been variously captured in works of art and many might have dismissed *The Devil that Danced on the Water* as just another account of the familiar story. Equally, the reason could be what Irene de Jong in *Space in Ancient Greek Literature* (2012) observes: "the relative neglect of space in narratological theory, compared to the wealth of models for analyzing narrators, perspective, or time, is acknowledged by narratologists themselves, and is plausibly explained by Buchholz and Jahn as due to two reasons: 'One was that characterisation of narratives in literature as appeared too obvious to be fundamentally analyzed'" (Jong, 2).

Criticism on Sierra Leonean literary works has dwelled on thematic concerns such as civil wars and the slave heritage. There has not been much attention to the stylistics aspects of the literary works. In life writings in particular, stylistic criticism has focused on aspects of journey motif and symbolism. Space as a tool for literary criticism has not been explored widely. This study looks at the author's use of space in the memoir. Where scholars have embarked on spatial analysis of literary works, there has been heavier attention to the novel as compared to life writings. Not many scholars have taken interest in space as a narratological tool in analyzing memoirs. With this in mind, this research has investigated how Aminatta Forna uses space as a narrative strategy in exploring both characters and themes.

1.2 Objectives

This study sought to:

1.2.1 Explore the author's use of space in characterization.

1.2.2 Examine the relationship between space and the themes in the memoir.

1.3 Research Questions

This research intended to answer the following questions:

1.3.1 How is space manifested and used in characterization?

1.3.2 In which ways is space related to the themes explored in the memoir?

1.4 Hypotheses

This research project set out to test the following assumptions:

- i. In telling her father's story, Aminatta Forna has used space as a tool to explore human relations through characterization.
- ii. Space is not a receptacle. Things happen to it and in it. There exist multiple relationships between space and human experiences.

1.5 Justification

Centrally, a reading of *The Devil that Danced on the Water* presents the reader with a powerful realisation that the book is metaphor of hope, rebirth and regeneration. Whereas many events captured in the text attest to this reality, two particular ones stand out. Early in the memoir we encounter the badly wounded character called Kendekah Sessay. He is wounded in a suspicious blast stage managed to implicate the memoir's main protagonist Dr Forna. He later succumbs to his injuries and the body is disposed off without the dignity of a burial. This points at the hopeless situation of the African people in Sierra Leone at that point in time. Later, as the text comes to an end the author refers to a couple living with amputation as a result of violence. This couple are presented as happy and above all they have a healthy daughter.

This particular couple is metonymic of the author's reimagined new nation that would arise from the ashes of the fallen state.

Through modernism and postmodernism our perception and understanding of space has been fundamentally altered. Space is no longer viewed as a constant or static category but rather as intricate, diverse reality. This conceptualization of space allows for a more dynamic discourse that literature explores in the quite often problematic representation of space, which is commonly ignored or downplayed by many critics.

While earlier studies have focused on conventional aspects of style like journey motif or symbolism, this study focuses on the aspect of space that has not been studied that much in recent scholarship. A spatial analysis of a literary text is essential since works of literature depict events taking place in spaces; some real, some imaginary. Characters also interact in spaces. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, the characters have been depicted to have a predisposition to either embrace the spaces they find themselves in or to reconfigure them and bring them under their control. Essentially, the author presents the characters as either belonging to the ruled or the rulers. At times these statuses change hence the temporal nature of space.

The memoir is a remarkable personal story of not just the author but of her father and the people of Sierra Leone.. The account narrated is the autobiography of the author as well as the biography of her father, a biography of a people, a place and an event. Whereas it largely delves into political and historical landscapes of Sierra Leone it also captures the sensibilities of African people in a post-colonial era. The author, Aminatta Forna offers a human account of Sierra Leone's tragedy that has been propagated by the leaders the people have placed in power. She does this in a manner that is a departure from the familiar

media depiction of a distant country that is ravaged by a bizarre fate at the hands of inscrutable rebels. When told as a personal story, the lived experiences appear real and easy to identify with.

When a society undergoes political conflicts and insurgence, untold suffering visits the people. The trauma lasts much longer after peace has resumed. The stories of such experiences can be told by historians and by journalists who will document what they reason to be a detailed coverage of the happenings. They may get the events, time and locations right but all this cannot adequately capture what a personal memoir of the events does. In a very creative way, Forna weaves a story that goes beyond being a mouthpiece for the oppressed but one that also offers possibilities of reconciliation and recovery.

This study is an exploration of the role of space in human existence and how space is factor in people's wellbeing. Space is conceptualized in its many manifestations. It is seen as a marker of identities and an index of belonging. It is site for freedom on one hand and a confinement on the other. This study is important in that it explores the significance of metaphorical and psychological spaces in human relations and existences hence creating a site for deeper appreciation of the subject of space.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Most of the terms used in this study are quite common but it would be necessary to single out a few and give their definitions as conceived and applied in the context of this study.

Space is one term whose definition is not easy. It can be conceptualized in different forms and manifestations. One can perceive space as the physically existing environment in which characters live and move. Secondly, space can be seen as the immediate surroundings of actual events, the various locations shown by the narrative discourse or by the image. Thirdly, space may be viewed as the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action of a narrative takes place. Fourth, it is equally viable to perceive space as the enclosure mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters.

Lastly, space includes the expanse and limits completed by the reader's imaginations subject to their knowledge, experience and other dispositions.

Spatial metaphors are those metaphors that have space as their source domain. They map the image of space onto a target that is nonspatial hence enabling the user to talk, think or write about the nonspatial domains in spatial terms. For instance the beach in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* may point at lost love, hope, disconnect, abandonment among others.

Characters refer to any person, animal, or figure represented in a literary work. In a memoir like *The Devil that Danced on the Water* the characters are nonfictional since they are actual in the real life written by the author.

Characterization refers to the creation and portrayal of a fictional character which includes the description of the distinctive nature or features of someone or something. In life writings the assumption is that the writer does not quite create the characters but has a role in determining the extent and nature of portrayal of the characters. Aminatta Forna has for instance paid attention to amputees, prisoners and mentally disturbed characters as a way to representing the horrible outcomes of misrule in Sierra Leone.

Symbol refers to a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.

Symbolism is basically the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. It can also be viewed as a style that uses symbolic images and indirect suggestions to express mystical ideas, emotions, and state of mind.

Dislocation refers to a situation in which a way of life is greatly disturbed or prevented from continuing as normal. It may also be seen as an event that results in a displacement or discontinuity.

Geocriticism is a method of literary analysis and literary theory that incorporates the study of geographic space. It concerns itself with the description, articulation and interpretation of literary concepts as regards metaphor, symbolism and mapping.

1.7 Literature Review

This literature review provides a contextual background for this research. It predominantly reviews works by scholars on the subject of space, literary works on the political history of Sierra Leone and the memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water*.

Maya Jaggi in 'The Guardian' points out this about Forna: "All her books reflect a fascination with 'joining the dots to see how a country implodes'. Her father, a doctor and political dissident, was hanged by the Sierra Leone regime in 1975, when she was 11. He was the first casualty in what she came to see as a long and unheeded descent into civil war". Jaggi notes a common trend in Forna's works. In her view, Forna has written about the experiences of people during civil wars. She has captured this in *The Hired Man* and *The Memory of Love* but the works of fiction would not capture the real experiences with the clarity that a memoir does.

Ernest Cole in *Space and Trauma in the Writings of Aminatta Forna* (2016) states: "Forna uses space as the critical factor to fashion characters and roles. She further emphasizes that the production of spaces is linked to the construction of human subjectivities" (7). Cole notes an important point that will be used in this study. The link between space and human subjectivities is quite prominent in this study. We have identified the nexus that exists between the author's choice of specific spatial metaphors and how these shape and influence her depiction of her characters, their growth and their relationships with one another and their environment.

Cole (2016) advances the argument further when he notes: “Spaces play a crucial role in shedding light on the connections between dislocation and identity in the works of Aminatta Forna. In her works, Forna articulates the point that the identity of characters emerges from the places or spaces they occupy, and from their relationship to them” (14). Cole’s argument brings to the fore the prominence of space as an index of social relations. The spatial metaphors present in the text allow for a critical examination of the relationships between characters, things and places through an exploration of images and symbols. The stylistic devices are influential in determining positions in the society. Where positions are thus determined, the result is the production of binary relations such as marginality versus centrality, belonging versus exclusion and settlement versus displacement, among others.

Cole’s analysis of Forna’s is in-depth and relevant for this study but our point of departure is that while he focuses on space and trauma with a clear inclination towards power this study broadens the scope and takes characterization and thematic concerns in their depiction through space. The spatial metaphors present in the memoir are analyzed to demonstrate how they function in bringing out characterization and themes.

While reviewing *The Devil that Danced on the Water* in Chicago Tribune of 2 May 2002, William Reno writes: “This is a remarkable personal story of lies, greed and corruption amidst the cultivation of fear and violence that marked an increasingly malevolent dictatorship...Forna offers a human account of Sierra Leone’s tragedy that does much to remedy a media image of a faraway country that suffers a bizarre fate at the hands of inscrutable rebels.” The idea of an author’s attempt to offer a remedy to a distorted historical account is what Reno has noted. This study takes cognisance of the fact that the author was a victim of the atrocities she has written about. She is also keen on presenting an alternative image of her father different from what the government agencies presented earlier. These facts carry a possibility of her account of the events being prone to subjectivity. This study will, however, not dwell on the veracity of the narrated account but rather on is the effectiveness of her choice of space as a style in the narration.

Reno's observation is salient but only in as much as the story is the biography of an event. The book does more than tell the story of an event. As a biography of Mohamed Forna, the book tells the story of a man who grows from innocence to experience. It is the story of a man whose life's odyssey leads him to a powerful position in which he makes an impact in his country's politics. He is a man who refused to bow down to intimidation but fought to the very end though he paid the ultimate price, death. While he may be seen as too reckless in ignoring numerous warnings to leave Sierra Leone and save his life, he chooses to stay and fight from within. This bravery points at hope for this country and the African continent. Of Mohamed Forna, Reno writes: "was a man of unimpeachable integrity and great charisma, who quoted Alexander Pope: 'Honour and shame from no condition arise: Act well your part for there the honour lies.' As Sierra Leone faced its future as a fledgling democracy, he was a new star in the political firmament, a man who had been one of the first black students to come to Britain after the war".

Rachel Cusk, in *Evening Standard*, asserts, "Aminatta Forna's intensely personal history is a passionate and vivid account of an African childhood, of an idyll which became the stuff of nightmare. As a child she witnessed the upheavals of post-colonial Africa, danger, flight, the bitterness of exile in Britain, and the terrible consequences of her dissident father's stand against tyranny." The emphasis by Cusk on the author's stature as an African child has a double-pronged implication. On one hand it places the author as a writer who occupies a vantage point to tell the African story by virtue of being a "daughter of Africa". On the other hand, the memoir is broadly a childhood narrative. This presents a nostalgic component of it which could be seen as a longing to desirable past by Africans in the post-colonial era. This longing might be due to the disillusionment experienced by Africans upon gaining independence. The text being a memoir gives the biographer the authority of experience. What she narrates is largely what she experienced or received from eye witnesses. We however would not fail to spot silences in the narrated account. This is expected since she writes a story in which she is right in the middle of it. The passage of time may also be a factor in the gaps in the story especially when compared to the accounts by the historians mentioned elsewhere in this study.

Godwin Siundu in 'Beyond Autobiography: Power, Politics and Gender in Kenyan Asian Women's Writing' posits that the auto/biography gives women the power to re-insert their experiences into the history of the nation-state. He further states that these writings signal the emergence of women's voices to contest the existing narratives (135). Whereas Siundu makes this observation in the context of Asian women's writing in Kenya majority of who are immigrants and their descendants, Forna's status in the Sierra Leonean context is quite similar to that of Asian women in Kenya. Having left Sierra Leone as a child and only returning occasionally for brief stays, Forna never quite become a local in Sierra Leone. Her mixed race heritage, her current nationality and marriage placed her as a "foreigner" in father's country. Forna's role in the literary world exemplifies what Siundu has postulated. By writing the story of civil strife in Sierra Leone through her father's biography, she has effectively contested the existing narratives notably media reports and some historical accounts that tend to offer a bystander perspective to the happenings in Sierra Leone. Her contestation, however, does not set out to invalidate what other writers have offered but she adds her voice into the discourse by offering alternative perspectives. The memoir does not present an alternative to historical accounts as documented by writers such David Harris in *Sierra Leone: a Political History* (2013) or Higbie&Moigula's *Sierra Leone: Inside the War* (2016). Instead, the memoir could be read as part of the country's history or evidence of a historical events now told from a different perspective, that of a victim. The memoir is intertwined with history in the sense that it situates the narrative of life within a historical perspective. As a biographical memoir, *The Devil that Danced on the Water* does not give prominence to historical facts but the life of the subject, Dr Mohamed Forna. The history of Sierra Leone where it relates to place and time captured in the memoir is subsumed in the subject's story.

Joan Borsa (1989) notes that writers of social criticism have the task of being able "to name our location, to politicize our spaces and to question where our particular experiences and practice fit within the articulations and representations that surround us" (36). Aminatta Forna in writing this memoir has "politicized" our spaces by giving us reason to relook our surroundings and make new senses of their

significances in our lived experiences. We are invited to give another look at the beach, the clinic, the school and many more. The memoir raises questions about the nexus between events and spaces. It goes further to attempt to answer these questions through a presentation of characters that are themselves representations of the African society in the post-colonial historical space. This research is premised on the notion that human activity occupies specific and unique spaces on the earth's surface.

Bertrand Westphal in *La Géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace* (2007) observes, "Literature abounds with the description and exploration of spaces. The writer maps the world, combining a representation of real places with the imaginary space of fiction". Westphal raises a critical point here. He underscores the significance of literary mapping. The role of mapping is assigned to the writer. Mapping is hence a deliberate activity by the writer to achieve a certain goal. The spaces the writer maps in the narration are much more than simple places when and where events occur. They are instead representatives of broader phenomena both in their literal existences and appearance and their implications. What Westphal alludes in this context is the existence of broader meanings to the spaces the writer positions the text. The meanings are multi-layered and multifaceted and thus the reason for critical analysis like the study we have undertaken.

In this study we argue that important as space might be it should not be handled exclusive from time. In *The Production of Space* (1991) Henri Lefebvre points out that "Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise energy and time." (12). Lefebvre's observations goes to show that space must be considered in tandem with other related tools of analysis and for this reason we have analyzed the situation in Sierra Leone as captured in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* by paying attention to both historical dimensions (time) and geographical dimensions (space). This space-time synchrony is conceptualised by Henri Lefebvre when he states that "History would have to take in not only the genesis of these spaces but also, and especially, their interconnections, distortions, displacements, and their links with the spatial practice of the particular society or mode of production under consideration" (42). In this

study Forna's memoir is read as a product of both physical and historical locations. This approach allows for a broader perspective of the role of spatial imagery present in the text and what it means in the depiction of characters and exploration of themes.

In our analysis of space we draw from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'chronotope' in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). To Bakhtin, events are changes of state that impinge on individuated existents, which are themselves bodies that both occupy space and are situated in space. Forna's memoir presents characters that in their individual capacities and in their collective existence occupy space and are situated in these spaces. In connection to temporal and spatial parameters of narrative analysis, Bakhtinian chronotope assumes the lead in merging the two into a convergence of time and space. Although abstract thought can be related to time and space attached to them, Bakhtin observes that there are no visible divisions or permitted segmentations in living artistic perception (Bakhtin 1994: 243). This thought by Bakhtin is applicable in this study as we demonstrate that physical spaces in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are significant in comprehending the socio-historical realities of the Sierra Leonean society.

Herman, Phelan and Rabinowitz in *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (2012) note that although there have been some previous remarkable efforts by A.J. Greimas and Gabriel Zoran, it has taken long before narrative theory begun to accommodate more complex questions about space and setting and thus give them the due consideration (Herman et al. 2012: 84). Herman et al confirm that attention to space has been ignored for long in spite of it being conceptualized much earlier. This situation is however changing since more scholars are increasingly paying attention to space and writers like Aminatta Forna are mapping spaces in their narratives. This study makes a contribution to the body of knowledge in the study of space with a particular focus on its role as a stylistic device.

Joshua Parker in *Conceptions of Place, Space and Narrative: Past, Present and Future* (2013) reasons that it makes little sense to simply speak about narrative space unless one considers the places in its enclosure and our connections with them. It is our own perception or comprehension of spaces and places from which we weave narratives about them or scheme narratives onto them (74). Parker bridges the gap between spaces and places. He draws our attention to the fact that a look at space will only be meaningful if there is attention to place. Place is a part of the space. Whereas Parker's focus is on "narrative space" his argument still apply in the study of the role of space in analyzing characters and themes. The places within space and the characters relationships with them form the basis of our study.

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, Forna expounds the spatial significance of Freetown, the city in which most of the action takes place. A city becomes a significant spatial metaphor and the dwellers are metonymic of the larger society the text represents. While referring to cities in *Social Infrastructure of City Life in Contemporary Africa* (2012) Abdoulmalik Simone writes:

"Urbanization conventionally denotes a thickening of fields, an assemblage of increasingly heterogeneous elements into more complicated collectives. The accelerated, extended, and intensified intersections of bodies, landscapes, objects, and technologies defer calcification of institutional ensembles or fixed territories of belonging" (408).

Simone observes that the growing of cities in terms of size and population brings together increased interactions and engagements which in turn define new spaces and subsequent boundaries. The ideas of Simone have been borrowed in analyzing the happenings in Freetown as regards human actions in *The Devil that danced on the Water*.

Marija Brala Vukanovic and Lovorka Gruic Grmusa in *Space and Time in Language and Literature* (2009)

pose a critical observation regarding space and time. They state:

Natural language expressions for spatial and temporal phenomena have long been recognized as being extremely puzzling and closely interconnected. Both abstract notions have very slowly and laboriously evolved within Western thought; for over two millennia space and time have intrigued thinkers and served as fertile grounds for vivid discussions. One of the claims that distilling various, frequently opposed views on the topic has slowly yielded is the idea that space and time are fundamental intuitions built into our nature(2-3)

Although Vukanovic and Grmusa have reference to “Western thought”, this study demonstrates that even in the African literary scholarship there has been an evolution in the spatial discourse. This study is part of this evolution and in it we have demonstrated that Forna has aptly used space as a “fundamental intuition built into our nature” and by this very establishment it is inalienable in us and in literary analysis. In this memoir spatial metaphor as a linguistic style has been employed to effectively establish human relations through characterization and thematic exploration.

Besides being centrally embedded in all aspects of life as regards literature, the temporal and spatial parameters of human experience transcend their known dualism and are integrated into space-time, centrally positioned in every narrative work. The activity of narrating a story corresponds with the temporal character of human experience. Thus, as Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* (1984) puts it, time is articulated through a narrative mode, while a narrative acquires its full when embedded in temporal existence. Forna’s memoir, *The Devil that Danced on the Water* bridges a historical framework of Sierra Leone spanning from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial. The time in between is captured in the narrative mode in which spatial metaphors are employed to bring out the temporal attribute of space.

This literature review is by no means exhaustive but it suffices to lay the foundations necessary in conducting this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study basically employs Geocriticism literary theory. In the field of literary theory, geocriticism is perceived as an interdisciplinary tool of literary analysis that lays focus on not just such temporal data as relations between the life and times of the author, the history of the text, or the story, but further includes the spatial data. Geocriticism has become an increasingly pertinent practice within literary studies. The works of critics such as Fredric Jameson, Edward Soja, David Harvey and Nigel Thrift are considered to have substantially contributed to geocriticism. More recently the geocritical discourse has received further boost through the contributions of scholars such as Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey. With the rise of geocriticism, the importance of spatiality has grown even further. Geocriticism takes interest in space, place and mapping.

Bertrand Westphal's publication *La Géocritique: Réel, fiction, espace* (2007) played a major role in giving currency to the term geocriticism. In this publication, geocriticism is seen to be geared towards comprehending the means in which narratives represent, shape and influence social spaces or what Robert T Tally refers to as "literary cartography" in *On Literary Cartography: Narratives as a Spatial Symbolic Act* (2011). Geocriticism evokes an approach of appraising literature with an augmented understanding of spatial relations, place and mapping as depicted in and around the text under consideration.

On space, William Mitchell in *Space, Ideology, and Literary Representation* notes:

The first thing to say about the notion of space from a literary point of view is that it does not exist, or should not exist. Literature, as we have been told at least since Lessing's *Laocoon*, is a temporal art. Space enters into literature only as a dubious fiction, as a phantom in the minds of over imaginative readers, as an invasion from alien and rival art forms like painting, or as a necessary evil in the transmission of verbal art by the spatial, visible traces of writing. (10)

Mitchell's observation poses ambivalence in conceptualisation of space. He sees space as being intrusive to the familiar forms of literary analysis. This notion of the invasive nature of space explains its limited attention. Frederic Jameson (1984: 53) expresses this ambivalence in a political and historical idiom: "Our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time". Jameson posits that space cannot be ignored and to him space supersedes time. In this study, however, as earlier pointed out space and time are treated as inseparably synchronised in the sense that events take place subject to both time and space together. Space is therefore a dominant factor in the expression of any works of art.

A geocritical analysis of literature considers representations of space to perpetually cross the boundaries of established ideals and thresholds. While doing so they also reconfigure new associations among people, places, and things. Cartography is no longer viewed in the customary sense as the exclusive preserve of the state. Instead, various agents may be accountable for representing the geographic spaces at the same time and with different outcomes. In application, therefore, geocriticism is a multipronged phenomenon, probing a variety of concerns at once, thus distinguishing itself from practices that focus on the singular point of view.

Geocriticism also operates on the assumption that there is a literary referentiality between world and the text, where the world is the referent and the text its representation. The relationship between a particular nature of space and its existence in depicted condition is probed and analyzed in geocritical approaches thus allowing for a study of fiction and non-fiction works that point also to the possibility of imagined worlds.

Geocriticism and spatial theories involve the study of places described in the literature by diverse authors, but it can also study the effects of literary representations of a given space. In *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010), Edward Soja explains what he refers to as “the spatial turn”. The phenomenon entails the steady progress to describe, interpret, and articulate literary concepts through geographical metaphors, symbols, and maps as a way of illustrating a different perspective to interpretive criticism.

As a development to geocriticism, there exist spatial literary theories which we have largely used in analyzing the use of space in Forna’s *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. Spatial forms are highly significant in that the memoir is written as a product of the author’s recollection of childhood memories, interviews of eyewitnesses as well as investigational skills derived by the author’s background as a journalist. The story she puts together travels through three main geographical locations namely: Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Scotland. The plot is not chronological but instead it takes the reader through numerous spatial shifts both in physical spaces occupied by the characters as well as psychological spaces such as homelessness and captivity. In taking the reader through this journey, the author is calling for participation in discovering and uncovering the concerns of the people, their predicaments and by so doing be part of imagining the solutions thereof. Like it happens in a legal trial where the jury is expected to piece together evidence, witnesses’ testimonies and versions of stories, the author engages the reader in being the jury to this trajectory and pass judgement as the memoir comes to a close.

Space is not a receptacle to things. It should not be viewed as simply a location where events occur. When Forna frequently takes her story to the city, the forest, the schools or the beaches one should look deeper at the significance of such locations. Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* argues that, “space is not a thing among other things, or a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity, their (relative) order and/or disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object” (73).

Doreen Massey in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) rightly posits that:

Space must be conceptualized integrally with time; indeed that the aim should be to think always in terms of space-time. That argument emerged out of an earlier insistence on thinking of space, not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of social relations, that the spatial is social relations 'stretched out'. (Massey, 2)

What Massey argues is that social relations should never be viewed as being still. On the contrary, they are inherently dynamic. We opine that space is both a precondition and a result of social superstructures. There are salient reasons why events take place in one location and not another. Equally time appears to move at different paces depending on the location of an event. As our perception of time is strictly intertwined with space, we cannot see time but only what happens over time (Kubler 1962: 68).

Doreen Massey in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994: 3) conceptualizes the term 'space-time' as a:

...configuration of social relations within which the specifically spatial may be conceived of as an inherently dynamic simultaneity. Moreover, since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification(16).

Michel Foucault in "Of Other Spaces" calls out for a "practical desanctification of space" (23) and illustrates that "a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down" (23). Thus, space can be perceived as constantly proficient of expanding itself infinitely.

William Mitchell's "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory" distinguished four different ways we speak about spatiality in literary texts: first, the text itself as a spatial form in the non-metaphoric sense [i.e., the page or screen itself, font sizes, etc.]; secondly, the spatial realm that a text describes, the world it represents [setting or story world]; third, the spatiality that pertains to elements of structure and form, the patterns of coherence that a text seems to suggest; and fourth, the spatiality that characterizes the "overall meaning," "the metaphysics" that we assign to a text. (Mitchell 1980: 550–553; cf. Sielke 2004: 78). For this study, our interest will largely be on the second and the fourth ways since we shall focus on the spatial realm by way of the world the memoir represents and the overall meaning that the memoir carries.

G rard Genette anticipated that language itself has a primordial, vital spatiality and appears almost naturally pertinent to "express" spatial relations, leading it to denote all relations as spatial, and to use space as a metaphor for any relationship. In summary he notes that "Treating everything in terms of space, language spatializes everything," (Genette 1969: 44). Indeed, as Derrida wrote, spatial "metaphors" are not simply metaphors, but are inherent to phenomenological processes themselves: "The phenomenon of so-called spatializing metaphors is not at all accidental, nor within the reach of the rhetorical concept of 'metaphor.' It is not some exterior fatality" (1983: 78). In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, Fornia articulates the use of space through carefully conceptualized spatial metaphors in which her characters are depicted as both active producers of space on the one hand and products of space on the other. Take the palace for instant. The people of Sierra Leone create political leaders through elections and insurgence. They entrust their fates to the elected leaders who occupy the palace and all that the palace stands for. The palace in turn determine the pathways of the people, be it for the better or for the worse.

Alexander Moore in "Postcolonial 'Textual Space': Towards an Approach". *SOAS Literary Review* 3(2001) makes a critical commentary on Said and Bhabha in contradistinction to Lefebvre and Soja:

Bhabha and Said's very different approaches to space reflect the more general division between 'social' and 'real' space that pervaded postcolonial theory. On the one hand, space is understood as identical with the shifting world of ideas and identity (Bhabha); on the other hand, space is contemplated as a pure materiality that analysis cannot penetrate; thus providing a dependable referentiality beyond discourse (Said). In either case, space as the *interdependency* of ideation and materiality is not fully conceptualized: space remains brainwaves or bricks. (5)

Moore's observation is limited to space as the interdependency of ideation and materiality in which he notes that as such it is not fully conceptualized. Space as style in analyzing works of art is, to the contrary, a fully functional tool as this study shows.

1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to Aminatta Forna's memoir, *The Devil that Danced on the Water* in order to have a more focused study. The choice of this particular text was informed by the need to explore the critical role of space in a memoir and its deployment in analyzing human relations through characters and themes in the text. We narrowed our analysis to spatial metaphors the author has used and their effectiveness in characterization and thematic concerns.

Whereas the memoir undoubtedly conveys many concerns that are crucial for analysis, this study confined itself to the analysis of space as a narrative technique in the portrayal of characters and exploration of themes. Space is a broad subject and this study cannot even purport to exhaust it. As such we have tackled its functionality in characterization and themes in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*.

Despite the fact that *The Devil that Danced on the Water* was published in 2002, it has not received much critical attention by scholars. Other works by the author such as *The Memory of Love* have been more

widely reviewed despite being later works. The presence of little work done on this text limited this study in terms of limited perspectives by scholars regarding the text.

While conducting this study it became clear that there is a skewed attention towards the novel in analyzing space in comparison to the memoir. In as much as one might assume space as a style applies equally to any genre, the manifestation of space in the memoir is distinct from other genres and as such the bias to the novel was perceived as a limitation to this study.

1.10 Research Methodology

This research is an examination of Aminatta Forna's *The Devil that Danced on the Water* with a specific attention to the use of space in bringing out characterization and themes in the text. To realize the objectives, my methodology was close reading. In it, the practice oscillated between two domains: the literary aesthetic and the historical. It involved, on one hand, a critical reading and interpretation of the text in order to infer how space as a narrative technique is used in the memoir and a consideration of secondary sources on the political history of Sierra Leone in order to explore the mutually illuminating depiction of characters and themes. Considering that the text is a memoir set at a historical locale in Sierra Leone, it was inevitable not to refer to the history of Sierra Leone in as far as it was relevant to the events captured in the memoir and compare the two accounts with a view not really to identify how they differ but more so how they intersect.

The research was based on two assumptions: firstly, Aminatta Forna has used space as a tool in exploring human relations through characters and characterization and secondly that there exist multiple relationships between space and human relations. The research required a validation of these assumptions and this was done by intensively reading of the primary text in order to explore the engagement of the characters and their relationships with the spaces they engage in. In the course of reading the primary text I identified some specific spatial metaphors notably the beach, the forest, the palace, the school,

government institutions and the clinic which carry a representational meaning and in which most of the action takes place. These spatial metaphors were conceptualized, contextualized and ‘problematized’ using literary theories in order to demonstrate their significance in this study.

The research invited the necessity to read scholarly works by critics on the subject of space and the analyses of *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. These secondary materials including works by distinguished spatial theorists were read and analyzed with the aim of looking at their perceptions to this subject in order to complement and build on their contributions.

1.11 Chapter Outline

This study project is organized in four chapters.

Chapter One, titled Background to the Study, offers the foundations upon which the study is based. In this chapter the objectives, hypotheses, justification and scope and limitations of the study have been stated and explained. Further the chapter has a literature review in which works by other scholars on the subject of space and on the memoir and the author have been studied and analyzed. In this chapter, the theoretical foundations have been explored where geocriticism and spatial literary theories have been considered. The chapter has also explained the methodology that was applied in the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the role of space in characterization. The chapter identifies various spatial metaphors, what critics say about them, which characters are associated with them and what this association and presence in them mean. In the chapter attention is given to how characters are both producers and products of the said spaces. Characters are seen in the light of their attempt to reconfigure, control and shape the space they occupy while the space on the other hand is a factor in their identity formation.

Chapter Three looks at the connection between space and themes in the memoir. It explores how the author has used space as a tool in exploring the pertinent thematic concerns in the memoir. Space is conceptualized as an agent, a force, a marker and a site for the various themes the memoir has explored. The specific spatial metaphors represent specific thematic experiences of the people of Sierra Leone at a personal, familial and national level.

Chapter Four offers summaries and conclusions of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ROLE OF SPACE IN CHARACTERISATION

2.0. Introduction

This chapter looks at the role of space in characterisation. It is organised in two broad sections where we first theorise the concepts of characterisation and space, and secondly explore the functionality of space as a narrative tool in characterisation in the memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water*.

In this chapter we argue that characterization is the platform through which a writer gives substance to text. Characters provide a story with intention and a reason for the reader to be concerned about what actually takes place. Jack Reams in *Characterization in Fiction* (2015, 2) posits at the need for us to think highly of cogent prose, or an elaborately woven plot, but if the characters within it don't captivate the reader into the story, everything else is does not matter much. Characters are primarily the most outstanding component in a work of art. As such, the parameters applied in developing and shaping these characters are the utmost significance for any author. Although Reams observation refer to fiction, the same holds true of nonfiction since the role of characters remain more or less the same across literary genres. In memoir a careful treatment of characters by the author goes a long way in piecing up a compact story for the reader.

Other than the conceptualisation of characterization, this chapter takes a look the metaphor. Ideally, we have chosen to approach the role of space in characterization by narrowing our discussion to the spatial metaphors. We argue that the author has selected specific and conspicuous spatial metaphors through which she has explored characterization. Being a memoir, the characters in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are not fictional. These characters have been used to portray historical occurrences on the one hand and as a metonymic representation of the lived experiences of the larger society on the other. The author uses space to demonstrate that human activity does not take place in the absence of a location but instead it is subject to the physical locations in which it takes place. Human activity is influenced by space and also influences space.

Whereas human relations are diverse and multifaceted, this chapter focuses on characters growth and development, and identity formation since these are the two domains the text seems to foreground. We demonstrate that Forna in writing the biography of her father uses space to depict interrelationships among people in a post conflict society. In the text, the characters' attempt at configuration of their identity is based on their knowledge of the dynamics of the spaces they occupy, the privileges and limitations of these spaces as well as the implications of the boundaries that these spaces engender.

The analysis of *The Devil that Danced on the Water* in this chapter shows that Forna is concerned with the lives of ordinary people as well as political leaders in the Sierra Leonean society. For the ordinary people, Forna uses space to demonstrate that in most cases they are affected by circumstances not of their own making, but have tremendous influence in shaping their lives and destinies. This way of conceptualizing the spatial, as Cole observes, "Inherently implies that there exists in the lived world a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces. These spaces are diverse and multilayered. By this very nature, these spaces: cross-cut, intersect, align with one another, or exist in relations that are paradoxical or antagonistic" (Cole, 14).

The Devil that Danced on the Water is evidently appropriate for spatial analysis of characters because the social and power relations experienced through the engagement of characters are encountered differently, and variously interpreted, by the people holding different positions as part of the general social sphere. Space is by far a major player in social and power relations. In fact, space is the platform upon which social and power relations and engagements operate.

2.1. Perceptions of Characterisation

Characterisation refers to any act by the author or that which takes place in the realms of a given literary work and which is used to give the attributes of a character. Generally, characterization can be looked at as either being direct or indirect. Direct characterization entails what the author communicates directly to the reader. Indirect characterization on the other hand is revealed to the reader by another source.

Characterisation is realized through the author's descriptions as well as through the characters' actions, reactions, thoughts and speech. What an author decides to expose concerning a character could be tremendously important, as it is the initial notion the reader registers of who the character is. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, for instance, this is what the author writes about her father:

My father was just five foot eight; one of those people everyone imagines to be a great deal taller.

In his student photograph he wears a well-cut suit, narrow in the leg and lapel, in the style of the sixties...the expression on his eyes is both amused and utterly self-possessed (Forna, 24).

Overall the author presents the character very positively and this sets the stage for the reader's perception of the person the character is. Critically, one can see the portraiture of a biographer writing about a father she considers her hero. One is tempted to read the memoir as a patriography.

In the world we live, our actions disclose who we are. At times they also conceal our identities. In similar manner, a character's actions inside a story reveal or conceal their identities. Characters' action could be viewed as what a character does as a principal act. The implied meaning here is that a character's actions are the basis, not the consequence. There is no action that exists isolated from the context in which it occurs. One's action is the reflection of a conscious or unconscious decision. Characters' actions as presented in a text can be said to be the 'frontline' image in understanding the character's traits. A character may speak, or imagine something, but this might lack the concrete connotation that an action would provide. Actions cannot be reversed, and as such they are often significantly dependable evidence of the true traits of a given character. In describing her grandfather, Mr Christison, the author writes:

Mr Christison was not impressed by the black man's credentials. Nor did he like his forthright manner. 'Arrogant' is how he would dismiss him later. He stated his position, an entirely simple one: I'm not prejudiced. I'm sure you've done well enough. But I won't have Maureen going about town with any man of a different colour. It is my view you stick to your own (Forna, 29)

The author here presents to us a disconnect between Mr Christison's words and actions. By words, he claims to have no prejudice but his actions betray him.

In literary terms, the actions of a character are in general regarded indirect characterization since what they denote is not availed overtly to the reader. Even when the importance of an action is usually clear, it is not readily stated and so the reader has to figure out this. "Action is said to be among the most resourceful strategies of characterization for it is equally an essential component of the narrative's development; action is, in literary terms, what transpires in a narrative. If nothing transpires, then why is the narrative existing? The actions of a character offers the author the chance to develop both the story and the character concurrently" (Reams, 6).

The thoughts of a character are majorly important. As in psychology, the workings of a character's mind speak volumes of the nature and traits. When characters portray optimism when faced with enormous challenges this chain of thoughts reveal a combination of vigour and a positive attitude by the character to the reader. Where a character is jittery, suspicious and sarcastic these traits emerge right from the person's mind even when they are not verbalized. By allowing the reader to observe these thoughts happening in the character's mind, the author takes an enormous step toward immersing the reader in the character, and by extension the story. To depict her frame of mind as a child in a new home the author lets the reader into her thoughts when she states:

The door of our house was always open and people wandered in and out of my world...I was a child, I lived my life in the moment. For me people existed only when I could see them. When they left, as far as I was concerned their flesh turned into air and they ceased to be (Forna, 67).

Characters in a story engage in speech. The speech could be monologue or the conversation between characters. Speech forms a link between characters' actions and thoughts. The ways in which characters communicate with one another can indicate how they feel, their origins and their relationship with the rest

of the characters to whom they are engaged in discourse. A soft-spoken character may most likely be viewed as gentle. A character who speaks very eloquently, with formal grammar and carefully chosen words, will come across as scholarly and possibly distant. Loud or coarse speech conveys just the opposite; that a character is aggressive and probably unintelligent. An accent or the use of a local language or dialect can serve as a distinctive feature, just like any physical trait. Dialogue, much like thought, allows an author to develop their character organically within the story. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water* the author mentions an incidence when she encountered racial attack by some white people in London directed to black man walking ahead of her. She writes: “Hey monkey! Show us ya face, monkey man” (Forna, 228). This speech by some unnamed characters demonstrates the existing racial attitude among them and probably among some others.

2.2. Perceptions of Space and Spatial Metaphors

Space may be perceived as real and imagined referential worlds. Doreen Massey, one of the most profound scholars in modern human geography, offers an alternative to the almost intuitive perceptions in the concept of space as a surface across which things happen, as a static dimension of differentiation, and as the context in which places are distinguished from the wider world. In *For Space* (2005) she sets out three propositions concerning space: as the product of interrelations, as the sphere of coexisting trajectories and heterogeneity, and as always under construction. In analysing *The Devil that Danced on the Water* we have considered these three notions of space. In the memoir space functions as the spheres through which characters co-exist within the family set up, the school, and in work places among others places. Further the memoir presents space as the product of interrelations. The schools, universities, the palace, courtrooms and prison are all a creation of the society and in them we experience proximity, exclusion, marginality, dislocation among others. Space in the memoir is also always under construction. It is temporal and perpetually shifting. Those who occupy a certain space may be dislodged from it soon. The changes in the regimes in Sierra Leone are a case in point where one who is a president today may be dethroned and locked in prison.

Irene de Jong in *Space in Ancient Greek Literature* (2012,3) posits that “there are huge differences in the attention paid to space: some narratives are full of detailed descriptions or semantically loaded settings, e.g. Dickens’ *Great Expectations*; others, e.g. Musil’s *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, focus on the plot or characters while their environments are largely left unspecified.” By Jong’s parameters, it is our consideration that *The Devil that Danced on the Water* stands out uniquely in that both characters and the environment are foregrounded and their relationship is the focus of this chapter.

From the onset, it is important to acknowledge that we can never discern space as it is, but only as we perceive it. Secondly, the logical and formal preoccupations of space are principally mental and its depiction often founded on sensorial registers such as sight. Even if sensorial perception is physical, it is synthesized and completed by our reflection and can be considered a product of our experience rather than something that exists by itself. Many perceptive sensations and a great amount of knowledge that we build up through experience in space remain virtual, and are concretized in human actions and engagements represented in a text through characters.

Brian Bowdle and Dedre Gentner in *The Career Metaphor* (2005, 174) postulate that “The standard approach to metaphor comprehension treats metaphors as comparisons that highlight preexisting but potentially obscure similarities between the target and base concepts... The notion that metaphors express similarities between semantically distant concepts is intuitively appealing... The degree of similarity between target and base has been found to be positively related to the aptness and interpretability of metaphors.” Although Bowdle and Gentner describe the attributes of general metaphor this description is very ideal for our analysis of the spatial metaphor. Spatial metaphor maps the image of space onto a target that is nonspatial hence enabling the user to talk, think or write about the nonspatial domains in spatial terms. This is the approach that Aminatta Forna has adopted in her character depiction in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* where she places her characters in let’s say a school to reference maturity and self-awareness on the part of the character and those that the character represents.

The view of metaphoric mappings has not escaped criticism on several grounds. One criticism concerns property selection: Whereas feature matching models equate figurative meanings with sets of common properties, not every property shared by the target and base of a metaphor will necessarily enter into its interpretation (Bowdle and Gentner, 1995). In *The Devil that Danced on Water*, as we shall analyze later the clinic is central but while it has features that correspond to the fragmented state of the Sierra Leonean society some features cannot be shared with its targeted implication. Andrew Ortony in *Beyond literal similarity* (1979) has argued that metaphoric feature matching is constrained by “salience imbalance”: Only those common properties that are significantly more salient for the base concept than for the target concept will be relevant to the meaning of a metaphor. As such in analyzing the spatial metaphors in Forna’s memoir only the common properties between the base concept and the target concept will be considered.

2.3. The Role of Spatial Metaphor in Characterisation

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, the author takes us through different geographical locations within Sierra Leone. The story takes place around distinct locations including the beach, the schools, the clinic, the forest, the palace, the courtroom and prison among other locations. All these places have significant symbolisms. The occurrence of events in certain time frames is of interest to a critic. Deeper understanding occurs once place and time cease to be viewed in their ‘normal’ or ‘usual’ senses but as agents of human relations in a text. The locations Forna takes her story are thus spatial metaphors.

Lefebvre strongly opines that the city, as a social space, ought to be considered as the initial position to research real space. He denounces all philosophical models of space as a point of departure. Lefebvre’s perspective essentially implies that cities as social space are the only real and relevant spaces worth research. This implication thus is that space created by humans is somehow more valuable than space as it exists before or beyond human physical formulations. Conversely, we view Lefebvre’s ideas as an admission of the reality that our perception and logic cannot fully grasp the notion of space. Many critics in spatial studies such as Edward Soja (*Seeking Spatial Justice*, 2010) and Ato Quayson (*Calibrations*,

2003) will actually argue that space that has not been planned or rendered functional by human intervention still becomes a product of society. For example, even areas that are not under human occupation such as forests and deserts still become products of the society. At a later point, we will demonstrate the significance of the forests as well as the unoccupied ruins mentioned in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*.

2.3.1 The Beach as a Paradoxical Metaphor

The beach appears prominently in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. Characters are seen moving in and out of this location. Its appearance and recurrence as well as its association with specific characters lead us to perceive it as a crucial spatial metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (2003) posit that: “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”(4). Our perception of the beach as a spatial metaphor is hinged on the knowledge that our conceptual systems play a crucial role in defining our everyday realities. Equally AminattaForna’s inclusion of the beach in this narrative offers an opportunity of relooking the beach and imagining the referential world that it stands for. In this study we have perceived the beach as a metaphor of leisure, marginality and hope.

The beach is generally associated with recreation, enjoyment and opulence. This can be justified in the text by the frequency in which the author and her family visited the beach when her father held the enviable position of a government minister. She also frequented the beach in Lagos after her mother was married to a high-flying diplomat. The beach, however, changes meaning as the author presents to us her observations of the events at the beach on two occasions later. After her father falls out with Siaka Stevens, the family visits the beach as usual. The country is in political turmoil and as the president is passing by the beach, ‘red shirts’ move about wagging whips and ordering everyone to rise and honour the president. As a young child, the author fails to understand why the president cannot speak to her father

yet the two are supposed to be friends. The second incidence at the beach is when the author returns to conduct an inquiry that forms the basis of this memoir. While at the beach, she notices the presence of very many amputees who are beggars. The sorry state awakens her compassion for the suffering and the traumatized. This leads her to the discovery and eventual engagement with Mohamed and Salamatu. These two characters are used by the author as a reference for both internal and external reconciliation. Internal refers to the attempt by the individual to come to terms with the loss and pain experienced as victims of violence and external being the pointer towards a reconciliation between past and present and between the victims and the perpetrators.

The beach, in the physical sense, marks the end of land and the beginning of the sea and vice versa. This perception is crucial. The sea to people of Sierra Leone has an unforgettable historical significance. It was by sea that slave ships came and violently destabilized the tranquillity of the people through slave trade. What followed this trade was a long and often permanent displacement. Individuals were separated from their families and their cultures. Centuries later, the sea brought the colonizers heralding another era of anguish. The sea, however, was also the opening to the outside world for the people of Sierra Leone. It became the means by which imports and exports were conveyed. The beach being the link between the land and the sea is hence a crucial spatial imagery of the position between possibility in the future and the hopelessness in the current state of life, between the memory of a bitter past and the anticipation of a fulfilling future for the people of Sierra Leone.

The author draws our attention to the beach in Lagos. She observes: "In Lagos we were far from the fighting, yet the signs of war were there. The secret police dumped bodies in the sea which sometimes washed back up onto the beaches or floated into the harbour, arms abound at the elbow, the marks left by their final torture still evident upon the bloated bodies"(141). In this context the beach presents hopelessness by way of being the dumpsite for bodies of victims of civil war. What is ironical is that at this same beach the author stepfather and other expatriates who were members of the Lagos Yacht Club

“raced each other round orange buoys in the harbour...During those competitions yachtsmen sometimes sailed past the nameless victims of tribal persecution with whom the police had finished”(141). One would have difficulties fathoming how people would still enjoy having fun at a beach with floating corpses. The author’s stepfather and other expatriates are characterised to represent the indifference of some of the foreigners living in Africa towards the plight of the locals.

2.3.2. Court and Prison

Ideally a court is meant to be an institution in which justice is served and disputes are resolved. It is meant to be the refuge to run to in order to seek justice. The prison too is established in order to offer corrective intervention to convicts. In *Seeking Spatial Justice* (2010) Edward Soja reasons that ‘justice in the contemporary world tends to be seen as more concrete than its alternatives, more oriented to present-day conditions, more open to a multiplicity of interconnected perspectives’ (21). Soja underscores the significance of justice in the society and how the exercise of justice is viewed variously. In this study we opine that the author has presented the court and the prison as spatial metaphors that can be interpreted and analyzed to ventilate into the attributes of the characters in the memoir whom we locate in the two spaces.

Sierra Leone has built prisons allegedly as institutions of correction and reform. Pademba Road Prison is depicted in the text as being at the center of the action in story. It is centrally located in the city in the physical sense but in the same breath it is centrally placed as a space for oppression, suppression and torture. The author actually gives the notion that all that went on at Pademba Road Prison was way far from the noble intention of a correctional facility.

The prison is a space where power relations are manifested through oppression, violence, aggression, torture, discrimination and death. In the text we see Mohamed Forna and others being put in prison. They are incarcerated without any access to the outside world. Often there are detentions without trial and

where trials are conducted, there are trumped up charges, coached witnesses, biased bench and often no legal representation. This arrangement widens the rift between those in power and those outside or in the periphery. Edward W. Soja, in *Seeking Spatial Justice* states: “Whether imposed from above or generated by spatial decision making from below, segregation or the confinement of specific populations to specific areas seems clearly to be connected to the production of spatial injustice”. You need to be clear that Soja is writing in a different though related context.

The courtroom is a vital space. In this text the author has actually placed the court right at the center of biography. It is what happened at the courtroom during the trial of Mohamed Forna and others that form the thrust of her investigation. The court here represents power relations that pit the powerful on the one hand and the downtrodden on the other. Whereas Dr Forna and his co-accused were previously powerful individuals and respectable professionals, at the point of their trial they had been reduced to miserable powerless people. This was cleverly done by denying them legal representation.

2.3.3. School as a Metaphor of Transition

The Devil that Danced on the Water presents the school in different dimensions. We encounter school first when young Mohamed Forna enrolls in school in the rural Sierra Leone. He would later pursue education both locally and in Scotland where he trained as a medical doctor. In all the institutions of learning, the school becomes a space of interaction with people, cultures and knowledge as well as a space for self discovery and identity formation. Aminatta Forna, the author, presents herself to us in different schools. In all these she grows through interaction from innocence to experience. In this study we identify and analyze the school as a spatial metaphor of growth and transcendence.

A lot takes place in the girls’ boarding school. Here she has friends and through her interactions with them we learn much. Her best friend casually told her that she could not invite Aminatta to her party because her father "doesn't like blacks", was a terrible place for a child living with loneliness with her

biological mother living far away in Nigeria with a new husband and her father in prison rephrase for clarity. The boarding school becomes a location where the author presents to us racial relations among whites and people of colour. Whereas boarding was meant to keep her away from the turmoil at home, it also opened her eyes to human relations she would probably never have realized. To the reader, boarding school equally evokes a clearer understanding of the characters and the larger society they represent.

2.3.4. Forest as a Metaphor of Uncertainty and Rebirth

The forest is often seen as a symbol of the unconscious. It's used as a metaphor for entering the unknown. In Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* (2013) the poet writes: "In the middle of our walk of life, I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost".

The author presents the forests in many dimensions. When people in Sierra Leone fail to get political change through constitutional means of elections as it did happen in 1967, they resort to guerrilla tactics by staging insurgencies operated from the forest. The forest therefore becomes a location that births political and social change. Elsewhere in the text, forests are spaces where sacred rituals and meetings are held. These sections of the forests are revered and in them crucial decisions affecting the society are made. Spiritual interventions are also made in the sacred parts of the forests. In this sense, forests are spatial imagery of sites of social direction.

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, we encounter the forest where Mohamed Forna and others use it for purposes of meetings to strategize the removal of a regime they considered oppressive. The author writes: "They met in the sacred bush where nobody, including and especially heavy-booted Mende policemen, dared to go" (103). The bush provided the right environment to birth leaders and a movement that would bring change to Sierra Leone. The enclosure among trees ensured secrecy which was necessary for the movement's operation. The forest acts like the womb from which Mohamed Forna was delivered not any more a doctor but a politician. It is there a metaphorical agent of change and character

maturity on the part of Mohamed Forna. Forna's involvement with the forest and what it stood for soon affected the family as it triggered animosity from the ruling class and in turn destabilization of the family. Forna observes: "Pressure was mounting; my father was locked into a dangerous game. There were reports of scattered violence, even talk of civil war...The day had come for us to go"(103). This departure was to be replicated many more times in future. It ended up characterizing the author's childhood. In a major way the resultant journeys and settlements became fields of identity formation for the author and her father.

The forest is depicted as mostly uninhabitable and acutely dangerous however this same forest is conquered and occupied by rebels and becomes the centre of their struggle for liberation. The forest is metaphorical as the proof of conquest and an incubation of political change. During the historical time the memoir is set, possibilities of political liberation was viewed to spring from the forest since constitutional means such as elections had since been viewed as ineffective. The characters broadly lumped together as rebels are therefore situated in the forest where they hone their leadership agenda in readiness to serve the people. This notion is the creation of the author who seems to be in support of rebellions where the father is in them and abhor the same when she almost becomes a victim of their atrocities.

2.5.6. Home and Homelessness

Homes of different models, sizes and locations are variously mentioned in the text. In these homes characters interact and events take place. These homes go beyond being places of settlement to being locations of human relations. In these homes belonging and exclusion are explored. Individual and group identities are developed and demolished. Self-consciousness and assertiveness; self-pity and remorse find bearing among characters in these homes. David Morley in *Belongings: place, space and identity in a mediated world* (2001) argues that: 'If the home, the neighborhood and the nation are all potential spaces of belonging, this is no simple matter of disconnected, parallel processes. Each of these spaces conditions the others ... because these spaces are simultaneously tied together by media messages, by the workings of

the real estate market, and by macro factors such as the immigration policies of the state and the impact of the global economy' (433). Morley articulates the significance of a home and its broad meaning as a representation of the larger society.

Aminatta Forna takes note of the many homes she lived in when she writes, "In six years I had lived in six homes" (Forna, 184). Each of the homes she lived in meant a lot for her and her family. There was a reason why she moved from home to home. These homes were located in different places including Aberdeen, Freetown, Koidu, and Lagos. In some homes, their occupation meant a good life due to her father's social standing while others meant fall of fortune after the father fell out with the government. In some instances, the occupation in a particular home meant displacement since it was a transition while in exile. Paradoxically home to the author at times meant homelessness.

The author exposes to the reader the first home in the story. Whereas this is not her first home to live in, it is the home where the main social activity takes place. It is the home where the author is separated from her father Dr. Mohamed Forna through his untimely arrest. The events that take place in this home shortly before, during and after the arrest of Dr. Forna become crucial in the shaping of the story. In fact, the main conflict of the narrative is hinged on the events and the people at this home. The home is therefore a centre of social relations. In this home we are introduced to the suffering of the people who work tirelessly but have nothing to show of it. Further we see a man so engrossed in practicing medicine and political mobilization that he inadvertently neglects his family. In this same location an injured man is nursed but when he later succumbs to his injuries and his body is disposed off, this very event becomes the crucial link that would have helped in the trial of the memoir's protagonist, Dr. Mohamed Forna.

An apartment by its very form depicts a 'box' where one lives in. It is suffocating in terms of space. The occupants try to stretch it by improvising. In the case of the author's family, the improvisation took the form of converting the living room into a bedroom and sharing of beds among the children. The apartment being small compared to the landlady's big and spacious house already depicts the hierarchical

relations between tenant and property owner. It only becomes even clearer when the property owner happens to be a white lady living alone in house too big for her own need and a black tenant family comprising of three little children without a father and under the care of a foster mother who are struggling to settle in exile. This black family rents the apartment and is keen to fit in despite its inadequate space. By expanding the scale of things through improvisation of these tiny living quarters, this movement serves to compensate for the pathetically small size of the space occupied. Effectively, it presupposes and imposes homogeneity in the subdivision of space.

Squeezed dwelling spaces in rental apartments symbolize narrow social spaces among the underprivileged in the society. Rental apartments also may be seen in the light of fleeting nature of social spaces among the downtrodden. By renting, one knows the tenant never owns the property and you effectively live at the mercy of the property owner. This social relation is true of life. In Sierra Leone, the masses live at the mercy of those in power. In some situations one lives at the mercy of their own enemies. Dr. Forna and his co-accused were at the mercy of Siaka Stevens. Even receiving relatives to visit them required the direct intervention of the president. The president's dominance over the people gives him the image of the domineering landlords and landladies to whose whims the tenants must abide by.

In the memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, Dr. Mohamed Forna sets out to build a house. His vision is to build a house with all social amenities including electricity, water, and internal bathrooms. The children and especially the author of this memoir are excited about living in such a house. The only time they enjoyed such a home was when they lived abroad and when they lived in the ministerial home provided by the government. Dr Forna almost succeeds in achieving this dream house. The construction of the home takes place at an almost parallel stance with his rise in power. Interestingly, when his political career come to an end through arrest and subsequent detention so is his new house demolished by government forces.

A good stone house may be viewed as the epitome of immovability. However, to a critic this perspective may be put to question. Dr Forna sets out to build a permanent house for his family. As a cabinet minister he is also allocate a permanent house by the government. These apparently solid structures of dwelling could be stripped off their concrete slabs, solid walls and imposing roofs to uncover a different picture.

The house would be seen in the light of the multiple in-flows and out-flows of energy in terms of electricity, water and sewage waste. These movements of energies will effectively demolish the notion of stability and immobility of the said house and put to fore a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits and a space of convergences much similar to a human body that is at times strong with overflowing energy and at other times desperately lacking in energy. This is the perspective in which Dr.Forna has been portrayed by the biographer. At some point he was overflowing with zeal as he treated patients in his new clinic, as he campaigned for All People’s Congress and as he dutifully served the government under Siaka Stevens. We also meet a weak and helpless Dr.Forna who has to beg for mercy from a man he helped come to power. The same is true of John Bangura who literally handed power to Siaka Stevens only for Stevens to persecute him clarify later.

Within home Maureen undergoes arguably the most visible transformation. She was naive by the time she literally ran away from her home and family in Aberdeen in order to marry Mohamed Forna. The makes a remark worth noting: “Our mother was the first person in her family to marry a foreigner. Our father was the first person in his to marry for love”(129). This as it may be, Maureen resolutely sticks in the marriage long after it is clear the marriage no longer works. The author further notes: “...still our mother clung to her position, which became less tenable as the years mounted”(129).

2.5.7 Clinic as a Symbol of Healing

Clinic in this study has been to represent all the medical facilities in which Dr Mohamed Forna worked. These facilities include the government hospital he served in shortly after his return to Sierra Leone following his studies abroad, the military medical facility he served briefly, and his private clinic in his rural backyard.

A clinic in rural Africa during the time the memoir is set was a crucial infrastructure. Healthcare in Africa then was wanting and the situation more dire in the rural areas such as Koidu, the author's rural home. The establishment of one by Dr Forna was hence a significant move. What interests us is that this very clinic served the locals' medical needs but soon became the avenue through which Dr Forna's political career would be hatched. Further the clinic became the centre in which Kendeka Sessay, a character who does little in the plot but whose situation is intertwined with the memoir main conflict. This relationship will be handled in detail under themes in the next chapter.

Dr Forna's role as the clinic proprietor can be perceived in the light of his role as the man who valiantly set out to fix the ills of his country's politics. The patients he received and treated, most of them too poor to pay for the services are representative of the maladies of the post colonial society at that particular time. The mothers he helped deliver could be viewed as the birth of hope for Africans that soon their strife would come to the end. This hope and optimism was seen in the very many attempts the people had in determining their political destiny by participating in the voting process like the one in 1967 and when constitutional means failed to work they opted to rebel.

To demonstrate the connection between the clinic and Dr Forna's entry in political limelight we refer to what the author notes:

One day my father lost his temper at the discovery of stillborn babies left stacked on shelves in the maternity delivery room, where other women came to give birth. The young doctors organised protests to the minister for health with my father as one of the leaders. But despite the assurances they received, change if came at all was slow (Forna, 70).

The reference to stillborn babies neglected in a government medical facility points to the hopelessness of the people under their post-independence regime. In the same way babies are born premature and dead in their mothers' wombs so was the disillusionment among people whose hopes in good governance after the attainment of independence were met with disappointment.

At the military's medical facility, another situation presents itself. The author writes:

A few months after my father arrived, a young woman appeared and wanted an abortion. Abortion was illegal in Sierra Leone and my father declined her request. Some time later the force commander called the new doctor and, as his superior officer, commanded him to perform the operation. Both my father and Dr Panda resisted. They resigned their commissions in protest (70).

The happenings at the military facility are of interest to this study. The senior commander represents the government of the day. The government intends to procure an "abortion" and this is resisted. One can view this in terms of what the post independence governments in Africa were seen to do. Leaders ended up demolishing economic structures such as cooperative movements in order to benefit personally. Political competitions were met with ruthless intolerance. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water* this reality is embodied in the acts of characters such as Siaka Stevens and Albert Margai. In the same way Dr Fornas resisted to conduct an abortion he would later fight against the arrest warrant of four party members during the election campaign against Albert Margai's regime. The author notes:

A warrant had been issued for the arrest of all four opposition candidates in the region: the plan was to stop them registering themselves as candidates by using the law to hold them for forty-eight hours over the crucial registration period. My father gathered the four together and urged them to stay (80).

The author draws our attention to a patient of significant interest who visited the clinic. The patient's name is not mentioned but she is described as "a deranged woman" who "behaved as though unseen hands were pinching her" (48). This patient could be viewed as a representation of the disturbed society and their consciences. Like mad people, they engage in functions beyond their control and which make no sense to them. The situation is clearly described as the author writes, "Under our first dictatorship, paranoia flourished and the nerves of the nation were stretched taut as a dancer's hamstring. All that bound the men ruling our country together was a fondness for power and an eye for an opportunity"(100). The clinic the father established soon took a toll on the family. Cracks began to appear and deepen in the marriage of Dr Fornas and Maureen. The author noted this and writes that by the time her parents were five years into their wedding the marriage was already crumbling since the father was too engrossed in with his patients and the politics(76). The author associates the clinic with politics and cites this as the main reason for the failed marriage. The clinic is hence metaphorical. While it served to alleviate the suffering of the patients, it robbed the Fornas of a father and a husband and as such it was an agent of displacement and disintegration. It can be seen as representative of the elements in the society that led to social disintegration. The effect of Dr Fornas's engrossment in work and politics is captured in the words of the author: "In our father's absence family life became one-dimensional: we had routine without substance, days with form but no purpose, like a water pot with a broken base"(95).

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that what stands out in the memoir is indeed the representation of space dominantly manifested in characterization. The author has presented us with a figurative language awash with spatial imagery which we have identified in this chapter. We have looked at the concept of characterization and its functionality in a narrative both in its direct and indirect manifestation. In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, the author has effectively identified specific spatial metaphors which she has used as the vehicle to explore characterization. The connection between space and characterization has led a solid understanding of the role of space in underscoring human relations hence confirming our primary hypothesis. In essence, by the verification of the hypotheses, we have considered a critical perspective at the essential role that characterization plays in plot development besides the formation of the story.

In this chapter, we have identified spatial imagery in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* and demonstrated how it is used by the author to address and explore how characters configure their identities, respond to happenings around and relate to one another under the prevailing circumstances and in the locations they operate in. The places, spaces and boundaries these spaces engender have bearings on the destabilization of the characters in the text, their families and the Sierra Leonean society in general. Space in the text is therefore metaphorical and metonymic implying broader operations that shed light on the connections between location and characters. This chapter therefore contextualizes space in its bearing to characterization.

Literature, in essence, serves as an expression of human society's nature and way of life. Embedded in it is the creation of living beings that reveal to us our very own attributes whether or bad. Writers are creators and inventors of characters who in turn reveal our own human and by so doing give form to literature.. Characterization, more than anything else, is the heart of literary texts and more so the memoir, *The Devil that Danced on the Water*.

A critical analysis of the use of space in Aminatta Forna's memoir cannot be complete without a look at the relationships between space and themes. A story can never be said to be complete with characters only yet in their engagements no ideas are formulated by the author. This being so, we shall take this discussion further by analyzing the multilayered relationships between space and themes in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPACE AND THEMES

3.0 Introduction

This chapter shifts the focus of the study from the analyses of characterization tackled in the previous chapter to the analysis of the relationship between space and themes in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. Having analyzed characterization, we will be seeking in this chapter to confirm the hypothesis that there exists multiple relationships between space and human experiences. When analysing space and characterization more focus was on what Massey conceptualizes space as the sphere of concomitant trajectories and heterogeneity. This chapter, on the other hand, looks at space “as the product of interrelations”. Like we did in the previous chapter, we have identified specific spatial metaphors and for each we will be analyzing how the author has use them in exploring the themes of violence, power, displacement, and disillusionment as the shared lived experiences of the people of Sierra Leone.

3.1.Expression of Themes using Spatial Metaphors

Theme refers to the central idea or underlying message of the text. Themes are rarely stated in the text – instead, the reader must usually consider the plot, characters, and setting to infer the theme. Strauss and Corbin in *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990), state that “the links between expressions and themes are “conceptual labels placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena”(61). In *The Devil that Danced on the Water* we have perceived themes as abstract constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects. The author has formulated spaces through which she has communicated the central ideas that depict the experiences of the characters and the society they represent.

3.1.1. Depiction of Violence using Spatial Metaphors

Among the most conspicuous themes in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* is violence. Violence in the text is mainly criminal in nature but it is given a political perspective by its perpetrators. In Sierra Leone, like in many other African nations including Somalia and Congo, greedy warlords use violence as a means of getting to power. In *Anatomy of Violence* (2009) Belachew Gebrewold notes that “The crisis and weakness of African states renders them prone to capture by violent non-state actors, such as international terrorist groups in search of wealth, support, recruits and sanctuary” (6). Besides external actors most African nations experience violence meted by internal actors. Foreigners may aggravate the situation due to other interests among them economic exploitation as was the case in Sierra Leone.

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, Siaka Stevens’ government uses militias referred in the text as “Red Shirts” who beat up and maim many locals including amputation of limbs and murder. Some areas of the country are under the control of rebels. The result of all these is fear and trauma. Lynne Griffiths-Fulton in *Small Arms and Light Weapons* observes that armed criminality in urban, rural and border areas has internal as well as regional security implications .

It is only beneficial to view space with practicality. When we become abstract in our perception of space Many foreign agencies operating in Sierra Leone at the time of war saw the country collapsing but failed to perceive the matter with practicality. Human rights were abused by those in power but no one complained. Violence visited the locals but life continued. This silence and inaction worsened the situation but equally portrayed foreign governments as acting in complicity with the oppressors. Some local people equally failed to view social spaces in practical perspectives. Ragtag militias, at the excuse of providing alternative leadership, ended up causing pain and suffering to the people living in areas they operated from. A case in point was where Revolutionary United Front (RUF) abducted boys are recruited to become soldiers. These boys who were exposed to drugs become perpetrators of violence against the people. They started as being victims but ended up being agents of torture, violence, and trauma. Ismael

Beah's memoir *A Long Way Gone: the memoir of a child soldier* captures this particular trajectory. However, Beah becomes a victim of this impractical view of social spaces. This fetishized abstraction in Beah's memoir turns the people represented by the characters, their presence, their 'lived experiences' and their bodies into abstractions too.

The city could be viewed as a monster that is fed by roads with people. It swallows them and transforms them to adjust into its ideals. Such people live a different lifestyle from how they previously lived back in the villages. Social sensitivity is stronger away from the city and weaker or non-existent within the city. City dwellers are too cautious and closed up in comparison to villagers. Levels of mistrust are higher among city dwellers. Most of social activities revolve around immediate families among city dwellers but in the village such activities involve a larger bracket of associates. Cities are therefore collages of social relations. But a human body fed by diverse sources and kinds of food, the city eventually suffers "indigestion" as it is crowded by people with all kinds of ideals. The "Red Shirts" for instance are young party supporters who are used to instil fear among those perceived to be enemies of the state. Beggars go unattended and multiple amputees live in isolation all over the city. Those in power live in storey buildings, depicting the raised social status. In as much as they isolate the poor majority, they are also dislocated from the society. They cannot move freely and friendships are betrayed.

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water* we learn that many former 'red shirts' who were actually young men used by politicians to mete violence on citizen victims are in drug addiction or have gone mad. Most of them are now vagabonds, again drawing our attention to 'home' as a spatial metaphor in power relations. Their uprooting from homes and the misery of living in ruins is a depiction of displacement and fragmentation as consequences of negative power relations.

3.1.2. The Amputated Body as a Metaphor of Trauma

Most victims of the government's oppression are presented as irretrievably destroyed pointing to serious traumatic existence. Trauma pertains both to the moment of the traumatic event itself as well as to the moment of the recall of such an event. Trauma is due to excessive excitation of stimuli that the psychic processes are not able to deal with, leading to a variety of symptoms and coping mechanisms. However, the traumatic event does not necessarily retain its original form in the process of recall. To demonstrate the nexus between space and trauma, the author gives us a sneak peak at Freetown. She states: "Freetown was full of living ghosts: amputees, deranged rebels" (Forna, 302). To many victims, their miserable circumstances notwithstanding, did not find the past regrettable. This is a variance of coping mechanism which was often taken by those in power as surrender. The author, after Saidu Brima, a character in the text who was a prime witness in the trial of Mohamed Forna, confessed to framing her father observes: "There it was. I had wondered if it would ever come. Finally I had stopped waiting for it. The first and only time anyone had ever expressed regret for all that had occurred" (Forna, 383).

3.1.3 The City as a Metaphor of Dislocation

In the events documented in this memoir one would expect society to be living very well as a united group. Sierra Leone and her neighbour Liberia have a history of slave trade. Sierra Leone's capital is called Freetown. It is supposed to be a reminder of the freedom of survivors of slavery should eternally enjoy. The national symbol of Sierra Leone is the cotton tree. This is meant to be a perpetual memory of the exploitation of black slaves who were conscripted to provide labour in cotton farms in America. When slavery was abolished and many slaves repatriated back to Africa, Sierra Leone became the home of freed slaves. The Creoles have carried the slave heritage for generations. The people suffered colonization but like slavery, they survived albeit with scars. The country attained independence and had African leaders. One would expect that the attainment of independence would guarantee the society a dignified life.

Contrary to this, people have continued to suffer. Social spaces are now characterized by violence and trauma. The heritage of home to freed slaves, the name of the capital city, Freetown, become an unfortunate irony. This is best captured in the words of the author:

...the Cotton Tree, which appears on postcards and in calendars as the symbol of Freetown, home of freed slaves, once but no more the Athens of Africa. The words are always written in capitals: the Cotton Tree. In between the massive roots the lepers sleep on, undisturbed under their makeshift awnings. (Forna, 5)

What we have is exactly what Lefebvre alluded to: social space cannot be adequately accounted for by nature or previous history. The actions of successive governments in Sierra Leone in particular have had their role in the breakdown of social fabric, making a once optimistic people languish in misery and despair.

Freetown's state of despair and stagnation points to the economic and social sterility in Sierra Leone and by extension in Africa. Since social spaces do not have mutually limiting boundaries, they collide because of their contours as a result of inertia. It is for this reason that we see Freetown and indeed the entire Sierra Leone depicting almost photographic semblances of itself with a quarter of a century difference in time span between the time the author lived there as a child and when she returns to conduct an inquest into the circumstances surrounding her father trial and eventual execution. Roadblocks similar to those erected to stop All People's Congress from assuming power are present many years after power was acquired, exercised and lost. At one point Forna is even unable to access her rural town since the entire areas is under rebel control.

Whenever a people are dislocated and abandoned on the periphery such people react either through agitation or surrender. Where agitation is successful, it often leads to regime changes as experienced in Sierra Leone with the change of power from the colonizer to a series of African led governments. In the

case of regime changes by African generals and civilians in Sierra Leone, occupancy of physical spaces also changes. Before ascending to power, the agitators operate from the bush. Their commanders plan from remotely located hideouts or makeshift offices in downtown Freetown. Upon assumption of power, the leaders occupy posh government residences and drive huge government vehicles while the dethroned ones are exiled, imprisoned, executed or simply allowed to live a disgraced lifestyle.

Slum dwellings in the outskirts of Freetown complicate an architecturally-based preservation prerogative because the city erased material traces of locals' existence and, potentially, the memory of the city's complicity in power relations and practices of urban renewal. Aminatta Forna is therefore making a commentary on behalf of all the victims of power dislocation like her late father and others who were formally dispossessed and are currently seeking recourse against their government for its role in the destruction of the community. The author takes us to a beach where those with means enjoy but at the side we have beggars such as Mohamed who come there every day. Forna singles out Mohamed who she follows all the way to his slum home. The neighbourhood is a sharp contrast of the luxury and affluence represented by the beach. It is also a depiction of the power strata between the rich and the poor who live side by side in regard to physical location but separated by a wide rift social and economically. This act of seeking recourse points to how differently imagined power marginalization can result in activism for social justice. The unfortunate thing, however, is that often the oppressed do not take up the challenge to resist against the evils meted to them. They seem to accept to live with the unpleasant encounters as an indelible or inevitable fact of history. Forna in reference to her father, Ibrahim and Bash Taqi puts it this way:

After they had made a decision to resign they travelled up-country to inform the local chiefs and to hold talks with the elders of the Poro society, but the news had not been entirely well received. No one voluntarily departed politics in Africa. The elders felt they had worked hard to get their men into positions of power, and the same men owed it to them to stay" (Forna, 184-185). Link

this quotation to the rest of the section through personal interpretation, before you move on to other things.

3.1.4 Space as an Agent of Women Empowerment

The Devil that Danced on the Water provides us with numerous spatial metaphors that could be analyzed from the gender perspective. There are homes, rooms, offices and social functions that call for a critical spatial analysis. According to Massey homes, boundaries and fences are symbols of safety and security. In a text the appearance of such images should be looked at critically since they are pointers of deeper gender relations. She argues that the need for the security of boundaries and the requirement for such are culturally masculine. Men were culturally portrayed to provide safety and security in the very same way walls of houses and fences to living quarters do.

In analyzing *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, this feminist adopted for rethinking the concepts of space and place. We cannot lose the fact that the majority of the physical structures mentioned in the text including homes, offices, clubs and business premises are owned and or occupied by men. The fact that men dominate the ownership of such permanent structures can be seen as the dominance of men by virtue of being more economically empowered compared to women. It therefore becomes a class issue in which women in the text are depicted to represent the downtrodden in the society while men are symbols of the powerful. Where women characters occupy, they are seen as tenants or visitors. This being a text based on a predominantly patriarchal society, the image of security represented by such structures is that male dominance over women as well as the rift in social class between the rich and the poor. The rich are in control and possess security while the poor are vulnerable and displaced. Male characters in the text wield power and control. We meet them in government housing such as the one occupied by S.I Koroma and John Bangura, they preside over courtroom such as the one presided by Judge Marcus Cole, or large companies that exploit the locals like the one owned by Mr. Tiny.

At the time Mohamed Forna is being taken to school, there is a bias favouring boys in school enrolment. The mission that admitted Mohamed had boys only. When Mohamed Forna went abroad for studies, we discover that only young men were privileged enough to pursue university education. His wife appears voiceless in this matter. It is the father who has the final say regarding this marriage. His obstinacy leads Maureen to elope and marry Mohamed Forna secretly. Through the male dominance in decision making as embodied in the character of Maureen's father we see the result being the dislocation of Maureen from her home and family.

Being a woman author, Forna has become the voice of women through her depiction of the space occupied by women. Feminists have a discomfort in traditional culture that defines how a good woman should do or behave in the society. Feminism is therefore a revolt against cultural constructions that privilege men over women. Patriarchal tendencies see men as rational, strong, protective and decisive while seeing women as emotional, nurturing and submissive Forna has debunked this notion in her creation of literary spaces that have uplifted women.

During the dark days following the arrest of Dr. Mohamed Forna the family gets support from only women. This was so because help was only sought from women but again the author uses the gesture of women helping to portray that women too have risen beyond the culture construction of belonging to the sidelines to where they too belong to the forefront Women, by being bold enough to risk victimization, is the author's portrayal of women's awakening to help fellow women against all odds in an attempt to have a just society. In the text it was a woman who accommodated the children at a time when the government was keen to destroy every member of the Forna family. It was a woman who helped them escape to London. During the trial of Dr. Forna and others, it was a female judge who offered Yabome, Dr.Forna's wife a place to rest in between the grueling court sessions. All the 'parents' occupy very distinct spaces in the lives of the children but even further the parents are symbolic of the different socio-political 'parentages' that African states have had to grapple with. Forna, in this memoir, has delved into the

historical and political landscapes of Sierra Leone by tracing the growth and development of the nation from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial era. Over this period of time, the African society has experienced slavery, colonial domination and post-independence exuberance with its attendant disillusionment. In every phase, those in power have occupied and represented spaces that have had an impact on the people in their individual capacity and as a society. Social relations have therefore been constructed within and about the existing social spaces produced by the various social systems in place.

3.1.5 Space as a Marker of Identity

The physical spaces produced and referred in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are products of human activities which involve the economic and technical realms but which extend well beyond them, for these are also political products. Politics is central in the text. It establishes who is within power structures and who is outside. Those within power also control the economy and this control is lost once power is lost. The author takes the story across Africa by situating some events in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Sierra Leone forms the bulk of the physical space in which most events take place or fail to take place. This very assignment places Sierra Leone as the stage for Africa's lived experiences ranging from colonial exploitation to poor governance and disillusionment.

The movement within the physical continent of Africa is captured in the marriage of Maureen to Winston Pratley and the eventual relocation of this new family to Nigeria. Whereas Nigeria is a differently country from Sierra Leone, we witness a startling resemblance of life in the two countries. Like in Sierra Leone, the white people in Nigeria enjoy extensive social privileges, unlike the locals. Violence and its impact are equally present. The plight of Africans is treated with disregard and abandon. The author notes:

In Lagos we were from fighting, yet the signs of war were there. The secret police dumped bodies in the sea which sometimes washed back up onto the beaches and floated into the harbor... On the weekends the sailors raced each other... During those competitions yachtsmen sometimes sailed past the nameless victims of tribal persecution with whom the police had finished. (Forna 141)

The intercontinental movements open up social spaces worth analyzing. Europe and America are mentioned through visits by some characters. For the young Mohamed Forna, his arrival in Europe opened doors for his career training and exposure. Europe offers him an opportunity to train as a doctor who would later be instrumental in helping his people. In this respect Europe becomes a social space that midwife's personnel that will work to alleviate the society's plight. Besides career training, Europe provides Forna with a platform to hone his leadership skills through student leadership. Unknown to him, these skills would see him join politics and serve as a respected brilliant government minister. The social space referred here is of European continent and society being an agent of social change in Africa through mentoring leaders.

The numerous journeys and stays in the author's childhood are similar to the many experiments new African states did in regard to power structures, foreign policies and economic models. In Sierra Leone this is seen in the frequency of regime changes and the phenomenal implications with each change. I postulate also that in the physical movement of characters, internal spaces are created to reflect the dislocation that characterizes their situation. Displacement is linked to identity and geographical spaces are also mental, psychological, and ideological spaces. It is worth noting that the author grows up in different places and with different people, including a stepfather and a stepmother at different times. This can be seen as a portrayal of the multidimensional nature of space. To the author, individual identity is as layered as the spaces characters occupy. This is well articulated in the way she has represented both her life and the life of her father. For Aminatta Forna and her father, their identities are influenced by the very many spaces they occupy. For the author, she is the last born in a family, she is a student in white dominated schools, and she is the daughter of a fugitive, a cabinet minister, a prisoner among others. As a grown up, she is the wife, the daughter of a Sierra Leonean, an African woman living in Diaspora and a professional. Her subject and her father, Dr Forna, he occupies equally diverse spaces all key fields of his identity formation.

Houses and places of abode are therefore depicted as spatial metaphors that unveil social prejudices and reflect the extent to which assumptions relating to these social constructs could be internalized and transformed into mechanisms of control of the other. On one hand the availed spaces such as prison and courtroom represent forces of repression while on the other hand the author's courage to dig for facts and tell the story, the witnesses' willingness to narrate the truth and the unwavering resilience of Yabome, Forna's wife and other women, and the university students' protests in England is a representation of the forces of resistance. The author's home in Koidu is represented in many dimensions. The home is the centre that spurred positive change and optimism that brought both political and social power to the family.

The home was also a place of misery and powerlessness. The description captures the fact that home is more than just a dwelling place. In the situation described it provided uncertainty and all the events taking place at 'home' then depicted 'homelessness'. The author's family is metonymic of many other families in Sierra Leone and indeed the entire society then. They lived in homes that gave little security and power. They were disposed and dislocated. Many embarked on the search for home, a space where they would feel secure. The author points out that "In no time at all we were back living in the uncertainty that had prevailed before the elections. The rules shifted, the security and substance vanished from our lives, as though the walls of our house had turned from concrete into paper."(97)

The physical spaces produced and referred in *The Devil that Danced on the Water* are products of human activities which involve the economic and technical realms but which extend well beyond them, for these are also political products. Politics is central in the text. It establishes who is within power structures and who is outside. Those within power also control the economy and this control is lost once power is lost. The author situates some events in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Sierra Leone forms the bulk of the physical space in which most events take place or fail to take place. This very assignment places Sierra Leone as

the stage for Africa's lived experiences ranging from colonial exploitation to poor governance and disillusionment.

There exist complex socio-political and historical tensions surrounding the valuation of Africans' spaces in national registries of historic places. The place and value of land, markets, towns and cities is downplayed and by extension downplaying the 'value' of the occupants of these spaces. In residential areas in and around cities, the value of land where the rich live is high. The value is improved by deliberate erection of social amenities and modern infrastructure. The land occupied by the poor, even when it is right in the neighborhood of the rich, is valued lowly. The low value is attributed to lack of basic amenities and congestion. Invaluing the poor men's dwellings, one can only see the devaluing of the people who occupy such dwellings. Such valuations effectively draw hierarchies in power relation.

People who dutifully served their government and sacrificed their time and resources are seen in the memoir as being victimized once the leaders have ascended to power. They live in deplorable conditions without the very basic amenities for survival and without hope of ever rising. Buildings that previously represented comfort and homeliness now are artifacts that document the years of suffering and despondency. In this regard, the razing down of buildings that once showcased stability and progress in a new nation is more than just the effects of the ravages of war but also the devoicing and isolation of perceived opponents who were previously partners. This eviction effectively renders the masses powerless and so subordinate to the ruling class. Without homes and businesses they live at the mercy of the ruling elite. In the memoir, we encounter the attack on a building that housed *Freedom* newspaper. The newspaper, being independent in philosophy and practice, was the voice of the people. It informed and educated. The government officials however were uncomfortable with this. Apparently at the orders of the Prime Minister, the demolition was done. When herfather resigned, the author has this to say, "Our father had left the house as SiakaStevens's most senior minister; by the time he came home he was the government's leading adversary. And by bed time we couldn't even call the house home anymore because

it didn't belong to us_it belonged to the government" (183). This situation depicts how space is used in 'othering' those considered opponents.

3.1.6 Space as an Agent of Discrimination

The racial discourse in this proposed marriage between Mohamed Forna and Maureen Christine is a representation of the racism existing among the whites against the blacks too general. The colour of one's skin becomes a hindrance to accessing many things in life. In the same manner Dr. Forna confidently faces Maureen's father to ask for his blessings in marriage. This could be viewed as akin to efforts by people of colour to reach out to whites with an intention of living as equals. Mr. Christison categorically declines to accept Mohamed Forna's request for marriage ambiguous, recast for clarity. This rejected request leads to Maureen's dislocation from her family. Her relationship with her father is permanently ruined. She becomes a pariah to her people and struggles to get assimilated among blacks. Once settled in Africa, she is treated with mixed reactions. On one hand she is treated with deference while being discriminated against on the other. The author says:

In Sierra Leone, my mother's white skin earned her deference and contempt in equal measure. The poor people looked up to her, for she was educated and white. But there was no place for a woman like her among her own people: a woman who had chosen a black husband and birthed black babies. (147)

Maureen Margaret Christison's may have been rejected by fellow whites back in Scotland but once settled in Africa she easily gets a job at a car dealer chiefly because of her skin colour. She also patronizes a whites-only club that does not admit blacks. A club here can be viewed as a social space. Those who afford the luxury of patronizing a members-only club are people of means. In this text only the whites are people of means not true. Think of the political elites like Stevens. They enjoy privileges that local people do not and are unwilling to admit the blacks into their social circles. It should be noted that this is happening on African soil, a place is where blacks are dislocated from accessing social privileges.

Maureen later divorces Forna and marries a fellow white man is she a white man?who is working in Nigeria at the time. Whereas Dr. Forna's failures may have played the biggest role in the disintegration of their marriage, one cannot help but note that for Maureen the divorce gave her an opportunity to marry a white man. This would probably create her chances of being fully readmitted into the whites only social circles she once lost by marrying Dr. Forna, a black. This possibility could find strength in the fact that when Dr. Forna goes for the children in Nigeria, she does not appear to put up a fight for their custody. This racial space that she occupies henceforth dislocates her from her family and she does not feature in the story any further.

It is quite common for people to zone settlements. This practice of zoning of settlements is a power relational construction. It is power arithmetic common but not limited to modern African states. James Tyner in "Urban Revolutions and the Spaces of Black Radicalism," (229) shows how practices such as zoning and limited public transportation created a type of legal segregation that also restricted the social and economic opportunities of poor Blacks in the US. Closer home, zoning is done through skewed allocation of resources. Cities such as Freetown have proper infrastructure, hospitals and schools. Rural areas such as Magburaka and Koidu have little or none of these. The situation is further compounded by the perennial insurgence in these areas. One cannot help but notice the stagnation of life in rural areas with ruins and the stench of death everywhere. The city is however vibrant with people enjoying drinks in exclusive clubs and beaches. There is no economic mobility in the marginalized rural for the zones lack markets and job opportunities. Mohamed Forna only has the option of starting a business in the city where his life is clearly in danger and those in power do not want him there since opportunities of business are only limited to cities. He is expected to act as per the wishes of those in power lest his business fails to take off. Those in power on the other hand are determined to frustrate him since by impoverishing him he remains powerless and will not pose any political threat. They end up watching over his office and premises and use some of the findings to falsely accuse him of trying to stage a coup.

Zoning goes beyond settlements and encompasses other social demographics. In the text, tribal zoning is exercised and a means of ascending to power and creating divisions among people in order to thrive in power. It is a case of divide and rule. Some communities would feel secure when recognized as supporters of particular leaders. Leaders also feel powerful when they have the backing of such social groups. Siaka Stevens's politics for instance relied on tribal zoning. Considering the African set up is such that tribal groups live predominantly in the same geographical space, his power bases were located in and sustained by such spaces. Those regions that supported him belonged while other regions existed outside the periphery of power. Aminatta Forna points out how Siaka Stevens ended zoning some regions in his country as his fortes by virtue of the support he received from there while regions that deemed opposition zones he considered differently. Forna states, "Stevens owed his election to the northern vote and he knew it, for he possessed an instinctive understanding of tribal politics. (Forna, 173) Using tribal zoning, he was able to consolidate power and manipulate others hence remaining the sole center of power. Those who pleased him shared in the power while those he viewed as dissidents were marginalized.

3.1.7 Space as an Index of Power

It must be noted that the author Aminatta Forna has set out to tell her father's story but she ends not just telling that story but also the biography of an event, a people and a place.. Power relations in this chapter will be viewed from both the political and the economic angle. In this section I reiterate the central role of space in human behaviour.

Aminatta Forna uses geographical locations to credibly present the existing power relations. An analysis of the text reveals that the different places people live or operate from are depictions of power establishments. These places may include bushes or forests, roads, homes, and cities. Further the book takes us beyond the political boundaries of Sierra Leone as a country and Africa as a continent. All these places and locations have power ramifications. Some are hierarchal in relations as in the case where Europe and America in the text are portrayed as privileged through their physical organization, the

convenience of their infrastructure and the comfort of their dwelling buildings. Equally, these locations are privileged from the fact that it is here Africans go to seek better education, refuge from political intolerance back home, and generally better life.

The movement of people from rural Sierra Leone is symbolic of mobility in power. The rural areas are places where the powerless live. All government installations are centered in the cities. Even when a political leader is elected to represent a rural constituency, they work, live in and serve from the city. Those who gain economic prosperity also leave the villages and settle in the city. Some find it hard to return to the village even when fortunes change and the city no longer accommodates them. Equally the villages could be viewed as a representation of the past while the city symbolizes the present and prospects of the future. Viewed this way, these two are in opposition. The past for Sierra Leone includes the slave history and the colonial era while the present is the post-colonial experiences.

The author's juxtaposition of events in the rural Sierra Leone and the urban life of Freetown foreground this historical journey. In analyzing white narratives from Zimbabwe, Cuthbert Tagwirei posits that "the past and the present appear incommensurate but nevertheless coeval" (9). In Sierra Leone, like any other former colony, the colonial past exists alongside the post colonial present. Most of the leaders who took over from the colonizers ended up being as ruthless and oppressive as the colonizer. The past therefore inhabits the present. Siaka Stevens was such an effective trade unionist advocating for the rights of workers. The Africans had a lot of faith in him which saw him easily ascend to power. His ascension however brought disillusionment in that the expectation of him being a servant leader was soon met with shock. The outcome of all this is mistrust among people thus the basis for violence.

In *The Devil that Danced on the Water* we witness many decisions made by those in power that end up alienating people from their government. In the text there is clear spatial segregation based on class, status and regions that accentuates social stigma and isolation. When Mohamed Forna is in good terms with

President Siaka Stevens, he is given a posh government house and guards to protect him although he really does not need protection. He is actually left in charge of the country whenever the president travels abroad. The moment this close relationship is severed, the Fornas instantly change to pariahs. The author writes:

In public Stevens lavished praise on his brilliant young minister, treated him as a protégé and honoured him as his right-hand man, leaving him as acting prime minister...At the same time and in private the Pa undermined his finance minister constantly. (Forna 169)

In the context of *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, the subjugation of the ruled by the rulers is visibly clear. The oppressed view themselves as powerless victims who live at the mercy of their oppressor. Dr. Mohamed Forna, after leaving prison, assured President Siaka Stevens that he had shelved political ambitions permanently and was actually settling as a businessman. Mohamed, the amputee beggar, was arguably contented that his begging was generating enough alms to keep his young family surviving. Many of the witnesses in the trial of Mohamed Forna and others as well as their families had accepted their marginal position in terms of power.

The re-emergence of Aminatta Forna twenty five years after the death of her father is a symbolic resurrection of that same father and by extension what he stood for. In equal measure, her reappearance and endeavour to dig into the archives of injustice and retrieve the truth is a re-imagination of the rightful power position of the oppressed. The author is actually debunking the normalization of power subjugation where the oppressed are meant to accept their situation and live with it. By writing this memoir, the author is actually re-inventing the voice of the oppressed by making a statement that space has transference and is temporary. Those who live outside the periphery of space can tomorrow occupy the centrality of power. Using the space he occupied first as a premier and later as the president, Stevens set out to destroy his political enemies. Villa Andre in Conakry and the State House in Freetown are metaphoric of places of vengeance in both planning and execution. The author brings this out when she

says: “By the time Siaka Stevens ascended to the premiership of Sierra Leone he was riven with grudges, scored as deeply into his soul as fresh tribal marks on an infant’s face. In the luxury of the Villa Andre in Conakry...there was plenty of time to brood. His list of enemies was long.” (Forna, 165)

The author captures the extent of negative power machinations as being more of an African problem than a Sierra Leonean when she states: “Nkrumah was the first African leader to take his country down the path to becoming a single-party state...soon African leaders by the score were following Nkrumah’s lead”(69). The intolerance to political competition through enactment of laws limiting political space can be likened to the amputation of people in order to disable them.

The significance of economic social spaces is not lost in Forna’s memoir. The Africans in Sierra Leone have lost their land to greedy foreign companies that indiscriminately exploit their mineral resources not for the benefit of the locals but for themselves. This mining becomes connected to politics as expressed by the author. She says the company mining diamonds operated with impunity. They destroyed the landscape and were extravagant. There were no benefits for the locals. Illegal mining became rampant yet the government did little to curb it. Economic exploitation led to economic dislocation. She says:

...they were attracted for the same reasons as the slaving ships two hundred years before to Freetown’s deep natural harbor. Men from the protectorate were recruited to fill the demand for cheap labour, including many from Mamunta....There was an even greater demand for produce for export and yet the prices offer double-check the accuracy of this by the colonial rulers never improved. With the extra hands gone from the fields, life grew hard for everyone in the villages. (Forna, 63).

The economic exploitation was to be felt even later when Sierra Leone was independent. As many students flew to Europe for studies, they were forced to work in factories, slept in crowded dormitories and had little income to make them live dignified lives. The author even mentions the harsh winter in

Europe that was hostile to the African students. Here weather represents the reality of social isolation of Africans from integration in Europe. So much is this impossibility of integration that the author noted her European teacher and fellow students did not care to distinguish Sierra Leone from Sri Lanka. People of African origin felt estranged while living in Europe. The author says, “She acted as though she were deaf...a poor African woman, away from her people, alone in a foreign country” (229).

3.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored how the author has used space to bring out the themes in the text. The experiences of the people of Sierra Leone manifest the shared lived experiences of people elsewhere in post-colonial Africa. Space and themes have multilayered relationships in *The Devil that Danced on the Waters* since space act as indices of power, of geography, and of identity. Spaces are also sites for narration of history in as far as it relates to the time the memoir is set. In this chapter we have been able to conceptualize space as a site for the narration of violence and trauma. Space has been perceived in the light of being the centre for familial relations and how these relations are metonymic of the nation’s experiences and consciousness.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.0 Summary

This project set out to critique the use of space in Aminatta Forna's *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. We have explored this subject by dividing the work into chapters with each chapter being dedicated to a particular aspect of the research.

In Chapter one, we have established the background of the study. In this background we spelt out the objectives of the study where my aim was to identify and then explain the author's use of space in characterization. Further, we sought to examine the relationship between space and the themes in the memoir. To achieve my objectives, we carried out a literature review that purposed to provide a contextual background for this research. A theoretical framework was established theorization of space and the post-colonial literature was examined. In the chapter, the scope and limitation as well as the justification for the study were duly established.

Chapter Two was dedicated to the identification of spatial manifestations in the text and then an explanation of the author's use of space in characterization. This chapter delved into the role of space in human relations as portrayed in the text by the interactions among characters and within the psyches of individual characters. The role of space was explored in analyzing their growth and development as well their attempts at self-configuration and identity formation. The fields of identity formation and the spaces occupied including the boundaries thus established by the spaces were tackled in this chapter.

Chapter Three shifted focus to the author's treatment of the lived experiences of the society or societies represented in the text through an exploration of the most outstanding themes and their nexus to space. It was established that geographical spaces are also psychological and ideological. As such human are products of the spaces they occupy on the one hand and producers of such spaces on the spaces on the

other. Sierra Leone was explored in this chapter as a metonymy of reality of life among African states after independence. The shaping of the contours of a new nation was conceptualized, contextualized and problematized in its bearing on the role of space in this discourse.

4.1 Conclusions

In conclusion, this monograph should be perceived a critical study of Aminatta Forna's memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water* with a focus on the author's use of space a narrative strategy in the story. Space is often an area ignored or unacknowledged despite being a crucial platform for literary analysis. This study is an attempt at re-energizing our appreciation of spatiality and stimulation of fresh modes of reasoning and acting in regards to the spaces encountered in texts. This is not an attempt at providing a substitute for or alternative to perception to literary discourses but on the contrary to amplify and extend spatial awareness and practices in critical literary studies. The study promises the viable possibility that an assertive spatial perspective using approaches that have been largely neglected could very well open up new sources of insights and innovative theoretical applications. Space and human life have a mutually influential relation in which each shapes the other in similar ways. Space is an active player in generating and sustaining human actions and relations.

Aminatta Forna has effectively used space to display its critical role in the historical and political spheres of Sierra Leone. She has succeeded in bridging the often elusive rift between geography and history, space and time. She has engaged the reader in an exploration of human actions and behaviour across three main historical eras in Africa namely the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial. Through the journey across the different time frames, the author has engaged the reader in an appreciation of the role of space in the society.

The book has examined the inevitable connections between space and events. Space in its manifestations in the text is multilayered and one form will keep overlapping with the other in a never-ending continuum. Events in a smaller location such a family home may be representative of the happenings in a country or even the entire continent. In similar fashion, an individual occupying a particular space may be the embodiment of a nation or an ideology held by a nation. A movement that may not be seen as significant may actually be pointing to broader operations and attendant ramifications.

Space is not a receptacle where things are contained and retrieved at will. Conversely, things happen to space and in space. Space fashions relations and influences them. It is shaped by humans who can both control it as well as get controlled by it. In the case of Sierra Leone, we see the ruled occupying spaces they participated in creating but also they were made to occupy. Individuals and agencies subdue space and establish hegemony but again the same spaces take charge of their actions and behavior by practicing dominion over them.

In post-colonial societies, space defines limits and freedoms. It establishes boundaries and sustains them often shifting them intermittently. Spaces and boundaries thus established, they demarcate who and what belongs and does not belong. There is centrality versus marginality at all levels of engagement including the social, the economic and the political. What is perceived to exist in the periphery at some point may very well be the pillar of centrality at another time. Similarly what is inside may later be alien.

All that we perceive as social inherently comprise the spatial. Similarly, everything spatial in the human world is inherently socialized. These relations exist simultaneously. Being the case one cannot divorce the event from its location. All locations have a significant bearing in the interpretation of what takes place in them.

This study has successfully demonstrated that Aminatta Forna in writing *The Devil that Danced on the Water* has elaborately explored the role of space in the shaping of human relations and determination of lived experiences in the human world. The author has formulated literary spaces to explore themes and characters in her memoir and by so doing tell her own story, her father's biography and the biography of an event. She has given a personal account different from the old story yet another failed African state since in her use of space she has presaged the realization of reconciliation and recovery by imagining the existence of a new nation borne of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Space is a viable and broad area for research. As a matter of fact this study did not even exhaust the subject of space in this particular memoir and further research could be done in areas not ventured including symbolism and mapping.

Further research may be appropriate especially in giving a comparative analysis on the effectiveness of the use of space in Aminatta Forna's works. One could also consider giving a comparative study of prominent memoirs of trauma by women writers such as Nega Mezlekia's *Notes from the Hyena's Belly* about Ethiopia and Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*, about South Africa.

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