ABSTRACT

**DISSERTATION:** The Spaces of Sex: Perversion, Performance, and Place in Literature between the Wars

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“The Spaces of Sex” examines the ways that space, defined by Henri Lefebvre as a theoretical and socially constructed concept, both produces and restricts characters’ expressions of sexuality. “Spaces of Sex” pursues these issues through close readings of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*, William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, Jean Toomer’s *Cane*, Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*, and Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*. Drawing on Lefebvre and Foucault, this project seeks to examine the ways that space collides with cultural expectations to produce characters whose spatial performances are marked as incorrect, out of place, and ultimately perverse. Each chapter includes historical and social background to culturally frame extensive close readings within a specific 14-year span (1922-1936) of the inter-war period, when public knowledge of sexual perversion and deviance (taken from popular psychoanalytic writings) had reached a peak, infiltrating middle-class home spaces with potentially threatening and transgressive knowledge of sexual deviance.