

“I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy” - Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael: A Study of Melville* (1947).

Discuss the importance of space in one or more texts from the module.

In order to iterate its importance, it is crucial to clarify what one means by “space”. I would define space as far more than simply an area and its dimensions, a view that is conveniently demonstrated with the quote above. Charles Olson refers to Folsom cave, a vast open quarry on the outskirts of Folsom, New Mexico. In 1927, a flint spearpoint and the bones of an extinct bison were discovered on the site, which pushed back the estimated date of human habitation on the continent by 10,000 years. It is through this reference that, I believe, Olson draws our attention to elements of space that are often overlooked: what it preserves, contains and displaces; how it is inhabited, protected and interacted with. It is for this reason that space is “the central fact to man born in America” and in turn, central to the American novel. Willa Cather’s *The Professor’s House* is certainly a product of the space from which it evolved; America’s post World War One attitude of displacement and protectiveness is prevalent throughout the novel, shaping the fictional literary space and how spaces within *The Professor’s House* are perceived by the reader. It is this idea that I’d like to explore; not just the fictional spaces that are created within the text, but also how they shape the characters, atmosphere and interactions within them.

Perhaps the most important function of space in *The Professor’s House* is its relationship with the temporal. To quote Samuel Alexander’s *Space, Time and Deity*, “Space is in its very nature temporal and Time spatial”. Gullón explores this idea further in his journal *On Space in the Novel*, identifying that “intemporalised, space would lack any distinguishable elements. Space, moreover is