

Victoria Chandler

English – English & American Literature

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

Spatial Rebellions: Power and the Orientations of Resistance

Dissertation Abstract:

This project examines American literature across the twentieth century that represents marginalized groups seeking the means to resist dominant powers that repress their desire and their movement. Spatial geography and domination are inextricable in these texts. Desire and power are expressed spatially in the architecture of cities, the structure of houses and exterior space, and even in interior design. These configurations become insidious insofar as power becomes so codified into spatial forms that its operations can be taken for granted. Domination asserts its power in violent ways, but these violences often go overlooked. This dissertation aims to "see" these systems of violence that often go unseen. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, I demonstrate how dominant powers compel bodies that deviate from proper behavior, and desire that diverges from the straight line, back in line through coercive force. The novels I examine concern women writers at the turn of the twentieth century who imagine the spatial dimensions of patriarchal domination and the micropaths of subversion or resistance to power, queer people challenging heteronormative pressures to straighten out their desire and align their physical movements with domestic propriety, and black women resisting white supremacy by cultivating communal spaces free from racial oppression. These transgressors either defy traditional forms of intimacy and community, or simply seek to establish alternative means of being at home in the world.