

BETWEEN THE HORNY AND HOLY:
WOMANIST SEXUAL ETHICS AND THE
CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS OF *NO MORE SHEETS*

BY

MONIQUE NICOLE MOULTRIE

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

May 2010

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

Professor Victor Anderson

Professor Linda Thomas

Professor Fernando Segovia

Professor Melissa Snarr

Professor Lewis Baldwin

Copyright © 2010 by Monique Moultrie
All Rights Reserved

To my mother, Mildred Crews Carter, whose spirit of perseverance and generosity I seek to follow

and

To my life partner, Eugene James Se'Bree, who shows me daily the Divine's tangible presence in my life. I am forever grateful for your love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bringing this project to completion was truly a collaborative effort. I want to specifically thank several funders whose financial support over the years has encouraged me. The Fund for Theological Education has constantly believed in the merit of my project. Sharon and Walter Fluker are unwavering reminders of the generosity of the saints! Sharon, you are truly how I got over! I am also indebted to the Roothbert Fund whose fellowship and mentoring was just as beneficial as the monetary support. I am ever so grateful for the Southern Regional Education Board whose dissertation fellowship has provided me support for my final year. I am thankful for the financial support but also the opportunities to be a part of a larger network. Finally, I am thankful for the generous support of Vanderbilt University that has funded my degree, sent me to conferences, and provided me with university-wide opportunities.

Having thanked all the ones that funded this opportunity, I now thank my extraordinary committee. Endless thanks to my dissertation adviser, Victor Anderson. I am appreciative of your guidance, knowledge, and model for teaching. You are a remarkable professor that reminds me that our ethical work must teach others to thrive not just survive. In my scholarship and life, I will continue to strive for the righteous boldness that you display. Thank you to Linda Thomas, whose model of womanist scholarship I attempt to emulate. The time you have poured into me will not be in vain. I appreciate your efforts and will pay it forward. Thank you to Fernando Segovia whose Latin American Theology course connected me to the global struggles of women for sexual justice. You have been a joy to work with. To Lewis Baldwin, thank you for the early formation of my teaching career. Your skillful lecturers are my standard for teaching, and I am so appreciative for your presence and wisdom on my committee. Finally, many thanks to Melissa Snarr whose Feminist Theological Ethics course continues to push me to make my principles

practical. I strive to enact the models of scholarship and mentoring presented by my entire committee, and I am ever appreciative of their insights on my project.

To my community of scholars and activists, I am also thankful. I have had several mentors along the way that have helped me enormously in the journey into the academy. I am especially thankful for the wisdom of Sue Houchins and Bernadette Brooten who have each enthusiastically supported my endeavors. When I arrived to Vanderbilt I gained another community of scholars and future colleagues. Whether gathering as PhDivas or Gents, our time together was essential to keeping me sane and willing to press on. For each moment of insight I am thankful. To my cohort of Natasha Coby and Kevin York-Simmons, I was glad to have served in the struggle with each of you. To my sister-friends, Amy Steele, Kimberly Peeler-Ringer, Keri Day, Tamura Lomax, Kimberly Russaw, Tamara Lewis, Angela Cowser, Iler Bradley, Lisa Thompson, Bridgett Green, and Febbie Dickerson each of you has given me reasons to laugh and thus continue journeying through the degree. You have critiqued my work, offered your varied perspectives, and taught me that the academy is about the community that you trust to hear your voice. To my brothers, Charles Bowie, Christophe Ringer, Brandon McCormack, TL Gray, Asante Todd, and Arthur Carter, your male perspectives have been vital to the formulation of my project. Along the way, I've made friends outside of my immediate community, and I'm thankful for Ipsita Chatterjea, Alyson Dickson, Klem-Mari Cajigas, Andrea Tucker, Albert Smith, Asha Hunter, Haywood Harvey, and Lynda Jordan. They have brought me laughter, perspective, and joy. Thanks for always being around! Finally, to my FTE friends, Kamasi Hill, Almeda Wright, and James Logan, we've got to write a book together! Whether playing Spades or discussing our work, we have always had good times. As a whole, my friends

have been my community of support and strength, and I wish I could offer more than a simple thank you.

I also must acknowledge my forever friends, those persons for whom I can't imagine going weeks without speaking to or hearing from. Ayana Burnett, my soror and confidant has always reminded me of my worth and my wise mind. These comforts do not go unnoticed. Melissa Hackman is my sister from another mother. I could not imagine Harvard without you, and there has not been a step in the doctoral program that you have not been there. I value your friendship as much as this degree. To Nichole Phillips, you've given me rides, listened to me at odd hours of night, taught me to laugh at myself and life, prayed with me and for me, and encouraged me throughout the journey. Your presence in this program has been salvific for me. I can't wait to celebrate with you next year! We have a vacation to plan!

I conclude with thanking my family for their years of sacrifice for me. Yes, mom I am finally done, and I'm not quite ready to collect Social Security! My mother, Mildred Carter raised me in a home of love and has always shown me that she believes in me and saw purpose in my life when I could not imagine it. Your faith showed me that Christians should wrestle with beliefs that did not serve their needs. My father, Thomas Carter had a quiet pride in my accomplishments that he showed in extra Hardee biscuits as he drove me early in the morning to catch the bus for the community college. Those early mornings full of silence, food, and an occasional stern reminder that school was important are golden memories. My aunts and uncles' support has been endless, whether financial, emotional, or comical, as you have each reminded me not to take myself so seriously! To my uncle Bobby, your life and untimely death were markers in my consciousness and remind me that our time is fleeting to be the change agents needed in the world. As the first person to receive a graduate degree in my family, you all have

reminded me that my work matters and that my voice is needed in this world. To my Nashville family, the Eppersons and Chargoises, I thank you for understanding my absence at functions so that I could get this degree done! You all embraced me immediately, and I have always felt the love and support.

I have saved the best for last! To my beloved partner, Rev. Eugene James Se'Bree, you were often my strongest and most vocal support during this project. From comprehensive exams to every draft of this dissertation, there is not an idea present that I didn't discuss with you first. You have patience beyond measure as you have dealt with postponed plans, vacations, and my moodiness so that I could see this project to completion. Through every struggle, hurt feeling, and joy you are my abiding love and for that I am eternally grateful. As my partner, best friend, keeper of my secrets and aspirations, this dissertation would never have been completed without your steady encouragement and loving chastisements. I promise you the Snuggie helped me make it through the last stages of this work! Truthfully, I can say without the Lord and Bre on my side I am not sure where I would be! I appreciate you for your generous spirit, keen insight, and most of all for your love. May J'ioni and Chandler understand our sacrifices, and may this project offer them an alternative to struggles with their sexuality and their faith.