



BECOMING A THIRD, MUCH GREATER THING:
THE INTERTWINING OF HORSE AND RIDER

By

ALLISON NICOLE SCHULTZ

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Lynn Ross-Bryant

Sam Gill

Loriliai Biernacki

Date_____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Schultz, Allison Nicole (M.A., Religious Studies)

Becoming a Third, Much Greater Thing: The intertwining of horse and rider

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The beauty of horses is their sensitivity to an unspoken language of the body. As two moving bodies, coupled together horse and rider connect through touch and feel on the surface of the skin to the feeling inside, and become more than just one horse and one rider. This feeling of unity is part of the mystery and myth surrounding the rider and the horse. This dynamic connection between horse and rider is one venue to explore human and animal interrelationships with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Flesh Ontology*, along with western thinkers on horsemanship. The interrelationship between horse and rider is a synergetic partnership in the sense that they become "a third much greater thing" (Tom McGuane, *Some Horses*), in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. As companion species, two species in companionship, the horse and rider communicate through body and species barriers to become a harmonious couple under saddle. All communication is through the flesh, between bodies, depending much on 'feel,' both literally and in the depth of context. That feeling is often described by riders as being and becoming one with the horse, a feeling that is as fleshy as it is emotional and hard to describe with words, as it is the feeling of communication and exchanging self information via the flesh and the sensory.

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“I know not what it is, but with gratitude, my tears fall.”

J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*

“Each memory that has left its trace with me, lingers forever, as if part of me.”

Nizami, *The Story of Layla and Majnun*



Norman, 1996

D e d i c a t i o n (s)

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"In the oldest religion, everything was alive, not supernaturally but naturally alive...For the whole life-effort of man was to get his life into contact with the elemental life in the cosmos, mountain-life, cloud-life, thunder-life, air-life, earth-life, sun-life. To come into immediate felt contact, and so derive energy, power and a dark sort of joy. This effort into sheer naked contact, without an intermediary or mediator is the root meaning of religion."

D.H. Lawrence

