Ashley Wells Publishes "The Cowgirl and the Racehorse"

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Ashley Wells, who recently joined the USU Department of English as a Lecturer, has just published *The Cowgirl and the Racehorse*, with Lantern Publishing. This scholarly memoir explores cowgirl stories, gender, the whitewashing of the West, and power, as Wells weaves personal narrative into an investigation of the world of horseracing. The book opens with the description of a traumatic horse-riding incident that provides an opportunity for the author to reflect on the personalities of the horses, both real and fictional, who have accompanied her through difficulties, teaching her strength, resilience, discipline, care, and trust. This story is presented alongside a cultural study of cowgirl narratives in films, television shows, music, and books. Though accessible to a wide audience, Well's book presents an especially compelling narrative for girls who find inspiration and complication in the history of horse care and horseback riding. As the stories and images mark the author’s life passages, they provide a way for young female readers to explore their own independence of spirit and the social and familial expectations with which they are burdened. *The Cowgirl and The Racehorse* is also a detailed examination of the ethical and societal questions raised by the sometimes dangerous and cruel, and sometimes seductive and compelling, world of horseback riding. More than just a hobby, *The Cowgirl and the Racehorse* shows, horseback riding represents a profound relationship between humans and nature that provides insights into many facets of our lives.

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