"The Weight of Dreams," by Jonis Ages (Viking, \$24.95).

Jonis Ager (Viking, \$24.95).

If you enjoy novels like "The Horse Whisperer or you may find "The Weight of Dreams" to your liking, too. Former Michiganian, Jonis Agee, where you have a sepacks. In fact, Agee's equine chearacters sometimes take on more convincing life than to the human characters in this contemporary drams.

Obviously, though, Agee intends for "The Weight of Dreams" to be something more than a story about horses. She writing here of human frailties and relationships, and at the heart of the action is yet another highly dysfunctional American family.

This one is headed by Nebrast concluse Ruder Earle a hard-

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artistic expression, and as a tool for influencing public opinion.
The book lists at \$40, or \$28 through the Interpret at Amazon.com or barnessandnoble. com The producer of the show was an academic from Carleton College in Minnesota, John Schott, who grew up in Howell and studied art history at the University of Michigan. The show and book used sever-

with Ty. There's the crooked horse trader. There's the taci-turn Native American. There use mindless lunkheads specializing in "dirty work." Ty himself grows alightly tiresome, what with his repeated brawling and booring and his tendency to hold his cards exceedingly close to his chost.

become involved his story. There, among the Nebranka Sandhille, he struggles to meintain the family rauch and gain the love of his parents, whose own terrible loss and pain may have permaneanty obliterated their capacity for love.

One morning, Ty rides out alone to try to receive what is left of a stranded cattle hard after a bitizzard. What he finds comprises one of the strongest scenes in the novel and, thanks to Agoe's way with words, we feel almost as if we are along when he makes a grisly discovery:

"One call had been strangled in the fence, its tongue hangled in a pink typ tetal. The streams of blood had frozen in long ribbons unapooling into the snow. An old., cow. had been crushed into the corner, her. .eyes forcen open in a sheath of ice, lips rimed white. her hely had. ripped. The . bloody intestine ropes and spilling stomachs draped the wire." cards exceedingly close to his chost.

The plot grows weedy with conreaders may find themselves a 
little dizziod, trying to remember 
just who did what to whom, and 
when, and where, and why. 
Agee's romantic scenes seem a 
little tired and trite and frayed 
around the edges. There are odd 
bits of repetition scattered 
throughout the book that don't 
enhance the story or the characters.

throughout the book that don't enhance has story or the characters.

These people watch each other aleep a lot. To avoid unpleasant odors, they repeatedly breathe through their mouth, which causes them to ultimately "taste" the odor (why do we need to be told this more than once?). Dukota sniffles so much you'd sort of like to give her face a smack.

To further detract from "The Weight of Dreems," Agee's concluding scenes (especially one involving an airplane crash) are so unconvincing they hardly seem to belong in this story. Agee's novel, "South of Keeursection," was reviewed in this column on its publication two years ago. At the time, it was lavishly praised for her indelible depiction of its setting, the Missouri Ozarks.

She deserves the same special kind of applause here for the way she brings the fierce beauty of the Nebraska Sandhills to these pages.

When it comes to backdrops, this is an author who definitely has the touch.

## The. .bloody intestine ropes and spilling stomachs draped the wire. This is certainly no pretty picture, but it is powerful prose. And together with Agee's exquisitely-perceptive portrait of a boy in pain, her use of the language makes this book's opening section - fittled "Chasing the Lightning" - Into something highly special, almost breathtaking in intensity. Then, the novel takes a peculiar turn, and begins to lose some of its footing. In the following sections, set some 20-plus years after the first, Agee's characters sort of slip in and out of that originally engaging dimensionality. Sometimes, we feel as if we've been left with a collection of rather blurry types that we've met too many times before on other pages in other tales. There's the feisty horsewoman named Dakota who hitches up heart of the action is yet another highly dysfunctional American family. This one is headed by Nébraska rancher, Ryder Bonte, a hard-drinking, hard-bitten son-of-agun marked by a tattoe that resembles "a sick lizard". Ty Bonte, the leading player in the story, is his ampuished, surviving son. (A gentler, younger son, Roonie, has died before the story begins in a horrific tractor accident.) Ryder's wife, Muriel, lives in town with their daughter, Charle, who plays such a tiny role we're mystified as to why Agee included her in the first place. "The Weight of Dreams' begins with exceptional promise. Agee paints such a luminous portrait of the lonely seventeen-year-old Ty that we immediately want to reach out to him or to Book complements PBS photos

overcomes flaws in 'Dreams'

Wondrous sense of place

A new book of notable images has been released in conjunction with a Public Broadcasting Corp. three-hour show on this century's photography being broadcast at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 13.

"American Photography: A Century of Images" tracks the "picture culture" of this century from 1900s through to today, looking at still pictures as a record of public events, as an outlet for

of Michigan.

The show and book used several easily accessible sources for

historic photos:
The Library of Congress has extensive historic images (American Memory collections) at leweb2.loc.gov/ammem.
The National Portrait Gallery

The Smithsonian home page for photography is photo2 si edu The National Archives can be

accessed at www.nara.gov
The Daguerrean Society is at
www.daguerre.org/home

## BOOK HAPPENINGS

Book Happenings features events at suburbon bookstores, libraries and literary gatherings. Send news leads to Kaely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (734) 691-7279 or — mail to kuygonik@ ac. honecomm.net 8000 Spating.

BOOK SIANING
Farmington Observer reporter and
Livonia resident Tim Smith will eign
copies of his new book, "Miracle
Bith Stories of Yery Pramature
Bables – Little Thumbs Upt"
Bhursday, Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m.,
Barnos and Nobie Booksellers, Hall
Road, Shelby Township.
Bi Thursday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m.
Borders, Auburn Hills,
Beaturdew, Oct. 30, 5 p.m.
Borders, Auburn Hills,

III Thursday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m. Borders, Auburn Hills.

III Saturday, Oct. 30, 1 p.m., Waldenbooks, Lakeside Mall, Starling Heights.

Smith can be contacted directly at (248) 477-5450.

MEET THE AUTHORS:
Author Iris Johansen will make a short yisit to the Books
Connection of Livonia on Monday, Oct. 11, Johansen, who has more than 12 million copies of more than 26 novels in print, has again made the New York Times best-celler lift with her ouspones thriller, 7 the Killing Game." Books Connection, instruer in the sale of new, used and rare collectible books, is located at 19043
Middlebott in the Mid-7 Plaza at the corner of Sevan Mile Road, Johansen will appear at the store to sign copies of her books starting at 4 p.m.

to sign copies of her books starting at 4 p.m.
Local suther Stophanie Mellen — who has written on phildren's, humor and self-help topies — will make an appearance at Waldenbooks & More; 30200 Plymouth in Livenie, 7-6 p.m.
Thursdey, Oct. 34. Among Mellen's works are "A Baar in the Chair,"
"The Golden Angel" and "God Doesn't Lawer the Tollet Seet Up—Why Should She?" Call (734) 281-

7811 for information. Author, professor, scholar and ordained Baptist minister Dr. ordained Baptist minister Dr. Michael Eric Dyson returns to his hometown for a free public lecture and book signing at Mengrove College in Detroit. Described as a "street fighter in a suit and tie," Dyson is one of the leading African-American voices of our day. Dyson has written many acclaimed books and made numerous network television appearages. Purson will lecvision appearances. Dyson will lec

ture at Marygrove, 8425 W, McNichols, at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 15, then sign copies of his books. Call (313) 927-1200 for informe-

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USED BOOK SALE

The Familiation Players will hold a used book sale featuring poperbacks and hardcovers on a wird variety of titles and subjects.

\*\*Corne do some aarty Christmes shopping. The event is set for 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 16, at 37332 W. 12 Mile Road, Call (248) 583-3925 for information.

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Tuesdey, Oct. 12, at 1524
Rackham Building (915 E,
Washington) in Ann Afbor, All seesions are free and open to the public. Distinguished U-M professors will discuss all aspects of the memoir, including the genre's future and the responsibilities of the memoirist. Sessions run on successive Tuesdays. Call (1734) 936-3518 for information.

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take piace the following Tuesdays:

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© Cct. 26: Beans of Egypt, Maine
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All programs begin at 7 p.m. The
Carl Sandburg Library is et 30100
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The Southfield Public Library presents author Dr. Ray Kamool in a
discussion of his book "Ancient
and Modern Cheldean History: A
Comprehensive Bibliography of
Sources." This book by the
Southfield resident and Chaldean
history expert will be a valuable
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The Jewish Community Center will hold its annual Jewish book fair Nov. 6-14. Included in the event is the authors mini/sir 11 s.m. to 4 p.m, Sunday, Nov. 7, The fair will take place at the center's facilities take place at the center's facilitie in West Bloomfield and in Oak Park. More than 30 speakers will appear, and entertainment will be provided (both free), Call the center for details, (248) 651-7648.