

THE WEEK

NONFICTION

AN UNQUIET MIND: A MEMOIR OF MOODS AND MADNESS **Kay Redfield Jamison** (*Knopf, \$22*) Oliver Sacks (*Awakenings*) is famous for his accounts of illnesses of the mind. But however acute his observations, Sacks is usually on the outside looking in. Imagine if that same rigorous intellect and writer's gift for description were applied to an illness he was dealing with himself and you'll begin to grasp the accomplishment of this book. Jamison, who coauthored the standard medical text on manic depression, reveals her own struggles with the disease that shattered and shaped her life. She charts an idyllic childhood in which her every enthusiasm was encouraged and then shows those passions becoming

more intense and irrational as she grows older. All-night reveries turn into days and even weeks without sleep. Intellectual ideas that power project after project in college become increasingly incoherent. Ruminations on death end with an overwhelming desire to commit sui-

cide. Jamison never shies away from the sometime beauty of her illness, how its gentlish manias have fueled her work. But ultimately it's obvious that her increasingly erratic and dangerous mood swings are too high a price to pay and that continuous medical and psychological

treatment are essential to a productive life. Deeply personal, although never maudlin, Jamison's remarkable memoir uses lucid, tight prose to describe the most tangled imaginings and unnerving losses of control. *An Unquiet Mind* proves her life spent dealing with manic depression has been a wonderful opportunity. **A** —Michael Giltz