

BOOKS

It's what we've done that makes us what we are.

-Jim Croce

Author battles "uncivic" journalism

Breaking the News
by James Fallows
Random House

JOSEPH FITZPATRICK

THE BRUNSWICKAN

If you've ever watched an entire television news broadcast and left with so little "news" that you wondered why you even bothered to watch it, James Fallows has some good ideas why.

Through a barrage of examples, Fallows argues that network news has strayed from its humble beginnings, and is now competing against entertainment programming when it should be striving to be informative. The success of network news has led to the formation of an elite corps of highly compensated television personalities. And now, the entire industry is modeling itself after this successful clique in a bid to detach themselves from their core constituency, to the detriment of the profession and the public.

With a gripping yet casual and matter-of-fact narrative, Fallows combines a soundly argued work with biting commentary. He presents many common perceptions about the media, and justifies most of them, although mostly not in the manner that you may have assumed. He brings his keen knowledge of American politics and history to bear when addressing such questions as: Why does the public have so little confidence in the media? Why has the media's insatiable appetite for "scandal" essentially eliminated old-fashioned story hunting? and How has a change in the demographic of journalists demonstrably changed their coverage?

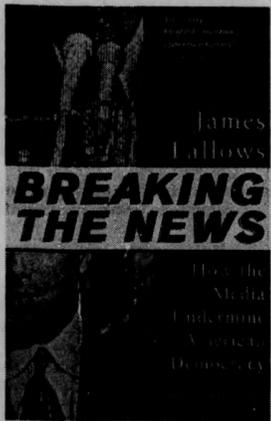
Throughout the book, Fallows brings to light many surprisingly blatant conflicts of interest that several prominent household-name journalists failed to recognize. In many cases, they disputed the relevance of such a disclosure. One example is ABC's George Will commenting against a proposal to impose tariffs on imported luxury goods at the same time that his wife was being paid \$200,000 to lobby the media on that very topic. Although Will had a long history of opposing barriers to free-trade, Fallows feels Will should have at least mentioned the conflict of

interest himself, rather than wait until a rival network pointed out the conflict.

And yet, while he pulls no punches, Fallows is never mean-spirited. He merely points out that journalists should not confuse themselves with reporters. For as Fallows sees it, a reporter goes out, looks, learns, and then reports on what they've found but a journalist, by contrast, merely reads the TelePrompTer. Lesley Stahl of 60 Minutes relies on an army of producers and staff reporters who never get their faces on the screen, yet she is the one who was paid (a rumored \$20,000) by a group of insurance companies to moderate a panel on health insurance changes.

Using such names as Donaldson, Wallace, and McLaughlin, Fallows argues convincingly that money and celebrity have undermined the very essence of journalism, which according to him, is "to satisfy the general desire for information to have meaning." A devastatingly simple ethic, yet Fallows shows that most media outlets fail to live up to even this, his minimum standard. Considering that ABC, CBS, and NBC spend a combined total of over \$1.5 billion US on their news divisions, Fallows feels he has good reason to complain.

And before you think Fallows has decided to merely "media-bash", look deeper. He devotes a sizable portion of his book to the "underdogs" of the media, those at the reputable yet unassuming news organizations like National Public Radio, which has two very thorough, enjoyable treatments of politics; *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, lasting a total of four hours. Fallows also speaks of "old-school" reporters such as Jim Wooten of ABC, *Esquire* and *The New York Times*, who had the temerity to submit a television piece in which he did not speak for an "agonizing" 55 seconds.



Real and difficult; novel explores woman's love for abusive father

The Rain Ascends
by Joy Kogawa
Vintage Books

MARY ROGAL-BLACK

THE BRUNSWICKAN

"Sex."
"Boys."

This is the sparse information given to the teenage daughter of an adored father and respected Anglican minister when he gets caught molesting children. Even though the minister is shielded by the Church, his previously saintlike image is gone and with it,

the girl's secure family and enviable position in the community. But the meaning of the words—sex, boys—is abstract to the young girl and, more importantly, the knowledge doesn't diminish her love for her father. It's the kind of relationship that few would understand without direct experience, but Joy Kogawa's novel, *The Rain Ascends*, brings us closer to understanding that unimaginable experience.

Kogawa, Canadian poet and author of *Obasan*, again writes with clarity and beauty, drawing her reader into the narrator's horrible experiences and demonstrating what it is like to live and grow through them. There isn't much graphic description in the novel because, unlike what we are usually most aware of through the media, the story in this case is not about the victims. Instead, it is about the family of the pedophile, the people who know him as something else also, the people we see sitting behind the defendant in court and wonder how they can be there. Unlike victims and their sympathizers who—understandably—condemn with ease the "monsters" who violate children, those who love the monsters can't easily abandon their love. The impossibility of this situation is what makes *The Rain Ascends* so real and difficult.

As with *Obasan*, Kogawa's acclaimed novel about a Japanese Canadian child whose family is interred during the war, *The Rain Ascends* is about complex and torturous experiences that do not happen suddenly, but are stretched out over decades and passed down to new generations. Religion and dreams are woven into a narrative that, until you read this book, you might have expected could never be told with the necessary depth and understanding. Kogawa spins the story with grace using the language of a poet and the skills of one of Canada's best novelists, creating something that, though not real experience, stays with you as something more than just fiction.



Account of manic-depression disappoints

An Unquiet Mind
by Kay Redfield Jamison
Vintage Books

CYNTHIA KIRKBY

THE BRUNSWICKAN

An Unquiet Mind is not a book for hypochondriacs.

If it had been more informative, maybe, but a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The cover says, "Jamison examines manic-depression from the dual perspectives of the healer and the healed." It is this duality that ruins the novel, which is not medical enough or personal enough to be truly informative.

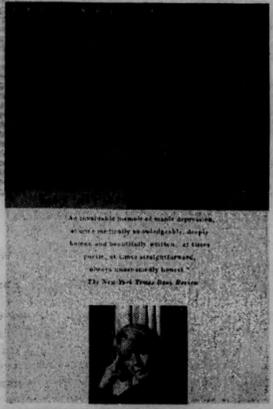
Jamison has barely detailed the science of the disease's cause and treatment (or the research being done to determine either), or the emotions she felt as a victim of it. Apart from the description of one hallucination, and even after completing the book I don't know if that is medically the proper word. *An Unquiet Mind* does

little to explain what distinguishes manic-depressives from the rest of us. The content is unsatisfying.

It's not that much fun to read either. Jamison states and reiterates time and again that she has lost her mind. Also the book would be many pages shorter if it weren't for the word "mercurial." These repetitions aren't substantiated except for in the hallucinative episode I've mentioned and in a reference to her manic shopping spree.

Beyond that, Jamison's sentence structure is awkward and annoying. Her sentences are confusing; she uses hyphens to join clauses that would be better separate. As well, she floods her writing with descriptive words to illustrate the contrast of her moods, which wouldn't be so bad if she had a working knowledge of parallel structure.

The book does, however, have a lovely matte finish. I don't think I would have finished it if I hadn't been so curious. *An Unquiet Mind* doesn't live up to its promise; read a medical journal instead.



Lighthearted look at a dog's life

A Day With Biff
by Ron and Joe
Addison-Wesley Publishing

AARON MACEachern

THE BRUNSWICKAN

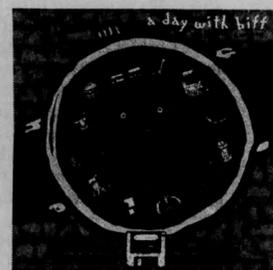
"Biff is no ordinary dog," say Ron and Joe, and this is no ordinary book, says I.

A Day With Biff is a book that brings out the child in even the most grown-up of adults. This tiny short story personifies the life of a gentle pitbull and chronicles his travels through the adventures of the day.

This book highlights Biff's continual distraction by the outside world, while he is occupied with his daily routines and habits. The authors do a great job of blending tons of funny and interesting scenes into one another, through the depiction of Biff's distractions with the use of simple text and effective cartoons.

Enough creative analysis for now. Biff is definitely a cool cat (I mean dog). He is funny, suave, and sincere throughout. Ron and Joe's short story, through painful moments at the vet clinic, to his more passionate moments with his

lady friend in the restaurant. Biff is everything a dog could be, and more. If any of you adult readers are looking for a short positive book to read your children, this is the book to purchase, with its creative nature and light humor. If there are any students looking for a book which does not require a large amount of thinking, then this is definitely the book for you, as *A Day With Biff* combines the animated life of Biff, with hilarious scenes. Enjoy!



Interested in reviewing books? New books are coming in all the time. Recent arrivals include books on the Yukon, Tibet and Nepal; fiction (including books by Salman Rushdie and Graham Greene); and nonfiction on topics such as race, health care reform, society and education. For doing the review, you get to keep the book, just drop in to Rm. 35 of the SUB for info. or e-mail us at bruns@unb.ca.

UNB/STU Varsity Christian Fellowship

This Week Visit Shut-Ins - Come join us at **WCF**: we visit places like senior citizen's homes to encourage those who may not receive many visitors.

Where: Alumni Memorial Lounge, Alumni Memorial Building.
When: Thursday Eve. @ 7:30 - 9:00
Check out our web page located at: www.unb.ca/web/wcf

It's Time To Express Yourself

Prizes will be awarded in 4 categories.

- Poetry
- Short Fiction
- Visual Arts
- Music

Submit entries to UNB Art Centre, Memorial Hall by

FEBRUARY 7

For more information call 453-4623.

Showcase '97 Coming Soon

THE FREDERICTON SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY (FSFS)

Monthly Meeting
Thursday Feb 6
Room 203 SUB at 8pm

Monthly newsletter
contact Lynn Stapleton
D7UX@unb.ca
454-9012 after 5pm

Friday Feb 28 FSF Sat Terminator Series
MacLaggan Hall, free, non-perishable food items welcome



FREDERICTON SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY



Improve Public Speaking Skills
Gain Confidence in Front of an Audience

With UNB Toastmasters

Meetings: 7-9pm, Tuesdays H301 Head Hall
For more info: Contact 457-3121, q417@unb.ca
<http://www.unb.ca/web/TM>

CONTACT LENSES
STUDENT SPECIAL
SOFT CONTACT LENSES
GUARANTEED FIT EXTENSIVE FOLLOW-UP CARE
159.
COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE PROGRAM CLOSE TO CAMPUS & HIGH SCHOOL
CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS APPLY EXPIRES FEB. 28
DAVID G. HARDING
CONTACT LENS SPECIALIST
SUITE 504, 1015 REGENT STREET
FREDERICTON MEDICAL CLINIC
458-0270

Up The Hill '97 YEARBOOK
EARN SOME MONEY!
The Yearbook Committee is looking for a Grads Editor. This is a paid position. The job will require the following:
- separating and placing grad photos in the correct faculties
- placing the names on the computerized yearbook pages
- verifying the proper spelling of names (cross-checking the back of the photos with a listing of all grads)
We must have this position filled by February 6th, 1997.
If you are interested, leave a message (with your name and phone number) at 453-5197. We will get back to you to set up an appointment. You can also e-mail us at m2xp4@unb.ca
FOR MORE INFORMATION, FEEL FREE TO PHONE OR E-MAIL...
Phone: 453-5197 - E-mail: m2xp4@unb.ca