

First version:

I don't need 300 words. Mihiko Kakutani for the last ten years has
been reviewing my books two weeks ahead of everyone else and simply
detests the language I stand on.

Second version

I don't need 300 words. Less than a hundred will do. It's Michiko Kakutani.

Any reviewer has the right to dislike a writer's book and deplore all his work

on a regular basis. Clifton Fadiman, for example, couldn't bear William

Faulkner. What I hold against Kakutani is not her reviews but her rushing

into print two weeks ahead of every other reviewer. Her opinion is her right,

but her timing is egregiously unfair. Kind of gross, when you get down to it.

I once called her "slovenly." I am pleased to find a word that can accompany

it.

[NB: this is 98 words.]

Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books over the last decade. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All the reviews were bad, but three out of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of her five pieces came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Kakutani was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. If you truly detest a book, get your review out early. But four times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless, I choose it now for three good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to memorialize my lifework.

The words are hers; the italics are mine: "There was a very *solid* World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a *steady but wasting trickle of minor works* about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to persevere in her lust to get out there first. (It does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one when the bad one is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. "All too often," she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text from complete essays to no more than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To impugn the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy. Michiko was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any expectations, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, however, I no longer place much hope in long shots. It is enough reward to clip the lady's claws. Doubtless, they will grow again. The real recourse is to leave her to literary history. I do recall that Clifton Fadiman couldn't tolerate the work of William Faulkner. Let me propose that something of the same is repeating itself now in a minor vein.

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed for the Times every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. Three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of those five reviews came out a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was almost always there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism, if you truly detest a book, is to get it out early. Still, four times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her bad reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless, I choose it now for a couple of good reasons. In the course of cutting it down, she summarizes one's lifework with a most determined deconstruction.

"There was a very *solid* [italics mine] World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* [italics mine] journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* [italics mine] (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* [italics mine] novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but *wasting trickle of minor works* [yes, italics mine] about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her status, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the bad one is a potential reader's first acquaintance with the work.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art . She accused him of sloppiness: "all too often, dates for statements are not supplied." She was in complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text, from whole essays to points as local as two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To violate the care he took with the source notes was slovenly. Michiko was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times professional reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any hope, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, I do not, however, place any large emotional investment in fond hopes. The best reason for writing this piece is in already. It was to have the pleasure of clipping the claws of the cat. After that, devil take the hindmost.

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All were bad, but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of those five reviews came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism, if you truly detest a book, is to get it out early. Still, four times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege. ← (2)

Of all her bad reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless, I choose it now for three good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to summarize my lifework in her most determined manner.

I quote the lady directly, but the italics are mine: "There was a very *solid* World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* (The Executioner's ← (3))

Song), two huge *oddball* novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but *wasting trickle of minor works* about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the bad one is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art: "...all too often," she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in error. It was a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text, everything from complete essays to no more than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To violate the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy. ← (4)
Michiko was slovenly. (5)

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times professional reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give ← (6)
Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any hope, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, I do not, ~~however~~, ^{rather} like to place too much in long shots (7)
and fond hopes. The best reason for writing this piece is in already. It was to have the (8)
pleasure of clipping the lady's claws. Let no one suppose they will not grow again. The

only recourse is to leave her to history. I do remember that Clifton Fadiman couldn't tolerate the work of William Faulkner. Allow me to suppose that the scene is repeating itself now in a minor vein.

605

1
 FAXED 7:30 P.M.,
 June 3, 04

Thanks for the notes.

Final.
 You can send it in.
 Don't put the word ~~word~~
 on the final greenery yet.
 Let me see it.
 I would guess it's now 5:15.

~~decade~~
 Over the last ~~ten~~ years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books over the last ~~decade~~ published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a

Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky

Art. All ~~the reviews out~~ were bad, but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of ~~these~~ ^{her} five

~~pieces~~ ^{reviews} came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. ~~Michiko~~ ^{Kakutani} ~~was~~ ^{her}

was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism,

If you truly detest a book, is to ~~get your review out early~~ ^{get your review out} ~~early~~ ^{But} four times out of five! Kakutani

was abusing her privilege.

Of all her ~~bad~~ reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous.

Nonetheless, I choose it now for three good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to ~~summarize my life work~~ ^{memorialize} in her most determined

~~summary~~ ^{The words are hers; the}
 I quote ~~the lady~~ directly, but the italics are mine: "There was a very solid World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some ground-breaking journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of Americana (The Executioner's

Song), two huge *oddball* novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a ^{steady} ~~steady but~~ *wasting trickle of minor works* about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to downgrade the ^{perseverance} ~~reception of each of my new books~~ by persevering in her lust to get out there first, (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, *if when* the bad one is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. *All too often,* she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in ~~error~~ *It was* a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text ~~everything~~ from complete essays to no more than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To ^{impute} ~~violate~~ the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy. ← ④

~~Kakutani~~ Michiko ^{was slovenly.} ⑤ (Soliman) ⑥

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times ~~professional~~ reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any ^{expectations} ~~hope~~, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. *However, I have no place with her.*

At the relatively wise age of 81 I do not, however, like to place too much in long shots *any longer. It is enough reward to be able to sleep and fond hopes.* The best reason for writing this piece is already. It was to have the pleasure of clipping the lady's claws. *But no one supposes they will not grow again.* The *best*

FROM :nm

FAX NO. :5084872136

Jun. 03 2004 01:37PM P3

FROM :JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. :17186243782

Jun. 03 2004 02:29PM P3

3

real
~~only~~ recourse is to leave her to history. *when recall* I do remember that Clifton Fadiman couldn't
Let me propose that something of the
tolerate the work of William Faulkner. ~~Allow me to suppose that the scene is repeating~~
same is repeating
itself now in a minor vein.

(L.H.S.) G.C.

FROM :nhM

FAX NO. :5084872136

Jun. 03 2004 07:37PM RJ

FROM :JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. :17186243782

Jun. 03 2004 02:19PM RJ

4

1. Your query re Mike: this was checked, double-checked, and triple checked with Mike before the original letter went to the Times luminaries. I can email him again, but it may delay us a day.
2. First-naming her isn't professional. Obviously, this has to be written from the moral high ground. Ms. Kakutani, Michiko Kakutani, and Kakutani are all acceptable ways to refer to a professional. "Michiko" is not. I don't recall if she sprinkles her bad reviews with references to you as simply "Norman," but even if she does, you have to be better than she.
3. "the lady" isn't needed.
4. "To violate the care..." Awkward wording. Maybe "To impugn his reputation with a blatant error of fact was worse than sloppy, etc."
5. First name again.
6. "professional" not needed, is it? Do they ever recruit amateurs to do reviews?
7. rhythm?
8. awkward. Maybe: The best reason for writing this piece has already been fulfilled, namely, the pleasure of clipping the lady's claws."

FROM : nm

FAX NO. : 5084872136

Jun. 03 2004 04:15 PM P1

FROM : JMWORCRAFT

FAX NO. : 17186243782

Jun. 03 2004 10:16 AM P1

549 words

OK w/ Mike Brennan. Did she know all five for certain?

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed ~~for the Times~~ every one of

my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Talo, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. ~~All were bad, but three~~ Three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all

received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of those five reviews came out ~~in the last three~~ a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was almost always

there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism, if you truly detest a book, is to get it out early. Still, four times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her bad reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous.

Nonetheless, I choose it now for a couple of good reasons. ~~In the course of cutting it down, she summarizes one's lifework with a most determined deconstruction—~~ ~~three. (The first is, of course, that she~~

"There was a very solid ~~[italics mine]~~ World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some ground-breaking ~~[italics mine]~~ journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of Americana ~~[italics mine]~~ (The Executioner's Song), two huge oddball ~~[italics mine]~~ novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but wasting trickle of minor works [yes, italics mine] about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given ~~her status~~ ~~positions~~, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her ~~and have it the last one is in the~~ lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the ~~encounter it then~~ bad one is a potential reader's first acquaintance with the work.)

come out early, the 90s and is that she chose to summarize my lifework in her most negative manner, I gave the body directly in English but the italics are mine

Cherry Tree

Start about here
Double-space from

FROM : nm

FAX NO. : 5084872136

Jun. 03 2004 01:11PM P2

FROM : JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. : 17186243782

Jun. 03 2004 12:18AM P2

2

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. She accused him of sloppiness: "all too often, ^{it is all a shabby declaration of dates} dates for statements are not supplied." She ^{It was a whole and complete error.} was in complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered ^{everything from completely to more than} everything in the text, from whole essays to points as local as two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To violate ^{compare then sloppiness} the care he took with the source notes was slovenly. Michiko was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times professional reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any hope, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, I do not, however, ^{like to place too much} place any large emotional investment in ^{in long shots and} fond hopes. The best reason for writing this piece is in already. It was to have the pleasure of clipping the ^{claws of the cat} ~~claws of the cat~~. And, this, was like the hindmost.

Let us not suppose they will not grow again. The only recourse is to leave them to his long, I do remember that Clifton Fadiman should tolerate the work of William Faulkner allow me to suppose that the game is going on now in ^{in a minor key} ~~in a minor key~~ repeating itself now

FA XED 7:30 P.M.,
June 3, 04

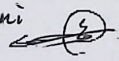
Thanks for the notes!

Final.
You can send it in.
Don't put the word ~~com~~
on the final page, but
let me have it.
I would guess it's now 15.

Over the last ^{decade} ~~ten~~ years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books over the last ~~decade~~, ^{the} published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a

Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky

Art. All were bad, but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. Four of ^{her} those five

^{pieces} reviews came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko ^{Kakutani} 

was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism,

If you truly detest a book, is to get it ^{get your review} out early. ^{But} Still, four times out of five! Kakutani

was abusing her privilege.

Of all her ~~bad~~ reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous.

Nonetheless, I choose it now for three good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to ^{memorialize} summarize my lifework in her most determined



the words are hers; the
I quote the lady directly, but the italics are mine: "There was a very solid World

War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some ground-breaking journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of Americana (The Executioner's

← (3)

Song), two huge oddball novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but ^{- Ital}wasting trickle of minor works about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first, (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if ^{when} the bad one is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky
Art: L^N "All too often," she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in
~~error. It was~~ a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed
 pages which covered everything in the text, everything from complete essays to no more
 than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic
 of some stature. To ^{impute} ~~violate~~ the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy.
~~Kobayashi~~ Michiko was slovenly. (5) (Soliman, Lenn.)

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times professional reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with no hope, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81 I do not, however, like to place too much in long shots and fond hopes. The best reason for writing this piece is in already. It was to have the pleasure of clipping the lady's claws, let no one suppose they will not grow again. The

real
~~only~~ recourse is to leave her to history. *literary recall* I do remember that Clifton Fadiman couldn't
Let me propose that something of the
tolerate the work of William Faulkner. ~~Allow me to suppose that the scene is repeating~~
same is repeating
itself now in a minor vein.

(605) 605

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. She accused him of sloppiness: "all too often, ^{in all} ~~dates~~ ^{if she declared} ~~dates~~ for statements are not supplied." She was in complete error. ^{It was a whole and complete error.} The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text, ^{everything from completely} ~~from whole essays to points as local as~~ ^{no more than} two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To violate the care he took with the source notes was ^{surprise then sloppiness} ~~slovenly~~. Michiko was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times professional reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any hope, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, I do not, however, ^{like to place too much} ~~place any~~ large emotional investment in fond hopes. The best reason for writing this piece is in already. It was to have the pleasure of clipping the ^{lady's} ~~claws of the cat~~ ^{after that, don't take the hindmost}.

Let us suppose they will not grow again. The only recourse is to leave him to his song. I do remember that Clifton Fadiman couldn't tolerate the work of William Faulkner. Allow me to suppose that the game is going on now in ^{an} ~~a~~ minor key.

Concise + sad to him.

Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books over the last decade. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All the reviews were bad, but three out of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. ^{Three} ~~Four~~ of her five pieces came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Kakutani was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. If you truly detest a book, get your review out early. But ^{three} ~~four~~ times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless, I choose it now for ^{several} ~~three~~ good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to memorialize my lifework.

The words are hers; the italics are mine: "There was a very *solid* World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a *steady but wasting trickle of minor works* about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to persevere in her lust to get out there first. (It does take ^{more than} three good reviews to overcome ^{very} a bad one when the ~~bad one~~ ^{is the latter} is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. "All too often," she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text from complete essays to no more than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To impugn the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy. Michiko was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any expectations, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, however, I no longer place much hope in long shots. It is enough reward to clip the lady's claws. Doubtless, they will grow again. The real recourse is to leave her to literary history. I do recall that Clifton Fadiman couldn't tolerate the work of William Faulkner. Let me propose that something of the same is repeating itself now in a minor vein.

FROM :nm

FAX NO. :5084872135

Jun. 24 2004 11:49 P1

FROM :JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. :17186243782

Jun. 24 2004 11:45 P2

Concise + hard to hear

Michiko Kakutani has reviewed every one of my books over the last decade. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All the reviews were bad, but three out of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. There was also a willful subtext. ^{Three} ~~Four~~ of her five pieces came out in the daily Times a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Kakutani was there first with the worst. It is an old stunt. If you truly detest a book, get your review out early. But ^{three} ~~four~~ times out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless, I choose it now for ^{several} ~~three~~ good reasons. The first, of course, is that she came out early. The second is that she chose to memorialize my lifework.

The words are hers; the italics are mine: "There was a very *solid* World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a *steady but wasting trickle of minor works* about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

FROM : nm

FAX NO. : 5084872136

Jun. 24 2004 12:14 PM '12

FROM : JMWORDCRAFT

FAX NO. : 17186243782

Jun. 24 2004 1:45 PM '12

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her position, able to persevere in her lust to get out there first. (It does take ^{more than a} ~~these~~ good reviews to overcome ^{very} ~~a bad one~~ ^{the latter} when the ~~last one~~ is a potential reader's first encounter with the title.)

What she was not entitled to, however, was to backhand the editor of The Spooky Art. "All too often," she declared, "dates for statements are not supplied." She was in a whole and complete error. The source notes came to ten closely printed pages which covered everything in the text from complete essays to no more than two lines from an old interview. The editor, Dr. J. Michael Lennon, is an academic of some stature. To impugn the care he took with the source notes was worse than sloppy. Michiko was slovenly

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the daily Times reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she does not welcome transgressions against her critical dominance. If I write these words with any expectations, it is that she will, in future, respect the publication date of my next book. At the relatively wise age of 81, however, I no longer place much hope in long shots. It is enough reward to clip the lady's claws. Doubtless, they will grow again. The real recourse is to leave her to literary history. I do recall that Clifton Fadiman couldn't tolerate the work of William Faulkner. Let me propose that something of the same is repeating itself now in a minor vein.

Norman,

I inadvertently led you astray.

Remember you asked me if the pub dates were checked? I told you Mike had checked and re-checked your original letter to the people at the Times (which he did) but I

****could**** ask him again if you insisted. You said, no, don't bother.

Now Dwight Garner of the NYT Magazine has also checked and says MK's reviews for Spooky Art, GATT, and Picasso were unquestionably out early. However, TOOT had a pub date of 5 May 1998 and MK ran her review 8 May 1998. ON Oswald, pub date was 25 April 1995 and MK's review appeared on 25 April 1995. So, she was unquestionably out early THREE of five times ("which is outrageous," says Dwight Garner.) He would appreciate your making the fix. He needs it by Wed noon latest—Mon or Tues would be appreciated.

Also, since everyone knows the writers contributing to this piece, he's skipping the canned

bios and wants a one-sentence tag on current/forthcoming work, like "Norman Mailer is *a novel that he hopes to complete in the next 12 months* currently working on. . ." Also needs that by Wed noon latest.

Piece is going to run in 18 July issue.

1. Your query re Mike: this was checked, double-checked, and triple checked with Mike before the original letter went to the Times luminaries. I can email him again, but it may delay us a day.
2. First-naming her isn't professional. Obviously, this has to be written from the moral high ground. Ms. Kakutani, Michiko Kakutani, and Kakutani are all acceptable ways to refer to a professional. "Michiko" is not. I don't recall if she sprinkles her bad reviews with references to you as simply "Norman," but even if she does, you have to be better than she.
3. "the lady" isn't needed.
4. "To violate the care. . ." Awkward wording. Maybe "To impugn his reputation with a blatant error of fact was worse than sloppy, etc."
5. First name again.
6. "professional" not needed, is it? Do they ever recruit amateurs to do reviews?
7. rhythm?
8. awkward. Maybe: The best reason for writing this piece has already been fulfilled, namely, the pleasure of clipping the lady's claws."

1. Your query re Mike: this was checked, double-checked, and triple checked with Mike before the original letter went to the Times luminaries. I can email him again, but it may delay us a day.
2. First-naming her isn't professional. Obviously, this has to be written from the moral high ground. Ms. Kakutani, Michiko Kakutani, and Kakutani are all acceptable ways to refer to a professional. "Michiko" is not. I don't recall if she sprinkles her bad reviews with references to you as simply "Norman," but even if she does, you have to be better than she.
3. "the lady" isn't needed.
4. "To violate the care. . ." Awkward wording. Maybe "To impugn his reputation with a blatant error of fact was worse than sloppy, etc."
5. First name again.
6. "professional" not needed, is it? Do they ever recruit amateurs to do reviews?
7. rhythm?
8. awkward. Maybe: The best reason for writing this piece has already been fulfilled, namely, the pleasure of clipping the lady's claws."

Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
718-838-0892
email: jmworcraft@compuserve.com

24 March 2003

Julie Salamon
The New York Times
229 West 43 Street
New York NY 10036

Dear Julie Salamon:

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed for the Times every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All five were given bad reviews (The Spooky Art perhaps the least awful), but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. What underlined the procedure and could give it a willful subtext was that four of those five reviews came out a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was first with the word. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism is to get it out early if you truly detest a book. Still, four out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Of all her bad reviews, The Spooky Art was perhaps the least poisonous. Nonetheless I chose it because it represented the variety of reasons, since indeed, even this much determined deconstruction of my later writing seemed not quite enough for the lady. In the course of reviewing The Spooky Art, she summarizes one's lifework as follows:

"There was a very solid [italics mine] World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some ground-breaking [italics mine] journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of Americana [italics mine] (The Executioner's Song), two huge oddball [italics mine] novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but wasting trickle of minor works [yes, italics mine] about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her status, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the bad one is a potential reader's first acquaintance with the work.)

Guinea
word count
when you read
it back -

Julie's
said
their book
incredible
spicy
a short
piece
First part

Michiko was almost
always first with the worst
of reviews, since
of reasons, since

a couple of
good reviews

What she may not be entitled to, however, is to attack my editor for The Spooky Art on grounds that are without basis.

Let me put on record Dr. J. Michael Lennon's letter to the Times (January 22, 2003). When he received no answer to the first, he sent a second, also without reply.

From: "Dr. J. Michael Lennon" <lennon@wilkes.edu>
To: <letters@nytimes.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2003 3:55 PM

To the Editor:

In her review of Norman Mailer's *The Spooky Art*, Michiko Kakutani claims that "all too often dates for assignments are not supplied." She is in complete error. For the editor of the collection and the source notes came to ten closely printed pages. Mr. Mailer felt it was important for interested readers to know the provenance of all his comments; be they an essay or a review or an old interview. I fear that the sloppiness Kakutani imputes to Mailer fits her review more closely than his text.

J. Michael Lennon
Professor of English, Wilkes University
67 South Pioneer Ave.
Shavertown, PA 18708
570-696-5449 (home)
570-408-4522 (work)

Conceivably, Kakutani didn't look all that closely at what she was writing about. In any event, she came forth with this imputation of careless work on the part of Dr. Lennon, an academic of some stature. Did she skip over the ten full printed pages of source notes in the Appendix? Dr. Lennon used the word sloppy to characterize this. I would call it slovenly. She was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the professional daily reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she has an acute sense of self-righteous repayment for any transgressions against her critical dominance. Rather, I choose to put this information on record in the hope that the Times will agree to a quiet meeting with one or two of the people who have received this letter, plus Ms. I'll write these words with any hope it is that she will, in the future, respect the publication date of my next book.

At the relatively wise age of 81, I do not have a large encyclopedic in vestment. The best reason for writing the book was to have the pleasure of clipping the essays of the cat. I don't know if I am a devil in hell or a demon in hell. I don't know if I am a devil in hell or a demon in hell. I don't know if I am a devil in hell or a demon in hell.

was to backhaul of the global of the Spooky Art. She accused him of not sloppiness - all too often dates for assignments are not supplied.

From whole essays to points as local as two lines from an old interview. The editor, J. Michael Lennon.

stature. To violate the cave he took with the source notes can only be characterized as slovenly. Michiko was slovenly.

348

Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
718-858-0892
email: jmworcraft@compuserve.com

24 March 2003

Julie Salamon
The New York Times
229 West 43 Street
New York NY 10036

Dear Julie Salamon:

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed for the Times every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All five were given bad reviews (The Spooky Art perhaps the least awful), but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. What underlined the procedure and could give it a willful subtext was that four of those five reviews came out a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism is to get it out early if you truly detest a book. Still, four out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Indeed, even this much determined deconstruction of my later writing seemed not quite enough for the lady. In the course of reviewing The Spooky Art, she summarizes me lifework as follows:

"There was a very *solid* [italics mine] World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* [italics mine] journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* [italics mine] (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* [italics mine] novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but *wasting trickle of minor works* [yes, italics mine] about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her status, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the bad one is a potential reader's first acquaintance with the work.)

-2-

348

1 and
↑

What she may not be entitled to, however, is to attack my editor for The Spooky Art on grounds that are without basis.

Let me put on record Dr. J. Michael Lennon's letter to the Times (January 22, 2003). When he received no answer to the first, he sent a second, also without reply.

From: "Dr. J. Michael Lennon" <lennon@wilkes.edu>

To: <letters@nytimes.com>

Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2003 3:55 PM

To the Editor:

In her review of Norman Mailer's *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing* (The Arts, Jan. 22), Michiko Kakutani claims that "all too often dates for statements are not supplied." She is in complete error. I am the editor of the collection and the source notes come to ten closely printed pages. Mr. Mailer felt it was important for interested readers to see the provenance of all his comments, be they an essay or two lines from an old interview. I fear that the sloppiness Kakutani imputes to Mailer fits her review more closely than his text.

J. Michael Lennon

Professor of English, Wilkes University

67 South Pioneer Ave.

Shavertown, PA 18708

570-696-5449 (home)

570-408-4522 (work)

Conceivably, Kakutani didn't look all that closely at what she was writing about. In any event, she came forth with this imputation of careless work on the part of Dr. Lennon, an academic of some stature. Did she skip over the ten full printed pages of source notes in the Appendix? Dr. Lennon uses the word sloppy to characterize this. I would call it slovenly. She was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the professional daily reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she has an acute sense of ten-fold repayment for any transgressions against her critical dominance. Rather, I choose to put this information on record in the hope that the Times will agree to a quiet meeting with one or two of the people who have received this letter, plus Ms.

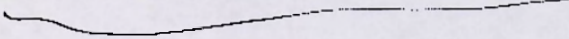
-3-

218 words

Kakutani and myself. I must say I hope to receive a reply. I would rather keep all this in camera than disseminate it to the teeming raptors of the internet. Did I say raptors? I meant raptures, teeming raptures.



Yours sincerely,



Norman Mailer

NM/jm

cc: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.

Howell Raines

Gerald M. Boyd

John M. Geddes

Soma Golden Behr

Tom Bodkin

Carolyn Lee

Michael Oreskes

Andrew Rosenthal

Allan M. Siegal

Craig R. Whitney

Dennis L. Stern

Michael G. Williams

Michiko Kakutani

Janet Maslin

Richard Eder

Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
718-858-0892
email: jmwordcraft@compuserve.com

24 March 2003

Julie Salamon
The New York Times
229 West 43 Street
New York NY 10036

Dear Julie Salamon:

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed for the Times every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All five were given bad reviews (The Spooky Art perhaps the least awful), but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. What underlined the procedure and could give it a willful subtext was that four of those five reviews came out a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism is to get it out early if you truly detest a book. Still, four out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Indeed, even this much determined deconstruction of my later writing seemed not quite enough for the lady. In the course of reviewing The Spooky Art, she summarizes me lifework as follows:

"There was a very *solid* [italics mine] World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* [italics mine] journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* [italics mine] (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* [italics mine] novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost) and a steady but *wasting trickle of minor works* [yes, italics mine] about everything from Marilyn Monroe to graffiti to Lee Harvey Oswald."

Now, Michiko Kakutani is obviously entitled to her opinion. She is even, given her status, able to downgrade the reception of each of my new books by persevering in her lust to get out there first (it does take three good reviews to overcome a bad one, if the bad one is a potential reader's first acquaintance with the work.)

348
1 end
↑

What she may not be entitled to, however, is to attack my editor for The Spooky Art on grounds that are without basis.

Let me put on record Dr. J. Michael Lennon's letter to the Times (January 22, 2003). When he received no answer to the first, he sent a second, also without reply.

From: "Dr. J. Michael Lennon" <lennon@wilkes.edu>
To: <letters@nytimes.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2003 3:55 PM

To the Editor:

In her review of Norman Mailer's *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing* (The Arts, Jan. 22), Michiko Kakutani claims that "all too often dates for statements are not supplied." She is in complete error. I am the editor of the collection and the source notes come to ten closely printed pages. Mr. Mailer felt it was important for interested readers to see the provenance of all his comments, be they an essay or two lines from an old interview. I fear that the sloppiness Kakutani imputes to Mailer fits her review more closely than his text.

J. Michael Lennon
Professor of English, Wilkes University
67 South Pioneer Ave.
Shavertown, PA 18708
570-696-5449 (home)
570-408-4522 (work)

Conceivably, Kakutani didn't look all that closely at what she was writing about. In any event, she came forth with this imputation of careless work on the part of Dr. Lennon, an academic of some stature. Did she skip over the ten full printed pages of source notes in the Appendix? Dr. Lennon uses the word sloppy to characterize this. I would call it slovenly. She was slovenly.

Mind you, this is in no way a request that some Times person other than Michiko Kakutani be assigned to me in the future. If I were Janet Maslin, Richard Eder, or any other of the professional daily reviewers, I would be a hair reluctant to give Norman Mailer a positive review given Kakutani's control of the bandstand. I expect she has an acute sense of ten-fold repayment for any transgressions against her critical dominance. Rather, I choose to put this information on record in the hope that the Times will agree to a quiet meeting with one or two of the people who have received this letter, plus Ms.

218 words

Kakutani and myself. I must say I hope to receive a reply. I would rather keep all this in camera than disseminate it to the teeming raptors of the internet. Did I say raptors? I meant raptures, teeming raptures.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Mailer

NM/jm

cc: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.

Howell Raines

Gerald M. Boyd

John M. Geddes

Soma Golden Behr

Tom Bodkin

Carolyn Lee

Michael Oreskes

Andrew Rosenthal

Allan M. Siegal

Craig R. Whitney

Dennis L. Stern

Michael G. Williams

Michiko Kakutani

Janet Maslin

Richard Eder

Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
718-858-0892
email: jmwordcraft@compuserve.com

23 April 2003

Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr.
The New York Times
229 West 43 Street
New York NY 10036

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

Now that the war has quieted to a degree, I'd like to bring up the matter of a meeting with Michiko Kakutani. If she is willing, and it is agreeable to you, I would suggest the afternoon of May 7 or any hour on May 8 since I will be in New York over those two days.

In the interim, let me thank you for your quick reply to my letter of March 24.

Sincerely,

Norman Mailer (signed in his absence)

NM/jm

24 March 2003

Norman,

This is the relevant portion of the letter we sent to a dozen people at the NYT after rigorous checking by Mike—who tracked down the reviews and compared with pub dates. It's 4 out of 5 in the most recent decade.

Julie Salamon

The New York Times

229 West 43 Street

New York NY 10036

Dear Julie Salamon:

Over the last ten years, Michiko Kakutani has reviewed for the Times every one of my books published in that period. In order, they were Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, The Time of Our Time, and The Spooky Art. All five were given bad reviews (The Spooky Art perhaps the least awful), but three of those five could make the claim that the ugliest review of all received came from Kakutani. What underlined the procedure and could give it a willful subtext was that four of those five reviews came out a week to two weeks ahead of publication. Michiko was first with the worst. It is an old stunt. One of the basic tricks in book criticism is to get it out early if you truly detest a book. Still, four out of five! Kakutani was abusing her privilege.

Indeed, even this much determined deconstruction of my later writing seemed not quite enough for the lady. In the course of reviewing The Spooky Art, she summarizes me lifework as follows:

"There was a very *solid* [italics mine] World War II novel (The Naked and the Dead), some *ground-breaking* [italics mine] journalism (The Armies of the Night, Of a Fire on the Moon), a brilliant piece of *Americana* [italics mine] (The Executioner's Song), two huge *oddball* [italics mine] novels, one about Egypt (Ancient Evenings), the other about the CIA (Harlot's Ghost)

Norman Mailer
627 Commercial Street
Provincetown MA 02657
718-858-0892
email: jmwordcraft@compuserve.com

A note to the recipients:

This letter to you and your colleagues is landing at the Times not a week after our troops have moved into Iraq. Given such circumstances, I can hardly ask for quick attention.

Still, in the days that follow, I hope some of you will take a close look at the matter. The Times, with some justice, prides itself on its fairness, and this will prove, I think, upon examination to be a small but definite canker eating away at fair journalistic practice in book reviewing.

Norman Mailer

*The letter went to
all those cc'ed.*