

ANIMAL FARM: THE RESPONSE TO MCCAIN'S PIGGY LIPSTICK STUNT

✖ Yesterday, I posted on the McCain camp's stunt to use false outrage over a common colloquialism to both distract from the mounting evidence that Governor Palin is a sham, and to cow the press into more deferential reporting. I promised to do a follow-up post, to catalog the good, the bad, and the ugly performance of the press in response. Below is a list of the articles that obviously came out of Jane Swift's performance—I'll update as new articles appear (and let me know what I've missed in the comments; h/t to cbl for an initial list of these, and to the FDL peeps for brainstorming on categories).

Within categories, I've ranked coverage from high to low. Here's the key to the rankings:

Pork-Buster: Not only did this journalist not buy the piggy lipstick stunt, recognizing a colloquialism for what it was, but in some way this story called out the larger context, in which the McCain campaign was trying to use their false outrage to distract or cow the press.

Kosher: This applies to outlets who obviously attended yesterday's performance by Governor Swift, but didn't find it newsworthy, as well as journalists who reported the McCain's attempt to generate outrage, but then called it for what it was, a stunt.

Hamlet: This applies to journalists who responded to Swift's stunt by presenting both the McCain claim and the Obama refutation, as if there were a real debate about what Obama meant in his

comments. These journalists write with an absolute lack of discernment for truth, but instead pretend on-the-one-side-on-the-other-side journalism results in some kind of laudable objectivity.

"A wonderful, magical animal:" Named after Homer Simpson's dreamy response to Lisa when she gave up pork (and meat more generally). Stories in this category acted just as the McCain hoped they might—by getting distracted by the shiny object of the false outrage.

Bought the Farm: For the Malkinites out there grateful to have been fed their daily outrage.

Pork-Buster

Mark Halperin, on AC360: Yes, Halperin. He nails the McCain ploy.

HALPERIN: Stop the madness. I mean, this is, I think — with all due respect to the program's focus on this and to what David just said — I think this is the press just absolutely playing into the McCain campaign's crocodile tears. I wouldn't —

COOPER: Crocodile tears?

HALPERIN: Yeah. They don't think this is sexist.

COOPER: They know exactly what it is.

HALPERIN: They know exactly what he was saying. It's an expression. And this is a victory for the McCain campaign, in the sense that, every day, they can make this a pig fight in the mud. It's good for them for them because it's reducing Barack Obama's message even more.

But I think this is a low point in the day in his — and one of the low days of

our collective coverage of this campaign. To make even – to spend even a minute –

Chuck Todd, MSNBC: Calls it the shiny metal object it is.

Ari Melber, Washington Indy: Contextualizes the bogus claim in the false cry of sexism, though doesn't contextualize the attempt to distract the press.

Kosher:

Marc Ambinder, Atlantic: A solid dismissal of the claim that Obama called Palin a pig.

Jake Tapper, ABC: Jake's coverage of this has evolved over time—his first, pre-Swift impression was to connect Obama's comment and Palin. But as time went on—and as he laid out Swift's ridiculous performance in great detail, he ultimately judged it to be "full of half-truths and statements that weren't true at all."

Mike Huckabee, Fox: Hannity attempts to co-opt him, Huckabee refuses.

First Read, MSNBC: Hidden within a description of both sides' claims the piece includes the judgment, "it's pretty clear that the "lipstick" remark wasn't directed to Palin."

Hamlet

Kornblut and Shear, WaPo: Yes, they do point out that three women reporters on the conference call last night thought this was bullshit and the headline emphasizes that Obama was talking about McCain's policies, but they still ultimately present this as an undecided issue.

AdNags: Notes that Obama's claim came nowhere near a reference to Palin, but he still goes on to present both sides dutifully.

Shep Smith on Fox News Radio (via email from Mike Stark):

Shep Smith: "Remember this?"

'What's the difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull? Lipstick'.
Shep Smith: "Here's Barack Obama yesterday."
'you can put lipstick on a pig. It's still a pig.'
Shep Smith: The John McCain campaign is demanding an apology. The Obama campaign claims that it's a common phrase."

Reston and Nicholas, LAT: The high point of this is that they note Huckabee thinks this is bull, but they don't do any thinking themselves.

CNN: A classic Hamlet story.

Ben Smith, Politico: Smith started by relying on telepathy—or some secret means to interpret the thoughts of those at a rally he didn't attend. But then he came back to give both sides.

Nedra Pickler: To the Pickler's credit, at least this time she **did** give both sides, though the headline here sides with the McCain camp.

"A wonderful, magical animal"

Byron and K-Lo, The Corner: Both note the skepticism of the reporters on the conference call though they do lay out Swift's claims. (Victor Davis Hanson seems to be the only Corner writer who buys this shit.)

Foon Rhee, BoGlo: Nods to an appearance of objectivity, but ultimately offers up the entire story as a soap box for Massachusetts' former governor.

Amy Chozick, WSJ: Includes both sides, but then somehow still concludes the statement was a play on Palin.

Pool Boy and Mike Allen: By putting the piggy lipstick claim in an article about "sharpened attacks" on Palin, Pool Boy and Mike Allen prove they haven't lost their solicitous ways.

Chris Cilliza, WaPo: "It seems hard — if not

impossible – to believe that Obama intended to equate Palin and a pig" but it doesn't matter because "perception often matters more than reality."

Bought the Farm

Sean Hannity, Fox: Attempts to co-opt Huckabee in his celebration of outrage; fails.

Carol Platt Liebau, Town Hall. This one's almost worth reading for the claim that Obama—and not the crazy guy who already riled up the Russians in Georgia—might incite Putin to invade Europe.