

NAR.RA.TIVE

It's a tough concept, I know, one that Marc Ambinder either can't—or won't—understand. But let's see if you all, in the comments, can help Ambinder out.

What's the difference between this:

█ technically true, but functionally false

And this:

█ repeated, blatant lies

Or this:

█ A serial liar

Or this:

█ A lying liar

Or this:

█ Completely divorced from reality

Go ahead—explain the difference to Ambinder!

Because Ambinder is cross that Matt Yglesias pointed out that he, Ambinder, has a role in whether people understand that Sarah Palin and John McCain made a claim that was "technically true, but functionally false" or whether they know that McCain has rolled out an entire campaign strategy built on repeated and shameless lies. It's all just that "a small but significant fraction of the electorate seems astonishingly inured to misleading charges and negative attacks," according to Ambinder, it has nothing to do with the flaccidity of the press, because, after all, "the press *has* pointed out the Bridge to Nowhere exaggeration ever since it was uncovered." No word on whether he finds McCain and Palin's related claim that Palin—whose own projects McCain once singled out

on his objectionable pork lists, whose own state still leads the country in per capita earmarks—is a great opponent of earmarks is just "technically true but functionally false, or whether it's a cynical lie. No word on whether Palin's clear fondness for the pork she claims to oppose undercuts the spin that she's a maverick. No word on when the McCain campaign's repeated insistence on the Bridge to Nowhere myth—or for that matter, its repeated, documented lies about Obama's tax plan—becomes a story.

Because at some point, McCain's cynical strategy to lie his way to victory threatens the entire principle of the objective press. If McCain can tell lies so brazen they'd make even Dick Cheney blush, and if the press does no more than simply correct them, once, quietly, politely, euphemistically, without noting that he and Palin repeat them in spite of all objective evidence, then the whole principle of objective truth has been replaced by the rule that whatever assertion gets repeated the most persistently will become "truth."

Journalists often say their job is to tell the truth. But Marc Ambinder, at least, doesn't seem phased that Rick Davis and Steve Schmidt have declared open season (no doubt aerial hunting season) on that very principle.

At some point, McCain's decision to run a campaign targeted against the very notion of objective truth—and those who try to expose it—needs to become the story.

Update: Here's Jamison Foser on the same topic.