

Melania and the Media

A friend at CBS News, when I was a correspondent at the Tiffany network, was a perfectionist when it came to grammar. If some poor schnook carelessly used “he” instead of “him” or “I” instead of “me” he would smile – the kind of smile one reserves for dimwits – roll his eyes, and after correcting the offender he’d mentally file the mistake roughly in the same category as the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Words matter, after all, and so do the ideas they convey. Especially among the *intellectual* class.

So, it comes as no surprise that Melania Trump’s speech to the GOP convention came under fire when it was discovered that several sections seemingly were plagiarized from a speech Michelle Obama delivered to the Democratic convention back in 2008.

In the world of words and ideas, plagiarism is serious business. If you don’t believe me, ask Joe Biden. In September 1987, he was running for president and was considered by many to be the strongest candidate in the field. Then it came out that he plagiarized a speech by a British politician named Neil Kinnock. There were other allegations of plagiarism when Biden was in law school and before he could say, Oops, my bad ... Joe Biden was done; he dropped out of the race.

So it’s understandable that this latest episode involving plagiarism is such a big deal, especially for liberal journalists on CNN and MSNBC, where the last time I checked they were running the story non-stop for hours on end.

Despite the interest among many of the media elite, I can’t help but think that in the country between Manhattan and Malibu, filching a few lines here and there isn’t as big a deal as say jobs and terrorism. I mean she didn’t try slipping “To be or not to be” by anybody. And so when I asked a friend

what he thought of the whole thing he said, “Seriously if you look like Melania who the hell cares if you plagiarize.”

For what it’s worth, I bet he’s not alone. And I bet there are a whole bunch of non-elite *ordinary* Americans who are saying, “No one got killed, right? She’s not running for anything, right? What’s the big deal?”

But to more than a few in the media, people who are famously out of touch with ordinary Americans, the episode is a big deal, one that shines a light on the Trump operation, an operation many journalists believe couldn’t run a lemonade stand let alone a presidential campaign.

But what struck me watching the non-stop coverage is how troubled journalists can be over an offense like plagiarism – and how moral outrage seems to escape them in so many other matters that seem – at least to me – far more important.

I don’t recall much liberal media outrage when Susan Rice and Hillary Clinton peddled a story about how an anti-Muslim video was responsible for the deaths of four Americans in Benghazi – a story concocted in order to help Barack Obama’s re-election campaign.

I don’t recall much outrage either when in her capacity as secretary of state Mrs. Clinton failed to adequately secure the compound in Benghazi where the Americans were killed.

I don’t recall much media hand-wringing when it came out – thanks to FBI Director James Comey – that Hillary Clinton had lied for years to the American people about her personal email server and all that went along with it.

Even now, I don’t see much curiosity from mainstream journalists about whether Mrs. Clinton lied, under oath, to a congressional committee looking into the email mess.

If liberal journalists were outraged over a Black Lives Matter

march where demonstrators chanted, "What do we want? Dead cops. When do we want it? Now" ... I missed it.

And I must have also missed the outrage when Barack Obama drew a red line in Syria then did nothing when Assad crossed it, clearing the way for the chaos that followed.

How many people died because of the president's inaction in Syria?

That's worth a little outrage, isn't it?

Something new will soon pop up, as it always does, to take the media's mind off of Melania and the tainted speech she delivered. But the media elite's moral tut-tutting over such an offense by Mrs. Trump – or whoever was responsible – is understandable. As I say words and ideas matter. You can't just go stealing someone else's property.

But at least for me, the media watchdogs who monitor moral offenses like plagiarism would have a tad more credibility if they showed some outrage where outrage is really warranted.