



1. This just in: TGA Flight 395 out of Atlanta lost power in two of its engines just after take-off. The pilot was forced to crash into a CNN top of the hour headline news report. Due to the soft nature of the news report no damage to the passengers, plane, or the news report is expected.

THE MT VOID

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Last week I was talking about the Simpson trial. This brings me to the subject of news coverage in general. I guess I am a bit petty about this, but I am grouching because the news is covering things other people are interested in, but not my personal pet topic. And I admit it, that probably is a selfish attitude. My little pet interest is a subject in which there are interesting developments all the time, but I have to admit they are just not the stuff of dramatic newscasts. And I admit it is not of wide public interest. There rarely is really spectacular news footage associated with it, but I really think people might be interested in it if they give it a chance. My pet news topic is government policy, and the policies of other countries' governments and sometimes the effects on me of all these policies. To me that is where the real news is, dramatic pictures or not. Anything else, to varying degrees, is distraction. That means that most newscasts never even get to the news that intrigues me. The U.S. has really lousy newscasts, at least as far as covering policy.

What we do get is coverage of trials. Just as I was writing this piece I watched CNN to get the top news stories. Presumably they are in CNN's idea of order of importance. Here was what was most important that hour:

- The baseball strike (This is winter. Are they *\*still\** talking about that???? Is that really the *\*top\** news story????)
- The Simpson Trial (Lots of close-ups on the faces of people testifying. Hot-dang, they are dramatic and that way they can be sure they are not getting the faces of any jurors in.)
- The Simpson Trial (No, that is not a typo. They had two different stories on the Simpson trial about different aspects.)

- The Breast Implant Trial (After years it still protrudes into the news.)
- The Long Island Railroad Shooting Trial
- And finally about eight minutes into the headline news, their sixth story was about the balanced budget amendment. And how did they cover it? Really superficially.

And at the bottom of the screen all the time, I could pick up the latest sports scores, just in case I got bored with the excessive coverage of fiscal policy. CNN has taken to running sports scores at the bottom of the screen, almost all of the time. I say "almost" because for one segment of their broadcast they take them off. They don't want the scores at the bottom of the screen distracting viewers from the sports coverage. And they didn't want sports enthusiasts to go into overload by seeing two different

inputs of sports stories at the same time. (Did you know you could hypnotize a chicken by forcing it to look at the ground and drawing a line in the sand in front of its eyes?) Ted Turner was probably wary of getting sued. In any case this must have been a slow news day, apparently. There was not one story about the trial of a mother who drowned her children. And there must not have been anything much happening with the Menendez trail.

And this is why I think Rush Limbaugh is doing a service for America. He is wrong about a lot of things, but at least he is creating a resurgence of interest in government policy. [-mrl]

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2. According to PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (27 Feb 95), Philip K. Dick's estate has sold the rights for two sequels to DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP for US\$1,500,000 (including audio and foreign rights). They will be written by K. W. Jeter and be titled BLADE RUNNER II and BLADE RUNNER III. The largest advance Dick ever received during his lifetime was US\$22,500. [-ecl]

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### 3. MURIEL'S WEDDING (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: A homely young woman with questionable values learns some self esteem in a plot with some unexpected twists, but which is ultimately quite predictable. Writer}director P. J. Hogan takes some chances of alienating viewers from Muriel's character. Rating: high +1 (-4 to +4)  
text

Reminiscent of British comedy/dramas of the 60s, particularly GEORGY GIRL, the Australian MURIEL'S WEDDING tells the story of a misfit finding self-esteem. And while the film takes a lot of unexpected turns along the way, its ultimate destination is obvious from the beginning.

Muriel (Toni Collette) is an over-weight and ungainly young woman with absolutely no fashion sense. Her home is the Australian town of Porpoise Spit--I kid you not. The clique of snooty school chums whom Muriel considers her friends ostracize her for just being too frumpy to be in their exalted presence. Muriel gets little emotional support at home from one of the ugliest families we have seen in film in a long while, headed by an overly critical and unsupportive father (Bill Hunter). Our sympathies at first are with Muriel, but soon we find her repeatedly stealing, first to have a dress to wear to a wedding and then in order to be able to

take a vacation with the women she considers her friends--without their consent, incidentally. On the vacation Muriel discovers the vivacious and instantly likable Rhonda (Rachel Griffiths), actually an old school friend, who strikes up an unexpected close friendship with Muriel. Much like the relationship in HEAVENLY CREATURES, the very differences in their personality types binds the two young women together. But though the two form a solid platonic relationship, events would soon take place that would place heavy demands on that friendship.

MURIEL'S WEDDING was written and directed by P. J. Hogan, her--admittedly I am assuming it is a her--first such effort. And it shows in the freshness and the feel for unexpected situations in Hogan's writing. If this film were made in America, Muriel would likely be written as an entirely sympathetic character. Ironically, sympathetic characters in American films live either apparently entirely moral lives or are rebels and live entirely outside the law. Of course in life there are a lot of people who are in the gray area being mostly honest and decent, but who would steal a little here or there and maybe cheat on their taxes just a bit if they thought they could get away with it. That is the sort of person Muriel is. People in her world blame each other for their own shortcomings.

Muriel's love of slightly tacky ABBA songs, matching her questionable taste in clothing, is reflected Peter Best's score which relies heavily on ABBA songs and a score that relies heavily on dramatic variations on ABBA melodies. As the Australians do so well, this is not so much a good film but a clever reworking of a cliched plot. It takes several unexpected turns, but ends up where everyone knew it was going all along. I give it a high +1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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Progress is the mother of problems.  
-- G. K. Chesterton