

Books: the best film you'll never see

by Ira Nayman

A lot of people have a strange idea that art is created in a vacuum, that the magic of creation takes place in the artist's imagination, without reference to the real world. A more realistic view is that the real world is the raw material of art, that art is a way of taking the familiar and making it new again.

book
Prospero's Books: A Film of Shakespeare's The Tempest
 written by Peter Greenaway
 published by Chatto & Windus/Little & Brown
 168 pages

The screenplay of *Prospero's Books*, director Peter Greenaway's visually overwhelming adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, contains reprints and descriptions of paintings

which inspired the look of certain scenes. The fact that Greenaway, whose background is in painting, frankly acknowledges his sources in no way diminishes the film's achievement.

In fact, the book is an invaluable tool in sorting out the film's imagery, which often passes too quickly to be fully appreciated. This is especially helpful in the opening sequence, which, with dizzying speed, encompasses a tempest, a shipwreck, the introduction of the world Prospero has created and a look at some of the books he carried with him to his exile.

Greenaway also explains one of the technical innovations used in filming *Prospero's Books*: the computer paintbox. Filmed images, including live action, paintings and other illustrations and still photographs, were reduced to the size of television images, then fed into a computer, where they were combined and manipulated.

The results, a half dozen of which are reproduced in the book, were complex, surreal images with the texture of paintings but filmic movement.

Since the book enriches the experience of seeing the film, it is necessary to see it first. But Greenaway has a reputation as a maker of "difficult" films, which makes it nearly impossible for him to find a distributor. For this reason, *Prospero's Books* may take a year to get to the screen, if it ever does.

I really enjoyed the script for *Prospero's Books*, just as I enjoyed the film. Unfortunately, if you haven't seen the film, I can't recommend the book.



A portrait of "a doer, not a thinker"

by David L. Mandel

John Sawatsky's *Mulroney, The Politics of Ambition* is a well researched, clearly stated treatise of a man who just happens to be our Prime Minister.

Mulroney's formative years are chronicled, from his youth in Baie Comeau to his eventual success in reaching the Prime Ministership. Sawatsky provides the reader with a basis for understanding Mulroney's strengths and limitations as well as his lofty ambitions; but, not in a sensational or irresponsible manner.

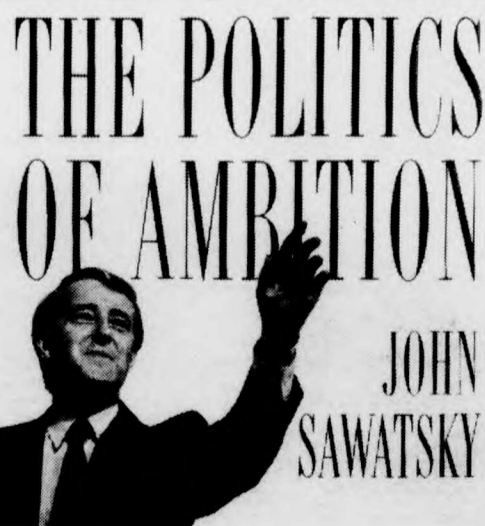
Mulroney's Baie Comeau was a remote and lowly-populated one-industry town. It was controlled at arm's length by an American Colonel who subtly and effectively wielded great influence. The effect was profound on Mulroney. Though at the time he would live free of Colonel McCormick's design, all of Mulroney's major characteristics and every decision he would later make could be traced back to the man who dictated the practices and the pace for the world young Mulroney knew.

Baie Comeau, we learn, was rife with social and political lines drawn between the different factions of the community. Mulroney learned how to move easily between and within interest groups. Living in the remote world of Baie Comeau, Mulroney learned young, and he learned well, the power afforded to the bridge-maker.

Mulroney eventually learned Colonel McCormick's tactic of isolating people to control them. Demonstrating good will through grand gestures, he demanded in return absolute loyalty and successful performance at key moments.

Sawatsky reveals how this young but exceptionally perceptive and able electrician's son masterfully sowed his seeds of charm, confidence and a conciliatory nature, to eventually bear the ultimate plumb-fruit of his ambitions: great financial wealth and the Prime Ministership of Canada.

Sawatsky is a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery who has employed his smooth and gripping style in four other books, all of a political slant. For *Mulroney*, Sawatsky and his team of researchers conducted over 600 interviews during a four year period, resulting in a very credible account of Mulroney's life.



book
Mulroney: The Politics of Ambition
 written by John Sawatsky
 published by Macfarlane, Walter & Ross
 \$34.95

Sawatsky portrays Mulroney as a shallow, opportunistic individual blessed with acute political instincts, an uncanny ability to mobilize these instincts in his own best interests and a seemingly disproportionate share of luck.

Mulroney's luck seems to have been so pervasive that even what would appear to be his greatest setbacks turned into what Sawatsky believes were his best-breaks. Mulroney's break with first time love Carol Stants left him free to pair with Mila Pivnicki. Sawatsky credits her for being the force which drove Mulroney from the doldrums following his failure to seize leadership of the Progressive Conservatives in 1976 to his success in 1983 and being Mulroney's singularly stabilizing life force.

Sawatsky further speculates that it was his defeat in 1976 that gave Mulroney the opportunity to mature and earn great financial wealth and public status. Combined with the political blunders, first of Joe Clark at the leadership convention, and later John Turner at the national level, Mulroney was poised to easily and successfully land the coveted Prime Ministership.

A biography should give the reader a true sense of its subject. If the author is successful and his work does reflect his subject's nature, his work is vulnerable to that subject's character. "[Mulroney] possessed extraordinary skill in communication, but he still needed a message to deliver..."

Sawatsky does not deliver a book on "how to become a Prime Minister," nor does he suggest a solution to or offer an opinion on the questions facing today's Canadians. What he does deliver in *The Politics of Ambition* is a thoroughly entertaining portrait of a man who is, "by nature a doer, not a thinker," and who just happens to be our Prime Minister.

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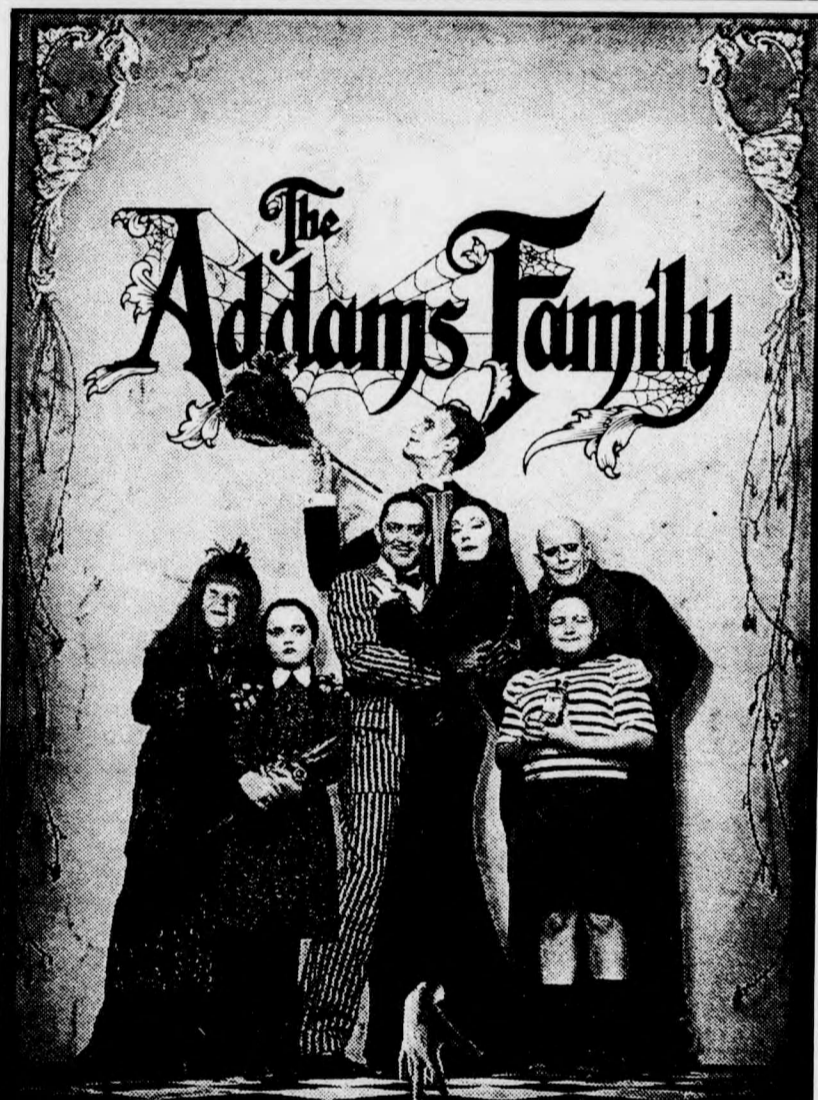
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