

crucial support for the institutions of commercial society, and everyone benefits when alternative options are explored and put on display. Respect for property rights is crucial, but such rights could themselves be expected to take diverse forms. Nozick's utopia of utopias allows for considerable diversity—a point that Brennan makes very clear (Nozick 1974, 297–334).

3. Thanks to David Gordon for discussion on this point.

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Freedom and Fiction

TROY CAMPLIN

Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism

by Allen P. Mendenhall
Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014
ix + 161 pp.

Exploring Capitalist Fiction: Business through Literature and Film

by Edward W. Younkins
Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014
x + 331 pp.

ABSTRACT: This review discusses recent work that considers literature and film from a free-market perspective. It focuses on two books: *Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism* by Allen P. Mendenhall and *Exploring Capitalist Fiction: Business through Literature and Film* by Edward W. Younkins. Each provides a different, but useful, approach to the topic.

We are more often coming across works that discuss literature from a free market perspective, although they are still rare. To books like Frederick Turner's *Shakespeare's 21st Century Economics: The Morality of Love and Money* (1999), Russell Berman's *Fiction Sets You Free: Literature, Liberty, and Western Culture* (2007), and Paul Cantor and Stephen Cox's collection *Literature and the Economics of Liberty: Spontaneous Order in Culture* (2009), we can now add Edward W. Younkins's *Exploring Capitalist Fiction* and Allen P. Mendenhall's *Literature and Liberty*.

Younkins's book emerges out of the Business through Literature course he has taught since 1992 in the MBA program at Wheeling Jesuit University. For those who think that literature and film are mostly antibusiness and antimarket, Younkins does a good job of countering, by providing a list of recommended readings and viewings. Indeed, the book is mostly a series of summaries of the books, plays, and films (sometimes including film versions of books or plays). Most are quite promarket, but certainly not all, and the works he recommends are hardly uncritical of business practices—how can one have a story without some sort of conflict, after all? But in his summaries, Younkins explains the value added by the books to understanding business practices. His discussion of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* is a great example of his ability to summarize a work. He notes what she is doing, the level of conscious construction in her novel, and readers' responses to this epic novel before proceeding to give a summary of the work itself.

While works like *Atlas Shrugged* are clearly probusiness and promarket, sometimes the books or films “accidentally” show us the positive aspects of business. There is little question, for example, that Oliver Stone is not procapitalism, yet he manages, in *Wall Street*, to present a character in Gordon Gekko who is able to explain how corporate raiders benefit the market and stockholders. We see this in particular in the (in)famous “greed is good” speech, where Gekko explains how what he does benefits the market by reorganizing or getting rid of wasteful companies. Indeed, corporate raiders are often a subject of literature dealing with business and free markets. However, they are not always negatively portrayed, like Gordon Gekko is. Jerry Steiner's play *Other People's Money*, and the film based on it, present “in dramatized form, both the arguments for and against corporate takeovers” (Younkins 2014, 249). They have even been presented positively, as in Cameron Hawley's *Cash McCall*. Younkins does a good job of explaining what it is that “corporate raiders” do, from an economic standpoint, putting the discussions of these works in the proper context.

When Younkins allows himself to provide insights from economics—including the rarer critiques of a work's ideas—the book is particularly valuable. Yes, we do need to know what works out there are worth reading or viewing, but some insight and analysis are also welcome. For example, in his chapter

“Taking a Look at Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*,” Younkins identifies many of the problems inherent in Bellamy’s socialist utopian vision, which leads to a short discussion of Rawls and Mises. The average reader would have benefitted greatly by having more of these brief but excellent analyses and discussions of the economic principles that are dramatized in the works.

Where Younkins’s book seems intended for the average reader or viewer looking for literature and films portraying business and markets (including the average professor looking to create a reading/viewing list for a class like Younkins’s), Allen Mendenhall’s *Literature and Liberty* is clearly aimed at a more scholarly audience. Mendenhall primarily addresses the subfield of law and literature, which makes it an unusual book in what is, with free market literary theory, already an unusual field.

Indeed, the fact that Mendenhall is writing about law and literature from a libertarian perspective is one of the strengths of the work. Most libertarian literary scholars are likely to think of doing literary analysis from a free market perspective as a corrective to the pervasive Marxism within the academy, but we certainly shouldn’t forget that libertarianism is a theory of governance, meaning that we libertarians have to understand something about the law. Mendenhall corrects this tendency with his book.

After a chapter on Emerson celebrating genius and individualism, in which he makes a positive comparison between Emerson’s and Rand’s individualistic philosophies, Mendenhall presents us with a history of law and literature involving the historical concentration of this field on Shakespeare. What is amazing to this writer, who has a master’s in English and a doctorate in the humanities, is that I had never learned of this area of study. So many are the silos in the academy. The literary scholarship done by many of our law professors could have perhaps helped correct some of literary scholars’ progressivist and Marxist biases. Of course, the addition of good economics would contribute even more to this correction, as Mendenhall observes at the end of this chapter.

For those looking for an example of how to do libertarian law and literature analysis, Mendenhall provides us with an excellent analysis of E. M. Forster’s novel *A Passage to India*. This is perhaps the kind of chapter one would most expect in a book subtitled *Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism*. Indeed, if the book has a fault, it would be that there are not more chapters like this. Sometimes the best argument for doing something new is to show rather than to tell the audience (it is perhaps unsurprising that this is also the advice creative writing students get to improve their writing). From this chapter we come to understand not only Forster’s novel better, but also a criticism of the “rule of law,” which might not have otherwise occurred to us. Mendenhall’s essay explicates both the novel as well as the criticism of the rule of law within it, bringing us to think about and question something with which most people

would tacitly agree: that the rule of law is good. We rarely think “good for whom” or “good for what,” but these are precisely what we ought to be thinking about. Moreover, we ought to be thinking about “what law, whose law.” When it comes to other cultures, we cannot simply come in and impose our own laws. Law ought to emerge naturally, dynamically from the interactions of the people within a given culture; it cannot be imposed on others without creating severe problems and stresses for the people and within the culture. This is what we see in Forster’s novel, and everywhere any country has engaged in “nation building.”

This brings us to the next chapter, on the rise of English law. Here Mendenhall brings the techniques of literary analysis to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* to help us better understand the underlying message of the book, that it is the law that is the true sovereign. The story of the English law is the story of the simultaneous emergence of the common law and Roman-style legislation. This combination gives rise to a unique tradition in English law:

The key message of . . . the history [of English law] is that law persists across the centuries, no matter who fulfills the role of sovereign, as the sovereign is subject to legal precedent even if he is capable of issuing law. The message is reassuring: regardless of who becomes the sovereign, law will protect Britain by providing order and peace among the polis and by ensuring the continuity of the nation-state. (Mendenhall 2014, 100)

The way law emerged and works in England is similar to how transnational law works, according to Mendenhall in his final chapter. Very often in England, the common law tradition gave rise to a degree of pluralism: local conditions resulted in local laws. Of course, there were hierarchies that placed those local variations within broader laws, including the laws handed down by the king himself, whereas in transnational law, there is and can be no central authority to bring everything together. This means that transnational law must necessarily emerge out of the interactions of local territories’ laws. It is and will always be pluralist insofar as it is transnational (rather than international, which implies some sort of unity). Mendenhall again makes use of literary theory to help us understand the nature of transnational law, showing us the degree to which such theory can be of great practical use.

Mendenhall also has chapters on Henry Hazlitt as a literary theorist and on a recent revision of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* to remove an infamously offensive word. Most of us know Hazlitt for his *Economics in One Lesson*, so it is good that Mendenhall points out Hazlitt was a broader writer and thinker. And most of us are familiar with the ongoing controversies surrounding *Huckleberry Finn*, to which Mendenhall’s contribution is welcome, even if he will probably be only preaching to the choir.

Indeed, if there is one criticism I have of Mendenhall's book, it is the title. While I certainly welcome a book titled *Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism*, I fear that such a name will immediately make the very people who most need to read it overlook it. This is a rhetorical point all of us with classical liberal/libertarian worldviews should consider in getting people to read our works—especially when the vast majority of the audience is hostile to classical liberal ideals.

Overall, each of these books is highly recommended for very different reasons. Younkins's book is recommended precisely because it is a very neutral, balanced summary of each of the works he treats. This is rare, whatever one's ideological leanings. And Mendenhall's book is recommended precisely because he engages in libertarian literary criticism, showing the value added in doing so. Moreover, he primarily analyzes texts through the lens of law (not surprising given he is a lawyer), making his contribution to literary studies unique. Law and literature is perhaps more common than is libertarian literary criticism, but Mendenhall's combination of the two is precisely what makes his book worth reading.

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- Mendenhall, Allen P. 2014. *Literature and Liberty: Essays in Libertarian Literary Criticism*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Younkins, Edward W. 2014. *Exploring Capitalist Fiction: Business through Literature and Film*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Russian Radical: Twenty Years Later

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Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical

by Chris Matthew Sciabarra
University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press,
second edition, 2013
xv + 526 pp., notes, bibliography, index.

ABSTRACT: The second expanded edition of *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*, like the trilogy of which it is a part, aims to radically redefine the methodology of established traditions by wedding the dialectical method to libertarianism.