

disappointing she does not address occupational licensing reform or deregulation, which could help bolster competition in several markets. Nonetheless, Klobuchar's book provides a thorough examination of where antitrust law has been, where it is now, and where it could go.

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**The Agitators: Three Friends Who Fought for Abolition and Women's Rights**

Dorothy Wickenden

New York: Scribner, 2021, 392 pp.

As a matter of personal preference, I tend to have a certain level of disdain for the “great man” approach to history. The flaw of viewing events solely through a testosterone-charged male gaze usually consists of reducing the world down to the cutthroat fields of absolutes—politics and war—leaving out the nuances of life in favor of a simplistic world of power. The affairs of charismatic generals and quick-witted politicians are prioritized over the experiences of all other individuals, groups, and perspectives. At its worst, this approach to history runs the risk of representing the world only through the eyes of the powerful elite, giving a skewed picture of the past that excludes most of the population of the planet from the story of how we came to be what we are today.

Crushed under a variety of despots in their lives, before the advent of the 20th century (and even during), women's voices and achievements have been consistently downplayed, marginalized, and even outright opposed by critics across the centuries. Women's near-total exclusion from educational opportunities, professional ventures, and politics means that women's contributions were easily obscured and diluted. Akin to the underground railroad of the abolitionists, the secrecy under which women had to operate to involve themselves in what was deemed “the affairs of men” obscures their contributions. In her newest book, *The Agitators: Three Friends Who Fought for Abolition and Women's Rights*, Dorothy Wickenden attempts to draw attention to three figures involved in both the abolitionist and the women's rights movements.

*The Agitators* tells the story of Frances Miller Seward, Martha Coffin Wright, and Harriet Tubman, who crossed paths in Auburn, New York. While Harriet Tubman stands out in her own right as an almost mythical force of nature, Seward and Wright are more obscure figures who are usually subsumed by the larger personalities that occupied their lives. Seward, for example, was married to the secretary of state in Lincoln's government. In a run-of-the-mill history book, her husband's narrative would be prioritized. But Wickenden, from the outset, aims to vindicate that "Much of American history is made by little-known people living far from Washington." History need not always come from the top down.

Despite not being a trained historian, Wickenden impressively breaks new ground by recovering Seward's previously deemed "worthless" correspondence and illustrating the coalescence of three different individuals united by similar ideals and the often undersung virtue of female friendship. Wickenden covers how Seward, Wright, and Tubman engaged themselves in the abolitionist movement alongside the burgeoning cause of women's rights, inspired partially by liberal-minded philosophers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, across the Atlantic.

The book is split into four parts entitled "Provocations," "Uprisings," "War," and "Rights." *The Agitators* takes the form of a collective biography covering all three lives in tandem. The trio in question is not the sole focus of *The Agitators*; macro-scale events and enigmatic historical figures such as Frederick Douglass and John Brown have their moment in the spotlight. The reader's perspective is ever-shifting between the intimate details of personal life set against the wider context of the political drama of the day.

In her acknowledgments, Wickenden emphatically states, "I am a journalist, not a historian." Though some might consider this a hurdle to overcome, it plays nicely into Wickenden's open-ended approach. She stays in her lane. She does not comment on historical matters extensively and, for the most part, lets the book's central figures come alive and steal the show. Her sources, both intimate and personal, do not provide objective narrative but instead a mixture of perspectives and experiences. Rutgers professor Ann Fabian, in her review of *The Agitators*, commented, "I wanted Wickenden to step back and tell me what it all means. But no. That's not her job." I agree. Wickenden's restraint makes the book not apolitical per se,

but instead a source open to all political persuasions to pick up and see what wisdom they can glean from these undersung heroines.

Though the issues of slavery and women's rights beget letters and speeches laden with the use of natural-rights lingo and condemnations of tyranny, the real value for a libertarian who reads *The Agitators* is the colorful and numerous accounts of civil disobedience. Wickenden provides accounts of both the main trio and a colorful variety of others who found ways to disobey and frustrate a morally bankrupt state—a practice that any libertarian should gleefully applaud.

One of the strongest aspects of Wickenden's book is how she focuses on the often-ignored ways women, though deprived of power, could exert influence through other means. Tubman relied on her oppressors and enemies to constantly underestimate her abilities because of her sex and race. Ironically because of their exclusion from the public sphere, women like Coffin and Seward could be bolder with their political opinions than their male counterparts. After witnessing the brutal treatment of slaves in Virginia, Seward began acting as her husband's conscience. Seward convinced her politically active husband, William H. Seward, to defend in court the mentally ill William Freeman, an African American who had been abused in prison. The trial helped propel William Seward's political career toward becoming a future secretary of state.

Reading Frances Seward's story, I was oddly reminded of a line from the romantic comedy "My Big Greek Fat Wedding": "the man is the head, but the woman is the neck, and she can turn the head any way she wants." With no aim of office or glory, women often acted as the moral conscience of men who were all too ready to compromise on their principles in the pursuit of power and glory.

Although this collective biography brings out pertinent contrasts and similarities between the leading ladies, coverage of each of the trio fluctuates. The lion's share of Wickenden's archival research relates to Frances Seward, who was the wealthiest of the trio by far. Coverage of Tubman, who was unable to read or write, relies on eye-witnesses and accounts of her character and exploits. Though her actions are easy to observe, locating Tubman's voice is an elusive task. This uneven coverage leaves the trio out of balance, and what we get is a narrative mostly focused on Frances, liberally interspersed with the experiences of Tubman and Wright. Despite this criticism,

Wickenden has a knack for narrative control, keeping a tight structure throughout.

Wickenden's book is a perfectly readable and exciting account of the intersection of the abolitionist and women's rights movements, and she deserves to be praised for the fruit of her labors. As historians endeavor to uncover women's narratives, Wickenden not only breaks new ground but does so without receding into academic jargon. *The Agitators* is an intellectually flexible work covering much ground while sticking to a narrative approach that never becomes muddled. On one end, it acts as an antidote to historical chauvinism; on the other, a recounting of courageous civil disobedience. The journalistic credentials of Wickenden shine through as she lets her readers decide for themselves what to make of the legacy of these women.

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### **The Tyranny of Big Tech**

Josh Hawley

Washington: Regnery, 2021, 207 pp.

Many Americans first learned of Senator Joshua Hawley (R-MO) in the wake of the January 6 assault on the Capitol. Before the assault began, an E&E News photographer took a photo of Hawley with his left fist raised looking toward protestors as he headed to the Capitol. About an hour later some of those protestors would storm the Capitol in an unprecedented attack on American democracy. After law enforcement had secured the Capitol, the Senate reconvened. Senators debated an objection to Arizona's electoral votes before rejecting it in a 93–6 vote. Hawley was among the six senators to vote for the objection.

Hawley's actions on January 6th were a reminder that the junior senator from Missouri had been positioning himself as one of President Donald Trump's most dedicated supporters. But Hawley's support for Trump extends well beyond electoral campaign theatrics. Like Trump, Hawley has been rejecting the Republican Party's expressed commitment to limited government and the market economy. Perhaps nowhere else is this rejection better displayed than the ongoing Republican criticism of "Big Tech" firms such as Google,