Trump to simultaneously claim the ground both of law and order and of merciful reformer? As the absurdity of a color-blind justice system becomes more patent, and the lines between violent and non-violent crime more porous, the claims of great promise in the work of those like Colson may attract some debate, but the fact of Griffith's role in illuminating the intersection of evangelicalism and incarceration cannot be gainsaid.

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Courtney E. Thompson, *An Organ of Murder: Crime, Violence, and Phrenology in Nineteenth-Century America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2021. Pp.259. $120.00 hardcover (ISBN 9781978813076); $28.95 paperback (ISBN 9781978813069).
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Courtney Thompson's *An Organ of Murder: Crime, Violence, and Phrenology in Nineteenth-Century America* is a wonderful contribution to the field of criminal justice in American history. The book focuses on the development, practice and popularity of, controversy around, and eventual decline of phrenology in the United States, a "science" based on interpreting the shape and size of skulls to predict the character of individuals. Thompson argues that "a primary theme associated with phrenology at each stage of its history was a focus on the problem of crime and the criminal" while constructing "ways of looking alongside modes of language for identifying, understanding, and analyzing criminals and their actions" (3). It is in phrenologists' construction of "lexical and visual" modes of engaging with criminality that, Thompson argues, predated the supposed "invention" of these approaches by Cesare Lombroso, the so-called father of modern criminology, in the 1870s (3). Despite the declining acceptance of phrenology in the late nineteenth century, Thompson concluded that the phrenological impulse to look for ways to classify, predict, and understand criminal behavior continued long past its formal acceptance in the scientific and medico-legal communities.

The book's six chapters trace the early development of phrenology in Europe, the spread of this "science" to the United States, the emergence of professional and lay phrenology practitioners, and the decline of phrenology as an accepted science during the mid and late nineteenth century. Thompson insists

that phrenology should be seen as the beginning of a larger movement in the United States among physicians, professors, legal experts, and others to find "practical solutions to social problems" (5–6). What began in the prisons of Western Europe with explorations by Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, Franz Joseph Gall, and George and Andrew Combes of the size of "mental organs" in the skull to determine the "propensities" of the people being studied, developed into a full-fledged "science" that devoted an enormous amount of time and energy trying to understand criminal activity (18). In the early nineteenth century, phrenologists in Europe and in the United States armed with calipers to measure the size and shape of skulls created a consistent profile of an individual that could, they argued, be predicted and used to possibly prevent criminal activity.

The centrality of the criminal justice system in the efforts to legitimize phrenology will be of particular interest to readers of this journal. The prison became one of the most important sites for practitioners to hone their skills and promote phrenology by conducting cranial readings of incarcerated people, while collections of skulls from people who were executed by the state also proved central to disseminating phrenological practices and conclusions. Above and beyond the prison, one of the main emphases of phrenologists was the acceptance of their conclusions in courtrooms. One early test of phrenology's legal fate came in *State of Maine v. Mitchell* (1834). This was perhaps the first time that the admissibility of phrenological conclusions was contemplated in an American courtroom. The defendant in the case, 9-year-old Major Mitchell, was accused of maiming 7-year-old David Crawford. Attorney John Neal argued that Mitchell had sustained a brain injury as a child, and he attempted to use phrenological theory to justify an insanity defense. Unfortunately for advocates of phrenology, the judge barred the defense's use of phrenological theory in the trial. This would not be the only time that phrenological theories were introduced into the courtroom, but again and again, they were rejected by judges.

Nonetheless, phrenology, according to Thompson, continued to shape how Americans understood and thought about criminal activity as the "ideas also spread through the courts in an implicit way through phrenological language and concepts, providing longevity for phrenology as a component of medico-legal expertise," particularly in the understanding of criminal insanity (58). While the scientific and professional communities largely dismissed phrenology by the mid-nineteenth century, the "phrenological impulse," argues Thompson, remained a part of the emerging fields of criminology and neurology (134).

This book sheds much light on the early attempts to rationalize and understand criminal behavior in the nineteenth century, especially among medical and legal professionals. Yet, how thoroughly the "phrenological impulse" penetrated the wider American society is unclear because of the geographic scope

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of Thompson's analysis. By emphasizing the trans-Atlantic nature of phrenology's birth and dissemination, Thompson largely emphasizes people and institutions from New England and the mid-Atlantic states. However, how and in what ways the phrenological impulse penetrated the socio-legal structures and practices of the South and the West, which in many ways were different in the nineteenth century from Northern states, is lacking. As such, it was difficult to fully appreciate the larger impacts of phrenology on American legal culture and society as a whole.

Despite this small criticism, this book provides much needed insight into the confluence of phrenology, criminal justice, and the attempts by Americans to better explain, understand, and even correct criminal behavior in the nineteenth century and beyond.

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Paul Sabin, *Public Citizens: The Attack on Big Government and the Remaking of American Liberalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021. Pp. 272. $26.95 hardcover (ISBN 978-0-393-63404-4).
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In *Public Citizens*, Paul Sabin offers a history of the "public interest movement"; that is, the 1960s- and 1970s-era efforts of Ralph Nader and others to push the federal government to act on behalf of the public interest. The elite lawyers leading this movement trained their critique on the federal administrative agencies that, they argued, mostly protected the interests of the businesses they regulated and took forever to act. Although this critique was already well developed in legal circles, Nader and his colleagues popularized it by launching investigations of individual agencies, industries, and Congress, and widely publicizing the examples of inaction and conflicts of interest that they found. They argued that these failures of the administrative process demonstrated the limits of the New Deal order underlying postwar liberalism, specifically "the productive partnership between government, business, and labor established during the 1930s" (3). To extend the protections of federal governance to those outside this arrangement, reformers sought to make government more efficient and transparent, more inclusive of diverse voices in the administrative process, and more receptive to environmental and consumer-oriented views of the "public interest."