

ing in *Paradise Lost's* depiction of the war in heaven—and in particular Satan's discovery and deployment of gunpowder against his angelic opponents—echoes not only of the Irish Rebellion (1641) but of the increasing disagreement among some Protestants over the role that *any* monarch might have in guiding the beliefs of England's truly faithful remnant (173–186).

The long-term contours of this shift from official narrative to popular fragmentation reappear in James' final substantive chapter, which examines four different political sermons by John Donne (1622), Henry Burton (1636), Matthew Newcomen (1642), and Seth Ward (1661). In many ways this chapter evidences the best elements of James's book, juxtaposing more immediately familiar texts and authors with works less familiar as a means to elucidate how the events of November 1605 echoed throughout the seventeenth-century, and how as late as 1688 this failed rebellion continued to provide the raw material necessary for authors of all sorts to explicate the longer national histories—political, religious, and literary—that informed their own individual compositions. Though the initial narrative of the thwarted plot was carefully structured to advance official state policy, as James's book carefully demonstrates the reception and reinterpretation of this account rapidly outpaced its origin, becoming instead a memory limned by the political and religious polarization of the years that followed.

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Alix R. Green, *History, Policy and Public Purpose: Historians and Historical Thinking in Government* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). 146 pp. Hardback \$67.00.

Since the election of Donald Trump, academic historians in the United States have wrestled with how to respond to a political situation that many perceive as a crisis: Should they simply offer their insights and potential guidance to a diffuse coalition of resistance movements? Should they seek to influence public discourse and debate more generally? Or, over the long-term, should they seek a more direct role in government and policymaking? Although none of these are new questions, they suddenly became more pressing following the 2016 election.

Written just before Trump's victory, and from the perspective of the United Kingdom, Alix R. Green's *History, Policy and Public Purpose: Historians and Historical Thinking in Government* offers a timely and provocative, but ultimately incomplete, contribution to this discussion. Green's work offers keen insights into what historians might bring to the policy world, as well as sharp assessments of our current shortcomings. Yet the book loses focus on its core question of how historians might contribute to policymaking and too often turns inward towards

deep consideration of the profession and its practices.

Green's premise is that when thinking of how we might participate in the public sphere, historians have focused far too much on our own expertise. In this view, the scholar has a body of knowledge and insights about the past which they must translate into forms accessible to busy policymakers. The familiar model of the historical case study is representative of such an approach. For Green, however, the emphasis on content knowledge and translation undersells or even ignores historians' most valuable potential contributions to government and policymaking: the ways that historians think and work, many of which are applicable to the policy process. These core habits of mind and practice should allow scholars to pursue what Green describes as history with "public purpose" (3). Her exploration of such "historianship," as Green terms it, and especially of the value of such thinking for policymakers, is the book's great strength. Its critical contribution to the discipline's self-conception is important and should receive wide consideration among historians interested in what they might offer in the policy realm.

The goal of such efforts, Green argues, should be to embed the processes of historical thinking and analysis in government. The assessment of this "Historians' Toolkit" that she sets out in *History, Policy and Public Purpose* is immensely valuable. Green identifies five skills that, ideally, should make historians useful participants in a policymaking team. These include the able to asses and interpret patterns across time: "discerning the sequence of happenings is a fundamental task that allows historians to trace, explain and define continuities, transitions and ruptures in the topic of study" (66) in ways that might otherwise be ignored or misdiagnosed in the policy process. A key second skill consists of using context to derive meaning. Green describes this "weaving of context" as "a form of oscillation between past and present which incrementally builds up a map or image representing the historians' understanding of the past in the present" (72)—which can then be shared with others in the policy process. Third, historians are uniquely skilled at analyzing comparative relationships between past events and current circumstances (the contested field of analogies) or, more generally, between different factors shaping a policy choice. A fourth and closely related strength lies in the integration and synthesis of large volumes of complex information, an act inherent to both historical writing and policy development. Finally, historians are adept at persuasion, although Green allows that in terms of reaching public and political audiences, rather than other scholars, many historians will need to adopt more accessible forms (and consider what compromises might be acceptable).

On the basis of these tools for policy, Green envisions something new: a "mixed policy unit" that would allow a new sort of "co-production in government" among experts from different fields (academic and non-academic) (53). Participation, she notes, might require abjuring the priority of "speaking truth to

power” because it establishes a divide “between academe and policy that makes collaboration problematic” (55). She is persuasive about the value of historical skills for such policy teams, particularly for readers already familiar with the methods and strengths of historical research and analysis. Where *History, Policy and Public Purpose* falls short, however, is in articulating how the unpersuaded—notably, most of the policy community as currently constructed—might be convinced of the case for including historians and historical analysis in their processes. “Mixed policy units” would represent a significant departure from current policymaking structures, and Green offers little insight into how such a shift might be initiated. Instead, the book explores disciplinary questions that are important and useful for historians concerned with the internal state of their discipline, but that are peripheral to the question of how to accomplish the transformation in government called for at *History, Policy and Public Purpose*’s most ambitious moments. For example, Green offers an extended assessment of possibilities for reorienting history teaching around analytically-focused practices of historical reasoning. This connects to a larger analysis of the field of public history, and its differences between the U.S. and U.K., as a potential vehicle for history conducted with “public purpose” in mind.

Green’s ideas about pedagogy are first rate, and offer potential inspiration for university teachers in this area (and may be a key reason for readers to engage the book as a whole). Yet the material does little to build a case for how historians can do more to connect with policymaking, the ostensible goal of the book. Similarly, the material on public history has the feel of an extended aside on the utility of the subfield as a separate specialty. It too will be of interest to readers with interests in those areas, but does not really extend Green’s points about history in government itself. Questions might also be raised about whether Green overextends her critique of the case study. The recent interest among many historians in writing historically informed opinion pieces, and their success at placing them in major publications, suggests that public and even policymaker-demand for specific, expert historical knowledge may be greater than Green suggests.

These critiques should not obscure Alix Green’s accomplishments in articulating the value of the historians’ toolkit in public life. In a time of demands for the humanities to demonstrate their value beyond the academy, Green has performed a real service in thoughtfully explaining the skills that historians use, and demonstrating their value. In terms of building actual connections between scholars and policymaking, however, far more work and thought will be needed.

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