

risks, applying a veneer of interpretation that doesn't always work to the book's advantage, but at least, in the very tradition that he is discussing, he opts to be bold. He also makes you wonder if, against your better judgement, he might be correct, and this can only serve to revitalise the creaky old debate about where our notion of freedom of speech came from. It should also be mentioned that the book is very well written.

Diana Newton. *North-East England 1569-1625: Governance, Culture and Identity*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006. x + 214 pp. £50.00 / \$85.00. Review by MARTYN BENNETT, NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY.

Dr. Newton's book deals with a significant region of the kingdom of England. She rightly places this geographic part as centrally important to the union of crowns in 1603. To people both sides of the border in the later years of Elizabeth I's reign, the question of succession was important. No one was allowed to speculate publicly on what would happen: Elizabeth disliked mention of the issue, not for fear of death, but for fear of drifting from the centre of political attention once her successor was named and confirmed. James VI was frustrated by the constant avoidance of the question and sought confirmation and solace in international expressions of support (as well as the more dubious support offered by the failure of a diabolic attempt on his life at the beginning of the 1590s).

In the borderlands, the issue of succession had a double edge. The borders were culturally diverse, and they were unruly. There were special jurisdictions in place, and the rule of law could be flouted by gangs, or more precisely clans of criminals known as the "surnames." These lawless families raided rival groups and their tenants periodically and violently, precisely because they were on a border where cultures, legal principles and jurisdiction met untidily. If the crowns were united then these border shires would stop being the rough edges of two kingdoms jostling against each other and become the centre of a new, rebalanced nation. Thus the questions of culture, order and lawlessness could be thrown into very different lights whenever succession was mentioned. Borders and fringes were important to Tudor and Stuart monarchs in their respective kingdoms; governance in these areas threw into relief the ability of a monarch to rule their entire kingdom. James

VI was battling with various fringes around his kingdom, and Elizabeth was preoccupied for much of the 1590s with colonial Ireland, but both were drawn back to this particular border.

Newton deals with the eastern part, the counties of Northumberland and Durham, the northernmost of which contained two of the subdivisions of the border, the east march and the middle march. Cumberland constituted the west march. These marches had their own devolved government to some extent but were swept up under the control of the Council of the North. Nevertheless each warden had some autonomy, and their personality and socio-political connections were crucial to good government in the region. Newton examines the importance of studying this region by justifying (perhaps unnecessarily) the nature and importance of regional studies, the definitions of region, etc. The most important part of this argument is that which points to the importance this area has for the development of British history, precisely because the area was the raw edge of two conjoined nations, and therefore its government was important for the English nation's credence as a state.

The real meat of the work comes with the analysis of the region through various focal points—culture, law, social order elites and government and of course religion—which would be important given work on the composition of royalist armies some seventeen years later. The book first looks at the elite families in the region: their structure, marriage patterns, social origins, particularly in relation to their location in the rural and urban gentry, using and, at the same time, critiquing the various forms of analysis developed during the past fifty years since gentry studies became common. Dr. Newton portrays the elites of the north east as less than parochial and suggests that as a group they were beginning to see themselves as a socio-economic class, at least in an embryonic sense. The focus shifts from a general overview of the elites to look at those involved in government, in which arena there was a division between the rural gentry which seemed to be quite county-bound and the urban gentry who were more peripatetic in their administrative responsibilities. From this point it is a natural movement to look at the “crisis of border government.” Here there seems a shift. As a border group, the Tudor regime saw the locals as ineffective and not to be trusted. Central government interference through Council of the North or via more direct means was the norm. However, with the group now part of the centre of the

kingdom, James placed far greater trust in the region's elite, further developing their class identity.

Whilst the religious element of the region was, according to Dr. Newton, generally a picture of peaceful coexistence as elsewhere in the country, there were periods of crisis such as the Northern Rising of 1569 and smaller crises caused by international politics throughout the period, which impacted on the relationship between Protestant and Catholic. Generally however the Catholic population was not a distinct community; families intermarried and did not necessarily develop fully as either Catholic or Protestant by tradition. In a cultural sense the region was not insular either.

The book demonstrates particularly well the differing views of the region. Lawlessness, seen from the south, was related to the borderers' predilection to not see the clarity of the drawn border in the same way as the southern-based government observers. That the ordinary people of the north east intermingled with the Scots was a problem to the Tudors and their national security. That the northern governors were a party to the cross-border cohabitation (and its illegal side) was a problem until 1603. For James, the lack of borderline clarity was exactly the opposite; intermingling could symbolise harmony in the middle of the kingdom. Far from hectoring the locals, James encouraged them. This book demonstrates why both policies existed and why they were both derived from the character of the region and its elites, cultures and communities. Neither view was right or wrong; it was the circumstances (as well as the ruler) which had changed.

This book is an important addition to our understanding of localities and geographic divisions as well as national governance and unification. It deserves a wide audience and is a laudable multifaceted work that creates a rounded picture of government, the regions and union.