

idea of “unreformed” and “reformed” periods in the church between 1780 and 1840. Nor is Slinn credulous about the value of a university degree; clearly some graduates got little benefit from an undergraduate education, especially at Cambridge where the emphasis was on mathematics and the sciences. The so-called Cambridge ten-year Bachelor of Divinity statute seemed designed to award a degree to those who had not attended the university at all. What literates might have lacked, perhaps, was the sophistication and polish that attending a university could bring. It is undoubtedly the case that graduates were much more likely to rise through the ranks of the church than were literates—as late as 1870 Gladstone was embarrassed to discover that his newly appointed bishop of St. Asaph, Joshua Hughes, had a Bachelor of Divinity from Lampeter rather than from Cambridge.

Slinn also explores the interesting idea of the social distance between parson and parishioner. If it is the case that, with rising clerical incomes and a greater tendency towards clerical magistracy, some clergy were becoming remote from their parishioners, the use of literates might have been an opportunity to reduce that gap. However, Slinn is careful to avoid the assumption that literates were more likely to be socially compatible with their parishioners than were graduates. There is no clear evidence that graduate or literate clergy were more or less successful pastorally.

In general, Slinn’s work is methodologically robust and she demonstrates a caution in her judgments. Her research across a very wide range of archival sources is exemplary. She has also been fortunate in having access to the papers of the Elland Society, which have been planned for publication by the Church of England Record Society for some years, and remain inexplicably delayed. However, it is unfortunate that she frames her study with use of Peter Virgin’s *The Church in an Age of Negligence* (1989), a work that has now been largely discredited. She also relies heavily on the Clergy of the Church of England Database. The database, though a useful tool for historians, is by no means complete or accurate—some periods are incomplete, and records and data for the complete periods are often badly fragmented (this is especially so for Wales, for which it remains a source on which scholars cannot rely)—so scholars approach it warily. Nevertheless, Slinn’s is a useful study that will inform discussion on clerical educational standards in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It will also contribute to the study of clerical career patterns and the wider issues of the relations between parsons and parishioners.

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JON STOBART and MARK ROTHERY. *Consumption and the Country House*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 320. \$110.00 (cloth).
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Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery’s *Consumption and the Country House* is a key output from a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In their book, Stobart and Rothery seek to bridge the gap between eighteenth-century studies of the country house (typically concerned with high living and high art) and studies of consumption (concentrated on the middling sorts). On the one hand, they do this by embracing a much wider span of country-house consumption than is typical, including everyday goods such as candles and chickens, as well as paintings and books. On the other, they situate this consumption fully within networks of supply, exploring the identities and locale of retailers and craftsmen as well as the roles of family, friends and household servants. Their aim is to draw out the

everyday life of the country house, and their book amply reveals the sheer amount of time and effort, as well as money, involved in creating these places, and keeping them in good working order. Stobart and Rothery offer three detailed case studies: the Newdigates of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire; the Leighs of Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire; and the Drydens of Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire.

The book is organized thematically, into chapters concerned with elite and everyday spending, gender, and the roles of various parties implicated in the processes of consumption, from servants through to retailers. This allows Stobart and Rothery to accompany their detailed presentation of quantitative research with fuller qualitative analysis, although it does also lead to repetition between chapters, considerable use of backward and forward signposting, and diminishes some of the power of the individual biographies. One of the key themes of the early chapters is the varied nature of motivations behind elite spending. Unsurprisingly, a key focus is the acquisition of expensive “positional” items that emphasized social status, such as coaches, silverware and livery, although the Stobart and Rothery also seek to temper any binary of “old” and “new” luxury (24). These families also fully engaged with the latest commodities, such as mahogany and japanned ware, and acquisitions such as silver tea ware, engraved with coats of arms, could span the two. Sometimes, outmoded items, such as tapestries, would be “cooled” in a lumber room before being disposed of, but often old things would be kept, carrying personal and emotional significance, as well as underscoring the stability of the family and providing a crucial “patina glow of history” (103, 106). And that silver tea service would also facilitate the consumption of a stimulating drink, at the center of rituals of sociability, thus providing “comfort” in a broad sense. In addition, Stobart and Rothery are concerned to emphasize that the individuals they analyze do not conform to any stereotype of the spendthrift aristocrat but lived within their means and also spent on production through investment.

Stobart and Rothery engage very briefly with issues of cosmopolitanism, both continental and European, but they do dwell for two chapters on issues of gender. The findings they offer in these chapters are less compelling than those of others and include particularly pronounced examples of the authors’ wider tendency to engage overly combatively with existing scholarship—sometimes setting research against “yawning gaps” in the literature; sometimes producing straw men (109). However, the discussion features a valuable emphasis on variation across life courses and between generations, as well as fascinating analysis of two single landed women: the unmarried Mary Leigh and the widowed Elizabeth Dryden. Stobart and Rothery describe how Leigh went from being a fashionable lady in London in the 1750s and ’60s to having much in common with landowners of either sex after her inheritance of Stoneleigh. Dryden, meanwhile, struggling with debts, evoked the authority of her rank when it served her purposes and patriarchal principles when necessary in order to present her unfortunate situation as entirely her late husband’s responsibility.

The book is at its strongest in the discussions of the mechanisms of consumption. Stobart and Rothery provide detailed analyses of how many craftsmen and retailers were used by these households, for how many things, how they came to be patronized, and the various mechanisms of credit. Some of this was common to middling consumers, but the significance of the country house to many economic lives becomes abundantly apparent, as does the degree to which the elite could be more relaxed about prompt payment, as well as the greater variety of routes to consumption open to them, from personal shopping through correspondence to delegation to the housekeeper or steward. Unsurprisingly, London dominates the analysis here: the capital accounted for around three times as much spending at Stoneleigh, for example, as did everywhere else combined. However, Stobart and Rothery have a few points to make to nuance the geographical story one would expect, unpicking patterns of spending in local towns, for example. Most compellingly, they point out that “local” was contingent for an elite consumer who would probably live in two or more locations in any one year. Furthermore, they reveal that the sheer number and range of available retailers meant

that there was no set body of aristocratic suppliers in London as in Paris, and two houses less than twenty miles apart (Arbury and Stoneleigh) could have barely any suppliers in common, metropolitan or local.

The chapter “Consumption and the Household” contains the most valuable insights of the book. Stobart and Rothery point up the sometimes persistent power and influence of dowagers; they highlight the role of trustees and guardians in the shaping and success of an estate; and they provide a particularly fascinating account of stewards, who are surely worth more sustained historical attention. As in so many places in this book, the most striking point here is the sheer variety of possible scenarios: from William Peacock at Canons Ashby, who managed the estate in Lady Dryden’s absence, following her orders closely; through Richard Jee, near redundant on the estate of the micromanaging Sir Roger Newdigate; to Samuel Butler at Stoneleigh, a compelling figure, who not only evoked his master’s authority in his dealings with retailers and craftsmen, but also his own. This chapter opens up valuable territory ripe for future research and, like the book as a whole, provides a valuable building block in the ongoing, increasingly interesting and rich field of country house studies.

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HELEN THOMPSON. *Fictional Matter: Empiricism, Corpuscles, and the Novel*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 359. \$59.95 (cloth).
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Displaying an impressive command of early modern science in her engaging and highly interdisciplinary *Fictional Matter: Empiricism, Corpuscles, and the Novel*, Helen Thompson strives to (re)assert the central place of “Corpuscularian Philosophy” (1) in the history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British culture. In Thompson’s compelling account, the corpuscle hypothesized by Robert Boyle and variously deployed by Isaac Newton, John Locke, and some of the period’s novelists postulates that all matter is made up of miniscule parts that cannot be sensed directly. Instead, the corpuscle’s existence can only be established relationally; consequently, it produces knowledge in the perceiving subject despite—or, more accurately, because of—its evasion of the viewer’s senses. One of Thompson’s many examples is illustrative here: that a chemical process such as sublimation can make a substance such as sulfur disappear from the bottom of a flask only to reappear on the flask’s sides shortly after establishes that sulfur is composed of minute particles precisely *because* it disappears for a time (3–4).

Modern accounts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and the novel, Thompson argues, have elided the period’s indebtedness to corpuscularian philosophy, with its attendant interest in “imperceptible causes” and “sensed qualities” such as “sourness or acidity” (1). As a result, empiricism is often presented as a mimetic mode of knowing that relies exclusively on a direct, one-to-one transposition of the external world to sensory perception. For Thompson, however, such an understanding neglects the period’s interest in “corpuscular matter’s power to stimulate empirical knowledge” (69). In *Fictional Matter*, histories of early science by critics such as Ian Hacking, Karen Barad, Steven Shapin, and Simon Schaffer as well as literary histories of the novel by Michael McKeon and Ian Watt are equally implicated in this construction of a “‘realist’ regime of transparently apprehended and transparently rendered facts” (1) that Thompson seeks to refute. Thompson convincingly demonstrates that, in failing to