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# The Literary Cultures of the Scottish Reformation

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## **Abstract**

Throughout the twentieth century Scottish literary studies was dominated by a critical consensus, engineered by Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid, which addressed the anti-Catholic atmosphere of early twentieth-century Scotland by rereading the reformation. Previously, Scotland and Scottishness had been regularly identified as 'Protestant'; for Muir and MacDiarmid, the reformation instead became the moment when the rich culture of medieval Scotland was replaced by an anti-aesthetic tyranny of life and letters. 'Authentic' Scottish literature has therefore repeatedly been defined in opposition to the Scottish Calvinism that appears at its heart. This consensus appears increasingly untenable. This article traces the impact of this anti-theological bias, linking the Muir-MacDiarmid thesis with the continuing neglect of writing by early modern Scottish women. It then surveys relevant genres, arguing that a large proportion of early modern writing can usefully be described as 'theological'. The article suggests that antipathy towards theological concerns occludes significant writing across a wider range of letters than the Muir-MacDiarmid thesis initially indicated.

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