This book challenges the critical approach to Scottish Reformation literature, dominant in the twentieth century, which sees Protestant writing as turgid, overly theological and unattractive. The essays, predominantly by literary scholars rather than historians, seek to shed new light on various aspects of the religious literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although one suspects that Reformation literature may remain for the most part marginalised in the canon, the book makes a valuable contribution in drawing our attention to the often lively literary culture that Reformation Scotland created.

The book is divided into three sections, “Contexts,” “Texts,” and “Reception.” The first section begins with David George Mullan’s reflections on Scottish Reformation literature, and serves as a continuation of Crawford Gribben’s introduction. Marina Dossena’s contribution introduces the vital issue of language choice, which resonates in several places throughout the volume. David Allan’s chapter on neo-Latin poetry makes a strong case for the significance of the genre, and its suitability as a medium both for exploring Reformation ideas, and for making oneself heard across Europe. The “Texts” section comprises the bulk of the book, with seven essays focusing on specific pieces of writing. It is worth noting that the emphasis is predominantly on well-known authors and texts, with Rudolph Almasy and Kenneth Farrow exploring John Knox’s writing, Astrid Stilma
focusing on James VI’s theological prose, and Amanda J. Piesse discussing David Lindsay’s *Satire of the Thrie Estaitis* (a chapter which is nicely echoed in the “Reception” section by Adrienne Scullion’s study of twentieth century performances of the play). Slightly less famous authors like Alexander Montgomerie and Hume of Godscroft are covered by Mark Sweetnam and David Reid respectively, while Deirdre Serjeantson attempts to tease out the possible Scottish influences on the development of a more imaginative religious literature in late Elizabethan England. Scullion’s chapter in the final and very brief “Reception” section is accompanied by Martin Holt Dotterweich’s study of Murdoch Nisbet’s use of Coverdale’s 1537/8 New Testament in adding to his existing manuscript Lollard Bible.

All of the chapters offer some useful insights into Scottish Reformation literature, and provide examples of the value of close textual analysis and linguistic awareness to historians as well as literary scholars for whom such techniques are second nature. This reviewer, however, found that the most stimulating chapters were those dealing with the less familiar texts. The chapters by Serjeantson and Allan, for example, put some lesser-known Scottish writers firmly in a British and European context, while Sweetnam’s study of Montgomerie’s complex religious verse adds to a growing emphasis in Reformation historiography away from sharp confessional identities towards more fluid sets of allegiances and ways of thinking. Overall, there is no clear narrative emerging from this series of in-depth studies, a fact about which the editors are admirably open. In a sense, this is an inevitable result of the broad range of subject matter, and perhaps the inherent ambiguities in the relationship between the Reformation and literature (and art more generally). However, the concluding remarks by David George Mullan occupy just four pages, leaving the reader wishing for a more thorough exploration of the book’s implications for the role of literature in the Reformation,
and the impact of religious reform on the written word.

The recent success of books like James Robertson’s *The Testament of Gideon Mack* and Bill Duncan’s *The Wee Book of Calvin* shows that Scottish literary culture remains influenced by themes and ideas which have their root specifically in the Reformation period, even if the relationship is far from straightforward. This collection of essays achieves its aim of demonstrating that the literature of the Scottish Reformation should be appreciated as writing, as well as historical evidence. It showcases some of the insights which the close reading of Reformation texts can add to our historical understanding, and should go some way towards bridging the gap between the tribes of historians and literary scholars working on the period.

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