



Ludwig Boltzmann Institut
Neulateinische Studien

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A Literary Revolution: Didactic Poetry and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Scotland

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Modern scholars of both the History of Science and intellectual history in Scotland have painted a particularly bleak picture of the progress of scientific culture within the kingdom from the mid-16th to the mid-17th centuries. The general scholarly consensus is that Scotland remained wedded to a traditional Aristotelian view of the material universe, and that this view was the only one propagated in the universities of Scotland. Both strands of scholarship have, however, failed to appreciate the importance of the poetic didactic tradition in the formation, dissemination, and maintenance of key ideas and discourses from the revolution. This talk will explore the nature of role played in this regard by a manuscript edition of, and prose commentary to George Buchanan's *De Sphaera*. The MS was written by Adam King, a former professor of mathematics and philosophy at the University of Paris in the 16th century. He intended it to be used by his nephew William King for instruction in mathematics and astronomy at the then new University of Edinburgh. The edition provides crucial evidence of how poetry and a neo-Latin literary tradition became an important tool of serious (and radical) scientific discussion, which demonstrates the importance of understanding neo-Latin literary culture for the progress of scientific culture more broadly across Europe.

