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Sommario/riassunto	This study tries, through a systematic and historical analysis of the concept of critical authority, to write a history of literary criticism from the end of the 17th to the end of the 18th century that not only takes the discursive construction of its (self)representation into account, but also the social and economic conditions of its practice. It tries to consider the whole of the critical discourse on literature and criticism in the time period covered. Thus, it is distinctive through its methodology (there is no systematic account of the historical development of critical authority and no discussion of the institutionalization of criticism of such a scope), its material of analysis (most of the many hundred texts self-reflexively commenting on criticism that are discussed here have

been so far virtually ignored) and through its results, a complex history of criticism in the 18th century that is neither reductive nor the accumulation of isolated aspects or author figures, but that probes into the very nature of the activity of criticism. The aim of this study is both to provide a thorough historical understanding of the emergence of criticism and as a consequence an understanding of the inner workings and power relations that structure criticism to this day.
