

Eighteenth Century Criticism

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The exiles returning from France with Charles II swung England into line with continental criticism which took its bearings from the **Poetics** of Aristotle and the **ArsPoetica** of Horace. French critics from Boileau to Bossuet had built up a system of abstract rules which claimed to be authoritative with respect to each several form of literary work, a poem or play being good or bad in virtue not of its intrinsic qualities but of its fidelity to the nature of its "kind". Example of each 'kind' for guidance were to hand from classical literature.

The apogee of eighteenth century "correctness" is represented by AlexanderPope. He was a conscious artist : "I corrected because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write" (Preface to works, 1717).