It was the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, which compelled numerous Greek scholars to move westward with their rich treasures of ancient Greek and Roman art and literature.The standards of judgment were theocratic, rather than literary and aesthetic.With the revival of classical learning all this was changed.No gentleman, no one with any pretensions to culture and refinement, could do without a knowledge of the ancient classics .The Ars Poetica of Horace had been known throughout the middle ages, and now during the Renaissance it wielded a wide and far–reaching influence on literary theory and criticism in Italy, France, and England.The chief characteristics of English literary criticism during the Renaissance are clearly brought out, if we briefly consider the course of its evolution during the 16th and early 17th centuries.Harvey's Letters and Webb's Discourse of English Poetrie are the first systematic attempts to introduce classical metres into English poetry.The second stage was followed by a stage of philosophical and apologetic criticism.During this phase, form and style as distinguishing features of literature were studied, and the result was the formation and development of English prose style.The second stage was a stage of classification of poetic forms and metrical studies.Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie is the first systematic classification of poetic forms and subjects, and of rhetori– cal figures.Literary theory and criticism received a new emphasis, and there was a marked change in outlook from theocratic to secular.The best and most representative work of this kind is, of course, Sidney's Defence of Poetry, 1595.The forth stage of Renaissance criticism occupies the first half of the 17th century, and Ben Jonson is the most important literary critic of the age.In the first stage, the study of literature was purely rhetorical.Gabriel Harvey is another representative of the Rhetorical school of criticism.The great works of antiquity were translated and edited in large numbers and were broadcast all over Europe.There was a spurt of transla– tions.It passed .through five more or less distinct stages of development, and in all the stages (except the fifth) it is the Italian influence which predominates.

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