

## **Bembo's 'Antique Sandal': The Idea of Imitation in Speroni and Du Bellay**

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### **Abstract**

This essay begins with the debate in the Italian Renaissance on the question of the primacy of Latin vis-à-vis Italian. Whereas Imitation theory in writing Latin was well established, the pioneers in vernacular Italian like Giovan Francesco Pico and Pietro Bembo debated the pros and cons of imitation of Latin writers in Italian. Sperone Speroni in a dialogue formulated the various opinions on the question. French Renaissance poet Joachim du Bellay, faced with a similar task of forging the vernacular in France, took a leaf from Speroni and Bembo. Both Bembo and Du Bellay conceived of their theory of imitation as the principal instrument of reformation of the contemporary culture of poetry. Both of them took upon themselves the task of steering the poetic practice and its theory out of confusion and chaos into a deliberate, premeditated and enthusiastic course of action. The paper by following the trajectories of the Imitation theory in Renaissance Italy and France, attempts to demonstrate the connected nature of European discourse on the influence of the classics in the formation of the vernaculars.

**Keywords:** Renaissance Imitation theory, Latin and vernacular debate, Renaissance prose styles, Ciceronianism, Giovan Francesco Pico, Pietro Bembo, Joachim du Bellay, Renaissance Italian prose, Sperone Speroni.