



The Renaissance Epic and the Oral Past (Yale Studies in English)

By Anthony Welch

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This book explores why Renaissance epic poetry clung to fictions of song and oral performance in an age of growing literacy. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets, Anthony Welch argues, came to view their written art as newly distinct from the oral cultures of their ancestors. Welch shows how the period's writers imagined lost civilizations built on speech and song—from Homeric Greece and Celtic Britain to the Americas—and struggled to reconcile this oral inheritance with an early modern culture of the book. Welch's wide-ranging study offers a new perspective on Renaissance Europe's epic literature and its troubled relationship with antiquity.

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Review

"Welch's multipronged argument repays careful rereading, and his lyrical prose commands grateful admiration....This consistently learned and imaginative book will be of significant interest not only to scholars of Renaissance literature and music but also to classists...."—Leah Whittington, *Modern Philology* (Leah Whittington *Modern Philology*)

"Anthony Welch presents for the reader a panorama of epic and narrative poets in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who fought a losing battle but in the process made a fascinating series of experiments before prose writers took narrative away from them. Anyone who studies Renaissance epic needs to read this book."—Michael Murrin, *Clio*

(Michael Murrin *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History*)

"Welch's . . . accomplished study considers early modern crossovers between epic and oral song as modeled in an ancient oral culture that Renaissance humanists both idealized and mocked."—Leah S. Marcus, *SEL* (Leah S. Marcus *SEL*)

About the Author

Anthony Welch is assistant professor of English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

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