

**Technology in Society:
The Pipe Organ in Early Modern England**

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(ABSTRACT)

The rise of English Protestantism produced a curious phenomenon in early modern England: the silencing of pipe organs in cathedrals and parish churches across the land. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this ecclesiastical instrument figuratively embodied and literally gave voice to the Roman Catholic Church. Because this ancient technology was perceived to be emblematic of much that was despised in Catholic ritual, it came under assault by the Anglicans, the Puritans, the Monarchy, the Parliament, Oliver Cromwell's army, and even the militant rabble-rouser in the street. My dissertation shows that it was the symbolic role played by the organ that bore the responsibility for this violence. My hypothesis is further enhanced by an investigation of the events immediately following the Commonwealth Era, when the Restoration of the Monarchy resulted in the restoration of the pipe organ.

In this detailed case study, I examine the role of the organ as a stable technology in the unstable society of early modern England. During the time that the ecclesiastical organ personified the Roman Catholic Church, it was persecuted. As soon as the balance of power shifted, this symbolism was no longer significant and the King of Instruments was restored to its long-accustomed place in the service of worship in English society. My analysis of the multifaceted relationship that existed between this well-established, essentially transparent technology and the diverse social structures that attempted to annihilate it shows the significance of using the concept of technology as symbol as an appropriate analytical category for interpreting the history of the organ in early modern England.

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