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# Understanding Long Reformation in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungarian Puritanism Revisited

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**Abstract:** With the focus on Calvinist Reformation I propose a case study on Hungarian Puritanism that will allow further extrapolations, projections, and some general remarks regarding the entire process of the Hungarian Reformation. This paper draws on the findings of my research examining the reception of English Puritanism in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania. I intend to unearth the problematic aspects of cultural and intellectual transfers in an attempt to decipher the intricacies of how Puritan-Calvinist ideas were accepted and incorporated in the religious culture of Hungarian Calvinists. My concern is primarily related to the receiving Hungarian context and its historical evolution. For both the Hungarian Reformation and Hungarian Puritanism appear to have been newly emerging religious cultures resulting from a mixed tradition consisting of transferred ideas and native components. My contention is that the process of transfers and translations are not mechanical takeovers, borrowings or replacements, but a rather complex hermeneutical process of understanding, explaining and applying ideas to the needs of the receivers. One of the major findings of my article is that the application of the concept of long Reformation to the Hungarian case, in line with the latest developments of the field, will not only provide a more suitable historical framework, but it will put to use a repertoire of methodological novelties nurturing the understanding of the entire process of the Reformation based on the transfers of ideas and their consequent reception.

**Keywords:** long Reformation, Puritanism, transfer, translation, master narrative, native religious culture, assimilated tradition

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# 1 Introduction

Envisaging Reformation as a process that supposedly altered or even replaced a former religious culture with a new one, appears to be a dangerously simplifying statement. Yet the claim is not without some merit. For the emergence of any early modern *Reformed religious culture* is unmistakably related to a prior (*late medieval religious culture*) testifying to the existence and effects of a process of transformation during which the *native and inherited tradition* was altered or even replaced by a *new or an invented tradition*. Moreover, this process of transformations brought about two further alternatives. In some western European cases, such as the Holy Roman Empire, reformers emerged from a native religious culture and acted as primary agents of transformations and changes. Therefore, in these cases the so-called Reformed religious culture came into being as an indigenous or native enterprise. In Eastern Europe, and in particular in late medieval Hungary, one can see a different pattern; as those determinant individuals, who could have transformed or at least controlled the transformation of the indigenous or native religious culture, were missing from the late medieval elite. Without the reforming activities of these agents, Reformation developed as a result of a complex process of cultural encounters followed by transfers and translations. Thus, in this case the so-called Reformed religious culture appears to have emerged as just a partially *indigenous or native enterprise*, as it evolved mostly from assimilated external ideas and practices. Finally, this admittedly simplified explanation suggests that both contemporary and the posteriorly articulated historiographic accounts distinguished between two major types of Reformation master narratives. While in Western Europe, as the German case seems to suggest, Reformation has usually been defined as a process of renovation and (re)invention of the extant inherited late medieval native tradition performed by native reformers, in the Eastern part of the continent Reformation became the equivalent of a process of transfers and translations serving the reception of an assimilated tradition only mediated by native reformers.

This latter pattern established itself as the dominant viewpoint of the Hungarian historiography on Reformation, which apparently relied on the possibilities of intellectual history or history of ideas in order to reconstruct how Reformed ideas were transferred to Hungarian culture. In addition, the institution of *peregrinatio academica* received particular attention as the main vehicle for the transfer of ideas. Similarly, the production of translations, very often associated with the attendance of western universities by Hungarian students, along with the acquisition of books, constituted the dominant historical explanation for modelling the reception of Reformed ideas, or even explaining their alleged influence upon Hungarian individuals and communities. However, this approach is undeniably not without its flaws and pitfalls and I intend to identify some questionable aspects of it.

With the focus on Calvinist Reformation I propose a case study on Hungarian Puritanism that will allow further extrapolations, projections and some general remarks regarding the *entire process* of Hungarian Reformation. My intention is to draw on the findings of my research examining the reception of English Puritanism in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania during the seventeenth century. I intend to unearth the problematic aspects of cultural and intellectual transfers in an attempt to decipher the intricacies of how Puritan-Calvinist ideas were accepted and incorporated in the religious culture of Hungarian Calvinists. My concern is primarily related to the receiving Hungarian context and its historical evolution from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century in order to delineate the chronologic confines of a long Hungarian Reformation. Both Hungarian Reformation and Hungarian Puritanism appear to have been newly emerging religious cultures resulting from a mixed tradition consisting of transferred ideas and native components. My contention is that the process of transfers and translations are not mechanical takeovers, borrowings or replacements, but a rather complex hermeneutical process of understanding, explaining and applying ideas to the needs of the receivers.

The case of Hungarian Puritanism as a well-documented process of reception allows us a complex analysis on both the macro and micro-level, improving understanding of how early modern transfers and translations of ideas brought about the development of a Puritan-oriented Calvinist religious culture. In a first step I shall briefly assess the findings of the secondary literature on Hungarian Puritanism, then I shall proceed to reflect upon the process of reception described by the scholarship. With the deliberate aim of unfolding the cultural and historical otherness of Hungarian Puritan religious culture, I shall very concisely compare the findings and dominant trends of English and Hungarian scholarship on Puritanism. I shall argue that Hungarian Puritanism, lacking the political agenda and theological diversity of English Puritanism, had a rather different character and as a historical process followed a different course, pace and timing. I will conclude with a proposal urging for further comparative researches. One of the major findings of my article is that the application of the concept of long Reformation<sup>1</sup> to the Hungarian case, in line with the latest developments of the field, will not only provide a more suitable historical framework, but it will put to use a repertoire of methodological novelties nurturing the understanding of the entire process of the Reformation based on transfers and translations of ideas, and their consequent reception.

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<sup>1</sup> Secondary literature on long Reformation include: Nicholas Tyacke, ed., *England's Long Reformation 1500–1800* (London: UCL Press, 1998); Peter G. Wallace, *The Long European Reformation: Religion, Political Conflict, and the Search for Conformity, 1350–1750* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); John McCallum, ed., *Scotland's Long Reformation. New Perspectives on Scottish Religion, c. 1500-c. 1660* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, ed., *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in Northern Europe c. 1300–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

## 2 Hungarian Puritanism as a Chapter of the Calvinist Reformation

The seventeenth century saw a major shift in Hungarian students attending western universities, as not only German, but more and more Dutch and English institutes enrolled students coming from Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. The outbreak of the Thirty Years' War and its prolonged duration would firmly establish some clear destinations for Hungarians both in Dutch territories and in England. It was due to this particular context that a pietistic Calvinism, shaped by the influence of William Perkins and William Ames, alongside some other English Puritan divines, such as Lewis Bayly or later on Richard Baxter, impregnated Hungarian Calvinism; and a great number of Latin and even English devotional and theological works were translated and disseminated both in Royal Hungary and Transylvania. It is probably safe to say that Hungarian Puritanism came into existence due to the *peregrinatio academica* and exercised a determining influence upon Hungarian Calvinist spirituality from the early seventeenth until the end of the eighteenth century.

The aim of this section is to dwell on the dominant trends of the historiography of Hungarian Puritanism, in order to formulate some critical remarks concerning the misperception of cultural transfers in the early modern era. Yet, I do not engage in providing a complete survey of the secondary literature, rather I am preoccupied to reconstruct some of the relevant internal and external viewpoints undertaken by experts in Hungarian Puritanism.

### 2.1 The Internal Account: The Findings of Hungarian Scholarship

As an ecclesiastical historian, Jenő Zoványi<sup>2</sup> focussed on the partially successful efforts of Hungarian Puritans to alter the established Church structure. He appears to have conceived Hungarian Puritanism as a radical Reformation movement challenging the authority of orthodox Calvinism expressed by the desire to replace the episcopal system with the Presbyterian system of Church organisation, which had not been carried out all over in the Principality of Transylvania. Despite the temporary or short-lived attempts to erect presbyteries, the process was extremely long; for it had been met with consistent resistance from both the high clergy and the nobility, including the entourage of the Prince, George II Rákóczi, who overtly

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<sup>2</sup> Jenő Zoványi, *Puritánus mozgalmak a magyar református egyházban* [Puritan Movements in the Hungarian Reformed Church] (Budapest: Magyar Protestáns Irodalmi Társaság, 1911).

opposed the initiative, too. Zoványi's narrative as an account of ecclesiastical history described Puritanism as a movement demanding reforms within the established structures of the Hungarian Calvinist Church, yet not powerful enough to prevail over the orthodox Calvinist majority.

Although he followed the perspective of ecclesiastical history too, József Bodonhelyi's<sup>3</sup> major concern was to unfold the pietistic religiosity of the Hungarian Puritans originating from England in an attempt to reproduce the reception of English Puritanism in Hungarian culture. In addition, he was preoccupied to trace the often-ignored particular evolution of Hungarian Puritan piety nurtured by the transfer of the practical theology of William Perkins (1558–1602) and William Ames (1576–1633). With the focus on the Puritan treatment of such determining concepts as conscience or election vs. reprobation, he was successful to a considerable extent in reconstructing and evaluating the devotional dimensions of Hungarian Puritanism. Unlike Zoványi, Bodonhelyi's efforts were not concentrated on retelling how the Puritans failed to impose the Presbyterian system; rather he strived to unearth the immediate textual patterns that had carved the features of Hungarian Puritan godly spirituality as a religious culture.

The Anglicist Pál Berg<sup>4</sup> followed a rather different approach as he was neither a student of Calvinist theology, nor an ecclesiastical historian. Still, his endeavour to provide a survey of the Hungarian and English cultural contacts based on the examination of the print corpus of those texts that had presumably English or England-related origins did have a significant impact upon the evolution of the study of Hungarian Puritanism. He identified altogether 48 English titles as sources or potential sources of the Hungarian Puritan devotional literature consisting mostly of full or partial translations and compilations. These texts included not only the three major authorities (William Perkins, William Ames, and Lewis Bayly)<sup>5</sup> of canonical Puritan literature, but some of the lesser known or less popular Puritans (William Cowper, Daniel Dyke, Dudley Fenner, and Alexander Grosse)<sup>6</sup> as well. Though he was not a trained theologian, he justly discerned how the English devotional practice of piety had been embraced due to cultural transfers by early modern Hungarian Calvinists. He also detected the essential differences in terms of political agenda and doctrinal radicalism between Hungarian and English Puritanism.<sup>7</sup>

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3 József Bodonhelyi, *Az angol puritanizmus lelki élete és magyar hatásai* [The Spirituality of English Puritanism and its Influences on Hungary] (Debrecen: Pannonia, 1942).

4 Pál Berg, *Angol hatások tizenhetedik századi irodalmunkban* [English Influences on Hungarian Literature During the Seventeenth Century] (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Orsz. Széchényi Könyvtára, 1946).

5 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 87–95.

6 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 95–8.

7 Berg, *Angol hatások*, 104.

László Makkai<sup>8</sup> and Attila Molnár<sup>9</sup> are two further contributors to this scholarship, yet their achievements are less conclusive. While Makkai advocated a Marxist interpretation drawing on the much-acclaimed thesis of revolution and reaction, Molnár insisted on the application of the Weberian thesis to the case of Hungarian Puritanism. None of these attempts produced remarkable additional knowledge for the field. Finally, István Ágoston<sup>10</sup> deserves a mention too, although his book is mainly a conspectus of the extant secondary literature. One cannot ignore the fact that despite some major political and cultural changes occurring after 1989, students of ecclesiastical history were not able to write a new history of the Hungarian Reformation benefitting from the recent findings of international scholarship. Sadly, the same applies to the ecclesiastical history of Hungarian Puritanism as well. Yet, Hungarian Puritanism is a rather popular research topic and several representatives of related disciplines have been permanently publishing significant findings. In particular, literary historians seem to be resolute in developing researches on Puritanism. Indeed, several fine efforts came out reflecting either single literary oeuvres related to Puritan authors, or examining general particularities of Puritan-oriented devotional culture and literature.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, literary historians appear to have a say in the evolution of the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism.

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**8** László Makkai, *A magyar puritánusok harca a feudalizmus ellen* [The Fight of the Hungarian Puritans against Feudalism] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1952).

**9** Attila Molnár, *A "protestáns etika" Magyarországon* [The "Protestant Ethic" in Hungary] (Debrecen: Ethnica 1994).

**10** István Ágoston, *A magyarországi puritanizmus gyökerei* [The Roots of Hungarian Puritanism] (Budapest: Kálvin Kiadó, 1997).

**11** Zsombor Tóth, *A koronatanú: Bethlen Miklós. Az „Élete leírása magától” és a XVII. századi puritanizmus* [The Memoirs of Count Miklós Bethlen in the Context of Seventeenth Century Hungarian and English Puritanism] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2007); Gergely Tamás Fazakas and János L. Győri, eds., *Medgyesi Pál redivivus. Tanulmányok a 17. századi puritanizmusról* [Pál Medgyesi Redivivus. Approaches to the Puritanism of the Seventeenth Century] (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem, 2008); Dávid Csorba, *A zászlós bárány nyomában. A magyar kálvinizmus 17. századi világa* [Following the Flag-bearing Lamb. The Hungarian Calvinism of the Seventeenth Century], *Speculum Historiae Debreceniense* 6 (Debrecen and Budapest: Kálvin János Kiadó, 2011); Tiborc Szabolcs Péntes, *“Valakik szikrának szárnya alatt vadnak...” Várad és a puritanizmus II. Rákóczi György idején* [Puritanism under George II Rákóczi, Prince of Transylvania] (Nagyvárad: Partium, 2014); Katalin Luffy, *“Romlás építőinek fognak nevezetni.” Prédikátori szerepek és alkalmi beszédek az Erdélyi Fejedelemség válsága idején* [Puritan Discourses and Performances Reflecting on the Tragic Destiny of the Principality of Transylvania] (Debrecen: University Press, 2015); Zsombor Tóth, *“The Importance of Being (In)Tolerant, the Strange Case of Transylvanian Puritanism,”* in *Reformed Majorities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Herman Selderhuis et al., *Refo500 Academic Studies* 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 89–108.

## 2.2 The External Account

It is most remarkable that the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism benefitted to some extent from the external view of those who assessed either the Hungarian Reformation in general or Calvinism in particular. Though none of them dedicated a complete book in particular to Hungarian Puritanism, both of the principal scholars worked on the Hungarian and Transylvanian Reformation, which unavoidably includes Puritanism as well.

Graeme Murdock,<sup>12</sup> relying on the English tradition of Reformation historiography, also described Puritanism through the Presbyterian vs. episcopal antagonism, whereby he also put the emphasis on the disputes over ecclesiastical authority in the Principality of Transylvania. In his view, the transfer of Puritan thought brought about the emergence of mainly Presbyterian and, to a lesser degree, independent initiatives within the Calvinist Church. Murdock's narrative of Hungarian Puritanism, which mainly reiterated the paramount findings of the traditional Hungarian ecclesiastical history, covered the timespan from the 1630s to 1660s.

An advocate of the German *Konfessionalisierung* thesis, István Keul,<sup>13</sup> provided a simplified and rather superficial account of a multid denominational society and culture, despite the application of the methods of narrative history. Unfortunately, the Puritan episode received disappointingly little attention in his treatment of the Calvinist Reformation, as he did not formulate any remarkable novelty. It appears that Keul imposed some very strict time limits throughout his book, and even constrained himself as a narrator to depict the entire history of the Reformation in a simplified and chronologically progressive account commencing in the 1520s and coming to its conclusion by the 1690s.

It seems that the external viewpoint was much more focused on the *structural* component of the reception of Puritanism; examining and comparing, first of all, how the dispute between the Presbyterian and episcopal parties had broken out and how it came to an end. To have this controversy embedded in the international context of Calvinist ecclesiastical history, or Reformation history in general, is undeniably important; yet the overall view and assessment of Hungarian Puritanism demands that the examination of *pietistic puritan devotion* be construed alongside it.

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<sup>12</sup> Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600–1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> István Keul, *Early Modern Religious Communities in East Central Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2009).

## 2.3 General Assessment of the Historiography of the Hungarian Puritanism

Having acknowledged the findings of these internal and external contributions, it is worth pausing over the general conclusions of the scholarship and the resulting overall perception of Hungarian Puritanism. It appears that Hungarian Puritanism emerged as the result of the transfer of certain theological ideas associated with English Puritanism, and mainly originated from the theological and pietistic devotional literature of Elizabethan and Stuart Puritanism. These transfers seem to have been taken place over a relatively short period of time, from the 1630s to the late 1660s, and the main vehicle enabling the spread of ideas was, of course, the institution of *peregrinatio academica*. Moreover, the major impact of these ideas was felt during the debates of the late 1640s and 1650s regarding Church organisation and authority issues as reflected in the Presbyterian vs. episcopal, or to a lesser extent Puritan vs. Orthodox, antagonistic exchanges. In addition, Puritanism also impregnated Hungarian devotional literature and Calvinist education, as numerous influential Puritan texts, some of them Latin, but English ones as well, were translated helping Puritan devotion and culture exercise a determining impact on Hungarian Calvinism which was still in the evolutionary process of development. Yet, one should not ignore the fact that according to scholarship, the main actors of these transfers were exclusively students of theology, who upon their return pursued careers as active members of the Calvinist clergy and remained devoted to an Orthodox Calvinist belief. Furthermore, according to the stance of the scholarship, not one lay person living in the seventeenth century has ever been remembered for having contributed to these transfers or as having been a devout practitioner of Puritan or pietistic religiosity. Apparently, the impact of English Puritanism did not penetrate the religious life and piety of lay people in Hungarian Calvinist culture and society; a bold claim that cannot be sustained anymore and which urges for further critical reflections on various assertions of the scholarship on Hungarian Puritanism.

## 3 Problematic Aspects of the Historiography of Hungarian Puritanism

It is now clear that the perception of Hungarian Puritanism envisaged by the secondary literature needs further refinements, as some of its claims and findings are often dangerously simplistic or articulated ignoring the possibilities of a complex comparative analysis. Bearing in mind these inconsistencies, the aim of



this section is to pinpoint some of the debatable methodological issues still in use when exploring Hungarian Puritanism. Even the most superficial comparison of the English and Hungarian scholarship of the field reveals some disturbing flaws on the Hungarian side often materialised in some missed research opportunities or unemployed methodologies. One of the most striking is the lack of complex comparison at the *micro* and *macro levels* of Hungarian, English or Dutch Puritanism; which could have ameliorated the possibilities of further contextualization. One of the benefits of this approach could have been a reassessment of the centre vs periphery issue alongside a shift from the prevailing transatlantic perception of Puritanism<sup>14</sup> toward a more Europe-centred one.

Furthermore, it appears that there are a number of unexplored research themes, such as lay people's religiosity in the context of Hungarian Puritan piety, or the impact of Puritanism on the development of a genuine Hungarian Calvinist martyrology during the 1670s. All these issues boil down to the methodological problem of how a *historical explanation* has been articulated by the scholarship when examining Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon with all its cultural and social implications. Seemingly, the scholarship did not rise to the challenge, as the historical explanation of Hungarian Puritanism follows a rather simplistic methodology borrowed from the field of intellectual history and the history of ideas, which is put to use almost exclusively at the *macro-level*. Thus, researchers have tranquilly capitalized on a quite inchoate descriptive pattern of transfer that has sought to reconstruct the flow of ideas coming from England towards Eastern Europe in a disappointingly rudimentary fashion. Travel to England transformed any early modern individual into an actor and agent of these transfers of ideas. The assimilation of ideas, envisaged by this approach, is even more disappointing, as it consists of the mere enumeration of vague facts, or more often presumptions, about how an individual might have or could have come into contact with a certain book. The main focus has predominantly been put on the texts relevant for ecclesiastical history as discipline, and solely a print corpus has been studied when reconstructing the agents, actors, and circumstances of these

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, see Francis J. Bremer, ed., *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1993). The ignorance toward European Puritanism is superbly demonstrated by the fact that in the *Encyclopaedia of Puritanism*, edited by Bremer and Webster, not one single non-English (that is, European: Dutch, German, or Hungarian) Puritan individual was mentioned. See Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster, eds., *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopaedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006). Alec Ryrie brought to my attention this fortunate exception, which covers the case of Scotland as well: David Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

transfers.<sup>15</sup> Case studies attempting to illuminate at the micro-level how and what early modern individuals had assimilated from Puritan doctrines have almost never been written. Similarly, manuscript sources neither have been searched for nor have been employed as at least complementary sources for a historically valid reconstruction of transfers and receptions of theological ideas and practices.

In order to offer some solutions to these persisting methodological problems, I intend to separately ponder the major issues such as the level of analysis, the concept of transfer and the disputable (mis)use of the sources.

### 3.1 The Level of Analysis

The use of micro-level approaches could substantially improve identifying individuals, who mediated as agents the transfers of Puritan ideas and religious practices from England to the Hungarian territories. Simply put, micro-level investigations would enable us to answer who qualified as a Puritan within the landscape of early modern Hungarian Calvinism. This is all the more important as during the extraordinary national synod of Szatmár, held on the 10–11th of June 1646, under the supervision and attendance of the Prince of Transylvania, György I. Rákóczi, a most censorious decision was taken. The synod patently condemned what was described “as a sinister affectation of religious piety and purity originating in England, and the name ‘puritan’ was deemed disgraceful, scandalous and hateful, and the synod ordered that it was not to be used in future within the Hungarian Church.”<sup>16</sup>

Strangely enough, as of 1646 nobody would or could claim to be a Puritan in Transylvania, let alone the fact that even the most ardent and resolute supporter of Puritan or Presbyterian ideas would refer to himself as an Orthodox Calvinist. In light of this historical fact, it is fairly difficult to accurately pinpoint individuals who would have been rightly considered Puritans. The scholarly discourse often very vaguely refers to those individuals who travelled and studied in England or had been involved in conflicts and debates regarding the establishment of presbyteries. Authors of translations, or compilers of Puritan-inspired English, Latin, or Hungarian texts, are the usual candidates for the role of early modern

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<sup>15</sup> For the ways in which manuscript studies and manuscript sources could help improve and innovate the research on Hungarian Reformation, see my article: Zsombor Tóth, “Hosszú reformáció Magyarországon és Erdélyben I.: konfesszionálisizációk és irodalmi kultúrák a kora újkorban (1500–1800). Módszertani megjegyzések egy folyamatban lévő kutatáshoz [Long Reformation in Royal Hungary and Transylvania (1500–1800): Methodological Remarks Regarding Early Modern Confessionalization(s) and Literacy],” *ItK* 123 (2019): 719–39.

<sup>16</sup> Murdock, *Calvinism*, 175–76.

Hungarian Puritan. Still, even among these individuals there are some, who, despite their alleged Puritan convictions, insisted on their belonging to Orthodox Calvinism. For instance, when Benedek Nagyari (1611–1663), who was considered to be a Puritan by experts of the field, published his supposedly Puritan treatise about the godly Christian,<sup>17</sup> he preferred to put on the front page as part of the title, and pointing to himself, the rather obvious term of *Orthodoxus Christianus*. This book, although it appears to imitate the genre of the Puritan conduct book, has not one single textual reference to Puritanism or Puritans.

I consider that these contingencies regarding the spiritual profile of those involved in the production of Puritan devotional literature could be efficiently eliminated by case studies operating on micro-level approaches. The detailed reconstruction of the life courses, alongside the examination of the texts and ego-documents, both manuscripts and printed works, could help us in deciphering the theological and spiritual markers of the mental world of the individuals under scrutiny. English experts in Puritanism have constantly been relying on this type of investigation from the 1970s up until the present day.<sup>18</sup> This would also be a safe solution for the cases of the so-called *domidoctus* individuals; those who did not receive their education abroad. One of such people was Matkó Kézdivásárhelyi István (1625–1693), who referred to himself as an Orthodox Calvinist preacher, and who, according to our knowledge, never benefitted from a stay in England. It seems that he never left Transylvania. Still, as a person with excellent linguistic skills, having relied on what he had assimilated in the Reformed College of Alba Iulia, he was able to render a number of English Puritan texts into Hungarian.<sup>19</sup> One of them was also translated into Romanian and published with Cyrillic letters.<sup>20</sup> Matkó's case reinforces the idea that soon after the first contact with English Puritanism, native tradition emerged. Therefore, the spread of Puritan devotional culture had undeniably been shaped by influential Hungarian texts as well and thus accommodated to the rather different needs of a Hungarian readership and audience.

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**17** Benedek Nagyari, *Orthodoxus Christianus, az az igaz vallásu keresztyen...* [Orthodoxus Christianus that is the Godly Christian] (Várad: Szenci Kertész, 1651).

**18** Alan MacFarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin; A Seventeenth-Century Clergyman. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeen-Century London* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); S Bryn Roberts, *Puritanism and the Pursuit of Happiness, The Ministry and Theology of Ralph Venning* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2015).

**19** For further details of this case see: Zsombor Tóth, "What do you Read my Lord? Words, Words, Words...: A Case Study on Translations and Cultural Transfers in Early Modern Eastern Europe," in *Transregional Reformations: Crossing Borders in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Violet Soen et al., *Refo500 Academic Studies* 61 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 187–204.

**20** István Kézdivásárhelyi Matkó, *Kegyves cselekedetek Rövid Ösvenykeje* [A Short Path to Godly Deeds] (Szeben: Szenci Ábrahám, 1666).

Theological education had gradually incorporated into the curricula of the Transylvanian Calvinist Colleges the theology of William Ames, together with Petrus Ramus's dialectic,<sup>21</sup> which remained a most influential corpus of knowledge for Hungarian Calvinists until the first decades of the eighteenth century. Surviving print<sup>22</sup> and manuscript<sup>23</sup> sources substantiate this claim and seem to confirm the idea that a *genuine Hungarian Puritanism* developed alongside the recurring waves of transfers from England.

Finally, a micro level approach would help us to find the lay representatives of Hungarian Puritanism. Notwithstanding the one-sided vision of the scholarship suggesting that Puritanism and Puritan devotional culture was an inner affair of Calvinist theologians, there were certainly various lay individuals outside the structure and employment area of the Calvinist Church who not only sympathized with Puritan religiosity, but were devoted practitioners of it. Relying on my own findings I can name at least two individuals, whose life courses, ego-documents, and surviving items of their libraries, including personally annotated Puritan books, testify to their unquestionable godliness. Count Miklós Bethlen (1642–1716), after studying abroad, including in England, and despite his spectacular political career, concluded his life in prison and exile. Yet he had been engaged all his life in practising a pietistic and Puritan religiosity. He qualified as godly man, as he recorded not only in his memoirs, but also in a most remarkable prayer book he wrote which was published in 1858–1860, and revealed a surprisingly intense Puritan devotion nurtured by his readings of Ames and Perkins. An outstanding intellectual of his age, Bethlen would embrace Puritanism and its martyrological discourse in order to fashion a self and an identity fitting his

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**21** For the Hungarian reception of Ramus's oeuvre see: Gábor Kecskeméti, "The Reception of Ramist Rhetoric in Hungary and Transylvania: Possibilities and Achievements," in *Ramus, Pedagogy and the Liberal Arts: Ramism in Britain and the Wider World*, ed. Steven J. Reid and Emma Annette Wilson (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 205–25; Gábor Kecskeméti, "Hungarian and Transylvanian Ramism," in *The European Contexts of Ramism*, ed. Sarah Knight and Emma Annette Wilson, *Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 285–329.

**22** The Latin version of William Ames's *Marrow of Theology* was published in Debrecen during the 1680s: Amesii, Guilielmi, *Medulla Theologica, Editio Novissima. Ab Avthore Ante obitum recognita & varis in locis aucta* (Debrecin: Per Stephanum Töltesi, 1685).

**23** Of the many surviving manuscript sources testifying to the assimilation of Amesian theology in Transylvania, it is worth mentioning the handwritten notes of Márton Dési, professor of theology at the Calvinist College of Nagyenyed, during the 1670s. He produced not only an outline of Ames's *Medulla* in 1673 that he would rely on during his lectures, but he also recorded the questions he addressed to his students during examinations from 1671 to 1674. Thus, the whole process of assimilating and teaching Ames's theology can be reconstructed from this remarkable source. (*Theses Theologicae a Clarissimo Viro D. Martinus Dési SS. Theologiae Professore*, Nagyenyed [Aiud], Gábor Bethlen Library, Ms. 146, 261–375).

worldly ordeal, although he was not persecuted for religious reasons, but for exclusively political ones.<sup>24</sup>

Mihály Cserei (1667–1756), coming from a lower stratum of Transylvanian society, never studied abroad, yet he soundly assimilated Puritan theology, and produced a great number of ego-documents illustrating a permanent concern regarding his own salvation. Apparently, he suffered from religious despair which haunted him throughout almost his entire life. Thus, the tormenting dilemma over whether he was a *homo reprobus* or *homo electus* often escalated into a major devotional crisis that would bring him near to suicidal attempts. Cserei deliberately relied on Hungarian Puritan texts to find comfort and reassurance, as several book entries and annotations of his surviving on the pages of these books clearly prove.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, he was preoccupied to impose a Puritan piety within his family as well. After he had convinced his wife, Ilona Kun, to give up on her Unitarian belief and become a Calvinist in 1715, later on he himself comforted the moribund Ilona reading her passages from the Hungarian translation of Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety* in order that she would die a Calvinist.<sup>26</sup>

Hungarian scholarship ignored the opportunity of investigating devotional experiences recorded by lay people.<sup>27</sup> This is either because these written testimonies, mostly vernacular texts, only emerged at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, or because the concept of transfer as the explanation of the reception was far too rigid to allow access of these texts into the corpus of theological texts conceived in Latin and English. Similarly, religion as a lived experience and its significance from the perspective of the

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**24** For an account of Bethlen's life and Puritan spirituality see: Zsombor Tóth, "A Man for All Seasons: Exile, Suffering and Martyrdom in the Autobiography of Miklós Bethlen," *Hungarian Studies* 2 (2012): 273–83; Zsombor Tóth, "Greenblatt's Self-Fashioning Revisited: the Problem(s) of Representing a Self in the Reformation Era. Historical Anthropological Remarks," in *Arts, Portraits and Representation in the Reformation Era: Proceedings of the Fourth Reformation Research Consortium Conference*, ed. Patrizio Foresta and Federica Meloni, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 37 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 365–83.

**25** For a comprising survey of Cserei's life see: Zsombor Tóth, "From the Cradle to the Grave: Representations of Confessional Identity in Mihály Cserei's Writings (1667–1647)," *Colloquia* 15 (2008): 44–71.

**26** For further details, see: Zsombor Tóth, "How to Comfort a Dying Family Member? The Practice of an Early Modern Hungarian Calvinist. A Case Study," in *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, ed. Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flæten, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 265–80.

**27** On the significance of the so called lay-experience in puritan devotion see: Kate Narveson, "Resting Assured in Puritan Piety: The Lay Experience," in *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 166–92.

history of emotions<sup>28</sup> remains a *terra incognita*, as experts of Hungarian Puritanism have never attempted to explore it. One could justly conclude that the reception of English Puritanism conceived in this limited way could not enhance the study of native Hungarian tradition.

### 3.2 The Concept of Transfer as the Explanatory Pattern of the Process of Reception

Having seen the possibilities for the manifold application of the micro-level approach, it is worth revisiting the macro-level perspective of the reception process conceived as a complex transfer, as there are further problematic issues to reflect upon. The narrativization of these disparate transfers into one synoptic account of Hungarian Puritanism in correspondence with relevant actors, events, and texts implies a certain chronology and periodization. It is this posteriorly designed timing that not only imposes coherence upon the disparate events and actors involved in the transfers, but is, first of all, the result of some biased choices and decisions made by scholars. Hungarian Puritanism, as envisaged by scholarship, seemed to have come to an end by the seventeenth century, as the narrative account displayed by scholars usually concluded the relevant events by the 1660s. It appears that the transfers nurturing the spread of Puritan thoughts ceased to produce any significant impact after this time-limit, and so one would infer that the reception also came to an end. Yet, the sources are telling a rather different story, as after the 1660s there was a consistent growth in publications transmitting Puritan-oriented sermons and pieces of devotional literature. When consulting the surviving manuscript sources, this discrepancy between an ecclesiastical historical account of Puritanism and the reception of Puritan piety through the transfers of texts, is even more striking. Vernacular or Latin manuscripts inspired by Puritan ideas populated the literary landscape as scribal publications well into the eighteenth century. These texts, although rarely published, were read, copied, and intensely circulated amongst literate people. Furthermore, the first Hungarian autobiographical attempts displaying textual, theological and devotional

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<sup>28</sup> A genuinely promising approach that would help decipher some of the particular features of Hungarian Puritan devotion. Out of the rich literature on this topic I found the following to be truly convincing and useful: Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), and the aforementioned Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda, eds., *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

particularities resembling the Puritan tradition of spiritual diary and autobiography<sup>29</sup> were almost exclusively written in the early eighteenth century.

No doubt there is a fairly compelling contradiction between an account describing Puritanism first of all through the lens of ecclesiastical history as a transfer concluded by the 1660s; and a multidisciplinary account making use of the print and manuscript sources, insisting on a much longer timespan, pushing the confines of Puritanism as an epoch well into the eighteenth century. This latter alternative is all the more important, as English scholarship on Puritanism also relies on the concept of the long seventeenth century (1580–1720)<sup>30</sup> in order to demark a godly devotional literature and culture promoted by Puritans.

Time and chronology cause further problems when the concept of transfer is employed as the *trope* of the master narrative of Hungarian Puritanism. As such, this tends to impose a debatable cause and effect relationship between English and Hungarian Puritanism, whereby the latter is nothing more than the mere effect or the consequence of the former. This not only reinforces the centre vs. periphery pattern, but also bolsters the *primary* character of English puritanism as compared to the *secondary* character of Hungarian Puritanism. Accordingly, Hungarian Puritanism appears to have been just a reduplication of English Puritanism, where the transfer of ideas could have been a simple import of Puritan thoughts and devotional practices. This is rather controversial, first of all, because, as we have seen, there is an emerging genuine Hungarian Puritan tradition that is not at all identical with the assimilated English patterns. Besides, Hungarian Puritanism was influenced by Dutch cultural influences as well, especially when William Ames established himself as professor of theology at the University of Franeker, where he would become one of the great favourites of the Hungarian students.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, when the concept of transfer is employed as a *historical explanation* for the reception of ideas, especially in the context of the *peregrinatio academica*, this tends to oversimplify the process. There is a danger that the lavish dissemination of

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**29** Previous and recent literature on the significance of writing as a means of articulating a godly self in Puritan devotion include: Tom Webster, “Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journal and Early Modern Spirituality,” *The Historical Journal* 1 (1996): 33–56; Tessa Whitehouse, “Structures and processes of English spiritual autobiography from Bunyan to Cowper,” in *A History of English Autobiography*, ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103–18; Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, “Never Better: Affliction, Consolation and the Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 5 (2018): 1–34, here 22.

**30** For instance, see: Andrew Cambers, “Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580–1720,” *Journal of British Studies* 46 (2007): 796–825.

**31** A remarkable outcome of this sympathy and cooperation was the volume of debates that confuted some of the theses of Bellarminus’s theology under the title: *Bellarminus enervatus vel Disputationes anti-Bellarminianae* [...], a Gvilielmo Amesio (Franekerae: Ex Officina Ulderici Balck, 1625).

ideas is reduced to some basic routes between Hungarian and English locations via German or Dutch universities. It appears that Hungarian scholarship has been invariably trusting this standard approach and has not been interested in exploring the plurality and multi-contextual embeddedness of ideas and texts reaching early modern Royal Hungary or Transylvania. Let alone those particular situations occurring well into the eighteenth century when English Puritan texts reached Hungarian readers through German pietistic mediation. John Downname was one of the Puritan authors whose *Contempt of the world* had been translated by Gottfried Heinrich Salmuth, a representative of German Pietism, in 1712; and this version was rendered into Hungarian in 1785.<sup>32</sup>

The object of these transfers, the so-called *Puritan* ideas, have not been properly defined. There is a certain fortuity as to the way this term is being used in the research. The term itself, Puritanism, is under permanent reconsideration.<sup>33</sup> While English scholarship has clearly stated that Puritanism denoted a large array of religious and sectarian positions often rather vaguely joined together under the criterion of non-conformity, this complexity has been utterly disregarded in the Hungarian use. Uninterruptedly, Hungarian scholars tend to reduce English Puritanism to a single sided and Calvinism-oriented innocent spiritual awakening, which was not the case of English Puritanism overtly exposing its radical convictions, often characterised as driven by dissenter and non-conformist actions. In light of these considerations, it would be justified to revisit the process of reception in an attempt to explore the meanings and references of Puritanism beyond the Presbyterian and Independent ideas of Church organisation unsuccessfully implemented in the Hungarian Calvinist Church.

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**32** John Downname, *The second part of The Christian warfare; or the contempt of the world* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1611). The Hungarian rendering is an unpublished manuscript and the work of an unknown translator referring to himself as K. P.: *E világról és világi híjávalóságokról való elmélkedés (...) Magyarra fordított K. P., 1785*, [A Meditation upon the Futility of this World and all Worldly Matters] Teleki-Bolyai Library, Ms. 269.

**33** I would rather refer only to those efforts that either proposed a definition of Puritanism, or attempted explaining why not having a generally accepted one: Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Peter Lake, "Defining Puritanism – Again?," in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bemer (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 3–29; John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–7; Ian Hugh Clary, "Hot Protestants: A Taxonomy of English Puritanism," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 2 (2010): 41–66.



### 3.3 Sources and their (mis)uses

Some of the deficiencies of the reception pattern can be completed, as we have seen it, by a combined use of micro and macro-level approaches. A further step to improving the accuracy of the reception pattern would be to reconsider the use of sources and rely more on manuscripts. For the narrative of Hungarian Puritanism envisaged as emerging in the 1630s, developing throughout the 1640s and 1650s, and concluding by the 1660s, is seriously challenged by the corpus of manuscripts recently discovered by the representatives of literary history. As early as 1602, there was a clear interest in Puritan theology, as testified by Mihály Orvos Suri's translation of Perkins's *Reformed Catholicke*.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Ames's lasting influence on his Hungarian students is convincingly illustrated by the publication of the *Bellarminus enervatus* (1625). It appears that there was a consistent preoccupation with Perkins, Ames and the Puritan paradigm right from the very beginning of the seventeenth century. At the other extreme, again the estimate of the scholarship is unsustainable, as manuscripts tend to refute the fact that by the 1660s, Hungarian Puritanism had come to an end. Quite the contrary, as we have seen, is that by the 1660s Ames's theology had entered the curricula of almost every Reformed College of Transylvania for good. Furthermore, the aforementioned case of Márton Dési, who was teaching Ames's theology during the 1670s, together with Mihály Cserei's notes on Ramus's dialectic dating from 1684 to 1685,<sup>35</sup> convincingly demonstrate that the intellectual elite of the 1670s and 1680s benefitted from a theological training predominantly based on Amesius's *Medulla Theologiae* and Ramus's dialectic. The combination of these two paradigms also resulted in a publication,<sup>36</sup> which would later be used as a textbook. It is possible to conclude that this combination of Ames's theology with Ramus's dialectic turned out to be the most influential paradigm of knowledge that would have influenced the lives and spiritual undertakings of several generations of Calvinists still active in the first decades of the eighteenth century. It is likely that the impact of Puritanism, manifesting especially as the combination of Ames's theology with Ramus's dialectic, would have been more determining as the

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34 Ágnes Baricz, "Suri Orvos Mihály 1602-es Perkins-fordítása [Orvos Mihály Suri's Translation of Perkins (1602)]," in *Eruditio, virtus et constantia. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Bitskey István tiszteletére*, ed. Mihály Imre et al. (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2011), 447–57.

35 Michael Cserei, *Notationes in Logicam*, Kolozsvár (Cluj), The Library of the Romanian Academy, Special Collections, Unitarian holdings, MS. U. 9.

36 Petrus Ramus, *Dialecticae Libri Duo* (Varadini: apud Abrahamum Szencinum, 1653).

scholarship used to consider it, for it dominated the whole seventeenth century and into the first decades of the next century as well.<sup>37</sup>

A further perspective worth considering is the development of a genuine Hungarian tradition of homiletics and rhetoric. Pál Medgyesi's *Doce nos orare* was the first ever Hungarian, in fact bilingual Hungarian and Latin, homiletics proposing patterns for writing and saying prayers or sermons. As Medgyesi pointed out, he had followed Ames in order to help the Puritan minister and laity articulate godly sermons and prayers. The impact of this book was immense. While it first of all sustained the development of pietistic godly discourse in orality, it also contributed to the production of devotional texts by lay people, for private use. Miklós Bethlen's aforementioned prayer-book, written from 1704 to 1708 during his imprisonment, concurs with this.

It has become clear by now that after Ames and Ramus had become leading authorities in Hungarian Calvinist education by the 1660s, their influence consistently grew and lastingly nurtured the production of both written and oral texts of Puritan content, some of them authored by lay people during the first decades of the eighteenth century. Therefore, it is fair to suggest that the thesis positing the conclusion of the Hungarian Puritanism as a process of reception by the seventeenth century, despite the shared conviction of Hungarian scholarship, must be reconsidered.

## 4 Of the Particular Features of an Emerging Native Tradition: Hungarian Puritanism

The previous sections exposed the flaws and shortcomings of Hungarian scholarship, reinforcing the idea that it persists with a far too simplistic understanding and description of how Puritan ideas were received and assimilated through transfers. It is the concept of transfer, I believe, that needs further refinement. As we have seen, the combined application of micro and macro-level approaches, completed by a more inspired use of print and manuscript sources too, would enable the nuancing of our understanding of Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon. Recent research findings on English Puritanism, if properly applied, would allow a more reliable treatment of the entire reception process, in particular its duration and timing. For instance, taking into account the fact that English Puritanism has often been described within the context of a long seventeenth

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<sup>37</sup> For instance, Ramist dialectic was only removed from the curricula of the Calvinist College of Debrecen during the 1740s.

century, concluding in the 1720s, it appears to me a good enough reason to allow Hungarian Puritanism a more or less similar timeframe. Furthermore, applying the same thesis, suggesting that Puritanism was a religious culture<sup>38</sup> promoting a particular religious literacy, would prove very significant in the Hungarian case as well, as important written responses to Puritan-oriented sermons and conduct-books were almost all produced during the eighteenth century. The significance of the so-called *lay experience*, as demonstrated by Miklós Bethlen's and Mihály Cserei's cases, urges in a similar way a redesign of the master narrative of Hungarian Puritanism incorporating a chapter that covers at least the first half of the eighteenth century.

While the approach with the emphasis on ecclesiastical history of the Presbyterian vs. Orthodox debate failed to recognise the close connection between religious persecution and the emerging protestant martyrological discourses, at the level of manuscripts, or even print sources, it is rather clear that the identity pattern of the Hungarian early modern martyr originated from Puritan traditions. It was the Puritan elite, who were resolute in articulating the theological and political argumentation sustaining a confessor-type martyrdom during the 1670s. Due to the efforts of such persons like István Nagy Szőnyi, exiles, refugees or executed Protestants were defined and regarded as martyrs of religious freedom.<sup>39</sup>

All in all, there is so much more to Hungarian Puritanism than what has been predominantly associated with it, namely the remembrance of a futile debate between supporters of Presbyterian versus episcopal systems of ecclesiology. My conviction is that a comparative approach, that involves Dutch examples as well, could illuminate the very particular features of Hungarian Puritanism as a historical phenomenon that had a remarkable impact on the culture and society of early modern Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania. One should not ignore the fact that Dutch culture very often had prepared early modern Hungarian students for the Puritan experience, as they first attended the Dutch universities of Franeker, Leiden, Utrecht, Groningen, and Harderwijk before they reached England. Furthermore, a great number of Puritan-oriented Hungarian books had been published in Amsterdam, from János Apáczai's first Hungarian encyclopaedia to the first Hungarian translations of Perkins's treatise on

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**38** For the definition of Puritanism as a religious culture see: Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14–15.

**39** Zsombor Tóth, "The Homiletics of Political Discourse: Martyrology as a (Re)Invented Tradition in the Paradigm of Early Modern Hungarian Patriotism," in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Márton Zászkaliczky (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 545–68.

conscience.<sup>40</sup> Finally, early modern Dutch culture, very much under the impact of English Puritanism and its devotion, would also leave a lasting mark on Hungarians residing there for a longer period of time. Hungarian Puritanism may well have evolved from English spiritual origins, yet during the process of developing a native devotional pietistic heritage it would have surely relied on Dutch contributions too, in every possible respect. Therefore, Hungarian Puritanism is not entirely an “import product” and ought not be regarded as a simple reduplication of English Puritanism manifesting in a different time and space. On the contrary, Hungarian Puritanism as part of the Calvinist Reformation allows us to understand how a partially assimilated tradition was transformed into an indigenous Hungarian tradition.

#### 4.1 The Importance of Studying Hungarian Puritanism

One of the most significant outcomes of the criticism exposed in the previous sections is that it has revealed the problematic aspects of the transfer theory as an explanation for the reception of ideas during the Reformation. Furthermore, Hungarian Puritanism as a chapter of the Calvinist Reformation enabled a critical investigation which revealed some of the persisting contingencies of scholarship. First of all, the concept of transfer, with a particular view on the relationship between the assimilated tradition and native tradition needs revision. Furthermore, the lack of interest towards the exploration of lay experiences, or the ignorance of the experts in properly construing the different timing and the very different pace of the transfer processes, are further issues to ponder. Finally, it is worth pausing on the significance of these aforementioned issues, as they are valid for the entire historical phenomenon known as the Hungarian Reformation conceived as a historical process resulting from transfers.

He who engages in describing the spread of Reformed ideas relying on the theory of transfers, will soon find herself or himself struggling with multiple problems and contradictions, for both Royal Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania tolerated no less than four denominations. In these multi-denominational societies, it would be rather difficult to reconstruct the flows of ideas and the particular ways how they had been assimilated and accommodated. Again, the difficult balancing of the extant native tradition, the assimilated new

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**40** Csepregi Turkovics Mihály, *Perkinsus Gullielmus a Lelkiismeretnek akadékiról írott, drága, szép tanításinak istenes orvoslási* [...] [Some Godly Directions of William Perkins upon the Cases of Conscience] (Amsterdam: Janssonius, 1648).

ideas, and the final outcome of the mixture between these two, is surely a difficult task to achieve.

Furthermore, the ignorance toward the study of lay experience is first of all a major debt, which obstructs a better understanding of the Reformation in general. The lack of microhistories of early modern religious lay individuals points to a typical shortcoming of the scholarship, namely the conviction that the Reformation was primarily an internal affair of the Church. Thus, with no attempt to reconstruct at a micro level the religious experiences of any early modern Hungarian individual, a spectacular research area has been deliberately ignored and forgotten. Finally, the chronological discrepancies in terms of the duration and the pace of certain processes of reception or assimilation of ideas, is one of the central problematic issues of the Hungarian Reformation. There is a spectacular delay, for instance, in terms of martyrological discourse and martyrological culture. While early modern western societies had been experiencing religious persecutions throughout the sixteenth century, bringing about the development of an impressive corpus of multiconfessional martyrologies, in early modern Royal Hungary and Transylvania, no violence was inflicted upon the Reformed population until the 1670s. It was only in the decade of sorrow from 1671 to 1681, that the Habsburg administration commenced religious persecution against the Protestant denominations, yet they never attempted to engage in something similar in Transylvania. The first Hungarian martyrology was only published in 1675, and it was during this decade of sorrow that both Lutherans and Calvinists from Royal Hungary made efforts to articulate a martyrological tradition.<sup>41</sup> As a consequence of the delayed encounter with persecution, vernacular texts giving a narrative account of the history of the Reformed Church were produced only then, and mostly remained in manuscript without being published. The early modern attempts to articulate a master narrative of Hungarian Reformation consisted first of all in a number of Latin texts, supplemented by Hungarian ones written exclusively during the eighteenth century.

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<sup>41</sup> By the early 1680s, after the ordeals of the decade of sorrow, both Lutheran and Calvinist elite established their martyrological discourses and literary tradition: Zsombor Tóth, “Calvinian Anthropology’ and the Early Modern Hungarian Devotion: The Case of István Nagy Szőnyi, the First Hungarian Martyrologist,” in *Anthropological Reformations – Anthropology in the Era of Reformation*, ed. Anne Eusterschulte and Hannah Wälzholz, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 28 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 415–28; Zsombor Tóth, “Persecutio decennalis (1671–1681). The Lutheran Contribution to the Emergence of a Protestant Martyrology in Early Modern Hungarian Culture: The Case of Georgius Lani,” in *Luther in Calvinism: Image and Reception of Martin Luther in the History and Theology of Calvinism*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis and J. Marius J. Lange van Ravenswaay, *Refo500 Academic Studies* 42 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 335–53.

In order to grasp the particular features of a *native Hungarian Reformed tradition*, I consider that the application of the concept of long Reformation to Hungarian Reformation history would be rather useful. Indeed, a long Reformation operating with a timeframe of 300 years, from 1500 to 1800, would impose a change of scale, as it would allow a longer period of time to fathom the complexities of the processes of transfers, translations, transformations, receptions and assimilations. As such, it would eliminate the impression of delay as compared to the European Reformation, and it would reveal in their entirety those transfers and processes of transformations that were mistakenly truncated by the unfortunate approach of scholarship operating with inadequate time limits. Due to this long Reformation concept, the eighteenth century would function as a post-Reformation era that could finally provide a comprising perspective of the outcome of how the Reformation had been received and assimilated, and what its immediate consequences were, recorded in the textual account of both ecclesiastical and lay people. Thus, so-called *lived religious experiences* could be taken into account when attempting to decipher the Reformation as an experience. It is of paramount significance that in this way female voices of pietistic devotion would also be recorded and assessed on their real historical merits.

## 5 Conclusion

The main concern of this article has been to reveal the problematic character of the concept of transfer as a historical explanation and as a trope of the master narrative put to use for providing a historically “accurate” account of the Calvinist Reformation in particular and of the Hungarian Reformation in general.

As suggested by the case of Hungarian Puritanism, if this reception theory does not benefit from the findings of a complex comparative analysis, it will function as a rather over-simplified pattern. With the exclusive emphasis on ideas or traditions as novelties that were assimilated, the receiving native religious culture often remained neglected. Yet one should not forget that any transfer or translation presupposes a genuinely hermeneutical process, revolving around *the acts of understanding, explaining and applying*. For instance, the proper assessment of the reception of Lewis Bayly’s *Practice of Piety* requires more than the simple identification of its Hungarian translation and the consecutive editions of this text. One needs to investigate how the Hungarian translation influenced lay people’s religiosity and how the text was used to fulfil the needs or functions of early modern pietistic devotion, expected from or added to this text.

The transfer as a trope of the master narrative of the Reformation nurtures the pitfalls and shortcomings of a *progressive linear and chronological narrative*

*description*, which sometimes imposes an anachronistic order upon the development of events or processes. The complexity of historical reality, especially the turmoil of the Reformation, can hardly be deciphered and described in one single narrative unfolding a single history of several complex transfers with their courses following consecutive acts of reception. Clearly, both the time and the duration of these transfers were surely not linear and progressive as they had been composed of simultaneous and often contradictory episodes with antecedents and consequences that would have often transgressed the Reformation era or the time span of early modernity. Furthermore, it is utterly impossible to incorporate the development and progress of Reformation-related events into one single master narrative; the disparate episodes of Reformations all over Europe can solely be described in different intervals; and most importantly, their progress and consummation *had a different pace*. For instance, despite the efforts of Hungarian scholarship to narrate the history of Hungarian Puritanism in an almost similar timeframe as the concluding chapter of English Puritanism (1630–1660s), it is rather clear that Hungarian Puritanism had a long lasting and determining influence well into the eighteenth century.

Finally, the perspective of a long Reformation has a particular significance, not necessarily just as a new time frame stretching out the limits of the historical process of the Reformation as a set of complex transfers from 1500 to 1800, but also as a methodological invention, proposing a change of scale, and a reassessment of the Reformation from a wider context and over a longer period of time, as denoted by the concept of *longue durée*.<sup>42</sup> In somehow blurring the far too rigid confines of Reformation – I am referring to the contingent boundaries between late medieval times and the beginnings of the Reformation, and, of course its conclusion and the advent of Enlightenment – there is a good chance to pursue a more detailed and layered understanding of how transfers brought about the emergence of not only Hungarian Puritanism, but the Hungarian Reformation as well.

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<sup>42</sup> See Braudel Fernand, “Histoire et Sciences sociales: La longue durée,” *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 13 (1958): 725–53.