

Valerian Mader and his little draught ox

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the life and work of Valerian Mader (1558–1605), a forgotten figure of Central European Neo-Latin literature. Drawing primarily on his sole surviving work, the *Libellus exercitiorum poeseos scholasticorum* (1588), the paper reconstructs Mader's biography from his birth in Trencsén through his education in various towns to his career as teacher and pastor. The article demonstrates how Mader's collection preserves traces of a vivid manuscript-based humanist culture operating at the provincial level, revealing an intellectual network of village schoolmasters, pastors, and local dignitaries, who communicated through Latin verses in letters. Unlike the transcontinental networks of renowned scholars, Mader's "rustic *respublica litteraria*" functioned within a limited geographical radius around Trencsén, yet, it maintained the same structural patterns as larger intellectual communities around European cultural centres. The study argues that Mader's work is crucial evidence of a rural humanist culture around towns with elementary schools in early modern Hungary.

KEYWORDS

Neolatin poetry, reformation, occasional poems, early modern literature, humanism

In one of his poems, Valerian Mader compares his books to oxen. Without these "oxen," breaking the soil and cultivating the land by his own strength alone would be an exhausting, nearly impossible work. However, behind his books, like draught animals, he slowly plows the earth step by step, row by row, so that the scattered seeds may eventually yield harvestable and storable crops. Mader also intends his little book to serve as such a little ox (*libellus*), which

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anyone interested in the art of poetry might harness before themselves to loosen and cultivate the soil of their poetic compositions. Thus, Mader intends his little volume to serve as a repertory or model for aspiring young poets committed to the art of poetic composition.

All references to the poems follow the numbering used in the modern edition of Mader's book.¹

I. SCHOLARLY LITERATURE ON VALERIAN MADER

The reconstruction of Valerian Mader's biography relies almost exclusively on his sole surviving work, the *Libellus exercitiorum poeseos scholasticorum*,² which Miloslav Okál summarized in his 1986 study.³ This study remains the only comprehensive and detailed treatment ever engaged with Mader. The scant secondary literature begins with Gedeon Borsa's 1964 article,⁴ which reported the discovery of the book at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Although Borsa emphasized the work as important primarily for its connection to the printer Bálint Mantskovit's Galgóc (Hlohovec, SK) period, he also noted that the unknown authors featured in the book would merit further studies, as their names are known only from Mader's volume.

Prior to the comprehensive survey in 1986, Mader received a brief mention in a 1971 study by Okál on Petrus Barossius,⁵ particularly concerning the poems addressed to Barossius. Subsequently, Júlia Székely referred to Mader in a single paragraph in 1982,⁶ identifying him as a member of the poetic circle in Trencsén (Trenčín, SK). Miklós Pálffy's 1965 catalog refers to a letter addressed to Mader dated 1600 (see below). This detail is important because Okál was unaware of this information, so he lost track of Mader around 1586.

In 1974, Mader's name appeared in Ján Mišianik's monograph on Slovak humanism.⁷ Mišianik is the first to attempt at a concise summary of Mader's *Libellus*. While he expresses uncertainty about whether Mader's poetry merits attention due to its provincialism, he nevertheless laments the absence of similar books. In the same volume, Jozef Minárik's article⁸ on early seventeenth-century Latin occasional poetry referenced Mader, listing several of his poems and associating them with major subgenres of occasional poetry. Reconstructing Mader's life and oeuvre, Okál's aforementioned study appeared more than a decade later.

The present study relies primarily on Okál's text, aiming to enrich the Maderian corpus with additional biographical and contextual details. The Hungarian literary scholarship has entirely neglected Mader. After Borsa, the only exception is András Szabó, who mentioned Mader in a study⁹ on the intellectual life of Sárospatak in the same year as Okál's publication. In his 2007 monograph,¹⁰

¹Mader (2024).

²Mader (1588).

³Okál (1986).

⁴Borsa (1964), 164–165.

⁵Okál (1971).

⁶Székely (1982), 651.

⁷Mišianik (1967), 215–217.

⁸Minárik (1967), 245, 249, 250.

⁹Szabó (1986), 498, 500, 504.

¹⁰Sebők (2007), 300. See also: Sebők (2022).

Marcell Sebők devotes half a sentence to Mader due to his poem written to Sebestyén Thököly. In the 2011 supplementary volume of the Czech-Moravian lexicon series initiated by Antonín Truhlář and Karel Hrdina and continued by Josef Hejnic and Jan Martinek,¹¹ a brief entry on Mader appeared, which contains no new information. The most systematic compilation of Mader-related data is found in Zoltán Csepregi's 2015 prosopography.¹² In 2021, the author of the present study published a paper in Hungarian on Mader's poem about Ficino's book and an expanded version in English.¹³

II. ON VALERIAN MADER

He was born into a noble family in Trencsén at six o'clock in the morning on May 19, 1558.¹⁴ His father, Nicolaus Mader, was an influential citizen of Trencsén – first a steward of noblemen and later the town's mayor¹⁵ (although the latter is not mentioned in any of his poems). Nevertheless, Mader often complains about their poverty. Georgius Chotessovius refers to Mader's father as a *civis iuratus*, that is, a sworn citizen of the free royal town of Trencsén.¹⁶ From a poem of Mader's father, it also emerges that around 1575–1577 (during his studies in Bártfa [Bardejov, SK]), his mother was no longer alive.¹⁷

His four brothers are known as Nicolaus, Josephus, Johannes, and Georgius. He also had a half-brother, David. A poem addressed to his father reveals that Valerian was the third son: *tertius a primo filius, alme pater*.¹⁸ He had one son and one daughter, whose names are unknown. They both died in early childhood, before March 1585.¹⁹ By that time, his half-brother, David, had also passed away.²⁰

1. Elementary schools: Semppte, Trencsén, Bártfa, Zsolna (1568–1577)

He began his elementary studies in Semppte (Šintava, SK). In a poem written for his own birthday (no. 67), he mentions that he had not yet reached the age of ten (two *lustra*) when he already studied in Semppte. This suggests that the child Mader began his studies in the town no later than May 1568, and possibly as early as 1567. Between 1573 and 1578, he continued his studies in Trencsén, Bártfa, and Zsolna (Žilina, SK). Petrus Barossius was his teacher at the school in Trencsén. With Simon Jeszenszky's (Jessenius) support, he was educated under Thomas Faber, Georg Radaschin, and Severin Sculteti in Bártfa. In Zsolna, his teacher was Nicolaus Colacinus, with whom he maintained continuous contact thereafter as evidenced by the poems they

¹¹Hejnic and Martinek, eds., *Rukovět'* (2011), 198.

¹²Csepregi (2015), 7.

¹³Molnár (2021a); Molnár (2021b).

¹⁴See Mader's poem: no. 67. Mader (2024), 357.

¹⁵Okál (1986), 160. That Mader's father had a voice in the administration of the city's public affairs is well demonstrated by the poem of Georgius Bulgar, in which he requests his support. See: Mader (2024), 391–392, app. 28.

¹⁶Mader (2024), 392, app. 29.

¹⁷Mader (2024), 379, app. 14, line 10: "*sive sit illa parens sive noverca tibi*".

¹⁸Mader (2024), 268, no. 8.

¹⁹Mader (2024), 364–365, no. 73.

²⁰Ib.

exchanged. The timeline of his studies can be further refined based on a poem about the comet of 1577 (no. 6). From his praise of the Dersffy family in the poem, we can infer that he was already residing in Zsolna by November 9, 1577. Thus, he was in Zsolna at least from the autumn semester of 1577, which also means that he studied in Bártfa, located approximately 240 km away, until autumn 1577 at the latest.

2. Kassa and Transylvania (1578–1579)

According to line 15 of Mader's poem titled *Hodoeporicon, sive peregrinatio in Transsylvaniam*,²¹ he departed from Kassa (Košice, SK) with unnamed companions after "almost four months" (*nondum complebat quattuor sua cornua Phoebe*). Okál suggests²² that Mader may also have intended to study in Kassa. However, he was not satisfied with the quality of education (*deficiente suos philomela psallere cantus, an cuculi turpes guis capit aure sonos*), and thus set out on a long journey to Transylvania with his companions (*Cassovia longas cogimur ire vias*). He only enrolled in the school of Sárospatak after this journey.

He probably did not return home before Sárospatak, because he asks his father for money at the end of the poem (lines 189–193). In the same part, he also writes that it would be good if his father could send him the requested sum before the snow falls, suggesting that he composed the verse in the autumn of 1579. This implies that his stay in Kassa can be dated to the spring of 1579, and his subsequent journey to Transylvania to the summer of that same year. These biographical details may be refined further. It is plausible that the poem addressed to Anthonius Thal²³ was composed in Kassa at Christmas of 1578. Based on this, he was already in Kassa in December 1578, and if we add the four months to this, they assembled and departed for Transylvania in April 1579.

Only one specific place is known on Mader's journey through Transylvania. In the poem addressed to his father (no. 8), he mentions that they were delayed for five days in Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, RO). Despite occasional references in the secondary literature to his possible studies in Kolozsvár (Cluj, RO), I have found no trace of this, nor is any indication that he ever was there.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is enough to look at the map, which makes it highly probable that he passed through Kolozsvár on his way from Kassa to Gyulafehérvár.²⁵ Somewhat later, his cousin Nicolaus Mednienski (Mednyánszky) – studying in Kolozsvár at that time – invited Mader, who did not undertake the long journey and remained in Sárospatak.²⁶

An interesting biographical detail regarding his musical education also emerges from this poem, which suggests that during his travels in Transylvania and his studies in Sárospatak, he earned some money through musical performances. If this is not mere poetic fiction, then his musical knowledge, on one occasion, even saved their lives in Transylvania. From his poem

²¹Mader (2024), 268–274, no. 8.

²²Okál (1986), 146.

²³Mader (2024), 320–322, no. 38.

²⁴Szabó (1986), 500. Okál found no trace of this in the poems either: Okál (1986), 148.

²⁵I am grateful to Emőke Gálfi for drawing my attention to the most frequently used trade route between Kassa and Gyulafehérvár (cf. Pach 1978, 1032–1035; Kubinyi 2009, 308–312). Based on this, Nagyvárad, Torda (Turda, RO), and Nagyenyed (Aiud, RO) can also be considered part of the route.

²⁶See: Okál (1986), 148.

addressed to Petrus Barossius²⁷ it is evident that he could sing. At this point, several questions arise. What kinds of songs could he earn money with in Transylvania? Even if Mader had some instrument with him, he never explicitly refers to it in his verses. When instruments are mentioned, it is typically in the conventional metaphorical sense of poetry. Whom might he have entertained as a singer who also paid for it? Did he play at festivities and weddings? But in what language did he perform? Hungarian, German, or Latin? Moreover, what did he sing about? About news, heroes, or biblical and love stories? Did he perform his own compositions or did he select from a commonly known repertoire (“standards”)?

Mader’s text suggests that we must consider not only a now-lost, likely manuscript-based, Latin humanist literary culture, but also a popular, perhaps vernacular musical tradition that had an audience willing to pay for it. The traces of this “micro-patronage,” if any survive, would be worth collecting, because they illustrate how – in a country without a university – even the curriculum of elementary schools was able to provide students with knowledge that could be converted into income. This knowledge offered not only upward mobility through Latin literary culture, but also a channel toward more humble, vernacular spheres – the world of taverns, markets, weddings, funerals, and hosts.

3. Sárospatak (1579–1580)

Based on Mader’s aforementioned poem describing his journey through Transylvania (no. 8), which he composed “*ex schola Patakina*,” he studied in Sárospatak sometime during 1579 and 1580. He refers to his studies there in several poems. It is known from the poem praising Colacinus (no. 9) that Mader wrote this verse during the 1579–1583 rectorship of György Kassai Császár (Georgius Caesar Cassovius),²⁸ when he was studying in Sárospatak. From the same poem, it can be inferred that when Mader composed it, his former teacher, Colacinus was no longer in Zsolna, where the Catholic Ferenc Dersffy dissolved the school on December 2, 1579. At that time, Colacinus was also expelled. This information implies that Mader likely wrote this praising poem in 1580. In lines 149–150 of the same poem, he writes that if God so wills, Mader will remain in Sárospatak for the spring. If the expression “*tempora veris*” is taken literally, this statement would date the poem to before the spring of 1580: “*sic igitur, siquidem statuit suprema voluntas, hic remanens laeti tempora veris agam*.” Moreover, based on the text of the poem, at the time of writing, Mader did not yet know about Colacinus’s 1580 office of pastorship in Biccse (Bytča, SK). From this, it may be inferred that the verse was composed before the spring of 1580, when Mader was already residing in Sárospatak. So, the lines above can be understood to mean that he intended to remain in Sárospatak in the spring of 1580 as well.

The poem also contains another reference to his studies in Sárospatak: “*et velut Euryalo tibi iunctus amore Mathias qui triplicis linguae cognitione praeest*.” György Kassai Császár may be identified as Euryalus, while Mathias is compared to Nisus. This “Mathias” can be none other than Matthias Thoraconymus (Matej Kabát),²⁹ who was expelled from the school in Késmárk (Kežmarok, SK) and served as a lector under György Kassai Császár from the summer of 1579. Consequently, both the composition of the poem and Mader’s stay in Sárospatak can likely be

²⁷Mader (2024), 295–296, no. 22.

²⁸Szabó (2004), 51–56.

²⁹Szombathi (1864), 412–418, especially 415; Szabó (2004), 53–56.

dated to as early as the summer of 1579. This hypothesis is confirmed by line 161 of his previously mentioned travel poem (no. 8), which tells the name of the rector of Sárospatak's college at that time: "Cophaeus."³⁰ At first glance, this name does not confirm anything, since we have no knowledge of a rector by this name. However, it is plausible that the name "Cophaeus" is a printing error of "Cormaeus," which would also preserve the metre. If so, this refers to Mihály Paksi Cormaeus, who directed the school between 1577 and 1579.³¹

To sum up, based on the content of Mader's poem about his Transylvanian journey, it appears that Mader was already residing in Sárospatak in the second half of 1579. The poem addressed to Colacinus³² further suggests that he may have begun the spring semester of 1580 there as well. However, a remark concerning János Laskay in a poem³³ addressed to Nicolaus Mednienski implies that Mader may have still been in Sárospatak in December 1580. If this assumption is correct, the end of his studies in Sárospatak can be determined with relative precision, since he was already in Trencsén in February or – at the latest – in March 1581. A poem dated 1580 by Martinus Hrabowsky³⁴ wishes Mader a safe journey home (inc. *Marmoreo quoniam committere carbasa ponto*). The verses refer to a sea voyage, which is certainly to be understood as a literary topos rather than a literal description. Although the point of departure is not stated explicitly, the poem accords well with the hypothesis outlined above that Mader most likely left Sárospatak sometime in December 1580. Further support for this chronology can be found in a letter (app. 35) from Albertus Husselius to Mader, dated August 3, 1580, and sent from Privigyé (Prievidza, SK).³⁵ In this letter, Husselius responds to Mader's earlier request for a copy of his treatise against dancing. Although Husselius does not remember the arguments in detail, he summarizes his thoughts on dancing: contemporary dances are only about bodily pleasures and should be condemned. However, he also writes that if Mader is interested in the topic in greater detail, he should come to the local fair in Privigyé on St. Lawrence's Day, where the notary might have a copy of the requested book and allow Mader to read it. Because the letter was written on August 3 and invited Mader to the fair on August 10, it can be concluded that Mader was no longer in Sárospatak at that time. It would have been impossible for the letter to reach him in Sárospatak, 280 km away, and for him to return to Privigyé by August 10. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that by the summer of 1580, Mader had returned to his parental home in Trencsén.

4. Assistant teacher and pastor in Trencsén (1581–1582)

One of the documents published by Mader is a letter written by the aforementioned Martinus Hrabowski,³⁶ from which the approximate date of Mader's appointment as assistant teacher at the school in Trencsén can be clearly inferred. The letter begins with a congratulation:

³⁰Mader (2024), 273: "[Commendatio scholae Patakiensis] Qui regit hanc, ubi nunc maneo Cormaeus in illo concilio praesens cogitur esse, scholam".

³¹He was succeeded in 1579 by György Kassai Császár, under whom Thoraconymus became lector from 1580. Szombathi (1864), 404–407, 415; Szabó (2004), 52.

³²Mader (2024), 274–278, no. 9.

³³Mader (2024), 298–302, no. 25.

³⁴Mader (2024), 394, app. 31.

³⁵Mader (2024), 397, app. 35.

³⁶Mader (2024), 394–395, app. 32.

“Intellexi ex vitrico meo, carissime Valeriane, te ad munus synergi in schola patriae nostrae, legitime accitum esse, quod cum auditu mihi fuerit iucundissimum, non potui intermittere, quin tibi congratularer.” Hrabowski dated it April 5, 1581, “in Dubowicz,” which could be Tarcadobó (Dubovica, SK). Considering that Tarcadobó is located 290 km away, and approximately one or two weeks were needed for this news to reach the village, Mader’s position as an assistant teacher in Trencsén can be dated from February or March 1581.

5. Beckó, Kiripolc, Trencsén, Márkusfalva (1582–1605)

In 1582, Mader married a certain Dorothea.³⁷ The couple moved to Beckó (Beckov, SK), where he served as a pastor. A dated poem by Andreas Werner³⁸ indicates that they were already living in Beckó by March 30, 1582. Werner does not mention Mader’s position as a teacher, but reflects his new pastoral office. Based on a poem by Petrus Barossius,³⁹ Mader’s former teacher in Trencsén, it can be suggested that their move to Beckó may have occurred even earlier. While praising Mader, the poem paraphrases the third chapter of Paul’s first letter to Timothy in praise of Mader. Although Barossius does not mention Beckó, the text makes it clear that he did not write his verse from Trencsén to Mader, who was living in the same town. Thus, it can be assumed that Mader was already serving in Beckó at the time of the poem dated March 5, 1582.

It is unclear how long Mader remained in Beckó. However, an important reference point is the death of his father on March 17, 1585.⁴⁰ Considering another of his verses,⁴¹ in which Mader asks Petrus Barossius to send children with a good voice for László Bánffy’s name day celebration on June 27, the duration of his stay in Beckó can be somewhat determined. At the end of this poem, Mader sends greetings to his father and stepmother via Barossius, indicating that they were still alive at the time. Since Mader could have arrived in Beckó sometime in February or early March 1582, he wrote the poem afterwards. It could have been composed in early June of either 1582, 1583 or 1584, because Mader’s father had already died by the summer of 1585. However, according to a 17th-century record preserved in the Draskovich family archive, Bánffy died in November 1583: “[1583.] 30. Novembris Ladislaus Banfi de Bolondos mortuus est.”⁴² Consequently, the poem must have been written either in May or early June of 1582, or 1583. This confirms that Mader was still in his pastoral office in Beckó in 1583.

Sometime after this, he continued his pastoral work in Kiripolc (today Egyházhely, Kostolište, SK). A propempticon⁴³ by Mathias Carthicius dated January 10, 1586, reveals that Mader was already preparing to return home to Trencsén by that time. According to a letter,⁴⁴ on March 21, 1600, he was certainly serving as pastor in Trencsén.

³⁷See Nicolaus Mednienski’s echo poem, written for their marriage presumably before March 1582, and also Georgius Beczkoviensis’ epithalamium (cf. *Okál* 1986, 155), which refers to Mader as still being an assistant teacher. *Mader* (2024), 395–397, app. 33–34.

³⁸*Mader* (2024), 384, app. 20.

³⁹*Mader* (2024), 385–386, app. 21.

⁴⁰See: *Mader* (2024), 364, no. 73.

⁴¹*Mader* (2024), 295–296, no. 22.

⁴²*Szerémi* (1890), 370.

⁴³*Mader* (2024), 401–402, app. 39.

⁴⁴*Pálfy* (1965), 102. (The original document was destroyed during World War II).

The last known record⁴⁵ of him dates from 1605, when he was pastor in Márkusfalva (Markušovce, SK).

III. THE *LIBELLUS EXERCITIORUM POESEOS SCHOLASTICORUM* (1588)

Mader's only known work was published in 1588 in Galgóc (Hlohovec, SK) by the printer Bálint Mantskovit.⁴⁶ The sole surviving copy of this edition is preserved at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (shelf mark: *35.X.164). This copy may have belonged to Hieremias Sartorius, who – according to the inscription – passed it on to a physician. The dedicatee of the book is illegible not only due to the faded inscription, but also because a library label has been pasted over it. The legible portion of the dedication is as follows: “<...> *Medicinae Licenciato d. d. hunc libellum, amicitiae ergo Hieremias Sartorius jam Scholae Trenchinii Rector 14 Junij: Anno D. 1588.*”⁴⁷ While it is impossible to determine the addressee, the inscription indicates that the volume had already been printed before June 14, 1588.

Most of the verses in his *Libellus exercitiorum* were composed by Mader as a student and according to the book's title he intended his work as a standard form of occasional poetry and sample collection for all those interested in writing poems. The book can be divided into two main parts. The first part, associated with the main title, contains 77 poems by Mader, and – as paratext – 12 dedicatory poems addressed to him. The second part, under the title *Libellus adoptivus*, comprises 27 additional verses and four letters addressed to him. This structure of the volume was likely inspired by the German Neo-Latin poet Georg Sabinus,⁴⁸ whose verses Mader not only cited on several occasions, but also explicitly named in one of his poems: “*Gloria Pieridum magna Sabinus ait.*”⁴⁹

The collection was published as a “little book of poetic exercises for students [and for teachers]”, from which, as the author suggests, the “*ars versificatoria* could be learned, perfected, loved, and memorized” by the novices in this art. The didactic character of the book is also confirmed by Mader's use of quotation marks in the margins to highlight lines containing classical, biblical, or contemporary references.

Mader's volume is an important cultural-historical document because it preserves traces of a contemporary practice. Ironically, this printed book confirms the vitality of the manuscript culture that was still vivid in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From a broader European perspective, this may not appear particularly remarkable, as members of the transcontinental intellectual networks of the time frequently exchanged letters, poems, and various gifts. However, what makes Mader's work exceptional is that it is proof of such a practice also functioning at a highly local, provincial level, and to date, no other similar example has been identified in Hungary.

⁴⁵Csepregi (2015), 7.

⁴⁶Borsa (1964), 164–165.

⁴⁷István Illésházy (1541–1609) also owned a copy of Mader's book: Herner and Monok, eds., *Iványi* (1983), 151. This was probably not the same copy that we know, because Hieremias Sartorius died in 1604.

⁴⁸Sabinus (1563), Z4^r.

⁴⁹Mader (2024), 281, no. 12, line 10.

The approximately sixty recipients or authors named in the book form an intellectual network centred around Mader, which displays a distinctly rural character even compared to Johannes Bocatius' network. This "rustic" *respublica intellectualis* was organized precisely like the networks of Bocatius or even Justus Lipsius, only covering a smaller territory. The patterns emerging from the relationships among its members are structurally identical to those found in geographically and numerically more extensive intellectual networks. The only difference is that Mader's literary network was composed not of internationally renowned scholars and statesmen, but of village schoolmasters, pastors, and local dignitaries.

Based on Mader's volume, it is reasonable to assume the existence of similarly functioning, rich intellectual networks surrounding small towns with at least an elementary school not only in Transylvania, but potentially even in regions under Ottoman occupation (for instance, in Tolna).⁵⁰ Had Mader not undertaken the considerable effort and expense of publishing his book, we would not know today of the remarkably high level of humanist culture possessed by the pastors and village schoolmasters of Kisbiróc (Malé Birovce, SK), Vágújhely (Nové Mesto nad Váhom, SK), or Privigyé. These poems circulated in manuscript form, and – except for Mader – no one thought to have them printed.

Poems similar to the verses in Mader's volume were likely composed in large numbers. Given that these texts often included named recipients, it is almost certain that they were exchanged personally or sent by letter. Mader's work has preserved this otherwise ephemeral manuscript material as poetic fossils. His book might, without much exaggeration, be described as a kind of museum, which simultaneously preserves the past and offers, from behind glass, insight into it. This in itself would not be particularly interesting. However, given that the background was not university study but merely the education provided by an elementary school or college, the quality is all the more remarkable.

It is also worth noting that Mader's name does not appear in the matriculation records of any European universities. While this absence does not prove that he never studied abroad, the circle of individuals represented in the collection and other biographical evidence strongly suggest that he had not left Hungary when the volume was compiled. This inference is further supported by a poem written in 1587,⁵¹ and addressed to Simon Jessenius, in which Mader laments that despite his desire, he could not pursue studies at German universities (see lines 37–38 and 65). If he had studied abroad, the list of recipients would likely include university professors and foreign classmates, in keeping with contemporary conventions.

However, it is precisely this absence that gives Mader's book its distinctive character, since if he had studied abroad, most of the individuals mentioned in the book would likely have been replaced by contacts from a more conventional network associated with a German academic background. However, among the addressees and authors, there is not a single one who did not live around Trencsén (or rather east of Trencsén). The farthest he documentably travelled – excluding unknown territories of Transylvania – was Sárospatak, located approximately 350 km away. If we wish to quantify this, it would be possible to map its *actio radius* in relation to Trencsén, based on his surviving correspondence (the last column indicates the number of published poems written to or from the given place).

⁵⁰Kathona (1974); Szakály (1992).

⁵¹Mader (2024), 305–307, no. 29.

Trencsén	Trencsén	0 km	34 poems
Trencsén	Kisbíróc	~10 km	2 poems
Trencsén	Beckó	~20 km	6 poems
Trencsén	Illava	~20 km	3 poems
Trencsén	Vágújhely	~25 km	3 poems
Trencsén	Bán	~30 km	8 poems
Trencsén	Uhersky Brod	~40 km	
Trencsén	Nagybiccse	~60 km	5 poems
Trencsén	Privigye	~60 km	1 poem
Trencsén	Zsolna	~75 km	
Trencsén	Mosóc, Sempete	~80 km	
Trencsén	Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica, SK)	~110 km	1 poem
Trencsén	Zólyom	~120 km	
Trencsén	Korpona (Krupina, SK)	~120 km	1 poem
Trencsén	Szentandrás (Liptovsky Ondrej, SK)	~170 km	2 poems
Trencsén	Késmárk	~230 km	3 poems
Trencsén	Márkusfalva	~250 km	
Trencsén	Siroka (Široké, SK)	~275 km	
Trencsén	Tarcadobó	~290 km	
Trencsén	Nagysáros (Veľký Šariš, SK)	~300 km	
Trencsén	Kassa	~310 km	1 poem
Trencsén	Bártfa	~315 km	
Trencsén	Mezőtúr	~330 km	3 poems
Trencsén	Sárospatak	350 km	6 poems

IV. THE PARATEXT OF *LIBELLUS EXERCITIORUM POESEOS SCHOLASTICORUM*

Due to space limitations, I only provide a summary of the paratext. Only the poems found at the beginning of the volume can be counted here, since from page 131 onward, we find a book within the book, the *Liber adoptivus*, which forms an immanent part of the main work. This part is an “adopted book,” a collection that Mader has integrated into his volume. It contains poems and letters addressed to him by his friends, some of which I will also discuss.

It is worth mentioning the poem titled “To the nosy reader” (*Ad lectorem nasutum*),⁵² which addresses the nit-picking reader, who pokes his nose into everything. In most poetic collections of the period, the critical reader is typically associated with the name of Zoilus; however, Mader exemplifies instead with Horace’s Theon (*Epist.* 1.18.82). Perhaps some believe – he writes – that these poems are not fitting for a pastor. Although many poets deal with themes contrary to Scripture, he renounces all impious writings. Mader recommends that the reader also take up the lyre and join the Muses in singing erudite songs. Poetry is a divine gift; to reject poetry is, in effect, to scorn the gifts of God. It is difficult to determine precisely when he wrote this *ad lectorem* poem, but it is certain that he was already a pastor. Considering the publication date of the book (first half of 1588), the poem could have been written during his pastoral service in Kiripolc. His known biography contains a significant gap between January 1586 and 1600, after which he is documented as a pastor in Trencsén.

At the beginning of the book, Mader’s introductory *epistola dedicatoria* can be read, addressed to István Balassa (1548–1590). From this dedication, it becomes clear that the work was primarily intended as a gift for him. Mader quotes the well-known motto from Palingenius: “The hope of fame is accustomed to drive many to virtue” (*Spes famae solet ad virtutem impellere multos*).⁵³ In praising the Balassa family, he also mentions Miklós Zrínyi, who was the father of Ilona Zrínyi, the first wife of István Balassa. In connection with Miklós Zrínyi, Mader invokes the topos of the “bulwark of Hungary,” referring to him as the wall and bastion of the country in his time (*qui fere fuit sui temporis murus et propugnaculum Hungariae*). Another classical topos in the text is the “Hercules at the crossroads.”⁵⁴ Mader claims that István Balassa had entered the “age of Hercules,” in which one must choose between virtue and pleasure. (By this time, Balassa was already 40, while the allegorical encounter with Virtus and Voluptas typically occurs in youth.) This is one of the reasons why he dedicates the book to him. The path of virtue is characterized, among many other things, by diligent study. The other reason is that the “lynx-eyed” preceptor Mathias Carthicius⁵⁵ was the first who encouraged him in his childhood to study the art of poetry in István Balassa’s house. This little book is nothing less than the offspring of his studies (*hunc studiorum meorum fetum*), which he commends to Balassa’s favour.

Then, Mader presents his four reasons why he decided to publish the poems written by him and his friends, despite their possible shortcomings.

1. **Firstly**, because lovers of poetic art may realize how arduous such studies are, especially in our nation for we, who can scarcely stammer even simple speeches (*vix balbutire posse*), especially compared to those who imbibe Latin and solid erudition from their parents as though from their mother’s milk (*qui Latinitatem et solidam eruditionem a parentibus et veluti cum lacte materno hauriunt*). However, the more difficult the labour, the greater the soul’s delight (*labor autem difficilior, maiorem animi voluptatem parit*).

⁵²Mader (2024), 368, no. 77.

⁵³Palingenius (1531).

⁵⁴See the most comprehensive summary of the topos: Panofsky (1930). For the summary of its occurrence in Hungary, see: Szőke (2017), 35–40.

⁵⁵Besides the previously mentioned 1586 propempticon (app. 39), Mader also includes two further poems by Carthicius in which he praises our poet. See: Mader (2024), 399–400, app. 37–38.

2. **Secondly**, as gratitude to his beloved parents, his homeland, his teachers, and his patrons, who – with God’s help – supported him in his poetic studies.
3. **Thirdly**, out of love for his friends and those whose names appear in the verses of this book (*amor amicorum et personarum, quarum nomina versibus his celebrantur*). Though some of them have already passed into the heavenly homeland, and others are separated from him by great distance, he will always remember each of them with the deepest gratitude.
4. **Finally**, he published the book to provide examples for young people who love literature (especially for the future citizens of his beloved homeland, Trencsén), showing how poetry can glorify God and gain the attention and love of the most distinguished people. Without citing the source, Mader then quotes two lines from a poem by Georg Sabinus,⁵⁶ according to which fame and glory are brought by noble art, and through it, the favour and love of kings can also be obtained.

After this, Mader once more offers the book to Balassa, accompanied by the most gracious of words and extending best wishes.

At first glance, the volume appears to be a collection of occasional poetry.⁵⁷ However, a closer examination of the verses reveals that a significant portion of them cannot be classified as occasional poems in the strict sense of the term. What primarily excludes Mader’s poetry from this category is its distinctly personal tone. This unexpected lyrical tone is particularly surprising because, according to the volume’s title, we would expect practical models for those who want to delve into the art of verification.⁵⁸ While there is some evidence of thematic arrangement in the structure of the volume (for instance, the part of epitaphia), Mader does not strictly adhere to it. The volume contains poems belonging to the following thematic genres: *epithalamium* (nuptial poems), epitaph, panegyric, *gratulatio* (congratulatory poems), *paideuterion* (poems of gratitude to a teacher), *apostrophe* (commendatory poems for a book or thesis booklet), *propempticon* (farewell poems addressed to a departing person), *epibaterion* (poems of gratitude for safe return from travel), *hodoeporicon* (itinerary poems), *genethliacum* (congratulatory poems for a birthday or name day), *votivum* (votive poems), εὐχαριστικά (poems of gratitude), blason, *paraenesis* (exhortatory poems), consolatory poems, *dehortatio* (dehortative poems), paraphrasing poem, iocus (jesting poems). A conspicuously large proportion of Ovid’s lines and turns of phrase can be discerned in Mader’s verses. However, the influence of Virgil, Lucan, Statius, Martial, Propertius, and Plutarch can also be textually detected. The almost contemporary Georg Sabinus (1508–1560) perhaps had an even greater influence on him than Ovid, as Mader incorporates entire lines by his favoured poet into his verses.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Sabinus (1563), Q2^r.

⁵⁷See the problems related to the genre: Molnár (2024), 99–148.

⁵⁸Okál (1986), 169–175.

⁵⁹I found phrases or textual passages from the following ancient authors (I indicate the number of references in parentheses): Ovid (87), Virgil (32), Lucan (12), Statius (10), Martial (9), Horace (8), Propertius (5), Tibullus (4), Lucretius (3), Juvenal (2), Plutarch (2). Among contemporaries: Sabinus (54), Lotichius (7), Eobanus Hessus (3).

Valerian Mader's biography	
1558, May 19	Born in Trencsén (Trenčín, SK)
1567, or May, 1568	Already began his elementary studies in Sempte (Šintava, SK)
1568, Spring	Seriously wounded by a bullet from some firearm
1573-?	Studied in Trencsén under Petrus Barossius
?-1577, first week of August	Continued his studies in Bártfa (Bardejov, SK) under Thomas Faber, Georg Radaschin, and Severin Sculteti
1577, from the autumn semester at least	Studied in Zsolna (Žilina, SK) under Nicolaus Colacinus
1578, December-1579, April?	Resided in Kassa (Košice, SK)
1579, April-Summer?	His journey to Transylvania
1579, Autumn-1580, December	Studied in Sárospatak during the rectorship of Mihály Paksi Cormaeus and Zsigmond Kassai Császár
1581, February or March-1582, February	Assistant teacher and pastor in Trencsén
Before March 5, 1582	Married Dorothea
Max. 1582, February-min. 1583, June 26	They moved to Beckó (Beckov, SK), where he served as a pastor
?-1586, January	He was pastor in Kiripolc (Kostolište, SK)
1600, March	He was pastor in Trencsén
1605	He was pastor in Márkusfalva (Markušovce, SK)

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