

# The Poet or the Duke?

*To His Imperial Highness,  
Eduard Habsburg-Lothringen,  
Archduke of Austria  
(b. 1967 – )*

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (February 2025)



Queen Zita of Hungary and Crown Prince Otto of Hungary,  
Coronation Day, 1916 (Gyula Eder, 1929)

*A lively desire of knowing and of recording our ancestors*

*so generally prevails, that it must depend on the influence of some common principle in the minds of men. We seem to have lived in the persons of our forefathers. It is the labor and reward of vanity to extend the term of this ideal longevity. Our imagination is always active to enlarge the narrow circle in which Nature has confined us. Fifty or a hundred years may be allotted to an individual, but we step forward beyond death with such hopes as religion and philosophy will suggest, and we fill up the silent vacancy that precedes our birth by associating ourselves to the authors of our existence. Our calmer judgment will rather tend to moderate than to suppress the pride of an ancient and worthy race. The satirist may laugh; the philosopher may preach. But Reason herself will respect the prejudices and habits which have been consecrated by the experience of mankind. –Edward Gibbon*

*Poetry is news that stays news. –Ezra Pound*

**Your Highness, human** life cannot but prove  
A man may qualify as something of  
    An existential fluke.  
I wonder. Who do you imagine more  
Ridiculous in twenty twenty-four:  
    The Poet or the Duke?

When either rages, threatening to part  
The Seas with his pronouncements, none lose heart,  
    For it's a barren threat;  
We're feudal creatures. Modern *laissez-faire*  
Makes everybody thrilled to be the heir  
    To nothing but a debt.

I've read of you: "Reactionary"; "White  
Supremacist"; "Exploiter"; "Parasite";  
    "Religious zealot"; "His

*Most recent book is full of rancid lies"—*  
The Everyman at least can recognize,  
    Though, what a Monarch *is*.

Possession of the adamantine cleat  
Of Pedigree (today, an obsolete  
    Prestige) or pointless skills  
Is not so horrible, as long as you  
Remain that queer anachronism who  
    At least can pay his bills.

It's only natural that men like us,  
Whose social function is superfluous,  
    Should mutually pledge  
Perpetual support. And that is why  
(With brimming soul & empty wallet) I  
    Solicit patronage.

I'll be your Poet, taking your prestige  
(Which no one really cares about, my liege),  
    And, managing to feed  
It through the craft whose bleak demands I curse,  
Convert your reputation into verse  
    Which none shall ever read.

Your Highness, ever since your fathers cut  
That part of the Carpathians from what  
    Was Ottoman terrain,  
My family wore its loyalty to yours  
Through something like a century of wars  
    As lions wear a mane.

Although possession of the city passed  
From hand to hand with each concussive blast,  
    With each dactylic flame  
Engaging an already-trampled field,  
My grateful family cannot but wield

Their city's German name.

Though many favors cannot be repaid,  
Some can. Forget the bullshit masquerade.

Forget the winsome trash  
That ancient Pedigree or fecund Muse  
Sincerely promise to produce. The news  
Remaining news is cash.

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