



OF  
KINGS  
AND  
NOBILITIES

B. J. Hughes



‘One can hear echoes of Byron.’ Charles Moseley,  
Cambridge University

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*Satire has always shown among the rest,  
And is the boldest way, if not the best,  
To tell men freely of their foulest faults;  
To laugh at their vain deeds, and vainer thoughts.*

DRYDEN

*Poesis est vinum daemonum (Poetry is the wine of demons)*  
Essays of Francis Bacon

## About the Author

B. J. Hughes is a British Pakistani writer. He was born somewhere close to what used to be ancient Khorasan, though to be precise, he was conceived in Karachi, reared in the plains of Punjab, and was corrupted by English education and a voracious appetite for world history. He's almost certain to die in our present century as he was born in the last. He's stained by a number of vices, and poetry is one of them. He has two degrees from Cambridge University, after which he thought the world should be at his feet; but he was wrong. He's authored one book so far, titled 'Let There Be Justice: The Political Journey of Imran Khan' and for this tome, chooses to shield behind his pen name 'B. J. Hughes'. The initials are his own, and the inspiration for the second name 'Hughes' doesn't flow from the British poet laureate, the genius 'Ted' but from Hughes Hall, a college of Cambridge university where the author of these unfortunate verses once studied. He can usually be found musing about in the Himalayas, or occasionally ranting in London.

## Praise for the Book

‘Of Kings and Nobilities’ never fails to amuse. It’s properly self-deprecating, as the author notes himself, very English. The rhymes are the heart of it. They have a nice Byronic tone, not just the sound but the everydayness too. A very interesting read.’ **Sir Professor Drummond Bone, scholar of the 19th century English romantics at the University of Oxford.**

‘There’s a touch of self-mocking and humour in these pages, which I thoroughly enjoyed.’ **Scottish Poet, Joy Hendry**

‘It is remarkable in its range of reference and comprehensiveness of vision: an ironic and thoughtful tour of so much in our human history; so much that has formed the way we can think and conceptualize ourselves. BJ’s verse has an energy and swing to it that develops quite a momentum: and in his fondness for the closing couplet coming to rest on a weak syllable, I kept hearing echoes, as I am sure I was meant to, of Byron. It’s a lot of serious fun.’ **Charles Moseley, one of Britain’s most admired travel writers, and senior fellow of Cambridge University and the Royal Society of Arts**

A god with a taste for Milton, and a bard with a penchant for verse satire. Put them together, and what you get is an unstuffy dialogue between the divine and the human – their views sometimes divergent, but never discourteous, each offering an opinion, but never proclaiming a truth. *Of Kings and Nobilities* is a zany romp through world history, seasoned with irony, irreverence and insight. – **Arundhati Subramaniam, Indian poet and literary critic, and winner of the Khushwant Singh Memorial Prize for Poetry.**

‘This unusual verse novella provides a refreshing take on 2,000 years of human civilization in which the central figure of the bard, as requested by his God, satirizes the formative moments of history. The writer achieves his monumental task by coupling poetic imagery of earthly beauty with sharp wit. B. J. Hughes is successful not only in satirizing the greatest and cruelest minds of the past, but also in teasing this present, inattentive “age of anxiety.” Despite the self-deprecation of the writer in describing this work as “torture,” BJ succinctly captures the essence of humanity and our relationship with the divine in a way that transcends race, religion and Western-centrism. Brilliant’ **Scottish Journalist and Researcher Mary Hunter.**

‘A lyrical, tongue-in-cheek delight. Astute, insightful, entertaining.’ **Laaleen Sukhera, Writer/Editor Austenistan**

‘It requires stamina to stay with the poet; finding oneself

lunging for references on a regular basis, uncurling memory and phrases and witty thoughts, attempting to project an ossified graduate mind into the ethereal, dancing realm of the poet. It is not easy. Perhaps it is not meant to be. Had I known what epic lay before me, I should have lit a large fire and padded the pipe, told my family, friends and colleagues to go away. Instead, I was pressed into snatches of readings and always going back to go forward despite the poem's ineluctable propulsion. On reaching the last page, not unlike Ulysses overdue return to Ithaca and unrecognizable to his wife, I rested. The first thought that came to mind: out of words abstraction is to be educed. I breasted the tape with a far keener mind not only for words but deeper thoughts within.' **Mr. Michael Thompson, Senior Australian Educationist, and Principal, Aitchison College Lahore.**

'A sense of irony, yes, but a god with flair for poetry? And the audacity of a mere mortal to put the words in His mouth? There is a certain egotism to this epic poem for a poet daring to do that, as is there desperation of a bard uncertain where he stands with poetry in a world out of tune with the "rhyming season." But amidst musings that are, by turn, satirical and sagacious, there is a certain Miltonic ambition to 'Of Kings and Nobilities' that insists on the soul's need to see, even if the eyes have turned blind. This is the kind of work that fits the oak desks and the brown libraries of great houses.' **Aurangzaib Khan, Senior Journalist, Herald, DAWN.**

## Dedication

Let my readers know I'm no Alexander Pope,  
I'm neither Keats nor Alexander Pushkin,  
Whose lyrics had such grace and scope,  
I'm educated on the contrary, which, is a sort of sin,  
If one's got a taste for versification,  
Because such talents aren't gifts of any education,  
Though I can give you a little explanation,  
My muses owe their heat to reading and observation,  
My English is a result of colonial preaching,  
A father who had a Shakespearean glow,  
As he worked in his youth for BBC radio,  
And a linguist who excelled in teaching.  
He'd come to our bungalow, so rich with pleasant air,  
And tell me for poesy, I have a natural flair.



## Of Kings and Nobilities

### Introduction

I started this poem on a certain dew-drenched January morning, few years ago, just as the sun began to make its first prints on my house. As is my wont, I got out of my bed early; my head filled with new ideas, rocking with fresh rhymes, which I believed not just tallied perfectly, but were also in good enough health to be tossed and preserved on paper. I reached for my notebook and pencil (I am not yet in the habit of using my laptop for writing poetry) and started scribbling away. Thoughts, which until few days ago, were totally vague, now stood before me in the shape of a man. This man, the bard, is the hero of my tale. This bard, who holds my unconstrained imagination in adamant chains, finally drinks from the cup of death and finds himself in the audience of the highest of the high kings in the country of Araboth, beyond the seven skies. The two have a conversation. The poem discusses events of monumental importance. Events that shape our modern political, economic and intellectual life; a nearly two thousand year history of the human civilization; men who have either wielded a sword or a pen; a sum of so many little biographies told in a satirical form for easy reading. Themes such as the burning of Rome, the killing of Socrates, the writings of Plato, the crimes of King Herod, the Crusades, the genius of Shakespeare and Milton, the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Trans - Atlantic slave trade, the Mughals, the rise of the British empire, World War II, the Indian independence, just to name a few, lightly feature in this great dialogue between the bard and his God. As I approach the climax

of my little note; I take the liberty of lending my readers a useful piece of advice; that should my verse, on any account, cause them any cerebral inconveniences, they are free to pause their reading and find themselves better indulgences. The job of any good poet is to fill the mouth of his reader with his muse; and should the muse fail to glide off the tip of his tongue and create a resounding effect; the author has clearly fallen short of his task. For years, I was lackadaisical; a total slug, but then, for some odd reason, had a sudden itch to share these verses with a publisher. I hope they prove worthy reading.



