

the commuter



An anthology of text poems
by Jim Rice

the commuter

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Poems by Jim Rice

Dakota Street Press

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To cris,
for whom these poems are written

Forward

As technology has advanced, new modes of communication have emerged, and with these, novel ways of creating poetry. The medium of poetry sent by text (SMS) messages is but one of these recent adaptations to the technology. This is an anthology of very short poems which were composed and sent as text messages while I was traveling on various modes of transport in and through Hong Kong and my home town, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In large part because this new mode of writing poetry is severely constrained in terms of length, these poems had to conform to a very specific format.

As part of this style, a different kind of convention in terms of expression has emerged creating a unique voice. For example many commonly used words are frequently abbreviated to extremes, altering longer words such as “this” to “dis” or “the” to “d”. This does *not* however represent an intention to “create” an artificial or ethnic voice. Rather, the convention of strange spellings of words came about by being taught by my daughter Joy, on how to text (or rather, in her own parlance, “tx”). I hope then, that the result for the reader is both immediately enjoyable and at the same time on other levels, highly accessible.

These poems are written broadly in the manner of children’s nursery rhymes sometimes evoking the rhymes of Robert Louis Stevenson (and other times Dr. Seuss). And while I have tried on occasion to amuse, these poems also try and intimate some of the deep-seated desires and anxieties inherent to the ordinary experiences of everyday life. As such, many of these short verses reflect an underlying unease held by myself about life and as such are intended to convey the same unsettling effect upon the reader.

In writing then, my immediate text interlocutor and poetic audience has been my wife, Maricris Tolentino, who since I have known her has been the inspiration of my life. And even though the writing for the most part, has come from an inner conversation that I have with her, my poems are also very much influenced by the poetry of John Barryman which first introduced me to the device of running characters such as Henry and Mr. Bones, as well as his characteristic style of writing of oneself in the third person. I am also indebted in my writing to the poetry of John Koethe whose own more intellectual style of poetry is able to shed fresh insight on both aesthetic and philosophical truths.

Jim Rice

Milwaukee poems

Even though
he cud have
been taken
for dead/

visions of
verses,
sprung from
his head/

as he lay
there sleeping,
snug
in his bed

Amy was the best
you see/
when she showed us
Milwaukee

Jack and Brian
did play their part/
by taking us to
Colonel Hart

Of all the places
we stopped to rest/
Jack and Brian's
we liked best

Poem for my mother

Dat we ar often told,
to grow young
an nevr be old/

But ovr time,
we find
instead/

dat wit age
its mostly
in yer head

Fast Tren

Wer both ridin on dat fas tren
An soon to run out of traks

An if I seen dis show before
Der jus ain no comin bak

Don weep for me wen im al gon
Cos dats jus d way I be

Jus think of us from time to time
Wen we wer young an free

Christmas Carols

Nights of frost
an icy clarity/

time of fear
and Christmas carols/

days of smoke
an muggy parity/

an end to dreams
and deep-felt perils

Sunny bay poems

We love dat witch
all the way/
She always let us
have our say/
Wen we come here
everyday/
But we don't nid a
longer stay/
Caus dis bus just left
sunny bay

Sittin in dis bay of
bitches and divisions/
cannot help but ponder
life's issues an
indecisions

And may
I call you hun?
oh no, oh no fun/
this most quaintest bay,
is wanting/
even the faintest
ray of sun

Running very late,
too hot to skate/
wat for to ate?

Disco bay, disco bay
ever let me have my way/
mus see my sweetie
as i may

Stranded in this
absurd bay of sun/
Why am I this
cowboy on the run?/

Why oh why
be forced to tarry so?/
driver, driver
Let me go

Dat cowboy now
stuck in sunny bay/
Can d gud witch
steal his cares away?

Dos big jets fly by
over head/
While I lie der
in my bed/

An although
they always
fly an soar/
all I hear is a
Dreadful roar

I might be a pain/
an don mean to complain
in dis sad refrain/
But all of des people
ar jus crowdin my brain

Stranded by d sunless bay
hav we al jus lost our way?
an wit mos nothing mor to pay
at d bittr end
of dis dreadful day

Losing rationality, typhoon comin on

Now d storm is
descending again
lashing d side of
d train/

all things considered
dis weathers insane
standin in d drivin rain

Frustration stop

Ar we stuck in santa fe?
'nei nei nei' I hear you say

We now rest an hope an pray
pray for rain another day

or take a sip at Firth an Tey
at d end of many hektik frey

We jus sit in sunny bay
dat godam bus jus drov away

Peril in d grass

Dat bouncy bus jus
reached d greens

Babies poop
in der bluejeans

Bankers live
beyond der means

An cobras lurk
behind the scenes

Final Approach

Airplane airplane,
come with me/
Help me fly
across the sea/

An if your wing
should ever fall/
to my love
will be my last call

Dats a very nice poem,
to read on d way/
On d long road hom,
to Discovery bay

Alone in dis
stinky bay,
will no one wipe
dis tear away?

D bus will come
come what may,
but d children jus
play and play

Why all d fuss?
I asked dos few
Dos few on d bus/
if I wer to gt hom,
d tunnel is a
mus

“Star” ferry poems

A teenage ophelia
wearing pants
that say juicy/
while the
ferryboat captain
shouting “I love
Lucy”

Wittgenstein was der
with a noodle
in his mouth/
And the steamboat
captain
was turning south

There’s a woman
on the stair/
they call miss
ratty hair/
Don’ like to
complain/
but her shirt’s
got a stain

No fun to be had today/
no chance for us to
run an play/
naman, Naman ¹
What an awfl day

Nothing is bettr on
D long way hom/
den to sit on dis boat/
an write a tx poem

¹ *Naman* is a word used in the Philippines official language, tagalog. It is an exclamatory expression which is used to denote surprise or concern.

Port visit, hong kong

Dat witch jus
sneeze an sneeze/
while dos ladies jus
sigh an
clutch der knees/
and d gray fleet lies
tied up in
d summer breeze

Nim shue wan pier

Sittin on d dock
der aint no sign
gotta wash it out
wit turpentine

under d sun
in an offhand way
dogs on d run
on dis long hot day

boats in d water
nothing to do
sails all adrift
as I tie my shoe

Commuter train terror poems

Brain is grindin
All d time/
Jus to make/
Des 12 words
ryme

Why all this fuss?/
They said there
was a bomb on the bus/
And that commotion
was all about us/

But that jus wasn't
the fairest/
'caus this old boy
just ain't a terrorist

Dat witch bak to
her tricks/
Don knowit
but dats a poet

Now cowboy ride
in a roaring train/
Tearing up dos tracks
in a thunderous refrain

Earthly chatter
an ghostly cries
exude from d passangers
and mark out der lives/

hold no illusions
about life on d go
the end wil come/
that much we know

Wai mus dey
be so mean
to a boy
whos only keen
on not just
doin gud
But always doin
as he shud

Cowboy anthology

Wen d cowboy hungry
An need his grub/
He like to ate
A sandwich known
As “club”

Wen dat cowboy tired
An haf to bed/
He like to hav
His doggie by his head

Wen d cowboy
Out and it begin to rain/
He always like
To take d train

Cowboy nevr get to rest/
Especially when he go out
West

Now dat d cowboy
Don got no jacket/
Jus put his troubles
In a cigarette
Packet

Jus lef class an
Feeling old/
Dat darn cowboy
Is on d Road

Now dat cowboy
Wil surely rue the day/
That his pony ever die
In sunny bay

Yippyaiyii/
Now d pony ride thru
Tsing yi/
But when will we reach
Dis co very?

Dat cowboy
Already start to sing/
Since his pony left
Lai king

Dat little cowboy
At last on his pony
Ha ha ha hoo hoo

Here on d lonsome prarie,
drifting like a stone/
Here on dat prarie,
i sing dis song of hom

Cowboy on da street/
Countin every heart beat/
Askin wat for to eat?

Now dat cowboy
Be truly blessed/

Since his sweetie
Was duly impressed/

An on d tren hom
He can finally rest



why mus we wait so long
for dis long day to end/
when dos dat live it/
are seldom strong?

Everyday utterance meaning poems

Dat ol boy wit da
Baseball hat/
Sho do look
Like one kool kat

May be thirsty
May be dry/
Dat baket² singin
Like a bluebottle fly

Baket on dis tren/
Got hair like a
coconut mop/
Singin like a spinnin
top

² *Baket* is an Ilocano term (Ilocano being the dialect widely used in the northern Luzon region of the Philippines) referring to an elderly lady.

Dis tren like a dog pen/
Cowboy stuck
In dat animal den

Naman.
D wind and rain
Driving/
Hard an
Cold against d
Window pane

All dos people
sit and stare/
Why den don dey
stop an care?

If all she does is
curse an hate/
Why then do I
haf ta wait?/

If the ocean is a
deep deep blue/
Why can't I see
my sweetie true?

Oh boy oh boy!/
Hav something
to smile about/
Cornbread

Dat little coldy cat/
Lookin like
a stinky
Rat

Wats dat witch evr
Goin to do/
If all she finds
Is one ol
shoe?

Don talk of volition
or ambition/
Wer all lost
In life's
Obliv'ion

Sense memory

The scent of witch hazel
fills d car/
An makes me glad
i ain't goin too far

An tho its got
connotations
in my mind/

An I don't
wanna
seem unkind/

So tho there's thos
associations
in my brain/
i sure was glad to leav
dat train

Bird Flu

Ders a crazy old lady
Wit one black glove/
Hoveren' in d cornr like a
Wounded dove

She got a tissue of lies
Dat she hold to her face/
Which she keep to protec
From dat othr place

No time for conversation

Ders a girl on d west boun
tren/
Got a kitten tattoo
Like an ankle
sprain/

And it seem she appears
to be in pain/
As she plays her fingers
on her video
game

So as she chats der
on d cellular
phone/
I find dat I mus now
leave her
alone

And as her tattoo
clings to d bony
shin/
an tho shes not
at al very
thin

She hides beside
a silver
pin/
As we all embark
on a life of
sin

Watchin d rebolusion

Jus las nite I was up
watchin d news/
Saw on d screen
Gene delacruz/³

Gabriela on a horse
was ridin by/⁴
Just had to cause me
to heav a sigh

Joe rizal was ther
finishing a buk/⁵
But th tv refused to
take a look

No one I cud see
was keeping scor/
as maryann⁶
shouted out for mor

³ Refers to Ferdinand Victor Eugene Delacroix, the French Romantic artist who in 1830 painted the work, "Liberty Leading the People."

⁴ Reference to Gabriela Silang, a Philippine nationalist hero who in 1731 following the murder of her husband led an unsuccessful uprising against Spanish occupation. She is depicted archetypically in Filipino art as riding on a horse, and bearing a sword.

⁵ Jose Rizal, (born, 1861) physican and author who ultimately became the leader of the Philippines independence movement and is known as being the father of the nation. Rizal was executed by the Spanish military authorities in 1896 for treason.

⁶ Marianne, refers to the symbol of the French republic. She personifies both the French nation and the values of reason and liberty.

New year poem

Lately no one text
or even calls,
walking under frozen
waterfalls

Learning to read
between the lines,
dead leaves falling
from tangled vines

Drawing painful lessons
from long lost past,
the dead of winter
here at last

Last nyt in fevrd dream

Last nyt in fevrd dream
By the banks of a wide
sandy rivr did glide
Feet sliding past cold pale shore,
Found a way to frosty rutted rural trail

An ther past open saggin woodn door
Crept on in fear and clingin doubt,
Along its long and windin route

To wan and hazy dawn
Evr hiddn covers drawn,
Findin in the new day
that ive long since,
Lost my way

Moral adage

Nole me tangare,⁷
We get wat we
realy want rarely

Don wanna sin,
Jus pleas let me in

An shud judgment
Evr come my way,
Den pleas pleas,
jus let me stay

⁷ *Nole me tangare*, latin for “touch me not,” the words spoken by Jesus to Mary Magdaline following his resurrection (John 20:17). Also the title of Philippine hero, Jose Rizal’s novel published in 1887.

Rain expected

Dis tren is packd
at d end of d day
An I'm at a loss
at jus wat to say

The clouds in d sky
Ar grey an low
An it seem ders a law
That it mus be so

Faces ar closd
in an iron vice
as they turn to
their personal
video device

watchin d scene
as dey go by so fast
through the thicknes
of d foggy windowless glass,
do we evr notice our lives
as they go past?

Listen to d night
As it falls from the sky
Can we evn hear the souns
That ar always neigh?

Philippine nursery rhyme

Pancit, pancit,
stil mainit pa
Kaldareta, kaldareta,
wat makano ka

Daning ding, sinigang,
for yer granma
Kamote tops, truck stops
in a private car

Pinakbet, bakit
wats d reason why,
Apai, tinapai
time to say gudbye

Einstein's shadow

Albrt Einstein finaly died
bak in the yer 1955,
but wen did that man
first come alive?

Befor Oppenheimer's
atomic bomb,
or the battle
of the Somme

Befor the time
of dynamite,
befor Edison's
first electric lite,

In an age of steam
an iron wheel,
wer farmer's scythe
an clover field,
an horse an carriage
wer yet so real,

An the fruit of science
tho mired in sin
and deep in error,
cud not yet fil our
youthful hearts
wit mortal terror

Royal wedding

Todays d weddin
of wills an kate,
i gues dat couple
jus cud not wait

To start der new
life as d royals,
of imbibing upon
d national spoils

So get yer ticket
at d abby,
i hear dis party
wont be shabby

Now take yer seat
d time is neigh,
an try not to think
of princess di

Middleclass commuter blues

Sitting on dis bus
of hellish tai tais,⁸
brings to mind
nought but tears
and sighs/

An though the impuls
springs to mind and
sometimes dies/

It all too often
makes me wish to
pluck out my eyes

⁸ *Tai tai*, is a Chinese language expression for “wife.” Another possible use of the term refers to a married woman of a certain age who lunches on a regular basis.

Announcement of public interest

Due to our current
signal fault,
the train will now
just have to halt

So we will now be
ten minutes late,
please don't start
to curse and hate

Sorry about
this short delay,
we hope it doesn't
affect your working day

Please keep in mind
the platform gap,
we can see our progress
on the map

When on the train
don't eat no food,
that kind of thing
is very rude

And when in the carriage
please don't spit,
that's very mean
to those who sit

Moving day

From dat litl haus upon d bay
I hear that you mus leav today,
I wish it didn't hav
to be dis way

I wish dat you cud evr stay
an in yer garden,
al kinds of seeds wud sow
an of thes into al kind of shoots wud grow

An then all too soon
into bright flowrs bloom,
an kiss d sun at evry noon

But plans they change
an nevr follow mortl reason,
an oftn end their time
far out of season

From dat litl haus upon d bay
I hear you mus leav today

The Ratty songs

ratty now on d
baby pram bus/
got notin much
to do wit us

jus sitting here
tryn t gt warm/
an slightly regretin
dat dey wer evr born

nothing's bettr for
ratty's achin feet/
den dat pure malt
wiskey/
served up so neat

so don you produce
any mor grief/
all ratty wan
is an aparitif

restart d engines
burn some coal/
dat little ratty
is on a roll

Dat ratty don nid
to giv an apology/
he jus sent off
a tx poem anthology

Why, why all dis fus?/
no nid, no nid to cus/
jus jump on d bus
and come wit us

Dat man on d tren
bleats a sad refrain
about somthin
connected with eaten/

Tho I might be wrong
dis feelin is strong
i think hes mos likely
norwegen

Ders a man nex to me,
wit a snake an a tree/
don mean to caus
no alarm,

Cus he ain't don me
no harm/
But dis much is vry
true,

Dats surly one
badass tatoo

Wat a day wat a day/
let dos children
hav der say/
why mus we always
pay an pay?/
take me hom to disco bay

Now the moon is risin
an dis long days work is don/
ratty now close to hom
an stil much on d run/

But something yet is missin
and d war as yet unwon/
hes stil somhow stranded
in dis vast bay of sun

Ratty make his way
along d rails
dustin off spaces
in his mind,

pondering new
an bettr trails
lookin for dos clues
dat he may find

Tren to nowher

Radical ratty
on t long tren
to nowher,

Locked out
latchkey kids
stil stuck
on d phon,

A trenful of people
wondren if
del evr gt der,

All of dem lost
on d long
journey hom

Consequentialist dilemma

Wai do ratty
make al dat fus?
caus he jus misd
d 5:30 bus

But no one care
an no one respond
it jus like dat baby
in a dirty old pond⁹

⁹ Reference to Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3, (1972) pp. 229-43, in which he uses the hypothetical example of encountering a baby drowning in a pond in an attempt to illustrate one's moral duty to those in distant countries suffering the effects of famine.

Early evening despair

Stranded on d 6:10 ferry
confused and bewilderd
by conflictin views

cant help reflectin
on Kowloon dairy
an my last remainin muse

As on d ferry boat
i embark
haf ta reflect on dat
snide remark

not visions of sugerplums
in my head
but a growin level
of dred insted

West Rail Odyssey

Ramblin ratty ride
along d shimmerin rails,

like d ship of fair odysseus
an its red sails,

thinkin about
them beans an rice,

cooked up by d gud witch
jus so nice,

an nobody evr
had to ask him twice

Musical interlude

Ders a girl
over there thats sat/
wit notes to d music
dats on her hat/

But cud dis
possibly be wors?/
she got notes to d music
on her purse

Day trip

Here on d inter urban line
wer d town slips away
an d sun does shine
we go out for a day
and all is fine

we can go into town
or out to d beach
its all der to find
within easy reach

d kids ride d tren
and are havin fun
as it chugs along
in d bright warm sun

everyone here treats us so kind
as we ride along to d tren on time
and it don cost us much mor den a dime,
its all on d inter urban line

at d end of the day
as the light slips away
an d sun goes down
we go bak into town

d moon is alone
at the edge of the sky
an skul waits for us
tho we don't know why

Expecting rain blues

Standin on d corner/
feeling kind of old/
wonderin 'bout d future/
nt doin as im told

little does it mattr/
nothin to forgiv/
time goes on without me/
no mattr how long I live

evn though my future/
may soon be brought to end/
got to keep on runnin/
no use to preten

For Bethune

Ther is a house in jordan,
its a diffrent kind of space
an though it was built
for only twenty souls,
they got sixty in dat place ¹⁰

My employer nevr
paid my wage,
his wife she beat me too
so now we live in Jordan,
an sing this song for you

The judge in court
he spoke to me,
as if I couldn't see
he said, people only love the rich,
an justice isn't free

I wish one day they'd listen
an hear the story I hav to tell
i wish one day they'd look at me,
an not jus the color of my skin

Back home the politicians,
love the money that we all send,
they tell us wer all heros,
a case they mus defend

¹⁰ Reference to Bethune House, (established in 1986) which is a shelter for abused migrant workers, specifically women from Indonesia, the Philippines and South Asia. Bethune House is located in South Kowloon, Hong Kong.

So i am a migrant worker,
i been put down and abused,
i been passed ovr,
kicked around an stared at,
an lest you be amused
now i'll tell you jus one mor thing,
befor yer precious time is used
i still got my dignity,
So don't you ever ever get confused

Winter's day

Gypsy boy
since he been born/
always accustomed
to be warm/

Only used to d
bright warm sun/
dis cold an gloomy
jus ain no fun

Elegy

At the edg of the day
wen the sun
goes down/

There's nothin lef to say
an hardly
a soun

The sun is the same
as it has always
has been/

But of wat may we claim
wen ther's no mor
to be seen?

Now the stil moon takes its turn
reflected in
a fainter glow/

Seeming then that this wud earn
faith's hope in
our ebb an flow

Beyond the pale and narrow stage
lies a black
and eternal sky/

An wher we dare to etch its page
ther is no end
in asking why

Nighttime terror poem

often I dread
of goin to bed/

where visions an lights
make up my nights/

an troubled dreams
like murky streams/

orflow their bounds
haunting me/
with muted sounds

til mermaids wake me
an we drown¹¹

¹¹ Reference to T.S.Elliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,"
"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea, By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown,
Till human voices wake us and we drown" from, *Prufrock and other Observations*, Egoist Press (1917).

Questions over Kant's epitaph ¹²

of what the moral law
that lies within?
an if we shirk it
do we sin?

an wat of that
starry sky above?
is this world we live in
without love?

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, (1788) trans., T. K. Abbott, Prometheus Books (1996) p. 191: "Two things fill my mind with ever increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the reflection dwells on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."

Cast off

Now that ferryboat
has slipped its ties/
seeking its way hom,
to distant lights
on d bay

Making its cours
thu murk and lies/
losing its wake
along d way

A change in the weather

d warm humid skies
can turn suddenly gray,
as a cold north wind
the spring it denies,

an leavin no choice
but to winter repay,
and leavin us naught
but its season of lies

Ontological doubts

Philosophy dinnr
playd my song/
but deep in my heart
thers something wrong/

Stil on d water
cant gt out/
but at d bak of my mind
thers a lingerin doubt/

Somthin bout god
somthin bout fate/
somthin or othr
that jus cant wait/

Wat if im wrong?
wat if im late?/
wat if its gt
nothing to do wit fate?

Going home late poems

Cowboy ate lamb
wit his friend davy/
only when he got
lots of gravy

Pony, pony follow me/
right on up to
D sycamor tree

Go away, go away
shimmering phone/
don separate dis
little lamb from d
bone

Dis much is clear
whether far or near/
ders no need to fear my dear
it wil soon be all too clear/
We wil hav beer
We wil hav beer

Long journey home poems

Chicken a la king/
Martin luther king/
Jus left lai king

Help me
Help me
I'm a bee/
just left d
station of
Tsing yi

Hey hey/
On d way/
just got in
to Sunny Bay

Dat guy on d bus
may need a poking/
Cause d moron stink
like he's still
Smokin

Cowboy happy as
Time runs slow/
Cause dat bus now
finally go

D cowboy's ear
Always feel like a
Funnel/
When dat bus
Go thru d tunnel

Don be mad
Be like a maus/
Cowboy now by
Wendy's haus

Don you mind if i
See you latr/
Cowboy stuck
on d escalatr

No matter how far
Dat cowboy fall/
He always love to
See his mahal ¹³

¹³ *Mahal* is an tagalong expression used in the Philippines literally meaning, dear, precious or expensive but commonly used in such a context in order to denote a spouse or loved one.

Dire frustration poems

Dat cowboy on d
Tren of darkness/
Goin thru a terrible
Hole in d groun

Babies havin
Poops and flies with
Scabies/
Like dogs with rabies/
Dis tren a mess

Ders a boy on d
Tren wit legs dat are
Shaved/
I might
look like him if i
nevr behaved

Cowboy anthology (2)

Acros d prairie d
Cowboy ride/
With his dog an pony
By his side ¹⁴

D grassland is d place
Dat d cowboy go/
Way on out der
In idaho

Aldo dat cowboy
Ain't dat bad/
He's stil mus be
a little fickle/
He never was once
willing
To ate a pickle

¹⁴ Reference to Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson, "My Rifle, My Pony and Me," from, *Rio Bravo*, (1959)
Directed by Howard Hawks. "The sun is sinkin in the west/The cattle go down to the stream/The red wing
settles in her nest/It's time for a cowboy to dream"

Wen d cowboy get
Dirty
He know jus wat to do/
He jump in d water
An take off his shoe

Dat cowboy no fool
Got no time for d girls/
De only want
To get diamonds an pearls

Wen dat cowboy
Get old
He jus hav to go/
Along with his doggie
Down to mexico

Dislocated animal poems

Jus outside d window
Fox and cat had a spat/
Fox got up an ran away

D nifty little monkey
Run away
from d witch/

Yup, no mor
to go home,
baa/

Ooh noo!
All lonely/
Mus go hom

D lonesome doggie
Of d prairie roams free/
Bring bak my doggie to me

D froggie went out
On a moonlite night
D froggie went out
On a moonlite night
Der was not a dog in
Sight

De froggie jump into a hole/
D witch fell down a telephone
Pole

Three early evening haiku

Darkness is falling/
Smoke is rising from the hills/
In the distant gloom

The train rushes on/
As neon lights line the cars/
Boys in white shirts part

The station is filled/
With faint echoes of sounds past/
Now on their way home

Philosophy dinner conversation poem

Though I don't mean
To complain too often/
That fuckin dinner
Was like bein in a
Coffin

National People's Congress

Styrofom Inch boxes

An cotton rags/

Bold declarations

An red flags/

Blue nylon jackets

An bus collisions/

Empty red packets

An social inhibitions

Concluding remarks (unacknowledged legislator) National People's Consultative Congress, 2010 ¹⁵

Prime minister wen
Hav you got any honor?
Were sick of yer tirades
On the dali lamma
Were tired of your views
on Taiwan and Tibet
an were bored wit your ideas
for barack obama

Prime minister wen
Jus listen to me,
Cant you see that the people
Just want to be free?
Mr wen my frien
You've got to beware,
Stop killing the students
In tienanmen square

Prime minister wen
if you wer at all cool,
youd give up your thoughts
and thos dull talks at skul,
youd quit all thos threats
an yer iron rule,
youd hedge yer all bets
an stop bein a fool

¹⁵ Reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," (1821) taken from, *English Essays: Sidney to Macaulay: The Harvard Classics 1909-14*, New York: P.F. COLLIER & SON, 1909-1917
New York: BARTLEBY.COM, (2001). "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

So save up all your insights,
An all of your sound
pack all of yer bags
an jus promptly leave town,
Prime minister wen
We don't mean to astound
But jus listen to us,
We dont want you around

cris' poems

A bird is singing/
Ragity's world is swerling/
Witch is waiting

Poet is yers
On a whim of tyme/
But ya blow when
Ya ain't got no dime

Ur d monkey who
Run away frm
Home/
Ar u lost my
Little friend

Woozle boogle idol/
Midol is witch's eyebol

Intelligence is
Melted

Lets go out
An hit lolas ¹⁶
Wit a stick

Minney winey
Mommy/
Bikini chaty faty
Coki

¹⁶ *Lola*, is a Tagalog expression for an older or mature lady.



Witches mind is
Whirly/
Whether d bus of urs is
Twerlin/
D ragity of mine
is moving

Hoy poet man
Wher are you running now/
Ur wheel
Spin an head realin/
My stomach
Achin

Keep d corral safe
Let d horse walk on
An empty space/
Where it lead
to the roaring train

Yi pants take
Busi/
Witchi hungry
Dali dali¹⁷

And d Indian of d
Land of native
Idaho/
Gun down d
quaking cowboy

Ar d witch upn her
Broomstick flin like
A toothpick/ or stil
Asleep in bed with
Arms an legs of
Lead?

¹⁷ Dali, is a tagalong expression for “hurry up.”

No one touch d
Princess lapayag/ ¹⁸
U monster
Give me my juice

Ofcourse im only ur
Friend/
D one who love you/
So whers my gift..!

¹⁸ *Lapayag* is a Ilocano word for “ear.”

Hoi.
Afraid to get wet/
Or become
a little baby mice

Ahaa or il make u
Into a little brew/
Wit d feet sticking up
Like a cinimon stick

Ur d monkey who
Run away frm home/
Ar you lost
My little friend

Yes ur my best
friend

D princess nid
Her native food/
Im going to help on d farm

Hoi bwisit, dnt want
To be a star/¹⁹
I jst wana rid broomstick
car

¹⁹ “bwisit” is a tagalong expression approximating the term, ‘bullshit’.

About the author

Jim Rice was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on February 26, 1956. He was educated at The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where he earned a degree in philosophy and the University of Cambridge, Downing College where he earned MA and LLM degrees. Mr. Rice has taught law at the National University of Malaysia and since 1992 he has worked and lived in Hong Kong. A legal philosopher by training, he has also worked for many years in support of both refugees and migrant workers' rights. Mr. Rice is currently an Assistant Professor in Philosophy at Lingnan University and lives with his wife Maricris Tolentino in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong.

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As technology has advanced, new modes of communication have emerged, and with these, novel ways of creating poetry. The medium of poetry sent by text messages is but one of these recent instances.

This anthology of very short poems composed by the author Jim Rice and originally sent as text (or SMS) messages are a vibrant example of this new genre.

In large part because this new mode of writing poetry is severely constrained in terms of length, these poems must conform to a very specific format. The result for the reader is both immediate and at the same time, highly accessible.

Written broadly in the style of children's nursery rhymes (and although both funny and poignant) these poems also evoke the underlying desires and anxieties inherent to the immediate experiences of everyday life. While at the same time, many of these short verses have the unsettling effect upon the reader of reviving both the familiar and at the same time, conjuring up a dreamlike series of disturbing mental scenarios.