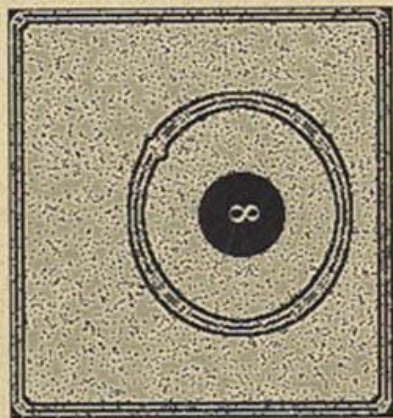


CARBON DATA



POEMS - PAT NOLAN

# CARBON DATA

POEMS

PAT NOLAN



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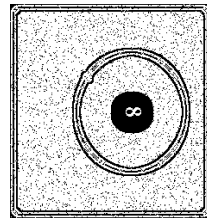
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**USE  
ONLY  
AS  
DIRECTED**

I'm too lazy to even  
change the channel

art's narcissism  
guitar soothes removes  
the distance and the return

midday hornets  
guard the yard

so too I  
the noise of identity  
so obvious

I would not envy you  
a pack of lies

the significance of everything

silence up  
all of a sudden  
associations

another word  
later as late grows later

**FOOL  
SCRAPS**

The joke's on me  
ear ring eye weep nose plug  
mucous rising chill waves

alternate hot flash  
taste buds flat as chalk  
sneeze exclamation

tea steam of consciousness  
pale purple flowers glow  
fine rain mist's dull light

there is an outside  
but I am too much inside

a big crumpled tissue  
the epitome of fuzzy logic  
next to half read what's  
got to be the most boring  
book of all existence

attention scattered  
I play the same dopey  
love song all over again

**CARBON  
DATA**

At last selfless hero  
peace and near quiet

gears turn invisibly  
in the guise of convenience

appliances feed  
body and soul both

worth guided by rise  
or decline of paper

we have come  
a long way, baby

misery pain covered  
by a facial cream

values misjudged by  
confusion of the century

enter stage right  
the new life

everything before  
static on the radio

messages arrive  
from the stars

**NOT  
EVEN  
WEDNESDAY**

Time transforms  
certainly mere words

life's a struggle  
nothing without

sound weary  
a decadent stance

bare bulb brilliance  
wall paper peeling

shifting decisions  
which grain of sand

out scream kids  
*"QUIET DOWN!"*

I dream alone  
awake to your touch

you were gone  
I was worried

you have to be here  
to keep my mind off you



**WORDS  
BENT  
ON  
MEANING**

I breathe  
the trees breathe  
I breathe

an announcement  
across time

in that stillness  
arc of wing  
sun dapples

an orange at  
mid-afternoon

white wind wisped  
emerging cloud sky  
shifting light

a delicacy  
unthought

**FREE**  
**FALL**

I have left my mark  
graffiti breaks down walls

breeze teases last few  
leaves on bared limbs

dappled drops of sunlight  
just around the corner

house to myself  
no need to escape

luxury and agony  
the fading landscape

whole new ballgame  
turned upside down

cat alive with fleas  
yowls at the door

amber faced days  
disguise slow decay

**CUBIST  
MOOD**

Day fractured  
by tenths  
(or variations thereof)

splintered wedges of glass  
from a clock face

shadows lengthen  
a landscape  
half pale blue

and dark  
deepening silhouettes

that blur of edges  
piece by jagged  
piece

where lines converge  
chimney smoke  
lanky poplar's

last few  
gold petals shudder

**FILL  
WANTED**

Hail the writing stick!  
hail the muse who moves  
the man who moves it!

strike a match get fire

the breeds of consolation  
the wine of evening  
sweet *magnifique*

the limits of proportion  
as the gala goes

italic that stanza  
in bronze  
it has snooze appeal

don't resist  
even the silly

something something  
the prosperous  
(the preposterous?)

gone  
(come on muse  
don't fail me now)

masked by attributes  
honey'd speech just draws  
flies to sticky lips

"did you know you've got  
ink on your tongue?"

**AFTER  
DESCARTES**

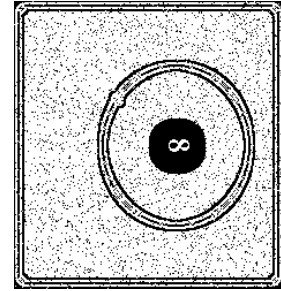
Thinking is highly overrated  
the blank page in front of me  
proves that!  
I'll never doubt myself again

why then do I  
dick around

an apt expression  
when applied  
to most men

(press gently)

it's not that I mind  
being stupid  
it's the reminders I mind



**AUGUST'S**  
**BLUE**  
*for Irene*

On the surrounding hills  
you can only see  
the tops of the trees

saw tooth skyline  
of redwood fir and pine  
in the mist of distance

close up patches of light  
and dark foliage  
stand out and recede

green river blue canoe  
and the pale pink torso  
of a man waist deep in water

"don't get the giggles –  
we'll never get anywhere"  
prow aground

notebook pages flutter close  
towel over shoulder  
pointing  
she says  
"the wind brings it to an end"

**CONCERTO  
CON  
LOS  
GUITAROS**

What a way to start the day!  
Meatball Alphabet Soup!

friend's perfunctory visit over  
I can get down to business

so it's just me and  
the bottom of a pot of coffee

some Country & Western sap  
wrung out of heartsick misery

now sinewy sax over  
thudthumping bass drum piano  
combo

it's just more music  
I have only to note it down

"trailer for sale or rent"  
light bulb pops its filament

"chocolate éclair don't sound  
too bad"  
(relax your mind)

constipated nasal fraud of  
this Dylan  
imitator's unmistakable phrase  
and whine

"the moon illumns the meadow"  
surrounded by classics

I steal all the best lines  
"you call that a poem?"





**YOUR  
HELLO**

Ringing in my ears  
the telephone  
takes a while to register

my normal condition  
high strung  
wired

buzz constant  
line busy

in touch with myself  
and no one else

I get up to answer  
as another  
part of my life

recognized as a voice  
other than my own  
drawn as a curtain

open on  
the darkness within

attention gathered  
by the earpiece

and funneled  
down behind the eyes

as a pebble into a well  
the splash of your hello

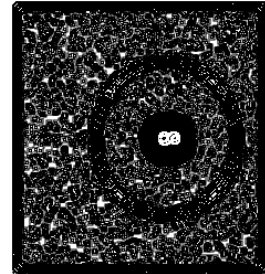
**LIQUID  
ZONE**

The road disappears  
in the sunlight

drive  
the gossamer bridge  
the flowing  
    hair of bright lit  
particle haze  
as the sun  
    dips toward  
the barbed skyline

a quiet storm of nerves  
stirs

    behind the wheel  
steers  
    also blindly through  
a patch of dazzling white



**RAINY  
DAY  
STEAL  
AWAY**  
*for Ted Berrigan*

Rank of golden  
poplars all but bare

"good evening  
is your daughter home"

blue jay flies up top  
the tall Douglas fir

I would go far to see  
the flirting locusts

I don't want to look at  
rain wet bare branches

river water angry as  
drops pock placid surface

the bright stand of bushes  
in the persistent drizzle

a tentative shower often  
asserts itself as a downpour

bowl at the front door and  
at the back for the cat

the voice-over narrative  
erases my thoughts

"I'm alive only a few moments  
in dreams or *deja vus*"

**PRE-PROZAC**

My heart is heavy  
but my liver is heavier

scrambled  
the whole sad egg

life narrows  
a constricted artery

when there is  
nothing left but

the dregs of self-pity  
and resentment

in light of these  
developments

the shadows of doubt  
are abundant

why should I continue  
question cast like a die

chance only one  
remove from the inevitable

## AFRICA

To die is to change your address  
squash tendrils take over the  
yard

artichokes flower row of tall  
poplars sky scraping golden  
wands

the ghost of a dead man's  
truck circles the block

get set for winter recharge  
battery  
anchored by the moment

"razzamatootie"  
ragged mist wrapped around

the hillside first seen  
driving across the bridge

but only for a minute  
curse the machine

that won't let me  
concentrate on great beauty

the same old sentiments  
every time I pick up the pen

(must be the pen)  
the personality of the poet

gets old as does the poet  
and quiet joy is quiet real quiet

**BLOW  
OUT  
THE  
CANDLES**

Days go by just like that  
the rush of hours

bubbling minutes the  
murmur of seconds

never stepping into  
the same dream twice

repeating the unspeakable  
a wordless agony

abetted by any vice  
the art of self-discovery

a slow painful progress  
years fly by on bat wings

brain like oatmeal  
in the land of milk and honey

**BRIEFLY**

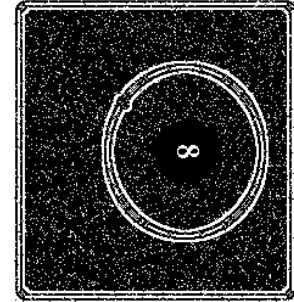
Light stream bathes the room  
cuts a bright swath across  
the rug the cat thinks he owns

untie my laces slough off  
my boots I can feel  
the gratitude of my feet

and there among the green maze  
of the overgrown mallow  
the tiniest of birds frolic

as a species we are pouring  
over the edge of history  
like water over a dam

afternoon fades  
the sparkling lights are birch  
leaves caught in a breeze



**CANDY  
MAN**

Ah sadness  
that you could ever  
be considered  
seductive

secret unfolded  
as a note passed  
from the back of the mind

weight of oppression  
my own  
or otherwise

enjoyed for what it is  
sorrow of being  
a rich sauce

in which I simmer  
then boil  
eventually evaporate

a thin  
carbon layer  
at the bottom of a pan

simple but  
complex  
bitter yet sweet



**MISSING  
DAYS**

It snowed Saturday (at sea level)  
every one was in shock all day  
nothing got done

and finally today  
bone gray bare limbs vibrate  
with the beginning shower

Sunday was a long cold day  
books and reading in order

tomorrow's appointment of  
purely routine details

windshield webbed in frost  
something new added to the  
familiar Monday morning ritual

what happened Tuesday  
a little of everything

**PROBABILITY  
WAVE**

A crow flies past the window  
back and forth  
lost in the fog

I do all the bad things  
early in the morning  
so I can redeem myself  
the rest of the day

had I only known  
the unpredictable in my life  
so predictable

as a butterfly  
in love with  
flowering spring  
showered in petals

I'm mostly where I am  
but  
there's a probability  
that some  
nonzero  
part of me  
is out there  
beyond Andromeda

herding the shoes  
to one side of the room

## INCOGNITO

Almond blossoms glow  
in light from the window

a quiet thought  
for a quiet night  
page of a book  
turned in the next room

pen scratch pad

the stains of conviction  
aren't easy to read  
let alone erase

what makes it light  
a bulb  
beyond that I need an hour  
documentary on PBS

to put it all in perspective  
Andy Warhol is dead

after fifteen minutes  
I could care less

accounting for the facts  
sometimes it all adds up  
sometimes it doesn't even  
matter

**RAIN**  
**RAIN**

I'm an old man  
I snore it's amusing

I'm too hard on myself  
the act carries me along

those rainbow sheets  
the flesh is weak

and I've read  
all the books

golden hue of sunlight's  
reflection off wet concrete

"how can he resist  
the siren's call

he's a volunteer fireman"  
wake up

a furtive morning  
clouds suddenly gone

**BASEBALL  
SEASON**

It has its own  
whether or not

kid kicks ball  
shoe flies off

the stick figures  
of a plodding mind

stumble through their  
improbable situations

square cut or pear  
shaped the empire puts

forth its own message  
sometimes I would

rather write it down  
than think about it

that fine line between  
black and white

the shadow of doubt  
too many big plans

art has always stood in  
the way of my progress

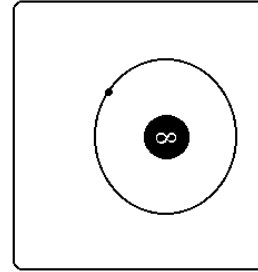
**HAND  
IN  
HAND**

At the end of a cloud  
clotted day the sun  
makes an appearance

that lone BBQ rib  
no one would eat  
an offering to the gods  
until tomorrow when  
it becomes breakfast

symmetry in language  
balance in the soul  
the amorphous shimmering  
indefinable self

the road disappears  
in puddles of light



**MEDITATION  
IN  
A  
DOWNPOUR**

All the low spots  
suddenly evident

large drops strike  
the pavement as  
dull wet sparks

birds frantic  
with delight

saturated the ground  
yields up all  
the ingredients for  
a delicious bug soup

furl and unfurl of wing  
in praise of the sky  
and its bounty

steady white noise  
makes me drowsy

**BITTER  
SUITE**

Children selfish  
I suffer the pain  
of my parents

▣

I want revenge  
on all those I imagine  
have wronged me

▣

This rotting life  
trapped inside by  
the bars of flesh

▣

What potential  
I'm a bonfire  
that won't stay lit

▣

Only the lonely  
know how well the cards  
are stacked against them

▣

Coffee taste lingers  
a slight breeze and  
wisteria petal confetti



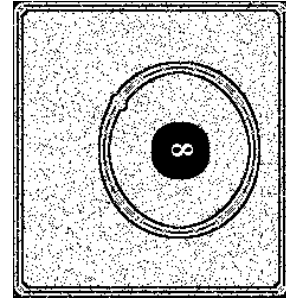
**NITE  
SHIFT**

Out of sleep  
I have to waste  
a glorious day

distracted  
my toe catches  
the edge of the step

something told me  
to sit down  
it wasn't a voice

sun smacked pines  
on a late afternoon hillside  
burned in my mind



**HOME  
ALONE**

The sound of rain on the roof  
just as my head hit the pillow

sat through two light changes  
she was still very much on my  
mind

debris jammed up against  
the bridge pilings after

the last high water  
bank of fog laid in

among a hillside of trees  
peeking in just above

a sheer blue curtain  
fir and redwood march

out of the mist duck call  
rises from the shrouded river

early dark of shorter days  
and late lifting mornings

the gingko has dropped  
all its leaves but two

**ZERO  
TO  
SIXTY**

Morning's quiet contemplation  
amused by the shapes smoke  
from  
my neighbor's chimney can take

well traveled conventions  
the getaway to never have left  
found here again

"I will remember you"  
but in Bob Kaufman's words  
"I wish to be forgotten"

living this long should  
have cured me of my delusions  
instead I have theories

trying leads to failure  
success is intention  
leave it at that

obscurity is my reward  
I realize now  
it is the Grand Prize

understanding's different  
from knowing  
long evening's cold feet

**BUG  
LIFE**

The smaller butterflies of  
autumn

water's velvet quench

rustic in my domestication  
domestic in my rustication

Sunday muted  
by a layer of fragile high clouds  
a thread of smoke  
sews up the day

I saw the light  
at the end of the tunnel  
it was a stop light

of course

there's intelligent design  
unfortunately few have  
the intelligence  
to understand it

a mass of bug life swirls up  
into the later amber rays

the inexorable Darwinian slide  
into materialism  
thems that's got  
thems that don't  
that never changes  
thems that's in the middle  
the sky is falling  
the earth opens up at their feet

in a cathedral of trees  
our mere existence



Pat Nolan's poetry and prose have been published in numerous magazines including *Rolling Stone*, *The Paris Review*, *The World*, *Big Bridge*, *Poetry Flash*, and *Exquisite Corpse* as well as literary magazines in Europe and Asia. He is the author of fifteen books of poetry, including *LATER* from *On The Fly Press* (2007). He has lived in the redwood wilds along the lower Russian River since 1973.



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