**The State Machine**

It starts with a woman,

sitting at a desk,

punchcard before her

and pen in hand.

She looks at the holes in the card.

Her brain

A black box –

But what she ultimately writes or

commits to paper

translates the punchcard

into visual, readable narrative.

A man looked at her work

and called it a computer.

She changed information

from one state into the next.

The concept was a big hit!

When people boiled down her work

to logic,

the black box holding her brain

started to creak open.

And inside these people found

the right gates and wires

to transform electrons

into commands,

and to translate those commands

into words,

and to convert those words

into pictures.

(Which are a thousand words.)

But the machine can’t do much by itself.

The lady’s black box

came from some weeks, months,

years

of training.

She decodes punchcards

for the snaps of fingers

with incalculable, constant decisions.

As only a black hole can consume light,

the fastest thing,

only this black box

can contain decisions

that flexible and strong.

Whereas the machine’s inner workings

are a crystal ball.

The poor bloke investing in their future

doesn’t need to smell sulphur

to mangle some sense into what they see within.

We pour money and time

into trying to paint the machine’s inner walls

a darker color,

but paint chips away,

and as it currently stands,

neither the machine nor the input it tries to decode

have truly changed states.

So it continues with a woman,

sitting at a desk,

lit screen before her

naught else in hand.

She looks at the symbols on the screen.

Her brain

A black box –

But what she ultimately develops or

saves in memory

translates the symbols

into visual, readable narrative.