

Punch Cards

(For Edwin Black)

Takes a mess
 of punches,
but such strange tabulations
move us
from theory to practice.

The holes
 count off
each one
--the power of negative capability
grows with the numbers
inscribed on the card
--just the size of a dollar—
guaranteeing
 our nation's "Doctor"
the tools
to confirm his diagnosis.

How better for us
to play both ends
 against the middle
and live to pick up
the pieces?

Let us pay tribute
to this dream of reason
and sing, as they did once,
a "Silent Night,"
--recalling how
our wondrous machine
made them all light up
their empty Hanukah rows
of big blue candles.