An Algorithmic Poem
Mike Edwards

I.

Dead alphabets — stony, mute, uncooperative —
disambiguate, cooking down all that lies between binary
        poles to their crystalline communicabilities.
Meanings missed, mistransmitted, petals from a wet
        black bough
count and sum the wayward syllables of these lines and
        stanzas.
Brautigan's machines of loving grace, watching over us,
        stitching javascript to databases
remember our handwriting like other hands.
Ambiguous tactile manipulations
turn meaning into matter, rather than that opposite
        progression, in their practices of display:
Marks and metrics, principles of passing moments;
iterations of machines compiling their own code, their
        keys hand-punched, material devices made
        from sets of syllables.
Stanzas serving as cogs in a text, cogs no more than an
        example of scansion's digital calculus: robots
wind metonymically through their serial turns and
        transformations and displacements, edging
        aside meaning:
Are we not weary of ardent ways?
These irregular abstractions
turn and ratchet, syllable by syllable in their incremental
        spondees and trochees, until there is no last
        enjambment
to start again, cycle the switch and so reorder the order,
        switching the cycle: as one, the blank screens

II.

sing, Frederick Winslow Taylor's automated rhapsodes,
        and singing turn us toward
marks and metrics, principles of passing moments.
Stanzas serving as cogs in a text, cogs no more than an
        example of scansion's digital calculus: robots
disambiguate, cooking down all that lies between binary
        poles to their crystalline communicabilities.
Our minds, intelligences,
count, and count again; count, and count again; sum,
        carry, and decrement the counter to zero:
meanings missed, mistransmitted, petals from a wet
        black bough.
Memories of the TRS-80, Commodore 64, Atari 800,
iterations of machines compiling their own code, their
        keys hand-punched, material devices made
        from sets of syllables
neither scan nor rhyme.
Dead alphabets — stony, mute, uncooperative —
scripts that call to mind the surge of memory, the
        accumulative weights of words
count and sum the wayward syllables of these lines and
        stanzas.
These bits, these beats
turn and ratchet, syllable by syllable in their incremental
        spondees and trochees, until there is no last
        enjambment
to end before ending.

III.

Brautigan's machines of loving grace, watching over us,
        stitching javascript to databases
count, and count again; count, and count again; sum,
        carry, and decrement the counter to zero;
mark and meter, divide and quantize, asking how much
        in each at given lengths.
Memories of the TRS-80, Commodore 64, Atari 800
sing, Frederick Winslow Taylor's automated rhapsodes,
        and singing turn us toward
stanzas serving as cogs in a text, cogs no more than an
        example of scansion's digital calculus: robots
surge and crash, pushing upward, rise and recede in
        flowing urge and ebb.
Groups of beings: poems, readers, teachers, scholars —
        all counters, computers —
turn meaning into matter, rather than that opposite
        progression, in their practices of display.
Scripts that call to mind the surge of memory — the
        accumulative weights of words —
disambiguate, cooking down all that lies between binary
        poles to their crystalline communicabilities.
Iterations of machines compiling their own code, their
        keys hand-punched, material devices made
        from sets of syllables
wind metonymically through their serial turns and
        transformations and displacements, edging
        aside meaning.
These circuitous and reflexive ideas without referents
turn and ratchet, syllable by syllable in their incremental
        spondees and trochees, until there is no last
        enjambment
to start again, cycle the switch and so reorder the order,
        switching the cycle: as one, the blank screens

IV.

remember our handwriting like other hands.
Groups of beings: poems, readers, teachers, scholars —
        all counters, computers,
memories of the TRS-80, Commodore 64, Atari 800 —
count and sum the wayward syllables of these lines and
        stanzas
and demand
our minds, intelligences
to start again, cycle the switch and so reorder the order,
        switching the cycle: as one, the blank screens
count, and count again; count, and count again; sum,
        carry, and decrement the counter to zero.
Meanings missed, mistransmitted, petals from a wet
        black bough
mark and meter, divide and quantize, asking how much
        in each at given lengths.
Iterations of machines compiling their own code, their
        keys hand-punched, material devices made
        from sets of syllables,
ambiguous tactile manipulations,
wind metonymically through their serial turns and
        transformations and displacements, edging
        aside meaning.
These games
turn and ratchet, syllable by syllable in their incremental
        spondees and trochees, until there is no last
        enjambment
to end before ending.

V.

Lines
wind metonymically through their serial turns and
        transformations and displacements, edging
        aside meaning;
remember our handwriting like other hands;
turn meaning into matter, rather than that opposite
        progression, in their practices of display.
Our minds, intelligences
count and sum the wayward syllables of these lines and
        stanzas;
disambiguate, cooking down all that lies between binary
        poles to their crystalline communicabilities;
surge and crash, pushing upward, rise and recede in
        flowing urge and ebb;
mark and meter, divide and quantize, asking how much
        in each at given lengths.
Sing, Frederick Winslow Taylor's automated rhapsodes,
        and singing turn us toward
dead alphabets — stony, mute, uncooperative —
and demand:
count, and count again; count, and count again; sum,
        carry, and decrement the counter to zero.
Are we not weary of ardent ways?
Turn and ratchet, syllable by syllable in their
        incremental spondees and trochees, until there
        is no last enjambment.