

Civil Service Blues

Black is my telephone; black my pen;
Typewriter's black too: these doleful
Instruments. Black is the binding of
My procedures manual wherein reside
The Grim Realities. Black is the hour.
Black the day, nay, black
Checkered squares hatch my office floor.

Is there fun here? No.
Black my suit and shoes; dark
My tie; when I punch my card in the
Black machine, will there be light?

This paper world, carbon copied, where
Form and format frame matter
faster
than

Good horse sense can, more accurately,
Adamant, bores you half to death.
The quarters of the fiscal year, too,
Affront the annual round,
dry
as
dust.

These similes as signs disguise
The sameness between reality as seen
And facts as filed, unlikely lived
Again once stored.

Inconsequential
As a mountain meadow, likewise annually
Reviewed, renewed, these trees ground up
And stapled, are my anchors to the earth,
My alienation, separation

From sky.

— *Hugh Miller*