

Most of the day, I only tend
to what's around me – cycles
of college policy, the needs
of faculty to be praised or blamed,
hired and admired, consoled and prodded.
Connected with insistent cords
of telephone and e-mail, I'm in a world
inexorably present. The real –
if you can call it that – is never far away.

What of the world beyond? it drops
on me in intermittent bursts
like snow from our overburdened eaves.
I go to the store, and on the radio
reports about the Taliban, or news
of cabinet appointments gone amiss,
executives and ethics probes –
All Things Considered, only not
for longer than it takes to drive.

I know of those for whom that world
is real, not only for a moment
but in their souls; those who think
with generous imaginations far beyond
their job, their town, their single lives.
And yet for me, hopelessly monastic
in this academic life, it's all I can
to see the work before me. For now,
at least, the rest will have to wait.

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