

**Let Nothing Be Put before the Work of God**  
—*Rule of St Benedict*

PATRICIA CHAFFEE

Gold and vermillion and lapis lazuli twine  
the margins of the Hours, vines blooming  
to *C* and *D* and the lavish *S*, fading to psalms  
sung seven times a day in choirs where echoes  
lay their remains like coral in a sea.

Whenever satan walks—twilight, midnight,  
morning, noon—*let them hasten*, says the Rule,  
to this Work, let them drop the scythe in the uncut  
wheat, let ink drip from the unwashed quill,  
let them quit their sleep and hasten.

At the door of the choir, let them put aside their haste  
and raise their cowls against the world. Let them  
praise, then, to steady the sun across the sky  
and hold the stars aloft at night.

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