

The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb
Hubert and Jan van Eyck, 1432

Hush, lamb, lavish with blood in madder red,
 Your varnish overfed,
 Too fat for this thin season.
Hush, choir—be-rubied, embroidered, unsomber
 As the lute tuned
 To your organ's lustrous umber.
And all you pious press in festal vestments,
 Silken chevaliers
 And saints, fold up your banners,
Fold in your Flemish wings. We must a wan
 And wastrel vista
 Now, at the phlegmatic end
Of spring, swapping our wanton carmines for shamefast
 Grisailles and the stern
 Click of the altarpiece latch.
Here's the catch: Though we've stanch'd our chansons,
 Slouching to matins
 Roughed in our workaday drab,
Yet our grayscales blush under the muffled
 Thrum through the shut
 Hinges like the heat
From a woodstove. We are by beauty shrove,
 And we its pledges
 Confess it in each intemperate
Pulse at the wrist, in the rash prismatic
 Of our glances.
 We've committed its rubrics
To heart. And to all the blackletter
 Austeres
 This our inmost responsory:
Vermilion, crimson, cadmium, madder red.