

## Masque

Stage right, the *flagellanti* enter  
out of early Bergman, effects and extras  
by Fellini noir, post-*Juliet*.  
Stage right, *danseuses macabres*, spiders  
on their hunched backs, brains enflamed  
from staph infections and mouldy rye they thought  
themselves fortunate to find. A scrim

falls. Backlights play on it  
like memories of dreams a waking.  
A lord and lady lead a progress:  
jesters, minstrels, mountebanks and bards,  
the bastard poets of the courts of finance  
wound up to sing for queen and king. *L'amour*  
they sing *La mort* and *l'amour*. *Toujours l'amour*.

Dressed like a Turk or a high prince of the church,  
Satan comes up center and orders both  
the Albigensian slaughter and Inquisition.  
The Children's Crusade joins the lines crossing  
against the bare backdrop wing to wing  
on their way to be raped in the name of all  
that is holy. The scrim turns to blood.

Inevitable carts of bubonic extras lumber  
through the smoky columns of the spots.  
Vermin infest every nook and cranny.  
Down in the pit, slowly out of the babble,  
bells rise as if from great depth.  
A light grows in the water. The bells ring louder  
almost drowning out the soft laughter.