About the Cover

Don Quixote by Bicycle, performed by Burn the Curtain (burnthecurtain.co.uk), photographed by Theo Moye

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In her introduction to this issue on Comic Medievalisms, guest editor Louise D’Arcens observes that humor and laughter are ‘inherently ethical practices which can have direct and even urgent ramifications for the coherent functioning of the social body.’ Borrowing a choice phrase from Helmuth Plessner, D’Arcens focuses attention on ‘the ways human societies use laughter to reflect on the specifically historical dimension of their “eccentric positionality”.’ Laughter indicates their ‘awareness of the relativity of their own subjectivity’ expressly in terms of their historical place. Capturing but one hilarious moment from a recent performance of *Don Quixote by Bicycle*, the cover image for Comic Medievalisms finds Don Quixote – as ever – wholly committed to tilting at windmills. In 2013, Burn the Curtain, a traveling theatre company based in the South West of England, organized site-specific collaborative productions of the Don Quixote story that translated it from ‘medieval’ seventeenth-century Spain to similarly ‘medieval’ sites in contemporary England and France. Trading horses for bicycles, performers invited each audience to travel with the troupe to the performance site in order to enact the story with them. In interventions like *Don Quixote by Bicycle*, Burn the Curtain encourages the ‘coherent functioning of the social body’ through audience reflection on the ‘specifically historical dimension of their “eccentric positionality”.’ More broadly, Burn the Curtain courts non-traditional audiences and strives to meet those audiences where they are, collaboratively creating a participatory event that aims to provoke audience members to in turn generate their own new stories. Theater in this scenario becomes hands-on, intergenerational, and community generated – much like medieval drama. Further, artistic director Joe Hancock observes that ‘a sense of medieval pageantry and the carnivalesque is always lurking somewhere in what we do.’ Indeed, in its upcoming production of a version of Angela Carter’s story ‘The Company of Wolves,’ the audience will be feudal villagers, each playing a role within the story. In these various ways, Burn the Curtain’s aims and inspiration share much with *postmedieval*, and we are delighted to include this image from *Don Quixote by Bicycle* in this issue on Comic Medievalisms. Many more whimsical images of *Don Quixote by Bicycle* can be found at <http://burnthecurtain.co.uk/dq/>.

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