



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### Bath, Spas and Belief

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#### Abstract:

My paper will be on the way hot springs bring about and consolidate myths; and the way that myths in return reinterpret the hot springs. It will explore the foundation myth governing Bath – that it was founded by King Bladud who had been cured of leprosy by the waters – and will trace Bladud’s progress through poem to puppet show to the recent public art event, ‘King Bladud’s Pigs in Bath’ (2008). It will equally investigate myths that accrue to the hot springs themselves: that they are holy (in a Roman or, equally, a Christian way); that they have magical properties; that ingesting them is curative – ideas which have also left their traces on literature over time. Ranging from the early modern period to the present day, the paper will ask what it is about thermal springs that makes them so ‘mythical’, and how and why such myths are repeated over time.

#### Biography:

Tiffany Stern is Professor of Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama at The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham; she was previously Professor of Early Modern Drama at the University of Oxford. She specialises in Shakespeare, theatre history from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, book history and editing. Her monographs are *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (2000), *Making Shakespeare* (2004), *Shakespeare in Parts* (with Simon Palfrey, 2007) and *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (2009). She has edited a collection of essays *Rethinking Shakespeare’s Theatrical Documents* (2019, forthcoming), co-edited a collection of essays with Farah Karim-Cooper, *Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (2013), and edited the anonymous *King Leir* (2001), Sheridan’s *The Rivals* (2004), Farquhar’s *Recruiting Officer* (2010), and Brome’s *Jovial Crew* (2014). Author of over sixty chapters and articles on sixteenth to eighteenth century dramatic literature, and regular advisor to UK and US theatre companies interested in original performance, Tiffany is a general editor of two play series: New Mermaids play and Arden Shakespeare 4.

