



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Taking the Cure: Mineral Waters and Love's Folly in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621)

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Abstract:

Plunges into icy cold salty water from sea cliffs, immersive warm water baths underground, draughts drunk from pebble-strewn nymphs' springs—characters throughout Lady Mary Wroth's two-volume early seventeenth-century English romance engage a variety of hydrotherapeutic cures to erase or enflame love's afflictions. Even the "sage" Melissa, the story's enchantress and revered source of counsel, operates what appears to be a kind of spa on the island of Delos. This paper explores how the newly revived interest in the healing properties of mineral waters in late sixteenth-century England infiltrate the imaginative landscape of romance. What do these episodes reveal—and foretell—about changing social attitudes towards female eroticism, religious belief, and wonder of the natural world? How might these imagined cures facilitate later theories that ministered healing water for both physical and mental health?

Biography:

Tiffany Jo Werth (Ph.D. Columbia University) is an Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Davis. Previously, she taught at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. Her research interests include Renaissance literature (particularly in its nondramatic forms), Reformation history, print culture, posthumanism, and the environmental humanities. Her work on the thorny relationship of romance to the long English Reformation has appeared in article form in the *Shakespearean International Yearbook* and *English Literary Renaissance* and as her first monograph *The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England after the Reformation* (Johns Hopkins University Press). Her current book project,

entitled *The English Lithic Imagination from More to Milton*, argues that the mineral (clay, rocks, stones, bezoars, iron) offers an unsettling touchstone for rethinking Renaissance humanism and literary creation. She has published on the more-than-human world as editor of a special issue of *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* and in articles in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, *Literature Compass Online*, *Upstart: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies*, and a special issue of *Spenser Studies* on "Spenser and the Human." She co-edited a never-before-printed academic drama *The Converted Robber or Stonehenge, a Pastoral in English Literary Renaissance* and looks forward to *Premodern Ecologies in the Modern Literary Imagination*, a collection of essays that she has co-edited with Vin Nardizzi (forthcoming from University of Toronto Press 2019).