

Speculative nonfiction: ecodramaturgies for dancing science

By Kate Adams

Water is Attracted to Water is a practice based research into eco-dramaturgy and what I called speculative nonfiction. Bringing together a climate scientist, a musician and two performers on stage, the performance celebrates the human relationship with water and creates an imagined Water Day with music, games, a water molecule dance, personal stories, history and an on stage scientific demonstration of greenhouse gas exchange in a peat core.

The research at the heart of this project addresses two questions:

1. How can the combination of the speculative and the figurative within nonfictional performance open imaginative spaces of radical hope in the context of the climate crisis?
2. How can ‘mythopoeisis’, the interweaving of voices across science, myth, music, dance, personal and historical discourses contribute to creating a shared space for celebration and mourning?

This paper reflects on learning emerging from the work-in-progress performance and public workshops, and briefly outlines how climate psychology plays a role underpinning the dramaturgical approach to both.

In both the show and the workshops, our confrontation with the difficult truths of the climate crisis is framed within a celebration of life, and the connection between human and non-human is evoked through our relationship with water (personal, molecular, mythic, historic, scientific and spiritual). Human experience is repositioned as part of many ecosystems of different scales. This opens the space to a wide spectrum of emotions. The work prioritises embodied exploration, non-linear multiplication of images and stories, and finally, wishes for water, to bring both the performance and the workshops to a close by verbalising fragments of hope within an imaginary frame.

The paper provides an analysis of the workings of this structure and how scientific discourse is woven into a complex network of relational and dramaturgical ecosystems.

Author Bio

Kate Adams is a performance maker, lecturer at Salford University and a director and member of the Climate Psychology Alliance. Her current research examines the relationship between psychology, dramaturgy, and the climate crisis. She makes interdisciplinary performance exploring the human relationship with nature and how playfulness and joy can still be part of our lives even as we confront difficult truths and emotions. Water is Attracted to Water her current project is a collaboration with interdisciplinary arts practitioners, scientists and engineers staging a 21st century myth for the human relationship with water.

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