

The HOUSE ON FIRE filmic metaphor: Where climate advocacy went wrong?

Sami Chatti
University of Manouba

Keywords: *Filmic metaphor; global warming; climate advocacy.*

Abstract:

Filmic metaphors are pervasive multimodal communication tools. Their elaborate imagination and aesthetic sophistication may challenge, though, the natural trade-off between effort and effect in figurative language processing. The HOUSE ON FIRE filmic metaphor, devised by the #FridaysForFuture (FFF) climate movement, profiles an apocalyptic framing of global warming. Echoing a firetrap imagery, the metaphor builds on the incongruity between the *burning house* source domain and the *global warming* target domain. This fatalistic narrative nourishes climate dystopia to compel the viewer to react face to the urgent menace. However, the promotion of climate action through the prism of apocalypticism is bound to backfire. Taken at face value, apocalyptic narratives nurture dystopian interpretations that advocate climate fatalism and cultivate the futility of climate action. As such, it engenders paralyzing anxiety that fuels climate skepticism. Interpreted favorably, the apocalyptic scenario profiles utopian promises that may fail to be realistic. Rather than dramatizing disaster, environmental utopianism projects a climate fantasy that shatters on the hard facts of climate change reality. A fair balance between climate fatalism and environmental utopianism would be more efficient of a discursive strategy for climate advocacy. Instead of FIRE metaphors that storm the gates of hell, climate rhetoric may benefit from factual imagery that espouses the virtues of climate scientism without falling in the grip of apocalyptic fatalism or environmental utopianism.