Blending, Change and Transformative Character Arcs for Compelling Stories

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Web Comics That Transform Our Understanding of Computers and Creativity

For more comix on creativity: RobotComix.com
Truly, one of the oddest E.C. Strep projects ever funded!
1. The **general** who became a slave ...

2. ... the **slave** who became a gladiator ...

3. ... the **gladiator** who defied an emperor!
Good Stories Often Use Incongruity and Blending

Are you not entertained?
From caring husband and teacher to evil drug-lord to public enemy #1 and back (somewhat) in 50 hours of TV.
To understand how people & things change over time, we need a rich property-level & behaviour-level model of world concepts.

We want to deconstruct & pull our concepts apart, to reassemble them in new ways that create interesting contrasts.
Do you want fries with that metaphor?

Creative metaphors are commodities that machines can generate at Web Scale via CC Web Services!

The Flux Capacitor uses these metaphors to understand how one concept might virtually become another.
Linguistic constructs like the simile frame “as ADJ as a NOUN” allow us to harvest a rich knowledge-base of stereotypical norms from the Web. These are from the Google n-grams.
The Flux Capacitor uses Google Web n-grams to appreciate which concepts are best imagined as the *start state* of a transformation, and which are better suited to being the *end state* of a change. The goal is to produce character arcs that are jarring for the right reasons and not the wrong ones.
A Lexical Database of Antonyms (e.g. WordNet) allows us to align the contrasting properties of two stereotypical representations.
Millionaire maddened by mansions, walks into workhouses
Millionaire rejects richness, hungers for hopelessness
Millionaire goes from being apparently dashing to increasingly drab
Millionaire's fake happiness masked true hardship
Millionaire goes from living in mansions to living in shacks and slums
Millionaire goes from living in ornate and luxurious mansions to living in wretched and Spartan slums
Millionaire goes from living in magnificent and swanky mansions to living in miserable and wretched slums
Millionaire goes from ostentatious to unpretentious
Millionaire's private pampering masked by outer poverty
Millionaire's artificial privilege masked genuine deprivation
Millionaire's public wealth masked pervasive poverty
Millionaire's false wealth masked genuine deprivation
Nun chucks chastity, wallows in wickedness
Nun nagged by nunnery, bounds into brothels
Nun chucks crucifixes, loves latex
Nun forsakes fidelity, veers toward vices
Nun hates habits, goes gaga for garters
Nun moans about mother superiors, poached by pimps
Nun skips out of spectacles, crazy for corsets
Nun vocal about veils, flies into fishnets
Nun vents about virginity, wallows in wickedness
Nun whines about wimples, grabs garters
Nun goes from being managed by abbesses and mother-superiors to being controlled by pimps
Nun goes from carrying rosary beads to carrying infections
Nun's forced chastity cannot hide wild hedonism
Nun's forced chastity cannot hide free grime
Nun's imposed faith masked secret disloyalty
Nun goes from living in cloisters and convents to brothels and bawdy houses
Nun's public morality masked inward sin
Nun goes from practicing chastity and fidelity to vices
Nun's public respect masked private immorality
A twitterbot using Flux Capacitor and Metaphor Magnet Web-service to tweet a new hard-boiled metaphor every hour.

@MetaphorMagnet

Metaphor Is My Business

Misfit. noun. A weird cocktail of 5 parts quirk-developing genius to 4 parts shortcoming-stricken wuss. #MisfitOrWuss #MisfitOrGenius

Abuse leads to the crime that causes suffering. Justice provides the punishment that inflicts suffering. Take your pick. #JusticeOrAbuse?
Flux Capacitor allows @MetaphorMagnet to blend the norms of two concepts with differing affect profiles to achieve a surprising what-if whole. Consider Artists: (I used to be an artist!)

By chaining KB triples together, a bot can observe that artists typically cause a positive effect on the arts. Seeing that critics can have a negative effect on arts, and dictators have a negative effect on their critics ...

... @MetaphorMagnet reasons that dictators can have the same positive effect on the arts as artists! This is sophistry as ‘critic’ is used in two differing senses, but in this what-if blend, Artists become like Dictators!
When two concepts cause the same effects (after a little *sophistry*), we can easily imagine a story in which one becomes the other, *deliberately or unintentionally*, with *dramatic* consequences.

I *love* the smell of *narrative* in the morning!
Metaphors are the stuff of psychologically real stories. They allow anything to be story-fied, as in this critic bot that comments on items in the Met’s collection.

@appreciationbot by Mike Cook responds to @museumBot as a critic by using the MetaphorMagnet service to source metaphors on demand (e.g. cylinder as curved blade) and ConceptNet to suggest possible relationships between things.