

Metafiction

A Roleplaying Game

by Colin Fredericks

Fictional worlds are as real as our own, separated by nothing more than quantum probability. Characters in Metafiction use points of coincidence between themselves and certain works of fiction to draw those imagined worlds into our own reality, or to travel from one saga to another.

Background:

Quantum physics describes reality on all levels. It is most obvious at the subatomic scale, but there are ways it can be seen in even the largest of things. Without quantum tunneling, our sun would not light. In truth, all things are quantum wavefunctions, collapsed by observers.

Human beings are observers. When our minds imagine a world, they entangle certain wavefunctions from that universe with those in our own. Certain people, known as Bridges, have the ability to exploit this entanglement, causing the collapse of wavefunctions from these alternate realities – these supposedly fictional worlds – in the four-dimensional fabric of our universe. The rules of this reality become superposed upon our own, and its truths become law.

Bridges become who they are by literally falling into a work of fiction. They become so profoundly engrossed in a novel, so absorbed in a movie, so obsessed with a game, that they disappear from our world. They cannot leave their fiction until something in that world tells them of their abilities and potential, after which they can use their power to return to our world, or seek out a new one.

Setting:

Metafiction can be set in our world, where it will likely escalate into a war between Bridges (with humanity caught in the middle), or in a series of fictional worlds as the characters tunnel from one to the other, seeking something they care about and running from their troubles. The problem, in both styles of play, is that none of these fictional worlds are exactly as imagined...

Themes:

Obsession with an unreal world, loss of control, loss of identity, seeking for the nonexistent, unimaginable consequences beyond control, childhood memories gone bad, sanity (or not) in an insane world.

Characters:

All characters in Metafiction are defined using innate points of coincidence, whether they are Bridges or not. Ordinary people may have 5-7 innate points of coincidence. Most Bridges have 8-10 points. Strong Bridges or people who are Poles have 10-12 points. It is suggested that all PCs in your game start with the same number of innate points of coincidence. Poles are playable characters, but they should not be put in the same game as Bridges, due to the great difference in character power and flexibility.

Coincidence:

Coincidence ties characters in the game to characters in other fictional worlds. Such points of coincidence are listed on your character sheet descriptively, in the form “as (quality) as (person) from (source).” For example, someone might be said to be “as mean as Malificent from Sleeping Beauty,” or “as strong as Heracles from Greek myth.” Variations on the form are acceptable, as long as all three pieces of information are present.

Blatantly supernatural qualities can be listed, but have no special effect unless a superposition is occurring. Saying that your character is “as big as a giant in Norse mythology” doesn’t make it so, though you might still be seven feet tall. In the area of an appropriate superposition, such qualities do indeed become literally true, though at the cost of a point of Entanglement.

One can also create artificial points of coincidence with certain stories. Wearing a Batman t-shirt does not make you the world’s best detective (or give you any investigative skill whatsoever), but it does still provide coincidence for the purposes of tunneling or invoking superpositions.

Game Mechanics:

Normally the GM describes events around the characters. When a player wants to change the outcome of an event that was just described, they bid an innate coincidence from their character that could reasonably be used to change the situation. The GM bids control over the story element.

The player can bid more appropriate coincidences (from his character or from others who are assisting, with their players’ approval) to add +1 to the roll for each one. The GM can increase his roll on a 1:1 basis by spending up to 5 points from his story pool (which refills to 10 per player at the beginning of each session). Tools can add to both sides: +1 for basic useful devices or angry wolves, +3 for automatic weapons or jabberwocks, or +15 for the power of god or nuclear bombs.

Both sides then roll 1d6, with the highest roll winning: the player either describes the outcome of that event, or strains all of the bid coincidences. Reroll ties. Every two points of “overkill” on the roll either strains an extra coincidence or removes a point from the GM’s story pool, as appropriate.

Strained coincidences should not be strained again for the rest of the day. If they are, they become unavailable for one week. Characters with all of their coincidences strained fall unconscious, awakening about a day later. Characters with no coincidences available will fall into a coma, and awaken or die at the GM’s fiat.

Superposition:

A superposition is the incursion of another reality into our own. Superpositions can be as small as you can see (microscopes are legal), or as large as a football field. They can include living beings, including humans. They can bring technology or magic that could not exist on Earth. Things from fictions carry the laws of their home reality with them, for a distance of twice their own dimensions.

If there are objects or (especially) living creatures in the area the fiction replaces, they are incorporated as best as possible into the fiction. This is almost always a bad thing for those involved, as finding yourself turning into the Jabberwock, an imperial stormtrooper, or one of the Seven Dwarves is not a pleasant experience, nor is it easily reversible. Only Poles and Bridges will retain their shapes and complete free will, though the strong-willed may be able to struggle free for ten or twenty seconds.

There are only two major limitations on a superposition. First, you need at least four points of coinci-

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$$\frac{d^2\psi(x)}{dx^2} + \frac{2m}{\hbar^2}[E - V(x)]\psi(x) = 0$$

②

③

dence with the fiction you are calling forth. For every point you lack, you can strain one coincidence to make up the difference, explaining how it somehow relates to the world you're calling up. Second, you can only call on fictional elements from a publicly known work that is not your own.

When you invoke a superposition, gain a point of Entanglement. Superpositions can be called to fictions other than Earth, at the cost of a second point of Entanglement.

Tunneling:

Tunneling is the skill of moving from one fictional reality to another (or to and from Earth). It requires at least six points of coincidence between your character and a character in a fictional world. For every point you lack, you can strain one coincidence to make up the difference, explaining how it somehow relates to the world you're tunneling to. You must still have at least one point of coincidence with your destination, either inherent or artificial.

You can always tunnel back to our Earth, unless your Entanglement is in the grey area. Every particle of your body is a point of coincidence with your home, but Entanglement eventually breaks that coincidence.

When you tunnel, gain a point of Entanglement.

Entanglement:

There are three unavoidable drawbacks to being a Bridge, both of which can really complicate your life.

Coincidence Changes Your Personality

If you have a point of Entanglement, the GM can force your character to temporarily act like someone one of your coincidences links to. Your actions are stereotypically, quintessentially the actions of that fictional character, in a way that immediately and seriously inconveniences your character. If similar to a thunder god, you boom and shout. If similar to a dragon, you hoard money. If emulating Sherlock Holmes, you become a misogynistic coke fiend. After this personality switch is complete (typically taking a minute or two, and never more than about half an hour), you lose one point of Entanglement. This is the only way you can lose Entanglement, and only the GM can trigger it.

Characters who receive a ninth point of Entanglement immediately suffer from this problem and go back down to eight points.

You Cannot Put Down What You Call Up

When you invoke a superposition, it stays around. You can't simply dismiss any part of it. If you desire, you can replace it with the real Earth (if what you brought in hasn't spread or run away), but you gain yet another point of Entanglement for this, and while living beings in the replaced area revert to their former selves, they are not cured of any ills that may have befallen them while superposed. Elements of fiction from a superposition can be broken, killed, blown up, or otherwise damaged and destroyed as easily as the stories say, but they cannot simply be wished away when they become inconvenient or deadly.


Exchange

Every time someone tunnels to or from Earth, a creature from that same fiction comes through to Earth. Most of the time it's just another human being, terribly confused and lost in this new world. Sometimes, though, it's something more dangerous and deadly. It always appears within a mile of the character's arrival or destination point.

Poles:

Some characters appear not just in a single story, not just in a single world, but in many worlds by many authors. Certain archetypes, likewise, are repeated time and time again in literature and through the worlds of fiction. When a human being shares traits with one of these characters or archetypes, he or she is called a Pole, an element around which all fiction revolves.

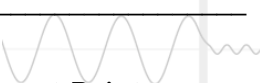
Poles are very powerful during a superposition. They gain all the features attributed to the character they resemble, but retain their own free will, and may have other ideas about what should be going on now. Superposition elements cannot harm Poles in the least, even if specifically tailored to that archetype's doom. Their essence is just too powerful. All you can do is slow them down. If the superposition is entirely destroyed, the Pole returns to being who he or she was beforehand, but with complete memory of the event, and an understanding of what happened. If they are caught in a superposition again, they might grab on to something from the fictional reality and take it with them, to ensure that they retain their power.



Metafiction

Name: _____

Points of Coincidence **Strained?**



Entanglement Points:

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Character Development:

Each game year you spend intentionally emulating a fictional character gives you another point of coincidence, as well as a *permanent* point of Entanglement.

Final Notes:

Metafiction was inspired by the unpublished game *6ix-se7en*, by Tim Sweeney, *Olympus*, by Dan Simmons, and the JAGS: *Wonderland* supplement.

