

Language & Labyrinths
A Metalinguistic Journey through Erdogic Literature

Multiplex Void

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: ABOUT THIS WORK

IT SEEMS ONLY APPROPRIATE TO PRESENT a paper on ergodic literature in ergodic format—it could even be argued that such an approach is necessary to properly convey the ideas and concepts contained within the body of this text. By its very nature, ergodic literature demands active engagement on the part of its Reader(s)¹. It requires not only *interpretation* but *reciprocity*. It is not meant to be *consumed*, but *explored*. Only through non-trivial effort can one effectively traverse such work.

HISTORY OF TERMS

The term *Ergodic Literature* was first defined by Espen J. Aarseth in his 1997 book *Cybertext*. The term *Cybertext* was first defined in Norbert Wiener's 1948 book *Cybernetics*.

FORM AND FUNCTION

THIS WORK IS PRESENTED IN THE STYLE of a 5e Dungeons and Dragons manual. Why this format, and not another? As the Author of this text, I knew from the beginning that I was going to take an ergodic approach to this assignment. Initially, I had planned on taking on a form inspired by *House of Leaves*. It is a favorite of mine, after all, and has shaped a great deal of my own thoughts and perspectives. However, implementing this proved difficult: *House of Leaves* is maddening—intentionally so. Immersing myself in the text never fails to induce in me an altered state of consciousness—we find ourselves consumed by a kind of madness. This mental state, while phenomenologically interesting, presents significant writing challenges. The thoughts are too disorganized, too flighty and entangled and chaotic and confused. I was entirely unable to write in such a way that could properly translate these states and ideas from Author to Reader. Any level of understanding would require significant effort on the part of the Reader. That's asking a bit too much, I think.

Beyond that, there were typesetting concerns—trying to program all of this in \LaTeX was simply taking up too much of my time. Searching for an

¹The term Reader is perhaps too restrictive in describing the role of an "ergodic explorer". It may be more accurate to consider this individual a user or consumer of ergodic media. Moreover, such an individual need not act alone. Many ergodic works, such as those exemplified by MUDs, ARGs, and tabletop RPGs, require the participation and cooperation of multiple individuals for storytelling and puzzle-solving purposes.

alternative approach, I eventually stumbled upon a DnD 5e \LaTeX template—perfect!

For one, a DnD manual is a perfect representation of ergodic text. It is not intended to be read like a novel (or a paper), from cover-to-cover in a linear fashion. Its format makes it particularly suitable as a reference guide. This seemed particularly appropriate for this assignment. What better way to explain and demonstrate ergodicity than by using this format to explore course themes and answer questions of interest?

The role that the Reader plays will also shape how they read this document. Are they a (potential) Player? A GM?² Perhaps they're curious about tabletop gaming, or perhaps they are unfamiliar with it entirely. Perhaps the Reader is me, the Author, as I read and reread and organize and edit this document.³ One particular Reader—our target audience—will play the role of 'professor who is grading a student's assignment according to a specific rubric'. More specifically, this Reader is known to be a professor who is grading a student's assignment according to a specific rubric who already has familiarity with tabletop RPGs and thus already shares a common cultural background with the author/student.⁴ This gives us the advantage of being able to use tropes and jargon that the Reader is already familiar with and greatly simplifies the effort to communicate effectively.

The purpose of introductory sections such as these are intended to explain the format of this document, its purpose, and how to engage with it. Later sections introduce a framework for the creation of a shared imaginary world. The background and mechanics of this world are explained so that Players can share a common frame of reference for its history and rules. Next, a framework is presented for the creation of a character by a Player. This gives us a framework for imagining how one's character may interact with and act within the shared world. In other words, it provides the perfect framework for

²The Gamemaster (GM), plays the role of storyteller; they take on the task of setting up a world and guiding the Players through it.

³The Author often plays an active role in ergodic literature; they are part of the work as much as the text itself. For example, *House of Leaves* is about a nonexistent documentary supposedly recorded by Pulitzer prize winner a book written by the Author Mark Z. Danielewski that is read by the Author, You, that is about a delinquent who ; in other words, it is about itself.

⁴Hello Dr. Cash!

CHAPTER 2: REFERENCE MATERIAL

SPELLS

SENDING

3rd-level Evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Unlimited

Components: V, S, M (a short piece of fine copper wire)

Duration: 1 Round

You send a short message of twenty-five words or less to a creature with which you are familiar. The creature hears the message in its mind, recognizes you as the sender if it knows you, and can answer in a like manner immediately. The spell enables creatures with Intelligence scores of at least 1 to understand the meaning of your message. You can send the message across any distance and even to other planes of existence, but if the target is on a different plane than you, there is a 5 percent chance that the message doesn't arrive.

PART 2

TEMPLATE

SECTION

This is a Section

SECTION

This is a SubSection

SUBSUBSECTION

Subsubsections are the furthest division of text that still have a block header. Below this level, headers are displayed inline.

Paragraph. The paragraph format is seldom used in the core books, but is available if you prefer it to the “normal” style.

Subparagraph. The subparagraph format with the paragraph indent is likely going to be more familiar to the reader.

CHAPTER 3: TEXT BOXES

The module has three environments for setting text apart so that it is drawn to the reader's attention. `DndReadAloud` is used for text that a game master would read aloud.

As you approach this module you get a sense that the blood and tears of many generations went into its making. A warm feeling welcomes you as you type your first words.

AS AN ASIDE

The other two environments are the `DndComment` and the `DndSidebar`. The `DndComment` is breakable and can safely be used inline in the text.

THIS IS A COMMENT BOX!

A `DndComment` is a box for minimal highlighting of text. It lacks the ornamentation of `DndSidebar`, but it can handle being broken over a column.

The `DndSidebar` is not breakable and is best used floated toward a page corner as it is below.

TABLES

The `DndTable` colors the even rows and is set to the width of a line by default.

NICE TABLE

Table head	Table head
Some value	Some value
Some value	Some value
Some value	Some value

BEHOLD THE DND_SIDEBAR!

The `DndSidebar` is used as a sidebar. It does not break over columns and is best used with a figure environment to float it to one corner of the page where the surrounding text can then flow around it.

CHAPTER 4: MONSTERS AND NPCs

The `DndMonster` environment is used to typeset monster and NPC stat blocks. The module supplies many functions to easily typeset the contents of the stat block

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Medium aberration (metasyntactic variable), neutral evil

Armor Class 9 (12 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin, Undercommon

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Foo's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *misty step*

3/day each: *fog cloud*, *rope trick*

1/day: *identify*

Spellcasting. Foo is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward*, *fire bolt*, *light*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (3 slots): *burning hands*, *mage armor*, *shield*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The foo makes two melee attacks.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Flame Tongue Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage, or 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Assassin's Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The foo can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The foo regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The foo moves up to its speed.

Dagger Attack. The foo makes a dagger attack.

Create Contract (Costs 3 Actions). The foo presents a contract in a language it knows and waves it in the face of a creature within 10 feet. The creature must make a DC 10 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, the creature is incapacitated until the start of the foo's next turn. A creature who cannot read the language in which the contract is written has advantage on this saving throw.

PART 3

GLOSSARY

WHAT IS LANGUAGE *for*? a paper on
ergodic literature in an ergodic format.
Ergodic literature, after all, demands
active engagement on the part of its
player(s).¹ est

¹Throughout this text, we will refer to someone who
engages with an ergodic work as a player, as opposed to
a reader. See *Cybertext* .