

THE LUDIC MODE
OF
PANGAMONIUM

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An exegesis on the novel *Pangamonium*
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	3
Declaration.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
The Ludic Mode of <i>Pangamonium</i>	
Synopsis of <i>Pangamonium</i>	6
Introduction.....	7
Genesis.....	9
Adventure Quest Structure.....	17
Postmodernism.....	26
The Ludic Mode.....	29
Bricolage.....	65
Orientalism.....	71
Neocolonialism.....	78
Conclusion.....	83
Bibliography.....	86

ABSTRACT

This thesis has two components: a novel and an exegesis.

Pangamonium is a comic novel that parodies and satirises adventure romances and travel accounts as well as global imperialisms. Francis, an American journalist who has lived in Australia, travels to a tiny Asian country, Panga, a kingdom that has been taken over by a military dictatorship. There he meets Easter, an African on a quest to find the grave and buried treasure of his pirate ancestor. The odd couple endure a comic odyssey together and ultimately liberate a group of enslaved children from a vibrator factory.

The Ludic Mode of Pangamonium is an exegesis of the novel. It explores the ludic mode, which it considers an open play of signification characterised by freedom, reflexivity and subversion, and it explores the work of Nabokov, Calvino and Borges to explicate manifestations of play. *Pangamonium* is also examined in the light of its mythic hero quest structure and its relationship to the discourses of Orientalism and Neocolonialism.

DECLARATION

Both components of this thesis contain no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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THE LUDIC MODE OF PANGAMONIUM

Synopsis of *Pangamonium*

Pangamonium tells the story of an American journalist, Francis, who flees his marriage and stalled career and escapes responsibility by travelling to a tiny Asian kingdom named Panga. He encounters an African pilgrim, Easter, who is on a quest to find the grave of his pirate ancestor in order to lift the curse of violence that has decimated his family. The two are arrested at the border when Francis's suitcase is found to contain nothing but vibrators. Francis reluctantly agrees to join Easter's quest, but only after he is told that the grave they are seeking contains buried treasure.

In the course of their odyssey, Francis tries to earn money by writing freelance articles that misrepresent the truth of his experiences. He and Easter fight over the direction of the quest, with Francis keenly focused on the treasure. When they encounter Marman, the corrupt owner of the factory that makes the vibrators, they discover children are the enslaved workforce; Easter decides liberating them is his revised goal.

Meanwhile, the simple, heroic guard of the vibrator factory, Daeid, falls in love with a beautiful librarian, Amila, who agrees to help the two foreigners with their pilgrimage. Bollywood romance movie fantasies play a significant role in the fate of Daeid and Amila. Together, the four questing souls unite to rescue the children from slavery, battling the repressive army every step of the way. Francis is forced to transform his self-centred nature in order to overcome the obstacles in their collective path, and ultimately he is redeemed by the act of reaching out to others.