



# God

For

*Rashida Hassim*

**Cor unum; intaminatus fulget honoribus**

*symbol of eternal inspiration*

Your sacrifice has been beyond measure. You gave me life, dignity, and unconditional love. I could never repay you!

## the Light

For

*Fazul Hassim*

**Castrum doloris**

*symbol of eternal strength*

Thank you for everything. From before the beginning until after the end.

A father, best friend, and an inspiration.

For

*Kulsum Hassim*

**Castrum doloris**

*symbol of eternal virtue*

Whose gentle soul carried a boy's aggressive search for meaning.

For

*Fatima Hassim*

**Fortis facere; nunc scio quid sit amor**

*symbol of eternal connection*

This achievement would have been impossible without you as my anchor.

For

*Cbrahim & Amina Patel*

AND

*Amod Ismail*

**Ubi amor. Ibi dolor**

*symbols of eternal faith*

Thank you for your legacies.

For

*Mikhail*

AND

*Hadil Hassim*

**Nosce te ipsum; vive et vivas**

*symbols of eternal resilience*

Joy and hope – personified.

Your father's treasures!

**CRITICALLY QUESTIONING AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON  
PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR**

**(PhD)**

in the

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**(DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY)**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**Promoter:**

**Prof. C. Wagner**

**May 2012**

I learned: the first lesson of my life: nobody can face the world with his eyes open all the time.

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 171)



All games have morals; and the game of Snakes and Ladders captures, as no other activity can hope to do, the eternal truth that for every ladder you climb, a snake is waiting just around the corner; and for every snake, a ladder will compensate. But it's more than that; no mere carrot-and-stick affair; because implicit in the game is the unchanging twoness of things, the duality of up against down, good against evil; the solid rationality of ladders balances the occult sinuosities of the serpent; in the opposition of staircase and cobra we can see, metaphorically, all conceivable oppositions, Alpha against Omega, father against mother... but I found, very early in my life, that the game lacked one crucial dimension, that of ambiguity – because... it is also possible to slither down a ladder and climb to triumph on the venom of a snake...

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 194)



Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems – but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality...

(Rushdie, 2008, p. 229)

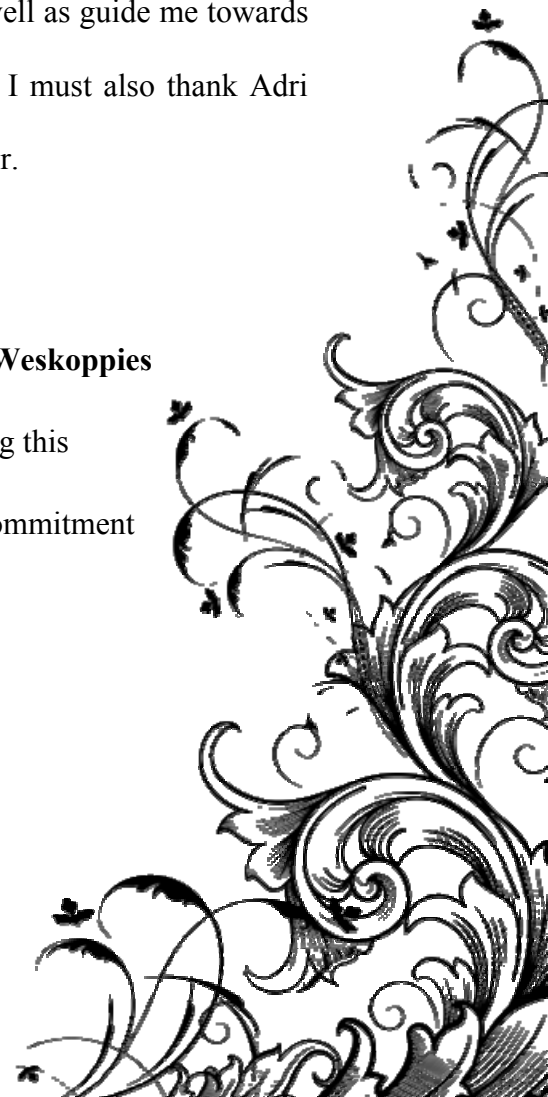


## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My promoter, **Claire Wagner** was instrumental in guiding me throughout this process. Of course, there were times during this process when the odds were too large to bear alone. Especially for those times, thank you Claire for helping me to walk tall against the rain.

The **Research Committee** at the **University of Pretoria** provided me with constructive criticism. I mean this in the real sense of the term. David Maree provided me with insights into the depths of the research areas and certainly motivated me when the chips were down. Also, Anne Moleko, Nafisa Cassimjee, Terri Bakker, Ilse Ruane, and Assie Gildenhuys helped me refine the topic, as well as guide me towards research material which certainly benefited this study. Here, I must also thank Adri Prinsloo for her role in guiding me towards the right supervisor.

My colleagues at the **Department of Clinical Psychology at Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital** not only assisted in supporting me during this process, but also motivated me with their enthusiasm. Their commitment to my personal and clinical process was invaluable. I would





therefore like to thank Nicole

Schluep, Grant Statham, Marissa

Morkel, Jenny Simpson, Melissa

Fernihough, Isabelle Swanepoel, Jonathan

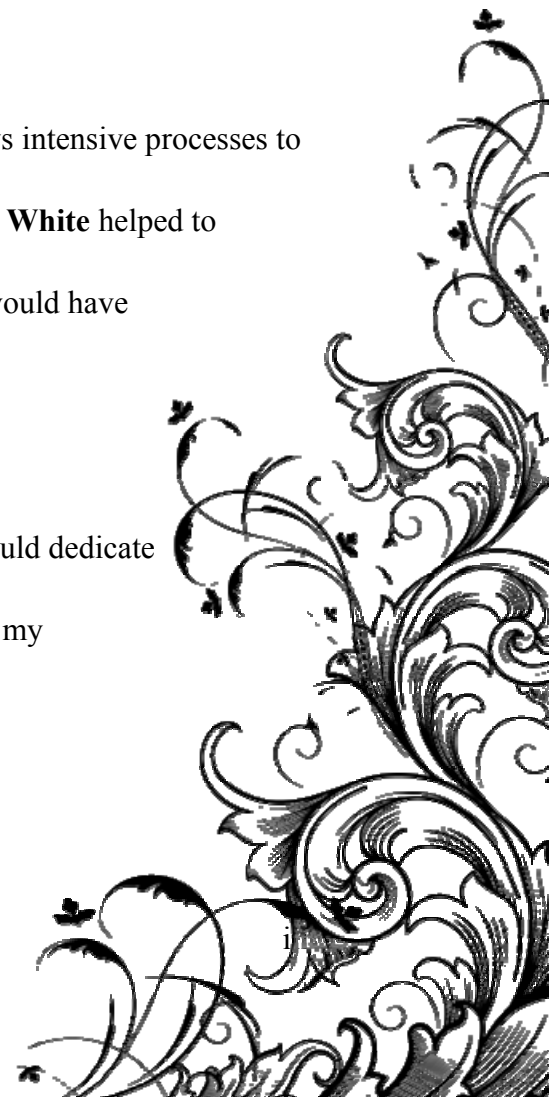
Scholtz, Katerina Michael, Chantelle van Lelyveld, and Kobus

Coetzee. Also, thank you to the Community Service and Intern Clinical Psychologists of 2010 and 2011 whose words of support were a pillar of strength.

**Werdie van Staden, Ilse du Plessis, Debbie van der Westhuizen, Heather Alison, Francois Esterhuizen, and Morongwa Mohapi**, your knowledge in psychiatry played a pivotal role in exploring the clinical aspects of my study. Thank you for the formal and informal resources you provided me with.

Often, people behind the scenes provide a service which allows intensive processes to run relatively smoothly. In this case, **Petru Woest** and **Janine White** helped to make administrative matters bearable. This research process would have been impossible without you.

My **family** provided me with supportive structures so that I could dedicate the necessary time to conduct this investigation. Thank you to my

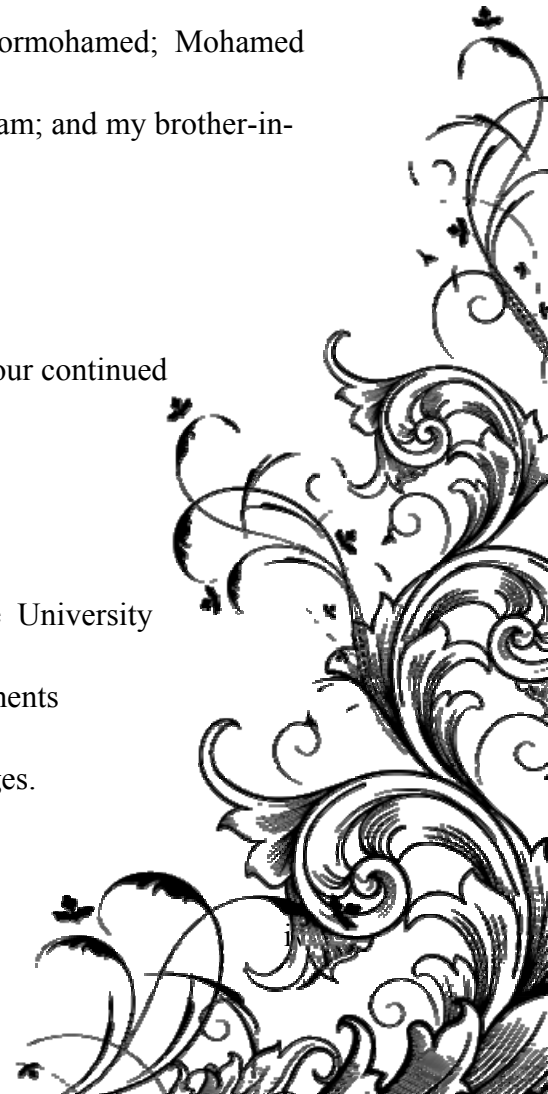




sister, Farhana Hassim;  
my parents-in-law, Sikander and  
Julie Carrim; my grandparents-in-law,  
Ismail and Ayesha Cassim; and my uncle, Ismail  
Patel. However, many more family members played a role in  
facilitating ease (or as much ease as a PhD will allow) in supporting me. Thank you  
to: Feroz, Hajira, Faheem, and Aalia Ismail; Ashraf, Shirin, Fateen, Kaamila,  
Naeem, Zawaheer, Farhaan, and Farheen Ebrahim; Mohamed Akhter, Nashrin, and  
Naadir Suleman; Zaahir and Nazrana Kalla; Shamigh, Yasmeen, Farid, Fahim,  
and Rashaad Alli; Moosa, Julie, Nazeer, and Zaida Patel; Afzal and Rubeena  
Dhudia; Adam, Zohra, Zahira, Mohamed Ashraf, and Diyanah Patel; Shamim and  
Fareed Valley; and Tasneem and Basheer Motala. I would also like to acknowledge  
the supportive contributions of Yacoob and Hawa Bibi Noormohamed; Mohamed  
Fuad, Nazia, and Rumanaah Suleman; Haroon and Zahira Adam; and my brother-in-  
law Mohamed Carrim.

**Adeeb and Kashiefa Samodien**, my friends. Thank you for your continued  
support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to **Elgiz Bal** at the University  
of Illinois (Chicago) for his assistance with psychiatric instruments  
and information while this investigation was in its earliest stages.



## DECLARATION

I declare that this is my unaided work and has not been submitted to another university for any degree.

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Junaid Hassim

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Date

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to collate and analyse academic literature with regards to possible African perspectives on psychological distress. The purpose of conducting the literature review was to explore thirty years of critical arguments supporting and refuting an African perspective on psychopathology. Literature (e.g. Bhugra & Bhui, 1997) appeared to suggest that some of the relatively recent views regarding psychopathology fail to adequately address psychological distress as it presents in Africa. A systematic literature review was selected as the methodology for this study, and the specific method of the review was research synthesis (Gough, 2004; Popay, 2005). Reviewed literature was sourced between the years 1980 and 2010. The theoretical point of departure was integrative theory, thus falling within the post-postmodern framework. As such, literature regarding psychological theory formed a substantial part of the research, including literature relating to psychodynamic theory, cognitive-behavioural theory, postmodernism, phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, and systemic patterning (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). These theories formed part of the analysis, thereby allowing contextual analysis as the interpretive method. The review's themes highlighted the following outcomes: current psychiatric nosology employed a universalistic approach to diagnosis and intervention, thus limiting cultural conceptions of mental illness; holistic intervention requires the inclusion of traditional epistemological tenets; collaboration between modern practitioners and traditional healers would probably better meet the patient's needs; and that culture-fit assessment and treatment often indicated improved prognosis. The outcomes evidenced the operation of an African perspective on psychopathology. In fact, much of the reviewed literature also suggested culture-contextual perspectives on psychopathology. Furthermore, the way in which lack of cultural coherence appears to exist between patients and some clinicians suggested that diagnostic flaws may be a relatively frequent occurrence. Potential benefits of the investigation include increased awareness that culture-related conceptualisation be further explored in the clinical field; that future researchers use the current review as a foundational reference for primary investigations; that contemporary clinical classificatory systems be reviewed in terms of cultural applicability; and that clinicians reconsider the diagnostic process in terms of culture-fit manifestations of psychopathology.



## **Keywords**

African perspective; clinical psychology; psychopathology; post-postmodern; systematic literature review; integrative theory; culture-bound syndrome; traditional healing; multiculturalism; South Africa.

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