

**THE POTENTIAL OF CLAYWORK TO FACILITATE THE  
INTEGRATION OF THE SELF IN PSYCHOTHERAPY  
WITH AN ADULT SURVIVOR OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA:  
A JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts  
degree in Clinical Psychology**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis was to explore the experience of “self” within the clinical context of adult survivors of childhood trauma. Childhood trauma in this study referred to a range of childhood experiences of emotional and physical assault, including encounters with various kinds of abuse and neglect. The focus was on the experience of a sense of disintegration and dislocation, associated to aspects of self being in conflict. This was explored from theoretical perspectives of Jungian analytic psychology, as well as art therapy.

Answers were sought to the questions of how claywork, as a form of art therapy, may facilitate the integration of the self and contribute to the development of a healing dialogue with feared and hated aspects of self. Grounded in Jungian theory, integration of the self was conceptualised as a movement towards “differentiating wholeness”. The study took the form of a phenomenological-hermeneutic case study. One participant’s experience of making and discussing a clay sculpture in a therapeutic setting according to Edwards’ method, was analysed thematically.

It was concluded that the potential of claywork in therapy to facilitate the integration of the self is related to three aspects. Firstly, claywork in therapy may promote a *concrete personification* of feared and hated aspects of self, which may enable the maker to view these aspects from a distance, and learn to understand them in a new way. Secondly, claywork in therapy may facilitate the safe ‘*unearthing*’ of repressed feelings as well as hidden aspects of the personality. Thirdly, claywork’s potential to mediate *symbolic functioning* was shown to be an important aspect of the integration process. These findings confirmed and extended existing theory regarding the usefulness of claywork in psychotherapy with adult survivors of childhood trauma. Brief recommendations for future research were provided.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In essence, this study provides an exploration of the experience and development of 'self' as mediated through the use of clay sculpture in psychotherapy.

In this study the concept of 'self' is described from a Jungian theoretical perspective. Briefly defined, the self is seen as a meaningful and purposeful whole, which is simultaneously experienced as a constellation of different aspects. The self is therefore acknowledged as coherent and continuous, as well as plural and flexible (Jung, 1961/95; Rowan & Cooper, 1999). Aspects of self are sometimes experienced as being in conflict with each other, as if two or more sides are arguing within the whole. Such conflicting aspects may reflect a sense of disintegration. This sense of disintegration could be so severe as to be pathological and dysfunctional. On the other hand it may be experienced as a sense of dislocation and isolation, but nevertheless with an ability to relate to self and others in fairly functional ways.

One reason for such a sense of disintegration, regardless of its severity, may be repression of memories and feelings that are rooted in early traumatic experiences, such as childhood abuse or neglect. As a result, disturbances in identity may occur, as well as an emergence of a wide range of symptomatic expressions such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders (Somer & Somer, 1997; Gerity, 1997).

In this study the sense of disintegration of the self is phenomenologically explored according to the experiences of a female student in her thirties who experienced abuse and trauma as a child. The student, referred to as *Julia* for the purpose of this study, was a therapy patient of the researcher (then intern psychologist), at the time of the research. Despite being highly functional in her daily life, Julia experienced a sense of disintegration and inner conflict. She expressed her inner conflict by explaining that it felt as if she were "two people". More specifically, it felt as if a self-destructive, irrational Julia (whom she named "Fat Julia"), was fighting with a strong, rational Julia (whom she spoke of as the "real" Julia) inside of her. She expressed a distinct fear and hatred for the "Fat Julia" aspects of herself, and wished to eradicate it from her sense of self.

Up to that point Julia's therapy relied on a verbal mode, and she indicated an urge to give expression to "Fat Julia" in a non-verbal medium. She had the opportunity to take part in a two-day workshop on claywork in therapy, during which she produced a sculpture, which seemed to

contain expressions of her inner conflict. Julia felt that the claywork experience was very meaningful and enhanced her personal growth, and verbally explored it further with the researcher in therapy.

The question arose as to how the expression of feared and hated aspects of self in clay and the verbal exploration thereof, promoted a sense of integration, a process which appeared to be more difficult to facilitate through a verbal mode alone. This question seemed to warrant further exploration, thus this research study was born.

In this study claywork in therapy is discussed as a form of art therapy. From a Jungian perspective the discipline of art therapy is rooted in the notion that spontaneously generated images are communications from the unconscious and may contribute to inner healing (Edwards, 1987). Research suggests different ways in which art therapy may facilitate self-discovery and an improved sense of self. However, there appears to be a need for research focusing on how claywork as a specific form of art therapy may facilitate the integration of conflicting aspects of self, specifically in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

This study starts with a theoretical exploration of the concept of the 'integration of the self' from a Jungian perspective (Chapter One). This chapter includes an exploration of the emergence of conflicting aspects of self and how adult survivors of childhood trauma may experience that conflict. Chapter Two focuses on a description of the discipline of art therapy, with specific reference to Edwards' method of claywork in therapy (Diers, 1998; Elliot, 1993). Emphasis is also placed on art therapy involving adult survivors of childhood trauma. In this chapter art therapy is discussed broadly in psychodynamic terms, although an elaboration is given of Jungian approaches to art therapy.

Chapter Three involves an outline of the methodology followed in this research study. This is followed by a phenomenological description of case material (Chapter Four) and a hermeneutic explication of this material (Chapter Five). Lastly, in Chapter Six conclusions regarding the findings of this study are presented.

Before commencing with Chapter One, it is important to note that this study is rooted in a 'poetic' understanding of psychological life. This implies a departure from an empirical, objective explanation of the functioning of the psyche, to an interest in the metaphoric and less literal character of psychological life (Knight, 1997). Jung proposed that a recovery of the imaginal holds the potential for psychological rejuvenation (Brooke, 1991). In this sense, this study

attempts to provide an exploration of Julia's experiences within the imaginal realm opened up by the medium of clay.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTEGRATION OF THE SELF**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to explore the concept of the 'self' from a Jungian perspective. Specific attention is given to what the integration of the self may entail in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

The chapter starts with a description of key terms such as *psyche*, *ego* and *self*. Thereafter the development of the self is discussed with reference to Jungian concepts of *individuation* and *symbolic functioning*. This is followed with an exploration of the emergence of conflicting aspects of self, with specific reference to the Jungian notion of *complexes*. Finally, insights gained are discussed in relation to the field of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

### **1.2 PSYCHE, EGO AND SELF**

The aim of this section is to present an outline of a Jungian understanding of the structure of psychic life. This will be done by defining key terms such as *psyche*, *ego* and *self*, proceeding from a phenomenological paradigm. This means that terms refer to patterns of lived experience in the world, rather than ontological entities in a fixed psychological domain (Brooke, 1991; Scholtz, 2001).

Jung uses the term 'psyche' to refer to the place of conscious and unconscious processes, or the place of experience and meaning (Brooke, 1991). In other words, *psyche* refers to the "psychological world in which we live" (Brooke, 1991, p. 12). According to a phenomenological understanding this does not mean that the *psyche* is an 'inner' region enclosed in the individual, but rather is an imaginal space that incorporates and surrounds the individual. Part of this imaginal space involves the development and functioning of the *ego* and the *self*.

In the tradition of Western philosophy the term 'self' typically refers to one's sense of conscious personal identity or a feeling of 'I-ness' (Clarke, 1992; Welman, 1995). This description of the self corresponds with Jung's term 'ego', which he described as the centre of awareness and

consciousness (Jung, 1977). In contrast, Jung conceptualised the self as a “quantity that is superordinate to the conscious ego. It [the self] embraces not only the conscious but also the unconscious psyche...” (Jung, 1977, p. 175).

Jung’s concept of the self refers to the “totality of the personality”, of which the ego, the sense of personal identity and awareness is only a part (Jung, 1961/95, p. 417; 1977). Also part of the self are aspects that a person is largely unaware of, which according to Jung include the personal and collective unconscious. The personal unconscious refers to aspects related to personal history, whereas the collective unconscious points to more universal aspects related to the history of mankind.

Conscious and unconscious factors represented by the self as the totality of the personality refer to all psychological and mental processes, physiology, biology, potentials (positive and negative, realised or unrealised) as well as the spiritual dimension of a person (Samuels, 1985). The self is therefore the totality of everything one may potentially be or experience (Brooke, 1991). Welman (1995, p. 99) writes that this concept of the self introduces a “telic” understanding of the self, as the self is always in a state of “becoming” the totality of the personality.

According to Jungian theory the self tends to regulate, order and orchestrate the emergence and development of psychological life (Welman, 1995). For this reason, in addition to referring to the self as the totality of the psyche, Jung also describes it as the centre of the personality (Jung, 1944/52). Analysed from a scientific point of view, these two definitions of the self, i.e. it being both the totality as well as the centre of the personality, seem to be paradoxical. However, in the phenomenological paradigm the totality and the centre refer to simultaneously emerging potentials which are neither mutually exclusive, nor related only by paradox (Welman, 1995). In this regard Brooke (1991) states that the “self as centre... does not refer to a reified entity within the psyche (however defined) but to the capacity of the self as a totality to structure psychic life around a centre” (p. 97). It appears that the self as centre and the self as totality are interrelated and function in conjunction with each other.

The self as totality represents a variety of elements and processes which may be in conflict and sometimes appear as opposites. This inner polarity gives life and momentum to the psyche (Jung, 1961/95). The centering function of the self regulates this inner polarity by helping opposites to achieve a state of balance. The self therefore functions as a “synthesiser” and “mediator” of opposites within the psyche (Samuels, 1985, p. 92). Opposites are continuously balanced through a process called “compensation”, which according to Jung involves the

automatic correction of imbalances and one-sided attitudes, leading to a “union of opposites” (Jung, 1954, p. 174). This unity is not undifferentiated, but as Clarke (1992) states is “rather a matter of balance and equilibrium within a system which is in a state of dynamic tension” (p. 148). Therefore, in the Jungian understanding of the self opposing demands of the ‘one’ and the ‘many’, and unity and plurality are balanced, and the self cannot be reduced to either of these polarities (Clarke, 1992).

According to Jung the self is not a “static quantity” or a “constant form”, but a dynamic process characterised by continuous transformation and rejuvenation (Jung in Clarke, 1992, p. 142). Clarke (1992) states that it is “not so much a thing, therefore, as a tendency or a goal, a unifying principle which represents the archetypal image of personal fulfillment” (p. 142).

In summary, the Jungian self can be described as simultaneously the centre and the circumference of the personality, pointing to everything one may potentially be. The self appears to be a dynamic process that is characterised by plurality and polarity, but nevertheless tends towards unity and equilibrium. In other words, the self can be described as moving towards a sense of undividedness despite inherent multiplicity. The process by which the self develops is called ‘individuation’, and is discussed in the next section.

### **1.3 INDIVIDUATION**

Individuation can be defined as a “movement towards wholeness by means of integration of conscious and unconscious parts of the personality” (Samuels, 1985, p. 102). That is, a person gradually becomes aware of collective and personal unconscious aspects playing a role in his or her life and starts to integrate them into his or her conscious ego personality. As described in the previous section, these aspects may be in conflict or appear as opposites. Individuation therefore implies a gathering together of disparate and opposing aspects of the personality. This includes recognition and acceptance of aspects of oneself that one may experience as distasteful or negative, as well as discovering hidden positive aspects. Thus, individuation involves realising one’s unique self, achieving one’s potential and becoming the person one is intended to be (Brooke, 1991; Clarke, 1992; Jung, 1954; Samuels, 1985).

Jung claims that when unconscious aspects are made conscious, they are not simply assimilated to the already existing ego personality. Rather, the conscious ego personality becomes transformed, vitalised and enriched and a new totality figure, the self, comes into

existence (Jung, 1954). Individuation therefore involves a transformative experience. It is a process of continuous broadening and deepening of the sense of who one may be, and an increased sense of meaning in the world. Finding meaning in the world suggests that individuation does not happen in isolation, but rather involves becoming more and more in touch with the universal features of humanity while discovering one's uniqueness (Clarke, 1992; Welman, 1995). For this reason it may be said that individuation does not "shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to one's self" (Jung 1977, p. 178).

Individuation is a natural process of the unfolding of the personality, similar to the way a seed becomes a plant. Unlike seeds, Jung believes that human beings can assist the process in a conscious way by engaging in a spiritual search for meaning and one's place in the world. However, since the unconscious can never be fully grasped and the process of self-realisation is never completed, individuation can be strived for but is never fully attained.

According to Jungian theory individuation is made possible through the spontaneous emergence of life-giving symbols. As a crucial aspect of the development of the self, the psyche's capacity to produce symbols is discussed in the next section.

#### **1.4 THE SELF AND SYMBOLIC ACTIVITY**

"The symbol is a creative product of the unconscious... It combines rational and irrational, inner and outer reality. It is Nature's way of containing otherwise unbearable tensions" (Redfearn, 1985, p. 27).

As mentioned above, individuation or the coming to self-hood is mediated through symbolic activity. Pascal (in Scholtz, 2001, p. 10) writes that individuation is facilitated by the "natural self-propelled movement of the human psyche... to produce original, spontaneous, transformative, energy-carrying symbols". This spontaneous psychic occurrence is called the *symbolic* function.

As conceptualised by Jung, symbols are formulations for "relatively unknown psychic contents that cannot be grasped by consciousness" (Samuels, 1985, p. 94). Therefore, symbols point to meanings that are beyond description, and which Jung saw as having an added dimension of profound spiritual significance (Edwards, 1987). Symbols appear as psychic 'images', which are not bound to the logic of language and everyday common sense (Samuels, 1985). They are at

the same time concrete and imaginal, personal and impersonal and link to inner and outer worlds.

Symbols are often described as having the potential to form a bridge between pairs of opposites, which follows as a result of what Jung termed the *transcendent function* (Jung, 1958). According to Samuels (1985), due to their ability to transcend logical discourse, symbols have the capacity to link both sides of pairs of opposites, and thereby represent movement from a position of 'either-or' to 'and'. In this regard symbols may emerge as transitory middle positions between opposites, in a form of intermediate space. In this way they may form links between the known (conscious) and the unknown (unconscious) and the archetypal and personal and lead to integration of these different spheres. Symbols may therefore enhance the development of the self by opening it up to more and more opposing experiences that are eventually transcended and integrated into the self in synthesised form.

Post-Jungians from the Developmental School (such as Redfearn, 1985) elaborate on the development of the symbolic function in childhood. Redfearn links the development of the capacity to symbolise with the quality of early mothering experiences. He writes that the ability to contain opposites in the self is first mediated by the mother through holding, reflecting and validating the child's behaviour. Through the mother's reflecting of the child's communications, the child is allowed a safe intermediate space in which to act and experiment with different ways of being. If this containing capacity is introjected by the child, it facilitates an ability to hold impulses and conflicts to the extent that usable images and symbols arise in consciousness (Redfearn, 1985).

The insights from the Developmental School suggest a strong link between symbolic functioning and 'containment'. However, when speaking about containment in a Jungian sense, it must be remembered that the self is always in a process of 'becoming' and therefore containment does not mean closedness. Containment in the Jungian sense should rather be understood as an 'open boundedness', where opposites may be momentarily held together, but are always exposed to further development (Brooke, 1991).

Jung differentiated symbols from 'signs'. Signs have fixed meanings and refer to what is already known, for example road signs or already discovered signs for specific fantasies in a person's life. Symbols, on the contrary, have many layers and shades of meaning, which may differ from person to person. Jung regarded images as symbolic when they lead to strong affects, while also defying complete or precise verbal description (Edwards, 1987; Samuels, 1985).

Jung's approach to the symbol should also be differentiated from that of Freud. Freud saw a symbol as the direct translation of one image into another, as a way of repressing anxiety-provoking material, usually of a sexual nature. For example, for Freud a dream of a tower would symbolise a penis, but due to fear of castration it is not allowed into consciousness. The symbol therefore serves a defensive purpose and is a mere disguise for a hidden conflict. Jung believed that Freud's view of symbols is too rigid and limited. To Jung symbols do not have mere defensive functions, but are purposeful and contribute to healing and the resolution of conflicts (Samuels, 1985).

Up to this point this chapter focused on how the self strives for wholeness and integration through the process of individuation. The tendency of the self to produce symbols to aid in this process and hold the tension between opposites was discussed. In the next section Jung's emphasis on integration and wholeness is explored from a more critical stance.

## **1.5 A CLOSER LOOK AT INTEGRATION**

"We are always falling apart, and we always have an opportunity to come together if we have the courage to embrace our chaos rather than try to escape it" (Levine, 1996, p. 136).

Hillman (1977) and Watkins (1986) warn against an interpretation of Jungian theory where too much emphasis is put on integration and unity of the self. They feel that excessive emphasis on the integration of the self may narrow Jung's psychology, which in many respects (such as his description of complexes and archetypes, which will be discussed in the next section) stresses the plurality and multiplicity of the psyche. Hillman (1977) and Watkins (1986) reiterate that too much emphasis on integration may stifle growth and curb a sense of vitality.

Hillman (in Moore, 1980) calls for a pluralistic psychology in which more emphasis is put on diversity and differentiation, rather than unity and integration. This means an acceptance of what he calls a 'multiplicity of figures' within the psyche without attempting to unify them into one. Samuels (1985) supports Hillman's point by stating that the dissolution of the psyche into multiple figures may be just as valuable as a unifying process. "Closer interest in psychological variety instead of psychological oneness will produce deeper insights into emotions, images and relationships" (Samuels, 1985, p. 108). Hillman calls for a focus that is less on transformation of

aspects of the self into a new unity, and more on “deepening of what is there into itself” (Hillman in Moore, 1980).

Hillman proposes a move from a perception of the self as “the one containing the many”, towards a pluralistic view of the self illustrated by Lopez Pedraza’s dictum “the many contains the unity of the one without losing the possibilities of the many” (Pedraza in Moore, 1980, p. 40). Here the emphasis is less on striving towards wholeness and more on the individual being able to feel him- or herself despite a diversity of experiences. Samuels (1985) explains further that it appears that by paying attention to one’s inherent multiplicity, wholeness will be promoted automatically. He writes that if the “part-self or psychic fragment is lived out fully, then wholeness will take care of itself” (Samuels, 1985, p. 110).

To summarise, the change of emphasis proposed by Hillman (1980) and Watkins (1986) appears to highlight that integration and differentiation cannot be understood separately. In fact, it appears that the movement towards self-hood is a never-ending process of interrelated occurrences of differentiation and integration. Through differentiation, integration of the self becomes possible, which then exposes the self to further differentiation. For that reason it appears apt to understand the integration of the self as a movement towards *differentiating wholeness*. It is important to note that this wholeness does not imply completeness, as this is an ongoing process.

In the next section closer attention is given to ways in which the self becomes differentiated and the emergence of conflicting aspects of self may take place.

## **1.6 THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTING ASPECTS OF SELF**

Jung writes that although the self represents a movement towards wholeness and integration of various aspects of the self, it is an ideal that can never be fully attained. What is often experienced, is a sense of disintegration, or a feeling that one consists of many aspects, of which the ego, the aspect that one identifies with at a particular point in time, is only one. Also present are other aspects, which appear to be in conflict with the ego and are hard to accept as part of the personality. Jung writes that this state of inner tension is not pathological, but is the norm and refers to a universal “age-old experience of mankind” reflecting the “plurality of souls in one and the same individual” (Jung, 1954, p. 174).

Jung describes the emergence and development of conflicting aspects of self according to two concepts, firstly the 'dissociability of the psyche' and secondly the concept of 'complexes' (Jung, 1954). An exploration of these two concepts follows.

### **1.6.1 The dissociability of the psyche**

According to Jung the sense of disintegration and inner tension between multiple aspects of self is partly due to what he called the inherent "dissociability of the psyche" (Jung, 1954, p. 173). This means that the various unconscious and conscious processes within the psyche are loosely linked and may at times appear as if they are disconnected. This may result in experiences in which it feels as if some aspects are broken off and separated from the ego. Jung referred to these as dissociative experiences, as these aspects of the self are difficult to associate with the ego.

Jung (1954) writes that such dissociative experiences may be a result of two different scenarios. Firstly, aspects that appear alien to the ego may be aspects of the total self that have not yet entered consciousness and are now in the process of becoming conscious. However, as these new aspects are not easily understood they cannot immediately be accepted as part of the self. The ego takes a while to adjust to them, a process which may involve inner tension.

Secondly, dissociative experiences may result from the repression of some aspects of the self due to it being incompatible with the person's current experience of who he or she might be. This means that these aspects did enter consciousness at a particular time, but as they pose a threat to the ego they have been repressed, or pushed back to unconsciousness. The threat to the ego may include that the incompatible aspects of self appear overwhelming, as if about to 'take over', destroy the person's existing sense of self and lead to personality fragmentation. In extreme cases the sphere of psychopathology is entered, which may warrant a diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder. According to the American Psychiatric Association's (2000) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*, fourth edition, text revision, Dissociative Identity Disorder involves the presence of a couple of distinct personality states in a person, which recurrently take control of the person's behaviour.

Jung (1954) writes that in both the above mentioned scenarios the alien or incompatible aspects of self make themselves known to consciousness by appearing as symptoms, such as depression,

anxiety or behaviour tendencies. These symptoms can then be seen as symbolic representations of psychic processes that are only partly understood at the time.

According to Jung (1954), in the majority of cases dissociative experiences are due to the first scenario, rather than the second. However, his theory of complexes, which takes a central position in his psychology and which he describes in a great amount of detail, appears to be related to the second scenario. Because his complex theory sheds more light on the experience of conflicting aspects of self, it will be discussed in more detail.

### **1.6.2 Complexes**

Complexes refer to groups of contents of the psyche, which constitute a relatively self-contained whole and is strongly associated with a specific emotional tone (Meier, 1984). Commonly referred to examples include inferiority-complexes and mother- or father-complexes. In the case of an inferiority-complex, the person would be prone to feelings of inferiority triggered by various experiences. A complex can therefore also be seen as a recurring 'psychological theme' in a person's life.

Jung (1954) described complexes as

“the image of a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual attitude of consciousness. This image has a powerful inner coherence, it has its own wholeness and, in addition, a relatively high degree of autonomy, so that it is subject to the control of the conscious mind to only a limited extent, and therefore behaves like an animated foreign body in the sphere of consciousness” (p. 96).

Jung's use of the words 'inner coherence', 'wholeness', 'autonomy' and 'animated' in his description of complexes emphasises that complexes appear to be inner beings or personalities in their own right (Meier, 1984). This notion is further enhanced by his use of the word 'image', which suggests that as representations of psychic phenomena, complexes develop recognisable appearances, almost like people. Jung (1954, p. 174) also refers to them as “splinter psyches”, which implies that they appear to operate separately from the rest of the psyche.

According to Jung (1954) complexes usually operate unconsciously and cannot be controlled by the conscious ego. He writes that they are like “malign tumors” or “little people whose pranks

disturb our nights” (Jung, 1948, p. 100), meaning that they are usually perceived as uncontrollable negative disturbances. They may inspire behaviour, feelings and thoughts that are foreign to the ego. Taken to an extreme they may even overwhelm the ego at times, which may feel as if a completely different personality speaks through the person at the time. For this reason complexes are usually feared, experienced as dangerous and seen as entities that should be eliminated and fought against.

Despite their dangerous appearances, complexes have certain benefits for the psyche. Jung (1948) regard complexes as the living units of the unconscious psyche, which may enable one to become better acquainted with the unconscious. By paying respect to complexes and listening to their messages one might gain a better understanding of one's unconscious qualities, for example hidden weaknesses and strengths. This means that if complexes are attended to they may ultimately enhance the development of the self, as they enrich the personality by allowing potentials to become conscious and integrated. Complexes can therefore be seen as the growing points or ‘emerging parts’ of the self. In Jungian theory, although pathology would often be associated with unresolved complexes, complexes are not seen as pathological manifestations per se (Samuels, 1985).

Jung (1948) writes that complexes are persistent and appears and reappears at their own will. Complexes can usually be “suppressed with an effort of will, but not argued out of existence, and at the first suitable opportunity it reappears in all its original strength“ (Jung, 1948, p. 96). Therefore, it seems that it is not useful to ignore them, as they would reappear, possibly in a different form. The less attention is paid to them, the more they tend to become acted out in ways the ego is not comfortable with (Redfearn, 1985). Also, if they are repressed, personality development becomes impoverished (Samuels, 1985).

Hillman (1977) writes that psychic life will benefit from proper attention given to complexes. He proposes that complexes should be personified, therefore approached as if they are autonomous personalities. One way of personifying complexes is to give them names. By personifying complexes they become discriminated which allows one to enter a relationship with them. An individual that is in relationships with his or her complexes is in a position to gain knowledge of them and own them, rather than feeling that they are malignant forces that want to take over. Hillman (1977) also states that when complexes are personified, one may more easily start to see them as respected parts of the self, therefore love them.

“When the complex is fully personified, I can perceive its specific qualities and yield to it the specific respect it requires...I am now able to love it. What was once an affect, a

symptom or an obsession, is now a figure that I can talk to...Loving is a way of knowing and for loving to know, it must personify. Personifying is thus a way of knowing, especially knowing what is invisible, hidden in the heart" (Hillman, 1977, p. 33).

In addition to the personification of complexes, or "imaginal others" as Watkins (1986, p. 2) calls the manifestation of multiple aspects of self, it is also beneficial to promote a healing dialogue with one's complexes. Watkins proposes that complexes are given voices, listened to and interacted with in personified form. This will ultimately allow the emergence of a more flexible and better adjusted self that is characterised by friendly relationships between multiple aspects of self.

"This experience of the self – as a collection of voices, organised through dialogue, observed by a narrating ego with a keen sense of metaphor- has its own stability, spontaneity, strength, flexibility, reliability, continuity. It is a self which grows to tolerate conflict, ambiguity, and subtlety; a self which practices its empathy, humor, understanding and compassion on those within as well as those without" (Watkins, 1986, p. 196).

Hillman (1977) and Samuels (1985) write that complexes cannot be discussed separately from what Jung (1954; 1977) calls archetypes. Archetypes can be described as 'potentialities' or the origins of typical patterns of behaviour and experience characteristic of human life (Brooke, 1991). Complexes can then be seen as personalised experiences of universal archetypal patterns, or archetypal potentials that are clothed with personal experiences and emotions. Therefore, complexes do not only originate from personal histories of people, but seem to be embedded in the collective unconscious. In this regard Hillman (1977) reiterates that instead of saying that complexes are extensions of individual human psyches, individual human psyches should rather be seen as extensions of complexes, as they existed long before the individual as archetypes in the collective mind. Therefore, complexes provide a link with archetypal possibilities. Engaging in a dialogue with one's complexes, involves a simultaneous unfolding of the archetypal.

To summarise this section, it appears that in Jungian theory the emergence of multiple, conflicting aspects of self is not only a natural occurrence, but also necessary for the development of a flexible and well-adapted self. In the light of Jung's concept of complexes it appears that some troubling aspects of self tend to form recognisable clusters that sometimes resemble 'personalities' in their own right. These 'personalities' are usually experienced as a threat to the coherence of the self. However, when these 'personalities' are brought to dialogue

and an amicable relationship with each other, they may give impetus to the development of a more well-adjusted self. Jung's theory of complexes and archetypes illustrate that these clustered aspects of self are reflective of personal as well as collective unconscious sources.

In the next section the emergence of conflicting aspects of self is discussed in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

## **1.7 CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTING ASPECTS OF SELF**

Childhood trauma in this study refers to childhood experiences of emotional and physical assault, inflicted by external sources, including encounters with abuse and neglect. (Reber, 1985). Survivors of childhood trauma often experience difficulties adjusting to the adult world. Many experience a sense of disconnection from themselves and the world (Simonds, 1994). This sense of disconnection implies a disruption of self-development, which may manifest in symptoms such as depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, substance abuse, self-destructive behaviour, flashbacks and psychosomatic symptoms (Meekums, 1999).

Research recurrently shows connections between childhood trauma and troubling experiences with conflicting aspects of self in adult life (Cohen & Cox, 1995; Davies & Frawley, 1999; Murray, 1994; Saccoa & Farber, 1999). It appears that what Jung talks about as the natural dissociability of the psyche, as discussed in the previous section, may be taken to an extreme in some cases of childhood trauma. Internal conflict, which may normally be unpleasant but bearable, may become unbearable in these cases and result in intense experiences of personality fragmentation. The link between extreme personality fragmentation and childhood trauma appears to be especially strong in cases of childhood sexual abuse (Murray, 1994).

Jung did not write about the effects of childhood trauma specifically, but his theory of the dissociability of the psyche (1954) may cast some light on this phenomenon. It can be hypothesised that the relatively high occurrence of personality fragmentation or inner conflict in cases of adult survivors of childhood trauma may be related to traumatic experiences being so overwhelming and threatening that they are difficult to incorporate into the person's sense of self. The child who suffered the trauma probably had little understanding of what was happening to him or herself and few resources to enable him or herself to make sense of it. Aspects of the self associated with the trauma were seen as incompatible with the child's self-perception at the

time. For this reason these aspects became split-off from the rest of the self, resulting in a sense of disintegration or fragmentation. These split-off aspects may then be carried through as separate personality clusters, or complexes into adulthood, resulting in a sense of disintegration or fragmentation.

Adult survivors of childhood trauma seem to have specific difficulties in seeing themselves as 'whole', or in other words 'holding' together or containing seemingly incompatible parts of themselves. Apart from the fact that the traumatic nature of their experiences render it inherently difficult to be held together, less than ideal parenting during childhood may also have arrested the development of containing and holding functions. In such situations the holding or containing function may not have been sufficiently mediated by the parent, leading to poorly internalised abilities to contain opposites and tensions.

Adult survivors of childhood trauma typically experience conflict between so-called 'adult' and 'child' aspects of self, as well as aspects of self representing 'body' and 'mind'. These two sets of conflict will now be discussed in more detail.

### **1.7.1 Conflict between 'adult' and 'child' aspects of self**

Adult survivors of childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect often experience rivalry between 'adult' and 'child' aspects of self. This phenomenon is explained by Davies and Frawley (1999). They write that in cases of severe childhood trauma, dissociation is used to preserve and protect, "in split-off form, the entire internal object world of the abused child" (p. 281). In such cases not only isolated traumatic memories become split-off from consciousness, but the actual child persona within the adult. The wounded child persona associated with the trauma becomes hidden, and a protective adult self emerges. This split between adult and child helps the survivor of abuse to function in the world. Davies and Frawley (1999) write that

"it is remarkable to observe the degree to which most survivors can painstakingly erect the semblance of a functioning, adaptive, interpersonally related self around the screaming core of a wounded and abandoned child. This adult self has a dual function; it allows the individual to move through the world of others with relative success and at the same time protect and preserve the abused child who lives on, searching still for acknowledgement, validation, and compensation" (p. 281).

Davies and Frawley (1999) say that adults who suffered severe childhood trauma often feel as if two people are present within themselves. On the one hand there is an adult who “struggles to succeed, relate, gain acceptance and ultimately forget” and on the other hand there is a child who “strives to remember and find a voice with which to scream out his or her outrage at the world” (p. 281). The adult and child aspects of self are usually at least partially aware of each other, although the adult might be unaware of the child’s rage and experiences of abuse. Although the child and adult aspects’ separation serves a protective function, these aspects do not stand in a good relationship with each other and represent an internal psychological battle.

Davies & Frawley (1999) write that for healing to take place contact needs to be made with the inner child within the adult and it needs to be allowed to speak. Healing also means that the adult and child need to engage in a relationship of mutual acceptance. This would mean that the adult is no longer afraid of the child’s experiences, understands its anger, and wishes to heal its wounds. The child on the other hand becomes freed from its painful burden, can discover its positive potential and stops undermining the adult’s success.

From a Jungian perspective, the notion of making contact with the inner child has specific significance for the integration of the self. From this perspective, the emergence of the inner child in dreams, art, imagery and mythology is associated with renewal, rebirth, recovery and transformation (Knight, 1997). In this way, the inner child may be seen as a manifestation of the self, pointing towards a restructuring of the personality and an integration of all its potentialities. Thus, the inner child can be viewed as a uniting symbol that brings together separated and disavowed aspects of the personality (Knight, 1997). In the context of conflict between adult and child aspects of self, allowing the inner child to speak and engaging in a new relationship with it, promises the birth of a new experience of self.

### **1.7.2 Conflict between ‘body’ and ‘mind’ aspects of self**

Adult survivors of childhood trauma frequently experience an alienation or disconnection from their bodies, and report that they live ‘in their heads’ all the time (Simonds, 1994). This is specifically true in cases of child sexual abuse. Simonds (1994) explains that this disconnection may be a result of children developing intellectualisation as a defense against trauma which is experienced in a bodily way. Through intellectualisation the child can stay distant from the body that is experienced as the site of the trauma. Later in life this dissociation from the body may

become generalised and lead to unpredictable incidents of depersonalisation and numbing. It may also lead to difficulties in being present in the here and now.

Apart from feeling disconnected from their bodies, adult survivors of childhood trauma may also experience distinct animosity towards their bodies (Simonds, 1994). The body is often experienced as a battle-ground, resulting in symptoms such as neglect of self-touch and grooming, eating disorders and self-mutilation. In order for healing to take place survivors need to learn to reconnect body and mind by becoming attentive to the body, taking care of the body and feeling bodily sensations that they have been distanced from. However, to connect mind and body may mean to connect with the pain (Simonds, 1994). Therefore, in the process of reconnecting with their bodies, survivors of childhood trauma may feel worse before they feel better. However, this process is necessary as Simonds (1994) states that as long as “the dissociative split remains, the pain of the past is as powerful as if it were happening in the present and the ability to experience the world as an adult is lost” (p. 103).

To conclude this chapter, it appears that adult survivors of childhood trauma are specifically challenged in regard to developing integrated selves. Aspects of self are often in conflict, experienced as enemies and therefore feared and hated. While necessary, entering into a dialogue with them may be a painful process, as it involves reconnecting with the trauma.

## **CHAPTER TWO: ART THERAPY**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

As discussed in the previous chapter the integration of the self involves a movement towards *differentiating wholeness*, which involves increased openness to aspects of self emerging from unconsciousness. These aspects may sometimes appear as opposites, be in conflict with each other, or threaten to 'overthrow' the ego.

The development of the self cannot always be grasped in logical, verbal terms. Rather, it appears to be a process that lends itself to non-verbal explorations, such as studying spontaneously produced images. Jung himself claimed that 'image is psyche', and that images are the 'stuff' of psyche (Brooke, 1991; Scholtz, 2001). Therefore, it naturally follows that artistic images may be a useful avenue to explore the workings of the psyche, and more specifically, the development of the self. This notion seems to have taken form in the emergence of the discipline of art therapy.

The aims of this chapter are to present an introduction to art therapy and to illustrate how art therapy may promote the integration of the self, specifically in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma. The chapter includes an outline of Jungian approaches to art therapy and a discussion of the use of art therapy with adult survivors of childhood trauma. Also, clay sculpture as a specific form of art therapy will be discussed.

### **2.2 ART THERAPY**

Art therapy can be defined as a branch of psychotherapy, where the production of images in a variety of art media such as painting, clay, pencils and collage materials forms an integral part of the therapy process. Images may be produced during the session in the therapist's presence, or may be done beforehand and brought to the session. The emphasis is on self-expression, rather than completion of artistic end products. The process often includes verbal exploration of images produced, with the aim of facilitating a better understanding and emotional connection to

the image. Art therapy is practiced by trained art therapists and psychotherapists who have an interest in working with art media (Dalley, 1984; Rubin 1987; Wadeson, 1987).

Art therapy has its roots in psychodynamic theory, strongly influenced by Freud's early goal of promoting insight by making the unconscious conscious. However, current practice in art therapy includes a wide scope of perspectives and approaches. In all of these approaches it is assumed that art activities as well as processes of reflecting on art productions have inherent healing properties.

## **2.3 JUNGIAN APPROACHES TO ART THERAPY**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Jungian approaches to art therapy is based on Jung's interest in spontaneously generated images as communications from the unconscious (Edwards, 1987). The Jungian attitude towards images differs from that of the Freudian in the sense that the emphasis is less on images as puzzles that need to be solved in terms of psychoanalytic theory, and more on relating to unconscious images as entities in their own right (Edwards, 1987).

Throughout his life Jung's personal explorations included image making, which he found specifically valuable during stressful times. Although he did not give extensive theoretical explanations for the use of art in psychotherapy, his writing includes descriptions of how some of his patients' involvement in artwork enhanced therapeutic processes. He wrote that by making artistic images, patients started to play an active role in their healing processes. Instead of just passively talking about problems, making an image means *doing* something about it. Jung also emphasised that by putting a fantasy or idea in visual form, it can be experienced more completely, as more parts become visible in the artistic image (Edwards, 1987).

Edwards (1987) writes that Jung's contribution towards the development of art therapy has largely been inspirational, rather than conceptual. Jung's inspiration to the use of images in therapy can be summarised by the following four points. Firstly, Jung appeared to value a phenomenological approach in working with visual images. Secondly, he developed a method in working with images called active imagination. Thirdly, the creator's relationship with his images

are accentuated and lastly, his description of symbolic functioning appears to be of specific importance in relation to work with art images. A brief discussion of these four aspects follows.

### **2.3.2 Phenomenological approach**

Phenomenology involves an investigation of phenomena as they appear loose from pre-conceived theoretical formulations (Kruger, 1988). Jung's approach to working with art images in therapy appears to be phenomenological in nature, as he placed more value on patients' experience of image making, than on theoretical analysis of the images. Jung (in Edwards, 1987) emphasises that images can only be interpreted through mutual understanding and insight between patient and therapist. The patient's understanding and feelings towards the image is therefore of utmost importance. This differs from the traditional Freudian approach, where the emphasis in interpretation is often more on theoretical explanations, separate from the patient's understanding.

Jung's view of images as autonomous beings in their own right that need to be respected, also relates to a phenomenological attitude. As messages from the psyche images need to be understood in their own terms and on many levels. Jung believed that the image is its own best explanation and that coming from the unconscious it "does not lie" (Edwards, 1987, p. 98). The image can be best understood when it is seen as speaking for itself, with a will and life of its own. The power of the image is lost when the ego tries to control it. When the image is allowed to develop and speak naturally without conscious control it will be the most insightful. The ego therefore needs to take a watching stance. Thus, from a Jungian perspective the image can never be adequately described, although some interpretations will be true in some sense (Edwards, 1987).

### **2.3.3 Art and active imagination**

Although Jung did not write about art therapy per se, his method of active imagination provides guidelines for working with images. Jung defined active imagination as "a method devised by myself, of introspection for observing the stream of interior images" (Jung in Wallace, 1987, p. 117). This method is similar to meditation. It firstly involves that one tries to empty the mind from conscious trains of thoughts, while letting the unconscious take the lead. The next step is to gently, in a playful manner, let images enter the field of attention. The idea is to observe the

images and let them evolve without trying to control them consciously. Thereafter images can be described verbally, or the experience can be given outer form by writing it down, painting it, sculpting it or translating it into a dance or other art forms (Wallace, 1987). If the image is translated into a visual art form, it may become a concrete reminder of an unconscious process, which can be worked with.

Active imagination can be described as a form of 'awake dreaming'. Similar to dreams, Jung considered images arising from the process of active imagination as manifestations of the contents of the unconscious. Whether they are put into art form or not, if they are paid attention to, they have the potential to guide towards the recovery of innate possibilities and subsequent healing. Wallace (1987) writes that active imagination opens the path for dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of the self. She writes that

“the dialogue starts with oneself and the many people of one’s inner household. As they appear, they can be confronted, we can come to terms with them, and they can turn from opposers to helpers. All this is part of growth, development and healing” (p. 120).

Wallace (1987) describes the dialogue as a process that moves from more to less irrational, in that it develops from what may first appear as irrational images and then to expression in words. In this way the messages that are necessary for growth become unfolded and understood. To conclude, according to Wallace (1987), working with art images as a form of active imagination means to let the “psyche speak, bringing to light that which was hidden in the dark, either doing damage or left unused...” (p. 124).

#### **2.3.4 The creator enters a relationship with the image**

According to Jungian approaches part of the healing effect of image making in therapy is that it allows the creator to enter a relationship with his or her images. When the creator starts to make the image, it will soon be realised that although the image belongs to him or herself, it has a quality of “otherness” to it and will start to speak back with a personality of its own (Edwards, 1987, p. 101). The image becomes a personification of the inner experiences of its maker. In the form of an artwork, the inner experience becomes separated from the creator and allows the creator to view it from a distance. Experiencing the image as separate from him or herself, allows the creator to engage in a dialogue and imaginative inquiry into it.

Part of the otherness of the image, involves that it reveals other, maybe hidden sides of the personality. Through dialogue with the image these sides can gradually be recognised as the creator's own. In this way previously unacknowledged aspects and possibilities for the self are discovered and have potential to be integrated.

### **2.3.5 The symbolic function of images in art**

In Jungian terms the therapeutic value of art images is strongly associated with their symbolic potential. As discussed in Chapter One, symbolic images play an important role in individuation and the development of the self (Edwards, 1987; Samuels, 1985). Apart from visual images, symbolic images may also manifest as movements, dramatic enactments, words, sounds and rhythms (Scholtz, 2001).

As discussed in Chapter One, symbolic images appear to have the capacity to contain opposites within the self. One may hypothesise that when these symbols are made concrete in the form of artistic images, the containing aspect is even more apparent than when the symbol is of verbal nature only. In the concrete art image, the juxta-positioning of opposites and tensions are not only imagined, but are made visible. Experiencing in the art image that previously disparate parts are actually one's own, may lead to an increased feeling of self-integration.

The potential of artistic symbols to contain disparate parts of the self seems to be specifically important in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma. As explained in the previous chapter, children suffering trauma may have specific difficulties in "holding together" different experiences of themselves. Artistic symbols may therefore mediate the holding function, and in that sense help to overcome less than ideal early parenting.

The next section provides a more detailed description of art therapy with adult survivors of childhood trauma.

## **2.4 ART THERAPY AND ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

Several writers specifically focus on the use of art therapy with adult survivors of childhood trauma who struggle with issues of psychological dissociation, disintegration and fragmentation of the self (Cohen & Cox 1995, Cohen, 1996; Gerity, 1997; Kotonias-Payne, 1996; Lawry, 1997; McMurray & Schwartz-Mirmann, 2001; Meekums, 1999; Simonds, 1994; Somer & Somer, 1997). Survivors of childhood trauma are often keen to work in non-verbal media and are specifically drawn to art therapy. Research also shows that the art therapy modality is frequently associated with successful treatment of this patient group, especially adult survivors of child sexual abuse (Burt, 1999; Friedman, 1997; Kotonias-Payne, 1996; Lawry, 1997).

It seems that part of the success of art therapy with survivors of childhood trauma involves that as a nonverbal modality, art therapy provides a safe way to 'speak' about threatening experiences. There may be few or no words available to survivors of trauma to describe their experiences. Reasons for this may be that early memories may be stored on a pre-verbal level, that the memories may be too painful to communicate in normal language or that patients are so accustomed to using normal language for defensive purposes that it cannot be used to express feelings. As a nonverbal modality art therapy provides a solution for the loss of words and an alternative to normal conversation (Meekums, 1999).

Meekums (1999) summarises the usefulness of the creative arts therapies to help survivors find a way to speak about traumatic experiences with four qualities. These qualities are firstly, the creative arts' ability to unearth unconscious material, secondly, the creative arts' containing and distancing properties, thirdly, the creative arts' potential to generate an image which can be faced, witnessed and appraised and lastly, the sense that the creation speaks for the survivor. These four qualities will now be discussed in more depth, with specific reference to art therapy.

### **2.4.2 Art therapy has the ability to “unearth” traumatic material**

Meekums (1999, p. 250) writes that engagement with the arts in therapy appears to facilitate the “unearthing” of unconscious material. Unconscious material may include memories, images and feelings associated with the trauma that are deeply buried. This unearthing is specifically

facilitated when working in unstructured or semi-structured modalities. The open-endedness of such modalities may typically evoke strong personal imagery, which are sensed to come from 'within'.

The ability of art to unearth traumatic material seems to be related to the understanding that traumatic material is likely to be stored as imagery, and therefore also likely to be retrieved in a visual rather than verbal mode (Cohen, 1996; Simonds, 1994). Experiences that are found to be overwhelming and undesirable, are difficult to process and translate into language and as a result are stored as disrupted schemas in short term memory, mainly on a visual and sensorimotor level. Cohen writes that this type of memory is wordless and often meaningless, as it is foreign to verbal language, and can therefore not be easily communicated. These unprocessed traumatic memories continue to manifest through somatic sensations, behavioural re-enactments, nightmares and flashbacks that might be disturbing to the individual. When the individual is given an open-ended invitation to engage in art making, these stored images may also appear as themes in art works, therefore 'unearthed' from their deeply buried sites.

Cohen (1996) writes that art appears to have certain qualities that enables it to unearth or give expression to the disparity and discontinuity of the inner lives of adult survivors of childhood trauma. Art is not restricted to reflect continuous, logical and sensible realities, but lends itself to express what Cohen calls "uncommon" realities like those experienced by survivors of trauma (p. 531). Art has a plasticity that allows for the expression of distortion, complex and unexpected juxtapositions and multi-levelness, which all appear to be characteristics of the disrupted inner worlds of survivors of childhood trauma. By bringing images that have no apparent connection together in a single work of art, new meanings can be created. In this way, Cohen writes that "disparate schemas that have been associated during traumatic experience can be effectively retrieved through an isomorphic process in art" (p. 530).

Levine (1996, p. 135) reiterates the ability of artistic images to reflect and transform discordance and fragmentation. He states that "...artistic expression takes up again the discordance of the human situation and gives it new voice."

The fact that art images usually have meanings on many levels also allows for patients to reveal information in a drawing while simultaneously camouflaging it from themselves or other viewers (Cohen & Cox, 1995). Cohen and Cox write that this is achieved by the intentional or unintentional use of ambiguous images. Images may look like, or be substitutions for or, camouflaged versions of a particular referent. Mountains may for instance be used as

substitutions for buttocks or lightning may be included as intrusive images. This allows for unconscious material to be unearthed and represented in a tolerable form.

### **2.4.3 Art has the ability to contain and distance traumatic material**

The nature of the art therapy process does not only allow for the unearthing of threatening traumatic material, but also has the potential to contain this material, ensuring that unearthing happens in a safe way. When threatening material, including memories, feelings and thoughts are expressed in an art image, it becomes distanced from the maker. The art image becomes a screen through which to view difficult emotions, which helps to lessen anxiety (Kotonias-Payne, 1996).

Meekums (1999) writes that the metaphoric language of art making allows it to contain overwhelming emotions. By expressing threatening feelings as a metaphor, the metaphor becomes the container of the feelings, rather than the maker. The metaphor then distances the patient from emotional content, allows for uncomfortable topics to be faced and gives the patient time to access experiences that have been suppressed in the unconscious. Metaphor also provides a way of articulating and transforming complex experience, and allows for many layers of meaning to be explored simultaneously. These ideas about art images as metaphor, seem to resonate with the containing capacity of symbolic images as discussed earlier.

### **2.4.4 Art allows for the generation of an image, which can be faced, witnessed and appraised**

The creation of an image during the art therapy process not only serves to contain overwhelming emotions, but also serves as something concrete that can be worked with, which may lead to new insights. The concrete image, acting as a mirror of the psyche, first of all allows the maker to become aware of aspects of the self. This may include a discovery of conflicting, disintegrated and possibly disavowed aspects as reflected in the artwork or process (Cohen, 1996). By recognising these aspects as one's own, they become reclaimed. For example, Simonds emphasises the reclamation of the child-self that is often disowned by adult survivors of childhood trauma:

“The process of creating a new self often involves rediscovering parts of the self which have been forgotten or denied. Many survivors who became parentified at a young age may reclaim the child-self, rediscover spontaneity and playfulness” (1994, p. 176).

Meekums (1999) and Simonds (1994) writes that the art therapy process may also allow for the survivor’s body to be reclaimed. As discussed earlier, trauma, specifically physical and sexual abuse, often leads to a disconnection with the body as it is experienced as the site of the abuse. Art therapy may allow for the mind and body to be reconnected, in that the physicality of making an image forces the body to be present in the process. Meekums (1999) also writes that the perspective gained in the art therapy process may help the survivor of abuse to disidentify his or her body from the abuse.

Burt (1999) found that part of the benefits of art therapy for survivors of childhood trauma is that the process includes experiences of being witnessed and becoming more visible. The image produced in art therapy appears to be a metaphor for the self becoming more visible. The concrete, tangible image may then serve as a reminder of this process.

#### **2.4.5 Art therapy may help the survivor to find a voice**

Simonds (1994) writes that the use of nonverbal therapy modalities such as art therapy may help survivors of childhood trauma to transform the silence of childhood into the language of an adult. Art therapy may therefore provide a language whereby hidden aspects of themselves find voices. She states that art therapy can “serve as a bridge between the unspoken and the spoken, between the unknown and the known, between the unconscious and the conscious” (Simonds, 1994, p. 1).

### **2.5 CLAY SCULPTURE AS A FORM OF ART THERAPY**

#### **2.5.1 Introduction**

Several art therapists have been successfully using clay as a medium in art therapy. It appears that specific properties of clay such as its pliability naturally invite the expression of feeling:

“Clay is a very forgiving medium. It is subject to endless change. Clay’s plasticity makes it a particularly apt material for evolving a process and experiencing change. Perhaps

more than any other medium, clay invites one to play, to feel, to shape and reshape without necessarily producing a finished object. Its tactile qualities can provoke expression of feeling through pounding, pulling, slapping, breaking and so forth” (Wadeson, 1987, p. 83).

Herrmann (1995) found that clay lends itself to the projection of anger as it can be poked, manipulated and handled forcefully. In contrast to this, Gerity (1997) highlighted the “soothing tactile” quality of clay. Atlas (1992) writes that the concretisation of feelings in clay may serve the function of exorcism or abreaction. In his work with adolescents he found that clay helped them to externalise their worries and regain focus on their everyday lives.

Casework done on claywork in therapy includes two studies on claywork with adult survivors of childhood trauma. Anderson (1995) describes a nine-week clay art therapy group program with adult female incest survivors. A structured approach was followed in this program, with specific topics or methods introduced every week. Anderson reported that all the participants found the process significant in their lives and that it appeared to have a positive effect on their self-esteem. However, Anderson (1995) suggested that inclusion of individual therapy in the process could have maximised the positive effects of the group experience.

Nez (1991) describes a case study involving the unstructured use of clay sculpture in therapy with an adult survivor of childhood abuse, over a period of four months. Nez describes the participant’s artwork from the perspective of archetypal psychology. Archetypal psychology is described as “turning to the ‘poetic’ imagination and its expression in fantasy, dreams, myths, art and culture as a means of understanding the processes of the psyche” (Nez, 1991, p. 123). The participant’s making of clay sculptures seemed to help her gain insight into her psychic complexes. She explored various archetypal images such as her “inner child” and “protective goddess” through her artwork, which appeared to help her to deal with the pain of the abuse and make changes in her life.

Nez (1991) found that clay encouraged a more spontaneous and less controlled expression than other art media, and that the “act of forming the clay seemed to put [the participant] in touch with primitive and intimate physical sensations and emotions” (p. 125). During the process of therapy it was found that the clay images produced by the patient bore resemblances to the Greek myth of the Rape of Persephone. During the final stages of the therapy process the story of Persephone was introduced to the patient, which was found to deepen and enrich the patient’s understanding of the images.

## 2.5.2 Edwards' claywork method

In this study the focus is on a special method of claywork in therapy developed by Edwards (Diers, 1998; Elliot, 1993). This method involves subjects being given a four kilogram block of clay and a piece of hardboard to work on with instructions that encourage free, playful molding of the clay without planning the end result. Subjects are encouraged to "let their hands do the talking" and to refrain from judging their sculptures according to artistic standards. The next step is to reflect on the experience of working with the clay. The aim is to "facilitate a dialogue" between the sculptor and sculpture and to allow meaning to emerge freely in the subject's own words with emphasis on the subject's emotions and physical sensations in relation to the sculpture (Diers, 1998, p. 50). Edwards found that clay sculptures produced in this way may contain projections of different aspects of the sculptor's self-experience.

Several research studies explored the therapeutic benefits of claywork employing Edwards' method. Franke (in Diers, 1998) investigated the potential of claywork to facilitate deep emotional shifts through focusing on the 'bodily felt sense' evoked by the sculpture. Elliot (1993) explored the clay sculpture's ability to access the inner world of the sculptor by acting as a mediator or bridge between conscious and unconscious parts of the self. Elliot discovered that the individual is confronted with hidden truths about the self through the medium of clay which facilitates a journey of self-discovery. Diers explored clay sculpture within the holographic and transpersonal paradigms. She described that meaning in therapeutic claywork is not only derived from personal conscious and unconscious sources, but also from transpersonal sources, which she described in conjunction with Jung's concept of the collective unconscious.

In summary, research broadly suggests different ways in which therapeutic claywork may facilitate self-discovery and improved knowledge of different aspects of the self, which may facilitate integration of the self. However, research does not specifically describe how feared and hated aspects of self that appear as autonomous personalities may be integrated in therapeutic claywork. Also, limited studies have focused on investigating the integrating potential of therapeutic claywork with survivors of childhood trauma. Therefore, more research is needed to explore and describe how claywork may facilitate a dialogue between conflicting aspects of self that may lead to better self-integration. This research is specifically called for within the context of individuals who developed a sense of disintegration as a result of childhood trauma.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is a phenomenological-hermeneutic single case study exploring the potential of clay sculpture to facilitate the development and integration of the self in psychotherapy. The study focuses on the experiences of a female student in her thirties, who will be referred to as Julia. Her experiences of the healing effects of claywork in therapy receives special attention. This chapter provides a description of the aims, approach and procedure of the research.

### **3.2 THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

The literature review illustrated that art therapy, and specifically clay sculpture as a form of art therapy, have the potential to facilitate the integration of the self. However, as explained in the previous chapter, this phenomenon needs more investigation, specifically in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma. The aim of this research is to conduct such an investigation, while keeping the following research questions in mind:

The main research question of this study is:

Conceptualising integration within a Jungian framework as a movement towards *differentiating wholeness*: How may therapeutic claywork facilitate the integration of the self in psychotherapy with an adult survivor of childhood trauma?

In the context of the literature review, the following subquestion is asked:

How may claywork in psychotherapy facilitate a healing dialogue with feared and hated aspects of the self?

### **3.3 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC APPROACH**

The phenomenological approach focuses on the qualitative exploration of human experience. In reaction to positivism, phenomenology calls for an investigation of things as they appear, away

from preconceived theories about them (Betensky, 1995; Stones, 1988). This implies a description of phenomena as they are, before theories and hypotheses about them are formed. The phenomenological researcher therefore approaches the phenomenon under investigation from a position of “conceptual silence” (Stones, 1988, p. 142).

Phenomenology is characterised by an attitude of “openness to whatever emerges as significant for the adequate understanding of a phenomenon” (Stones, 1988, p. 143). This attitude of openness as a central principle of phenomenology is captured in Husserl’s (as cited in Giorgi, 1985) dictum, “Back to things themselves”. The phenomenological approach appears to be an appropriate approach for this study, as it allows the researcher to enter Julia’s experience of clay sculpting and stay open to whatever emerges during the image making process. In this way the study promises to stay close to the Jungian notion that as images can be seen as communications from the unconscious, they should be respected and allowed to speak for themselves (Edwards, 1987).

Packer and Addison (1989), state that the use of phenomenological descriptions only do not always provide adequate insight into the subject's experiences. According to Knight (1997) the hermeneutic approach provides an additional dimension in that it moves beyond mere description of phenomena to an interpretative-dialogue between phenomenological description and existing theoretical frameworks.

The hermeneutic interpretative process entails the employment of existing literature as “lenses” through which experiences may be viewed and a deeper understanding obtained (Edwards, 1998). Literature therefore provides “a way of reading, a preliminary initial accessibility, a stance or perspective that opens up the field being investigated” (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 277). In this study literature on the development of the self in a Jungian context, art therapy and the experiences of adult survivors of childhood trauma are used as hermeneutic lenses through which a deeper understanding of Julia’s clay sculpture experience is sought.

Apart from promoting a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, the hermeneutic interpretative process also provides opportunities for the further development of existing theory. This may happen in that the existing literature, which serves as a hermeneutic lens, in turn also becomes evaluated and modified through dialogue with the case material (Packer & Addison, 1989). Knight (1997) describes this interaction between case material and existing theory as a hermeneutic-dialogue. In this study the hermeneutic dialogue involves that literature regarding the Jungian self, art therapy and the experiences of adult survivors of

childhood trauma, may be refined and tested for usefulness as conceptual lenses (Edwards, 1998).

### **3.4 THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHOD**

Case study research involves the systematic and in-depth examination of one or more cases of a phenomenon of interest with the aim of gaining an understanding of the phenomenon and developing or extending a theoretical framework (Edwards, 1998). Case study research starts with an accurate and detailed description of a limited number of units (often only one), such as an individual or an institution. These descriptions are then used to conceptualise general principles pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, from a single case study, general principles can be generated through an inductive process (Knight, 1997; Diers, 1998).

Case studies involve different phases, which can be seen as lying on a continuum from description through to theory testing (Edwards, 1998; Knight, 1997). The present case study firstly involves a phase of phenomenological description, where the aim is to stay as faithful as possible to the data throughout processes of data collection, reduction and extraction of themes. These methodological procedures are discussed later. Secondly, this study is also concerned with the development or extension of existing theory regarding clay sculpture and therefore involves a theoretical-heuristic phase (Edwards, 1998). As discussed in the previous section the phase of theory development will involve the selection and evaluation of hermeneutic lenses.

As mentioned earlier, the present study is a *single* case study, meaning that the experience of one participant is under investigation. Although research based on only one participant has been criticised, especially within discourses favouring quantitative methods modeled on the natural sciences, the single case study method has been recognised as an important research tool within the discipline of psychology (Edwards, 1998). Edwards (1998) writes that the careful observation, description and discussion of individual cases have proven to be the foundation of the development of clinical knowledge.

## **3.5 THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

### **3.5.1 The research context**

As mentioned earlier, the research participant, Julia, is a female student in her thirties who experienced a traumatic childhood. She is highly functional in her daily life but has some psychological problems, and thus had been attending weekly to twice-weekly therapy sessions with the researcher, then intern psychologist, for five months prior to the research. The next chapter provides more information regarding her biographical details and the therapy process preceding the research.

During the time that Julia was in therapy with the researcher, she had the opportunity to take part in an experiential workshop on the use of the expressive arts in therapy. This workshop stretched over a couple of days, and included sessions of free dancing, clay sculpting following Edwards' method (cf. section 2.5.2), and group discussions of the participants' experiences. The facilitator of this workshop was an expert in the use of Edwards' clay sculpting method. During the first day of this workshop Julia made a clay sculpture, which was verbally explored with the workshop facilitator in a group context the following day. The day thereafter she brought the sculpture to her therapy session with the researcher, and continued her exploration thereof. Her discussion of the clay sculpture with the researcher included a detailed description of the exploration during the workshop.

Julia's clay sculpture produced at the workshop focused on her expression of feared and hated aspects of herself. As the theme and Julia's experience of the clay sculpture corresponded with the researcher's interests, permission was asked for her case to be used for research purposes. The impact, both positive and negative, of the research on the course of therapy was discussed with Julia, as well as other implications of being a research participant. Julia gave verbal and written informed consent for her case and the photograph of her clay sculpture to be used for research. She also gave permission for her therapy sessions with the researcher to be audio-taped (see consent form in Appendix A).

As it implied a dual relationship, the fact that Julia was in therapy with the researcher introduced some ethical considerations. For this reason the researcher endeavoured to conduct the research in such a way as to cause minimal disruption of the normal therapist-patient relationship. In this regard discussions pertaining to the research were conducted outside Julia's

therapy hours. Also, the researcher, as far as possible, refrained from directing the therapy process according to her research interest.

### **3.5.2 Data collection**

The following four data sources were utilised:

- 1) *Assessment and therapy notes made by the researcher/ therapist prior to the clay sculpture experience.* These notes consist of Julia's biographical details as well as detail regarding the assessment and therapy process prior to the claywork experience.
- 2) *Audio-taped therapy sessions in which Julia's clay sculpture experience was explored with the researcher/ therapist.* These sessions include Julia's recollections of how the exploration of the sculpture with the workshop facilitator proceeded, as well as additional reflections that developed in the context of the therapeutic situation. The sessions were of an unstructured and non-directive nature, allowing Julia to explore the clay sculpture in whichever way she wanted. These sessions were transcribed verbatim.
- 3) *Audio-taped therapy sessions following the claywork experience, other than those focusing on the claywork per se.* Sections of these sessions that provide additional information regarding the clay sculpture experience were identified and transcribed verbatim.
- 4) *Audio-taped follow-up interview of clay sculpture experience.* Once therapy had been terminated, six months after making her sculpture, Julia was re-interviewed regarding the clay sculpture experience. This interview was completed in one session of an hour and-a-half. The purpose thereof was to provide Julia with an opportunity to re-examine her clay sculpture (per photograph) and produce a retrospective description of the experience. In addition, the perceived effect of the claywork experience on Julia's life six months after making the sculpture was discussed.

An open-ended, unstructured interviewing style was followed, allowing Julia to describe the experience in her own words (Kvale, 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998;). Her reflections were

transcribed verbatim. The rationale behind having the follow-up interview after therapy had been terminated, was to ensure minimal disruption of the flow of the therapy process and the therapist-patient relationship.

Validity of data collection in all phases was ensured by avoiding bias and selection effects as far as possible (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1994). This was done, for example by avoiding the following practices: leading questions as well as directing sessions and selecting material to coincide with research expectations.

### **3.5.3 Data reduction**

Data from the first source, namely assessment and therapy notes made by the researcher/therapist prior to the clay sculpture experience, were reduced in order to provide a historical context for the claywork experience. Firstly, relevant biographical details were extracted and organised into a concise summary (see section 4.2). Care was taken to omit data which could potentially harm the confidentiality of the participant. Secondly, two themes that emerged during therapy prior to the claywork experience, which seemed to have bearing on the clay sculpture experience, were identified and summarised (see section 4.3).

Vast amounts of data obtained from all other sources, that is data specifically pertaining to the claywork experience, were reduced following methods described by Barker et al. (1994) and Taylor and Bogdan (1998). The first step involved reading through therapy and interview transcripts in order to form an overall holistic perspective. The next step was to summarise the transcripts of the various data sources into an extended synopsis, with the aim of getting rid of repetitions and descriptions unrelated to the clay sculpture experience. During this process care was taken to keep key words and phrases that best described Julia's experience.

The extended synopsis was further reduced to a third-person narrative synopsis. This was done to describe the claywork experience as truthfully and accurately as possible, whilst presenting it in a logical story format (Barker et al, 1994). The narrative synopsis was compiled by grouping thematically similar data units, as summarised in the extended synopsis, and arranging them into paragraphs. These paragraphs were given titles, which highlighted naturally emerging themes. Nine themes, presented in section 4.4, emerged in this way.

To ensure validity of the reduction process, Julia was employed as co-researcher at this stage (Knight, 1997). She was asked to read through and comment on the summary of biographical details and the narrative synopsis. The purpose of this was to establish if the material accurately described her experiences. Adjustments were made to the material according to Julia's comments and recommendations.

#### **3.5.4 Data interpretation**

Reduced data, in the form of summaries of the two themes that had developed from the therapy process prior to the clay sculpture experience, as well as the nine themes pertaining to the clay sculpture experience, were explicated using an interpretive hermeneutic approach (Packer & Addison, 1989). This involved bringing the case material into dialogue with theoretical perspectives presented in the literature review. In other words, theory regarding the Jungian concept of the development and integration of the self, as well as art therapy literature, were used as 'hermeneutic lenses' to assist in gaining insight into Julia's clay sculpture experience. This was done by selecting relevant sections from the theory as ways of reading the data and thereby developing a deeper understanding of each of the eleven themes.

In addition, the usefulness of the theoretical perspectives employed to explicate Julia's clay sculpture experience was evaluated. Therefore, the degree to which the findings of this research support, deny or expand existing theory was used to determine the validity of the theory. This was done in order to establish in which ways insights developed from this study may contribute to theory development.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CASE MATERIAL**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter entails a phenomenological description of Julia's case. The first part of the chapter provides a historical context for Julia's case by presenting relevant biographical details. The second part is a brief description of some prominent themes that emerged during Julia's five months of therapy with the researcher prior to the clay sculpture experience. Lastly, a narrative synopsis of the clay sculpture experience is presented.

### **4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

At the time of the research Julia was a post-graduate student in her early thirties. She is divorced and has no children. She is now engaged and lives with her fiancée in a small town. She presented as an intelligent, well-spoken, confident, success-driven and goal-directed individual.

Julia described her childhood as "chaotic". Her family had perpetual financial difficulties as her father was alcohol dependent, which made it difficult for him to hold work positions. When her father was intoxicated he was emotionally abusive towards his wife and five children. However, Julia said that she had always been her father's "favourite" child and that he behaved more "humanely" towards her than towards her other siblings. Compared to her father, her mother was "like a saint" and always tried to protect her children from her husband's abusiveness. Julia nevertheless felt that her mother was "weak"- she did not have any sense of "control" or "power" to do anything on her own. She said that their house was always in a "mess", her mother always "depressed" and the children always fighting. Since an early age Julia, being the eldest child, tried to clean up, create order and manage her siblings. She became her mother's "helper" and played a strong role in raising her siblings and trying to protect them from her father.

As a young child Julia was sickly. She frequently suffered from ear, nose and throat infections and had tuberculosis when she was in pre-school. She has bad memories of primary school and experienced herself as "different" because she came from a poor family and was frequently

teased about it. She was also teased about being fat and reported having no friends in primary school. She described an early memory of herself standing behind a fence, watching other children play and feeling “isolated”, “branded”, “singled out” and “distanced”. She also reported feeling vulnerable, out of control, unable to fight for herself and having no voice during her early primary school years.

When Julia was approximately thirteen years old she discovered that her father had been sexually abusing her sister who is three years younger than her. This was kept a family secret and was never spoken about. Julia suspected that she might have been abused as well, but had no memory of it. She said that one reason for this suspicion was that she became preoccupied with sex at a very young age.

Julia reported engaging in self-destructive behaviour since the age of approximately eleven. This included hurting herself by hitting her head against a wall and binge-purge behaviour. At the age of twelve she started cutting herself. When she went to high school she decided to change her name: Instead of introducing herself as “Julie” as she had always been called, she started to use the name “Julia”. She was tired of being bullied and hoped that by changing her name she could put the old Julie behind her, and make a new beginning. She reported being happier and more confident during her high school years.

Julia became sexually active at the age of fourteen. She described her romantic relationships as a teenager as “rebellious” and her boyfriends were often much older than her. During her teenage years several incidents occurred where she felt “obliged” to engage in sexual activities when she did not want to do so. This included being raped at a party when she was approximately sixteen years old, however she only realised that it was rape at a later stage in her life. During these incidents, Julia felt as if she was not really present, but was just acting without having control over her behaviour.

When she was eighteen, Julia left her parent’s home, started working and got married. Her husband abused alcohol and they had many relationship problems. She also reported feeling sexually abused by him. They got divorced after four years. At about the same time that her marriage came to an end, Julia was foster-parenting a child. She made plans to adopt the child, but these fell through at the last minute and left her feeling devastated.

After her divorce Julia went overseas, where she worked for some years. During this period, she reported that her confidence and sense of self-esteem increased. She met her current fiancée

while she was abroad. A few years later the couple returned to South Africa to study. At the time of the research they had been in a stable relationship for approximately five years.

Julia's father died of liver failure when she was in her mid-twenties. She reported being very distressed by her father's death, but felt that she had mourned him by the time of the research. She also reported that she stopped cutting herself in her mid-twenties.

Approximately a year before the research commenced, Julia fell pregnant and decided to have an abortion. This was a difficult decision for her and she started to feel emotionally unstable. She felt depressed, suicidal and feared losing control, which prompted her to start therapy. After a couple of months her therapist left town and she was referred to the researcher for continuation of therapy.

Julia started therapy with the researcher approximately five months before the time of the research. At that stage she complained of sleeping problems, frequent nightmares associated with her father and having self-destructive fantasies. She felt haunted by intrusive images and thoughts of "misery and uselessness", and engaged in binge-purge behaviour. No evidence of psychosis or personality disorders such as Borderline Personality Disorder was apparent. She saw therapy as an opportunity to "sort herself out" and also stated that she wanted to speak about her father abusing her sister, which she had never spoken about to anyone before.

### **4.3 THE THERAPY PROCESS PRECEDING THE CLAY SCULPTURE EXPERIENCE**

As stated above, Julia was in therapy with the researcher for five months before making her clay sculpture. The following two themes gained prominence during the therapy process preceding the research period, and seem to have bearing on the clay sculpture:

#### **4.3.1 Fear of self-destructive tendencies**

During the first couple of months of Julia's therapy she frequently spoke about fearing that she might engage in self-destructive behaviour. This fear was related to a feeling of loss of control associated to past experiences of self-destructive behaviour, such as binge-eating, cutting herself and engaging in unwanted sexual behaviour or fantasies. She explained that when she enters the self-destructive "mode" it feels as if she is taken over by another person and her

“normal rational” side has no say. She would for instance enter a supermarket, buy loads of unhealthy food, go home and eat the food without being able to stop herself. She described this state of mind as almost “trance-like” and said that she was worried that she would one day commit suicide whilst in this state of mind.

Julia later said that it felt as if she were two people. The one part was strong, rational and in control (according to her the “real” Julia), while the other part was weak and self-destructive. She later named the self-destructive part Fat Julia and described her as “fat, dirty and disgusting”. She described her mental image of Fat Julia as an “incredibly fat and ugly” woman, passively sitting in a chair, smoking and drinking uncontrollably. She also spoke of Fat Julia as being hungry and looking for something but didn’t know what she was looking for. She felt that there was some sort of resemblance between Fat Julia and her father.

Julia spoke about feeling as if she were in a constant battle with herself. The controlling self-sufficient part of her was always trying to get rid of the self-destructive part.

#### **4.3.2 Separation between body and mind**

The theme of a perceived separation between Julia’s mind and her body was also explored in therapy. Julia explained that she lived in her head, and felt as if she did not own her body and often had no authority over her body. She had a feeling that sometimes others had authority over her body. She also thought of her body as a battle-ground and as something that needs to be punished. Although she was of normal weight, she was very concerned about her body image, and would frequently embark on diets.

About four months into the therapy process -approximately a month before making her clay sculpture-, Julia started to feel that certain changes were beginning to happen within herself. For example, she explained that she felt less separated from her body, more content with her body image and less in need of extreme control. She described what she called a progression in the image of Fat Julia. She no longer saw Fat Julia as a fat woman separate from herself, but saw her as an “ugly growth” on her back, approximately the size of a child. When the opportunity arose for her to take part in the workshop on the expressive arts in therapy, she said that she would like to use it as an opportunity to continue her exploration of the image of Fat Julia in a non-verbal medium. Although she no longer saw Fat Julia as an ugly fat woman, she felt a strong urge to “start at the beginning” and portray her initial conception of Fat Julia in clay.

## **4.4 NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS OF THE CLAY SCULPTURE EXPERIENCE**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

As mentioned in chapter three (Methodology), the sculpture that is presented in this study was produced during a workshop on the expressive arts in therapy, and not in therapy with the researcher. However, Julia brought the sculpture to her therapy session two days after making it in the workshop, and explored it with the researcher. Her exploration included recollections of her experience of making the sculpture and the process of discussing it with the facilitator in the group context during the workshop. As discussed in chapter three, the synopsis of her clay sculpture experience is presented in thematic order, with references to both discussions with the workshop facilitator and the researcher.

A photograph of the sculpture is presented on the next page.

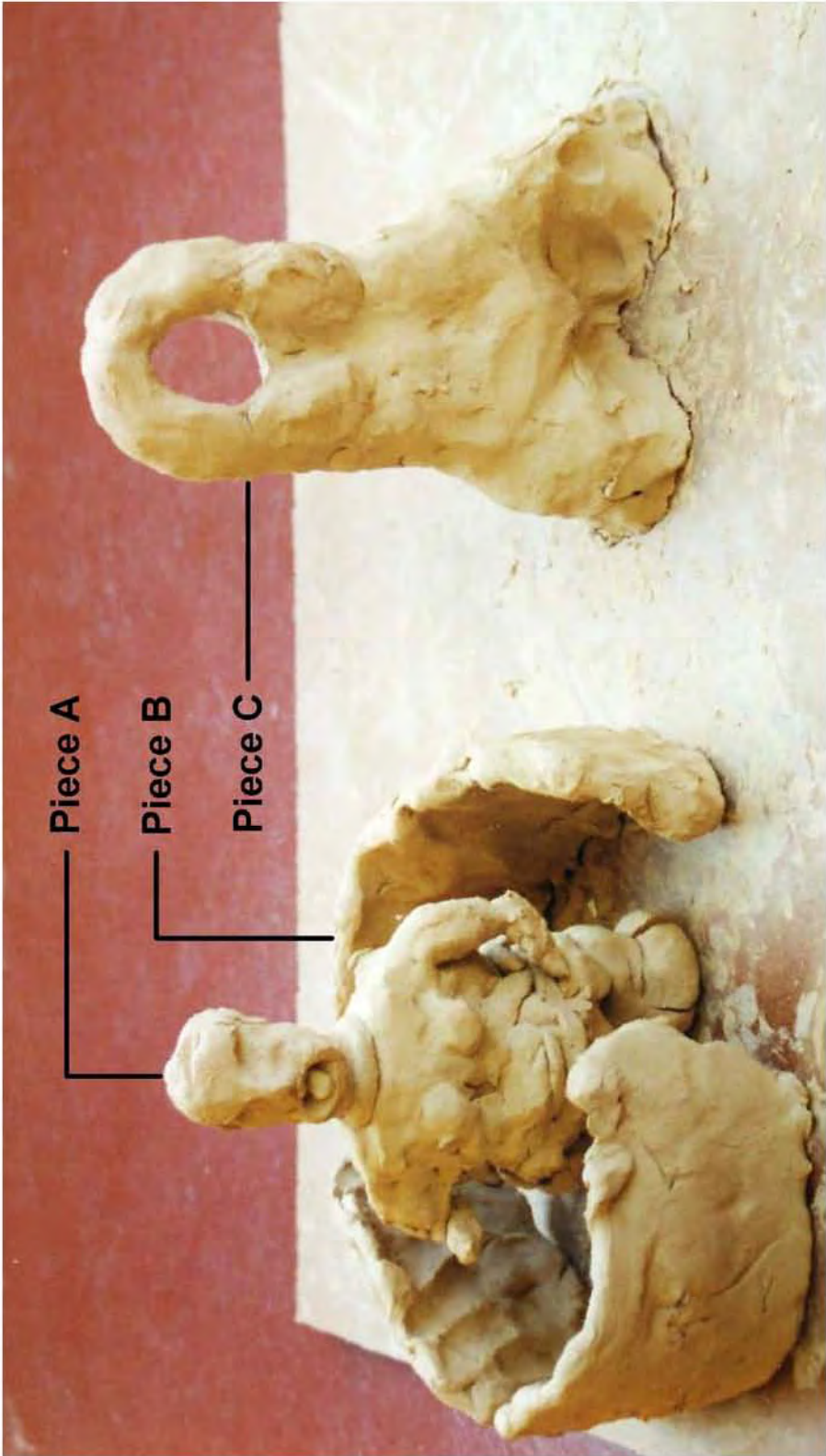
### **4.4.2 Julia's experience of making and discussing the sculpture**

#### **4.4.2.1 Making the sculpture**

Before starting to make the sculptures, the facilitator of the workshop instructed the participants to "let their hands feel what they wanted to do" and to try not to allow preconceived ideas to influence what they make. However, Julia came to the workshop "burning" to give shape to Fat Julia and decided that she would follow her initial idea despite the facilitator's instructions.

Julia was very eager to start her sculpture. When she held the five-kilogram block of clay in her hands she felt that it was "too big" and broke it into manageable portions with which to work. She started by making Piece A (see page 42), which she named Fat Julia. She made the legs first, then the torso and the arms. While she worked on the body she kept "wanting to make her fatter" and did so by rolling long pieces of clay in her hands and "pasting" these onto the figure. Four months after she made the sculpture she still remembered that she wanted to make Piece A "jagged" and "ugly." After finishing the body she made the neck and head. The head "wouldn't come right" so she stuck her finger in at the mouth position and then "it felt right".

PHOTOGRAPH OF CLAYWORK



After making Piece A, Julia had a thought of building a fence around the figure. She said that the image of herself as a small child behind a fence (which was discussed in therapy a couple of weeks prior to the workshop) came to mind. She did not know how to make a fence and decided to make a wall instead (Piece B- see page 42). She planned to put Piece A behind the wall, but it “didn’t feel right” and so she decided to rather build a wall around Piece A and leave a part open, as she felt that she has already “accessed” Fat Julia a bit in some ways.

When Julia was finished with Piece B, a piece of clay was left over and she played with it in her hands. It “came into the shape” of Piece C (see page 42). She recognised it as another fat woman, which she “didn’t feel like giving a head or a face or anything”. She did not want to give it arms either. She felt that Pieces A and C were the same figure, but just “different expressions of it”. When she was finished with Piece C, she felt that “something was still not quite right” and gave Piece A a tongue and ears. This was the last thing she did. When she was finished she felt an intense feeling of satisfaction. She looked at her sculpture feeling that it was “right”, that it was what she wanted to make and that it looked the way she wanted it to look.

#### **4.4.2.2 Discussing the sculpture**

Julia was very eager to have her sculpture discussed in the group and volunteered to go first. The facilitator of the workshop reflected on her eagerness and commented that it appeared to say something about her willingness to confront the part of herself expressed in Fat Julia. Two weeks later Julia told the researcher that she thinks the facilitator was right about that.

Julia experienced the discussion of her sculpture as “very intense” and said that she and some of the other people in the group were in “floods of tears” most of the time. After discussing the sculpture with the facilitator she felt “absolutely exhausted” and “couldn’t stop crying”. When she got home that afternoon she felt like a “wet rag”. She woke up in the middle of that night and continued crying. She described it as “not really thinking, just tears”, and said that she did not try to fight the tears. She explained that she felt that the experience was “something very deep” and “cathartic”.

Julia described some physical sensations that she regarded as associated to the clay sculpture. After the discussion of the sculpture in the group her jaw was aching and it felt as if “an iron bolt was driven through” her head at her temples either side and the “top of her head wanted to lift

off". On the day that she was exploring the sculpture with the researcher her jaw was still aching and she had various tics in her face, upper body and thighs.

The researcher remarked that Julia seemed to feel some tension in her body and that it appeared that part of the tension may be related to the battle between her head and her body. This same tension appeared to be reflected in Piece A (Fat Julia). Not only did Julia have different feelings about the head and body of Fat Julia, but the sculpture itself also demonstrated tension in that the head kept rolling off. Julia commented that the head has "fallen off about twenty times so far".

#### **4.4.3 Immediate feelings about the sculpture**

Julia's immediate feelings associated with the sculpture were a combination of fear, "repulsion" and "satisfaction". She described that she was simultaneously "repulsed" and "fascinated" by what she had made. Further explorations of these feelings brought the following insights:

##### **4.4.3.1 Fear**

Julia said that she felt "quite frightened" after making the sculpture. She explained that she found the figures "quite scary", that she could not believe that she had made them and was not sure "where they came from". She tearfully said that she had an idea in mind to make something like that, but didn't know that it was going to "come out this scary". When she was asked what scared her the most she pointed to Piece A, Fat Julia. She explained that Fat Julia looked so "aggressive and angry and ready to fight" and that it was almost like she would come "stomping out there". She also commented on Fat Julia's eyes: "And she's got such evil eyes. No eyes... Such evil eye sockets..." When she was asked if it felt as if Piece A wanted to fight with her, Julia answered that it felt more like she was going to "take her over".

##### **4.4.3.2 Repulsion**

During discussions with the facilitator and the researcher Julia emphasised that she found Piece A "repulsive". Julia explained that although it was her intention to make Fat Julia fat and ugly, seeing the fat on Fat Julia's figure "shocked" and "repulsed" her. She said, "inside all this fat

there is actually a small bone structure... And all the bigness is all the fat..." She also said that she found Fat Julia's small breasts repulsive. She had however deliberately made them to be "skew and hanging" and distorted. She first made them more like the breasts of piece C, " sort of more round and upstanding", but didn't like the result. She then "pinched the clay in and made it smaller and uglier". Four months later she said that when she made them she felt that was how she felt about her own breasts. She found the head of piece A not so repulsive, but more sad, scary and expressive of pain.

The fear and repulsion Julia felt towards Piece A made it difficult for her to associate with it, resulting in an ambivalent connection to it. She felt almost surprised with what she had made and said that she could not believe that was what she felt about herself. She said: "I do know this is me... -this is part of me-, and I'm sad to find that I... that there is a part of me that I think is frightening."

The facilitator of the workshop encouraged her to talk about the sculpture in the first person, therefore to say "I feel" instead of "she feels" when talking about the feelings of the different figures. Julia found that difficult to do and felt as if the figures (especially piece A) were "not her", although she rationally knew it was part of her. Also, when the facilitator asked her to role-play what she would like to say to the figure, she felt that she could not and did not want to do it.

She explained that Piece A represented her original conception of what Fat Julia looked like, and that she did not see her like that any more, although she wanted to portray her like that. She said that although she still finds the aspect of herself represented by Fat Julia very repulsive it has improved. "A few months ago it was so repulsive I couldn't even dare to think about it. Now I can think about it and say okay, this is part of me. It is pointless being repulsed by it, because it is me so... too bad if it is ugly. It's time to have a look at it."

#### **4.4.3.3 Satisfaction**

Despite Julia's intense feelings of repulsion towards the sculpture and her difficulty in associating with it, she still felt "good" when looking at it and very "satisfied" by it. The facilitator asked her where in her body she felt the good feeling, and she replied that it was in her heart. He then suggested that part of her loves Fat Julia, which is why it felt good. He also said that it appeared that her mind and feelings were in conflict over the sculpture, as it seemed as if her mind told her that she hated Fat Julia while she had some positive feelings about it. Julia

commented on this four months after making the sculpture and said that she did not think it was “exactly love yet” at that stage, but that she was ready to “start loving that part of herself”.

#### **4.4.4 The faceless mother**

Julia said that in discussing the sculpture with the facilitator it was agreed in the group that Piece C represented an “archetypal kind of... maternal type of figure”. When she was asked why the figure has no face Julia replied that it is because she “has no power”. At a later stage she said having no face was also related to a “mute protest”, a “silent scream” and “having no voice with which to scream”.

The facilitator asked Julia if she experienced a lack of power, upon which Julia replied that she did have a sense of power at that stage, but that she did not always have this perception. She then told the group about the loss of her foster daughter a couple of years ago, and how that had made her feel powerless as she “didn’t know what to do” about it. Julia also said that she did not have power as a child, upon which the facilitator pointed out that the figure (Piece C) was that of a woman, not a child. Julia’s reply to that was “ja, I guess”.

Julia told the researcher that at that point during the discussion with the facilitator, the thought - “but I’ve killed that part of myself”- came to mind. She did not know where the idea came from, but after a while felt that it might have been related to the abortion she had had the previous year. She told the researcher that after her foster daughter was taken away from her, she might have felt that she wanted to “kill off” the maternal part of her because it was too painful, which may have influenced her to have an abortion after falling pregnant years later.

#### **4.4.5 “Fat woman screaming”**

After Julia stuck the hole in Fat Julia’s face to create a mouth, another possible title for the figure, “Fat woman screaming”, came to mind. Initially she was thinking of giving Piece A a “big, wide mouth” as if it “needs to be fed”. However, after a while she felt that the mouth was “not open to be fed, but to scream”. When the facilitator asked Julia why Piece A was screaming and what it wanted, she replied that it was screaming to be heard, but that she did not know what she was saying. She later said that she thinks that she (Julia) doesn’t “really want to hear”.

#### 4.4.6 Connecting with the pain

Julia also said that it felt as if the two figures were about “pain”. The day after the discussion with the facilitator she told the researcher that she realised then what the function of Fat Julia had been: She sobbed when saying “I think I have given her all the pain, and that is why she is so fat. When bad stuff happens I think I just give it all to her. And I don’t... because I need to cope you know...And I can’t bear it, so I’ve given it all to her”. The researcher reflected that it was easier if Fat Julia carried the pain and was felt to be separate from Julia. Julia agreed to this and said that she thinks that her binge eating and smoking had been a way to “shut her (Fat Julia) up”. She also said that her eating and smoking felt like a “substitute”. This led to the following exploration:

- Julia: it has been calling for attention for a long time and I’ve been ignoring it for a long time, but occasionally I’ll feed it instead.
- Researcher: It’s opening its mouth right now. It’s opening its mouth to say something?
- Julia: Ja, like a dummy for a baby. I don’t know...(pause)
- Researcher: When you made it and you realised that she’s screaming, what did you imagine it sounded like?
- Julia: Like very loud, very angry, very hurt, like pain.
- Researcher: Like crying, shouting?
- Julia: Shouting loudly.
- Researcher: Shouting, screaming, with a crying feel to it?
- Julia: Like a wounded animal. I mean, I’ve done that a couple of times. Funny enough, just before I cut myself, I scream like that...

Julia explained that she used to drive somewhere in her car, the doors locked, screaming and screaming and screaming. That expression of rage had never helped her, however, and usually made her feel worse. After she screamed she would feel “empty and awful and sick and ashamed... and stupid”. She said “I want to hurt myself and I want to slap myself back... to reality or to... myself”. She explained that those were the same kind of feelings she had towards the sculpture.

After saying this Julia told the researcher that she felt very “sad and sorry” for herself, almost as if she needed to say to herself: “Oh jeez Julia, you don’t need to hate yourself that much, you’re not that bad a person.” Saying this made Julia laugh, but it soon changed to crying.

#### **4.4.7. Ambivalent process**

Julia expressed a wish to give more expression to and attain “closure” on the things Fat Julia represented. At the same time she was scared that exploring it might lead to a “recreation” of the pain. She said that she would like to “put things behind her”, and didn’t want to “relive” it. She didn’t see the point of “pulling things out” just to look at them again, without moving on.

Julia said that she has a goal of becoming “whole”, the “best person” she could be and that it was very important for her to “integrate these different parts” of herself. However, this process felt like a “journey through her own psyche” past many “monsters”. She then said that she thinks that in a way she is already “listening” to Fat Julia. She said: “You know, as we go along in this therapy process I keep wanting to hang back, but no... I actually, another part of me is eager to bring it out... I was so eager to put that clay together, you have no idea. Like part of me really wants to hear, to listen, but I’m not quite sure how... if she is the holder of my pain, how to best listen to her.”

#### **4.4.8 The girl that was left behind**

Two weeks after making her sculpture Julia told the researcher that she had started to feel very differently about Fat Julia. She said that ever since the discussion of the sculpture she had been thinking about the facilitator’s suggestion that she may have had some “positive feelings” for Fat Julia. She felt that maybe she had been “hiding” these feelings from herself and that her “negativity” towards Fat Julia was a “defense” and a way of “not accepting this aspect”. She said that she felt more able to accept that Fat Julia is part of her, “ugly or not ugly”. She tearfully said that she came to realise that Fat Julia was the “girl that [she] left behind” when changing her name at the age of twelve. When thinking about Fat Julia like that she did not see a “huge fat woman” any longer, but a “little girl that does not understand what is happening, and is trying to deal with life the best she can.”

Julia said that when she was twelve years old, she looked in the mirror all the time and saw herself as “utterly repulsive, fat and lazy”. She realises now that her “perceptions were distorted”, and that she did not see herself as she “really was” when she was twelve. She also realises now that when she was twelve she did not have the “emotional maturity to distance” herself from what was happening to her family. Because of her family background she thought, “I had some kind of stink, something that other people didn’t have, something that said ‘unwanted’”. She said

that she “did not have the vocabulary” at that stage, but somehow knew that going to high school was another chance for her. She could start high school as a girl different to the girl that everybody knew in primary school as the “outcast”. She therefore changed her name, asking people to call her Julia instead of Julie as she had been called up to then.

Julia said that all these years she had been trying to “leave the twelve-year old girl behind”, but “had never been able to do so”. She said: “I’m like split... I left Fat Julia to have all of that side of myself and all those memories and that persona of being unwanted and unloved”. Realising that Fat Julia was the twelve-year old girl made her understand why this aspect of her personality seemed immature, reacted “all on emotions” and did not “respond to reason”. She said that she thought Fat Julia tried to deal with bad experiences by “becoming depressed, by eating” and “reverting back” to a twelve year old’s way of being. She said these were things her “adult side” could not “reason out.”

Julia commented on the effect of the abortion on the apparent division between her rational side and Fat Julia. Referring to her rational side, she said: “I worked very hard at creating this person”. When she decided to have the abortion this decision appeared to “attack” the rational side, the person who she “thought she was” and “challenged her identity too much”. She also remarked that the abortion seemed to “rip away the division” between her and Fat Julia. She explained that it didn’t help to “compartmentalise” aspects of herself any longer, because neither “rational” Julia nor Fat Julia could deal with the abortion. “Both gave up” and neither of them could cope.

Julia also realised that the sense of satisfaction she felt after making the sculpture, had something to do with making “concrete” what was “completely incomprehensible” to her a couple of months ago. A couple of months ago she had “felt torn” by feelings and images. She did not understand why she felt so “terrible” and why she was so “unhappy”. This made her feel that she had no control over her emotions and behaviour and made her afraid that she would commit suicide in a “trance state” when Fat Julia “takes over”, and just “watch herself doing it” without being able to do anything about it. Now she felt a lot more “relaxed” and instead of “fighting” what she feels, she is just “letting it happen”. She added that she feels much more “real” and more in touch with her feelings.

Despite her improved understanding Julia said that she still had “many different feelings” towards Fat Julia, and that it was difficult to organise these. Some parts of her would like Fat Julia to “go away”, other parts feel “sorry for her pain” and another part says “it’s okay, I can start

listening now". Julia said that she felt as if the "wall" around Fat Julia "was down", but that she was not "ready to embrace it yet". She said: "The lines of communication are open. It's happening, but not too fast. I need time."

#### **4.4.9 Growing a new "skin"**

Two weeks after making the sculpture, after telling the researcher about the above insights, Julia also said that it felt as if she was "growing a new skin". She reported that her skin felt "fragile". She explained this as an "emotional" as well as "bodily" experience. Her body felt "like a peach, a very ripe peach almost at the point of going rotten, but still nice to eat". At night she would lie in bed touching herself, especially her thighs, and feel that her body is "soft", with "a hint of decay". She reported that the way her body felt and the emotional fragility was new to her and while she was not comfortable with it, she said she was "not too upset" about it. She tried to "just watch" what was happening and was not fighting it. She explained that she thinks she is in a process of "embracing it", but doesn't "like to think about it."

Julia described this as a progression in the image of Fat Julia: "Previously Fat Julia looked like the sculpture, then it was growing on me like a wart, and now it feels like she is in me". She said it felt "more integrated", but that her skin felt "funny". It also felt as if she was learning to know herself in a new way.

#### **4.4.10 Accepting and forgiving**

Six months later, Julia referred back to the clay sculpture experience and said that by making the sculpture she came to realisations that she would not have come to without the clay sculpture experience. She stated it as follows: "What I saw was that it was a message from my unconscious telling me that I was ready to accept and forgive that part of myself...". She said that this realisation "came out of the sculpture", and that she was not consciously aware of it before making the sculpture. She clarified the concepts of accepting and forgiving as follows:

##### **Accepting**

When Julia made the sculpture she thought that she hated Fat Julia and that she had made it from the perspective that it was a part of herself that she wanted to "kill, cut off, deny and take

away". She said that she entertained the idea that she would like to "keep the good part" and somehow get rid of all these things that she was "putting onto Fat Julia". She came to realise that if she could cut these parts out of herself she would "stop existing" because these parts "were her". Julia again thought back to the facilitator's suggestion that part of her "loved" Fat Julia. She tearfully stated that it felt more and more true, and that she was beginning to "love that whole part of herself, the twelve year old who wanted to change who she was".

### **Forgiving**

When talking about forgiveness Julia said "there was a lot" that she needed to forgive herself for, but that she did not know what it was all about. She said that part of it had to do with the abortion, and was related to section C of the sculpture. She said that although she did not consciously feel guilt or felt that she did the "wrong thing" by having the abortion, it was "emotionally wrong" and "felt wrong". She said that she had to forgive herself for making that decision, no matter how many rational explanations she gave herself.

Julia described the forgiveness as a "nice" feeling and said that it was associated to being "kinder" and more "maternal" towards herself. She said that she also felt more kindly towards "Fat Julia" as well as towards the "child part" of her, "the child in her that has always been crying for attention and which she "used to ignore".

Six months after making the sculpture, Julia also told the researcher that the process of making the sculpture and talking about it was "incredibly therapeutic", "special" and "powerful" for her. She said that she believed that if it were not for the clay sculpture experience she would probably have spent the rest of the year in therapy talking about difficulties related to Fat Julia. She remarked that she stopped talking about Fat Julia, as she did not see her as something "separate", "different" or "outside" of herself any longer. Associated to this, it felt as if the division between her mind and body was less prominent. She said that she was more able to live in "both her head and her body", which made her feel more "complete" and "whole". She again stated that the unconscious process of making the sculpture initiated these changes, and that she did not think that she would have come to those realisations "consciously".

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter involves a discussion of the following eleven themes outlined in Chapter Four:

- 1) Fear of self-destructive tendencies
- 2) Separation between body and mind
- 3) Julia's experience of making and discussing the sculpture
- 4) Immediate feelings about the sculpture
- 5) The faceless mother
- 6) Fat woman screaming
- 7) Connecting with the pain
- 8) Ambivalent process
- 9) The girl that was left behind
- 10) Growing a new skin
- 11) Accepting and forgiving

In this chapter the above themes are explicated by employing the literature presented in Chapter One and Two as hermeneutic lenses. The reader is reminded that the first two themes developed during Julia's therapy process with the researcher prior to the clay sculpture experience. Discussions of these two themes are included as they provide a context and background to the claywork experience. The remainder of the themes developed in reaction to the clay sculpture experience itself.

### **5.2 FEAR OF SELF-DESTRUCTIVE TENDENCIES**

Julia started engaging in self-destructive behaviour at the approximate age of eleven, round about the same time she discovered that her father had been sexually abusing her sister. This behaviour included hitting her head against a wall, binge-purge behaviour, engaging in unwanted sexual behaviour as well as cutting herself. Although the cutting behaviour subsided in her mid-twenties (at the approximate time of her father's death), self-destructive tendencies continued up to the time of the research, mostly in the form of binge-purge behaviour.

Julia associated these self-destructive tendencies with a loss of control. The experience of loss of control was of such a nature that it felt as if she was “taken over” by another person. During such experiences she specifically felt as if her ability to behave rationally was intercepted, and that she was momentarily delivered to the irrational and self-damaging mind of another personality within herself.

It appears that in reaction to these experiences, Julia started to fear any form of loss of control, and therefore invested in building up an ego identity characterised by control, efficiency, goal-directedness and confidence. Furthermore, aspects of herself that were associated with a loss of control were hard to accept as part of her identity and were therefore repressed. Being repressed, they became alienated and split-off from the rest of her personality and therefore resembled what Jung calls a “splinter psyche” (Jung, 1954, p. 174). In Jungian terms this can also be seen as an example of a dissociative experience, as aspects of the self that the ego finds difficult to associate with have become separated (Jung 1954).

Julia’s hatred for ‘out of control’ feelings seems to be rooted in traumatic childhood experiences. The “chaos” of her family life, including her father’s uncontrolled drinking and unreliability as breadwinner, as well as Julia’s perception of her mother’s lack of “power”, probably left Julia feeling largely out of control as a child. Her father’s abusiveness, including emotional abuse of his family and sexual abuse of Julia’s sister, accentuated her lack of control. This may be seen as adding a sense of being ‘disarmed’ in the face of the pain as a result of destructive, abusive behaviour. One way of interpreting her self-destructive behaviour may be to see it as a way to give expression to the pain. Also, by becoming self-abusive, she gained control of pain inflicted, and by associating with her father as abuser in a sense gained control of him as prime abuser. At the same time, however, she feared and hated this self-destructive aspect of herself, in the same way that she probably feared and hated her father for his abusiveness, whether she acknowledged it or not. Therefore, although the self-destructive behaviour may have been a means towards instances of a rudimentary sense of relief and control, it was an aspect of herself that she could not accept as part of her personality. She therefore needed to dissociate from this aspect as much as possible.

Julia’s fear of self-destructive tendencies can further be explained according to the Jungian notion of complexes as described in the literature (Jung, 1948, 1954; Meier, 1984). Complexes are groups of contents of the psyche that form a relatively self-contained whole that are incompatible with the habitual mode of consciousness (Meier, 1984). For Julia, aspects of herself that were associated with self-destruction and a feeling of loss of control formed such a

self-contained whole, which was incompatible with her controlled, rational ego identity. Therefore, this group of aspects may be called a 'self-destructive complex'.

When Julia started speaking of these aspects of herself, she saw them as something that she had to fight against, and which, almost like a tumor, she needed to "cut out" of her personality. Julia's fear, hatred and disgust for these aspects of herself, is typical of the strong emotional reactions that individuals have towards their complexes (Jung, 1954). According to Jung (1948), these negative feelings towards complexes evolve in reaction to complexes being perceived as threatening the stability of the existing ego identity. It is feared that if complexes are acknowledged as part of the personality, they might 'overthrow' the ego and the existing sense of self may be lost. In Julia's case, she feared aspects of herself related to self-destruction and loss of control, as they posed a threat to the survival of the rational, goal-directed ego identity on which she has been depending for a sense of security.

Despite Julia's battle to get rid of these feared and hated aspects of herself, they constantly reappeared as a theme in her life, typical of the persistence of complexes. Jung (1948) writes that although complexes may be suppressed, they can never be argued out of existence and will continue to reappear in different shapes and forms. When Julia started therapy with the researcher, her self-destructive complex manifested in the form of distressing nightmares and binge-purge behaviour. These symptoms led to a feeling of disintegration and instability.

In therapy with the researcher Julia imagined what her so-called self-destructive complex looked like. This process resembled the method of active imagination developed by Jung (Wallace, 1987). According to Wallace active imagination is a method of introspection which involves letting images enter one's mind, while trying not to control them consciously. Jung considered images arising through this process as manifestations of the unconscious. When they are attended to, these images have the potential to guide towards the recovery of hidden potential and facilitate a dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of self.

When Julia was asked to 'actively imagine' what her self-destructive complex looks like, the image that came to mind was that of a fat, ugly, dirty and lazy woman, passively sitting on a chair, smoking and drinking uncontrollably, not unlike her father. She named the image "Fat Julia". By describing its imagined visual appearance and naming it, the self-destructive complex became personified (Hillman, 1977). According to Hillman the personification of complexes allows the ego to enter into a relationship with it and learn to know it. In this way a dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of self may start to develop. In Julia's case the

personification of Fat Julia became something that she could engage with on an imaginal level. Rather than dwelling on and becoming sucked in by indiscriminate and overwhelming negative feelings towards herself, the personification of these feelings into a visual image of Fat Julia gave momentum to the therapy process. While Julia had previously tried her utmost best to dissociate from self-destructive and out-of-control feelings, the personification of these feelings in the image of Fat Julia allowed her to start facing it and working with it.

### **5.3 SEPARATION BETWEEN BODY AND MIND**

In therapy with the researcher, Julia discussed a feeling of her head and body being separated. She explained that she “lives in her head” and was therefore very comfortable with a ‘thinking mode’ of being, while being uncomfortable with bodily felt experiences. She reported feeling as if she does not own her body and that she was used to seeing her body as something that needs to be punished. As mentioned in section 4.3, Julia’s sense of disconnection from her body appeared to be synergistically illustrated by the tendency of the head of Piece A to roll off, separating Fat Julia’s head and body.

Literature shows that it is not uncommon for adult survivors of childhood trauma to feel disconnected from their bodies (Simonds, 1994). In such cases, childhood trauma may have become associated with bodily felt experiences. In Julia’s case there may have been several reasons for this, one being that her suspicion that she was sexually abused is correct. In such a case, her childhood body was literally a site of abuse, which she needed to distance herself from. ‘Staying in her head’, or intellectualising, and dissociating from bodily-felt experiences probably helped to create this distance. If she was indeed sexually abused, what happened to her body was incompatible with, and posed a threat to her sense of self, and therefore needed to be dissociated from.

However, it is also possible that Julia came to associate her body with childhood trauma for other reasons than the possibility of being sexually abused. One such reason may be that as she was a sickly child, she came to associate her malfunctioning body with the “chaos” in the family. Another reason may be related to her experience of herself as “fat” as a child. She reported that as a child she was teased about being fat as well as coming from a poor family. In therapy with the researcher Julia described a memory of standing behind a fence as a child, watching other children play and feeling “singled out”, “isolated” and “branded”. It is as if in this image feeling “fat” and feeling “different” because of her family background fused into one

painful experience of being distanced and ostracised. Dissociating from bodily felt experiences may then be seen as a way of lessening the pain of feeling “branded” and “different”, not only because of her perceived body image, but also because of her family background.

Whatever the reason for Julia’s apparent connection between bodily-felt experiences and childhood trauma, it appears that the dissociation from bodily-felt experiences became generalised in her adult life, leading to an enduring feeling of discomfort with, and even hatred for her body. This was expressed by hurting and punishing her body by means of cutting, binge-purge behaviour and engaging in unwanted sexual interactions.

From a Jungian perspective, Julia’s fear and hatred for bodily-felt aspects of herself can again be explained according to the notion of complexes (Jung, 1948, 1954; Meier, 1984). As with her fear and hatred for aspects of herself associated with self-destruction and loss of control, her dissociation from bodily-felt aspects has become a recurring theme in her life. In this context it may be called a ‘bodily-felt complex’. Although one may treat the bodily-felt complex as a theme on its own, it appears to be interrelated with the self-destructive complex as described in the previous section. This is evident in her body being both the agent and recipient of self-destructive behaviour. This notion is further supported by Julia’s description of the self-destructive complex. By describing it as a “fat”, “ugly” woman, Julia gave expression to unbearable bodily-felt aspects of the self-destructive complex. Due to this apparent interrelation between the feared and hated bodily-felt and self-destructive aspects, the use of the term ‘self-destructive complex’ in the remainder of this thesis will refer to a combination of these themes.

To conclude the discussion of the first two themes, it appears that Julia’s fear and hatred for aspects of herself, whether in the form of aspects associated to losing control or bodily felt aspects, suggests a difficulty to hold opposites in herself together. In other words, one may interpret that at this stage of her self-development she had not been able to form symbols that could adequately contain disparate aspects of herself, and therefore contribute to an integrated sense of self (Redfearn, 1985). As discussed in Chapter One, this difficulty with symbol formation appears to be common among adult survivors of childhood trauma (cf. section 1.7). It appears that the extent of the trauma experienced by Julia and the disorganised feelings associated with it, as well as apparent inadequate parental modeling of the containing function, made it difficult for her to develop internal symbols capable of containing conflicting aspects of herself.

A discussion of the nine themes related to Julia’s claywork experience follows.

#### 5.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF MAKING AND DISCUSSING THE SCULPTURE

Julia approached the task of making and discussing her clay sculpture with eagerness. She was “burning” to give shape to Fat Julia and felt an intense sense of satisfaction after she did that. This corresponds with the findings of writers such as Burt (1999), Gerity (1997), Kotonias-Payne (1996) and Lawry (1997), that adult survivors of childhood trauma are often keen to work in art therapy media such as clay. Julia described the experience of making and discussing the sculpture as intensely emotional and “cathartic”, almost as if “something very deep” was allowed expression.

As discussed above, visualising in therapy what Fat Julia looked like helped Julia to start facing feared and hated aspects of herself. However, it appears that the actual making of a concrete image of Fat Julia, took it a few steps further. This appears to relate to Jung’s notion (in Edwards, 1987) that by making artistic images patients start to play an active role in their healing processes. Giving expression to the self-destructive complex in clay, enabled Julia to *do* something about these aspects of herself, and led to a sense of control over them (Edwards, 1987).

The sense of control is evident in the way that Julia manipulated the clay to give shape to Fat Julia in Piece A (see page 42). She spent a lot of time making Fat Julia look “fat”, “ugly” and “jagged”. She rolled long pieces of clay and “pasted” it onto Fat Julia’s body almost like fat rolls. She deliberately “pinched” Fat Julia’s breasts to make them “skew and hanging”. When the head did not look right, she “stuck” her finger in the mouth position to make it feel right. Julia’s description of how she manipulated the clay almost gives a sense of abusiveness. In making the clay image of Fat Julia, it appears that Julia could give vent to, and at the same time feel in control of interrelated aspects of fat, ugliness and a sense of abuse. These were aspects that she had no control over as a child and which continued to haunt her into adulthood. The distinct feeling of “satisfaction” after making the sculpture seems to be related to this newly found sense of control.

It appears that the making of the sculpture of Fat Julia facilitated the ‘unearthing’ of unconscious traumatic material. According to Meekums (1999), unearthing involves the retrieval of unconscious material from ‘within’. Julia’s sense of the sculpture allowing “something very deep” to gain expression appears to relate to this concept. It appears that Julia had some overwhelming and undesirable experiences as a child, which were difficult to communicate verbally and subsequently became deeply buried. As discussed in the literature review, such

buried and 'wordless' experiences typically manifest in behavioural re-enactments, nightmares and somatic sensations (Cohen, 1996; Simonds, 1994). In Julia's case this was evident in self-destructive behaviour and haunting nightmares about her father. The claywork experience appeared to give her an opportunity to retrieve material that had been repressed for a long time and give expression to it in a non-verbal way. Apart from the sense of control achieved while making the sculpture as discussed above, it appears that this opportunity to express and externalise what had for long been inexpressible, also contributed to the distinct feeling of "satisfaction" Julia experienced after completing the sculpture.

In Jungian terms the unearthing of unconscious material signals the beginning of a recovery of hidden aspects of the self (Jung, 1954). This may potentially lead to increased self-awareness, as well as integration of feared and hated aspects into the conscious ego personality (Samuels, 1985).

Apart from giving shape to the premeditated mental image of Fat Julia in Piece A, Julia's clay sculpture experience also involved the making of two pieces, Pieces B and C (see page 42), which seemed to evolve spontaneously. After making Fat Julia (Piece A), Julia made a wall around it (Piece B). Julia said that this piece was inspired by the image of herself behind a fence as a child (cf. sections 4.2 and 5.3). By building a wall around Fat Julia, she gave expression to feelings of "isolation" and "being branded", which she experienced as a child. Julia's reaction to these painful childhood experiences was to turn her back on it and try to dissociate from it by changing her name at the age of twelve. Therefore, on another level, Piece B also seems to illustrate Julia's reaction to painful experiences, namely her tendency to 'wall off' feared and hated aspects of herself. In other words, the wall may be seen as symbol of her tendency to dissociate from everything that reminds her of her traumatic past and make her dislike herself.

When she made the sculpture, Julia decided to leave part of the wall around Fat Julia open, as she felt that she had already "accessed" Fat Julia a bit in some ways. In other words, by exploring the image of Fat Julia, she had started to engage in a process of communicating with, and getting to know, feared and hated aspects of herself (Hillman, 1977; Watkins, 1986). This suggests that Julia had started to pay attention to her complexes, and was getting prepared to listen to their messages. This includes the possibility of opening up towards, and starting a process of engaging with the child aspects of herself, which she had been distancing herself from since changing her name.

After making Pieces A and B, Julia played with the left-over piece of clay and found that it “came into the shape” of Piece C. Julia recognised Piece C as “another fat woman”, whom she felt was also Fat Julia, but a different expression of her. This piece developed without a head or face. As her facelessness makes her less recognisable, one may interpret that this figure points to ‘lesser known’ aspects of Fat Julia.

Julia described feeling very emotional during and after discussing the sculpture with the facilitator of the workshop. She described her state of mind after the workshop as “not really thinking, just tears”. She also explained that she experienced a variety of physical sensations after the discussion. Her jaw and head were aching and she had various tics in her body. It appears that Julia experienced the making and discussion of the clay sculpture on feeling and physically sensational levels, rather than intellectually. In this way, the restrictions of a purely rational ‘thinking’ way of being were circumvented, enabling the expression of pre-verbal contents that are difficult to express in normal language (Meekums, 1999). Also, it appears that the physical nature of making an image forced Julia’s body to be present in the process (Simonds, 1994). By introducing physically sensational ways of experiencing, the sculpture appeared to provide an opportunity for Julia to connect with bodily-felt aspects of herself.

In summary, the experience of making and discussing the sculpture led to a distinct feeling of satisfaction that seems to be related to Julia actively *doing* something about her complexes, and thereby gaining a sense of control of feared and hated aspects of herself. Furthermore, the feeling of satisfaction also appears to be related to the unearthing and expression of repressed unconscious material. In this way Julia started to embark in a process of uncovering and getting to know hidden aspects of herself. This process was not primarily experienced on a logical, rational level, but rather felt emotionally and physically.

## **5.5 IMMEDIATE FEELINGS ABOUT THE SCULPTURE**

Julia’s immediate feelings associated with the sculpture included a combination of fear, “repulsion”, “shock”, “satisfaction” and surprise. It appears that the plasticity of the clay medium stimulated the expression and experience of a wide range of feelings (Wadeson, 1987). This supports the finding of Nez (1991) that the act of forming clay may put one in touch with primitive and intimate sensations and emotions.

Julia's feeling of fear was related to finding the sculpture, especially Piece A, "scary", "evil", and fierce. This may be understood in the context of Piece A being a representation of Julia's self-destructive complex. This piece seems to express the fear and terror Julia experienced when feeling that Fat Julia had "taken over" and she was left with no sense of control. At times this fear appeared to be of the extent of fearing for her life, for Julia mentioned that she was afraid that one day she might commit suicide when "taken over" by Fat Julia. Fat Julia's empty eye sockets and skull-like face as seen in Piece A, seem to portray this deadly fear.

On another level, Julia's feeling of fear in relation to the clay image of Fat Julia may be related to an unearthing of repressed childhood fears. Specifically, it may be related to fears associated to feeling out of control, whether in reaction to abuse or to other experiences of trauma. It is possible that in her childhood mind, feeling out of control may have felt like dying. It seems that Julia tried to escape these childhood fears by dissociating from it, but was not completely successful in that it kept haunting her in the form of the self-destructive Fat Julia complex. Now this fear was made explicit in the haunting image of Piece A.

Julia's feeling of repulsion was related to seeing all the fat on Fat Julia's (Piece A's) body. The extent of the feeling of repulsion illustrates Julia's absolute hatred for "fat". The repulsion may be seen as rooted in childhood experiences of being teased about being fat. Also, as discussed in section 5.3, feeling fat as a child appeared to be related to painful feelings of being "different" and "branded", not only because of her bodily appearance, but also because of her family background. However, apart from referring to possible meanings of 'fat' that are rooted in Julia's personal history, her repulsion may also be seen as a reflection of cultural ideas about fat. In western culture body fat is usually regarded as unwanted, socially unacceptable and something to fight against. In this way Julia's hatred for fat may be seen as a personal expression of collective notions about fat.

Julia was also repulsed by Fat Julia's breasts, which she deliberately manipulated to be "skew", "hanging" and distorted. When she made the clay breasts, Julia felt that they expressed how she felt about her own breasts. They therefore appear to express a sense of being in a discordant relationship with feminine and sensual aspects of herself. This feeling may be related to feeling a lack of control over her body during numerous experiences of being forced to engage in unwanted sexual behaviour. Therefore, the repulsion she felt towards the feminine parts of Fat Julia's body, may be seen as related to feeling betrayed by her own sensuality.

As described in the previous section, Julia's feeling of satisfaction after completing her clay sculpture may be linked to the relief of long repressed unconscious material being unearthed and externalised, as well as the clay sculpture experience providing her with a sense of control. However, when discussing the sculpture with the facilitator of the workshop, the feeling of satisfaction was also linked to the possibility of Julia "loving" aspects of herself expressed in her sculpture. Although Julia could not yet relate to a feeling of love at the stage of discussing her sculpture with the facilitator, four months later she looked back and recognised that the feeling may have been in a phase of development.

During the discussion of the sculpture with the researcher it became apparent that Julia was surprised by what she had made. Firstly, she appeared surprised by the feeling of fear evoked by the sculpture, and said that she could not believe that she was capable of making such "scary" figures and did not know "where they came from". Also, although she planned to make Fat Julia fat and ugly, she was "shocked" and "repulsed" by how fat and ugly the end result was. One may interpret that Julia's sense of surprise and shock was related to the 'unearthing' of unconscious material as described above. Before making the sculpture, Julia was unaware of the extent of the feelings associated with aspects of herself related to Fat Julia. Making the sculpture unearthed, or in other words brought her in touch with these feelings, but not without a sense of surprise that they actually belonged to herself.

Also, although Julia rationally knew that the clay figures were "her", she initially felt that they were "not her". It appears that she was not in the position to immediately accept her creations as expressions of aspects of herself. This, together with her sense of surprise at what came out may be related to the quality of "otherness" often associated with one's creations (Edwards, 1987, p. 101). As discussed in the literature review, when an image is made, the creator sometimes realises that although the image belongs to him or herself and is a personification of inner feelings, it also appears to have a personality of its own. According to Edwards (1987) this quality of otherness has the function to help the creator to become separated from his or her personified inner experiences and view them from a distance. In Julia's case, previously unacknowledged aspects of herself seemed to be contained by the clay image of Fat Julia. The clay sculpture distanced and became a screen through which to view difficult and unfamiliar emotions associated with feared and hated aspects of self, ensuring that unearthing happened in a safe way (Kotonias-Payne, 1996). The distancing function of the sculpture therefore gave Julia time to gradually access repressed experiences.

To conclude this section, it appears that the claywork experience facilitated the safe expression of a wide range of feelings embedded in Julia's traumatic personal history. The clay sculpture also seemed to mediate the containment of these feelings. This containing aspect of the sculpture appears to be related to it being a metaphoric expression of Julia's experiences. According to Meekums (1999), by expressing feelings in the metaphoric language of art making, the metaphor, rather than the maker, becomes the carrier of the feelings. In Julia's case, the metaphor of Fat Julia appeared to distance her from the emotional content, allowing her to acknowledge and face long repressed feelings.

Furthermore, in linking to known as well as unknown aspects of herself, the clay sculpture appeared to mediate the development of the Jungian notion of symbolic functioning (Jung, 1958). As described in the literature review, symbols are not bound to logic, and may simultaneously link to inner and outer realities, personal and impersonal aspects as well as the known and the unknown (Samuels, 1985). In Julia's case, feelings and aspects brought forth by the sculpture were both familiar and unfamiliar, part of herself and not part of herself. They seemed to exist in a kind of intermediate space, between the known and the unknown. It appears that the clay sculpture represented a middle position between these different sets of opposites, which allowed it to be momentarily held together and potentially be integrated. In this way, it seems that the clay sculpture functioned as a temporary container for disparate aspects of herself. This has the potential to mediate the development of integrative symbols of self that seems to have been inadequately formed in the past.

## **5.6 THE FACELESS MOTHER**

This theme relates to Piece C of Julia's sculpture. Julia described that this piece appears to represent an "archetypal kind of... maternal type of figure". A striking feature of this figure is that it does not have a face or head and that what appears to be arms seem to be in a surrender-like position above the space where the head is expected to be. When she was asked in the group discussion with the facilitator of the workshop why the figure has no face, Julia replied that she has "no power". She later related this sense of powerlessness with a "mute protest", a "silent scream" and "having no voice with which to scream".

The powerlessness and silence of what appears to be a maternal figure can be interpreted on two different levels. Firstly, it can be interpreted on the level of Julia's personal history, and secondly, it may be discussed in the context of an archetypal or collective historical level.

On a personal level the powerlessness of Piece C may be connected with the lack of power Julia felt as a child in the face of abuse and trauma in her family, as well as the social ostracism she experienced. Metaphorically speaking, the fence that she remembered herself standing behind as a child and which was now transformed into a wall in the clay sculpture, not only isolated her, but also imprisoned her and therefore made her powerless. As a primary school child she felt that she was "unable to fight for herself" and "had no voice". The powerlessness seems to relate to Julia's feeling of having no control, specifically in relation to her father's abusive behaviour. Part of her voicelessness may have been related to the secrecy that was kept around her father's alcohol abuse and his sexual abuse of Julia's sister.

As an adult Julia felt "powerless" when her foster daughter was taken away from her, and she did not know what to do about it. Therefore, Julia experienced a great deal of powerlessness and sadness in the maternal role of foster-parenting. She told the researcher that the pain that she felt when having to let go of her foster daughter may unconsciously have motivated her to "kill off" the maternal part of herself. In other words, Julia came to associate maternal aspects of herself with pain and a lack of power, and therefore needed to dissociate from it. This appears to have become literalised in the abortion she had years later.

However, dissociation from maternal aspects also appears to be rooted in her childhood. Apart from literally 'cutting out' her unborn baby by means of the abortion, it also appears that Julia's changing of her name when she was twelve signifies that she tried to cut out child aspects of herself, associated with pain and a lack of power and control. It may therefore be said that maternal aspects of herself that she has been dissociated from not only relates to her being a mother to a child in the physical world, but also her ability to embrace and be a mother to needy child aspects of herself.

Julia described her mother as "weak" and said that she experienced her as having no "control" or "power to do anything on her own". Julia specifically felt that her mother's lack of doing or saying something about her sister's abuse and staying married to her father thereafter were signs of weakness. Therefore, Julia's own experience of being powerless in maternal and feminine roles, resonated with her experience of her mother's apparent lack of power. This introduces the archetypal level of interpreting the powerlessness and silence of the maternal as

represented by Piece C of Julia's sculpture. On this level the lack of power and muteness that both Julia and her mother had experienced, may be seen as embedded in collective experiences of powerlessness experienced by women through the ages. The oppression and abuse of the feminine and resulting feelings of powerlessness is an archetypal theme that reappears in many different forms throughout history. Julia's own experiences as a 'powerless mother', can therefore be seen as a personal manifestation of a universal theme. In this way, the complex of Fat Julia, which in the shape of Piece C appeared as a 'faceless mother', can be seen as an extension of a universal archetype, rather than merely an expression of Julia's individual psyche (Hillman, 1977). Therefore, the pain that Julia had experienced in regard to a lack of power, voicelessness and isolation, may be seen as rooted in collective experiences of the oppressed female.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the two clay figures (Pieces A and C), that have been discussed as different expressions of the self-destructive complex, appear to be opposites in temperament. In Piece A Fat Julia is represented as powerful and fierce. Piece C on the other hand, gives expression to a side of Fat Julia that is softer, more motherly, but powerless and unable to scream. The clay sculpture therefore seems to illustrate that complexes are multi-leveled and may present themselves in a variety of ways.

## **5.7 FAT WOMAN SCREAMING**

When Julia worked on the image of Fat Julia, she initially planned to give it a "big, wide mouth" as if it was a hungry baby that "needed to be fed". However, after she stuck a hole in Fat Julia's face to create a mouth, she realised that the mouth was not open to "be fed", but to "scream". An alternative title for Fat Julia, "Fat woman screaming" came to mind. In the discussion with the workshop facilitator Julia explained that the woman was screaming "to be heard".

Realising that Fat Julia's mouth was open to scream and not to be fed, appeared to introduce a progression in Julia's relationship with her self-destructive complex. Understanding that Fat Julia wanted to be heard suggests that Julia became acquainted with the idea of entering a dialogue with Fat Julia, rather than engaging with her on a pre-verbal level, signified by feeding. According to Watkins (1986), engaging in a dialogue with one's complexes is the beginning of the emergence of friendly relationships between aspects of the self, which signals a step towards healing and integration. Also, in the light of the faceless and voiceless qualities of Fat

Julia being related to a lack of power, the newly found ability of Fat Julia to scream seems to introduce a theme of empowerment.

However, Julia was not accustomed to having dialogue with Fat Julia, as she represented feared and hated aspects of herself. Therefore, her initial reactions in response to this idea included that she “does not know” what Fat Julia was saying and also “does not really want to hear”. Julia’s ambivalence about engaging in a dialogue with Fat Julia appeared to be twofold. On the one hand she was not used to listening to the voice of Fat Julia and therefore found it hard to understand, and on the other hand she appeared to be scared that she may hear something that she would not like to hear. One may therefore interpret that to engage in a healing dialogue with one’s complexes is a process that takes time and courage.

## **5.8 CONNECTING WITH THE PAIN**

The day after discussing the clay sculpture with the workshop facilitator, Julia tearfully told the researcher that she came to realise what the function of Fat Julia had been all these years. She stated that she had been “giving her [Fat Julia] all the pain, which explains why she is so fat”. Therefore, through engaging with the sculpture, Julia came to the conclusion that the “fat” that she had been fighting all these years, symbolises “pain” related to her traumatic past. As she could not deal with the pain on her own, she had “given” it all to Fat Julia. Therefore, in the process of dissociating from painful experiences and denying that aspects related to the pain were part of herself, the self-destructive complex as represented by Fat Julia became the carrier of it all. Paradoxically, one may conclude that the self-destructive complex ‘protected’ Julia in this regard. Now, by putting the fat into clay, it appears that the clay sculpture became the new holder of the pain, allowing Julia to unravel and access it bit by bit.

Julia’s description indicates an awareness of a needy quality of Fat Julia. However, she had always interpreted this neediness as ‘hungriness’ and therefore “fed” it by giving it food or cigarettes. Doing that made Julia hate the aspects of herself represented by Fat Julia even more. Julia realised that there may be another way of looking at her feeding and supply of cigarettes to Fat Julia. In addition to “feeding” her, it may also be seen as a way to “shut her [Fat Julia] up”. Therefore, the binge-eating and smoking are like babies’ “dummies”, or temporary pacifiers, which would always be “substitutes” for the real thing. In the light of Julia’s realisation that Fat Julia’s mouth was open to “scream” rather than to be “fed”, it may be interpreted that the real thing in this case would be to allow Fat Julia to speak and be listened to. In other words, it

means to acknowledge denied aspects of the self, paying attention to it and learning to live in a harmonious relationship with it (Hillman, 1977; Watkins, 1986).

After realising that Fat Julia's fat was related to "pain" and that the feeding of Fat Julia was a substitute for listening to her, Julia seemed able to come closer to getting a sense of what Fat Julia was trying to communicate. When imagining what Piece A may be screaming, she could not think of words, but described that it sounded "very loud, very angry, very hurt, like pain", almost like a "wounded animal". This description suggests that Julia was getting in touch with a level of experiencing that had been deeply buried and appears to be of a pre-verbal nature. Julia connected this type of screaming with her rage before she used to cut herself. In the past, unable to express her pain and rage in words, Julia, in the guise of Fat Julia, would cut herself to give expression to her woundedness. Now, imagining what the screaming of the clay image of Fat Julia sounded like, helped Julia to put this pain into words. Therefore, it appears that the medium of clay provided Julia with a language to give voice to hidden aspects of herself. This relates to Simonds' (1994, p. 1) suggestion that art therapy has the potential to serve as a "bridge between the unspoken and the spoken, the unknown and the known, between the unconscious and the conscious".

From a Jungian perspective giving voice to hidden aspects of the self suggests that Julia was starting to own feared and hated aspects of herself and therefore integrate them into her existing ego identity, instead of dissociating from them (Jung, 1954; Samuels, 1985).

## **5.9 AMBIVALENT PROCESS**

In discussing her sculpture with the researcher, Julia expressed a wish to explore the meaning of the sculpture as thoroughly as possible, but at the same time indicated that it was not an easy process and that she was scared of "reliving the pain". She explained that one "part" of her was eager to "bring out" whatever needs to be brought out, while another part kept "wanting to hang back". This relates to her ambivalence about engaging in a dialogue with Fat Julia, as discussed in section 5.6, and suggests an experience of inner conflict.

It may be interpreted that this conflict relates to the concept of the inner polarity of the self, as described by Jung (1961/95). Jung explained that the experience of internal opposites, as illustrated by Julia's conflicting feelings about the process of working with her clay sculpture, can be expected as part of the process of the development of the self (Clarke, 1992; Jung, 1954). In

fact, Jung (1961/95) suggests that this inner polarity or battle between opposites gives momentum to the psyche. Therefore, Julia's expression of conflicting feelings about the clay sculpture process suggests that she was involved in a process of finding a balance between opposites within herself. More specifically, Julia appeared to be trying to find a balance between opposites of self-protection and preservation, versus self-extension and -exploration. This seeking of an internal balance seems to illustrate the regulating function of the self (Samuels, 1985).

Also, from a different perspective, one may interpret that Julia's inner conflict represents a battle between adult and child aspects of herself. According to the literature (Davies and Frawley, 1999), such a battle is often experienced by adult survivors of childhood trauma. This battle typically results from a split between adult and child aspects, which originally formed to help the survivor function in the world.

In Julia's case one may say that wounded child aspects associated with abuse and pain became hidden and protected by adult aspects of herself, such as her rationality and efficiency. However, the child and adult aspects are in conflict as the child seeks to scream out its pain and rage, while the adult tries to move away from the pain and forget about it (Davies and Frawley, 1999). Therefore, part of Julia would like to scream her pain out in the manner Piece A suggests, while another part feels that it would be better to move on and ignore the pain. It appears that the clay sculpture experience put the adult in Julia before the challenge of listening to her inner child's pain. However, the adult is not sure if she will be able to deal with it. This seems to be illustrated in Julia's remark: "...part of me really wants to hear, to listen, but I'm not quite sure how... If she [Fat Julia] is the holder of pain, how to best listen to her".

## **5.10 THE GIRL THAT WAS LEFT BEHIND**

Two weeks after making the clay sculpture and discussing it for the first time, Julia continued to explore it with the researcher in therapy. One aspect of the claywork experience that remained with her was the facilitator of the workshop's suggestion that her eagerness and sense of satisfaction in relation to the sculpture may indicate that she had some "positive feelings" for Fat Julia. It appears that Julia got more in touch with these positive feelings as time passed since the initial discussion. She came to the understanding that in the process of "defending" herself against Fat Julia, she may have been "hiding" positive feelings from herself. Exploring the clay

image of Fat Julia, seems to have opened up these feelings. Julia suggested that this may pave the way towards “accepting” Fat Julia as part of herself.

It appears that Julia’s growing positive feeling towards Fat Julia was related to a changing perception of Fat Julia. She explained that she had started to see Fat Julia not only as a “huge fat woman”, but now realised that she was also the “girl that [she] left behind when changing her name at the age of twelve”. She said that Fat Julia was only a “little girl that does not understand what is happening, and is trying to deal with life the best she can”. This suggests that Julia’s recognition of the child aspects of Fat Julia enabled her to have empathy for this previously feared and hated aspect of herself. This also appeared to facilitate the process of bringing Julia closer to child aspects of herself. It appears that she could now empathise with her twelve-year old self, whereas at the time she saw herself as “utterly repulsive, fat and lazy”. This suggests that Julia was entering a new relationship with previously feared and hated aspects of herself. She now appeared able to understand, accept and embrace her inner child, whereas previously she tended to reject it.

As discussed in the literature review, the notion of making contact with the inner child, as appeared to occur at this stage of Julia’s clay sculpture experience, has specific meaning for the integration of the self. From a Jungian perspective the emergence of the inner child in art and imagery is often associated with rebirth and transformation in a poetic and metaphoric sense. It is also seen as a uniting symbol pointing towards the integration of conflicting aspects of self (Knight 1997). In this way, embracing her inner child signals the possibility of a new integration of various potentialities and the rebirth of the self.

Together with Julia’s growing empathy towards Fat Julia and child aspects of herself, she also developed more insight into the development and functioning of the Fat Julia complex, as well as her tendency to dissociate from certain aspects of herself. Julia started to realise that her negative feelings for herself at the age of twelve were rooted in traumatic experiences in her family. She explained that as a child she did not have the “emotional maturity to distance” herself from what was happening in her family, and therefore projected all the negative feelings onto herself. This resulted in perceiving herself as having some kind of “stink” that other people did not have, which made her feel “unwanted” and “unloved.” As this was an unbearable feeling to live with, Julia tried to turn her back on child aspects of herself by changing her name and adopting the persona of an ‘in control’, strong and efficient adult.

Julia mentioned that she had tried to “leave the twelve-year old girl behind”, but “has never been able to do so” all these years. Everything the twelve-year old girl stood for, continued to be lived out in the Fat Julia complex. She said: “I’m like split... I left Fat Julia to have all of that side of myself and all those memories and that persona of being unwanted and unloved”. It seems that this split created a great deal of inner tension that appeared to become unbearable when Julia discovered she was pregnant and had an abortion the year before the research. Julia explained that the abortion “ripped away” the division between her and Fat Julia and that she could not “compartmentalise” it any longer. It appears that her old way of coping with stress, trauma and pain by means of dissociation, was not working for her any longer. Finding herself at a loss of coping mechanisms, led to a sense of instability that prompted her to seek therapeutic help.

During this session with the researcher Julia also mentioned that she had realised that part of her sense of satisfaction after making the sculpture was related to making “concrete” what was “completely incomprehensible” to her a couple of months ago. This relates to Cohen (1996) and Meekums’ (1999) findings that the art image in therapy serves as something concrete that can be worked with and may lead to new insights. When Julia started therapy she felt out of control as she had little understanding of her emotional instability. Making Fat Julia concrete in clay, as well as the subsequent explorations of the image, helped her to understand her feelings and how they are related to the emergence of the self-destructive Fat Julia complex. This appears to have helped her to feel more in control and in touch with her feelings. Also, her changing feelings for Fat Julia and her gaining of understanding of how she had developed, appear to have enabled Julia to stop “fighting” with herself. This contributed to an increased sense of being more “real” and relaxed.

However, directly after talking about these positive changes in herself, Julia mentioned that she still had many different feelings towards Fat Julia which were not always easy to organise. Part of her would still like Fat Julia to “go away”, whereas other parts “feel sorry for her pain” and felt that she “can start listening” [to her]. Julia explained these contradictory feelings by saying that the wall around Fat Julia was down, but that she was not “ready to embrace it yet”. She said: “The lines of communication are open. It’s happening, but not too fast. I need time.”

Julia’s apparent ambivalence appears to illustrate the Jungian notion that the development of the self is not a straightforward, linear and orderly occurrence, but a dynamic, circular process (Clarke, 1992). This process appears to be characterised by a spiral-like movement. Although the overall tendency appears to be towards a unifying goal, it involves a continuous re-

emergence of disorganised states of being. Julia's ambivalence also suggests that it is a process that cannot be hurried, and that the self needs time to gather together its pieces.

### **5.11 GROWING A NEW SKIN**

Two weeks after making the sculpture Julia continued to describe her changing sense of self by using the metaphor of "growing a new skin". The idea of "growing a new skin" suggests a process of metamorphosis, or moving from one phase to another. In Julia's case it seems to signify growing towards a new relationship with herself, as if she was "learning to know herself in a new way". "Growing a new skin" also reminds of a birthing process, which in this context may suggest the birth of a new sense of self.

Julia described the metaphor of "growing a new skin" as a progression in her image of Fat Julia. "Previously Fat Julia looked like the sculpture, then it was growing on me like a wart, and now it feels like [Fat Julia] is in me". Therefore Julia's new sense of the Fat Julia complex involved the incorporation and integration thereof in her sense of self, rather than seeing it as something alien and malign that needed to be dissociated from.

Julia indicated that she experienced this metamorphosis in a bodily as well as emotional way. When she touched her body she got the sensation of her skin feeling like a "very ripe peach, almost at the point of going rotten, but still nice to eat". Her body felt "soft", with a "hint of decay". There is a sense that the old skin was not useful any longer, just as Julia's old way of relating to herself did not make sense any longer. One may interpret that Julia's exploration of the meaning of Fat Julia involved a gradual peeling away of the fat layers that was the old way of looking at herself. That left her in need of a "new skin", a new way of keeping herself together.

Julia's description suggests that getting rid of the old and used to the new is not a "comfortable" process. She described it as a "fragile" process. Although the old way of relating to herself was not working for her any longer, she was used to it and it gave a sense of security. Shedding the old skin left her in a vulnerable position. Still, she was not "too upset" about it and tried to "just watch" what was happening without "fighting" it. This suggests that Julia was now more able to just be with herself instead of trying to control who she was by rigidly "cutting" some aspects out and promoting others. She appeared more able to allow herself to develop and evolve naturally, trusting the transformation process even though she was not in control of it.

Julia's sense of transformation seems to relate to the concept of individuation (Jung 1954). Individuation is a process whereby one becomes aware of unconscious aspects of the personality, and integrate them with the conscious ego personality. This includes accepting aspects of oneself that may have been experienced as negative (Brooke, 1991; Samuels, 1985). In Julia's case, she gained a new perspective of aspects of herself related to self-destruction, as well as child aspects of herself. This new perspective enabled her to integrate these aspects into her personality. Instead of continuing to divide herself into unacceptable "Fat Julia" aspects and acceptable "real Julia" aspects, Julia now developed a new symbol for herself, the "growing of a new skin". This symbol seems to point to the incorporation of a wider range of self-aspects. "Growing a new skin" seems to be a symbol for the birth of a 'totality figure', which is able to hold together and embrace previously disparate aspects of self. This suggests a transformation of the ego, a broadening and deepening of her old sense of self, and a growing sense of undividedness (Clarke, 1992; Jung, 1954). In this way the clay sculpture experience seemed to facilitate the development of a more individuated self, a self that appears to be more flexible and able to tolerate ambiguity and conflict (Watkins, 1986).

## **5.12 ACCEPTING AND FORGIVING**

Four months after making the clay sculpture Julia reflected on the meaning of the experience. She told the researcher that making the sculpture helped her to come to realisations about herself that she would not have reached otherwise. She specifically mentioned that the clay sculpture seemed to bring a "message from [her] unconscious" telling her that she was "ready to accept and forgive that part of herself". In referring to "that part", Julia talked about the Fat Julia complex.

Julia explained that when she gave expression to Fat Julia in clay, she made it from the perspective of "hating" her and wanting to "kill", "cut off", "deny" and "take [her] away". At that time she felt that she would like to keep all the "good" parts of herself, and get rid of everything Fat Julia stood for. It appears that Julia initially hoped that giving expression to these aspects of herself would help her to get rid of it. However, as the process continued, she explored the "Fat Julia" aspects in more detail and thereby got to know and understand them better. This brought her to the realisation that if she got rid of those aspects she would lose part of herself and "stop existing". Even more, she now came to the realisation that she "loved that whole part" of herself, "the twelve-year old who wanted to change who she was".

Julia was now in a position of accepting and embracing these aspects of herself, instead of 'walling off' and 'aborting' them as she used to do with aspects of herself that she experienced as a threat. Realising that she needed those aspects to continue "existing", illustrates the necessity of the acknowledgement of complexes (Jung, 1948; Samuels, 1985). If complexes such as Fat Julia are repressed, personality development becomes impoverished. However, if they are attended to they have the potential to enrich the personality (Hillman, 1977).

In addition to helping her accept feared and hated aspects of herself, Julia also mentioned that the sculpture brought her a message that she was ready to "forgive" herself. She was not sure what she needed to forgive herself for, but thought that part of it may have to do with the abortion she had the year before the research. Although she did not feel that she did the "wrong thing" by having the abortion, she had a feeling that it was "emotionally wrong". It may be that Julia's feeling of having to forgive herself for the abortion is related to unrecognised feelings of guilt in relation to the actual abortion. However, one may speculate that her sense of needing to forgive herself may also refer to needing to forgive herself for "aborting" aspects of herself in the form of dissociating from it. It appears that she was starting to realise now that turning her back on aspects of herself also feels "emotionally wrong".

Julia described the sense of forgiveness as a "nice" feeling that was associated to being more "kindly" and more "maternal" towards herself. She indicated feeling more "kindly" towards Fat Julia as well the "child part" of herself, the "child in her that has always been crying for attention" and which she "used to ignore". In this way the faceless mother (as discussed in section 5.9) appears to have developed some recognisable features. In addition, Julia also appeared to be more kind to her own body, as the sense of division between her mind and body became less prominent.

Therefore, it appears that the clay sculpture experience facilitated an opening up to universal features of humanity such as archetypal maternal, child and sensual aspects. The experience brought Julia in touch with growing points or emerging parts of her personality as represented by the Fat Julia complex (Jung, 1948). In this sense Julia's self became more differentiated, enabling her to embrace a wider range of experiences. At the same time she also felt more "whole", as recognising more aspects of herself made her feel more complete as a person. This suggests that the clay sculpture experience facilitated a development towards a differentiating wholeness, involving the simultaneous expansion and integration of the self. This supports the notion that integration and differentiation are interrelated processes that cannot be conceived of separately (cf. Section 1.5). In Julia's case, as Samuels (1985) proposed, paying attention to her

multiplicity, led to an increased feeling of wholeness, and an ability to be in touch with herself despite a diversity of experiences.

Julia emphasised the unconscious nature of the process. She felt that the changes that happened within herself were unlikely to have occurred through a “conscious” process. Therefore, it appears that the non-verbal and open-ended nature of the clay sculpture experience allowed Julia to come in touch with deeply stored unconscious aspects of herself, which are difficult to reach through logical, rational and verbal processes alone.

### **5.13 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The discussion of the case material illustrates that by engaging in the clay sculpture experience Julia discovered a new sense of integration within herself. This includes coming to accept and develop a more friendly relationship with previously feared and hated aspects of herself.

As discussed in the literature review, individuation and the integration of the self are ongoing processes that can never be regarded as complete (Brooke, 1991, Clarke, 1992). Therefore, the sense of transformation and integration that was facilitated by the clay sculpture experience does not mean that Julia reached the peak of self-development. Rather, it would be more valuable to see the claywork experience as a landmark in a continuous process of growth, which has the potential to stimulate further movement towards individuation and integration.

Proceeding towards answering the research questions, the ways in which the claywork experience seemed to facilitate the process of integration and a healing inner dialogue will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this study the development of the self was explored according to theoretical paradigms of Jungian analytic psychology and art therapy. The exploration focused on the sense of disintegration that may develop in association with conflicting aspects of self, as well as the potential integration of such aspects. This was studied within the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

The research was guided by two questions. Firstly, it was asked how claywork in psychotherapy may facilitate the integration of the self. As a subquestion the issue of how claywork may enhance the development of a healing dialogue with feared and hated aspects of self was investigated. These questions, for two reasons, appeared to be specifically relevant to the patient group of adult survivors of childhood trauma. Firstly, these individuals often have troubling experiences with conflicting aspects of self (Cohen & Cox, 1995; Davies & Frawley, 1999). Secondly, research shows that this patient group is frequently drawn to art therapy modalities such as claywork (Gerity, 1997; Simonds, 1994). Following a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, the research took the form of a case study. A single participant's experience of modelling and then discussing a clay sculpture expressing feared and hated aspects of herself, formed the focus of the study.

The participant's experience suggests that claywork in therapy is a valuable medium to facilitate the integration of the self and enhance the development of a healing dialogue with feared and hated aspects of self. This study illustrates certain ways in which claywork may facilitate the above. Synthesising the findings of this study, these ways are discussed in the next section.

### **6.2 THE POTENTIAL OF CLAYWORK TO FACILITATE THE INTEGRATION OF THE SELF**

Before the claywork experience, the participant, called 'Julia' in this study, experienced a sense of disintegration and inner conflict. She felt as if she was split in two, and that aspects of herself

were fighting against each other. She identified with aspects such as rationality, control, confidence and efficiency. On the other hand, aspects of herself associated with losing control and self-destructive behaviour as well as bodily-felt aspects, were experienced as a threat and incompatible with her ego identity. This difficulty with conflicting aspects of self appeared to be rooted in a traumatic childhood, echoing the experiences of many other adult survivors of childhood trauma.

Due to Julia's tendency to dissociate from feared and hated aspects of herself, they became split off from the rest of her personality. These aspects seemed to develop an autonomy of its own, almost like a separate personality. This 'personality' was perceived as a threat to the survival of her ego identity, her existing sense of self. Therefore, Julia continued to fight against these aspects of herself and endeavoured to "cut them out" of her personality. However, these aspects were persistent and reappeared in various forms at different stages of Julia's life. In Jungian terms these feared and hated aspects formed an enduring personality complex (Jung, 1954), referred to as the 'self-destructive complex' in this study. This complex seemed to stand in the way of Julia experiencing an integrated sense of self.

The clay sculpture experience was preceded by Julia's personification of the self-destructive complex in individual therapy with the researcher. This included naming the complex 'Fat Julia' and, in the manner of active imagination (Wallace, 1987), giving a verbal description thereof. This personification gave an imaginal, visual appearance to the self-destructive complex, motivating Julia to explore it further via the medium of clay. In this way the verbal personification of the complex laid a foundation for, and appeared to be a useful precedent to the claywork experience.

The clay sculpture's ability to enhance the personification of feared and hated aspects of self appeared to be an important aspect of the integration process. Hillman, (1977) suggested that the personification of one's complexes may facilitate inner healing. In Julia's case it appears that the healing process achieved momentum with the *concrete* personification of the self-destructive complex in clay. Concretising Fat Julia in clay, helped Julia to pay closer attention to the self-destructive complex, leading to the complex becoming better known and discriminated. Also, by making Fat Julia in clay, Julia physically engaged with the complex. Therefore, the concrete personification in clay, appeared to facilitate Julia's growing ability to *do* something about, and eventually enter a relationship with feared and hated aspects of herself.

Furthermore, the integration process was also enhanced by the fact that the concrete nature of the clay sculpture allowed a safe confrontation with feared and hated aspects of self. As a concrete object separate from Julia, her sculpture allowed her to view distressing aspects of herself, as personified in the sculpture, from a distance. This appeared to facilitate the beginning of a healing dialogue between Julia and these aspects. Observing Fat Julia's fierceness, distortion and her screaming open mouth in the clay image, enabled Julia to imagine what her voice sounded like. She described that her screaming sounded like that of a "wounded animal". Thereby Julia started to give voice to previously inexpressible pain and at the same time listen to denied aspects of herself. Finding a voice signaled an increased sense of empowerment.

Also, engaging in this inner dialogue, helped Julia to start understanding Fat Julia's woundedness and therefore facilitated empathy for this part of herself. By listening to Fat Julia's voice, Julia's feeling range in connection to aspects of self related to the self-destructive complex changed from exclusively hatred and fear to also include love and understanding. One may conclude that, as Hillman (1977) proposed, the personification of her complex eventually helped Julia to see it as a respected part of her personality, which she could love.

Another important aspect of Julia's growing sense of integration appeared to be facilitated by the clay medium's unearthing of unconscious material (Meekums, 1999). The fact that the clay could be manipulated and handled forcefully, facilitated the expression of disconcerting feelings such as fear, repulsion and a sense of ugliness and abuse, rooted in traumatic childhood experiences. This suggests that the claywork allowed repressed feelings to be retrieved and communicated. Furthermore, it appears that the clay sculpture experience not only engaged Julia's mind, but also evoked a strong sense of bodily and emotional involvement. This seemed to allow the expression of pre-verbal and pre-logical material. The expression of repressed feelings and pre-verbal material appeared to be important steps towards the recovery of Julia's potential self.

The unearthing of unconscious material also seemed to involve the uncovering of previously unknown and hidden aspects of Julia's self. This became evident in the continuous unfolding of the self-destructive complex during the process of exploring her sculpture. When Julia started speaking of Fat Julia, only her fierceness, "repulsiveness", and destructiveness were known. As the exploration unfolded, more layers of the complex became visible. For example, Fat Julia became associated with repressed maternal as well as child aspects, opening up possibilities for Julia to embrace these as archetypal possibilities.

Recognising the child aspects of Fat Julia appeared to be of specific significance, as it introduced the beginning of a new loving relationship with herself, characterised by acceptance and forgiveness. This confirms the Jungian notion that the emergence of the inner child in imagery may be symbolic of rebirth, renewal and transformation (Knight, 1997). In Julia's case, making contact with her inner wounded child as facilitated by the unfolding of the sculpture of Fat Julia, helped her to make peace with disavowed aspects of herself. In other words, previously feared and hated aspects as represented by Fat Julia gained new meaning, which enabled Julia to integrate these aspects into her personality. In this way Julia discovered a new sense of self that is capable of embracing a wider range of experiences, suggesting a broadening of her potential and a movement towards individuation.

The claywork's ability to mediate symbolic functioning appeared to form another important facet of the integration process. According to the literature, integration of disparate aspects of self may be mediated by the emergence of transformative symbols (Samuels, 1985). Specifically, the production of symbols may aid in the transcendence of opposites and is seen as "nature's way of containing unbearable tensions" (Redfearn, 1985, p. 27).

In the discussion it was argued that Julia's resistance towards the self-destructive complex illustrated a difficulty in holding opposites within herself together. In other words, the development of a symbol or symbols of herself that could adequately contain disparate aspects of herself was disrupted. Instead, she lived according to an image of herself that only gave recognition to part of her personality, implying that her potential could only be partly lived out. This suggests a curbing of individuation, the process by which the personality unfolds (Brooke, 1991; Jung, 1954).

Preceding the claywork experience, the mental image of Fat Julia seemed to emerge as a symbol of Julia's inner conflict. By concretising this symbol in clay, its ability to contain the tension between disparate aspects of self appeared to be enhanced. It appears that the clay image as actual object held feared and hated aspects in a type of intermediate space, between what Julia saw as herself and what was seen as not herself. This space seemed to represent a transitional phase between dissociating from and accepting distressing aspects of herself as her own. By viewing her sculpture and exploring it in different contexts over a period of time, Julia spent time in this transitional phase. This allowed her to get to know feared and hated aspects of herself and gradually recognise them as her own. In this way pairs of opposites such as the 'known' and unknown", 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' were transcended and eventually integrated into the self in a synthesised form.

This synthesised form was symbolised by the emergence of a new image of Fat Julia. The image of “growing a new skin” developed, together with a feeling that Fat Julia was now “inside” Julia. In contrast to the old symbol of Fat Julia representing inner conflict, fragmentation and dissociation, the symbol of the new skin pointed towards integration, incorporation and transformation. This new symbol of herself signaled Julia’s growing sense of being able to hold opposites together within herself, an ability that had been compromised up to now. Therefore, one may conclude that claywork in therapy has the potential to facilitate the transcendence of outdated symbols of self and stimulate the development of more useful symbols. In Julia’s case the symbol of a new skin holds endless possibilities, suggesting a rejuvenation of Julia’s sense of self.

To conclude, claywork’s potential to facilitate the integration of the self may be summarised with three interrelated aspects. Firstly, claywork in therapy may promote a *concrete personification* of feared and hated aspects of self, which may enable the maker to view these aspects from a distance, and learn to know them in a new way. Secondly, claywork in therapy may facilitate the safe *unearthing* of repressed feelings as well as hidden aspects of the personality. Thirdly, claywork’s potential to mediate *symbolic functioning* seems to be an important aspect of the integration process.

### **6.3 THE HERMENEUTIC DIALOGUE**

As discussed in the Methodology section of this study, a hermeneutic dialogue involves an interaction between case material and existing theory. Part of this interaction involves an evaluation of the usefulness of selections of theory to provide deepened understandings of case material (Knight, 1997; Packer & Addison, 1989). This evaluation may include confirmations, expansions or refinements of existing theory. In this study the hermeneutic dialogue involved an evaluation of literature regarding the Jungian self, art therapy and the experiences of adult survivors of childhood trauma.

This research illustrated that literature regarding the Jungian concept of self as well as art therapy literature are useful lenses to study the potential of claywork to facilitate the integration of the self in the context of adult survivors of childhood trauma. Jungian notions about the nature of the self, the development of conflicting aspects of self as well as ideas regarding the integration of the self were confirmed. In particular, Jung’s conceptualisation of personality fragmentation in association to the development of complexes seemed to be useful in

developing an understanding of the participant's sense of disintegration. Also, the Jungian notion of the integration of the self being a continuous process involving the unfolding of the personality was confirmed.

Theory and research regarding art therapy, and clay sculpture in particular, were also confirmed. For example, the potential of clay sculpture to facilitate processes of making the unconscious conscious as well as providing the maker with a means of voicing the unspoken, were proved to be important aspects of the participant's integration process.

However, this study also provides some expansions of existing theory. Firstly, the healing effects of clay sculptures as *concrete personifications* of aspects of the self, appears to extend Hillman's (1977) ideas regarding personification in general. Furthermore, the potential of clay sculpture to facilitate the integration of the self by *mediating symbolic functioning* also provides an extension of existing theory.

The fact that selections of theory regarding the Jungian self and art therapy were found to be useful hermeneutic lenses to assist with the explication of Julia's case, does not mean that this is the only way to interpret it. Rather, this is but one way of understanding Julia's experiences. The use of other theoretical lenses might illuminate different meanings, which may be just as useful.

To conclude, the reader is reminded that this study is based on a 'poetic' understanding of psychological life (Knight, 1997). As explained in the introduction, this means that the aim was not to provide an objective, empirically tested explanation of Julia's case. Rather, the aim was to enter the imaginal realm opened up by the clay sculpture experience, and highlight meanings of Julia's experience in a metaphoric sense.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Julia more than once indicated that coming to accept feared and hated aspects of herself was a process that required time. Although the clay sculpture was made in one single session, the exploration thereof was a gradual process that stretched over a time period of six months. It cannot be claimed that, even after six months, the process had been completed. Although single claywork sessions may lead to meaningful insights, this research illustrates that the process

appears to be more beneficial if a gradual unfolding in a therapeutic relationship is allowed. Therefore, it is recommended that in order to maximise the integrating effects of claywork in therapy, it should form part of a long-term therapy process.

Certain factors limited this study. Firstly, due to time constraints a retrospective appraisal of the experience after a period longer than six months was not possible. Such an appraisal may have provided more information regarding long-term benefits of the claywork experience. Also, the fact that the researcher was a therapist in training with limited experience may have restricted the process.

Lastly, some recommendations for future research can be made. Firstly, it is recommended that a series of sculptures produced over a longer period of time may provide more information regarding the healing effects of claywork in therapy. Secondly, comparing sculptures made by various participants with traumatic backgrounds may be useful in building on theory regarding intervention with adult survivors of childhood trauma.

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## **APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM**

**RHODES UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

**Research conducted by Tanja Smuts as part of the requirements for a Masters in Clinical Psychology degree.**

This research focuses on the experiences of adult survivors of childhood trauma as explored through the medium of therapeutic clay sculptures. Research participants will be asked to produce clay sculptures in a therapeutic setting and engage in open-ended interviews regarding the sculptures. Interviews will be audio-taped and photographs will be taken of clay sculptures. The research process will entail an exploration of research participants' feelings, thoughts and experiences. Personal histories and other information obtained from participants during assessment and therapy sessions with the researcher will be used as contextual information in the final research report. Participants will also be asked to check the validity of processed data. Participants will be invited to read the full research report once it is completed.

Participants' privacy will be protected by omitting or changing identifying data in the final report, as well as by organising for the report to be excluded from the Rhodes University Library for one year after its completion.

It is proposed that the research may hold therapeutic benefits for the participants, in that it may increase insight and aid in the working through of troublesome feelings and experiences.

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I \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed of the nature of the research which will be conducted by the student researcher, Tanja Smuts on claywork in psychotherapy with adult survivors of childhood trauma.

I understand:

1. that the researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Masters in Clinical Psychology degree at Rhodes University.
2. that participation in this research is voluntary.
3. the nature of the research as explained above.

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give consent to take part in the research as outlined above.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**