SUMMARY. This paper offers an approach to the understanding and psychotherapeutic treatment from a Jungian perspective of gay men who seek treatment for sexual compulsivity. It presents a definition of sexual compulsivity that places it in the diagnostic category of an addiction. A classification from an affect theory perspective is presented to clarify the different variants of sexual compulsivity. The paper focuses primarily on two specific types of sexual compulsivity: (1) Sexual encounters for the purpose of avoiding discomforting “unacceptable” repressed affects. This is the result of the psychological mechanism of splitting and repression that causes sexual energy and other vital affects to be repressed in the unconscious where they constellate as part of the shadow. This repressed shadow aspect, driven by sexual energy, takes on a negative form in the unconscious and can at times function independently of the ego resulting in loss of control and sexual compulsivity. (2) Sexual encounters driven by an addiction to the affect of excitement. Unconscious archetypal masculine energy is projected onto the phallus of any anonymous sex partner where it is “worshipped” and experienced as charged with numinous energy. Because of the lack of awareness of and the paucity of outlets for the experience of the numinous in our desacralized society, being in the presence of this powerful numinous energy is extremely compelling and exciting and paves the way for sexual compulsivity. As awareness of wounding of the archetypal masculine energy is recognized in the course of therapy, the possibility for this energy’s positive attributes to
emerge in the life experience of the individual becomes a reality. He is able to reclaim his own power and this helps improve self-esteem.

Jung’s concept of a teleological or synthetic approach to treatment (including the use of active imagination) is explored and illustrated in a clinical case study. His concept of the numinous and how it possibly relates to sexual compulsivity is discussed. Shame as an important etiological factor is emphasized. The concept of the shadow, including its necessary integration in the course of treatment, is discussed. The epic of *Gilgamesh* is used as a helpful tool in the treatment process of the clinical case presented. Following the bibliography, an appendix has been added. This is a response from the person who was discussed in the clinical case after he read the paper and also includes comments on his impressions of the treatment process.

**KEYWORDS.** Sexual compulsivity, gay men, Jung, acting out, psychotherapy, dreams, and homosexuality

The discussion will follow the following format: (1) Definition of sexual compulsivity; (2) Classification from the perspective of affect theory; (3) Discussion of Jung’s concept of a teleological approach to treatment; (4) Shame as a contributing etiological factor; (5) The epic of *Gilgamesh*; (6) A clinical case study: Paul; (7) Conclusion; (8) Bibliography; and (9) Appendix: Response from Paul.

**DEFINITION**

Sexual compulsivity is often diagnosed as a form of impulse disregulation that results in compulsive sexual acting out behavior that the person feels driven to perform and over which he feels he has little or no control. If this causes the person distress, it can be diagnosed according to the criteria in the DSM-IV, as Sexual Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. However, the essential features of all substance-use disorders according to the DSM-IV are the following: (1) loss of control, (2) preoccupation with, and (3) repetition of the behavior in spite of adverse consequences. These criteria apply to many cases of sexually compulsive behavior as well so that it can thus also be regarded as an addictive disorder.

**CLASSIFICATION FROM AN AFFECT THEORY PERSPECTIVE**

From an affect theory perspective four types of affect dynamics are described (Kaufman and Raphael, 1996, 214-221), which provide a helpful framework within which to contextualize sexual addiction:
Sex as a Sedative

Most addictions rely on a particular sedative–alcohol, drugs, food, cigarettes, shopping, or sex—to reduce or suppress being overwhelmed and discomforted by certain affects. These disturbing affects may be shame, rage, fear, loneliness, sadness or any other intolerable affects. In some cases the sedative effect of some form of sexual activity may have initially been used for comfort in the presence of negative affect situations, such as humiliating shame, ridicule, rejection, or hurt. Sexual activity may have been used initially to comfort wounds caused by significant losses, such as the death of a beloved parent, sibling or loved one. Compulsive sexual activity could also mask the symptoms of an undiagnosed clinical depression. Sex may be used in the service of self-medicating and bring about temporary relief of the discomforting affects associated with depression.

If used repeatedly for this purpose of avoidance of discomforting affects, the sexual activity that was initially experienced as soothing and comforting becomes a behavior that appears to ward off negative or intolerable affects. Eventually, the absence of the sedative effect of sex causes increasing anxiety that can only be relieved by more sex. Sexual addiction has set in when the person learns that being deprived of the sedative effect of sex is much worse than any other negative affects that it may reduce (Kaufman and Raphael, 1996, 217). The addiction to the sedative effect of sex becomes so powerful that it overrides rationality. The person may then engage in potentially dangerous and self-destructive behaviors such as exposure to HIV or to other potentially dangerous situations. He may also risk disruption or loss of his relationship with a primary partner. The addictive behavior becomes an all-consuming activity over which he feels he has little or no control.

Harry described his experience as follows:

When I was about five years old, my parents caught me with another little boy under the bed with our pants down. They forced me to walk around naked in the house as punishment. I remember feeling so ashamed. To comfort myself I masturbated that day as soon as I could. After this I began masturbating all the time, several times per day. It made me feel better. It was a comfort to me. I still find myself doing this now when I am upset.

For Harry, masturbation initially was a way of comforting himself as a child in a situation that caused extreme negative affect, namely, shame and humiliation. He subsequently found it to be a source of comfort throughout his childhood. In adolescence and adulthood, sex continued to bring about immediate, though temporary, relief from feeling “upset.” It had a sedative
effect and helped suppress intolerable or unpleasant affects. As an adult, he gradually began to notice that when unable to have sex he felt increasingly anxious. The absence of the sedative and comforting effect of sex now produced intense discomfort, a critical factor in the shift from sedation to addiction (Kaufman and Raphael, 1996, 216). This could only be relieved by more sex. Harry had become addicted to sex.

In childhood and adolescence, the expression of any affect or instinctual energy (such as sexuality) that is met with ridicule or other negative reaction often results in the psychological mechanism of dissociation and repression. Such dissociative splits with repression of affects and instinctual energies, results in an inability to access or express these powerful energies appropriately. However, without access to the entire spectrum of affects and instinctual energies, the capacity for intimacy, relatedness and love is significantly jeopardized. The repressed affects constellate in the unconscious giving rise to problematic complexes that often exert a powerful negative influence on the conscious ego, giving rise to acting out behaviors over which the person feels he has limited control. The split off sexual energy often tends to take on a life of its own and results in sexual acting out and/or compulsivity. (This is discussed below in reference to the shadow.)

This dissociative split with subsequent repression occurs in many persons but particularly in gay men when the expression of sexual energy that is homoerotic is shamed into the unconscious. Often a vicious cycle is set in motion: the expression of sexual feelings, having previously been met with shame and/or ridicule give rise to overwhelming feelings of shame; sexual activity provides comfort for this discomforting affect—which in turn elicits further shame that is relieved by more sex. A pattern of repetition compulsion takes hold and sexual addiction follows. As the capacity to tolerate bringing repressed affects and sexual energies into awareness develops in the course of therapy and recovery, there is increasingly less need to engage in sedative sexual addictive behaviors. The ability to express a full range of affects more appropriately and the capacity to embrace the expression of sexuality without shame can allow the person to be more fully related. Intimacy in relationships becomes possible and sexuality no longer needs to be split off and lead an independent life of its own. Establishing and maintaining loving relationships that include the freedom to express affects and sexuality becomes a possibility.

**Sex Used to Release Suppressed Affect**

Sexual activity (and other addictive behaviors) can also be used for the release of affect that has had to be chronically suppressed. Sex then serves the purpose of being a dis-inhibitor of suppressed affect. This is a well-recognized effect of the use of alcohol, although the biochemical pathways and mechanism of action by which alcohol brings about its disinhibition is quite
different from that of sex. A sexual encounter can provide a forum where a person with overly suppressed affects can allow themselves to actually express affects of various kinds. If sex becomes associated with the release of suppressed affect and is perceived as the only available means to do this, the person can become addicted to sex in order to be able to express feelings that cannot find an outlet elsewhere (Kaufman and Raphael, 1996, 218).

Adam grew up in an abusive household. His father physically and emotionally abused him. His mother failed to protect him and would also beat him. His beloved grandmother however, adored him. She treated him like a little prince. He came to understand that an important aspect of his sexual addiction was related to experiencing affects that he otherwise was unable to feel. In the course of a sexual encounter he felt affirmed, attractive and adored. These were the positive affects that he had felt when with his grandmother. When not engaged in sex, he suffered from low self-esteem, was hypercritical of himself and felt much guilt and shame. Sex was the only place where he could connect with the suppressed positive affects associated with his grandmother. He came to need sex to boost his self-esteem. Adam was not using sex to sedate his feelings but to experience suppressed affects that he otherwise could not access.

**Sex and the Affect of Excitement**

Another type of affect dynamic that may be operating in sexual addictions is addiction to the affect of excitement experienced in the sexual encounter. In order to sustain the excitement affect, many and varied sexual partners are required to maintain the passionate thrill of sex with a stranger. This gives rise to indiscriminate promiscuity. There is a hunger for ever-increasing levels of excitement that can only be experienced with new sexual partners. This form of sexual addictive behavior will be expanded upon below. I am postulating the hypothesis that the numinous inner image of archetypal masculine energy (*Phallos*) in the unconscious is projected onto the phallus (the erect penis) of the sex partner where it is “worshipped.” The person is usually totally unaware of this unconscious dynamic. Consciously they would only be seeking a sexual encounter. The excitement affect that results in these situations is in part the result of being in the presence of powerful numinous energy (see below) which has a transpersonal quality to it. Connecting with this energy is highly addictive because of the hunger in our desacralized society for a connection with spiritual or transpersonal energies. As mentioned above, this form of addiction results in promiscuity because only sex with a stranger can sustain the dynamic of projection accompanied by an experience of the numinous. Once familiarity takes place, the projection of numinous archetypal masculine energy onto the phallus of the sex partner is more difficult to sustain and hence the excitement affect diminish-
es. Because one of the features of persons who have symptoms of Attention-Disrit Disorder (ADD) is the craving for excitement from risk-taking behaviors, they may be more vulnerable to this form of sexual addiction.

Kaufman and Raphael (1996, 219) point out that the quest for excitement can totally dominate a person’s life. All other affects are subjugated to the thrill of anonymous sex. It can even endanger the enjoyment of relatedness in more enduring relationships. In this type of addiction, sex is neither a sedative nor a dis-inhibitor of suppressed affects, but instead becomes an all-consuming uncontrollable quest for greater experiences of excitement.

One of the challenges in recovering from this form of sexual addiction is the process of learning to become less addicted to the experience of excitement affect in anonymous sexual encounters. The person begins to be able to cultivate the awareness of other affects, such as enjoyment and pleasure in the context of more enduring relationships. It becomes possible to also have numinous experiences that are not only sexual in nature. As the person is able to recognize the projection of his own positive inner masculine energies onto the phallus of strangers, the possibility of expressing these attributes in himself leads to empowerment and improved self-esteem. He is able to be more accepting of who he is (including his sexual orientation). The experience of being “out” and taking a stand for his beliefs in the face of possible adversity becomes a reality. Creativity is more accessible and there is a willingness to bring this forth and for it to be seen in the world. There is an increased ability to be aware of his needs and to express them appropriately. He is also better able to protect himself from abuse and re-wounding, especially in the area of his sexuality. He may finally be able to experience a sense of pride in his achievements: “Here I stand. I can be no other.” This reduces the need to concretize and literalize these intrapsychic functions by projecting these qualities onto the phallus of a stranger. There is a concomitant reduction in shame and the possibility of making more conscious choices becomes an option.

Twelve Step programs, such as Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (S.C.A.), or Sexual Addicts Anonymous (S.A.A.), that encourage the awareness of spiritual or transpersonal energies may be particularly helpful in supporting recovery from this type of sexual addiction. These programs acknowledge “that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” Members are encouraged to seek “through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand God.” Part of the recovery process is thus a more conscious acknowledgement of and connection with whatever God or Higher Power may represent to each person. This may be a more conscious relationship with the authentic inner self (the Self or archetype of wholeness described by Jung) and other powerful forces in the unconscious; an awareness of spirituality and transpersonal connections in everyday life.
and in nature; or the expression of creativity. Specific workshops are offered by SCA on ways to connect with the numinous energy of Higher Power other than through anonymous sexual encounters. Some gay men in recovery from sexual compulsivity have found these workshops to be very beneficial.

**Sex and the Displacement of Affect**

The last type of affect management that may give rise to sexual addiction is the displacement of suppressed affect into sex and its expression via sexual activity. If one is criticized or humiliated in some situation where the resulting discomforting affect of shame cannot be expressed (in the work situation, for example) and is suppressed, a degrading sexual encounter may serve to discharge this affect (Kaufman and Raphael, 1996, 220). The sexual humiliation results in an intensification of the shame. Shame is displaced into the sex and expressed in this context rather than in the original situation. Addiction to this type of sexual encounter may ensue if it becomes the only outlet for certain intense affects such as shame and humiliation that cannot be expressed in other ways. This dynamic may give rise to various forms of sadomasochistic patterns. The painful affect of shame becomes eroticized in an encounter where the person is sexually humiliated. Alternatively, one person may identify with the aggressor and assume the dominant powerful role and humiliate the other person sexually.

In this article, I will focus mainly on the first and third forms of sexual addiction according to the above classification, namely, sexual encounters used in the service of avoiding discomforting affects and the addiction to the affect of excitement. Although the above classification according to affect theory provides a useful framework outlining various mechanisms involved in sexual addiction, most persons seeking treatment do not fit into any single category. The human psyche is extremely complex and each person presents their own unique multiplicity of determining factors and modes of expression.

**A TELEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO TREATMENT**

It is always important to attempt to make a definitive diagnosis when treating someone for sexual compulsivity. The above definition and affect dynamics serve as helpful guidelines in understanding variations in the various presentations of sexual compulsivity compelling someone to seek treatment. The approach to treatment will largely be determined by the theoretical orientation of the therapist. Jung used the word “reductive” to describe the process of attempting to reveal the primitive, instinctual, infantile or other possible childhood experiences as the causes of the person’s current symptoms. Jung was critical of using only the reductive method because he contended that it did not explore the full meaning of the symptom or behavior.
He was more interested in exploring where the person’s life was leading them than focussing on the causes of how they had arrived at that point. His was a teleological point of view. Jung described this orientation as “synthetic” with the implication that what emerged from the starting point of treatment was of primary significance and moved the process forward. His interest was mainly in the unique constellation of the intrapsychic energies in a particular individual at the time that they presented for treatment. Viewed from this unique perspective that is teleological rather than purely reductive, an attempt is made to understand the symptoms as if they had intention and purpose.

Jung also developed methods for engaging the energies in the unconscious by personifying them as they appeared in dream images as well as in the process of “active imagination.” He described this process of active imagination as follows: the person focuses on a specific dream image, mood or event and then allows a dialogue to occur or a chain of associated fantasies (1963, par. 706). The conscious ego is actively engaged in the process and can react more immediately and directly than is the case with dreams. Active imagination can facilitate the process of psychotherapy but it achieves success only if it is integrated and does not become either a substitute for or an escape from the labor of conscious living (Samuels, 1986, 9). This helps the person become more familiar with his inner world and the unconscious forces that profoundly affect behavior. By becoming more familiar with the forces in their unconscious, Jung hoped that the person would form an ongoing relationship with their inner world. This would allow for the possibility of making more conscious choices instead of being at the mercy of unconscious forces over which the person felt they had little or no control. There was also the hope that some of the negative potentially destructive aspects could be transformed into more supportive and positive energies.

From the teleological perspective, Jung tended to place less emphasis on the contribution of traumatic childhood and other experiences or the relationship with the parents. With sexual compulsivity, however, the causes are multiple and complex. The contribution of shaming parents and others in the boy’s childhood, toxic homophobia, abuse (emotional, physical or sexual), inherent disposition, and many other factors can all play a role. In the course of my psychotherapeutic work I use an integrative approach of both the reductive method as well as the synthetic or teleological approach, as will become evident from the case material presented below.

Using a teleological approach, sexual compulsivity in some persons may be understood as a powerful urge to connect with “something” that is compelling and fascinating, over which the individual feels he has little or no control. In this context, the basic instinct is sexual in nature and for gay men the compelling object is the phallus. Being in the presence of the phallus can be a “numinous” experience (resulting in a connection with transpersonal or
spiritual energies, see below) although the person may not be aware of it. This arouses the affect of excitement. If this is the only way in which the person experiences spiritual or transpersonal energy, the thrill that this causes gives rise to a craving to repeat the experience. The desire for the numinous connection and concomitant arousal may lead to sexual compulsivity. The “symptom” of sexual compulsivity is thus not only to be regarded as the emanation of an underlying disturbance or imbalance, but also as a yearning for an encounter with powerful spiritual or transpersonal energies, in this instance experienced in the presence of an erect phallus. Instead of attaching to religious icons and symbols, this energy becomes attached to the phallus.

Because of the dissociation and repression of sexual energy from consciousness, it tends to function autonomously outside the realm of awareness (the mechanism is discussed below). This is one of the reasons that it can subsume the conscious personality or ego and lead to compulsive behaviors. The repetitive and compulsive nature of this activity can be viewed from a teleological perspective also as an attempt at self-healing. These behaviors may be the result of repeated attempts to comfort the self in the face of discomforting affects, to experience feelings that otherwise cannot be accessed, or to discharge displaced affects (as described above). Because of the loss of conscious control, however, it may also draw the person’s attention to the fact that he is out of balance and is suffering from a state of dis-ease and hence may need to seek some form of treatment.

THE NUMINOUS

Jung described the numinosum as “either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness” (1958, par. 6). Jung borrowed the word “numinous” from Rudolf Otto’s (1926) book The Idea of the Holy, which had a major influence on Jung’s thought (1950, par. 580, 583; 1958, par. 6, 7, 9, 222 and 472). According to Otto, the essence of holiness, or religious experience, has a specific quality that remains inexpressible and eludes description. To convey its uniqueness, he coined the term “numinous” from the Latin numen, meaning a god, cognate with the verb nuere, to nod or beckon, indicating divine approval. The numinous is compelling and mysterious. It has the power to attract and to fascinate us. It is alluring. It is non-rational and irreducible. It can only be evoked and experienced (Otto, R, 1926, 7). Once experienced, a longing for it is awakened. It grips the person with a powerful affective state. It allows for a spiritual or transpersonal experience. Otto describes it as follows:

The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over
into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its “profane,” non-religious mood of everyday experience. *It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy* (emphasis mine). It has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of–whom or what? In the presence of that which is a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures. (1926, 12)

In my opinion, some sexual encounters allow one to satisfy the basic human desire for a numinous experience, to be in the presence of a “mystery inexpressible,” that arouses tremendous excitement affect. For some gay men, this numinous experience occurs in the presence of the phallus or erect penis. Others may experience it in the presence of other admired masculine attributes such as a firm muscular torso. The symbol of the phallus in particular is “a pictorial representation of the essence of manliness, a representation of the synthesis of every imaginable aspect of proper manhood” (Vanggaard, 1972, 56). It symbolizes the inner image of archetypal masculinity (*Phallos*) carried in the psyche of every male. In its positive aspects, it represents the willingness to be seen, proudly and assertively; the ability to expose oneself in taking a stand for one’s beliefs; the courage to put out into the world one’s creative endeavors, and the strength to take responsibility for one’s actions.

The phallus has been regarded as a sacred symbol since ancient times. “The phallus is the source of life and libido, the creator and worker of miracles, and as such it was worshipped everywhere” (Jung, 1956, par 146). In Hinduism, the great god Shiva is worshipped in the form of a phallus. Many homes in India have on their shrines a *lingam*, a phallic object, representing the god Shiva. Phallic objects represented the Greek god Dionysus, god of fertility, creativity and ecstasy. A phallus was crowned with wreaths and carried around in the god’s cult. During Dionysiac celebrations a song was sung to phallus. There is inscriptive evidence for the use of a large wooden phallus in the processions of the Dionysia in Delos (Otto, W. 164).

As an illustration of how the numinous manifests in our daily lives, some gay men will be able to identify times when overpowering sexual energy has “burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions” (see above quote regarding the numinous). This may lead to “the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and ecstasy.” Contemporary humanistic psychology refers to such impressive occurrences as “peak experiences.” Eliade, noted historian of religion, states that “except
in the modern world, sexuality has everywhere and always been a hierophany (a manifestation of the holy), and the sexual act an integral action and therefore also a means of knowledge” (1969, 14). The spontaneously shared experiences of Joe and Alan that follow serve to further illustrate the manifestation of numinous energy in the daily lives of these two gay men.

Joe was in treatment with me for his sexual addiction. During the course of our work together, he reported the following:

When I walk down the street, my eyes are always drawn to the crotch of cute boys like magnets. It seems to happen almost automatically. If the guy has a large crotch, I’m immediately entranced. Sometimes I feel compelled to turn around and follow him even if I don’t really have the time. It is as though I go into some sort of trance. I am gripped by a feeling of awe that feels out of my control. I want him! I want to worship him!

Alan, who had also sought treatment with me for his sexual addiction, described his experience of a visit to a sex club for gay men, which he frequented on a regular basis. He expressed concern that he was spending too much time there and that it had become part of his sexual addiction. These clubs may be regarded as ‘temples’ where the phallus is worshipped by gay men, albeit unconsciously. They are usually dark and often underground. This phenomenon is indicative of the realm to which sexuality has had to be banished in many gay men, namely, to the darker less conscious regions of the psyche. Alan’s description of his experience follows:

When I’m in the presence of an erect dick (phallus), something happens to me that I find difficult to explain. I start to tremble, quite involuntarily. It’s as though I’m in the presence of something greater than me and my little world. I have this indescribable urge to fall to my knees and worship this magnificent object. All the while, I’ve lost touch with my surroundings. I no longer hear the music. I’m totally unaware of any onlookers. I lose all sense of time. I am taken over by desire, a sort of adoration. I won’t bore you with the details of what I want to do with it. I’m in a state of ecstasy (even though I haven’t taken any!). It’s almost like a religious experience.

In some gay men, numinously charged sexual energy is shamed into the unconscious in childhood or adolescence (as discussed below). I am postulating that this repressed sexual energy constellates in the unconscious around the archetype of the inner phallic god-image (Phallos) present in the psyche of every male (Monick, 1987, 16) and becomes part of what Jung calls the shadow. Jung explains this phenomenon of repression of numinous energy as follows:
Since energy never vanishes, the emotional energy that manifests itself in all numinous phenomena does not cease to exist when it disappears from consciousness. As I have said, it reappears in conscious manifestations, in symbolic happenings that compensate the disturbances of the conscious psyche. (1950, par. 583)

The phallic of a stranger and the numinous experience that an encounter with it engenders, becomes the compensatory conscious manifestation of this process. The inner phallic image is projected onto the phallus of strangers where it is “worshipped.”

**SHAME AS A CONTRIBUTING ETIOLOGICAL FACTOR**

A core of shame is often at the root of sexual compulsivity. Gay boys are often confronted at an early age by culturally defined, potentially destructive homophobic or heterosexist attitudes in their parents, family and peers. Being shamed, ridiculed, criticized or even beaten for any gender non-conforming behavior is a frequent occurrence in the lives of gay men. Any expression of perceived homoerotic or “girlish/sissy” behavior often evokes a shaming response. These repeated humiliations result in dissociation and repression of this sexual energy. With repeated shaming (which in many sex addicts is accompanied by a history of sexual and/or physical abuse) the dissociative split and subsequent repression is severe. This defensive survival mechanism serves the purpose of warding off intolerable anxiety associated with these now unacceptable aspects of the self. Using the concept of left (rational, logical, ego, conscious) and right (irrational, instinctual, affective, unconscious) brain hemisphere functions, repeated shaming “damages” and “shuts down” the bridge necessary for communication between these two sides of the brain. Winnicott (1960) describes this defensive split as resulting in the development of a false self with the need to hide the true or authentic self. The sexual energy, primarily governed by the right brain, is separated from the rest of the personality and tends to lead an independent life of its own. The homoerotic/homosexual impulses, which form a vital part of the true self in gay boys, are repressed and go “underground,” where they disappear in the deeper layers of the unconscious with unpredictable results.

Having been banished into the nether regions of the unconscious and denied the chance to be expressed in consciousness in an uninhibited fashion, the homoerotic/homosexual energy constellates as an ever present destructive “shadow,” primarily in the right brain. Jung points out that even tendencies that might exert a beneficial influence turn into veritable demons when they are repressed (1950, par. 580). Jung’s clearest definition of the shadow is as follows: “the thing a person has no wish to be” (1954, par. 470). It is that
which one perceives to be one’s dark side, the unpleasant or unacceptable qualities one wants to hide. It tends to take on a life of its own, operating from the unconscious, thwarting our most well meant intentions. Given that these particular shadow aspects are sexual in nature, they also become powerfully affectively charged. The shadow tends to function autonomously and is therefore capable of startling and overwhelming the well-ordered ego (Samuels, 1986, 101). When these repressed shadow aspects surface in later life in the form of compulsive sexual acting out behaviors, it leaves the ego feeling helpless and powerless.

To help someone deal with their shadow, it is necessary for the therapist to find a way in which the conscious personality and the shadow can live together (Jung, 1958, par. 132). To become aware of the shadow, to admit to its existence and to attempt a more conscious integration of it is helpful in breaking its compulsive hold. Using the concept of left and right brain hemisphere functions mentioned above, the damage done to the “bridge” between the left brain and the right brain as a result of repeated shaming, resulting in this split, has to be repaired. This occurs in the course of treatment as the person becomes aware of the core of toxic shame and it begins to gradually lessen. The more conscious rational aspect of the ego is repeatedly encouraged to observe and monitor what occurs in the right brain. Input from both sides of the brain is imperative for the mature functioning of the personality. Irrational instincts and powerful affects aroused in the right brain need to be appropriately monitored and managed by the left brain. In order for this to happen, energy needs to be able to flow freely between right and left brain hemispheres across an intact, repaired “bridge.” Much of the work in therapy entails a slow and systematic “repair” of this “bridge” so that the split between left brain and right brain functions gradually decreases resulting in a more integrated functional personality. I often find it helpful to use the metaphor of the need to develop an eagle’s eye viewpoint, or overview, in order to monitor the “traffic” on the “bridge.” This is also referred to as the development of an “observing ego” that is helpful in monitoring and regulating the flow of energy back and forth between left and right brain hemispheres.

Conscious integration of the sexual aspects of the shadow is an important part of the coming out process for gay men. The sexual aspects of the shadow also constitute a vital part of the true or authentic self. It may take many years, perhaps even a lifetime, for the authentic self with its homoerotic and sexual shadow aspects to re-emerge and be reintegrated into the personality. In the therapeutic setting, enormous patience on the part of the therapist is often required to allow the traumatized true self to re-emerge (Drescher, 1998a). The stages of “coming out” and reconnecting with the authentic self is a process and not a one-time event (Drescher 1998a, Scasta, 1998). The same is true of the attempts to become aware of and to integrate the shadow.
By bringing awareness to these “forbidden” desires and repressed affects, the person is better able to make conscious choices.

In order to illustrate this process of integration of the shadow with a clinical example, I will first relate the ancient epic of Gilgamesh (Mason, 1970). In my experience, engaging the unconscious by using imagery (the primary language of the unconscious) as portrayed in myths, epics, fairy tales and dreams is a potent clinical tool.

**THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH**

Myths and epics originated millennia ago as a result of our ancestors’ attempts to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of humankind, the customs, institutions, or religious rites of a people. Myths and epics usually involve the exploits of gods and heroes, ostensibly with a historical basis. They appear to have evolved as an attempt to explain the peculiarities of observed human behavior using vivid and colorful imagery while at the same time proposing possible solutions to some of life’s most difficult challenges such as death, loss and the meaning of life.

The epic of Gilgamesh is Sumerian in origin, and is believed to have been created as far back as the third millenium BC (Mason, 98). It predates the Bible and the Homeric epics, the latter by at least a millenium and a half (Mason, 99). It is therefore one of humankind’s oldest and most enduring stories. It was later added to and unified as a national epic by the Semitic Babylonians. A number of clay tablets on which the Gilgamesh was written were discovered in the nineteenth century in the temple library and palace ruins of Ninevah.

The epic of Gilgamesh is divided into several parts and has different subplots. The first section describes the meeting and friendship that develops between Enkidu and Gilgamesh. The friends become inseparable and go on an adventure to slay a troublesome beast, the Evil One named Humbaba, in the forest. Enkidu succeeds in slaying Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven who was sent by the enraged goddess Ishtar after Gilgamesh rejected her advances. During the battles with these beasts, Enkidu is mortally wounded and eventually dies. Gilgamesh is stricken with grief at the death of his friend and is unable to recover from this bitter loss. The rest of the epic is about Gilgamesh’s quest to find a way to bring his friend back to life. After many adventures, he succeeds in extracting the knowledge from an old man who tells him that there is a plant in the river that will give him new life. Gilgamesh finds it but leaves it on the side of a stream while he bathes. A serpent smells the plant and devours it. Gilgamesh finds only its shed skin where the plant was. He accepts his fate and limitations and returns to Uruk to rule as king. He has acquired wisdom and the knowledge of the possibility of renew-
al and rebirth (symbolized by the shed skin of the snake) in the face of loss and grief.

The first part of this epic, namely, the description of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and their meeting and developing friendship, is relevant to illustrate the clinical process of the integration of the shadow mentioned above. The initial separation of Gilgamesh and Enkidu is useful as a metaphor for the dissociative split that occurs in gay men when instinctual sexual energy and other affects are forced into the unconscious (right brain) as a result of shaming or other situations charged with negative affect (as described above). Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, represents the more rational intellectual aspect, or left brain functions, that rules the personality disconnected from sexuality and “unacceptable” affects, or right brain functions. As a result of this split, Gilgamesh is initially described as “a tyrant to his people” (Mason, 15). He “was a godlike man alone with his thoughts in idleness” (Mason, 16-17). He appears to lack a feeling connection to his people and is quite unrelated. Enkidu represents the uninhibited, chthonic, instinctual aspect of the personality that includes the sexual energy and the affects split off from the intellect or more rational aspect of the psyche. “He ran with the animals, drank at their springs, not knowing fear or wisdom” (Mason, 16). This process of dissociative splitting and repression of sexual instinctual energy and other affects can impede linkages between the need for intimacy and sexual feelings (Drescher, 1998b, 286). When disconnected from the instinctual self and the affects, it is difficult to be related to either oneself or to others in a meaningful way. When this split has occurred, these two aspects of the personality tend to operate independently. The “bridge” between left and right brain hemispheres is all but shut down for business, metaphorically speaking. If this split is severe enough, sexual energy (right brain) will tend to usurp the more rational (left brain) part of the personality at times, “not knowing fear or wisdom.” Sexual acting out can then occur that is beyond the control of the more conscious rational self. This gives rise to the phenomenon of sexual compulsivity. One of the goals of treatment is to bridge this split between intellect (left brain) and instinct (right brain), the conscious more rational self and the unconscious more instinctual self, resulting in a better integration of the personality. In terms of the epic of Gilgamesh, this process is symbolized by the meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and the friendship that develops between them: “It is the story of their becoming human together” (Mason, 15). Their initial encounter is described as follows:

Gilgamesh looked at the stranger
And listened to his people’s shouts of praise
For someone other than himself
And lunged at Enkidu.
They fell like wolves
At each other’s throats,
Like bulls bellowing,
And horses gasping for breath
That have run all day
Desperate for rest and water,
Crushing the gate they fell against.
The dry dust billowed in the marketplace
And people shrieked. The dogs raced
In and out between their legs.
A child screamed at their feet
That danced the dance of life
Which hovers close to death.
And quiet suddenly fell on them
When Gilgamesh stood still
Exhausted. He turned to Enkidu who leaned
Against his shoulder and looked into his eyes
And saw himself in the other, just as Enkidu saw
Himself in Gilgamesh.
In the silence of the people they began to laugh
And clutched each other in their breathless exultation. (Mason, 23-24)

As will be illustrated in the clinical material presented below, the encounter with the shadow aspect of the personality in personified form is often a frightening experience. The process usually involves repeated confrontations and a considerable struggle until a more conscious integration occurs so that these two aspects of the self can learn to “clutch each other in their breathless exultation.”

**CLINICAL CASE DISCUSSION: PAUL**

Paul sought treatment with me because he was concerned about his sexual compulsivity. He had been attending SCA regularly for several years but in spite of this, he found himself still acting out sexually on occasion. He was in a stable long-term relationship with a partner for several years and was afraid that his sexual compulsivity would ultimately jeopardize his relationship. He suspected that he might be suffering from Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD) and part of the initial assessment included confirming this diagnosis. He recognized that the impulse disregulation aspect of ADD contributed to his sexually compulsive behavior. He reported that it seemed like there was a separate part of him that would “take over” at times and he’d go into a trance-like state. At these times he was more prone to acting out sexually. Drescher describes this phenomenon as follows:
Some people may experience their sexual desires as a compulsive force, outside their conscious control. Their sexual activities can take place in a reverie state, a severe dissociative phenomenon that significantly interferes with developing a sense of self. (emphasis mine) (1998b, 283)

One of Paul’s initial dreams seemed to indicate part of his problem regarding his sexual compulsivity. It was a dream in which the split off shadow aspect of the personality that he related to his sexual compulsivity made its first appearance. The dream was as follows:

Paul is driving a car. A guy wearing a monastic habit with a cowl that made it difficult to see his face is sitting next to him. Paul has an uncomfortable, creepy feeling about this guy and is aware of not wanting to offend him. The man is physically very powerful, like a coiled spring, tense and fidgety. The man moves closer to Paul and he wants to tell him to stay away from him, not to move any closer, but doesn’t and plays a non-offensive conciliatory role. Then this guy grabs the wheel and starts to turn the car. He’s been waiting to take over and go where he wants to go. Paul doesn’t want to go there and tries to keep the car going where he wants to go but can’t overpower the man. He awakes with a feeling of fear.

The frightening figure with the cowl and monastic habit represents a personification of a powerful negative shadow aspect in Paul. The dream-ego (that part of the self that is closer to consciousness represented by Paul in the dream) adopts a conciliatory attitude towards this powerful energy and is unable to confront it. Initially, the dream-ego is in control of the personality and is “driving the car,” but the shadow figure grabs the wheel and directs the car (representing the personality) where he wants it to go. The dream-ego is left feeling helpless and afraid in the face of this powerful, hostile energy that he feels unable to confront.

Paul’s association to the dream was that this man was “criminally insane.” He had no conscience, or social correctness; goodness and rightness had no influence over his behavior. His impulses go unchecked (emphasis mine) and they are hostile and aggressive. He may do things to hurt others given the chance. Normal restraints would not stop him. He is killer energy. As a personification of the shadow, this man represents powerful energy in the unconscious that has constellated in a negative potentially destructive way. This has occurred because of the repression of instinctual energy and other vital affects. Paul’s association to the guy’s monastic habit and cowl was that it reminded him of the little people with the electric eyes in Star Wars. They were impulsive and dangerous (emphasis mine). Paul associated this man and his energy to his sexually impulsive behavior over which he felt he had no
control at times. When this man, representing the split off instinctual sexual energy and affects (Enkidu), took control and grabbed the steering wheel, the ego or more conscious rational left brain aspect of the self (Gilgamesh) was rendered helpless. Paul was able to recognize that he was “a people-pleaser,” and that he was frantic to please everyone that he came into contact with. This guy in the dream was aggressive and quite the opposite. Beneath the “nice” self lurked a raw, unformed, primal energy that is crude and abrasive that Paul is afraid to let out. Paul reported that in his family, he was allowed to express only “good” or “nice” feelings. His mother was controlling and very concerned about appearances. She would not tolerate any angry, sad or other “negative” affects. All these affects had to be repressed and relegated to the unconscious. “Niceness” was an important family value, resulting in the development of a people pleasing “nice” false self. It was also everyone’s task in the family to keep father happy. So he had to intuit father’s feelings and wishes and in this way deny his own needs or desires. This manifested in the transference in his desire to please and entertain me.

Paul was willing to engage with this dream figure in a process of active imagination (as described on p. 148). During this process, the following emerged:

**Dream figure:** Nice people threaten me. They don’t want me in their world. I am a killer that strangles people.

**Paul:** I believe you are very angry and have bottled up your anger for too long.

**Dream figure:** When I’m angry, pay attention to me and listen to me. Get out of the way. Don’t withdraw behind your pretense of confusion and stuff me back because of what others might think. As the killer, I will protect you but you won’t let me do that. You open your abdomen to everyone.

I pointed out that the two of them had to work together to figure this out. Paul agreed. Jung describes the above process of actively engaging an aspect of one’s own unconscious as follows:

He therefore feels compelled, or is encouraged by his analyst, to take part in the play and, instead of just sitting in a theatre, really have it out with his alter ego . . . This process of coming to terms with the Other in us is well worth while, because in this way we get to know aspects of our nature which we would not allow anybody else to show us and which we ourselves would never have admitted. (1963, par. 706)

At this point in the treatment, I introduced Paul to the epic of *Gilgamesh*. He was able to equate the frightening dream figure with Enkidu and his more
conscious, rational “nice” false self with Gilgamesh. It seemed clear that part of his inner work was to become more aware of this unconscious “Enkidu energy,” to engage with it more consciously and eventually to find a way for these two aspects of his psyche to “become friends.”

Jung coined the term persona (derived from the Latin word for the mask worn by actors in classical times) to refer to the mask or face with which one confronts the world. Another word to describe this aspect of the personality is the false self. In the gay boy, as the sexual energy is shamed into the unconscious, the stage is set for the development of a compliant, “nice,” people pleasing false self or persona. The powerful stream of instinctual sexual libido carries with it not only sexual energy but also access to vital affects (Drescher, 1998a), such as anger, sadness or joy, and the ability to consciously experience the numinous (see above).

In subsequent sessions, Paul reported that the impulse to act out sexually persisted. He had not actually acted out but had engaged in cruising behaviors that had placed him at risk for anonymous sexual encounters. He was however better able to identify when “the addict” (Enkidu, or the man in the cowl in the above dream) was in control. This would occur when he passed an attractive man on the street and turning to see if there was reciprocal interest, looks or touching on the subway, or when visiting places where he had had casual sexual encounters previously. His task was to become more aware of when this “inner addict” was activated and to not allow it to take over control of the personality (that is, to not allow it “to grab the steering wheel of the car,” in the language of the above dream).

Paul began to explore more in depth the split that had occurred in his personality. He reported that when he became aware of his same-sex attraction to other little boys in the third grade, he became withdrawn and his lust for life decreased. During adolescence, it was as though someone flipped a switch and the world went dark. He recalled being lonely and miserable during those years and suffering a great deal. Shame and guilt were his constant companions resulting in self-laceration and a sense of inadequacy.

Around this time in the treatment, Paul had the following dream:

A giant was waking up at the bottom of a lake. It was scary. Paul hides behind a wall and hopes that the giant will step over him but is very afraid. Paul did want to see his face though, which was angular. Paul’s feeling was that this guy would do exactly as he wanted and wouldn’t care what others thought: “It’s my way or nothing!”

Paul’s association to the giant was that he was strong, powerful, hard and unyielding. This is a somewhat different male energy than in the first dream. Although larger than life and intimidating to the dream-ego, the giant appears to be more benevolent than the guy in the first dream. This indicates that some transformation of the negative masculine energy was occurring in
Paul’s psyche. We discussed the similarity of this dream image to the huge, hairy, primitive man that is discovered at the bottom of a pond in the fairy tale of “Iron John.” The giant represents in Paul’s psyche the despised and repressed positive masculine energy, namely, strength, the willingness to be seen, generativity, clarity and assertiveness. Paul remarked that for him sex represented taking what you wanted when you wanted it. It was thus in his split off sexual activity that Paul could express strength and assertiveness. We wondered together how this energy could be harnessed and expressed in other areas of his life as well.

In the sessions that followed, Paul expressed fears that if he were to say what he was thinking or feeling, that it may hurt me or do damage to me and that I would then reject him. He expressed sadness at his lost sense of wholeness, his loss of a connection with nature and his own inner rhythms. He was beginning to be able to recognize the “damage” to the “bridge” between left and right brain functions, resulting in the shut down of communication between these two aspects of his psyche. Shortly after having the above dream, Paul was able to express some of his angry, despairing affects directly to me as follows:

I am a bad unworthy person. No one would love me as I am. Jung wasn’t able to successfully treat alcoholics. There is nothing that any doctor or medical science in general can do for addicts. The insights are valid but can this stop the acting out? I am scared and desperate. I am mistrustful of you. I don’t think that you really believe in sexual addiction and are not educated in treating this problem.

My acceptance of this expression of distrust of me without judgment or retaliation allowed Paul to develop more trust in himself, in me, and in his own process. As our work progressed, Paul began to reflect more on how his cravings for sex were related to his need to be validated for who he is (and this would include his less “nice” more spontaneous self), his need for closeness, and his need to feel worthy and acceptable. He recognized that the more he was able to express his true feelings, the less need he felt to cruise or act out sexually. There was less need to use sex to sedate his discomforting feelings. At my suggestion, he started making crude primitive drawings in order to help him access his inner split off feelings, especially his rage. With the help of a drawing, he was able to let out his rage in a stream of consciousness in one of our sessions as follows:

Slashing, stabbing rage, murder, aggressor, doing to others what was done to me, like getting back at the whole heterosexual monolithic world. I am raging at the wounding inflicted on us by other men because we are gay. It is other men that enforce this through violence, homophobia, shaming. This has led to a total annihilation of my male
side, of my version of masculinity. How dare they make fun of me, of my “sissy” side, just because I was not like them? The unattainable fantasy of having sex with another man that had to be repressed for so many years: part of my rage is getting even, for being made to feel so one down. Having to repress this rage has led to me being cut off from any spontaneity, so I act out sexually. I feel alive when I act out sexually and I also feel my rage. Under the veneer of people-pleasing is rage. My male energy is very wounded. It is destructive, wounding, betraying, rageful—no warmth, generativity, kindness or empowerment there.

A wounding of the masculine energy because of gender non-conforming behaviors is almost a universal theme that emerges during the course of in-depth psychotherapy with gay men. Drescher points out that boys who grow up to be gay are often gender stressed (1998b, 24). Subsequently, Paul reported that when he was able to connect with his murderous rage and desperation more consciously, the urge to act out sexually decreased. During childhood, he had been afraid that if he expressed his true feelings directly, his parents would withdraw love, he would be abandoned and at risk for dying. He expressed this in the transference relationship with me in the course of our work together, as discussed above. In adulthood, he feared that if he dared to ask for what he needed or expressed his true feelings, something awful would happen or he would be abandoned.

Around this time, Paul had an episode of sexual acting out behavior, and reported feeling heartsick, sad and horrified. I again suggested a process of active imagination in order to engage the “Enkidu energy” and to allow it to have a voice. This is how he expressed himself:

I like to hide, in the shadows. It is exciting, seeing but not being seen. It is safer. I can leap out at the prey. I like my freedom. Nobody tells me what to do. I can come and go as I want. I don’t have to answer to anyone. I like my strength and I live by my senses and wit, listening for sounds of what I can hunt. I am tough and in my prime. I don’t have mercy and don’t care about others. Phallus nourishes me, gives me life, makes me feel alive. It’s my god, manna, communion, my connection to aliveness, to life . . . survival, food, feeling good. I see myself bringing it to my mouth and just feeding on it. I’ll kill anything that gets in the way. I just press it in my mouth and hold it there until I am fed (emphasis mine). He (referring to the Gilgamesh or intellectual, rational aspect of Paul’s psyche) won’t let me eat. He stops me because he is a coward. He thinks that the way to survive is by being nice and by not taking what you want. Take the pleasure wherever you can find it and enjoy it, revel in it and don’t worry what others think. I starve when he worries about what others think. I feel like a pent-up frightened animal that can’t get my food. I’m a great lover. I like sweating and screaming. I’m
I experienced this as a cathartic release of energy that was pouring forth from a deep level of Paul’s psyche. It appears from the above that the instinctual or “Enkidu” energy needs the connection with the powerful phallus or Life Force energy in order to be nourished by it. Paul seemed to be connecting with a passion that had all but been extinguished. Something seemed to be shifting for him. He subsequently reported a resurgence of energy and interest in life. It was also becoming easier to identify the shaming voices. It was as though his boundaries had become clearer and he was better able to protect what was important to him. “Gilgamesh” and “Enkidu” seemed to be in the process of at least becoming aware of each other. He reported having close encounters with his inner “Enkidu” but no acting out sexually occurred. He now was better able to converse with “Enkidu” and engage him more consciously. This energy no longer was being allowed to usurp the personality. If he engaged in cruising behaviors, he was able to stay more consciously present during these potential sexual encounters, aware of the risk of disease, of the potential harm to his relationship with his partner and what he’d feel like afterwards. He realized that it was acceptable to feel lonely, sad, horn, unfulfilled. He could just sit with these feelings and did not need to do anything to make them go away. He no longer needed to sedate these affects with sex. He no longer felt compelled to act out sexually.

Paul reported a resurgence of energy in several areas of his life: his work, his creativity, in the relationship with his partner and with his friends. I would like to draw the reader’s attention to the above section in italics. This is a spontaneous description of the unconscious “numinous” energy discussed above associated with the phallus. He reported that his sex life with his partner had also improved. He was aware at times of experiencing powerful truly primal sexual energies when making love with his partner. Sometimes it felt as though he just wanted to worship his partner’s phallus. The split off numinous energy, formerly projected onto the phallus of strangers where it was worshipped, was beginning to be experienced in the context of the relationship with his partner. The excitement affect, formerly only experienced in the context of anonymous sexual encounters, was also being experienced while making love with his partner.

Paul has not had any further sexual encounters that he would regard as sexually compulsive behavior for the past several months. He continues to struggle with the “Enkidu” energy that still at times wants to usurp the personality and take over. However, he is now better able to express most of his feelings more appropriately, including the not so “nice” ones, and no longer needs sex to sedate them. He has discussed his awareness that he can celebrate his life in ways that are not only sexual. He is beginning to be aware
that the numinous can be experienced in other circumstances as well. He is learning to “celebrate” (that is, connect with the numinous) through creativity and is giving himself time to express this. He is aware that he can experience the numinous in ways that do not only have to be “exciting,” such as the joy of being in nature, the pleasure of listening to music and the enjoyment of being more present in his body. He is also beginning to experience this numinous energy in his sexual expression with his partner. It would seem that the “Gilgamesh” and “Enkidu” aspects of his psyche at least have a working relationship now, even if they are not as yet “the best of friends.” The “bridge” which allows for a free interchange of energy between left and right hemispheres of the brain is becoming more functional. His awareness of these powerful energies in his inner world and how they influence his life, his willingness to engage them, as well as his ability to accept his limitations and strengths, may allow him to acquire wisdom. That was the final outcome of the quest of Gilgamesh. He ultimately had to accept the reality of his own humanity and mortality. He came to accept the pain of the loss of his beloved friend, Enkidu, and finally returned to Uruk to rule as king. It is as a result of this acceptance of our own humanity and lot in life that we become wiser and can participate in the joy of living our lives as fully as possible.

CONCLUSION

It is impossible to convey the complexity of what occurs when two people are working at a depth level with the powerful forces of the psyche. I have only focussed on relevant material in my work with Paul in order to illustrate my particular way of working within a Jungian framework. The material I have presented was selected to illustrate the split that occurs in many gay men between intellect and instinct, left and right brain hemispheres, as a result primarily of shaming related to homosexual impulses and gender non-conforming behaviors. This profoundly affects the ability to have intimate relationships in which empathic connection and sexuality can co-exist in the context of a love relationship. It was my intention to illustrate not only that sexual energy is split off and repressed in the unconscious but many other vital affects as well. I wished to illustrate the connection between sexuality and “numinous” experiences and this also influenced my selection of clinical material. Working with the intrapsychic energies as they initially constellated in Paul’s psyche, by actively engaging them and observing their capacity to transform from one form to another, I hoped to illustrate a teleological approach to psychotherapy. However, I also incorporated aspects of Paul’s childhood, his family relationships, and his interactions with peers when important to the overall treatment process. I am deeply indebted to Paul and all those who grant me the privilege of facilitating their processes.
I have read much about what causes, perpetuates, and triggers sexual addiction and am deeply committed to a twelve-step recovery program. Even so, remaining sexually sober in the face of addictive fantasies and impulses has been difficult and often takes considerable effort. I am not alone in this. I see many in my sexual addiction recovery program also struggling to main-
tain basic abstinence from their bottom-line addictive behaviors. I have found the Jungian-oriented, eclectic psychotherapy that John offers effective in strengthening my abstinence and sobriety.

For me, the most important aspect of working with John has been the building of a relationship where my trust and sense of safety were sufficient to expose and explore my real feelings and thoughts. This in turn enabled me to risk experiencing and expressing feelings in a different way. The safety of the container created in our therapeutic work itself became the catalyst for the change and healing I sought. The building of this container took a long time. A critical step in this process occurred when I realized that John was not going to shame my sexuality or me, when I understood emotionally that he was focused on helping me to stop shaming myself. This taught me the value of a therapist who has dealt with his own issues. Though this is something we never discussed directly, I believe that John could only have provided this safe place for me by first working through his own sexual shame.

In the safe space provided by the container of my therapy sessions, I was able to experience the realities described by the affect theory presented in the first section of this paper. I sought to act out sexually as a way to medicate the momentary shame, fear, and anxiety arising from specific situations or triggers in my life. In the course of my therapy, I learned I could both tolerate and endure these emotions in the moment without a catastrophe happening. Also, I learned how to soothe myself and release or counteract these feelings so that they didn’t persist or escalate. Through therapy, I came to know that I also used sexual acting out behaviors to punish both others and myself. Acting out expressed the rage I felt towards men in general, my father in particular, and the deep and painful oppression of the monolithic heterosexist world perpetrated on gay men. I learned that underneath fantasies of sexually acting out lay a craving for attention, affection, and affirmation—a craving that I could meet better in other ways. I realized that addictive sex was a way of rewarding myself with excitement and passion.

Addictive sex was also the dark way I experienced a sense of the holy—a sense of truly being alive. I began to allow myself to experience passion and holiness in healthier ways in other areas of my life, specifically in my relationship with my partner, my creative life, my work, and my contact with nature. An experience that happened on a hike sums this up for me. Hearing an eerie cry, I peered into the mist of a sheltered arm of the sea and saw a merganser, free and wild, lifting its open beak into the mist and singing with a sort of ecstasy. Feelings awoke in me of aliveness and passion deeper and much more satisfying than those I felt momentarily when acting out sexually. And unlike acting out, I could remember and recount this experience without releasing a torrent of shame!

Recovery from sexual addiction has not meant making my sex life unim-
important, but instead has led to it becoming important in different ways. The worship of the phallus comes naturally to me. The shameful, fearful part of me cringes as I write this; however, there is nothing I like better than taking my partner’s hard cock in my mouth and bringing him to orgasm. It is fully equal to the pleasure of my own orgasm and seems something at once intimate and cosmic and wholly engrossing. I believe that allowing myself to have this experience with my partner helps release psychic energies, the knotting and cross-wiring of which results in compulsive sexual acting out.

I relate to the worship of the phallus primarily through the notion of spirituality. It means that sex with my partner and the sexual dimension of my interactions with others and the world at large becomes a gateway for vitality, meaning, the free flow of feeling, the experience of wholeness, and connection with the divine. My ability to regard sucking cock as a legitimate form of worship stretches my conception of the spiritual. When I think of this, I hear a stern and punitive voice say: “Thou shalt worship no other gods before me.” But is this God speaking or William Blake’s Nobodaddy? The Self in Jungian terms (God, wholeness) does not preempt the archetypes but flows in and through them and their interactions. Perhaps it can be best said that the archetypes and their interactions exist in and because of the Self. However I conceptualize this in theory or in my therapeutic work, seeing hot sex with my partner as a worshipful act opens me to experience spiritual energy, serves as an antidote to sexual shame, and is healing. So I have welcomed this idea, trying neither to cling to it heavy-handedly nor to look to it as yet another way of medicating uncomfortable feelings.

I found the Jungian bent of our therapy sessions helpful. The many vivid dreams I had during our therapeutic work served as guideposts or trail markers on my journey, windows into the deep workings of my soul. They shed light on the progress I had made and the work that was yet to be done. Likewise, working with active imagination and fantasy during sessions and bringing in artwork I created between sessions helped me connect with the creative power and wisdom of my psyche. Exploring mythological analogues to my struggles not only gave me insight into them and metaphors to help me in my daily struggle with addiction, it made me feel less alone—people in other times and cultures have struggled with these same issues. John’s involvement and guidance in this process were essential. I was as apt to interpret a dream out of my perfectionism and shame, for instance, as out of connection with my deeper center. When the perfectionism and shame became active in the symbolic work, John extended a firm hand to help me observe them and choose another way.

In our sessions, I was able to face to some extent my fear of death, the great linchpin that keeps the cycle of shame and anxiety fueled and running like a juggernaut. John helped me peek beneath the surface of this fear and
emotionally experience death simply as a part of life. I believe he could only do this because he has to some extent dealt with his own fear of death.

Finally, the experience of reading the drafts of this article and adding to it has been a powerful healing experience. It has helped me understand the place I started from, where I am now and why I feel healthier. Through it, I appreciate how far I have come and how far I still have to go.
ADDICTIONS IN THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY