



# Reclaiming the Authentic Self: Dynamic Psychotherapy with Gay Men

*Carlton Cornett*

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## **Reclaiming the Authentic Self: Dynamic Psychotherapy with Gay Men** Carlton Cornett

American culture is overwhelmingly heterosexual, filled with the symbolism, rites of passage, and rituals that affirm and strengthen heterosexual identity. Homosexuality is scorned, disparaged, and treated with contempt in myriad subtle and obvious ways. The homosexual boy who becomes the homosexual man is bombarded by assaults on his identity and self-esteem. In this milieu of rejection, the homosexual man cannot help but internalize some self-hatred. Taking in society's contempt for him leads the gay man to become alienated from who he essentially and authentically is. In an attempt to achieve some acknowledgment, he often adopts a false self more pleasing to his parents and the larger culture. However, hiding his personality behind a veneer completes his alienation from the true self underneath. As Carlton Cornett ably demonstrates in *Reclaiming the Authentic Self*, to be successful with the gay man, dynamic psychotherapy must focus on the creation of an environment that invites the patient to discover and create his authenticity. In addition to allowing this true self to be revealed, the work must involve the integration of feelings and values that previously were rejected in order to minimize narcissistic injury. The psychotherapeutic environment also must acknowledge the gay man's constant struggle to maintain his identity in a hostile world that continues to reject who he is.

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