



JOHN RECHY

PABLO!

**"One of the few original American writers of the last century."**  
**—Gore Vidal**

## Praise for the work of John Rechy

### *City of Night*

"A ground-breaking book . . . observing a whole new array of characters . . . many for the first time in American literature. . . . A classic American novel."  
—Edmund White, *New York Review of Books*

"Probably no novel published in this decade is so complete, so well held together, and so important as *City of Night*."  
—Larry McMurtry, *Houston Post*

" . . . a remarkable book . . . Mr. Rechy writes in an authentic jive-like slang. [It] has the unmistakable ring of candor and truth."  
—Peter Buitenhuis, *New York Times Book Review*

"A stunning piece of writing."  
—David Bowie

"When John Rechy's first novel, *City of Night*, appeared in 1963, there had never been anything quite like it. Its urgent, syntax-scrambled style [was] a wonderful shock to the reading eye . . . rangy and full of bold riffs as a Charlie Parker album. . . . Display[ing] a throwaway brilliance."  
—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"An American classic, with its loner hero, its juke joints and neon signs, its restless shifting from city to city . . . a hybrid of *On the Road* and *Catcher in the Rye*."  
—*Independent on Sunday* (London)

"The novel has not aged a bit. . . . one reads [it] eagerly. . . . We understand better its exceptional authenticity, its premonitory vision, its subtle literary innovations. The characters . . . have the tragic complexity of Vautrin, Charlus or Morel, and the aggressive solitude of the marginal people of Jean Genet. . . . Its poetry is not ostentatious nor imposed. . . . The protagonists are individuals of flesh and blood."  
—Hugo Marsan, *Le Monde* (France)

### *The Coming of the Night*

" . . . very nearly touches greatness."  
—*Salon*

### *The Miraculous Day of Amalia Gómez*

"Rechy, himself Mexican American, probes the dark underside of the American dream in this powerful portrait of one day in the life of a Mexican-American woman and her shattered family. [He] scorchingly evokes the prejudice faced by Mexican Americans . . . poverty, gang warfare, illegal border crossings and visions of salvation amid hopelessness."  
—*Publishers Weekly*

"A triumph, a sad, beautiful and loving book rooted in cultural experience as well as deep intuition . . . Amalia comes to stunning and heartbreaking life."  
—*Newsday*

"[Amalia] makes the reader rejoice . . . [She] demonstrates startlingly and brilliantly that not all heroines must have lives of heroic proportion."  
—*San Antonio Express-News*

"[Rechy] has a tremendous gift of insight into the lives of Hispanic women living in the barrio. [Amalia's] spirit lives in every woman who is oppressed."  
—*Albuquerque Journal*

### ***After the Blue Hour***

"Rechy continues to write with such elegance and lyricism, descending into raw scenes of human longing and violence . . . His language remains lapidary and hypnotic, never fading in its own control."  
—Susan Straight, *Los Angeles Times*

"John Rechy is as bold as ever. When Gore Vidal said that Rechy was 'one of the few original American writers of the last century,' he was right. There's no other writer like him, and with the publication of *After the Blue Hour*, he shows no signs of letting up."  
—Ken Harvey, *Lambda Literary*

"Shocking, erotic and suspenseful . . . His fiction is as provocative and electric as ever. Rechy has explored the intersection of identity, sexual yearning and morality throughout his career, but never with the clarity he exhibits in *After the Blue Hour*."  
—Jonathan Parks-Ramage, *OUT Magazine*

"Rechy's gift for storytelling and erotic embellishment shows no signs of wear-and-tear . . . Mysterious, intriguing and brashly amatory, Rechy's take on gamesmanship, power, domination and deception is a welcome return to form for the author and a wild ride indeed."  
—Jim Piechota, *The Bay Area Reporter*

"Tense metafiction, pungent with desire and emotional cruelty . . . Rechy's prose is lean and sinewy . . . The novel is unflinching in its candor even as its events have a tantalizing aura of mystery."  
—*Publishers Weekly*

" . . . a steamy tale . . . with a kind of Gatsby-by-way-of-Henry James subplot. Beautifully written."  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

### ***The Life and Adventures of Lyle Clemens***

" . . . a kind of cross between Mark Twain and Terry Southern, a comic tour de force . . . a truly heartfelt book."  
—*Publishers Weekly*

### ***Our Lady of Babylon***

“Eve tells her version of the creation. Adam and Eve know they are naked and they come to know each other . . . John Rechy’s new novel puts more flesh on the bones of this ancient story . . . wonderfully erotic flesh.”

—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

### ***Marilyn’s Daughter***

“ . . . a grand slam . . . a massive, magnetic story by a major American novelist writing at the peak of his powers.”

—Richard Hall, *San Francisco Chronicle*

### ***The Fourth Angel***

“A tour de force . . . a joy to read.”

—*Washington Post*

“A powerful work that may very well be Rechy’s best.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

### ***The Sexual Outlaw***

“ . . . an intelligent, persuasive and in its way a heartbreaking manifesto . . . ”

—*New York Times Book Review*

### ***Bodies and Souls***

“ . . . a memorable feast . . . powerful, chilling . . . extraordinary.”

—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“Brilliant portraits of modern lives . . . superb.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“ . . . memorable . . . masterful . . . one of the most important novels of the year.”

—*Dallas Times-Herald*

### ***Rushes***

“ . . . a tour de force . . . like peering into the gates of hell.”

—*Los Angeles Times Book Review*

### ***About My Life and the Kept Woman***

“ . . . a marvelous autobiography by a writer whose life is as interesting as his fiction.”

—*Publishers Weekly*



# JOHN RECHY

# PABLO!



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*Recovering the past, creating the future*

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For my mother,  
Guadalupe Flores Rechy



And the soul must wander  
aimlessly until the sun and  
the moon shall fuse.

—Mayan Legend

# *THE PAST: The Village*

## ONE: The Girl, the Man and the Woman

### I

"It is the Xtabay."

The old man squinted to see through the rain.

"It is the Xtabay," repeated the frightened voice of his wife huddled behind him. "It is she who lures men with her unholy beauty." She crossed herself and recited a prayer, unaware of the rain wetting her.

And her memory sang the words of the evil Xtabay, and she could almost hear the illusive voice calling like music played by the wind on trees,

*"Tuux ca bin?*

*Coten uayé . . ."*

beckoning the old man to come to her, luring him as she had lured others to their death,

"Where are you going?

Come with me. . . ."

"It is only a girl who is lost and has fainted," said the old man. "It is not an evil spirit. I would feel it." For once in a village far away he had been a holy man, and he was warned of evil as others are warned of rain. "We must help her."

"She is pretending sleep to lure you." The woman's voice was hardly audible over the rain. "Say a prayer and leave her,"

the old woman demanded. The sharp claws of her ancient hands would not release her husband's arm.

And as the man proceeded toward the form of the girl encompassed by the fantastic green of the plants, he mumbled something and crossed himself.

The old woman remained behind, clasping her bony hands. From the distance she saw her husband kneel before the girl, and fear enveloped her like a shroud. She took a step forward. The earth would open and swallow the man. She would hear the wicked laughter of the Xtabay, then the mocking song mingling with the sound of the rain.

But none of this happened. She saw, instead, the old man lift the girl in his arms, saw him walk back with her, still asleep or fainted deceptively, pretending whichever she wanted.

"She has fainted from exhaustion," said the man as he approached the livid old woman trembling with religious fear.

"No," said the woman, moving back frantically as the body was brought closer to her. "You do not understand. Her beauty hides evil." As she moved farther back, she watched the face of the girl in fascination, and she understood why men were lured so easily to their destruction. This young girl in her husband's arms, evil as she was, was as beautiful as the flower of the Tzacam, into which she converted herself after bringing unholy death to men.

"If it were the Xtabay, I would feel it in my heart," said the man who in a village far away had been a holy man.

"But the face—the body," persisted the woman in an awed whisper, "they could destroy even a holy man such as you."

The man walked into the house with the girl. The wife followed a distance behind.

Inside, the sound of the rain was unreal, ominous, and the woman crossed herself again as she hurried to the corner of the

one room, where the live skeleton of an ancient woman shrouded with brown skin crouched. It was the mother of the wife.

The man laid the girl gently in the hammock.

"She is very wet," he said solemnly to his wife. "Take her clothes."

The woman only retreated farther into the corner, cringing on the floor beside the fading skeleton shrouded in the horrible brown skin, thin enough that the bones were visible. And they were stark and white. The wife clung to her mother, pressing herself against the disintegrating body, clasping at the torn clothes, so that the two old women were like desiccated eagles feeding on each other.

"He has brought the evil woman into this house," the man's wife whispered to the skeleton of her mother. "He has brought the Xtabay inside."

The mother stared fixedly before her. Her eyes were covered by a thin white mist, and she never blinked. She heard only one word through the vortex of her time-destroyed mind, and that word whirled around and around, and it echoed, "Xtabay." She would have raised one terrified trembling hand, but her mind stopped thinking and she remained silent.

When the man saw that his wife would not come, he began to remove the girl's clothes. He stopped abruptly, turning away. The ancient hand touched the smooth flesh of the girl's arm. Quickly, he withdrew it. He gazed at the face, at the closed eyes, the black hair moist on her face. He turned away fiercely.

On the hammock, the girl was breathing audibly. She could hear the soft rain even in the stupor into which she had fallen. She heard the thunder, once, and it burst loudly in her mind and then entered the realm of silence. She spun toward unconsciousness, into the world of pure motion.



"Look, he is lost, he cannot move, she has paralyzed him, he is lost to the evil Xtabay." The wife's voice rose hysterical and insane. She embraced the skin-shrouded skeleton beside her.

Once again, the name reverberated in the mother's ears, and, her mind clinging to the word this time, she began to chant from the wasteland of her memory the legend of the Xtabay, to chant like a priest the words long buried in her mind, confusing her own life with the life of the other, the lonely hunter of her tale.

"She who lures all men . . . searching until time ends for physical love—searching in death because in life she denied the spiritual . . . to fill her empty yearning." She chuckled mirthlessly. "Lost . . ." she breathed. "Lost searching a substitute for salvation. . . ." Then she trembled, as if completely alive again. "And I became a flower full of thorns . . . But the Xkeban, my sister, who loved in life, smells of beauty."

The old man retreated from the hammock, and in a moment he returned to cover the girl's body. He who was a holy man, who was very, very old—and closer now to the spirits and the great god, he who had even denied his wife to remain pure—he had almost surrendered to the evil of desire.

"And the man saw her standing at the door, and he let her in, for it was raining," the wheezing voice of the mother continued. "My father, who is dead, the Xtabay lied . . . but he did not believe her, for he recognized the luring, sweet voice of evil. . . . For all evil is sweet. . . . And as he held me in life—before my wandering death—I strained to reach his young body, not his soul, and then it came to me like a god. . . . And he burned a strand of her hair and buried the ashes, to keep the evil from him. . . ."

For the first time, the wife became aware of the mother's voice. And remembering the ancient charm, she stared at the girl's long hair.