

Abstract

Most people are guilty of worrying about what others think of them, seeking approval, and finding comfort when accepted, their lives validated. In “City of Night,” John Rechy suggests that these behaviors are characteristic of most people but also contribute to pain in those who feel rejected by others. Rechy says the marginalized characters exist as a culture separate from the dominant culture, the night distinct from the day, with people resisting, and advocating for visibility. In “NEIL: Masquerade”, the unnamed narrator and Neil try to find acceptance from one another through photography and dressing up, but neither can validate the other, causing both to feel rejected, with both behaving aggressively in response. Neil fails to understand that the narrator is interested in dressing up to appear more attractive and valued and inadvertently invalidates the narrator’s desires, making them feel unaccepted. Similarly, the narrator invalidates Neil for his desire to be perceived by others as someone strong and dominant. The narrator refers to dressing up as “costuming” and feels Neil’s desire to find acceptance by photographing people with similar sexual preferences is an attempt to rationalize socially unacceptable sexual fantasies. Neil feels rejected for his gender and sexual identity, and when their shared interest in finding acceptance through photography brings them together again, they lash out violently, furthering the already existing harm. They cannot recognize that they are both a product of their place within society, and grow to resent each other when they could have worked together.