

Vampire, Not Now!

A Review of Michael Schiefelbein's Vampire Vow

BY JOEL NICHOLS

Who doesn't like gay vampires? Especially sexy ones named Victor who started life as a Roman soldier, was in love with Jesus Christ, and then spent 2000 years masquerading as a monk in order to get back at his love? Michael Schiefelbein's novel, which is topping the gay new release and best-seller lists, starts with the above storyline and goes nowhere.

Victor tramples through Jerusalem raping and murdering wenches and boys. He takes what he wants although his commander, Pontius Pilate, orders him to stop after he beats a prostitute and her child. His reasons were being refused when he wanted to do, "the usual things...enter her backside...her tongue inside me...to bind her." In typical callous Roman nature, Pilate is only angry because of damage control to the city's priests and not because Victor is a sex criminal.

The one person he wants is Jesus, whom he calls Joshu. Joshu refused his sexual advances because of his religious devotion and, because Victor loves him, he never tries to take him by force. Victor, after he is made a vampire by a seer in a confusing, opaque scene, whom he goes to see to for an elixir "temper [his] anger." When he enters her shop, she greets him by

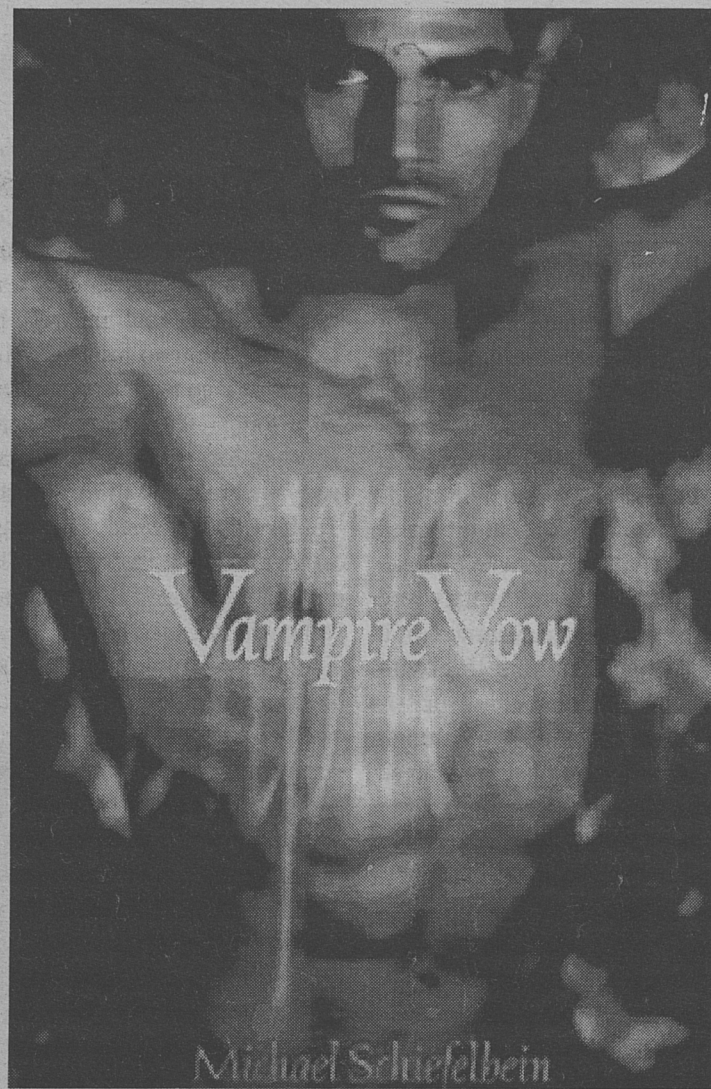
name and says, "Welcome to my lair." The fact that Schiefelbein made her a seer made me laugh and that she had a lair caused giggles to erupt. When prose is bland enough that I have to entertain myself by laughing at the style alone, there is something wrong. Victor becomes a vampire and has one last encounter with the now crucified and resurrected Joshu, who again refuses to join him and rises to heaven instead. Victor swears to the reader to, "avenge [his] loss on this pompous being who had deprived [him] of the only one [he] ever loved."

After his first thousand years of raping and pillaging Europe by night and watching Rome fall, this revenge takes the form of moving from one monastery to another for the thousand years, destroying each one and moving on to the next. Now Brother Victor, he has made his way to the New World, to a group of Dominicans in the Appalachians. Conveniently, there are at least two hunks of monk-meat at this new monastery who immediately catch his eye, Michael and Luke. One is a simple country boy whom Victor uses sexually and toys with, the other is the one man other than Joshu, Victor might be able to love. The plot plods on without a twist in sight and ends about 150 pages and a lot of blood,

butt-sex, and religious ecstasy later.

In the middle of the book, it's impossible to tell that the setting is a monastery. After all, Victor pays close enough attention to Bother Michael that he knows, "invariably he lifted weights on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings." Victor starts showing up, too, and tells the reader that he has seen so many monks like Michael through the years: "cocky, full of themselves, aware of their brawn and handsome features, or their intelligence and charisma." This description strikes me as either a severe romanticization of monks or a revision of the standard figure of a bumbling, middle-aged monk presented (think Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*). It's hard to say, because the author himself spent ten years studying for the priesthood. In an interview released by Alyson, his publisher, he said that his, "imagination is shaped by Catholicism. . .in seminary [he] experienced the kind of intimate life with other men that Victor experiences." It is no shock that men in fraternal organizations or religious orders have intimate and sometimes erotic relationships, but the image of these monks as hunks is too much for me.

The book moves fast and is not the worst way to spend a



couple of hours on a rainy day. Schiefelbein, who teaches writing and literature in Memphis and took his Ph.D. in English from the University of Maryland, has a book coming out from a scholarly press about the effect of Catholicism on Protestant Novels. Two more books of his are coming from Alyson, a sequel to *Vampire Vow* and *Blood Brothers*, a revenge story also set in a monastery scheduled to come out next year.

I did enjoy the attitude the author maintains towards his faith. It would have been easy

to give in to the urge to make Jesus not only gay, but also sexual. The betrayal perceived by Victor was the most subtle aspect of the whole novel; the Roman's obsession with the other man leading to heartbreak rather than an actual erotic relationship surprised me, but does not affect the whole text enough to make up for the blunt and over-the-top style.

Joel Nichols studies German at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. He grew up in Brandon, VT.

Protect

your savings
long-term

Almost one in two Americans will spend some time in a nursing home after age 65. Now is the time to start protecting yourself and your loved ones.

- Medicare does not cover custodial care
- The average length of a nursing home stay is two and a half years.
- Nursing home costs average \$50,000 per year

I can help you determine whether long-term care insurance is an option for you and provide you with information on plans, costs and available options. For more information on how to protect yourself against the rising cost of long-term care, call or stop by my office today.

(Source: Shoppers Guide to Long Term Care Insurance 1999)

Antoine T. Williams
3198 Shelburne Rd
Shelburne, VT 05482
985-9965
www.edwardjones.com



Member SIPC

Edward Jones

Serving Individual Investors Since 1871



URBAN TRAVEL

Falling Prices!!!!

Affiliated with TZELL New England
edesilets@tne.tzell.com

AIRFARE ONLY:

EUROPE

Amsterdam	from \$456
Athens	from \$431
Barcelona	from \$420
Berlin	from \$388
Brussels	from \$356
Lisbon	from \$418
London	from \$318
Paris	from \$348
Prague	from \$393
Rome	from \$418
Stockholm	from \$386
Vienna	from \$411
Venice	from \$421

CARIBBEAN:

7NIGHT PACKAGES

Aruba	from \$499
St. Barths	from \$1099
St. Lucia	from \$799
St. Martin	from \$798
St. Thomas	from \$850

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE IN TRAVEL.

FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE MISSING!

Contact us at: 617-482-5610 or 1-800-504-9075 • 20 Melrose St., Boston MA

All rates based on availability and are subject to change.

WWW.GLEEIMAGE.COM/URBANTRAVEL

