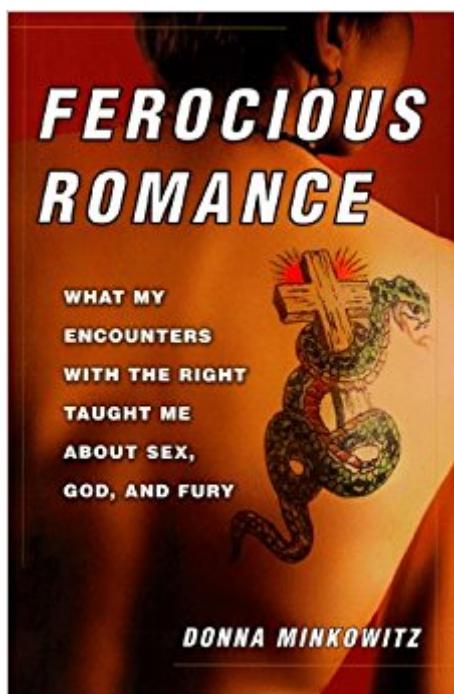


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Ferocious Romance: What My Encounters With The Right Taught Me About Sex, God, And Fury



Synopsis

In Ferocious Romance, Donna Minkowitz meets her worst enemies -- and discovers herself in the process. On assignment for The Village Voice, Minkowitz reported on the religious groups of the far right. She went to a Christian Coalition convention disguised as a delegate, infiltrated the Promise Keepers (disguised as a man) for an award-winning article in Ms., and spent a week with a pastor who protests at the funerals of gay men who died of AIDS. But as this radical lesbian feminist went undercover and got to know her "subjects", she was startled to learn how much she had in common with the activists she feared and opposed. As Minkowitz discovered parallels between the extremes of religious fundamentalism on the right and sexual liberation groups on the left, she began to explore the connections between love and hate, between victim and victimizer. The result is a personal story of one woman's battle with her inner demons -- and a startling overview of our contemporary wars of sex, religion, and gender.

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Customer Reviews

When Donna Minkowitz, a contributing writer to the Village Voice, Ms., and Out (among others), got in drag as a 16-year-old boy (complete with baseball cap and fake mustache), she soon found herself surrounded by taut-bodied, sweaty men in tight-fitting T-shirts and well-worn Levi's embracing and holding hands. But she wasn't sneaking into a gay bar: this was a Promise Keepers convention, where "family men" were enslaving themselves before their master, Jesus, as they learned to ask forgiveness for their sins and demanded the return of their traditional patriarchal role

from their families. In her brave new book, *Ferocious Romance*, Minkowitz investigates the Religious Right, and in so doing draws some unexpected parallels between that culture and the diametrically opposed worlds of the S/M community, ACT-UP, Queer Nation, and *Sex Panic!*; she also finds herself identifying with many of the people she meets. This is a poignant journey in which Minkowitz comes face-to-face with the very people she has protested against as an activist; the experience leads her to explore her relationships to organized religion, women, feminism, sex, friendship, romance, and rage. A thoughtful and unconventional memoir--at turns harrowing and enlightening--that hits straight at the reader's heart and mind. --Kera Bolonik

Minkowitz, a lesbian activist, brings a refreshing lack of rancor and an appealing open-mindedness to encounters that would normally be fodder for the most extreme rhetoric of the culture wars. In pursuit of an article for the *Village Voice*, she set off to engage the religious right, her perceived enemy, mostly by infiltrating their ranks at rallies. To her surprise, she was almost wooed. In chapters alternating between experiences with Christian groups (e.g., the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, the Promise Keepers, Focus on the Family) and her life among her own set (S/M workshops, gay rights marches), Minkowitz details how she came to feel an affinity "with people who cackle, ululate, and bray their praise of God." Minkowitz, who calls herself "Dionysian," feels at home with what she sees as the eroticism of charismatic Christianity ("my people, gays and lesbians, have been known to get pretty ecstatic themselves"). Her writing, never strident or polemical, is both earnest and breezy, and sometimes funny. After a while, however, it becomes clear that Minkowitz is content to keep her account subjective and impressionistic: she offers little contextual understanding of the differences among Christian groups or of the wider ramifications of their beliefs?or, for that matter, of her own. She concludes by offering a purely personal notion of virtue: "I could see there was no redeemer. No enslaver. Only other people. I approached them with great joy." Minkowitz's book is notable for its generosity of spirit more than for its depth. In the end, she seems to view conservative Christianity as just another a lifestyle choice. Agent, Jed Mattes.

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This book was about an extremely liberal lesbian who went undercover to a number of right-wing religious events such as a promise keepers rally (where she disguised herself as a 16-year-old boy) the Toronto Blessing, which was a famous super Pentecostal group that was so over-the-top it was even kicked out of its own denomination, a Christian ministry that did makeovers for women, and a meeting with focus on the family executives.. I found her observations very interesting, I always

wondered what goes on in promise keepers rallies were no women are allowed. The First-hand account of the Toronto Blessing was good too. but I have no idea what the chapter on sadomasochism was doing in the book. All it did was gross me out and make me dislike the author. Plus I found it boring. I just didn't see why she went on and on about it so much. I understand she was trying to draw a correlation between extreme religion and sadomasochism, but I had a hard time understanding the points that she was trying to make with this. I understand that both these things can be cathartic and provoke strong emotions, but I think she overstates the connection, or rather, that pretty much the whole connection is only in her own somewhat warped mind. I found myself really disliking her during and after that chapter, which was kind of unfortunate. That chapter turned me off so much that I'm knocking a whole star off my rating and gave it 3 stars, because just left such a bad taste in my mouth

I can't remember the last time I read a book that I immediately wanted to read again. Minkowitz's narrative of sex, gay rights and the Christian Right is one of those books that you could read twice in a row and be enriched in new ways the second time. It would have been easy for Minkowitz to bash the Promise Keepers and Focus on the Family -- instead, she seeks connection with them on matters of faith, healing and exctasy. She also makes startling connections between S/M and Christianity that will surprise you and make you think. Minkowitz never falters in her condemnation of the Right for its stance on matters of the family, sexuality and gay rights -- yet her ability to find connections with her political enemies and discover common ground are inspiring. Hands down the smartest, funniest and most moving book I've read all year. A must read for anyone interested in religion, love, sex, violence, anger and forgiveness -- in other words, just about everyone.

Whew, Minkowitz really bit off a huge chunk here. From infiltrating the Promise Keepers (and oh what a controlling bunch that is!), to interviewing the right wing "Focus" staff, she leaves no stone unturned and no sacred cow undefiled. As a lesbian and a writer, she sought to expose the right wing ultraconservative religious factions, but ended up identifying with them on many levels. I got this book because I wanted to read her explorations and hopefully, her exposing of their frailties but was disappointed that she did little exposing. The christian groups she visited seemed more pitiful than volcanic. I wanted more in the way of bashing, I guess. As a survivor of sexual abuse at the hand of an evangelical minister, I wanted her to say more about the hypocrisy that exists in right wing christian churches, not to identify with them. I wanted more of a down and dirty expose' of their manipulation and scare tactics. I wanted her to validate what I had experienced in the guise of

religion. I wanted her to stand up in the "glamour" workshop and get that makeover, and proclaim that she is lesbian.... and she didn't. Her juxtaposition of an S/M lifestyle with the ultraconservative religious right seemed out of place, but gave the reader an insight as to where she is as an individual. Interesting read, great prose, excellent imagery, but I hoped for more.

Journalist Minkowitz goes undercover in different Religious Right groups (including the Promise Keepers and a Christian ladies' makeover seminar) and compares the desires she sees expressed in these groups to those she sees expressed among her own queer Left. She starts out seeing the Religious Right as enemies, and without changing her fundamental political views, she discovers that desires for connection, unconditional love, ecstasy, transcendence and transformation shape both of these opposing movements. A fascinating and interesting read!

Wow. I was impressed with her willingness and ability to see the best in the religious right extremists, but when she revealed from how far on the other end of the spectrum she was writing I was dumbfounded. Her personal immersion in Sadomasochism juxtaposed against the controlling sweetness of the far right was jarring. I have long considered myself liberal but living as I do in the Bible belt I now find myself up on the fence fighting vertigo.

This book has gross errors. The woman's organization to which the author refers, is not what she made it out to be at all. What she actually attended was a church. The church invited a woman's ministry from elsewhere in the country to come in and, both speak to the women who attend the church and to do a teaching that might benefit women as they seek employment. One reviewer accepted the author's perverse depiction and reaction to this event and called what really was a church as "a kaffeeklatsch of Christian women." Factual errors lead to the spreading of misinformation. Another disturbing thing is that she day dreamed of taking a knife and cutting a woman minister's body up into little pieces. Also in error is the idea that she was so courageous that she walked into the far right's territory. The author isn't as brave as one might think: she had her parents standing on either side of her! Also, the event which she attended was in a church where many of the ministers and leadership voted for Clinton! This she depicts as the "far right?"

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