Sex and Love attempts to put sex back into the context of the relationships we create. It succeeds most clearly in putting sex firmly into the context of the motivations we have for forming and sustaining sexual relationships. It uses the concept of desire as the key to understanding our motivations and our pleasure. That desire for sex affects our sexual responses and our sexual relationships seems a truism, but as Wendy Worship explains in her essay "Heterosexual Sex: Power and Desires in Two Stories," the whole area of women's experience of men in heterosexual sex which feminist theory and politics has not successfully addressed, it is also already the source of assumptions about love and sex which are so taken for granted that we keep missing the basic and fundamental question: why do some of us feel so strongly about it, that our feminist analysis (the oppression of sexual relationship with men and all that) just does not succeed in determining our sexual experience?

"Sex and Love" is an innovative and exciting collection of essays that use psychological understandings of desire to get at the more emotional aspects of our sexuality. It is a relief to see psychology used as a means to this end by feminism (though Freudianism was never as wholly rejected by British feminists as it was by American), and I hope this book will not be as much a throwback to Freud's work as the product of a dirty-minded misogynist. But a focus on desire is tricky, especially for a political approach to sexuality, and I'm not quite sure. This exploration of the way each of us understands our gender and our sex role socialization. It can lead to a greater understanding of our sexual responses and why and how power is acted out in our relationships. This ap-proach, while potentially valuable for each of us individually, is tricky because that power is not felt only at the level of the individual.

If we pull out the politics of oppression, the struggle between us, not only within us. If we lose sight of this then we run the danger of turning feminism into a political issue because it is a huge and complex issue, the movement to end social relationships - at home, at work and out on the town. We put at risk the fragile understanding of our personal/social relationships as a fundamental part of a continuum of social relationships that stretches uninterrupted into the personal/apologetic relationships that the mate left as taken as its domain. And the result is an increase by and large, drawn a line across that continuum and has declared the entire political invalid. It will be that much harder to assert the existence of oppression when we explore if we exist only within us in the expense of what exists between us.

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Writing in a Stage of Siege by André Brink (New York, Summit Books, 1983)

André Brink is one of a small number of South African writers to have had any real international celebrity. Others are Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, and Anton Pienaar. Brink's novels are best sellers, reviewed in the large circulation American and British newspapers as well as the fashionable liberal left-wing journals like the New York Review of Books and the New Statesman. Writing in a State of Siege is then, a collection of essays by a major contemplator of the political situation which addresses the problems confronting the South African writer and, by extension, any writer attempting to practice in a society which has been condemned by the international community as an apartheid regime.

Common in the other writers mentioned above, Brink is white and writes in English - two factors which contribute to their popular success. That only white South African writers are so far managed to garner the world’s attention is in some measure a consequence of the kind of readers who have accredited them their fame. This type of reader - and therefore political sympathizer - of Brink and the others is a literate, curious, white, English-speaking, left-leaning liberal, who is a fundamental aspect of the English-speaking world at present. By large, and though there are obvious and honourable exceptions, these writers, drawing nowhere near the number of British readers, and in some cases, written in English, try to tend to the world of white people and its relation to that of the black. Their protagonists are, often, unlike the readers, allowing a kind of "identification with" them which tends to bring the South Africa of the literature into a familiar perspective for the white Westerner. As significant to the success is the fact that, as Brink puts it in the essay "Censorship and the Literature of South Africa," "for obvious reasons, can breathe more freely [than the black in South Africa]. In other words, the South African government, in its desire to placate its Western business partners who publically express abhorrence to apartheid but publically continue to trade with South Africa, is inclined towards white South African writers who publish their denunciation of apartheid abroad while it jalls, harasses, and bans black writers who express similar views. South Africa is undeniably an internationalized country - unlike the other African nations - whose apartheid is perceived, in a logical, if blunt and brutal, extension of Western capitalism and whose setting is thus recognizable to us all. We in Canada may not be numerically overwhelmed by our poor native people, but we do have our poor and our unemployed and we are all participants in the way of life that conspires to keep them poor and powerless. This state is the deepest intention of the apartheid system. In addition to the blacks poor and to render them harmless so that the white population can remain rich and powerful. The government of South Africa has been successful in keeping the blacks poor and relatively powerless, keeping them harmless. Though there have been immensely significant movements of black resistance to apartheid since the inception of the Union of South Africa and the African National Congress. In a superbly told chronicle of South African Resistance to white domination, "After Soweto," Brink maps the history of the relation of black and white and in an attempt to explain the events of Soweto in an historical perspective. The great irony of South African history is the once common goals of the Africans and the black South Africans - vividly seen in white-oriented Socialism of the Afrikaners miners in the 20s and the resistance of the Afrikaners to the British domination and British contempt. The great tragedy of the ultimate struggle of the black and white South Africa, as Brink explains it, is the rigidly row rural Calvinism of the Afrikaners and the political maneuvering of the British. This eason is from those pristine beginnings of the struggle to forget about the wars between the British and the Afrikaners, and those between the whites and the blacks, and the acquisition of power of the National party of Dr. Vorster, the inception of the doctrine of apartheid and its ideas of racial purity, to the present day, the powerful political-military machine of the South African government smoothly operates one of the most efficient dictatorships in the world. It has in its memory, and its present, but it reminds us, had lots of time to practise and refine it, that as in the world knows by now, the National Party of South Africa has been in power, virtually unchallenged and apparently unshakea- bie, since 1948. With no practice and accommodation to the minucule objections of its trading partners in the Western world, the South African government of South Africa has firmly and definitively placed the doctrine of apartheid which, by definition, implies the subjugation of seven-eights of the South African population on the grounds of colour alone.

The success of the South African government has to do primarily with the fact that the West, inherently racist itself, has tended to regard the South African system as objectionable chiefly because of its legitimation of racism. We may, I believe, safely assume that if the South African government were to abolish the laws of the apartheid state, enacting blacks to serve and such laws as legally discriminate against them, very little would change. A state would continue to exist in which a vast capitalist machine would continue to plot a huge majority of working people and peasants who would be overwhelmingly black. And while, undoubtedly, at the top echelon a few blacks might eke out some power, send their children to expensive private schools, eat in the same restaurants as whites, ride in the same buses, even, God forbid, use the same toilets as the whites, the machine would be fueled by poor black South Africans. The difference would be that under these circumstances the Western World would not entirely approve of the South African government, trade even as unhappi- ly with it than now, and South Africa would become even richer.

The Western governments now condemn apartheid because they enjoy the material benefits of this arrangement with other black nations and because amongst them - and particularly the United States - have significant numbers of black voters. In addition, of course, they fear that South Africa - the most powerful, rich, and strategically necessary nation of the continent - will go over to the Russians in the event of a successful black revolution. It's then, capitalism aside, that makes South Africa as sympla- tic to the West and it is the assumptions that the various worlds of white South African fiction become assimilable outside the country, Brink's writings in this book directly address those ques- tions and forcefully attack the assumptions, and then white liberal socialism which is the panacea which will mean Westerners - within and outside his country - would apply.

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African literature has been indefatigable in the sense of the writers who have defined offense as one of necessary criteria of art good writing. That is, most African literature has not challenged apartheid or its dogmas. Kenneth Kaunda's novel is the first African book in history to have been banned in South Africa, a fact which lends a certain pride of place in the literary history of his nation, but which led him to the decision to continue his career writing in English. As he describes it, in a passionate essay entitled "Culture and Apartheid," Brink was in the vanguard of a small but vitally important group of African writers who were willing to accept the stigma of treachery to the ideology of apartheid and the attitudinal and symbolic production and to produce, in Africa, works which dared to question, as never before, the sacred values of Afrikanersdom. This group was known as the "Boers in the sixties," (i.e., writers of the 1960s). Its members were isolated and ostracized as suspected "Communists" in their determination to write truthfully about the reality of African in the language of the oppressors of their nation. The very language which the Afrikaners demanded, they actually have as a specific cultural group which Brink defines as "a group which through language, through geographical necessity, and through the rigidity of Calvinism, has made a virtue of isolationism: a group almost cut out of touch with the world outside."... Especially because the majority of the white writers and critics are hostile outside this means that, contrary to trends almost everywhere else, young African writers openly or tacitly support the establishment and to the extremes of explicitly or implicitly endorsing, condoning, or supporting Afrikaner Nationalism and apartheid."

Of Brink's most famous essay in this book, "Culture and Apartheid "most crucially addresses the intertwined cultural and political issues facing a South African writer of any background. It takes advantage of virtue of possessing two temporal perspectives. Written originally in 1975, the essay contains a postscript, added in 1982, which brings up to date the issues raised as questions in the earlier-written portion of the essay. Of particular significance is the acknowledge- ment, in 1970, of the fact that South Africa then was fast approaching the "point of no return" where a violent revolution seemed inevitable. At that time Brink was able to write - many would have found this difficult to express - a philosophy that Brink's essays about apartheid was this view that violence is, however, the central issue facing all South Africans at present and, as Brink's words suggest, "something is being done to avert" it: "efforts are being made to say that nothing is going to stop it. It is a fact that violent acts against apartheid have greatly increased in recent years, at the same time, however, it must be noted that the government is getting more and more efficient in its capacity to deal with resistance at all levels, including that of vio- lence opposition. A measure of the government's sophistication in dealing with intellectual opposition - perhaps the most successful of all its measures - is the very existence of this book and the sheer possibility that such points and arguments as it advances are publishable and speakable in South Africa. For the essays it concerns were all written by South African audiences and readers and more remarkably, heard and read by them. The essays, like the one just quoted, are all subversive of apartheid. They have in com- mon a deep, intellectual, moral, and sentimental loathing of sim- mer and resound with a tense passion of conviction born of the author's despair of his native country. To some, to the optimistic liberal, they will speak of the government's capacity to accept and allow criticism of itself. To others, like Brink himself, one must try to preserve the control of the author's control of his own country's character, and to find, as it were, an opportunity to speak of South Africa's legitimacy. It is the fact that he is an Afrikaner and the fact that the language he has become a language of oppression, wrenching out of shape by a political religion which they deny, is the most vital and creative possibility that accounts for much of the pain and the fury of this superb, courageous book. Derek Cohen teaches English at York University.