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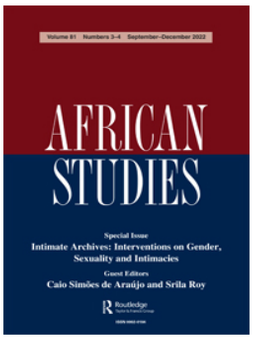
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Emily Bridger & Erin Hazan

To cite this article: Emily Bridger & Erin Hazan (2022) Surfeit and Silence: Sexual Violence in the Apartheid Archive, African Studies, 81:3-4, 286-305, DOI: 10.1080/00020184.2023.2212606

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2023.2212606

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AFRICAN STUDIES
2022, VOL. 81, NOS. 3–4, 286–305
https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2023.2212606

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Surfeit and Silence: Sexual Violence in the Apartheid Archive

Emily Bridger [a] and Erin Hazan [b]

[a]University of Exeter, United Kingdom; [b]University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Despite contemporary concerns about sexual violence in South Africa, the longer history of violence against women has been insu□ciently explored. This article examines the apartheid-era archive on sexual violence, exploring what methodologies can be used and histories written based on its contents. It argues that this archive is marked by a contradictory dichotomy of both excess and absence. While many sources from the 1950s to 1980s, and particularly white-authored ones, ignore sexual violence, others depict it in abundance and often gruesome detail. This surfeit of material shockingly confronts the researcher through both its quantity and the violent racism and misogyny that permeates each narrative. Yet there are coinciding glaring silences in the archive, particularly pertaining to Black women's subjectivities. This renders Black women both hyper visible and invisible in the apartheid archive. Sexual violence is simultaneously hidden, spectacularised and made quotidian and banal. This article grapples with this peculiar mix of surfeit and silence and what the archive means for contemporary understandings of sexual violence in South Africa.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 25 April 2022
Accepted 9 January 2023

KEYWORDS
sexual violence; women; archives; methodology; South Africa; history

Introduction

In September 1972, the Weekend World newspaper reported a case of sexual violence tried in the Umlazi Regional Court in South Africa. On 6 June, two men and one teenager accosted a 38-year-old woman walking home at night, cutting o□ her clothes with a knife and physically and sexually assaulting her. When the two older men had 'satisfied their lust', they invited the 15-year-old boy to have what they called 'sex for nothing' and also rape the woman.[1] Writing about Caribbean slavery, Marisa Fuentes argues that:

> Women appear as historical subjects through the form and content of archival documents in the manner in which they lived: spectacularly violated, objectified, disposable, hypersexualized, and silenced. The violence is transferred from the enslaved bodies to the documents that count, condemn, assess, and evoke them, and we receive them in this condition (Fuentes 2016, 5).

CONTACT Emily Bridger E.J.Bridger@exeter.ac.uk

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Women – and particularly Black women – appear in South Africa's apartheid archive in the same manner as the enslaved women Fuentes analyses – with the violence inflicted against them presented as if it were 'for nothing'. When the researcher accesses the archive, they are met by a gluttony of similar sources: women being attacked and violated by strangers, ex-boyfriends and police, with their experiences relayed in voyeuristic, gruesome detail. We are simultaneously given very little insight into the experiences of these women, their thoughts and feelings, or their lives beyond the violation they experienced. The women entombed in the archive appear to us in stasis, unmoving and unnamed. Sexual violence thus appears through both surfeit and silence – rape is highly accessible through diverse sources and yet not problematised as a social issue warranting attention, rendering it both highly visible and written, and invisible and unwritten (Stoler 2009). This article addresses these contradictions and o□ers a treatise on the methodology of researching sexual violence in the apartheid archives.

Despite concern about rape rates in contemporary South Africa, the longer history of sexual violence has received surprisingly scant academic attention, with historians showing 'relatively little interest in exploring the subject' (Posel 2005b, 24). Many contemporary studies of rape turn to the country's racist and violent past for answers. Yet in doing so, they often jump from the colonial period to the present, at best glossing over the history of sexual violence during apartheid in a paragraph or two. Scholars have attended to the history of rape during the nineteenth century, demonstrating how ideologies of slavery and colonialism created gendered, racial and class stereotypes that shaped perceptions of rape perpetrators and victims, and the physical and emotional harm rape caused (Fransch 2016; Scully 1995; Thornberry 2018). Recently, Pumla Gqola's (2015) work has highlighted the importance of understanding this longer history of rape and its ongoing consequences. For Black women, these stereotypes diminished their experiences of violence, rendering them 'unrapable' in that 'raping them does not count as harm and is therefore permissible' (Gqola 2015, 4–5). For Black men, these imposed ideas spread deeply entrenched beliefs about their inclination towards predatory, licentious behaviour – particularly towards white women. There is considerable historiography on the episodic 'Black Peril' panics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that these stereotypes induced. However, as Elizabeth Thornberry (2018, 20) argues, 'the history of black peril is not […] the same as the history of rape', as these scares reflected economic, class and gendered tensions within white settler-colonial society more so than any actual increase in sexual violence.[2]

Deborah Posel (2005a, 242) argues that despite the paucity of historical research, there has been a 'long-standing and serious problem of sexual violence across di□erent races and classes in this society, intertwined with powerful impulses to conceal it socially and marginalize it politically'. Social histories of urbanisation and township life demonstrate the ubiquity of sexual violence in the 1940s and 1950s, claiming that rape 'was extraordinarily common' or 'staggeringly high' (Glaser 2005a, 120; Mager & Minkley 1993, 237).[3] Yet such quotes are typically cursory and provide little insight into attitudes towards or experiences of sexual violence. Works that explore sexual violence in greater detail have tended to focus on men and shifting masculinities, often leaving women's lives and subjectivities largely unexplored (Kynoch 2001; Mager 1999).

One can hypothesise about historians' reluctance to explore this clearly important topic of historical inquiry. Some may reasonably be concerned that studies of intra-

communal and intra-racial rape (which make up the majority of cases in South Africa, as elsewhere) will only further the negative stereotyping of Black men as inherently violent.[4] Yet, as Helen Mo□ett (2006, 143) argues, 'we must learn to confront and deconstruct the knee-jerk response that in scrutinising the sources and purposes of rape, we are engaging in a racist project'. Furthermore, sexual violence is a topic that is ethically and emotionally challenging to research. Yet the lack of historical work is also shaped by assumptions about the archive, or lack thereof. Where sexual violence has been archived, it has often been because of its distinctly political nature. Violence committed in detention or in exile, or perpetrated by police, soldiers, or cadres, is more visible in the archive (and thus in the existing historiography) because it was more likely to be addressed by liberation struggle organisations or in the post-apartheid truth and reconciliation process (Goldblatt & Meintjes 1998; Ross 2003; Sandwell 2021; Tlhabi 2017). Yet it was this classification of certain types of sexual violence as 'political' and thus relevant to national liberation that often hid more quotidian or 'non-political' sexual violence from view. Uncovering discourses and experiences of sexual violence within women's everyday lives under apartheid is a more challenging endeavour. Responded to with secrecy and disinterest, such violence has presumed to have left little historical record until the late 1970s and 1980s, when newly founded feminist anti-rape organisations and the rising women's movement helped raise public awareness. Even still, Posel (2005a, 240) argues, violence against women continued to '[languish] on the margins of public debate and political engagement' until the 1990s. Consequently, scholarship on sexual violence in South Africa has overwhelmingly focused on the post-apartheid period.

However, the silencing and side-lining of rape during apartheid did not lead to its complete absence from the historical record. The historian is, in fact, confronted by a contradictory mix of both surfeit and silence in the archive. Where one might expect to find documents concerning rape, such as in the files of women's organisations, social workers, or court records, it is glaringly absent or scantly mentioned. Yet in other sources, sexual violence exists abundantly. This is particularly the case with Black-readership media from the 1950s to 1970s, where sexual violence appears in countless stories reported in harrowing detail. In these sources, sexual violence is portrayed as being so omnipresent that it is quotidian and banal, not a social problem in need of addressing. While the government, police, social groups and political organisations were largely inattentive to rape (at least until the 1980s), it was not a topic completely supressed in everyday life. The abundance of sources demonstrates that rape was significant to township residents' worldviews and media consumption, but was something to be gawked at, not problematised. Rather than addressing sexual violence, this interest depoliticised it and inadvertently committed further violence to women. By using women's pain to 'delight and titillate' and constructing sexual violence as permissible, these sources remove women's lives and feelings from the archive (Hartman 2008, 7). The historian is confronted with an excess of sources about the violence committed to women's bodies, but stifling silences about their identities and subjectivities.

Through an analysis of Black-readership media and other sources from the beginning of apartheid to the early 1980s, this article addresses the peculiar mix of excess and absence that characterises the archive on sexual violence in South Africa. Responding to the lack of previous historical engagement with this archive, we ask what is knowable and unknowable, sayable and unsayable about sexual violence in the past. Fuentes

(2020) argues that exploring and critiquing the archive is an essential and urgent project for understanding the permissibility of violence against Black women in the past and present. Such projects are 'concerned with an ethics of history and the consequences of reproducing indi□erence to violence against and the silencing of black lives' (Fuentes 2016, 12). This article demonstrates how those who had the power to define and archive sexual violence – whether the apartheid state, media, or township communities – did so in ways that caused further harm to women and have had long-lasting repercussions for South African society. It concludes by asking how historians can use this archive to construct histories of sexual violence without 'committing further violence in [our] own act of narration' (Hartman 2008, 2). Our discussion does not focus on records from the ANC in exile, which expose how violence against women surfaced and was silenced by the liberation movement. Instead, it concentrates on non-state, non-o□cial sources – newspaper and magazine articles, short stories and oral histories – to explore what these sources elucidate about the everyday histories of sexual violence during apartheid.

Globally, most histories of sexual violence draw on court records as their primary archival base. Yet in South Africa, only records from cases escalated to the Supreme Court or appealed through the Governor General's o□ce were preserved. The records of regional magistrate's courts, where rape was most frequently tried, were never archived. Vestiges of magistrate court cases do exist, but these are scattered accidentally in other archival records where specific cases were singled out by government o□cials. The available cases in the archive provide a glimpse into the nature and procedure of rape trials, but typically only through exceptional cases tried in higher courts. To access wider histories of sexual violence, the historian must comb through other files relating to gender, sexuality, crime and violence. Such material includes anthropological research from the 1930s to 1950s, reports on urbanisation, crime and juvenile delinquency, and the files of various women's organisations from the 1970s and 1980s. Accounts of sexual violence occasionally appear tangentially or incidentally in these sources but are rarely the primary focus. Crime statistics, including those for rape, are available, but are a flawed measure of prevalence as they do not include cases that were not reported to police, were reported in South Africa's Bantustans or did not fit the state's narrow definition of rape (including marital, homosexual and instrumental rape).

Whereas archival collections may have boxes dedicated to women, violence, or crime, there is no archive dedicated to sexual violence in South Africa. In 'o□cial' or white-authored sources, Posel's argument about the public marginalisation of sexual violence during apartheid rings true; rape receives cursory mention but is rarely the main subject of analysis. White-readership newspapers mostly reported rapes involving white women being 'outraged' by Black men in their homes; otherwise, rape was hardly discussed until the late 1970s when feminist organisations such as Rape Crisis and People Opposing Women Abuse were formed (Campbell 2000). Researchers, feminists and white newspapers then 'discovered' the rampant sexual violence problem in Black and Coloured townships.[5] However, Black-readership papers had been reporting on sexual violence since at least the 1930s, providing extensive coverage of the problem across the high apartheid period.[6] Sexual violence also features in the fiction and non-fiction of Black authors and in the recollections of township residents in oral history interviews. Thus, while sexual violence may have existed on the periphery of public debate within

white spaces before the 1980s, this silence was not always mirrored in Black public life. The article attends particularly to Black urban communities in and around Johannesburg, a focus reflecting that of the archive itself, which is centred predominantly on historically Black communities such as Soweto, Alexandra and Sophiatown.

Voyeurism and violation: Archival excess

In the South African archive, (especially Black) women are most visible through their victimisation. Where sexual violence appears in the archive, it is often shown through excessive and gratuitous descriptions of violence, rendering women hyper visible through the spectacular violence enacted on their bodies. Such violence appears most vividly in Black-readership media. Whereas English-language white-readership papers such as The Rand Daily Mail or The Star largely did not report on sexual violence within townships until the late 1970s, Black-readership newspapers such as Golden City Post and The World regularly reported on sexual crimes. Such reporting was generally limited to 'stranger rape' cases reported to the police and prosecuted in magistrate's courts. These reports were typically brief, covering where the woman was when she was attacked, the nature of the assault and the verdict of the trial.

Media descriptions of sexual violence from the 1950s to mid-1970s display recurring features: exorbitant reporting, excessive depictions of violence and voyeuristic language. An early example of this can be seen in a March 1958 Golden City Post article titled 'A Beast With Scissors Held Girl for 22 Hours', in which a 19-year-old woman was held captive by Muntukathandwa Shongwe, raped ten times and stabbed with scissors.[7] The unnamed woman was walking home when she was accosted by Shongwe, chased, caught, stabbed in the shoulder and dragged o□. In 1969, the Weekend World reported a similar case in which a 12-year-old girl was lured by Tembile Ngxakela, strangled with wire, dragged to a bush and raped, resulting in her hospitalisation.[8] These examples are just two of hundreds of similar cases available in the archive.[9] This style of reporting continued until the early 1970s, with most cases following a similar pattern: an unnamed Black woman was walking when confronted by a man (often brandishing a weapon), grabbed, attacked, thrown to the ground, her clothes violently torn o□, and raped. The women typically appear in these articles as helpless and voiceless. They are sexualised, essentialised, or objectified, routinely described as 'shapely', 'curvaceous' 'dolls' who fell victim to lust-driven men unable to resist their beauty.[10] The visceral description of these assaults, and particularly the repeated mentions of underwear being torn o□, furthers the voyeuristic portrayal of rape in the archive as these stories '[tra□c] between fact, fantasy, desire, and violence' (Hartman 2008, 7). Once the rapist 'satisfies his lust' and the crime is committed, the detail about the victim concludes too. The reader is given little information about the woman aside from cursory mentions that she is pregnant, a wife, mother or grandmother. Snippets of women's lives thus become visible in the archive through the violence enacted on their bodies; these archival narratives continually reproduce the initial act of violence and do not provide details about the victim aside from the violence they experienced.

The headlines used in this reporting, clearly designed to catch readers' attention, focus on the most abhorrent aspects of each case: 'Youth raped doll in turns'; 'Rapist slit

grandma's tongue'; 'Doll raped, murdered after wedding party'.[11] It is not just the language of these headlines that historians must contend with, but also their sheer quantity. For example, the Weekend World's 22 September 1968 edition alone included the following headlines:

'Thug's Ex-Doll is Stabbed to Death'
'Bag Snatcher Raped Victim who Chased Him'
'Dragged into Donga and Raped–Evidence'
'Rapist Caught Half Naked in a Closet'
'Mini-Skirted Doll Chased, Raped'[12]

While the language and details of these sources display women as 'spectacularly violated', the excessive numbers of such reports also construct women as disposable (Fuentes 2016, 5). Each headline depicts yet another voiceless victim whose trauma is co-opted for public consumption. This disposability is furthered by the lack of overt condemnation of rape within these reports; the violence done to these women is emphasised, but not critiqued.

This style of reporting was not limited to intra-racial cases within Black communities but also extended to cases with white perpetrators and Black victims that have received little historical attention despite being a key tool through which apartheid's racial and gendered hierarchies were reinforced. White perpetrators were often police or men posing as police, soldiers, ticket inspectors or employers – men who used their authority and racial privilege to violate women's bodies. These cases were also reported sensationally and once again did little to denounce this violence and wider abuse of power: 'He pounced on her while she washed the dishes', reported the Golden City Post in 1958; 'Cop Outraged Pregnant Mum at Gun-Point', read a Weekend World headline in 1969.[13]

In the 1970s, media reporting on rape began to shift. The World began to take a more expressly political focus, and its voyeuristic accounts of sexual violence decreased significantly. Meanwhile new publications aimed at Black markets, such as The Rand Daily Mail's 'township' or 'extra' edition and later The Sowetan covered sexual violence through a new form of excess: numbers and statistics.[14] In Soweto, the police began holding weekly, then daily, press conferences on the latest crime numbers, leading to regular headlines such as: '12 Raped in Soweto Weekend'; 'Weekend in Soweto: 14 Die, 13 Raped'.[15] Concurrently, Progressive Party MP Helen Suzman began routinely asking the Minister of Police to read the country's annual rape statistics aloud in parliament.[16] Public shock at the numbers announced – between 14,000 and 15,000 a year by the late 1970s – led media outlets to declare that South Africa was now in a state of 'rape crisis'.[17] By 1979, sexual violence was often front-page news of Black-readership publications, with headlines such as: 'A Rape Every Eight Hours'; 'Soweto Women in Fear: The Rape Crisis'.[18] While this shift from voyeuristic detail to statistics and 'crisis' removed much of the unnecessary focus on gratuitous violence, it maintained the same depiction of women as anonymous, disposable objects who appeared mainly in the archive through the violence inflicted against them.

These Black-readership publications were widely read and influential within township communities (Johnson 1991). They were all white-owned, sta□ed predominantly by Black writers and aimed at Black audiences. Nechama Brodie argues that newspapers, while not a true reflection of social reality, nevertheless tell us 'what was considered valuable and

important or what was considered a threat' in a particular time and place (Brodie 2020, 31). Newspapers were widely accessible to literate township residents in a way that police reports or courtroom trials were not and were thus a key tool through which sexual scripts were shaped, disseminated and consumed (Freedman 2011). Yet we must ask the question: Why was sexual violence capitalised on so significantly by newspapers? What were the intended purposes of these startling headlines and gruesome narratives? We must contend with this non-o□cial, non-state archive and ask questions about who had the power to produce narratives of sexual violence, and most importantly, why it was considered necessary to report on sexual violence this way. Perhaps the most obvious answer is that sex sells; the sensationalised reporting of rape and other crimes was clearly designed to interest readers and sell papers, which was successful given that The World was the most widely read Black-readership newspaper between 1955 and 1977 (Johnson 1991). Moreover, these newspapers were primarily aimed at urban, literate, middle-class audiences. Consequently, their reporting on sexual violence perpetrated by 'thugs' and 'brutes' can be understood as a means of reinscribing social and class di□erences between 'respectable' township residents and criminals, delinquents, or rural, 'tribal' Africans, with only the latter groups portrayed as 'rapists'.

This excess could also be read as a patriarchal tool. Gqola (2021) argues that the 'female fear factory' – whereby women are policed through their fear of sexual violence – requires an audience. The female fear factory becomes legible through the repetition and normalisation of violence against women in these sources and ensures women remain fearful through the socialisation of sexual violence. Historians have demonstrated how media portrayals of rape instil fear in women and remove their autonomy. 'For this sexual "protection racket" to operate and patriarchy to be enforced,' argues Estelle Freedman, 'only a few men had to assault women, but their crimes had to be widely known and publicly acknowledged, a requirement fulfilled in part by the press' (Freedman 2011, 467).[19] It is therefore apropos to argue that the consistent repetition of sexual violence in Black-readership newspapers served to reinscribe patriarchal control and surveillance, limiting women's freedom of movement and maintaining their marginality. It is no surprise that these lurid accounts portray sexual violence as something committed outside the home – in public spaces such as streets or fields, by deranged strangers, ex-boyfriends or distant acquaintances – and by both white and Black men. In doing so, they send a clear message: 'the city is a dangerous place for women, when they transgress the narrow boundaries of home and hearth and dare to enter public space' (Walkowitz 1982, 544). Conversely, little is said about violence within the home, maintaining it as an imagined safe space for women.

'All township love-making is rough'

Simultaneously, sexual violence is portrayed in the archive as quotidian; something so routine, so normalised, that it is neither condemned nor denounced. Beyond the court cases salaciously reported on by the media, the archive contains substantial evidence of the violence women experienced not formally prosecuted as 'rape' such as street harassment, physical assault, kidnapping, 'forced love' and coerced or non-consensual sex within relationships. These assaults were discussed regularly in Black-readership media such as the popular urban magazine Drum, in fiction and non-fiction by township

authors, anthropological studies, oral history interviews and memoirs. Together, these sources construct a picture of Black women as being constantly at risk of harassment or assault. As Can Themba (1972, 59), one of Drum's leading writers, nonchalantly wrote in 1964, 'All township love-making is rough'.

Such violations are rarely labelled as 'rape' or 'violence' in the archive but are instead portrayed through a linguistic 'slippage' between 'acts of love and brutal excess' and women as 'victims and sweethearts' – which works to normalise sexual violence (Hartman 2008, 5). In June 1957, Drum published a four-page leading story titled 'Love by Martial Law!'. It described how being 'forced into love' was now the norm for young women, who had their 'arms twisted' or were 'threatened at point of gun or knife' by their 'gangster lovers'.[20] Not once does the article mention 'rape'. This is not just an issue of historical grammar and semantics, and what could or could not be said at the time. 'Rape' was used in 1950s South Africa, and where it was not, it was euphemised as 'outrage'. In sources such as this Drum article, it is made clear that these cases of 'forced love' were not conceptualised as 'rape', nor even necessarily as a violent crime. Such banal descriptions of violence reinforce women's disposability. The article apportioned some blame for this violence, but not with the perpetrators. The problem, it declared, was that 'too many of our women folk accept "martial law love" as the normal thing' and that:

> After a guy has 'pushed them around a little,' and they had made their token protests, they then go on to accept him as their guy. Which makes other guys think that this is the only way to make love and to win a woman's respect.

The writer proceeded to call women 'pain loving hussies', declaring that 'women still don't want to be charmed; they want to be clubbed', legitimising dangerous stereotypes that blame women for sexual violence and make coerced sex permissible.[21]

The distinction between 'forced love' and 'rape' is made explicitly in Clive Glaser's 1988 interview with Stan Motjuwadi, a 'man-about-town' and regular Drum writer in the 1950s.[22] When asked how Soweto gangs treated women, Motjuwadi explained that gangsters would 'impose themselves on women' and 'kidnap' them. Asked to clarify, Motjuwadi responded, 'just grabbing her I mean, against her will' and explained that such things 'happened quite a lot':

> Glaser: And were there a lot of rapes as well?
>
> Motjuwadi: No, rapes weren't as … there weren't a lot of rapes.
>
> Glaser: So it was more just often sort of forcing girls, but not really …
>
> Motjuwadi: Ja, quite. Not violent rapes … some of the girls just didn't resist enough.

This linguistic 'slippage' between 'forcing' and 'rape' neutralises sexual violence, rendering it mundane and routine. A similar discourse was used by white anthropologists documenting the impact of urbanisation on African communities in the mid-twentieth century. In her 1950s study of Johannesburg women, Laura Longmore wrote how tsotsis would 'force' women into 'love-making against their will'. Because women would acquiesce out of fear of violent assault, Longmore (1959, 31) does not classify this as rape. When sexual violence is labelled 'forced love', or is not labelled at all, it is not

problematised. This supports Posel's (2005a, 243–44) argument that, during apartheid, 'there was little sense that sexual violence constituted any fundamental threat to the moral foundations of the society'. Furthermore, historical structures of gendered and social power were reproduced through this refusal to categorise such acts as 'rape' (Block 2006). This dangerous demarcation continues today, with research demonstrating that many still distinguish 'rape' from 'forced sex', often refusing to define non-consensual sex within relationships as the former, and accept or expect a level of physical force or manipulation in sexual relationships (Ashforth 1999; Shai 2018; Wood, Lambert & Jewkes 2007).

Evidence of the normalisation of sexual violence is not only found in sources written by men. Women writing about township life during apartheid also spoke of sexual violence as quotidian. Women-authored sources are limited and often highly circumscribed: printed in publications owned and edited by men, designed to entertain readers and written in ways that maintained existing gender ideologies (Driver 1996). One such source is Drum's column 'Girl About Town' written by Marion Morel, a young single woman and the only regular woman writer for Drum at the time, from 1959 to 1963 (Johnson 2009). In one of her earlier pieces, Morel lamented that:

> One of the greatest problems for women – and all women of South Africa – is, I think, the problem of getting around. What women ever dare go out alone? Not me. Not even in the day, much.[23]

As elsewhere, gender-based violence is not named here, but implied. This was common in Morel's columns, which later shifted to discussing harassment and coercion in more flippant ways. In 1961, Morel advised women how to escape a man who makes an unwelcomed 'dive for you' at a 'dark spot' at the end of a date. She instructed women not to 'go screaming into the night' but to kiss him back but make it 'real dull'. At the end, she o□ered further advice:

> Honeys, on no account try to resist an A.J. boy by saying you are tired. I don't know why this is, but it seems to bring out the worst in him. I guess he thinks that if you are tired your resistance is correspondingly low.[24]

The question remains as to whether Morel was normalising and making light of sexual violence or genuinely attempting to help her women readers. It is possible that the frivolous tone of her writing may have masked a deeper attempt to warn and instruct women while maintaining the magazine's typical patriarchal tone – and her job.

Another such source are Drum's popular agony aunt columns, 'Priscilla Asks' and 'Dear Dolly' (Clowes 2008; Mutongi 2000). Alongside routine teenage problems, these columns contain numerous cases of physical and emotional abuse, forced sex and rape. In their responses, Priscilla and Dolly[25] oscillated between normalising, permitting and condemning such abuse. In 1974, a 17-year-old girl wrote to Dolly that her boyfriend, aged twenty, forces her to have sex with him and slaps her when she resists. In response, Dolly refused to acknowledge the girl's victimisation, writing: 'nobody forced you to stick around and be forced to have sex' and that 'if you enjoy being slapped and kicked and raped, then do wait for this man'.[26] Six weeks later, a man wrote to Dolly that he had forced his 17-year-old girlfriend to have sex with him, and since then she had refused to kiss him or have sex with him. Dolly responded: 'it was very foolish, unkind and literally criminal of you to

have forced her' and advised him to continue to court her 'gently […] in the hope of seducing her'.[27] Dolly's responses to these two similar cases are quite different, and the latter reflects a shift visible by the mid-1970s towards labelling forced sex as a crime or indeed as 'rape'.[28] Yet the underlying assumptions are the same: that sexual violence, even when understood as criminal, is a frivolous issue that can be flippantly dismissed or easily rectified, and is normalised and redeemable within relationships.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, 84) writes that 'built into any system of domination is the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy'. The ubiquity of sexual violence in the archive, coupled with its lack of condemnation, accomplishes just this. It is portrayed as too common, too normalised, to warrant attention. Blasé portrayals of sexual violence have also impacted historical research, which habitually notes the 'endless and often violent harassment of women by men' or how 'abduction of women was an extremely common township phenomenon' in apartheid South Africa, but rarely centres sexual violence as a topic of research (Ballantine 2000, 392; Glaser 1992, 59). Furthermore, this surfeit of sexual violence makes the archive an uncomfortable place for the historian, where one is subjected to an emotional onslaught of countless salaciously or flippantly written articles. It is not just the sheer number of cases that causes anguish, but also the language used, the lack of initiatives to address the problem, and the stunning levels of racism or misogyny in each source. As Fuentes (2016, 147) writes, 'to spend time in this temporal and geographical space is to risk emotional strength. It obliterates the possibility of objectivity. It is an exercise in endurance'.

Sexual silence: The missing, incomplete and censored

This archive is also incomplete and brimming with silences. Trouillot (1995) highlights that there are four stages of creating historical silence: when primary sources are made; archived; retrieved and used; and when significance is given to them through the production of history. The silencing of women's experiences of violence during apartheid has occurred at each stage. In many cases sources were never produced. Only a fraction of cases reported to police or made public were archived. Countless others exist only in the memories of those who experienced them. Beyond the terse quotes published by newspapers on the most salacious cases, we have irrevocably lost records of victims' and perpetrators' testimonies, court proceedings and judge's statements. The surviving accounts of sexual violence have subsequently been ignored by historians, or only selectively used. Academic and popular narratives of apartheid barely mention sexual violence as an everyday concern in Black women's lives and often reproduce the issue at the crux of this article: that sexual violence was so normalised that it did not require analysis.

Sexual violence appears to us in the archive through the racial, gendered and class biases of those who wrote about it and had the power to construct dominant understandings of it. As Sharon Block (2006, 2) argues, 'the preservation of certain kinds of records regarding sexual coercion is not mere happenstance'; certain types of violence are more visible than others. White-authored sources predominantly focussed on cases with Black perpetrators and white victims and rarely reported on intra-racial rape (in either white or Black communities) until the late 1970s when it became a key concern of white feminists involved in the anti-rape movement. Court records too reflect the harmful racial stereotypes South Africa was built on. Most legal documents that remain

relate to cases where the death penalty was issued and appealed – which are overwhelmingly those with a Black perpetrator and white victim.[29] Other records produced by the apartheid state rarely mention sexual violence as state institutions were 'particularly disinterested in the problem' (Posel 2005a, 242). If records on rape were produced, these were not preserved by the then State Archives Service. This is unsurprising given that those in charge of the Service tended to be white Afrikaner men politically aligned to the state. Consequently, the experiences of apartheid's marginalised groups are scantily reflected in apartheid-era public records (Harris 2002).

In the 1930s and 1940s, white welfarists and liberals took interest in various women's issues but were more concerned with illegitimacy and family instability than rape. These welfarists were perturbed by pre-marital sex, sex work, venereal disease and 'delinquency' yet rarely highlighted sexual violence as an issue underlying these social ills.[30] Anthropologists working during these years noted the presence of sexual violence, but this was not their primary concern (Hellman 1948; Longmore 1959). The apartheid state was deeply concerned about sex because of its e□ects on population growth, illegitimacy and racial purity but cared little about whether sex was consensual. Racial assumptions of Black women's lasciviousness often meant that it was women's rather than men's engagement in sexual activity that was problematised (Eales 1991). The only form of sexual violence that threatened the apartheid state was interracial, and it was the presence of Black women in towns that caused panic rather than any violence inflicted on them. As apartheid progressed away from 'welfare paternalism' and towards 'racial modernism' in the 1960s, state regulation of sexuality shifted significantly; while the South African Institute of Race Relations and other welfare groups continued to voice some concern about sex, little state resources were dedicated towards addressing these problems (Bozzoli 2004; Glaser 2005b). Concomitantly, few historical records pertaining to sexual violence from any state institutions were created.

Historical understandings of rape, drawn from legal definitions or commonly held rape myths, also limit what is visible in the archive. As in many countries, 'rape' during apartheid was o□cially limited to cases involving a man's forceful penetration of a woman's vagina with his penis. Heterosexual sexual violence that fell outside this boundary was typically tried as 'indecent assault' and homosexual rape between men as 'sodomy' (Fransch 2016). It was also not possible for a man to rape his wife, according to the law. The Black-readership media did occasionally report on cases of sexual violence between men, mostly within prisons, though such reports o□er minimal historical insight.[31] Rape within marriage is viewable in the archive through cases where men took their wives to court for 'desertion' or to sue for divorce on the grounds of refusing sex – cases that typically ended in judges ordering wives to restore conjugal rights to their husbands.[32]

Another means through which sexual violence has been concealed in the archive is the classification of cases with white perpetrators and Black victims as Immorality Act o□ences rather than rape (Klausen 2022).[33] The Immorality Act outlawed consensual interracial sexual relationships, among other sexual o□ences (Hazan 2020). White men were often tried under the lesser charge of having interracial sex, or plead guilty to Immorality charges to avoid being sentenced for rape – a privilege rarely a□orded to Black men. Besides hiding such cases from historical view, this tactic reinforced ideas about the 'impossibility' of raping Black women, suggesting that their consent was irrelevant

(Gqola 2015). In these cases, there is a disturbing disregard for Black women's evidence, as women testify to being kidnaped, threatened with weapons and screaming for help, yet judges routinely ruled that such sex was consensual.[34] Moreover, in many of these cases, Black women themselves were charged and convicted for Immorality Act o□ences, despite being victims of sexual violence, not willing participants in interracial sex.[35] Where such cases were indicted as rape, the harm inflicted by the rapist was contrived as jeopardising the purity of 'European blood' rather than the physical or emotional well-being of the victim.[36]

The most glaring silences in the apartheid archive are women's subjectivities. One frequently reads about how women were grabbed, twisted and thrown yet is rarely o□ered insight into their lives and identities. Posel (2005a, 243) argues that during apartheid, rape was conceptualised as a crime against a woman's physical body, 'her individuality, her self, were irrelevant to the act of brutal passion: she was simply an instance of the female physical form'. The archive likewise focusses on the physical rather than emotional or subjective aspects of sexual violence. As Fuentes writes, 'the violated women enter our view in a tortured state, their genitals exposed to voyeurs, without a name, a future, or a past' (Fuentes 2016, 140). Despite the surfeit of sexual violence in the archive, we are left with glaring silences around the thoughts, feelings and circumstances of these women who were violated. For each rape case reported, we are typically given no further information about the woman and her life beyond that specific moment of violence. We do not know who these women spoke to about their ordeals, how the rest of their lives were impacted, or the ripple e□ects of the violence they experienced. We also have little insight into how women interacted with the sources that now make up this archive. Did they read the voyeuristic reporting of rape in The World or the nonchalant discussions of forced sex in Drum? Did they consent to their stories being published? Did reading such sources make them angry, fearful or despondent? How did these public portrayals of rape shape their own understandings of this violence?

The silencing of women's stories is epitomised by Miriam Tlali's short story 'Fud-u-u-a!' in which three women attempt to catch an overcrowded train from Johannesburg to Soweto. The women struggle to share their past experiences of sexual assault on such trains with each other, speaking in 'whispers' and words that 'just would not come out'. Such violence was routine rather than exceptional, something experienced by 'bitter women of all ages'. The women have no language to articulate this violence in and no willing audience to tell their stories to. As Tlali (1989, 35–41) writes,

> We su□ocated and su□ered in that terrible torture of it all, and there was nothing we could do. By the time the train got to Park Station, we were too hurt, too shamefully abused, to speak. Who could we speak to? Who could we accuse? Who would listen to us even if we tried to complain? Everyone would tell us that 'it is all too shameful to say anything about this.

The silencing of women's voices and understandings of sexual violence has occurred at multiple levels and moments. The stigma around sexual violence during apartheid meant that spaces did not exist for women's voices to be heard. The culture of shame and secrecy surrounding rape meant that even when women did have rare opportunities to speak, they struggled to find the words or saw such sharing as futile, knowing few would listen and nothing was likely to change. Despite the legal structures existing to allow women to report rape, those who did were not necessarily believed. For instance,

in 1977, Colonel Visser of the Soweto police claimed to The Sunday Times that '80 per cent of rapes' were 'false reports' made by women trying to exonerate themselves after being unfaithful to their husbands.[37] For historians, this silencing of women's voices has resulted in an archive that tells us little about women's own conceptualisations of sexual violence and its harms.

We must also acknowledge how some women chose silence or not to speak about rape. Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (2002: xxv) argue that we must challenge the assumptions that pair voice with empowerment and silence with disempowerment and see how 'silence can be a refuge and a resource'. In 1982, the Soweto News asked women if they thought rape should be reported to police. Opinions were divided, but many argued 'no'. 'The best thing for me to do was just to keep quiet and forget about the whole thing', said one woman who was raped earlier that year. Another, after reporting her experience of rape and securing a conviction, stated, 'I don't want to talk about it anymore'.[38] Women's silences can thus be understood 'as part of a range of languages of pain and grief' that do not necessarily ascribe to the dichotomy of speech equalling power (Motsemme 2004, 910). As the characters in 'Fud-u-u-a!' demonstrate, while their stories of sexual assault are not reported in any o□cial capacity, their silence is nuanced. Although they lack the language to adequately describe their experiences, they are able to communicate their pain with each other, despite and in spite of their silence (Tlali 1989). There are multiple reasons for women's silence, be it imposed or self-imposed, but silence does not necessarily correspond with absence or disempowerment (Gasa 2007).

Ways forward: Understanding and addressing the archive

How then does the historian navigate this contradictory mix of surfeit and silence? How do we construct histories of sexual violence that avoid voyeurism and violation, acknowledge the ubiquity of sexual violence yet account for its subjective meanings, and recognise the harm done to women without constructing them wholly as victims? Despite their problematic nature, these archives still o□er important insights into the history of sexual violence. Reading them along and against their grains reveals the logics of apartheid's racial and gendered hierarchies and how these were resisted (Stoler 2002). The archive also lays bare how those with social power delineated rape from non-rape – dangerous categorisations that continue to harm. The sensationalism in many media reports may be unhelpful or even a form of violence itself, but the quantities of these sources show the omnipresence of rape during apartheid and help counter popular conceptions of rape as a post-apartheid problem. Furthermore, most cases discussed by the media were those that were o□cially reported, likely by the victim. Despite the constraints and prevailing cultures of secrecy, women did report rape to the police and sought to hold men accountable. What is astonishing about this is that the surfeit of rape reports in papers such as The World represent just the tip of the iceberg of women's actual experience; they are just a 'sliver of a sliver' of actual cases, representing only those that were reported, tried in court and deemed newsworthy (Harris 2002, 65).

These reports overwhelmingly focus on 'stranger' rapes, leaving significant silences around gendered violence in the home or within intimate relationships. Yet such cases elucidate the intersections of Black women's gendered, racial and class-based oppression in apartheid's racial capitalist economy. Trains, station platforms, darks streets and fields were all common sites of women's sexual assault. With no choice but to commute long distances to work through poorly policed areas, women were rendered susceptible to the violence of both white and Black men in public places. The archive also reveals that sexual violence was not only or primarily inflicted by gangsters. While their assaults may have been particularly brazen, they were paralleled by the routine use of force within many intimate relationships. While violence within relationships or the family was rendered particularly invisible during apartheid, sources such as Drum's 'Dear Dolly' still provide us with a glimpse, albeit circumscribed, into the 'continuum of force' that existed within many relationships (Wood et al. 2007, 284).

In navigating the apartheid archive, historians can also employ methodologies that seek to redress the violence done to women; methodologies that 'liberate them from the obscene descriptions that first introduced them to us' (Hartman 2008, 6). As Saidiya Hartman (2008, 11) states in relation to her work on slavery, 'The intention here isn't anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead, but rather laboring to paint as full a picture of the lives of the captives as possible'. Where feasible, we must seek out and listen to women's voices and portray them as 'actors and speakers as well as silenced victims', an approach that can be empowering not only to past victims but also to researchers and the readers of our work (D'Cruze 1992, 377–378). Across the apartheid period we can see how women individually resisted or sought justice against sexual violence; newspaper reports tell about women who outsmarted their attempted rapists, lured them to police stations or warded them o with lies of venereal disease.[39] Increasingly from the late 1980s, we also see instances where women turned to violence themselves, seeking retributive justice against their attackers.[40] While such cases were chosen by newspaper sta for their entertainment value, they nevertheless demonstrate that women were not merely passive victims. Examples of more organised feminist resistance are also apparent, though more di cult to trace. Ventures through catalogued archival collections mainly reveal attempts by white feminists to address gender-based violence. Black-readership newspapers provide evidence of township women's own responses to rape within their communities from the early 1980s, o ering brief insights into the meetings they held, solutions they proposed and experiences they shared. However, these sources are often dead ends – once-o reports with no follow-ups – making it di cult for the historian to trace the continuation or e ects of this resistance.

Scholars must also work to expand the archive. We can turn to alternative sources where women's subjectivities are explored. We can use creative, arts-based methodologies adept at challenging rape myths and allow women to speak back to and disrupt dominant narratives about sexuality and gender (Mitchell & Moletsane 2018). We can employ oral history, not necessarily to uncover individual, untold stories about sexual violence, but rather to explore women's understandings of rape and how these have changed over time (Mphaphuli & Smuts 2021; Mookherjee 2015). We can heed Hartman's (2008, 22) call to paint 'as full a picture […] as possible' of women's lives through life history interviews, exploring what place sexual violence

occupies within their memories of apartheid. As Cheryl McEwan (2003, 743) writes, 'the fundamental issue for archiving the present in South Africa is ensuring that those previously denied agency, including black South African women, play a full part in the documenting of their lives, in construction what might be a postcolonial archive'. Through these e□orts, historians themselves can build a more complete archive of sexual violence in South Africa's past – an endeavour essential to understanding and addressing sexual violence in the present.

Conclusion

In seeking to understand today's high rates of gender-based and sexual violence, scholars often turn to the past for answers, finding them in the country's long history of violence, inequality and division (Buiten & Naidoo 2016). However, the longer history of sexual violence itself is often ignored. As Fuentes argues, exploring the archive of such violence can help us answer the question 'how did we get here?' (Fuentes 2020, 121). Understanding how sexual violence has been conceptualised, categorised and archived in South Africa is crucial to understanding how violence against Black women has been made permissible in the present. This article has demonstrated that while sexual violence was largely ignored by the apartheid state and subjected to silencing across races and classes, it was not necessarily absent from Black communities' worldviews. Instead, it was made highly visible across social and cultural outputs – in newspapers, magazines and short stories. But this is not to argue that sexual violence was politicised or urgently addressed. Conversely, the ways in which it was defined and catalogued tended to do further violence to women.

Since the end of apartheid, sexual violence in South Africa has seemingly worsened rather than dissipated, and the contemporary archive suggests that the country remains stuck in a perpetual state of 'rape crisis'. Sexual violence in the country today is often reported on in ways reminiscent of the apartheid archive, leaving women faceless and disposable, emphasising either numbers and statistics, or gruesome details of violence without o□ering wider contextual analysis of gender-based violence. One example is the October 2021 overturning of the rape conviction of Loyiso Coko, who was acquitted of raping his girlfriend on the grounds that her consent to kissing and oral sex was tacit consent to penetrative sex. Reporting on the case, Independent Online referred to the victim as Coko's 'virgin girlfriend' who was 'pantyless' under her pyjamas when engaging in sexual activity with Coko.[41] This article shows that 'we are witnessing, in real time, how archives silence and eradicate Black experience and impose doubt on Black testimony' (Fuentes 2020, 120). The victim has been written out of the archive, rendered nameless and written about in a manner like what has been discussed in this article. This lays bare the vestiges of violent white supremacy and misogyny and their impact on the way Black women are written about and archived, rendering them hyper visible yet silent.

Notes

1. Weekend World, 24 September 1972.

2. See also Jeremy Martens (2002), Timothy Keegan (2001), Charles van Onselen (1982) and Norman Etherington (1988).
3. See also Anne K. Mager (1999); Christopher Ballantine (2000); Clive Glaser (1992); and Peter Delius and Clive Glaser (2002).
4. For example, in 2004 then President Thabo Mbeki called anti-rape campaigner Charlene Smith a racist for claiming that South Africa had the highest rape rates in the world (Mo□ett 2006, 133). See also Nyasha Karimakwenda (2020).
5. Heather Reganass, director of South Africa's National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of O□enders during apartheid, discusses the 'discovery' or rape in Black communities in the early 1990s (in Armstrong 1994, 36).
6. HP CULL0002, The Bantu World, 'Lichtenburg News', 1 January 1938.
7. Golden City Post, 16 March 1958.
8. Weekend World, 12 October 1969.
9. See also Golden City Post, 1958-1960; The World, 1955-1977; Weekend World 1968-1977.
10. See also Weekend World, 24 August 1969; 25 October 1970; 5 September 1971; 3 February 1974; Drum December 1961; and Golden City Post 21 June 1959.
11. Weekend World, 9 August 1970; 25 May 1969; 22 December 1968.
12. Weekend World, 22 September 1968.
13. Golden City Post 24 August 1958; Weekend World 21 September 1969. Rape cases with white perpetrators and Black victims were also increasingly covered by the Rand Daily Mail from the late 1940s onwards.
14. The former was launched in the mid-1960s and the latter in 1981.
15. Rand Daily Mail 'Extra' 31 January 1978; 1 April 1980.
16. Rand Daily Mail 28 February 1979.
17. Rand Daily Mail 3 May 1979; 12 June 1980.
18. Rand Daily Mail 'Township Edition' 11 June 1980; Rand Daily Mail 12 June 1980.
19. See also Sharon Block (2002); Anna Clark (1987); and Judith R. Walkowitz (1982).
20. 'Love by Martial Law' Drum, June 1957.
21. Ibid.
22. HP A3172/22. Interview with Stan Motjuwadi by Clive Glaser, 29 September 1988. See also Glaser (2000, 51).
23. 'Girl About Town', Drum, June 1959.
24. 'Girl About Town', Drum, August 1961.
25. There is some evidence to show that in Drum's early years, Dolly may not have been a woman, but was a fictional agony aunt authored by the magazine's male writers. See Kenda Mutongi (2009).
26. 'Dear Dolly', Drum, 22 May 1974.
27. 'Dear Dolly', Drum, 8 July 1974.
28. See 'Dear Dolly', Drum, January 1976.
29. In practice, the death penalty was reserved for Black men convicted of raping white women. See National Archives of South Africa (NASA), URU/3002/2057, 'Regina versus Ashington Kala: Rape (three counts)', CR Swart, 4 July 1952.
30. See HP A2052, AG2679, AG2619, AD1433, AD834B.
31. See Weekend World 23 February 1969; 22 February 1970; 15 March 1970; 10 January 1971.
32. See Weekend World 11 January 1970; 26 July 1970; 17 January 1971; 9 April 1972.
33. See Weekend World 11 August 1968; 1 September 1968; 11 October 1970; 3 January 1971; 11 April 1971; 19 September 1971; 9 December 1973; 26 May 1974.
34. There are many such cases reported in the Rand Daily Mail from the early 1950s onwards. For example, see 25 January 1951; 14 March 1953; 4 September 1954; 24 August 1955; 6 December 1957; 19 August 1965; 14 June 1967.
35. See Weekend World 26 May 1974; 1 September 1968; 11 October 1970.
36. Rand Daily Mail 24 April 1946.
37. HP 1912A/W270.2. Sunday Times 5 June 1977.
38. Soweto News, 26 February 1982.

39. See also Weekend World 8 September 1968 and 24 September 1972; Rand Daily Mail 10 April 1979 and 20 October 1981.
40. Weekly Mail 17 February 1989; The Citizen 20 March 1989. See also Emily Bridger (2018).
41. Independent Online, 14 October 2021.

Disclosure statement

No conflict of interest has been reported by the authors.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by UKRI grant number MR/S033718/1. The research data supporting this publication are provided within this paper. For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a Creative Commons Attribution licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising. We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at African Studies for their helpful feedback on this article.

Notes on contributors

Emily Bridger is an associate professor in history at the University of Exeter. Her work explores gender, violence and memory in twentieth century South Africa. She is the principal investigator of the UKRI-funded project 'South Africa's Hidden War: Histories of Sexual Violence from Apartheid to the Present'.

Erin Hazan is a PhD candidate at the Wits History Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, funded through the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies and the Social Science Research Council Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Fellowship. She is currently a research associate on the 'South Africa's Hidden War: Histories of Sexual Violence from Apartheid to the Present' project.

ORCID

Emily Bridger http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9583-0853
Erin Hazan http://orcid.org/0009-0008-8467-2029

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