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Is this output project related?	Yes	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If yes, provide the project number.
Title	Response to Lucy Graham's 'State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature'			
Authors	Nadia Sanger			
Type of output	Select the appropriate output type from the list below			
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Name, date and place of conference/seminar			
13 th August, 2012, Humanities in Africa (HUMA) building, University of Cape Town.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify			
Confidential?				
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Submitted by:	Nadia Sanger			
Submission date:	1 st March 2013			

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS

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Response to Lucy Graham's 'State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature' (2012).

Humanities in Africa (HUMA) book launch, University of Cape Town

Nadia Sanger

13th August 2012

- Lucy's book presents a sobering view of South African society at this point in its history of democracy. As noted in her conclusion, Lucy's attempt was to provide a complex unpacking of particular rape narratives. I believe that she has done this in her book.
- The necessity of such a book, coming out of Africa, and more specifically, South Africa, must not be under-estimated.
- Without providing a review of the book, I want to highlight central issues which the book raises, for me, at this juncture in South Africa's democracy.
- Although the book sets out to provide an analysis of the ways race and rape are represented in South African literature, through the early 20th century to the contemporary 21st century, it provides an understanding of sexual violence, intermeshed specifically with race, in the post-formalised apartheid South African context.
- Lucy argues (p. 68) that representations of sexual violence under apartheid as well as within the post-apartheid context are framed by early 20th century 'black peril' narratives.
- Drawing on Foucault's theory of bio-politics, and Butler's theory of cultural melancholia, enables a reading of both 'black peril' and 'white peril' narratives of sexual violence as represented in multiple literary works.

The arguments that stood out for me:

- The obsession with interracial rape in literary texts at particular moments in history, despite the more common occurrence of rape as intra-racial.
- How interracial rape, as illustrated in the 'black peril' narrative, reflects the relationship between white femininity and what Lucy calls 'the imperilled status of the white nation'.
- The fear and anxiety within the black peril narrative of the educated black man in the settler colony, in terms of the threat he poses to political and textual authority, and as competition for white men for jobs and women.
- The potential of texts by Sol Plaatje, for instance, in countering the myth of the black man as the inevitable rapist, and highlighting 'hidden' texts that depict white women as complicit in their desire for black men.
- Butler's theory of the unthinkable, unlovable and ungrievable as it links to interracial love relationships, as well as the ways in which 'miscegenation', in the form of 'mixed race' offspring, becomes the unspeakable in 'black peril', and at times, 'white peril' narratives.
- Millin's writing in the 20th century that 'half-castes' should not breed 'in order to restore purity and health to the collective.' Her focus on the intellectual degeneracy of mixed race children, and the consequences of this for mixed race subjects in South Africa within the new democracy.
- The raped white woman who must die so that mixed race offspring will not contaminate the collective.
- Arthur Maimane's work 'Victims' in 1976, with the newer title 'Hate no more' in 2000, as the first piece of literature by a black man that engages a white women's sexual desire and subjectivity, and how this challenged the typical black peril narrative.
- Karodia and Ngoba's work in the late twentieth century as the first to highlight women's perspectives in white peril narratives.
- Ndebele's work in the late 1980s in its focus of intraracial rape.
- Coetzee's *Disgrace* as potentially a restaging of race and rape in black peril narratives, and within this re-staging, the notion of women's silencing, both chosen and forced. Coetzee's choice to not articulate

women's experiences of sexual violence in his work. A consciousness around masculine complicity?

- Duiker's quote (p. 132): 'we are part of a violent culture... we never knew a period of rest' significant in thinking about the nervous condition of the black subject in current South Africa.
- Dangor's 'Bitter Fruit' and Wicomb's 'David's story' which focus post-94 on the unspeakability of particular aspects of the apartheid past in terms of sexual violence and women's silencing.
- Behr's 'The smell of apples', and Hermanus' 'Skoonheid' in representing sexual violence against men, and the disconnect between this violence and (homosexual) identity.
- **Very significant is Lucy's argument that there is continuity between past and present gender violence in South Africa, and that even though there has been a highlighting of sexual violence in the country, the reported statistics for sexual violence has not really increased post-94.**
- **How concerns around race are enmeshed as well as obscure a focus on sexual violence in post-apartheid SA.**
- **Representations of sexual violence against women, men, and children in contemporary SA, reflect anxieties about nationhood, citizenship, human rights, and so on, and hopes for SA's healing and wholeness.**
- **'Where racist thought is most deeply entrenched, love for the other is unthinkable, and interracial sex becomes imaginable only in the melancholic form of violation' (Graham, p. 193).**