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Literature & Postcolonial Capitalism

Dear Cheryl, Shashi, and Sunny,

Attached is a revised draft of my article on *Highland Tales in the Heart of Borneo*. I'm grateful to you and to the external peer reviewer for the detailed and incredibly helpful feedback.

In this draft, I've revised the introduction in order to reframe my argument about survivance and *Highland Tales*. I've tried to stress that both the text and the Malaysian/Orang Asal contexts become sites from which to theorize survivance in relationship to postcolonial capitalism and state multiculturalism. I've clarified here a two-pronged argument: the first reads the text as a critique of state multiculturalism and postcolonial capitalism, and the second illustrates how the text operates as a form of capitalist survivance. In other words, I argue that FORMADAT has chosen to strategically coopt the very systems that exploit Indigenous peoples in order to advance its critique and the interests of Indigenous communities. I have also, in the opening pages of the introduction, explained the significance of *Highland Tales* in relation to other texts from East Malaysia, expanded on what makes this text a unique case study for this special issue, and discussed what it means to be attentive to both its ethnographic and literary qualities. In addition, I've briefly defined trans-indigenous in relation to the field of Native Studies and discussed what is at stake in using trans-indigenous and transnational as connected terms for this text.

In response to feedback on the use of Gerlad Vizenor's theory of survivance, I've chosen to streamline my discussion of this concept in order to foreground my own argument. In line with the very helpful suggestions that were provided, I've attempted to argue that *Highland Tales* illustrates how Orang Asal survivance is necessarily entwined with postcolonial capitalism and state multiculturalism. I've also suggested here that FORMADAT's decision to embrace ecotourism functions as a means *enacting* survivance; a strategic choice made possible through postcolonial capitalism. I've also tried to concisely explain the importance of using survivance in a Malaysian and Orang Asal context, given that it is a foundational concept in Native Studies and one that productively speaks to the work being done by Orang Asal communities and through this text.

I attempted to move my close readings of *Highland Tales* earlier in the article, but found it difficult to do so without first foregrounding my argument about exceptional multiculturalism and postcolonial capitalism. As a result, my close readings remain in the second half of the article, but with expanded readings and with a reordering of some sections of material. In the close readings, I've focused on deepening my analysis of the opening visual map in the text, reading it in comparison to a specific commercial from the Malaysia, Truly Asia series, and analyzing it in relationship to other travel maps that follow within the text itself. I've aimed to demonstrate here that the two sets of maps in the text function both as a critique of state multiculturalism and postcolonial capitalism, while also coopting these forces to advance the economies and interests of Orang Asal communities (in keeping with the desire of Indigenous communities in Malaysia to support development "on their own terms"). I've

also expanded the analysis of the stories surrounding the giant, Upai Semaring, to reflect the possibilities they suggest regarding Indigenous land use and alternative Indigenous geographies.

In terms of the section on Malaysian multiculturalism, I've struggled to manage the comparative and historical dimensions of both my argument and the suggested revisions. I've clarified that the use of the term "exceptional" points to the *state's* view of *itself*. In other words, I use this term to signal that the state *imagines itself* as the *epitome* of Asian multiculturalism. I also referenced Stuart Hall's definition of multiculturalism to indicate how Malaysian multiculturalism both reflects this definition *and* how it is predicated more specifically on the exploitation of Indigenous communities. Additionally, a footnote in this section situates the rise of Malaysian multiculturalism alongside wider debates about multiculturalism in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US. I've also added a paragraph that provides a slightly longer history of Malaysian multiculturalism in order to be clear about its colonial origins. However, I've kept the discussion of Malaysia multiculturalism in relation to Singapore, Indonesia, and Canada relatively intact. In re-reading the feedback and in re-reading this section multiple times, I felt that my discussion of multiculturalism here does provide specificity to Malaysian multiculturalism – not by arguing that it is exceptional, but rather by trying to indicate how some of its cultural and economic policies manifest differently in comparison to Singapore, Indonesia, and Canada. I was also wary of adding too much additional material to this section (e.g. analyzing how the Orang Asal figure in state multicultural policies in contrast to the state's treatment of Chinese/Indian populations), especially given its length and the relative position of my discussion of the text itself. I recognize that this section probably needs more work, or perhaps more significant reframing.

I appreciate your time and effort in re-reading this article draft, especially as I continue thinking about and working on this project. I value your feedback and look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheela Jane Menon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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