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"(Com)Post-Capitalism Cultivating a More-than-Human Economy in the Appalachian Anthropocene"

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This article explores the cultivation of life in ruins. At the foothills of Appalachia, I focus on a permaculture farmer—Sally of Clearwater Creek—fostering arts of (making a) living on a damaged planet. Ethnography in the Anthropocene requires tending and attending to those making the best of the mess that's been made: a commitment to noticing things not (only) falling apart, but (also) coming back together again. In other words, an attention to compost—the (de)compositional processes and collaborative assemblages nourishing all life on earth. Building on "more-than-human" and "human economy" theorizing in the environmental humanities and economic anthropology respectively, this article develops the concept of the "more-than-human economy" to better understand the "problem of living despite economic and ecological ruination" (Tsing 2015). At Clearwater Creek a multi-species ecological ethic recursively informs an economic paradigm for making ends meet with others, where surpluses born of synergies feed back into a resilient system, revaluing weeds and waste. Sally's labors reflect a new form of ethical, ecological, and economic entanglement that crops up in the interstitial spaces and disturbed landscapes of the Anthropocene. Permaculture praxis—an embodied relationship with more-than-human others and an attention to symbiotic communities of co-flourishing—contributes to the cultivation of "arts of attentiveness" (van Dooren et al. 2016) necessary for living (well) on a damaged planet. Promising, yet precarious, these emergent forms of life offer hope in a blasted landscape (Kirksey et al. 2014). (Text from author's abstract)

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