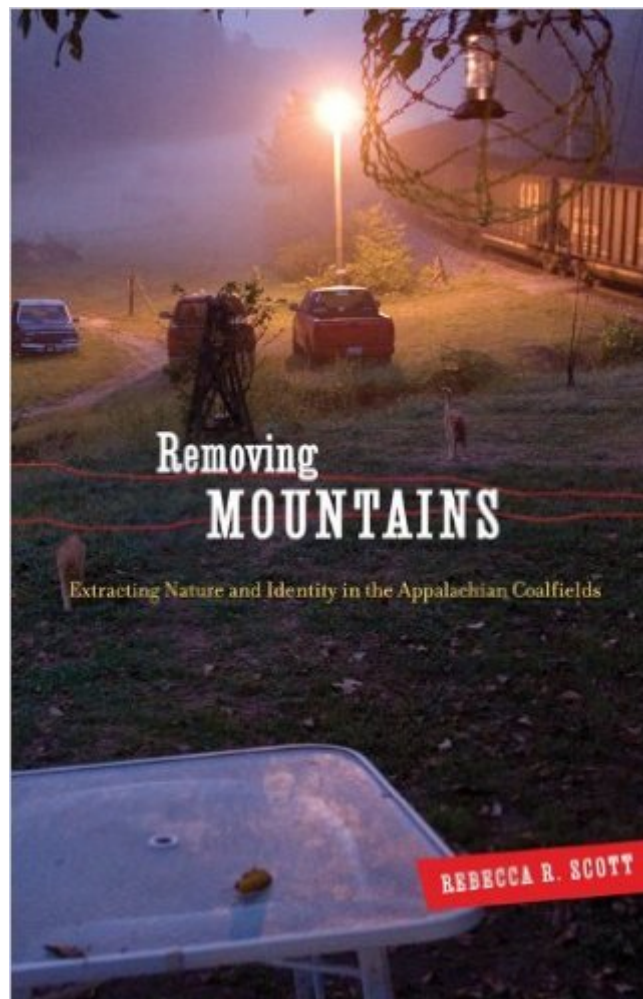


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Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature And Identity In The Appalachian Coalfields (A Quadrant Book)



Synopsis

A coal mining technique practiced in southern West Virginia known as mountaintop removal is drastically altering the terrain of the Appalachian Mountains. Peaks are flattened and valleys are filled as the coal industry levels thousands of acres of forest to access the coal, in the process turning the forest into scrubby shrublands and poisoning the water. This is dangerous and environmentally devastating work, but as Rebecca R. Scott shows in *Removing Mountains*, the issues at play are vastly complicated. In this rich ethnography of life in Appalachia, Scott examines mountaintop removal in light of controversy and protests from environmental groups calling for its abolishment. But *Removing Mountains* takes the conversation in a new direction, telling the stories of the businesspeople, miners, and families who believe they depend on the industry to survive. Scott reveals these southern Appalachian coalfields as a meaningful landscape where everyday practices and representations help shape a community's relationship to the environment. *Removing Mountains* demonstrates that the paradox that faces this community—forced to destroy their land to make a wage—raises important questions related not only to the environment but also to American national identity, place, and white working-class masculinity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What I'd say about this book: really great--compelling and smart and super-important. It's a study of the cultural politics surrounding the environmentally destructive practice of mountaintop-removal

coal mining in southern West Virginia. Here's an awesome paragraph from the first chapter, in which the conditions that give rise to Appalachia's being a 'national sacrifice zone' are being examined: "The Sago mine tragedy brought to national attention the issue of mining safety and the pattern of increasing unenforcement of regulations and loosening of regulatory oversight of the coal industry that coalfield communities have been dealing with for decades. The coal industry has made it very clear to coalfield residents that it considers fatal accidents in mines, like the many fatal road accidents caused by overweight coal trucks, to be just part of the cost of doing business (Burns 2007). After the Sago disaster and several subsequent deaths at other mines, national and state legislators scurried to enact more stringent protections for workers (Ward 2006c). But cable news coverage of the events chose not to focus on the details of state and federal regulations, their ineffective enforcement through nominal fines, and the lack of proportional response to serious infractions (Ward 2006b). Instead, national coverage of the Sago disaster became a sentimental story of dashed hopes and a miraculous recovery. The conventions of the genre--tight-knit communities, simple piety, and hard-edged suffering--allowed the incident to become an allegory of American national character, an iteration of the story of the ideal white Appalachian. As was Jessica Lynch, the miners were portrayed as always ready to sacrifice themselves to provide for their families and nation. The miners' families and communities justly joined in the sanctifying of the miners on national television; not only did this allow them to express their grief and their love for the deceased, but this is one of the only representations Appalachians can access to escape their stigmatized identity on the national stage. Occupying the narrative of ideal, sacrificing, Christian citizenship allowed West Virginians to portray their communities and the deceased miners in a positive light on the national screen."

Dr. Scott explores the tension between unsustainable practice in a finite world. This is a MUST for any college class about environmental sustainability or inequalities. Here is a shorter related piece by the author that speaks briefly about the text: [...]

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