Rachel Emma Rothschild, *Poisonous Skies: Acid Rain and the Globalization of Pollution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019) 335 pp.

Rachel Emma Rothschild's *Poisonous Skies: Acid Rain and the Globalization of Pollution* is a history of knowledge-production and its political implications. It focusses on acid rain, one of the first forms of air pollution to be identified as having devastating impacts in regions other than those it is emitted in. An elusive argument made by Rothschild is that environmental scientists, science, and technologies were key to unraveling the threats that acid rain posed and identifying fossil fuels as their cause. However, scientists were often unable to convince politicians of the accuracy of their findings and the urgency of the problem. Most notably because the British and American coal industry lobby actively sought to discredit their work. Rothschild's book thereby seeks to uncover the threshold at which scientific evidence becomes compelling enough to drive policy actions and environmental reforms (8).

During the period from 1950 to 1990, scientists began to assume the role of translators for environmental concerns (10). Rothschild's work, consisting of eight chapters, takes us on a journey through this transformative period. Between 1950 and 1990 Scandinavian and American scientists formed a scientific apparatus to study acid rain and engaged in new interdisciplinary and international partnerships to address this "invisible" phenomenon in the air (10-12). Scientists for the first time traced environmental systems across national borders, understanding them as integrated wholes instead of confined components (3-4). In Chapter four, Rothschild explores how joint scientific projects on acid rain between Eastern and Western factions during the period of détente helped decrease tensions and fostered some of the first collaborations between the two Cold War blocs. These acid rain studies ultimately led to the creation of the 1979 United Nations [UN] Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, a groundbreaking international treaty on fossil fuel pollution (84). Rothschild lastly explores the complex dynamics between politicians, scientists, and the influential coal lobbies. The coal industry lobbies, supported by the political ideologies of Reagan and Thatcher, prioritized their profits over investing in technological advancements to reduce harmful emissions. In their pursuit of maximizing financial gains, these lobbies resorted to producing misleading and dishonest studies on acid rain (126). The story is, however, surprisingly hope-bearing as scientists in the 1980s were successful in persuading both politicians and the public to support environmental regulatory efforts by highlighting the potentially unbearable costs of inaction. Discussions held at the 1982 international conference on acid rain in Stockholm played a fundamental role in this regard (138-148). This positive outcome and successful international cooperation

serve as welcome news for those attempting to drive contemporary positive change in environmental policies.

Rothschild's work has a well-defined scope and is the first to examine the history of acid rain in an international context. As a result, it logically and generously leaves much for others to explore. Rothschild explains at various moments that public's concern with acid rain helped enact environmental policies, but the book only marginally explores such public efforts as it focusses on scientists and politicians (14, 17, 146). In the 1950s, according to Rothschild, women began actively participating in street demonstrations, but neither the protests nor this gender dynamic are fully explored (14). Future, more bottom-up, research could help us better understand how public awareness, activism, and political engagement influence the development of environmental policies. Focusing on Europe and the United States, Rothschild moreover provides an exemplary work for those who wish to study acid rain in other regions.

Yet Rothschild has set the standard for future scholarship on acid rain. She spent nearly a decade consulting over a dozen archives in eight different countries and five languages, meticulously tracing the decisions of primarily scientists and diplomats across the boundaries of Norway, Sweden, Britain, the US, Canada, and West Germany (4). Interviews with leading scientists from both the public and private sector compliment the archival materials, a substantial amount of which was not public information prior to her endeavors (4-5). In Rothchild's words, part of her aim was thereby "to uncover what was going on behind the scenes in constructing acid rain research and policy" (5). Rothschild's impressive work on the way scientists and politicians navigated the geo-politics of acid in the past can help us improve our current perspectives on environmental pollution.

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