

Oponentský posudek bakalářské práce

Wasilewska, Elizabeth Meine, *Caroline Henderson's Letters from the Dust Bowl: A Window Into An Intercultural Dialogue on Federal Relief for the 1930's Environmental Disaster in the Great Plains*, Praha: FHS UK 2019, 55 s.

Ms. Wasilewska's bachelor's thesis, titled "Caroline Henderson's Letters from the Dust Bowl: A Window Into An Intercultural Dialogue on Federal Relief for the 1930's Environmental Disaster in the Great Plains", seeks to provide microhistorical account of Dust Bowl and especially subsequent application of the New Deal relief plan by Roosevelt's administration through the lens of Oklahoma farmer, Caroline Henderson.

By using Henderson's letters and also her Master's thesis published after the crisis, Ms. Wasilewska focuses on her protagonist's personal experience and specifically on the impacts on her agency, emotions and values in contrast both with macrohistorical narratives of the events and contemporary interpretations by the New Deal apologists.

Overall, Ms. Wasilewska succeeds in her own goals, providing the reader with compact, sharply focused study that is clearly structured and vividly written. Furthermore, some of the themes discussed in the thesis are just as relevant as they were in the 1930s, e.g. the controversy of automation and machinery, struggle between individualism and statism, or impacts of the large-scale governmental programs on personal level, including emotions such as self-respect etc.

However, I believe Ms. Wasilewska could've improved her already excellent thesis by

1. expanding the theoretical chapter (Overview of Sources and Methodology, p. 3-9) to address more robustly the microhistorical method and its concrete application on her source material.
2. reflecting in more detail on the nature and of her primary sources. It would be relevant to know when and under what circumstances was Henderson's correspondence published, whether there are other witness accounts of the Dust Bowl (Ann Marie Low and her *Dust Bowl Diary*) and how do they differ, how specific is Henderson's personal experience in context and comparison (e.g. in terms of her education, being a woman etc. – these issues are partially addressed but scattered throughout the thesis without much reflection), or to what degree Henderson's correspondence was already used in other academic studies.
3. expanding the contextual chapters (Origins and Definitions of the Dust Bowl, p. 9-14; The New Deal, p. 14-18), as the thesis sometimes lacks information that could be useful for general understanding of Henderson's living conditions. For example, it would be helpful to get more into detail with particular Dust Bowl relief policies included in the New Deal.

Suggested thesis grade: 1