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**Anna Odrowąż-Coates (2015). *Fatamorgana saudyjskiej przestrzeni społeczno-kulturowej kobiet. Płynne horyzonty socjalizacji, edukacji i emancypacji*. Kraków: Impuls, pp. 302.**

**[English title: *A mirage of socio-cultural space of women in Saudi Arabia. Liquid horizons of socialization, education and emancipation*].**

#### CYTOWANIE

Tłuściak-Deliowska Aleksandra (2018). *Anna Odrowąż-Coates (2015). Fatamorgana saudyjskiej przestrzeni społeczno-kulturowej kobiet. Płynne horyzonty socjalizacji, edukacji i emancypacji. Kraków: Impuls, pp. 302 (review)*. „Studia Krytyczne” nr 6: 123–127.

June 24 this year is an important date for women in Saudi Arabia. It is from this day that they can independently drive a car. The restrictive law was abolished by the prince Mohammed bin Salman. So far, women were driven most often by private drivers, not from luxury, but rather from necessity. Saudi Arabia is given in discussions about women's rights as an example of a country that limits their political, social and economic freedoms. In fact, gender separation is a general phenomenon in Saudi society, and the liberty of women is limited by specific moral norms more than by – gradually weakening – legal restrictions. In Western societies, there are stereotypical beliefs about the bad situation of women in Arab countries, there is a lot of talk about the limited rights of women and the ubiquitous dominance of men. What the situation of women in Islamic countries

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really looks like, we can learn from the book written by Anna Odrowąż-Coates, who spent two years in Saudi Arabia conducting research on social inequalities, and in particular, the situation of Saudi women. The result of this research is the work titled: "A mirage of socio-cultural space of women in Saudi Arabia. Liquid horizons of socialization, education and emancipation" published by Impuls Publishing House. Although my scientific interests as a social researcher are related to the problems of school environment, in particular the problem of peer bullying, I have reached for this book from pure cognitive curiosity, with the desire to know what is unknown to me. My interest was all the greater because the book received many positive reviews, and what's more, the book received an award in the competition organized by Polish Educational Research Association (PERA; in polish: Polskie Towarzystwo Pedagogiczne, PTP) for an outstanding scientific monograph on pedagogy. For these reasons, the book interested me, firstly as a researcher who wants to become familiar with the research workshop presented in it, secondly, as a reader for whom the subject of the book is extremely attractive and unfamiliar.

From the short introduction "From the Author" we find out that She stayed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for two years (in 2010-2012). Her stay was related to Her husband's professional work. Being a specialist's wife gave her protection and opportunities to be in the environment of indigenous Saudis, to be in their homes, participate in various everyday situations and natural conversations with other women. The fluent knowledge of English and the willingness to learn this language by the people of Arabia also proved useful. However, the research involved many difficulties and limitations. They result from restrictions related to conducting scientific research, which in the presented conditions could not be fully met and ethical issues. Interviews with a translator and interviews in English probably do not allow to fully understand the cultural code of the respondents and their way of understanding the world. The subjects were an occasional, accidental sample, which over time was supplemented. The interlocutors did not know the Author's "real" research intentions. This can be treated, on the one hand, as a significant limitation, and on the other – as an aspect that has, however, ensured greater freedom and naturalness.

The main purpose of the work was to capture the socio-cultural reality of women living in Saudi Arabia. The effects of stay in Saudi Arabia and information gathered in this way are presented in the book. The structure of monograph is logical and transparent. Individual chapters and subsections result from one another creating a logical whole, although some of them have extremely poetic titles, which is unusual for strictly scientific works. The book consists of seven

chapters, of which the initial ones constitute an introduction to the adopted discourse and includes theoretical content regarding the conditions of the individual in the theories of socialization. In the first chapter, the Author outlines the theoretical framework evoking various sociological theories, including the theory of Bauman, Goffman or Bourdieu, and trying to locate the situation of women in this context. The Author draws attention to the class habitus, symbolic violence and the role of school in perpetuating the situation of women and their place in the social structure. There is also a reference to the theory of Durkheim about the functions of religious beliefs. Religion has a unifying function and, above all, validating the existing social order, which is significant in the context of the issue raised in this book. The Author moves with great ease in these issues.

Anna Odrowąż-Coates explains the title term “mirage” in the second chapter and draws attention to the liquidity of the thesis. The author writes about how the mirage of horizons that determine the cultural space of women affects the liquidity of these borders and the level of women’s emancipation, as well as the applied research workshop. The third chapter can be treated as a methodological part typical for research work in the field of social sciences. The qualitative method was used in the research, hence the interpretation paradigm has been applied. Own research is called by the Author as multifaceted ethnographic research. As time passed and the Odrowąż-Coates entered the Saudi social reality, further fields of analysis and new research questions emerged. As a result, the empirical material consisted of notes from conversations with women, a diary from observations, memories of a two-year stay in Taif and Jeddah captured, for example, in photographs, which are not missing in the book and which are attractive from the reader’s perspective. In the fourth chapter the Author discusses the historical and political context of the undertaken subject. In the following subsections, the Author analyzes the reasons leading to the formation of Saudi culture, the influence of religion on the identity and social status of women, raises the subject of women’s freedoms and privileges, and introduces the assumptions of Islam itself. Odrowąż-Coates also discusses the branches of Islam in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their implications for women.

In further chapters the Author analyzes the collected material devoted to the place and role of women in Saudi Arabia. Based on observations carried out in the natural environment and collected materials, the Author tried to get an answer to the question regarding the perception and interpretation of women’s situation in this cultural environment. In chapters 5-7, the Author presents not only the information gathered during Her stay in Saudi Arabia, but, by making explanations, She also reaches other sources. The Author not

only tried to describe the situation of women, but also to identify instruments of social programming, educational or social space in the context of the uniqueness of the Saudi social order. Presentation of research results is probably the most interesting part of the work, especially stories that are exemplifications of formulated statements and conclusions. The fifth chapter is devoted to the cultural space of women in Saudi Arabia, reconstructed on the basis of interviews conducted with indigenous people, including with a bus driver or a colonel in whose home the author visited. We will also find here information on the perception of the woman's body and the issue of sexuality, as well as on marriage and the right to choose in this matter. The contents presented were interesting to me, not only from the point of view of the researcher or the reader of the book, but from the perspective of simply a woman. In the next chapter, the Author looks at the intellectual development of Saudi women and approaches to the subject of their education and introduces teaching methods in Saudi schools. Odrowąż-Coates also discusses the subject of class, caste and racial divisions. In the last chapter, we will find observations of reality, including, inter alia, the issue of gated estates.

In the book "A mirage of socio-cultural space of women in Saudi Arabia. Liquid horizons of socialization, education and emancipation" the Author outlines the panorama of problems resulting from the belief in the necessity of gender segregation. A woman who reveals a piece of hair is exposed to malicious comments and gestures of contempt on the part of passers-by. If a woman faints in a public place, no one will help her – touching a foreign woman is treated as an insult on her and her family. It is also not worth giving help to road accident victims in Saudi Arabia – which was painfully felt on their skin, originating from Africa, the driver of the bus carrying the wife's employees from the housing estate where the author lived. For the willingness to help the injured person, he paid the dismissal and the trial in which he was acquitted only by joint testimony of women passengers. From the perspective of a person who grew up in a different cultural circle, such examples may seem at least "strange", while for indigenous people they are something natural. On the one hand, it can be assumed that this is a kind of harassment of women. On the other hand, women can pose for themselves, although in a different way. Contrary to popular opinion, the status of women in Islam is high. The Author of this book outlines the perspective of women traditionally and conservatively raised, women raised in the tradition but with progressive and emancipatory tendencies, and the perspective of the researcher, which comes from a different, western socio-cultural space. The situation of a modern Saudi woman is very diverse and depends on many factors, such as the geographical region or tradition. It results from environmental and social conditions, from

the dominance of the masculine world, from the proper interpretation of sacred works, as well as religion itself. Taking this into account the title of the book seems to be extremely accurate, and the fragment of the world depicted in it is fascinating.

In conclusion, it could be stated that the reviewed book is a response to the need for this type of knowledge, especially in the Central European country that is different religiously and culturally from the subject being analyzed in this book. The content presented in it can therefore be both attractive and abstract to the reader. Therefore, it can be recommended to both researchers and people interested in this subject. It is important material regarding the situation of women described from the perspective of the interested – sometimes accepting the expectations they are being asked, sometimes more or less openly confronting them. The advantage of the work is also a uniform and “light” style of expression that naturally arouses the reader’s interest, also due to the transparent conduct of the arguments in particular chapters and the concise presentation of the most important information. I think that a two-year stay in Saudi Arabia was an interesting adventure for the Researcher herself, as a result of which an equally interesting book was created, which I recommend.