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World Literature and Transformative Learning: Reading and Teaching *Season of Migration to the North* in Swedish Upper Secondary School

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This study investigates how Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (2006) can be read and taught as an example of world literature in accordance with the transformative and culturally empowering ambitions of the Swedish upper secondary school curriculum. A total of 18 third-year students in the upper secondary science programme read the novel and recorded their reading experiences in journals. These journals have been thematically analysed, and the results show that the students' processes of deconstructing and reconstructing the finalised reading, using literary concepts, help forward estrangement effects, which produce critical readings. As the students read for the plot and closed in on the end, their text-centred understandings of the novel were heightened, and by actively using subject-specific terminology (i.e. stylistic devices and modes of reading concepts), they strengthened the sense-making of their relations to the world as mediated through the text. Frames of reference about historical and current Sudan support the students in allowing the novel to become a merging point, at which their cultural horizons are nuanced through the juxtaposing of different perspectives. The students' meta-reflexive readings allow for experiencing culture on the move as part of their transformative learning.

Keywords: transformative learning, world literature, cultural horizons of meaning, upper secondary school

Introduction: Context, Aim and Research Question

Thoughts, assumptions, highlights, dismissals, *et cetera* are continuously re-created within cultural settings (Gay, 2018). As cultural changes affect worldviews and self-awareness, it is crucial to recognise culture as a dynamic phenomenon rather than a product of the status quo (Pertierra, 2020). Swedish upper secondary literature teaching aims at challenging the students' frames of mind through developing their comprehension of themselves and others' 'experiences, living conditions, thinking and conceptual worlds' (Skolverket, 2012). Such ambitions echo the pedagogical idea of transformative learning, which includes becoming aware of and critically reflecting upon one's own and others' assumptions, beliefs, and habits of mind (Mezirow, 2003).

Also at the core of understanding is knowledge about historical and present worlds, as explained by Gadamer (1997). According to Gadamer, understanding involves engagement in 'a confrontation with something radically different from ourselves' (Outhwaite, 1985, p. 24), such as a text, but without ignoring the culturally produced position from which one started (Gadamer, 1997). Only then, 'cultural horizons – that is, our prejudices and biases informed by the cultural elements with which we have been familiarized – can naturally extend past themselves to accommodate novel meanings' (Pertierra, 2020, p. 57). Fictional texts can bring not only known realities to its readers but also disclose the not yet known in ways that test the readers' approaches to the world (Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen, 2020). Hence, in this study, world literature is assumed to transgress place- and time-bound cultural limitations by juxtaposing opposing judgements. The interplay between the familiar and the strange bears a learning potential that harmonises with Swedish upper secondary steering document aims and with Gadamer's idea of merging horizons of meaning as a metaphor for broadening and/or deepening understanding through encounters with the world (1997).

However, already in 2004, a report showed an almost complete lack of world literature reading practices within upper secondary school due to limits of a) time, b) material resources, and c) knowledge among teachers and school librarians (Hallonsten & Bergstrand, 2004). Since then, regional and government-funded measures have been taken to increase interest in and availability of literature from around the world in Sweden. Some examples include a greater focus on World Book Day (UNESCO, 2015), the founding of the House of World Literature in Gothenburg (Världslitteraturhuset, n.d), and the Swedish Arts Council's investment in the book series *Alla tiders*

klassiker [Classics Throughout Time] aimed at making world literature more widely available for schools and the general public (Kulturrådet, n.d). Moreover, world literature has been made more accessible online through Världsbiblioteket's web portal (n.d).

Clearly, measures have been taken to promote world literature as a cultural influence in Sweden. Rutherford and Levitt (2020) argue that since cultural influences shape thinking, it is necessary to put world literature on the syllabus. However, non-Western literature is seldom included in Swedish upper secondary school practice (Bergman, 2014). Also, world literature research which contributes concretely to educational research and teaching practices is not extensive (Persson & Sundmark, 2022). Recent globally themed research anthologies (Helgeson et al., 2018; Nemeth & Nordenstam, 2020; Nygård Larsson et al., 2022) are only implicitly relevant to teaching and learning (Persson & Sundmark, 2022). Moreover, contrary to the transformative learning potentials of character development in novels (Bradling, 2020), practice-oriented research on upper secondary world literature reading emphasises the use of short stories (Bradling & Lindberg, 2020; Gustafsson Nadel, 2018). On top of this, current official politics have stipulated that a Swedish cultural canon ought to be produced and reflected in school reading lists (Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige, 2022), even though *Bildung* aspects of literature teaching centralise individuals' relationships to the world and to communal historical memories rather than to specific canonical content (Petersson, 2022). These circumstances make the issue of and research on moving culturally produced horizons of meaning forward through world literature teaching acute.

Consequently, this study aims to contribute to the research field of literature teaching and learning by providing an investigation of the transformative potentials and challenges of reading and teaching a world literature novel, which is distant in time and place, in upper secondary school. By doing so, the ambition is to help subsidise the bridging of the gap between world literature research and the teaching practice. The contribution is concretised through a study of student readings of Sudanese/British author Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (2006).[1] The posed research question is as follows:

[1] Original Arabic title: موسم الهجرة إلى الشمال [*Mawsim al-Hijra ilā al-Shamāl*] (1966). Swedish title: *Utvandringens tid* (2008). Throughout this article, it is referred to as *Season.*

How can reading Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (2006) in an upper secondary school setting help move the cultural horizons of students in a transformative direction?

Literature Review: World Literature and the Research Field of Literature Teaching and Learning

World literature has been redefined often (Damrosch, 2003; Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen, 2020). Given that understanding other cultures than one's own is increasingly crucial due to digitalisation and migration, among other reasons, world literature presupposes a global(isation) perspective that goes far beyond Goethe's notion of *Weltlitteratur* as a world-common literary heritage (Petersson, 2022). World literature is more than 'works that have been critically endorsed internationally, and which also address issues of otherness and strangeness' (Yarova, 2021) because literature that travels from one cultural hemisphere to another does so because it can be pinfolded into an existing discourse (Locane, 2018). Instead, world literature 'cultivate[s] … multi-perspectivism' (Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen, 2020, p. 158) grown out of contrasting perspectives in which disagreement subsidises knowledging. That is, world literature brings perspectives which are created in local or regional conditions but are nevertheless able to journey to the reader from other world regions. The reader's understanding challenges not only the way world literature comes across but also the reader's own perceptions (Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen, 2020). World literature requires 'the reader's acceptance of the alternative world-view' (Yarova, 2021, p. 32) and benefits from gazes 'wherein reflexivity constitutes both the source and the outcome of pluriversal, multisided understandings' (Bagga-Gupta & Carneiro, 2021, p. 321). Hence, world literature, as it can be mediated in a delimited teaching context, is mainly about explicating the readers' relations to the world (Leppänen, 2020).

However, if reading world literature in school is about explicating readers' relations to the world (Leppänen, 2020), there is a risk that this reading will reinforce unnuanced assumptions about different cultures (Gustafsson Nadel, 2018). It is not an uncommon perception that upper secondary readers either read fiction documentarily or heavily subjectively (Nordberg, 2017). Gustafsson Nadel's (2018) study shows three possible, but unless combined reductionist, outcomes of upper secondary students' meetings with a short story from Kenya, namely, that the students use fiction 'as a source of knowledge and a window to the world', 'as a mirror', or else treat it 'as

the other' (p. 139–140), from which one has to disentangle oneself. In order to resist reductionist readings, thought-provoking internal contradictions within a novel and the subsequent teaching of it can help students organise their thoughts through reading journals (Bradling, 2020). Wearmouth (2017) describes reading as a process of meaning-construction, which includes the readers' prior assumptions about the text and the testing of these expectations throughout the activity. Also, fiction is in itself contingent, that is, a construction that could become another construction depending on the point of view of the reader and the act of reading (Mehrstam, 2010). Therefore, literature teaching needs to focus on the interplay between the text, the reader, and the world.

The choice of stories to read and teach for educational purposes has been the subject of extensive research in Sweden. This research highlights internal contradictions within the text which position the reader in between incompatible positions as fruitful for learning processes, especially in relation to common values (Alkestrand, 2016; Bradling, 2020; Mehrstam, 2010). These conditions are brought about by the use of multiple voices, different narrative points of view, and varied focalisations in fictional texts (Holmberg & Ohlsson, 1999). Moreover, literature which depicts diversity by making space for intersecting forms of culture can present mosaic representations of societies (Mansour, 2020). Consequently, estrangement effects that winkle out, extort, or reinforce a reader's new perspectives on the worlds inside and outside of the text leave the reader without ready-made answers and in need of positioning in relation to the text and the world (Agrell, 2009). Concretely, literature reading and teaching focused on strange making has been shown to de-automise school pupils' habitual thinking (Bradling, 2020). However, framing literature teaching intent on transformative learning by stressing the importance of finalised reading (Öhman, 2015), accentuating stylistic devices as part of an indispensable subject-specific language (Johansson, 2019), and estrangement effects (Agrell, 2009) have been shown to be successful (Bradling, 2020).[2] Also, if the students can shape their own literary discussion, then this allows for personal views to matter in collective meaning-making (Varga & Davydenko, 2023), thus allowing school to become

[2] The concept of finalised reading highlights readers' narrative desire to reach the end of the plot, as crucial for reading engagement (Brooks, 1984; Öhman, 2015). Fictional texts are viewed as complete and intentional utterances meant to spark reactions from the readers (Bakhtin, 1986; Öhman, 2015).

a *rendezvous* for students to meet the world and see themselves in relation to the world (Menezes de Souza & Monte Mor, 2021).

Theoretical Springboards: Transformative Learning and Horizons of Meaning

The core of the transformative learning process is to make established roles and patterns visible and thus possible to reshape (Mezirow, 2000). In doing so, transformative learning empowers students to become agents for democracy (Wilhelmsson, 2005). To visualise cultural structures that govern assumptions, thoughts, expectations, et cetera, it is necessary to include critical aspects in teaching and learning (Gay, 2018). One way of bringing such visualisation about is to prepare for different habitual ways of thinking in order to produce collective meaning-making (Wilhelmsson, 2005). Possible forums for such meetings include the act of reading fiction and communal discussions (Bradling, 2020). Mezirow (2009) claims that 'one must access and understand, intellectually and empathetically, the frame of reference of the other and seek common ground with the widest range of relevant experience and points of view possible' (p. 91). By making students aware of their current frames of reference and adding alternative perspectives to these, it is possible to prepare for feasible reshaping of the students' conceptual worlds (Mezirow, 2000). Unlike critical approaches to literature and learning, which however remain uncritical to their own points of departure, the transformative ambition embraces investigations of one's own starting point (Bradling, 2020; Mezirow, 2000). For literature teaching, transformative learning comprises both engaged reading for the plot and more distanced critical reading, but the latter must not precede the former so as not to thoughtlessly impose ready-made prior assumptions onto the text (Bradling & Lindberg, 2018).

As Mezirow (2009) highlights, the seeking of mutual agreement with as much experience and as many perspectives as is viable for transformative learning to occur is a recognition of the need to merge different horizons of meaning (Gadamer, 1997). According to Gadamer (1997), such fusion is not a question of leaving preconceptions behind, but rather preconceptions are the basis against which new impressions have to be measured. Presumptive ways of thinking are firmly established within societal units, and in any process of meaning-making, this needs to be acknowledged as something that affects understanding (Kjørup, 2009). However, both Gadamer (1997) and Mezirow (2009) stress that understanding presupposes open-mindedness towards different ways to comprehend, even though it is necessary to recognise the cultural dead weight one always brings

into interpretation (Kjørup, 2009). Kjørup (2009) explains that to understand a text, the past, or a culture, it is essential to allow oneself to be influenced by it, and therefore, actual horizons of meaning are dynamic – not static (Gadamer, 1997).

The metaphor of horizons of meaning functions as a means for conceptualising understanding, and to embrace a new horizon is to see further without dismissing what is near (Clark, 2008). However, Gadamer's conception has been subject to criticism for placing too much, as well as too little, significance on the text (Kjørup, 2009). The fusion of horizons stands in between the will to uncover the author's intentions (Hirsch, 1967) and the view of reader reception as an active meaning-making engagement with the text (Jauss, 1970). According to Gadamer, though, understanding transcends the text, but texts can still mediate what is universally human (Kjørup, 2009). In addition, this Gadamerian front is also championed by the 'Swedish National Agency for Education', which highlights the opportunity 'to understand in fiction … what is universal in space and time' (Skolverket, 2012) as one of the aims of the subject of Swedish. In contrast, giving such credence to the text itself risks ruling out critical reading completely (Habermas, 1994). However, Pertierra (2020) explains that the horizonal merging between writer and reader as explained by Gadamer discards any interpretative priority of the author, and instead makes it possible for incompatible perspectives to co-exist.

As hinted at above, the concepts of transformative learning and fusions of horizons share approaches to understanding. They both presuppose engagement in experiencing new frames of reference and self-reflexivity, and actively attempt to see 'how one's own horizon differs from others' (Pertierra, 2020, p. 49). To approach a text from one's own horizon is to put this prospect into play by allowing it to be revised and transformed as it meets different approaches to the world. Given that 'horizons constitute our perspectives on the world' (Pertierra, 2020, p. 51), they can be used as analytical tools for understanding 'culture and cultural meaning' (Pertierra, 2020, p. 60). Throughout his article, Pertierra (2020) writes of 'cultural horizons' consisting of explicit and implicit parts. For transformative learning to come about, such implicit elements need to be brought to light and comprehended as culturally conditioned (Mezirow, 2009). This can happen when the subject matter of a text becomes the meeting place for knowledge derived from different 'cultural horizons' (Pertierra, 2020). In doing so, universal bonds can come into sight without rejecting understanding as something historically and culturally situated (Gadamer, 1997).

Methods and Ethics: Teaching and Research

Qualitative methods and ethics are often inseparable, especially if the purpose of the research is to close in on learning processes. In relation to both methods and ethics, this section will bring up the split role of being a teacher and a researcher, how the study was designed and carried through, and how the data from student-produced reading journals have been thematically analysed.

It is the bipartite teacher–researcher role that has made this study possible. Even though the data solely consist of the students' reading journals, the study is autoethnographic to the extent that the teaching is not only designed, experienced, and remembered from the insider–teacher position but also juxtaposed with culture and research from outside of the classroom, as explained by Bylund et al. (2021). Consequently, it is necessary not only to make one's own viewpoint visible but also to allow for self-reflexivity to maintain a central position throughout the entire process of research (Salö, 2018). This is also in line with the reflexivity ascribed by the theoretical springboards of this study. The in-betweenness of a position as researcher and practitioner is especially beneficial for self-reflexivity, given that 'workers know a lot: more than any intellectual, more than any sociologist. But in a sense they don't know it; they lack the instrument to grasp it, to speak about it' (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1994, p. 273). By continuously positioning experience from a practice field in relation to strands within a research field, an interplay between practice and research experience is created, in which knowledge is elevated through a hermeneutic spiral process (Gadamer, 1997). Öhman and Lindell (2019) pinpoint the importance of rapprochement between literature teaching research and teachers' proven experience in order to balance doing and meta-awareness in literature teaching and to gain relevant research results. One important measure taken in order to not be 'imprisoned by the field' (Salö, 2018, p. 27) of practice has been to present the study at scholarly events for different research groups throughout the entire work process, which is also an activity that helps maintain ethical consideration towards the autoethnographic self (Bylund et al., 2021).

According to Bourdieu (1996), extensive subject knowledge is a necessity for a researcher, which in this case, is provided through an actual teacher position and more than 20 years' experience of working practice and/or comparative literature/educational studies. However, the ability to step back and look at routines, interactions and relationships is necessary to be able to rethink established interpretations (Bergold & Thomas, 2012) instead of uncritically inheriting collective

beliefs (Salö, 2018). In this study, such distance is provided through the research position. Even though Bourdieu (1996) argues that there is no such thing as a neutral observer, some actions have been taken to ensure that potential biases do not overrule the collective benefits of swiftly getting started and using the classroom as a familiar place:

- Not grading data
- Leaving classroom discussions out of the data
- Not publishing results until the students have graduated
- Allowing for students to produce data at home in order to create safe spaces (see Bergold & Thomas, 2012), without direct peer or teacher pressure

Had it been the case that classroom discussions were incorporated as data, ethical concerns about the interaction between teacher/researcher and participating students would have been more delicate (Bradling, 2020). Instead, this study is focused on the learning expressed through reading journals written as part of the students' mandatory Swedish course. Incorporating the study into regular teaching makes it '*a realist construction*' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 28) and the participatory rate large. Moreover, the study did not impose more work on the students. Ethically, not to demand more effort than necessary from any research participant is considerate (Enghel, 2023). Nevertheless, there is a power asymmetry between students and their teacher which is difficult to dismiss in autoethnographically inspired educational research. However, the method allows for the teacher/researcher to approach the learning process in a way that would be harder to accomplish for a complete outsider. Also, this asymmetry is part of realist constructions in different ways: on one hand, students might want to impress their teacher by making qualified efforts; on the other hand, students might be annoyed because the research contribution is not graded. In hindsight, it is my overall impression that all students looked upon the journal-writing as part of their regular coursework and as something that could help them better comprehend the novel, but nonetheless not written for grading.

During the autumn semester of 2022, 19 third-year students in the science programme were given the assignment to read *Season* as the first part of the course, Swedish 3. As a researcher as well as teacher, I was new to this group, and this was to be our first interaction. After reading *A Handful of Dates* (Salih, 2006) together and briefly discussing its plot, characters, and imagery, the students

were instructed to document the reading experience of *Season* in journals.[3] The instructions for the journal writing were to summarise the reading, pose questions about the text and the reading, and write something about the reading experience using (not mandatory) the concepts of recognition, enchantment, knowledge, shock (Felski, 2008) and reluctance (Bradling, 2020), which the students could familiarise themselves with through a brief teacher lecture and in writing. The journals were intended to support the students' meta-reflections on their reading and to become research data. After being informed orally and in writing, all students allowed their contributions to be part of the research data. However, one student never handed the journal in. In this paper, the students are continuously referred to as S1–S18.

The students were assigned to read two chapters (of ten in total) at a time for five different lessons (over a period of five weeks) and to write drafts for their reading journals as well as discussion questions. During each of these five lessons, the students partook in group discussions in which they reviewed the plot and discussed the questions they had brought. Any time left could be spent on reading and/or revising the journals. Thus, the journals became products of both individual and collective reflection. During the five weeks, relevant stylistic devices were brought up to further explain passages of the text. Examples of the devices taught are symbols, frame narrative and Russian doll structure, *Leerstellen*, plot voucher, and metaphors such as the window/mirror metaphors used by Gustafsson Nadel (2018). Moreover, the students could use the online resources, Landguiden and Sweden Abroad, as introductions to the historical context of *Season* and the current state of Sudan.[4] Despite encouraging the students to focus on learning aspects of their participation, it is not unlikely that some have tried their best to steer their reflections towards imaginations of teacher/researcher expectations. If so, this is due to the authenticity of the situation and to be considered advantageous, as it means the students have been encouraged to engage with their own learning processes.

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[3] Salih's short story *A Handful of Dates* is part of the same 'Wad Hamid Cycle' about life in a Sudanese village, as is *Season* (Pearson, 2021). It is available in Swedish as *En näve dadlar* (*Karavan,* 2006:4, pp. 24–28).

[4] This was before the power struggle in Khartoum accelerated into armed violence, although this happened during the same school year.

The reading journals have been approached through a thematical analysis inspired by the model presented by Braun and Clarke (2006). The originators themselves stress that the model is meant to be used creatively, and not as a dictate (Braun et al., 2019). In the study at hand, the analytical process included an initial phase of familiarisation in which the data were read through in their entirety. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe such an initial act as important because ideas of patterns are shaped as one reads the data and becomes accustomed to their complexity. However, the teacher-researcher position allowed for picking up students' lines of thought even before this initial phase. Nonetheless, it is the written reading journals that constitute the data, but the autoethnographic element of the study – i.e. the insider-teacher position, which enables closeness to the students' learning processes – made it possible to arrive at the analytical work with 'prior knowledge of the data and … initial analytic interests' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16).

These interests also derived from previous research on literature teaching for transformative learning in upper secondary school (Bradling, 2020). In Bradling's study, a) finalised reading, b) using literary concepts, and c) literary estrangement effects are shown to be important so as not to draw imprudent conclusions, but rather make possible reflections through subject-specific vocabulary and to prepare for experiencing several perspectives (2020). To that extent, the thematic analysis is deductive, whereas the sub-theming is generated through the inductive coding of the data. However, the labelling of the sub-themes partly overlaps with previous literature in teaching and learning research as essential parts of the data explicate existing research findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) make clear that a thematic analysis never exists within 'an epistemological vacuum' (p. 12), and by making this clear, they echo Bourdieu's (1996) acceptance of research as non-neutral, upon which this study rests. A thematic analysis that is theory-driven might not provide a description as rich as a completely data-driven analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), but this risk is negligible given that the data are fairly small.

In addition to reading the journals in their entirety, I read and compared the journals entry by entry, following both the plot of the book and the growth of the journals. In doing so, it was possible to group features by the themes of 'finalised reading', 'literary concepts', and 'estrangement effects' derived from the aforementioned previous research. Movement back-and-forth between extensive writing, the feature groups, and the data enabled the identification of sub-themes. Also, during this process, the data have been put aside and returned to later. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight non-

static analytical work as beneficial for thematic analysis and explain sub-themes as 'themes-within-a-theme … useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme' (p. 22). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that as sub-themes are reviewed in a dynamic back-and-forth-process, some may have to be discarded because they do not fit the overall pattern. As true as this may be, research intent on making space for a diversity of voices must not to rule out conceptions that deviate (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). This study is an exploration of how world literature can breed 'multi-perspectivism' (Helgesson & Rosendahl Thomsen, 2020, p. 158); therefore, the reporting of results bears a stamp of attentiveness to alternative approaches within the data. In addition, this accounts for the complexity of the data and ensures a rich description despite the initial top-down approach. The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 1:

Table 1.
Thematic descriptions of the results

Finalised reading		**Literary concepts**		**Estrangement effects**	
Reading for the plot	Reaching the end	Stylistic devices	Modes of reading	The Mirror	The Window

In this table, there is no separation between the mirror/window sub-themes because the analytical work has shown these categories as interconnected to the extent of boundary dissolvement. The (sub)themes are used as (sub)headlines in the results section of this article. However, to supply context to the results, they will be preceded by an account of *Season*.

Reading *Season* for Transformative Learning

According to Öhman and Lindell (2019), it is the work itself that sets the boundaries for what is possible in a literature learning situation: which questions are relevant, which themes are important, *et cetera*. Even though many different types of knowledge can be taught and learnt in a classroom, a specific book makes specific learning outcomes possible. Therefore, *Season* holds a position at the core of this study, and below, its plot and transformative potentials are outlined.

The narrator returns to his home village on the banks of the river Nile after years of studying in Britain. Soon after his arrival, he realises that there is a stranger – Mustafa Said – in the village. Mustafa too has studied abroad, and therefore there is an implicit bond of intellectualism between

the two men. As Mustafa opens up to his newly found peer, he tells about his life as an African Arab philanderer in Britain. However, in retrospect, the narrator tells about a flood in which Mustafa drowned, possibly by suicide. The form of *Season* is challenging. For example, a spontaneous desert celebration of life and Sudan is a deviation from the through line of the story. The chronology is chaotic, and the narrative perspectives continuously change between the narrator and the intradiegestic Mustafa, even allowing a ghostlike voice towards the end of the story. Pearson (2021) states that *Season* requires a reader 'to grapple with chaos and confusion' to release the novel's 'transformative power of language' (p. 47). Such split focalisation has been shown to be beneficial for transformative learning purposes, as it can prepare for strange making (Bradling, 2020).

Throughout the novel, the narrator's acquaintance with Mustafa continues to haunt him. Moreover, he develops an emotional interest for Mustafa's widow, Hosna, but eventually learns about her forced marriage to the old villager, Wad Rayyes, and an attempted rape which leaves both the widow and villager dead. In the light of his own position, the narrator reconstructs the life of Mustafa. At the end of the novel, the narrator walks naked into the river and is about to drown – much like Mustafa – but his strength returns, and *Season* ends with the narrator screaming for help. Optimistic readings may view the narrator's struggle in the water 'as an affirmation of life, as a resolution of conflicts, as the representation of the final closure of imperialism' (Makdisi, 1992, p. 815), but the actual end remains unclosed. Symbolically, the narrator is left in the centre of a river whose bends simultaneously turn east, west, south, and north. According to Klee and Siddiq (1978), this illustrates how the narrator is at the centre of his own world, despite the magnetism of different cultures. However, one could also link the fates of Mustafa, who drowned, and the narrator, who does not, intertextually to deluge myths in which only the just survive. Ostensibly, frames of reference are decisive in shaping understanding made possible by the novel, as cultural horizons meet and merge.

Much like *Season*'s narrator is positioned in between cultures, its readers are put in between contrastive positions. As the plot challenges opposite pairs such as east/west, south/north, Sudan/Britain, rurality/urbanity, tradition/modernism, female/male, unconsciousness/consciousness, and revenge/reconciliation, readers are urged to reflect upon these. Salih underscores that origins are not 'clearly definable, and everything is of necessity a

midpoint' (Davidson, 1989). Prejudicially produced polarity is easily exploited but challenged by *Season*'s narrator (Klee & Siddiq, 1978), who goes through 'the epic process' (Lagerroth, 1976, my translation). He develops from holding expectations of sameness to understanding that he no longer fully belongs in his childhood village, nor in Britain. As the narrator gradually realises this, so can an attentive reader. Unlike Mustafa, who has already gone through this process but without being able to accept his othered position in Sudan or Europe, the narrator comes to terms with being doubly othered (Klee & Siddiq, 1978). Parallel with this, a reader can make the same transformation from unconsciousness to consciousness as the plot is revealed, which ascribes importance to finalised reading.

Furthermore, the deaths of Hosna and Wad Rayyes reveal to the narrator and the reader a conspiracy of silence akin to the protecting of patriarchal structures. As the narrator contests the village narrative of Hosna's madness, claiming that she was the sanest person of them all, this has been preceded by a focalisation that allows the reader to see the course of events through the eyes of the narrator's contesting. In the narrator's process of becoming aware of his now changed outlook on life, the narrative technique makes possible an estrangement effect that visualises the reader's own outlook on forced marriage, sexual assault, suicide, and cultures of silence. As a result, *Season* confronts its readers with taboo topics in a way that might stimulate self-insight.

However, Mustafa's incapability to reconcile drives him towards revenging colonial abuse on a personal level, which culminates with his murder of Jean Morris, his first wife, who continuously challenges him in various ways. He is perceived by the women he woos 'as an extension of nature itself' (Klee & Siddiq, 1978, p. 68), and he acts upon this position accordingly. On the one hand, his position of the exotic savage is beneficial to the extent that he manages to revenge colonialism sexually, but on the other hand, this position hinders any attempt of becoming a fully accepted European academic (Klee & Siddiq, 1978). The life course of Mustafa is the product of colonialism and Sudanese independence and tradition (Holt, 2019) as well as of a fatherless upbringing (Klee & Siddiq, 1978). It needs to be pointed out that this context consists of 'multilayered historical, cultural, literary, and economic relationships … between the Arab/African world and Western Europe' (Geesey, 1997, p. 129), which has produced an identity struggle clearly visible in Mustafa. Whether Mustafa is a victim or a villain, or both, is an example of an ethical discussion topic produced by the novel which can disclose readers' assumptions.

Season is made up of internal opposites that welcome the reader to an openness of perspectives which escapes 'negative cultural reductionism' (Geesey, 1997, p. 138) by viewing cultures/structures/texts/persons as dynamic and interdependent (Pearson, 2021). This makes *Season* a possible merging point for cultural horizons and subsequent transformative learning, which would develop differently without the use of the novel. As Öhman and Lindell (2019) point out, it is the content of a text that directs how it can be read.

Results

The reading journals show a variety of ways of dealing with the novel. Some students use extensive summaries to reconstruct meaning from their reading, whereas others, to a greater extent, direct their reflections away from the book and towards themselves and their knowledge of the world. There is a variation of how, and to what extent, the students use a conceptual apparatus of literary devices. All examples from the students' journals are translated from Swedish to English, and slightly edited for readability, for this article.

Finalised reading

From the very beginning of their reading, several students direct their attention to the narrative structure of the novel, noting that the narrator returns home after seven years abroad meeting Mustafa, who reveals his even older story. Hence, the basis for the students' comprehension of Mustafa's intradiegetic story is that it is exposed to them through a filter that is the narrator and through a non-linear narrative.

Reading for the plot

The non-linear narrative causes problems in the student readings. S4 claims difficulties to follow it due to the 'lack of [a] through line', whereas S2 asserts that Salih 'writes in riddles'. The challenging form is also described by S9: 'The whole of chapter 2 is supposed to be a dialogue between the narrator and Mustafa, but actually we only get Mustafa's life story retold from the narrator's perspective since he never really interacts in the conversation.' This monologue from Mustafa, the disruptive narrative of the novel, and its many metaphors are highlighted by several students as hindering the reading. S12 explains:

> The many scenery descriptions with metaphors that I am not used to complicate the reading. … There is no clear beginning and no clear ending when Mustafa tells his story. I do not understand any connections yet and have so many new facts about the main characters that I cannot link together yet, but I suppose that it will be resolved in the end. (S12)

S12's explanation points to the importance of the finalised reading, as it is impossible to fully comprehend *Season*'s intrapersonal relations without finishing the novel. The students' accounts of their reading include thoughts and questions that relate to a plot structure they are unaccustomed to and to a longing for plot closure. For example, S15 is surprised 'when Mustafa died, [as I] thought he would be a main character', and when the narrator 'did not follow his strong curiosity from previous chapters, but almost put it on hold'. In S15's conclusion, S15 states that the book 'is written in a way that I was not at all used to'. Similarly, S9 describes the realisation of Mustafa's death so soon in chapter 3 as an 'anticlimax', thus using a literary device to explain the element of surprise.

S12 brings up several aspects of Mustafa's life story, which lead to longing for plot closure. This student asks about Mustafa's hostility towards poetry even though both Mustafa and the narrator have studied it, about the bacteria that Mustafa claims infected his women many years ago, and finally about who Mustafa is, as S12 wants Mustafa's 'face and lies' to be disclosed. This undoubtedly shows how the plot activates a desire for denouement. Moreover, S4 adds that discussing the novel's chain of events with classmates is very helpful: 'It was facilitating to sit in small groups, so now I understood much better.' The collective wrap-up of the narrative is important for the students to make their understanding not only clearer but also more multi-layered.

There is a frustration amongst some students over chapters that do not clearly add to their understanding of the plot. 'What has the Bedouin to do with the story?', S12 asks, and S17 views chapter 7 and its spontaneous desert celebration of Sudan as being of little content and a way of 'filling out'. The narrative perspective of a drunk person makes it difficult to follow the through line, S15 points out. In addition, S13 adds that 'large parts … were difficult to grasp and I think that it once again is because of the disjointed narrative'. S11 reflects upon the lack of plot knowledge during the first two chapters: 'I do not really understand what actually happened between Mustafa and the women. How did they die? It was not apparent how he killed them.' It is

obvious that the students are unaccustomed to the disrupted through line, and that the form is experienced as an obstruction in their endeavours to reach clarity.

Reaching the end

As the students' readings move towards the end of the story, it is possible for them to start revisiting the plot from a more distant view. S11 notes this about the backstory:

> The narrator has a key to Mustafa's room. He goes inside and finds different pictures/portraits of the women. For every picture, a story is told from Mustafa's perspective. Now we get to know a little bit more about what happened between Mustafa and the different women. (S11)

Here, it becomes obvious that following the plot is necessary for S11's comprehension of the story. This is also essential for several students, and S7 clearly states how rewarding it is to close in on the end: 'Chapter 9 was probably my favourite because you got to know more about the women and got more insight into Mustafa's past.' Accordingly, S6 uses the entire journal to reconstruct the plot by summarising and asking questions about what events occur in the story and why. In an aim to elucidate more meaning, S10 writes the following about the importance of trailing the plot until the end, especially when reading a novel that does not adhere to Aristotelian composition:

> There are other ways of composing stories than what we normally read or watch. This kind of story made it difficult to get into the book in the middle, but in the end, you felt how everything cohered in a new way and you got a better understanding from the book. My opinion about the book would have been completely different if I had not read the last two chapters. (S10)

As S10 revisits the plot, a new way of grappling with textual structures through finalised reading becomes evident. Correspondingly, S16 retells a passage of the plot to better understand Mustafa: 'The key leads to a secret room in his [Mustafa's] house that contains diaries and texts which Mustafa hoped would help the narrator better understand how his life was.' This example illustrates how retelling functions as a sense-making technique.

To some students, however, the open end is a cause for frustration. S1 is disappointed: 'The book has a very bad ending according to me since you do not get to know anything more about Mustafa Said and about whether the narrator gets out of the river or not.' The students impose realist,

optimist and analytical interpretations of the narrator's struggle against the streams and depths of the river Nile. S2 writes that the narrator 'thinks about whether life is worth living and decides to continue [living], but soon his strength will have run out', and S5 explains that 'he goes down into the Nile and swims halfway, then he chooses between life and death but chose life'. While S2's interpretation represents a view on the end as tragic, S5 thinks of it as positive. Another more analytical understanding of the end is held by S3, who interprets the end as follows: 'He swims halfway out in the Nile before he realises that he wants to live. It symbolises his and Said's lives and that they were stuck between Sudan and Europe (did not fit in anywhere)'. This example from S3's journal captures a position that is biographically accurate and central to this novel – belonging is not necessarily a static concept and the impact of collective and individual (anti)colonialism creates a third space which could be branded middle, centre or in between.

Literary concepts

The students' active use of terminology for stylistic devices often strenghtens their understanding of the text. Students both spot stylistic devices in the text and use subject-specific language to explain their own readings. Also, there are examples which show that non-use of literary concepts obstructs understanding. The modes of reading support the students in applying self-reflexive gazes.

Stylistic devices

The idea of the novel as an expression of being stuck in between counterparts returns in S1's journal; here, S1 writes about how a bridge symbolises a possible but hurtful unifying of worlds:

> I understood it as if he wanted revenge on the Brits for what they [have] done to Sudan and that the bridge symbolises the two of them: Mustafa in the South and her in the North. It is a kind of joinder between the two different continents. (S1)

S1's knowledge of symbols as a literary device forwards the comprehension of the novel. In addition, when Hosna and Wad Rayyes die following a sexual assault, the reading is described metaphorically as a 'knife in the heart' by S1. However, the extent to which the students use devices in their journals differ. Also, certain passages in the novel are difficult to comprehend without access to specific literary devices. For example, S7 does not make any mention of the key to

Mustafa's locked room, which is presented early on in the plot and foreshadows events to come. Instead, when faced with the room as a metaphor of inner life again in chapter 7, S7 concludes that because Mustafa is an impostor, and therefore the room may not exist, someone else must have committed Mustafa's crimes. In contrast, S3 writes about Mustafa's secret room as being 'very British, with loads of English literature which symbolises Sa'id's inner' life'. Here, it becomes clear that unintentional fallacies can be avoided through active use of stylistic devices.

As demonstrated, metaphors are central to the students' sense-making of the novel. S18 claims that Salih challenges the novel concept, as 'similes and metaphors ... made it feel as if you … [have] read a poetry collection', and S8 uses the metaphor as a tool for deconstructing and reconstructing the epic process of the narrator. Moreover, S8 compares the narrator to Mustafa by highlighting the metaphors of the rooted palm tree and a rootless tent peg, which the characters use to describe themselves respectively. In much the same way, S3 uses the journey metaphor to illustrate that the book is a reminder of the students' own development during the upper secondary school years. Additionally, S18 uses the window metaphor to describe a glimpse of 'new knowledge, mostly about Sudan and their post-colonial identity and about everyday village life … a world which I have no previous connection to'. Inversely, S5 argues that the desert celebration of Sudan 'mirrors' a community amongst its people. In sum, the students' abilities to both recognise and use stylistic devices help forward their sense-making of both the text and themselves in relation to the text.

Modes of reading

The students were encouraged to use Felski's (2008) conceptual apparatus of recognition, enchantment, knowledge, and shock, together with reluctance (Bradling, 2020), to reflect upon their own reading experiences, and to some extent, they do. However, it is already clear that more text-centred stylistic devices are used to grapple with the novel.

Knowing about literary concepts can support students in overcoming their reluctance towards the text, given reading obstacles are thus made visible. For example, students' notions of chronology, disrupted narratology, and anticlimax help them overcome their reluctance and reach finalised readings (Bradling, 2020). As already shown, S18 claims that the poetic expressions of the novel disrupt its through line, which is a cause for reluctance. S8 writes that 'the author uses a lot of

similes and metaphors which make it difficult to … understand what is meant', but also goes on to claim that a book which does not spell everything out makes the reader want to continue reading.

Recognition is used by the students to explain both how *Season* affects them and to express an understanding of character development. S10 explains the process of returning using recognition: 'I can recognise myself in the feeling of returning to a place, which you have identified yourself with, and then returning to that place after having developed as a person with a new identity.' S8 writes explicitly that 'the narrator does not recognise himself any longer' and also observes the narrator's rhetorical and self-reflexive questions about what had happened to the tribe and where the roots that connect with the past have gone.

The reading journals show that enchantment and shock often go together, as surprise follows a desire to know. S18's enchantment is clearly expressed as wanting to be informed:

> I also felt enchantment during the reading, but especially around Mustafa Sa'id and when new information about him came up. I thought that he was very difficult to grasp, and therefore, I felt that I wanted as much information as possible about him. (S18)

If such a wish is not fulfilled, it might lead to surprise, as it does for S16, who uses the shock concept to describe this anti-revelation: 'I was shocked … that the narrator did not open the secret room when he finally got the key.' The enchantment–shock intermingle is further expounded in, for example, S12's journal, as shock is connected to Mustafa's past and the surprise that such an important figure is 'killed off' by the author. Similarly, S11 asks, 'How can Mustafa die so early?', thereby expressing how the form is puzzling.

S18 describes Mustafa's continuous interest in Jean Morris despite her 'sick behaviour' and the forced marriage of Hosna to the old villager Wad as shocking. The relationship between Mustafa and Jean Morris also captures the attention of other students. S4 writes:

> She got Mustafa very frustrated, so he said, 'I will kill you'. But she said that he was too coward[ly]. … It still came as a bit of a shock when he murdered his wife. At the same time, it was a little expected, considering how she behaved, that she lied, was unfaithful and bumptious. And did not give anything either.

Even though S4 flags the behaviour of Jean Morris as part of the reason behind this sex-murder, it is not fair to ascribe doubtful views on guilt and innocence to S4. Instead, it is more honest to view this example as an expression of acknowledging complexity to the gender structures of the novel. Also engaging the students, is Wad Rayyes attempt to rape Hosna, which leads up to him being stabbed by her and her committing suicide. S1 explains that 'the story becomes more and more interesting, [and] you get all shook up' which triggers the desire to continue reading.

As shown, shock is overlapped by enchantment, but it also intersects with knowledge. Several students bring up gender issues as examples of both shock and knowledge. For example, when the old woman Bint Majzoub openly discusses intercourse, S3 labels this as both a 'shock' and new 'knowledge', as it is both surprising and educational to learn that it is okay for a Sudanese female character to speak so freely of this.

Otherwise, knowledge is something that the students extract from the novel and make use of to understand it. S14 writes about Sudanese feelings of betrayal and hatred towards British colonialism and makes a point of Mustafa being born the very same year that the British colonised Sudan and dying the very same year Sudan became independent. This elucidates the importance of frames of reference to add layers in comprehensions of this novel. Intertextually, S14 associates the flood motif to the old Testament and the deluge myth of Genesis. S12, however, thinks about the 2004 tsunami in Thailand and the children's book *Alex Dogboy* (Zak, 2003), in which a street child in Honduras survives a flood. Moreover, S10 compares the relationship between Mustafa and Jean to *Othello* (Shakespeare, 1622) to better understand jealousy and inter-colonialism at work.

It is apparent that S14, S12 and S10 have different frames of reference but nevertheless make sense of the novel. Several students use the world around them to understand the novel and *vice versa*; for example, S3 makes a comparison between Sweden and the Sudan of the book at an administrational level: 'The government hardly ever finish building something on time.' Although far-fetched, this similarity is proof of a student trying to make use of an interplay between the worlds inside and outside of the book. To sum up, frames of reference are crucial for the students to deepen their understandings of the novel – more so than the modes oriented towards the personal reading experience, which instead are backgrounded as support for strange making.

Estrangement effects

At one point, the actual expression *estrangement effect* is used by a student. It is S2 who labels Bint Majzoub's way of expressing herself an 'estrangement effect'. As accounted for in relation to shock, her rebuttal of the students' prejudices brings them new perspectives of themselves and the world. The mirror and window metaphors have been explicitly used by students, but there are several examples of more implicit uses of the novel as both a mirror and a window in descriptions of experienced estrangement effects.

The mirror and the window

As unusual as it is for the students to read literature which is not fully western in origin, they are surprised to find out new things about their own culture. S14 writes about meeting Europe from a different perspective through this novel:

> I thought it was quite interesting to read about the Sudanese's preconceptions about Europe, which are described on page 7. The villagers asked the main character many questions … and thought that the peoples of Europe were weird and lived in sin. (S14)

This example illustrates that the reading has generated an outsider's view on Europe, which S14 sees as unusual. Furthermore, S14 brings up the same woman that produced S2's explicitly expressed experience of an estrangement effect:

> They seem to think that women only exist to please the men … She too seems to think that men are to be gone through as if on an assembly line. If the men cannot please her, she replaces them. (S14)

Here, S14 acknowledges a complex gender structure that was not expected. Yet another example of an estrangement effect at work is S15's thoughts about circumcision: 'I thought that you circumcised children a lot earlier. Mustafa's sons were like seven years old. It must be a horrible experience to carry with you for the rest of your life.' Hitherto, presupposition is exposed and challenged by the novel and leads up to a reaction that, in turn, challenges S15's preconception emotionally. *Season* nuances conceptions that students hold, and the journals thereby become platforms for self-reflexivity.

However intricate the novel is, several students are guided by their gut feeling that some things are profoundly wrong. S13 explains that:

> the history about Jean Morris ends with Mustafa killing her, and judging from several details in the book, it feels as if Jean wanted it to happen. I find the entire chain of events disturbing since it feels so unnatural. (S13)

Reading the novel has not changed S13's opinions, but rather reinforced basic assumptions. In addition, S16 brings up not only the sex deaths of Wad Rayyes and Hosna but also the culture of silence that follows, which is also present in S16's lifeworld: 'I recognise how everyone in a village silently agree to cover things up, because in a small place it is considered "bad" to grass on each other … everyone knows everyone and all that.' This puts focus on initial recognition as a prerequisite for estrangement effects.

The complex image of Sudan delivered in *Season* is highlighted by S9, who emphasises that there is complexity not only within a culture but also within individuals:

> Here, you can see how this group of elderly people in part become old-fashioned in the way that the men speak of how they must have a lot of women intended for their pleasure. But then we also get to hear how Wad does not think that women should be circumcised and an old woman is outspoken about sex. You got an insight into what the view on women was like, which gave a better image of their culture. (S9)

S9's lodestar is that gender oppressors are at fault, but S9 nevertheless manages to see the intricacies of the situation. In contrast, other, unnuanced opinions remain throughout the reading. This example is from S8's journal: 'Made me angry', S8 writes along with an arrow pointing to a paragraph stating how the view on women in Sudan becomes evident in chapters 5 and 6. S8 writes that 'they are objects, and the man has total power' but also notes that the narrator's view on women differs from the views of the other Sudanese men. Lastly, S8 concludes that the narrator 'lives in Europe, and that is probably why'. To some extent, S8 can explain the internal contrasts of the narrator with him being torn between Sudan and Britain. However, S7 shows that the idea that Europeanness by definition means a moral stance against bigamy (as expressed by S8) is inaccurate. S7 writes: 'I was quite disappointed that he did not take Husna as his second spouse'. It is possible that S7 thinks that it could have saved her from Wad Rayyes, but this journal entry

still puts culturally produced approaches to marriage in the spotlight. S4 writes, 'That is something I do not come to terms with' about the polygamy portrayed in *Season*, which shows how the reading makes S4's taboo-redline visible.

S16 learns about the world in a very concrete way and writes about gaining 'knowledge about what a Bedouin is because I needed to look that word up'. Further, S16 demonstrates learning about the world when writing that

> they take whichever wives they like, as long as the men agree amongst themselves. I was therefore a bit surprised about the respect Bint Majzoub brought with her amongst the elderly men and that she too has re-married many times. (S16)

Here, S16 recognises polygamy as a patriarchal structure but meets this notion anew through reading the novel and thereby gains a more nuanced perception of this phenomenon.

Several examples of estrangement effects can be found in relation to not only the students' notions of colonialism and all things Sudanese, but also in relation to their own reading and learning. For instance, S13 writes explicitly that 'particularly "shocking" was that the men accepted how Bint Majzoub talked. I did notice that my prejudices about Sudan are not correct in this story, and that was interesting'. Likewise, S1 has previously stated that the novel reinforces 'my opinion about North Africa that I knew from before, for instance, that you circumcise, marry many wives, and that it is poor with a lot of Agriculture', but now writes about the desert celebration of Sudan:

> An enormous joy spread in my body when I read about the spontaneous party in the middle of the desert. I was happy to read how the people gathered and ignored their everyday problems and how they created a community. … I also brought with me a lot from this event [which] made me rethink. These people are poor and live under bad conditions and can still have a good time, whereas we in Sweden live like kings and have everything served on a silver plate but are still not pleased and happy. … It is not often you get to read something like that. (S1)

This journal entry clearly shows how the novel's description of Sudanese solidarity breeds strange making of S1's lifeworld. Clearly, the window and the mirror are not always opposites. In addition, S1 experiences reading in a 'new' way, and S15 calls the spontaneous desert celebration of Sudan

an 'insight into what it was like before colonialism'. S10 writes that the novel challenges the usual schooling about colonialism:

> I experienced quite a shock when I thought about the fact that all Sudanese do not feel that colonialism was bad but that there are many viewpoints of it even in Africa. In school, when we have learnt about colonialism, [it was] always seen as something bad, but we have never looked at it in a nuanced way. (S10)

S10 writes the above after having read chapter 3, in which there is a dialogue which includes the idea that the Sudanese are left using the infrastructure built by the British. Here, the novel and the reading estrange S10's previous learning process and knowledge of the world. This clearly shows fiction nuancing a conception gained from other teaching. In contrast, S9 still reads fiction documentarily:

> During the book, you get a good overview of especially African culture, and you get knowledge about the gender roles and their different rights in the society. The book also gave a lot of implied knowledge about the colonialism. You get a lot of information without maybe knowing that what I now read are facts. (S9)

The excerpt from S9's journal shows a reading that does not fully break free from looking at the target culture as an other, especially since S9 thinks of African culture in the singular. Nevertheless, S9 spotlights both gender roles and colonialism. In contrast, S14 reaches a nuanced understanding that acknowledges and calls for the acceptance of cultural differences:

> The Sudanese citizens were not happy about the colony that England created in Sudan. Therefore, people like Mustafa want revenge on England. Besides, we have such different cultures and values that the relationship between England and Sudan becomes difficult to work unless both parties accept each other's differences. (S14)

As nuanced as S14's journal entry is, it still carries an unspoken Eurocentrism which is difficult to rid the Swedish school setting of. It manifests itself through expressions such as 'people like Mustafa', suggesting that *they* are the *all the same*. Although it can be difficult to distance oneself from a habitual perspective, an estrangement effect can produce an awareness of it and thereby resist perspective-blindness. S12 reaches a consciousness about perspectives when writing 'as a

Swede and a Christian, I get another perspective … which makes it difficult to interpret', but S12 still reasons about the novel as follows:

> It confirms the view on Sudan and their culture, view on women and way of life since it is what we hear in Europe. However, we do not hear about their perspective and how we really helped them with railways to transport soldiers, schools to teach them about Europe, steamboats to 'carry cannons not bread'. I did not know either that they might not have wanted help. In other words, I have departed from a 'typical European perspective'. (S12)

As S12 becomes aware of the 'typical European perspective', it opens up for adding other perspectives which can merge into a new cultural horizon of meaning. Thereby, *Season* becomes a means for better understanding the self and the world as culturally produced and changeable. Although some student readings remain reductionist, it is apparent that the novel itself prepares the reader for estrangement effects, which are in turn realised and reported on in many of the students' reading journals.

Conclusive Discussion

The results indicate that Tayeb Salih's *Season* can function not only as a source of knowledge but also as a merging point of cultural horizons when used in upper secondary literature teaching. Metaphorically, the text becomes not only a window and a mirror but also a window to the world in which it is possible to see one's own reflection. Thereby, the students' relations to the world are indeed explicated and put at play. Their cultural presumptions are made visible and challenged, and despite that they are often amended, they are not necessarily changed. Instead, using Season as a cultural horizonal merging point allows for reciprocally incompatible perspectives to co-exist in a manner that generates multi-perspectivist approaches to the world, the self, and the text.

A pluriverse of perspectives presupposes a mouldering hierarchy of assumptions. Therefore, it is not correct to speak of a pluriversal outcome of this study. Rather, it becomes clear that some of the students' preconceptions stay throughout the reading and reproduce othering. Yet, transformative learning is produced as the interplay between closeness and distance is made dynamic through the reading and teaching. Although finalised reading is heightened as central to the learning situation, *Season* is critically read by the students. Even so, the students' distanced views

on the novel are more culturally productive when applied towards the end of or after the reading. Given that the students' frames of reference subsidise the meeting with the book, it is warranted for the teaching to include opportunities to learn about historical and present Sudan, which is also shown fruitful in student interpretations of the novel. Complete trust in either the novel as an intentional source or in the students as wearing neutral reading glasses is not reflective of reality.

Instead, the education needs to address all sides of the world–text–reader triad in order to prepare for possible transformative learning capable of moving cultural horizons. Actively supporting frames of reference about the world helps, as does an epic process approach to the finalised reading of the plot, but it is also crucial to supply the students with subject-specific language. Fundamentally, this means learning to use literary jargon intended for interpreting the specific text. As the terminology of modes of reading is put to work, the students are empowered in their self-reflexive gazes. Also, as the students learn to use stylistic devices to describe characters, events, and settings which they come across in the reading, they are empowered to interpret, and merge with, the cultural horizon they are faced with through the estrangement effects of *Season*. In conclusion, reading *Season* in upper secondary school can prompt the students' experiences of cultures on the move as a pivotal part of their transformative learning, especially if supportive teaching intent on finalised reading include both literary terminology and contextualisation of the literary work.

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