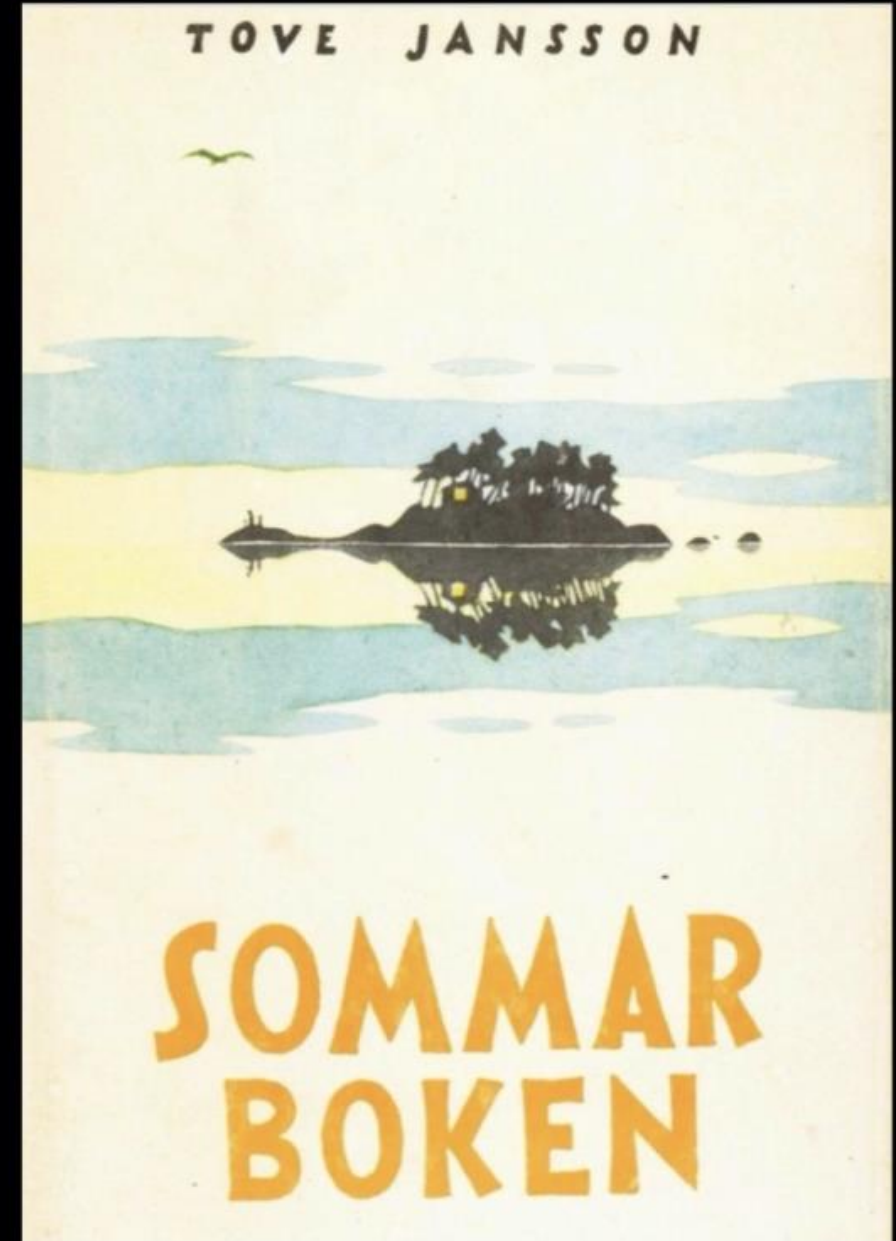


# TOVE JANSSON, *THE SUMMER BOOK*

# THE SUMMER BOOK



Queen's University Belfast & University  
of Hyderabad: "Ageing in Literature:  
Global South and Global North  
Perspectives"



Picture source: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sommarboken-Tove-Jansson/dp/9100576476>

## PERSPECTIVES

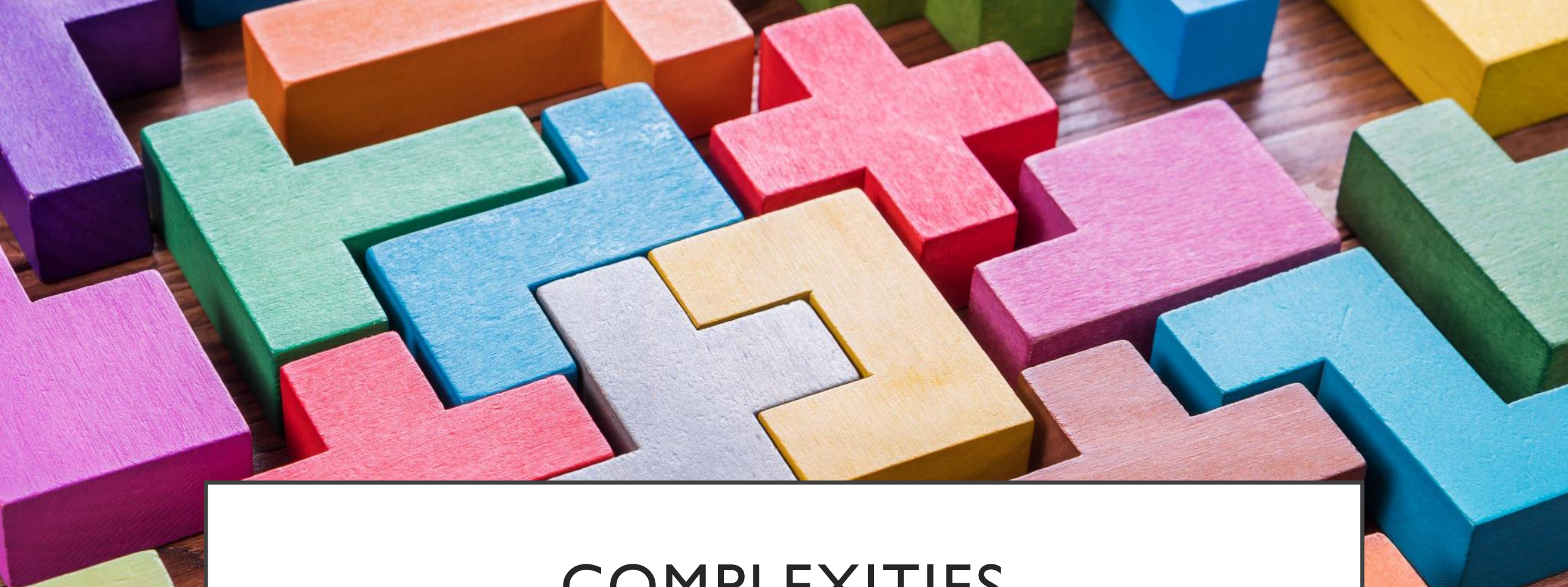
- Our first 'view' in the book, in this first chapter is of the **landscape**.
- This is to be very important because this **reflects the vision of both grandmother and granddaughter**.
- What we are enabled to see is a landscape which combines both **outer and inner vision** – it is both **naturalistic** and seemingly **magical**.
- The technique offers a mix of realism and the magical.
- Space made for **imagination**.

## AND THEN THERE ARE HUMANS...

- The child, **Sophia**, is no picture book angel, but is **peremptory, sharp, demanding** to know what her grandmother is doing.
- **Grandmother** responds **angrily**, with the answer a child would give; I am doing nothing, but then she relents and admits that she is looking for her false teeth. As she is older, perhaps, her own teeth have decayed. And sometimes, with age dentures might get a little bit loose.
- Our first view, or the perspective of the text regarding the grandmother is of a **fragile, uncertain figure** (p.21).
- **Banality, precarity and even shame** are not what the reader expects to intrude so unceremoniously in this predictable urban representation of the wild island.

# OLD AGE AND DEATH: MATTERS OF FACT

- The child asks her grandmother, matter-of-factly, **When is she going to die?**
- To which the grandmother responds, in equally stark terms that it will be soon. On the other hand, she tells Sophia that **she is not to be in at all concerned.**
- This could mean that she is sparing her from further thoughts or she does not want to discuss the matter and resents her pressing her.



# COMPLEXITIES

- Soon after we see that there are **many facets to their relationship**; while the grandmother has appeared to shut the child out, they are now, thick as thieves, **co-conspirators**, heading towards the ravine where neither of them is allowed to go.
- Their **shared sense of adventure** and a certain **attraction to the transgressive**, towards the breaking of rules and norms is, of course, what allows the relationship to be so extraordinary and what allows Jansson to question conventional 'portraits' of children and older people.
- And to **question the decline narrative**.

# FROM GRANDMOTHER TO CHILD: THE DRAMA OF SHIFTING CENTRES OF CONSCIOUSNESS



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- A further aspect of Jansson's concern with perspective is seen towards the end of the chapter as the **'angle of vision' or centre of consciousness seems to shift** from the child to the old lady. We become aware of how frail she is but also how alert she is about the child.
- The **subtle shifting between child and older person** occurs many times throughout the book, enabling the reader to engage and identify with both characters, offering **an alliance rather than an alienation between generations.**