

I: *The Dove* and Laura Goodman Salverson

I first came across a reference to Laura Goodman Salverson's *The Dove* when I was researching several disparate topics out of which I hoped to forge a dissertation project and PhD applications. When I came across Terrence Craig's reference to a celebrated prairie novelist having produced a work in which "romance replaces realism" to narrate "the experiences of Icelanders kidnapped and sold into slavery on the Barbary coast" (70), I was, first, puzzled that such a text even existed, and, second, surprised that it had remained virtually unknown amid an academic culture preoccupied with reissuing forgotten works of Canadian literature. Despite Craig's considered dismissal of the text as melodramatic, I felt certain that the subject matter alone meant that it would be a fruitful engagement with many themes that are often at the centre of commentary on early twentieth-century Canadian literature.

A few years later I had all but forgotten about this discovery; coincidentally, however, my work on Euro-Canadian ethnic identities had again led me to Salverson, and while embroiled in *The Viking Heart* I was reminded of that seldom mentioned *other* work of historical fiction in her bibliography. Upon tracking down the text, I was once again enthralled by the sheer weirdness of it; what is more, my reading of it suggested that, despite the obvious shortcomings to which Craig had referred, the text indeed represented a complex engagement with genre, European identities, religion, and imperialism—all topics that figure prominently in the many critical and theoretical approaches that have gained currency since Craig's monograph appeared in 1987. The fruitful confluence of all these topics perhaps emerges from the text's unique position near the beginning of Salverson's shift away from prairie realism and toward historically inclined romance and engagements with her Icelandic heritage and Scandinavian identity more generally. Although *The Dove* is certainly marred by the same stylistic and diegetic shortcomings critics have found in her later romances, it nevertheless succeeds in merging several of Salverson's literary interests by adapting particularly fertile subject matter.

Laura Goodman was born in Canada in 1890 to Icelandic parents who had immigrated to Canada a few years before. Despite having grown up in Canada as well as American states such as Minnesota, North Dakota, and for a brief time Mississippi, she spoke only Icelandic until the age of ten. She married George Salverson in Winnipeg in 1913, and her husband's work for a railway company resulted in a dizzying number of changes of residence throughout her life. Her career as a writer gained steam in 1922, when her story "Hidden Fire" won the Women's Canadian Club prize and was published in both *Maclean's* and *Maple Leaf*. *The Viking Heart* followed in 1923, and from here she went on to publish a collection of poetry, numerous short stories, several other novels, and a number of essays and articles. She is regarded by some as representing the turning point between Western Icelandic literature written in Icelandic and the next generation that would to some extent maintain this identity while writing in English (Wolf 32);

accordingly, her work is read productively, if sporadically, in contexts of gender, autobiography, cultural identity, assimilation, and ancient and modern history.

Salverson's most frequently commented-upon works are *The Viking Heart* and her autobiography, *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* (1939), which won a Governor General's Award for nonfiction. The modern realism¹ with which the former text describes Icelandic immigrants in Western Canadian and the latter's intricate engagement with the self have in recent years endeared critics to these two works. Many of Salverson's other books have not stood the test of time quite so well. She won a second Governor General's Award, this one for fiction, with *The Dark Weaver* (1937); today, however, this work is largely ignored, likely due to its melodramatic prose and its focus on genteel European intrigue. Others, meanwhile, such as *Lord of the Silver Dragon* (1927) and her final book-length work, *Immortal Rock: The Saga of the Kensington Stone* (1954), suffer these same stylistic deficiencies in addition to being marred by the ethnic pride that became progressively more explicit throughout Salverson's career.² *The Dove*, however, fits in neither with these neglected texts nor with Salverson's earlier works of realism. It certainly errs on the side of romance and at many points succumbs to the same hyperbolic style, but its invocation of a traditional Icelandic story (and real historical events) as well as its complex engagement with histories of Orientalism, imperialism, and cosmopolitanism set it apart from her most easily dismissed works. The difficult-to-classify *The Dove* is neither Salverson's finest work nor her most misguided, but it is perhaps the one that is most widely resonant with her themes and with multiple critical contexts.

The Dove appeared in serial form in 1930 and 1931 in *Canadian Home Journal* and then in book form on Ryerson Press in 1933. It tells the tale of a group of Icelanders who are abducted in a corsair raid in the early seventeenth century and enslaved in Algiers. The protagonist, Steffania, uses her the freedom afforded to her (three hours each day and all of Friday) to assist the imprisoned and otherwise abused Europeans she finds scattered throughout the city. Along the way, she becomes embroiled with various authority figures in the city as well as the corsair leaders themselves, most of whom are of mixed cultural heritage or simply European renegades who have converted to Islam for the purpose of material gain.

The Dove has been frequently and somewhat erroneously described as being based on an Icelandic saga. Salverson's work certainly justifies comparison with the sagas; still, this large category includes several traditions of poetry and prose that stretch back to the Middle Ages and deal with mythical subject matter and particular family histories in addition to retellings of historical events (O'Donoghue 104). *The Dove*, meanwhile, is firmly historical, as it deals with a relatively well-documented series of incidents from the early seventeenth century, including most prominently one particular kidnapping of villagers from the West coast of Iceland by corsairs in 1627, an event that was widely known in Icelandic as the *Tyrkjaránið*, or the Turkish Raid.³ While the large body of scholarship on the Icelandic sagas makes reference to the cross-pollination that is inherent to these texts, with Ralph O'Connor stating that

the ongoing influence of European romance fiction had made much of the sagas' "pseudo-historical prose more 'pseudo' than 'historical'" (8), *The Dove* nevertheless does not draw from the mythical or poetic tradition that makes up such a large part of the sagas. The novel is certainly an interweaving of fact and fiction, and it does justice to Daisy Neijmann's argument that the form of Salverson's works resembled not sagas proper as much as more recent and familiar forms such as romances and later Icelandic settlement stories ("1923" 166-67). In addition to functioning as a largely original work of fiction, then, *The Dove* draws not so much from the tales that are often referred to with the word *saga* as from specific historical events recorded in a variety of memoirs and chronicles.⁴

That said, details on just which sources Salverson consulted throughout her research are somewhat sparse. Her personal notes and her correspondence with William A. Deacon yield some answers here, but it is nevertheless difficult to determine what configuration of particular texts served as Salverson's written inspiration. Her miscellaneous drafts and research notes that are housed at Library and Archives Canada include a brief outline of Iceland's religious history in which she makes reference to raids in 1615 and 1618, as well as the *Tyrkjaránið* of 1627, and also notes that the record of Bishop Einar was used in "my Dove" ("Iceland"). Further, in a letter to Deacon she refers to her use of "the archives of the Iceland Bishops" (7 Apr. 1933). Her reliance on such sources reflects Salverson's interests not only in Iceland, but also in Christianity and the religious history of Scandinavia. In a separate set of notes on the poetic sagas, she refers to the work of two contemporary scholars of Icelandic history sources, Gabriel Turville-Petre of Oxford and Sigurður Nordal of the University of Iceland ("Spell of the Sagas"), indicating that she was also well versed in contemporary scholarship on the sagas and other Northern European historical writings.

In her correspondence with Deacon, Salverson also writes explicitly about her childhood experience "hearing good Icelandic poetry and the great old Saga's [*sic*]" (7 Apr. 1931); later, she clearly states that an oral version of a story that included the protagonist of *The Dove*, Steffania, having been "told [and] retold me as a child," as well as the fact that she altered her protagonists' religious attitudes despite the fact that "the Icelander will love me the less—bless them." She states here as well that the experience of writing *The Dove* was "different from ordinary effort" due to her integration of this variety of sources, which she claimed also included records "compiled in part by my own ancestor back in the 17th century!" (22 Sep. 1933). Deacon's handwritten notes from one of their meetings shortly afterwards includes the possibly confused statement that the Bishops' chronicles in question dated from as far back as the fourteenth century ("Carlton Parks Hotel"); one can almost imagine Deacon rapidly taking notes on the details of a wholly unusual and disorienting premise and, in the process, anticipating the mistakes that would later be made by several of those who have commented on the novel. The review Deacon ended up producing, however, was ironically one of the more precise in its description of the novel's genesis, stating that it took place "In Charles II's time, 250 years ago," and that "In one descent on Iceland a beautiful girl, who was captured,

became famous in Algiers, and the bulk of this novel is from actual records made by her after her escape, and similar memoirs by other Icelanders” (“Fire and Ice”). In a roundup of the year’s notable books published shortly later, Deacon confirms that the novel’s “[f]acts and atmosphere” were “taken from Norse sagas and chronicles” and, with the appearance of the novel, were “now first translated by the Canadian novelist” (“The Hand-Picked List”).

Instead of any single saga, then, it seems to have been a patchwork of both written and oral sources that provided Salverson with the historical subject matter at the centre of *The Dove*. One source that describes the raid of 1627 from an Icelandic perspective yet has been recently translated into English is a memoir entitled *The Travels of Reverend Ólafur Egilsson*. Translators and editors Karl Smári Hreinsson and Adam Nichols state that the texts they worked from to produce their translation were “hand-copied versions made more than a century after the original, which disappeared (most likely) in the early eighteenth century” (9), a genealogy that goes some way in explaining Salverson’s many vague references to unnamed historical sources. Known in Icelandic as *Reisubók Séra Ólafs Egilssonar* (or simply the *Reisubók*), this text tells the tale of the 1627 *Tyrkjaránið*, in which Muslim corsairs from northern Africa took roughly four hundred Icelanders into captivity and then slavery in Algiers. Those taken from the Westman Islands included the Reverend Ólafur Egilsson (born 1564), a Lutheran Minister who was then in his sixties. Hreinsson and Nichols state that Egilsson’s memoir is historically important in that it is “one of the earliest travel books by a northern, post-Reformation European writer describing both Islamic and Christian civilization in the seventeenth century” (8). The memoir depicts the arrival of the corsairs and the battle that ensued, during which many villagers were killed, and then the transportation of Egilsson and his family to Algiers. His depictions of the city match Salverson’s insofar as they emphasize the multicultural composition of both the raiders and the slaves; his descriptions of the plight of the various Northern Europeans who are sickened because they “could not endure the terrible heat of the place” (43) even resemble the focus on almsgiving that defines Steffania’s character in *The Dove*.

Whether or not Salverson had access to this text in the form adapted by Hreinsson and Nichols, she would certainly have been familiar with this story and similar ones. What is more, Salverson’s depiction of Algiers suggests a thorough knowledge of the characteristics of the corsairs and the city at the centre of their complex world. She is aware, for instance, that while a variety of Europeans were being captured, the perpetrators were oftentimes neither Ottoman Turks nor Arabs, but rather European renegades who had at some point converted to Islam in order to take part in this kind of activity. The *Reisubók* confirms as much with Egilsson’s statement that “[m]ost of those attacking us were English” (20); the cast of characters onboard Salverson’s corsair ships is more varied yet no less European. In addition, several details in the novel suggest that Salverson had a fairly comprehensive understanding of the political world of the corsairs of the seventeenth century. Many Europeans from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century succumbed to a similar fate as Egilsson’s companions, perhaps the most notable among them being

Miguel de Cervantes, who was held captive in the city from 1575 to 1580; María Antonia Garcés describes in *Cervantes in Algiers* the milieu in which Cervantes found himself after being captured, and many of the political realities she outlines are apparent in *The Dove*. She notes that piracy had long been practiced by both Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean, but that the sixteenth century saw an increase in privateering owing to the wealth of the Muslims who had been expelled from Spain during the *Reconquista* (20). It would also be incorrect to refer to the corsairs of this era as pirates—rather, privateers existed as instruments of “tacit warfare” who were “backed by letters or passports from a particular government or state, although they sailed at their own risk and gain” (29). Readers of *The Dove* will note that the intrigue surrounding Steffania’s release bears out the importance of this distinction.

Regarding the novel’s historical setting, the governing entity in question here was the corsair city-state of Algiers, or El-Djezair, which emerged as a political centre of the North African coast. From here, those who were expelled from the Iberian peninsula as well as other Muslims raided Spain and other European territories (Garcés 20). By 1571, Algiers had become a cosmopolitan centre of 125,000 people (31), having by then been founded by the Barbarossa brothers, corsairs who came from the Greek island of Mytilene, and incorporated as the capital of an Ottoman province and a “stable, well-organized, and powerful corsair establishment” (21). Although Salverson’s novel does not get into specifics regarding this history, such figures certainly lurk in the background of her portrait of the foreign city into which her Icelanders are thrust, such as when the narrator mentions that the ruthless Courschid Taker Dey might at a different time have “become a second Barbarossa” (61).

In addition to her awareness of the composition of Algiers and the prominent figures in its history, Salverson’s picture of the city accurately reproduces the complex relationships between these groups. Various sources from the late sixteenth century claim that there were roughly twenty-five thousand Christian captives in the city, and that between 1520 and 1660 up to six hundred thousand Christians were sold in its environs (Garcés 32). Garcés draws upon several extant captivity narratives from this period that report a great deal of sympathy between these slaves and the formerly Christian renegades who had captured them. All such sources make note of the residual religious and territorial allegiances that crosscut this dynamic multiracial and multicultural environment, and Salverson suggests as much quite early on in *The Dove* when the outspoken Black Marta confronts Murad Reis, the corsair who leads the raid on her village. Outing him as Jan Klaus, she addresses the raider as having been “born of a Danish woman, and begotten by a Dutchman gone prudently German,” only to “in holy Christian territory have turned Turk” (26), also making reference to his role in the intra-European warfare conducted during this period by privateers (25).

It is worth noting here that, despite Salverson’s familiarity with Icelandic oral tales and historical sources, she could well have drawn from several English-language

texts describing European experiences of capture and enslavement in North Africa. The Flemish captive Emanuel d'Aranda's French-language account of his experience in Algiers between 1640 and 1642 had been translated into English by 1666; in it, he gives a history of the region that goes back as far as the sixteenth century, explains the foundations of Turkish control, describes the city and its government, and even states that his writing seeks to "remedy the deficiencies of other Chronologers, who confound the years, the names, and the Nations, taking the *Turks* for the *Moors*" (108), pointing to the long tradition of European sources that have sought to document this particular experience and milieu. He also describes events that occur leading up to his capture and his release, in the process making reference to the multicultural milieu of the captives, the privateers, and the city itself, as well as the fact that Icelanders were present in the city as both slaves and corsairs despite the fact that these people "thought they had no other enemies then Poverty and Ice" (247). Other such sources include Maria Martin's *History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin...* (1807), which includes a history of events leading up to the early nineteenth-century capture of the narrator and her eventual release. This memoir describes the cosmopolitanism of city (9) and the complex transnational politics of the privateers, including events that feature versions of some of the same figures that appear in *The Dove*, such as Pichinin (26). Salverson's subject was thus anchored in a historical context that was somewhat well established in English; her fictional treatment and expansion of the experience of Icelandic captives, however, itself warrants attention as a unique contribution to this body of writing.

As for fictional antecedents, the experience of abduction and enslavement in North Africa provided the subject matter for the salacious epistolary novel *The Lustful Turk* (1828), regarded as the first example of the "harem novel" (Colligan 48), as well as Edith Maude Hull's genre-defining *The Sheik* (1919). *The Lustful Turk*, which was reprinted and republished several times throughout the nineteenth century, functions as a romance in some senses; however, it is remembered more as a vaguely literary and lightly Gothic example of Victorian erotica, and is similar to *The Dove* only insofar as it is an early, popularized fictional treatment of a woman's experience of captivity under the Dey of Algiers, this time in the early nineteenth century.⁵ *The Sheik* was in many ways a more prototypical romance novel, as it depicts a genteel English woman who is captured and eventually manages to reclaim her identity in a way that subordinates her to a European man. Both works centre the subject in the cosmopolitan, well-to-do European woman; *The Dove*, on the other hand, infuses the Barbary captivity plot with the lesser known Icelandic experience, as well as an acknowledgement of the complexities of imperialism and the early colonialism of this era (the implications of which will be discussed below). It is not clear to what extent Salverson was familiar with the above historical texts or the genre of the harem novel; she had certainly read *The Sheik*, however, stating in her unpublished autobiography *The Funny Side of Failure/Fortune* that neither it nor a contemporary bestseller, Florence L. Barclay's *The Rosary*, "seemed to me to merit so much excitement. Both were fantasies as impossible of attainment as a trip to Venus" (89-90). Regardless of whether or not the novel in reality made more of an

impression on Salverson, the existence of such texts marks *The Dove* as part of a multivalent tradition of romance that predated her novel by more than a century. What is more, the strains of Orientalism and racism that are so visible in those earlier novels are downplayed and at least to some extent rather tongue-in-cheek.⁶ *The Dove* reproduces the harem novel's trope of the main character being held by a benevolent master while another must suffer abuse by a comparatively sadistic figure; it also at once recalls and challenges the epistolary form of *The Lustful Turk*, such as when the narrative briefly retreats to a greater distance from the events of the novel and adds to its description of El-Djezair the statement that, "in such letters as still survive (having been carefully copied under oath, duly witnessed and treasured in the archives of the Iceland Bishops), one finds little of what to the troubled scribes seemed extraneous and unimportant detail" (84). This kind of commentary on the epistolary form occurs again when Lilia is described as writing of her encounter with Humayon El-Hadj "long afterwards" and, at this temporal remove, "marvel[ing] that the shock of that meeting did not kill her" (114).

Given these antecedents, it should be obvious that my argument for the relevance of *The Dove* is not based on its superior narrative or stylistic qualities. Indeed, comparing virtually any passage from the text with the more celebrated realism of the early Salverson reveals that the shortcomings critics have found in the former text are indeed present here. These flaws are especially noticeable when one considers either the dialogue or the narrative that comprise any of the novel's several action-based sequences:

"Fool!" [Humayon] hissed at her, rising lazily. "Fool!" Out flashed that precious whip from the green girdle of his satin tunic. "You will do as I command. Little fool, instead of damnation it is the Prophet's paradise I offer; instead of slavery a couch of comfort . . . if you are wise you will choose quickly."

It is not difficult to see the reason for the text's absence from the pages of literary criticism when such a passage is compared with the subtleties of, for example, *The Viking Heart*, with its delicate treatment of the myths settler heritage as they exist alongside the quotidian details of prairie life:

The day on which the visitors were to arrive found the Johnson home with its best front forward, so to speak, and its mistress decidedly nervous. In the way of the Icelander the table was already set for the expected guests and Finna, in her black Sunday dress and stiffly starched apron, sat uneasily in the little parlor with eyes glued to the window and ears heeding each and every sound. Elizabeth had come home early from the shop to be with her. She was trying to read a book, but the letters danced about crazily and all she could think of was the strange new development in the life of Balder. Tomi had done his share by laying off half a day that he might meet the train. (224)

Here Salverson's prairie realism manages to capture the quotidian realities of settlers' lives without losing sight of the myths and symbols of the Icelandic-Canadian community. Also tightly interwoven with these themes are engagements with the fashioning of the self, which Salverson would articulate more fully in *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*, but which are nevertheless present in the skillfully modern-realist yet certainly multivalent passages of *The Viking Heart*.

Yet in spite of these stylistic shortcomings, the above excerpt from *The Dove* functions as something of an open flame: the excess is there, certainly, but this lack of pretense works well with the lurid narrative and thematic effects Salverson wishes to produce. What is more, Barbara Powell argues that Salverson intentionally "defied common speech in her writing," as "any form of realism could not begin to portray her deep emotion" (86); Salverson herself speaks to this position when she states in the preface to *Lord of the Silver Dragon* that "seeming anachronisms" in the work were included as "attempts to make our Norse forebears live again in fiction as they lived most gloriously in their golden age" ("Author's Preface" 9). So despite the frequent dismissal of *The Dove* as one of Salverson's "minor romances" (Dahlie), the novel's bizarre and imaginative subject matter makes it far more worthy of study than the author's other quasi-historical works. While a text such as *Lord of the Silver Dragon* may be of interest due to its linkage of ethnic heritage with constructed myths of extensive Viking settlement in North America, *The Dove* provides a far more disorienting and multivalent exploration that succeeds at folding many of Salverson's less exotic themes into its otherworldly story and setting: for instance, the experience in Algiers is depicted as dissolving some Icelandic characters' class prejudice and xenophobia (74), characteristics that are not always acknowledged in Salverson's portraits of Iceland. Further, even the least well-regarded and most outlandish of Salverson's romances stand apart from the majority of early Icelandic Canadian (also known as Western Icelandic) writing, much of which combines religious aphorisms with depictions of the domestic details of settler life. It is also relevant that Salverson's description of her ambition and goals for this kind of narrative acknowledges that a seemingly outlandish or even tasteless register may be required. A few years before working on *The Dove*, she wrote Deacon describing her labour on *Lord of the Silver Dragon* as comprising "five years hard work in research and ancient languages"; she describes it as "a real book" and states that "Until this story I've been sticking to character stuff just to avoid the danger of letting my plot do all the work as is so often the case in the historical romance. Now I hope to be off at last in my own field and if this falls flat I may as well fold up my wings and die for I do not intend to write sex stuff nor to do a series of Viking Hearts" (Apr. 1926). It seems likely that she would have regarded *The Dove* as a further step in this direction.

For these reasons, the novel presents a uniquely self-reflexive rewriting of local Icelandic history, national and transnational experiences, and even, in a highly abstract or inverted way, narratives of imperialism and colonialism. Accordingly, I believe that *The Dove* needs to be read and reconsidered in the context of Canadian modernism. Its aforementioned engagements with epistolarity, descriptions of an

early modern, non-Western urban environment, incorporation of themes such as religious, cultural, and racial passing, as well as its implicit probing of the nature of imperialism make it a truly unique example of broadly modern Canadian writing. What is more, the novel's place at the early stages of Salverson's gradual shift from the realist to the personal, romantic, and melodramatic allows it to play an especially unique role in highlighting the opportunistic and individualist elements of an imperialism that has most frequently been read in the larger contexts of modernity and capitalism.

II: Critical Contexts

In *Bad Modernisms*, Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz contest the notion that modernism ought to be transformed into a purely temporal designation, with all writing from the first half of the twentieth century thereby classified as somehow modernist. Instead, they advocate expanding the definition of modernist writing in a way that accounts for both the chronological and qualitative sense of the term (2). It is productive to think of *The Dove* in this way; while the novel certainly does not resemble High Modernism in any formal way, it does reproduce the arguably non-modernist popular writing of its time in a way that is uniquely attuned to both the political and cultural conflicts of the modern era as well as the way the roots of such conflicts extend into the more distant past. In this sense, the novel challenges notions of high and low culture, as well as modernist and non-modernist writing, in what is (at least on the surface) a predictably conservative Canadian fashion.

Salverson's engagement with these oppositions also recalls the argument made by Nicholas Daly in *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle*. Daly draws upon expanded definitions of modernism, such as those of Fredric Jameson and Marshall Berman, to argue that that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century popular fiction "takes over from the domestic realist novel as the narrative flagship of middle-class Britain" (4) due to its offering British culture a "form of narrative theory of social change" (5). Although Daly provides several examples of the way such literature registers Britain's shift from an economy of production to one of consumption, he acknowledges that his study does not examine the role of the historical romance in the processes he outlines (28). He does, however, build upon Maria DiBattista's argument that accounts of literary modernism need to remain attuned to "low cultural phenomena and entertainments" as "an inalienable part of modern life" and "hence unavoidable subject matter whose forms as well as content might be assimilated or reworked, playfully imitated or seriously criticized" (5). Using the term "low modern" to describe generic and technical characteristics such as the "deliberate, relatively uninflected realism of their narratives," the "avoidance of literary experimentalism and its defamiliarizing techniques," the "embrace of the energies, themes, and techniques of the new entertainments and popular arts of film, jazz, and cabaret," "readable politics and relatively untroubled morality," and an "affinity for journalism as a mass medium that could convey information (if not prompt reflection)" (9), DiBattista clears a space in which Salverson's incorporation of middlebrow reading, affirmation of one's heritage, and aphoristic religious values

come together with a more concealed, typically modernist probing of the psychological and geopolitical undercurrents of imperialism and cultural conflict.

Glenn Willmott, meanwhile, has posited a Canadian modernism hidden behind the “inverted shells of romance and realism” (5). He describes the “new romance” in this arrangement as a vehicle that registers a “disorganized, global flow of deterritorialized fantasies, of indeterminate and heterogeneous imaginations,” and thus “the primacy of the (contingent) event over the (cosmogenetic) world, rather than the other way around” (5). This conception is particularly useful for thinking about *The Dove*, as Salverson’s romance is here similarly inverted in that it individual desires and happenstance emerge as central both to the geopolitics of the European and Mediterranean worlds of the seventeenth century and to the legacy of these relations that persists within the modern, ethno-national European identities at the centre of twentieth-century Canadian literature. In other words, the setting that provides the foundation of Salverson’s romantic narrative arc is itself made of a patchwork of Europeans haphazardly performing the roles of slave, privateer, and, by the novel’s end, the supposed Other of the master himself; this series of revelations at once inverts the roles of modern imperialism and preserves the self-interested, profit-seeking impulses that structured the colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Functioning simultaneously as ragged privateers on the fringes of empire and, by the story’s end, the heroes and beneficiaries of a supposedly Eastern economy and system of political relations, the Europeans and their Muslim counterparts exist in Salverson’s world as both contingency and ordered system. Keeping in mind Willmott’s ideas as well as Daly’s and DiBattista’s implications regarding the role of the popular romance within expanded conceptions of modernism, Terrence Craig’s assessment of *The Dove* as displaying an “excess of romance” (70) comes across less as a condemnation and more an acknowledgement of its vexed role within modernist, colonial, historical, and global writing.⁷

Another feature that locates the novel within this framework is its exoticizing of the European self. By portraying the historical Icelander as one of the myriad identities composing the disorienting multiculturalism of the Barbary Coast, Salverson in some ways enacts what Michelle Facos has described as the tendency of some turn-of-the-century Nordic intellectuals and artists to define the self in relation to cosmopolitan, urban centres of European modernity such as Paris, London, and Rome, thus regarding the Nordic self as “indigenous and primitive” and the continental Other as “non-Nordic and urbane” (206). This dynamic resonates once again with Daly’s description of the way the early-twentieth-century popular romance was analogous to the work of the high modernists both in its treatment of the unexplored territories of both the mind and the map as well as its being itself “theorized as a form of primitivism” by its creators and enthusiasts (24).

Further, Salverson’s depiction of the multiculturalism particular to the Algiers of this period is yet another example of the multivalent ambivalence of *The Dove*. Some

such descriptions verge on the Orientalist, for example, but in so doing they serve to further the novel's surprisingly expansive and tolerant views. One description reads,

All manner of shops lined this dusty road. Kept by as many races, and patronized by the outcasts of them all. Here, in El-Djezair's vilest corners, beggars and thieves, heretics and unbelievers, shackled slaves and brawling freemen, demonstrated noisily, if not gracefully, that tolerance of differences need not necessarily prove fatal to mankind. (97)

Similarly, the novel at several points expresses a form of cultural relativism and acknowledges the way observations of other cultures can shed light on the limitations of one's own outlook. At one point, for instance, Steffania laughs at Lilia's disbelief of a fellow Icelander's statement that her master-cum-husband treated her better than she had ever seen in their corner of Iceland (99). Later, upon being confronted with the intrigue that results in the continued captivity of another European, Sir Roger, Steffania reflects upon "How strange it was . . . that mankind found it so difficult to be united in charity. The Moslem, at least, were a united people" (146). The religious nature of Steffania's, and seemingly Salverson's, commitment to multiculturalism and syncretism shines through at several points. In many ways, the novel ties together these strands to present a far more nuanced picture of the Barbary Coast than its Orientalist forebears, such as when Steffania is criticized for her assistance of the "foreign wretches" (174) of the city and replies, "if I have any people they are not from Feld, but the wider world of misery where simple kindness justifies friendship and loyalty" (175).

Commentary on the complexities of imperialism occurs throughout the narrative, with Murad Reis eventually being accused of transferring wealth to European lands (259), a turn of events that once again reveals the ostensibly Muslim piracy and warfare as European imperialism (literally) in disguise. The text explicitly draws attention to the opportunism lurking behind such phenomena, such as when "Though, to tell the truth, there is little Moorish blood in any of them; Effendina, they were Spaniards under Moorish rule and Moors under Spanish rule—*Walla*, a terrible mix-up!" (273). The promise that a fortune has been built for Steffania and is waiting for her in Venice, with its accompanying request that Steffania visit the Dutch village where her benefactor's mother is interred (284), both fuses these questions with the arc of the romance and construes European heritage as constructed with reference to participation in this ostensibly Eastern yet ultimately multivalent imperialism.

Many other elements of the text both confirm my hypothesis regarding its modernism and stand alone as unique features of an imperfect yet difficult-to-categorize work. The narrative steps back at beginning of chapter seven, for instance, and describes both the city as it likely was and the limited sources by which descriptions of must be constructed; in this way, the novel draws attention to its own existence as a highly mediated work of historical fiction. Other references to

the work's own textuality crop up throughout, and these sporadic *clins d'œil* too play a role in raising the question of whether Salverson's "excess of romance" was ever meant to be taken at face value at all. This introduction is perhaps not the place for me to offer any final pronouncement on such matters; even if readers are not convinced by the arguments I have made for *The Dove* as work of modernism, however, I think that such idiosyncrasies are themselves enough to recommend the text as a truly unique and original example of Canadian historical fiction.

III: Textual History

The Dove first appeared in serial form from December 1930 to June 1931 in *Canadian Home Journal*, a women's magazine that would be folded into *Chatelaine* in 1958. It appeared here as *The Dove of El-Djezair*, and several sources erroneously use this longer title to refer to the novel version, which was not published until 1933. The simultaneous printings on Ryerson and Skeffington and Son in the UK carry only the shortened title *The Dove*.

The serialization is substantially shorter than the novel version: longer descriptions are frequently shortened, back-and-forth dialogues are sometimes truncated, and on occasion entire paragraphs that do not have a direct bearing on the plot are omitted. Salverson implies in a letter to Deacon that *The Dove* was finished in its entirety by the time of the serialization: she states in early 1931 that *Lord of the Silver Dragon* "is better in form," but that "my last novel the Dove of El[-]Djezair is better in subject matter" (7 Apr. 1931). Such cuts having been made from a longer text would not have been surprising given the middlebrow nature of *Canadian Home Journal*; for instance, the first installment features a subtitle describing the story as one that "will enthrall you with beauty, romance and with the charm of swift action" (3). Each installment featured illustrations by A.C. Valentine, as well as a brief few paragraphs summarizing first the premise and, in subsequent installments, the events of the previous episode. Interestingly, two chapters from the novel are absent in their entirety: chapter ten, which briefly details intrigue in the house of Humayon, and chapter eighteen, which describes the battle between the Black African slave Sunie and Humayon, an episode that makes for the text's most violent and distasteful moment. The aforementioned scene at the beginning of chapter seven, in which the narrative describes the city and records of its layout, is also absent—another omission that reflects the expected readership of a 1930s women's magazine such as *Canadian Home Journal*. So too does one other notable feature: the addition of a whole new paragraph at the end of the final installment of the story. Aside from the paratext described above, this is the only such material that appears in the serialization but not the book version. Fittingly given the venue of publication, this paragraph adds a layer of syrupy closure to the story's most romantic elements:

A proper enough ending, since he kissed her as only lovers out of Spain know how to do. But Steffania who, despite the sweet folly of the moment, should certainly have known, always maintained it was no ending but a mere beginning; and that the wonder of it set her

weeping in the most shameless fashion. An April shower not to be stayed until the thought struck her that priceless Mocklin laces sodden with tears were no fit ornament for a bridegroom. (83)

In 1933, Salverson published the novel on Ryerson—it was the first of four that would appear on the Toronto press, and was followed by *The Dark Weaver* and *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* in the 1930s and *Immortal Rock* in 1954. Press for the novel tended to emphasize the historical basis of the story, although details were seldom mentioned (a lacuna I hope the first section of this introduction has gone some small way toward remedying). This reframing of the story as more than a tale of action makes sense given the lengthier and more descriptive text: one contemporary review stated that Salverson “is not only a novelist of ability, but also a scholar of distinction” who “rescues dramatic material from history and re-creates its passion in vivid and telling pen-pictures” (*Winnipeg Free Press*), and other reviews were similarly positive. This edition of the novel was priced at \$2 (Locke 39).

Published in parallel with the Ryerson edition was a “second impression” by UK publisher Skeffington and Son; this version was priced at 7s.6d. (Locke 39). Held at only a small number of libraries in the UK and Ireland, this version of the text seems to be identical to the Ryerson edition save for a frontispiece that mentions the London publisher;⁸ it also features the short introduction Pierce commissioned from J.A. Royce McCuaig, one of Salverson’s “admirers” (Campbell 353). The Ryerson edition, then, should be seen as the definitive version of the full-length text in spite of Salverson’s complaints to Deacon that the printing was “a crime” due to a typographical errors and overall aesthetics (19 Nov. 1933).

Despite Salverson’s high hopes and encouragement from the likes of Pierce and Deacon, *The Dove* seems not to have been the financial success for which its author had hoped. Aside the general downturn of the publishing industry in the 1930s, Campbell cites dismal sales figures in general for Salverson’s run on Ryerson (354), with *Immortal Rock* in particular proving to be a letdown (358). Details on *The Dove* in particular are again scarce; what is more, the novel receives little further mention in Salverson’s extant correspondence. It comes up at only a few points in later years, most conspicuously regarding Salverson’s and Pierce’s attempts to interest American movie studios in the film rights.⁹ An authors’ and producers’ representative named Adeline M. Alvord sent Salverson a letter confirming she had received the manuscripts of both *The Dove* and *The Dark Weaver* in 1939 (20 Feb. 1939); it is not clear what came of this particular attempt, but as late as 1954 Salverson was still inquiring with Pierce as to what befell the manuscript in “the Hollywood madhouse” (26 Oct. 1954). What is certain, however, is that Salverson at least at times continued to regard the novel as having great potential; in addition to attempting to adapt the novel into a film, she proudly states in a letter to Deacon that an “instructor of English [and] Modern literature in Boston” had praised the novel and been “asking about my other junk” ([1937]). This existing and unrealized textual history—which spans from middlebrow adventure story, to accessible yet

sophisticated historical novel, to critically discussed piece of modern literature, to plans for a film version—in many ways mirrors the work’s status as a slippery and multivalent yet ultimately neglected example of literary potentiality.

IV: Statement of Editorial Principles

My primary goal in publishing this edition was to provide a basic, easily readable and accessible version of a text that is virtually unknown and unavailable outside of Canada. For this reason, it is something of a documentary edition that does not pay quite as much attention to the physicality of the document. I have drawn loosely from Hans Walter Gabler’s description of the German tradition of documentary editorial practice, choosing this approach over others that emphasize process and seek to take full advantage of emerging digital tools and technologies in order to focus on the singularity of a central moment in a text’s history rather than the genesis of a textual object whose overall relevance has already been established. Specifically, given the historical uniqueness of *The Dove*, I was drawn to Gabler’s understanding of the role modern German Editing continues to play in influencing digital editions. Gabler writes,

The aim of a German edition is not to establish a text in the sense of critically shaping it. An edition provides as its edited text, rather, a segment or slice from the text’s history. In practical terms, an edition commonly prints, or reprints, an historically defined version of the work as edited text. Around and toward it, the edition organizes the entire textual history in apparatus form. License to modify the edited text is restricted to an absolute minimum, emendation functioning exclusively to remove the textual error, or ‘textual fault’ (*Textfehler*).”
(3)

This approach is different from others, such as French Genetic Criticism, which envisions not “existing documents” but “the movement of writing that must be inferred from them” (Deppman, Ferrer, and Groden 2), including the Internet-era reader (or editor) who herself functions as a “textual agent” (12). My decision to highlight the historical uniqueness of *The Dove* also stands apart from John Bryant’s notion of the Fluid Text, which imagines present-day editorial arrangements of multiple versions as finding “pleasures of textual fluidity” (113) in what is perhaps a necessarily interruptive reading process (139).

In accordance with this approach, I have retained the pagination and line breaks of the Ryerson edition; doing so has yielded an average of 60 characters per line, which is well within a recent, informal consensus in which a 66-character line is ideal and 45-75 characters satisfactory (Richard Rutter qtd. in Ross). Additionally, this slightly lower count retains the crowded margins of what Salverson and Lorne Pierce regarded as, in McCuaig’s words, a sophisticated read that was nevertheless not “surfeited with realism, behaviourism, and analysis of character and motive, to an extent painful to contemplate” (12).

Further stylistic choices take into account Shawna Ross's statement that "every design decision for a digital edition reflects an ontology of the book"; even if facsimiles are not included, as is the case here, Ross's attention to this ontology is relevant to the present edition. She states, for instance, her desire to organize a digital text as "*a conceptual entity, a way to organize thoughts, a method of presenting narrative information*"; accordingly, the HTML version of this edition of *The Dove* uses a large yet unadorned font (sixteen-point Georgia) both as an indication of its middlebrow register and as a nod to Deacon's statement that the novel "would have found a quicker sale here if the type had been larger; the swiftness of the action requires that a reader get on with it" (20 Nov. 1933).

As for the minimal changes I have made to the text, obvious typographical errors and the occasional spelling error have been corrected and documented in the "Textual Notes" section. Many of Salverson's spelling choices are more British than Canadian ("paralysed," for example), and these choices have been honoured. Additionally, her use of several archaisms appears to have been intentional; variant spellings that are noted in *The Oxford English Dictionary* have therefore been retained, while those that are not have been regarded as typos and corrected. I have been conservative in making these changes—if the *OED* offered any plausible reason to believe Salverson was using an archaic variant, an error was not regarded as a typo and was therefore left uncorrected. Exceptions to this rule have been made when a plausible variant appears only once amid other examples of the standard spelling (such as "saphire" [38], which has been corrected).¹⁰ Non-English names and honorifics (especially those which include the particle *el/EI*) are often capitalized and hyphenated inconsistently; I have retained these differences except in cases where there is a clear precedent and a very small number of inconsistencies (as is the case with Abd-El-Kader and Zhar-ud-Din, which have been standardized as shown here). Some other terms also display a great deal of variance: *Walla* and *Wallah* are used interchangeably, for instance, while the use of *kayia* and *Kayia* (as well as *kayia* and *Kayia*) defies any logical system. Given Salverson's dismay at the mistakes that made it through to the final printing, the present edition seeks to preserve such irregularities while eliminating a few minor mistakes and unquestionable typographical errors that would serve only to disrupt the reading process. Finally, the glossary contains many variant spellings of terms, which suggests that this portion of the text may have been imported directly from the serialization without any further editing having occurred. I have simply left this section as is rather than attempt to standardize it in accordance with the inconsistencies that have been retained in the main text.

Notes

¹ Colin Hill has recently used this term to describe Canadian writing from the modern period that takes an ostensibly realist form just as it engages with many of the thematic concerns that preoccupied the high modernists (16).

² Kirsten Wolf gives a good description of why the later novels are ignored, stating that, in many if not all, “the canvas is too crowded and the language far too verbose,” and that such works lack “clarity and unity” (34). While she dismisses *The Dove* as similarly melodramatic and lacking in structure, I believe that the multiple resonances of its subject matter nevertheless set it apart from the other later novels.

³ Seventeenth-century Icelanders used the term “Turkish” to refer to Muslims rather than Turks as an ethnic group or nation (Hreinsson and Nichols 8). In the time of the Barbary Corsairs, however, the term was also accurate in that it referred to the nominally Ottoman-held port cities of the Maghrib.

⁴ Sandra Campbell, for instance, describes *The Dove* as “a historical novel set in Algiers, based on a tale of Icelandic captives found in fourteenth-century Icelandic sagas” (353), but provides no evidence for this. This error seems to indicate the importance of emphasizing that the text is based on a recorded, seventeenth-century event rather than history from a more distant period that could have been interwoven with mythology in a way that occurs in the earlier sagas and is implied by the imprecise use of the term *saga* itself.

⁵ Peter Webb gives a fuller account of the work’s publication history (97) and situates its Orientalist rape fantasy amid other erotica from the era (98-99); Collette Colligan locates the text amid the contemporary “repositioning” that characterized the European and Ottoman geopolitical rivalry at this time (51).

⁶ In a wartime speech Salverson refers ironically to “the unspeakable Turk” (“Speech of Welcome”), and a similar tone bleeds through in even the most outlandish descriptions of Turks, Moors, and Arabs that appear in *The Dove*.

⁷ Another argument that suggests the novel’s multivalent position amid these traditions is Neijmann’s reminder that many Icelanders regarded the settlement of Iceland and the Norse discovery of the Americas as connected, with Icelandic immigration to Canada functioning as a “re-enactment” of these earlier events as well as a broader “reconstruction of the ethnic past” (*Icelandic Voice* 77). Although Neijmann has little to say about *The Dove*, this argument suggests that Salverson’s body of work as a whole can be read as a similarly complex and in some ways inverted take on colonialism in which Icelanders are both the perpetrators and the victims of the colonial enterprise in Canada.

⁸ Information on the second impression is difficult to locate; on this matter Campbell notes only that “All of Salverson’s books were also brought out by British publishers, which made it financially easier for Pierce to publish her work during the Depression” (353).

⁹ Campbell notes that Pierce also sent a copy of Grove’s *Two Generations* to MGM (348), perhaps indicating both his high expectations for each as well as his enthusiasm for the unsubtle elements of their work.

¹⁰ The only instance in which I have taken greater editorial liberty regards the puzzling term *blakerskate* (28), which appears as *blatherskate* in the first

installment of the serialization (27). In the present edition I have corrected this word to *bletherskate*, which is the closest variant listed in the *OED*.

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