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Third Concept,

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Ph: 23711092, 23712249, Fax No: 23711092.

E-mail: third.concept@rediffmail.com Website: www.thirdconceptjournal.com

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Analytical study of Santa Montefiore's Songs of Love and War

Dr. Rajendra K. Dash* J. Hindu Sree** & Dr. Amarendra K. Dash***

[Santa Montefiore's Songs of Love and War, which comes under a trilogy called Deverill Chronicles, deals with the rent and dent in identities, culture shocks, and emotional roller-coasters in times of war. The novel chronicles Ireland's struggle for Independence exposing the harsh realities of war and the simmering fury towards Great Britain for weaning away the basic human rights of the Irish to live in their homeland as natives and not as savages. The need for self-identity and patriotism renders a fictional chronicle that weaves history with supernatural undertones. The plot of this epic tale revolves around the thoughts and actions of three independent women characters born in the year 1900 — Kitty Deverill ("the flame-haired Anglo-Irish daughter of the castle"), Bridge Doyle (the cook's daughter) and Celia Deverill (Kitty's flamboyant English cousin). Their perspectives and actions revolve around Castle Deverill. Using the postcolonial theories of identity and longing, this article attempts to trace the lost identities of the three young girls who get drifted into war and explore their love and longings for home.]

anta Montefiore's Songs of Love and War (SL&W), published in 2015, is an epic romance that blends history and fiction to showcase the struggle that had been undergone by the Irish and Anglo-Irish during the Irish struggle for independence. It depicts twentieth-century Ireland and Britain with Ireland as the major setting to dwell in the lives of the characters. It puts forth the cruelty of war and its traumatic impact on the subjectivity of the affected people. War has toiled the lives of people in two ways: the Irish fight for their liberty and home rule whereas the Anglo-Irish people remain in utter chaos. This novel sheds light upon the afflictions undergone by people because of the worn-torn Ireland where people are unable to live either as British or Irish. It also presents their longings for home and identity crisis in a genre that weaves history with a narrative heavily informed by the spirit of the age.

Santa Montefiore, a British writer who has written copious novels, has created a great impact among her reading public through her simple, well-written style. She has an Anglo-Argentine background that indeed helped her in handling the

- Associate Prof., Dept. of Basic Sciences and Humanities, GMR Institute of Technology, Rajam.
- Asst. Prof. in English, Fatima College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.
 Assistant Professor, Department of English, RGUKT Nuzvid,

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plot that involves two nations. The setting of her novels has got her childhood days spent on the farm which she says is an "idyllic swallows and amazons childhood" (Montefiore, 2013). Her style is significantly influenced by Alexander Dumas, Edith Wharton, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mary Wesley, and Isabel Allende.

She is known for the famous trilogy which consists of Songs of Love and War, Daughters of Castle Deverill, and Last Secret of the Deverills. Her novels kindle the interest of readers because of her deft combination of realism and magical realism. SL&W, in particular, begins with a prologue and moves ahead in three parts, each dealing with a particular issue and its consequence.

The post-colonial novel

The postcolonial novel bestows its author the will to give vent to his or her representational power — of representing history in contemporary terms. The *leitmotifs* of the postcolonial novel are the assertion of personality, search for identity and history, and urge to overcome existential problems that are often seen as the legacy of the past. The postcolonial novel is a microcosm of the macrocosmic world outside but tinged in the colourings of imagination of a people or race in its aspirational best or struggle to decolonize the self. The public space and private space often overlap in the postcolonial novel. Cultural identity,

gender, subjectivity, nationality, race, ethnicity, language, and power are the underpinnings of the overarching postcolonial novel that takes for its theme colonialism, decolonization, and even postmodern themes.

Seminal postcolonial theorists and their work include Culture and Imperialism (1993) by Edward Said, In Other Worlds (1987) by Gayatri Spivak, The Empire Writes Back (1989) by Bill Ashcroft et al., Nation and Narration (1990) by Homi K. Bhabha. The key concepts of post-colonialism include "othering" (both negative and positive othering), diasporas (negotiation between two conflicting identities), multiculturalism, subaltem, history, nation, race, gender, etc.

SL&W as a post-colonial novel

SL&W is an amalgamation of reality and fantasy. This novel is narrated from different points of view. The novelist becomes the voice of the narrative who has carved each page with historical details. These details are interwoven in the narrative where the novelist retells the history through three little girls who undergo transitions in their lives, characters, and behavior. This novel sets forth a sense of belonging, love, and longing for home. It highlights the significance of the Irish War of Independence which was won with many obstacles, loss of life, and marginalization of people based on identity. They live with a fractured identity that forces them to become the citizens of their oppressors, not the patriotic citizens of their own country. The class divisions between the Irish and the British are narrated through the lens of three protagonists Kitty, Bridie, and Celia. This story primarily revolves around the destiny of the young

girl, Kitty Deverill. The main setting of the novel is Ballina Kelly, although it also shifts to Hunting Lodge sometimes. The settings keep on changing which shows the constant migration of people especially as the main characters move towards America and London. The Deverill castle is a stately estate that stands as a symbol of antiquity that has been passed down through generations of Deverills over time. However, the Deverills are not the original owners of the castle. It was taken forcefully by

as each telegram arrives, people get panicked because it might be their family member. In the Irish War of Independence, the Deverill family loses George Deverill. When the war stops for a while, all the families return to their normal life despite a lot of people being lost to the war. This covers the first part of the novel.

The second part of the novel discusses the budding love between Jack and Kitty; the arranged marriage for Victoria and her settlement in Kent, England followed by seeking a bride for Elspeth; and Maud's longing for life only in England, not in Ireland. Bridie, on the other hand, works sincerely for the family by attending to everyone in Deverill's house. The plot moves intricately that decides the future of Kitty and Bridie.

Jack's passion for Home Rule makes Kitty feel like living as Irish. Kitty's family is not much happy about the whole thing. Hubert's anger towards the Irish people is obvious as he labels them as "Irish Rebels". When Ireland wins independence, Kitty travels with her half-brother (born to Bridie) to London while Jack is in the prison. She assumes the responsibility of taking care of the young boy whom she names "Young Jack" whereas Bridie travels to America to the Newfound Land which is indeed going to change her fate.

In the third part of the novel, all the characters go through a topsy-turvy transition in life. At the age of sixteen, Kitty marries Mr. Trench, her tutor, who turns out to be the person most empathetic person in her life. Bridie works for Mrs. Grimsby who is an Irish settled in New York. She gives everything to Bridie in her will in affirmative response to her hard work and patience. Bridie marries an old man named Mr. Lockwood and earns disrespect among the community in New York.

Seeking the help of Mr. Williams in New York, she decides to move to London with her maid. The same longing for homeland can be seen in the behavior of Kitty who urges Mr. Robert Trench to move to the White House in Ireland. Meanwhile, she comes across Jack, and because of his unfailing support, they can revive their dried-out love-life.

When Bridie reaches Ireland, she is puzzled to listen to the

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