II. **Im Lande der Verheißung**

In order to analyze the characters of Maleen Dietlas, a baroness, and Maria Beta, the daughter of a missionary, in depth and investigate their relationship, I will first provide a summary of Frieda von Bülow's most popular and most successful colonial novel *Im Lande der Verheißung* for those unfamiliar with this work. This will be necessary for clarification and reference. For the second part of this chapter, by looking at the characters of Maleen and Maria and particularly their relationship through examples from the original text, I will establish that Maleen and Maria actually are in a type of mother/daughter relationship.

**Summary**

Bülow's colonial novel *Im Lande der Verheißung* starts out by introducing the heroine, Maleen Maltron von Dietlas, a baroness, who arrives in German East Africa on a ship to join her husband, Georg von Dietlas, a tobacco plantation owner, in the town of Ungudja, in the newly established German colony. Maleen is excited to join her husband, her brother Rainer von Maltron, captain in the *Schutztruppe*, and her love interest, Dr. Ralf Krome, the colonial commissioner in German East Africa. Maleen is very patriotic and wants to help and support the German colonial efforts in East Africa, together with the men in her life. As one of the very few white women in this part of the world, Maleen enjoys never experienced power, prestige and influence, as well as a limitation in personal freedom she had not experienced in the motherland.

By heading the society in the small town of Ungudja, Maleen, newly married and in her mid-twenties, enjoys every comfort of a luxurious life. Her husband Georg, already
forty years old, spoils her immensely. Leading a protected and rather boring life, Maleen meets everyone (white) in their small community and everyone admires her and pays her the highest respect. Accompanying her brother Rainer to the home of a local missionary, Maleen meets the missionary Beta’s daughter Maria, a seventeen-year-old beauty who, on a regular basis, receives small tokens of kindness in the form of animals, such as a crippled eagle or a monkey, from Maleen’s brother Rainer and other admirers from their small community.

Although Maleen is impressed by Maria, she is concerned about her brother’s interest in the young girl. Rainer Maltron eases his sister’s concerns about his flirtation with Maria by assuring her that he has no intentions of marrying the young girl. Meanwhile, Maleen enjoys the constant association with Ralf Krome whom she admires and loves. Krome, too, enjoys spending time with Maleen, who understands him and is enthusiastic about the colonial efforts in German East Africa. When Maleen’s husband Georg leaves their home in the little coastal town of Ungudja to go to a plantation in inner Africa for business, Maleen and Krome are left to themselves and spend more and more time together, which some individuals in their community question as inappropriate.

When Maleen visits Miss von Eltville, a single French woman who lives in the town of Ungundja and who has dedicated her life to helping and caring for the natives, she finds Maria in the care facility in total despair. Maleen tries to comfort the young girl but Maria refuses to tell Maleen about her troubles. Miss von Eltville tells Maleen that Maria had had a romance with Ralf Krome and that they were caught. Now he refuses to see her. She then appeals to Maleen, who is in total shock, to persuade Krome to be more
reasonable and careful in his dealings with the young girl. Maleen confronts Krome who excuses his behavior. He accuses Maleen of distancing herself from him and insists that the distance between them was the reason why he sought attention somewhere else. Knowing they have hurt each other’s feelings, Maleen and Krome write letters to each other full of passion and love. Meanwhile, riots have erupted all around them. Krome leaves to lead the defense of the white community, and Maleen’s brother Rainer goes to lead some recently arrived missionaries into inner Africa. Maleen is utterly alone but refuses to leave her home to seek protection in the German consulate. She even warns her husband’s assistants, who live out on the plantation, about the riots and murders of whites and insists that they leave immediately to save their lives.

After saving the lives of her husband’s assistants, Maleen is struck down with a severe case of malaria. Miss von Eltville is at her side caring for her. The news of the murder of the missionary Beta and the destruction of his home reaches Maleen, which makes her fear for the young girl’s life. Maleen is relieved when she is told that Maria has been saved from intruding rebels by the Italian gentleman, Dephini, who had convinced her, through a marriage proposal, to leave her home and seek shelter in town. Maria’s father, however, had vehemently refused to leave his home, assured that he had friends among the rebels. Other Europeans have been murdered in this uprising, which makes Maleen fear even more for the lives of the men in her life. However, her husband, brother and Krome have not been harmed. After the uprising is under control, Maleen gratefully welcomes her husband home, who scolds her for her courageous rescue of his assistants and her poor health. But soon after, he himself contracts a severe fever and dies.
Maleen, widowed and left without the protection of her previous standing, is now the center of Ungudja’s gossip for having had an inappropriate association with Krome. Her close friend, Miss von Eltville, advises her to leave Africa to return to Germany, since there would be nothing left for her to do in the colony. With a heavy heart, Maleen heeds her advice and returns to Germany to live with her grandmother on the family’s estate. Krome, having been recalled to Germany for questioning on his treatment of natives and other unauthorized practices, visits Maleen. He acknowledges his love for her, but she refuses him, in honor of her deceased husband, whom she feels she betrayed with her love for Krome. Krome then leaves her bitter and disappointed.

Meanwhile, Maleen and her brother Rainer correspond through letters. He keeps her informed about the progress and latest gossip in the colony, including news about Maria. Together, Maleen and her brother purchase land in a coastal area of East Africa, which he wants to farm after being released from his civil service. Maleen desires to join him and return to the land she came to love. However, grim news reaches her that her brother has been killed in battle with African rebels. With the passing of her grandmother and her brother Rainer, Maleen has no family left and decides to return to Africa by herself and farm the land that now is hers alone. Finally back in Africa, as she settles down and begins her work, she is refused all cooperation, because of her reputation from her first stay in German East Africa and because she is a single woman.

Nevertheless, she begins to establish herself and farm her land with the help of hired natives, whom she treats with great kindness. Her reputation suffers once more when she decides to meet with Krome in Ungudja. They spend the day together and talk as they had in the beginning. He informs her that he is now working for the English,
having turned away from the German government because of the country’s inability to
gain and rule colonies overseas. Krome now wants Maleen to join him in his new cause.
She refuses to turn against her motherland, however, feeling only disgust for what this
man, whom she once loved, has become. Returning to her farm, through persistence,
kindness and long-suffering, she is finally accepted into the German community of East
Africa and earns respect as a farmer. She is also told that Maria intends to pay her a visit
on her farm. The novel concludes with Maleen looking at her newly built home on a bluff
overlooking the sea. She looks into the future, wanting to use her home as a hospice for
those suffering from the climate but also seeing how her fellow Germans will have to
fight a new enemy on the other side: Krome.

**Mother and daughter?**

The poem below, written by Bülow’s sister long before Bülow wrote her novel,
foreshadows the relationship between Maleen and Maria and the feelings they have for
each other. In the novel, Maleen “leads” Maria into womanhood and “civilization.” She
wants to comfort and protect the young girl who comes from a different world than her
own.

*Gib mir die Hand, du mein geliebtes Kind,*
*Ich will dich führen durch die Dunkelheit.*
*Steil ist der Pfad, der Morgen noch so weit,*
*Und deine Augen matt vom Weinen sind,*
*Zu öde das Land –*  
*Ich gehe nicht von dir,*
*Gib mir die Hand*  
*Und glaube mir.*
*Nicht denk’ an das, was in des Sturmes Wahn*  
*Ein toller Flug der Phantasie dir bot!*  

*Ich traure über dich und deine Not*
Und um das Lächeln, das der Kummer nahm.
Zu tief der Schmerz –
Ich bitte nichts von dir,
Dein krankes Herz
Vertraue mir.
Ich will dich führen durch des Sturmes Nacht,
Mein Herz ist kalt, doch meine Hand ist fest.
Ich bin dein Hüter, der dich nie verläßt.

(Der Führer by Margarete von Bülow)

The poem reflects that which Eigler also noted about this type of relationship:

“The novels’ embrace of colonist discourse can be observed in the ways they represent the relationship between colonizers and colonized” (Friedrichsimeyer, Lennox, and Zantop 72). There is a relationship represented in the novel, Im Lande der Verheißung that does just that. Maleen, belonging to the group of the colonizer, represents a type of foster-mother for Maria, who belongs, because of her mixed race, to the group of the colonized.

Not until this novel had Bülow chosen a female protagonist for her novels. Of course there had been dominant female characters in her other novels, such as Nelly in Der Konsul and Eva in Tropenkoller, but none where the focus was entirely on the female hero such as Maleen Dietlas in Im Lande der Verheißung. Some critics, such as Joachim Warmbold, put this novel in the category of Trivialliteratur, but its historical and cultural value is indisputable, since it offers a rare look into an age of German history and colonization that has long been overlooked or even forgotten.

The fact that this work was written for propaganda purposes becomes obvious to anyone who has read it and is familiar with Germany’s colonial history. This colonial history and the attendant colonial writings are without any doubt intertwined with each other. Frieda von Bülow had definitely, as her biographer Sophie Hoechstetter pointed

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3 See Hoechstetter 57-58.
out, used her writing for propaganda purposes: "... sie wollte ihre Feder in den Dienst der geliebten Kolonialsache stellen und für die Idee Freunde werben" (160). Her patriotism and nationalism are clearly visible in her works, through which she tries to excite her fellow Germans for colonization by laying out the roles and forms of participation she has in mind both for German men and German women. As the character of Maleen suggests, she particularly tries to convince the women of her country to take an active role within the colonies rather than staying behind in the motherland. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, along with Bülow’s nationalistic ideology.

In the short summary of the novel provided above, I could only briefly touch on Maleen’s and Maria’s characters. However, a relationship between the imperial woman, Maleen, and “the other” girl, Maria, becomes apparent as one analyzes the novel. Both women are part of the same German community in Ungudja, East Africa, though of different social standings. Maleen is a baroness from the motherland, while Maria is the African-born daughter of a white missionary and an Egyptian woman; still the two women constantly come in contact because of the smallness of the community they are living in. These facts about their background might lead to the conclusion that Maleen and Maria have nothing in common with each other and therefore that they would not have any grounds for a relationship. However, their interaction and conversations prove otherwise. The text suggests that the type of relationship between Maleen and Maria is that of a “mother” and a “daughter”. In order to establish this mother/daughter relationship between Maleen and Maria, I will now turn to the novel itself.

Maleen meets Maria while she is accompanying her brother to Anton Beta’s home. There she sees Maria for the first time, and exclaims: “Und sieh nur, das reizende
Mädchen dort” (Bülow, Verheißung 54). From the first moment on, Maleen is intrigued by Maria’s appearance, a phenomenon which will be more closely examined in chapter three. Maria, however, is reluctant to trust the German woman’s friendliness and Maleen’s efforts to get to know her. Maria’s thoughts about this first meeting between the two are revealed to the reader. Maria likes the European men because they are friendly to her, compliment her and bring her presents. The European women, however, she does not appreciate because “sie alle hatten immer etwas zu predigen. ‘Eine junge Christin hat dies zu thun und jenes zu lassen’ hieß es immer, oder sie sagten von dem, was ihr gerade Vergnügen macht: ‘It is not the proper thing for a young lady’” (Bülow, Verheißung 57). Maria’s response to the efforts of these European women who try to be her “mother” is that of an average adolescent girl who rebels against her mother.

In fact, Maria is almost seventeen years old (Bülow, Im Lande der Verheißung 123), and she is motherless. Her mother died when she was just a little girl, so she had been raised by her missionary father. Maria seems to rebel against Maleen because she fears that another European woman wants to act as her “mother” and dictate her life. Maria has no experience with what a mother is and what role she fills. The girl is suspicious of women, especially of white European women. However, Maleen, like other European women before her, feels compelled to act as Maria’s “mother”. Interestingly enough, Maleen is a newlywed and has no children of her own; therefore she lacks experience as a mother, but she nevertheless possesses the innate qualities of a mother. The role of a mother seems to be one of the roles a German woman in the colonies was expected to fulfill, in Bülow’s opinion. This will be explored further in chapters four and five.
Maleen’s motherly feelings are also obvious when she refers to Maria as “liebe Kleine” (120) and “arme kleine Maria” (123) or calls her “liebes Kind” (151, 186), “scheues Kind” (185) and “liebe Maria” (187) throughout the novel. Also, when Maleen finds Maria crying, like a loving mother, she lays her hands on Maria’s shoulders to comfort her: “Maleen legte ihre Hände auf die schmalen jungen Schultern des Mädchens und versuchte gütlich zuzusprechen” (Bülow, Verheißung 151). Besides her motherly feelings, Maleen also views Maria as a child per se, even though Maria is a seventeen-year-old girl, almost a woman. She seems to reduce Maria to a position of dependence. This will be more fully explored in the next chapter when I discuss Maria’s character in more detail.

In order to further establish the existence of a kind of mother/daughter relationship between Maleen and Maria, we need to look at the following event in the novel. Maleen, even though married to Georg Dietlas, actually loves and admires Ralf Krome. When she hears that her beloved Krome has been romantically involved with Maria, she first becomes jealous. But after she overcomes the initial shock, her motherly instinct takes over and she supports Maria in her concern about the young girl’s future and reputation: “Sie wollte die mutterlose Maria schützen” (Bülow, Verheißung 162). Here, Maleen herself feels that she has to fill the motherly void in Maria’s life. She also appeals to Krome and rebukes him for his reckless behavior towards Maria: “… wie unbeschützt die Kleine ist! Sie dürfen das unerfahrene Mädchen nicht ins Gerede bringen” (Bülow, Verheißung 166). Maleen protects, defends and fights for Maria but at the same time talks to and about Maria as if she were ten years old, a further evidence
that Maleen views herself as a superior, mature mother dealing with an disobedient, immature child.

Moreover, Maleen, as befits a mother, is concerned about Maria’s future. She wants Maria to receive an education and make a good match, typical concerns of a mother for her daughter at the turn of the century. Maleen even talks to Maria’s father, making her concerns known while trying to convince him to follow her advice. Her motherly concern for Maria is expressed by her thoughts when she calls Maria the sunshine in her father’s life (Bülow, Verheißung 184). She herself justifies her “motherly” intervention in this way: “Das Kind ist zu hübsch, um ungefährdet ohne den Schutz älterer Frauen hier leben zu können“ (Bülow, Verheißung 183).

While trying to find a match for her protégée, Maleen realizes that the Italian Cavaliere Despini seems attracted to Maria. So, as any mother of the time, Maleen takes Maria aside and gives her a “motherly” speech of encouragement, combined with rebuke for her romance with Krome: “So hielt sie ihr eine freundliche kleine Predigt” (Bülow, Verheißung 185). Maria listens, but after Maleen is done with her speech, Maria once again expresses her opinion about European women when she tells Maleen:


Maria knows of Maleen’s intentions to send her away to receive a proper education and save her reputation. Her distrust towards Maleen and her “motherly” intentions indicate that she is suspicious of women trying to “mother” her. Maria loves the personal freedom
she has enjoyed and has no understanding of what a mother/daughter relationship should be. She sees no need and does not want a mother in her life to take away her freedom. When she exclaims that no woman loves her, the void in her life once more becomes apparent. Nevertheless, in that same conversation, Maleen and Maria, for the first time, have an intimate and open conversation about each others’ concerns, desires, hopes and dreams. The importance of a mother figure in a girl’s life will be discussed in the next chapter when the psychological development of girls will be briefly examined.

As time passes, Maleen’s affection for Maria grows. When she hears that during a revolt, the missionary’s home has been burnt to the ground, her first concern is for Maria, not her father or other possible victims: “Lieber Gott! Maria?!" (Bülow, Verheißung 238). Maleen is told that Maria was brought to safety as she was convinced to leave the mission home when Dephini asked her to marry him. This brought joy and relief to Maleen. However, when she makes it known that she would like the now homeless Maria to stay with her until she gets married, Dephini makes excuses.

Maleen’s reputation suffered greatly when the large amount of time she spent with Krome caused people to gossip. For a married woman, she had spent too much time with a single man, which made everyone suspicious of her true feelings and intentions. As a result, Maleen’s reputation and influence dwindled, especially the influence she had on Maria, since this position of power was the privilege of “honorable” women. A “dishonorable” woman was not accepted as the role model and “mother” of an impressionable adolescent girl. This realization puts Maleen in shock, as she sees herself stripped of her role as a “mother” when she is not allowed to house the fatherless and motherless Maria and to continue the influence she had on her. When Maleen hears about
Maria’s wedding, to which she is not invited, she only feels happiness for Maria. This unconditional love is the type of love exhibited by a mother.

When Maleen (who returned to Germany after the death of her husband) receives a letter from her brother with the newest gossip from the colony, she is told that Maria has now taken her place in the society of Ungudja. It appears that Maleen’s influence did affect Maria positively, because Maleen’s brother states: “Maria ist ganz große Dame geworden, macht ein Haus und wird gefeiert, wie einst Du“ (Bülow, Verheißung 316). Maria seems to follow in her “mother’s” footsteps. Miss von Eltville, Maleen’s friend, also tells her that Maria has become a “proper lady”.

To this point, I have focused on Maleen’s motherly feelings but have not explored Maria’s affection for Maleen. Maria’s thoughts and feelings are scarcely made known to the reader. When Bülow makes Maria’s thoughts or feelings known, they are presented from a Eurocentric perspective. Maria’s feelings for Maleen become more obvious towards the end of the novel, when a more mature Maria, now married to a European and a mother herself, a lady and part of the European society of Ungudja, realizes the goodwill and concern Maleen had for her when she was a motherless adolescent girl. After Maleen returns to the colony and begins to farm her own land, build her own house and live the life of an aging widow, she is told that Maria wants to come and visit her in her new home: “Unsere kleine Missionarin hofft ihren Gatten nächstens auf einer seiner Inspektionsreisen begleiten zu können und freut sich wie ein Kind darauf, Sie dann in Ihrem neuen Palast zu besuchen“ (Bülow, Verheißung 444). With the excitement of a child, Maria looks forward to a visit with her “mother”, Maleen.
Maleen and Maria are very different individuals, who seem to be opposite in every aspect, and yet, they are drawn to each other in a kind of complex, complicated mother/daughter relationship. Barbara Ann Shumannsfang realizes the importance of the connection between Maleen and Maria. Rather than recognizing a clear mother/daughter relationship, she describes them as rivals. Nevertheless, she admits: “Maleen has a strange affinity for Maria...” (189). Maleen obeys her motherly instincts and does her duty as a woman in the colonies. Maria feels drawn to Maleen as someone who can fill a void in her motherless life; she is seeking someone to look up to and to imitate, someone who would be concerned about her needs and her future.

Now that this mother/daughter relationship has been explored, the next two chapters will discuss first Maria’s, then Maleen’s distinctiveness, and how these two characters differ from each other. The women belong to two different worlds: the world of the colonized and that of the colonizer, which puts them in different roles on opposite sides. Maria is the immature adolescent whose mixed race makes her “the other” in Bülow’s novel. Maleen is the married white woman who becomes an imperial mother in the colony of East Africa.