III. Maria

This chapter will examine Maria’s character more carefully, in the context of post-colonial concepts such as hybridity, displacement and language, as well as the concepts of ‘The Other’, the colonized and the noble savage. First, I need to examine Maria’s stage of psychological development. Still an adolescent, Maria is in need of a mother, although she does not believe that this is the case, seeing herself as a mature woman with all attendant rights and privileges. In order to better elucidate Maria’s character, her stage of emotional and psychological development as a seventeen-year-old girl and as a “noble savage” and her relationship with her “mother” Maleen, this analysis will now turn to key concepts from Salomé’s work *Im Zwischenland*.

*Halbwüchsiges Mädchen*

The first time Maria is mentioned in the novel is when Ralf Krome is on the way to Maria’s father, the missionary Anton Beta. Krome sees her outside her father’s home, which provides impetus for the first description of Maria’s character and her appearance. Also, her level of maturity becomes apparent in these few lines. Maria is seventeen. She is not quite yet a woman, but neither is she is a child. Maria adores animals and welcomes all the animals she receives as gifts from the European men, gifts a child would receive: “… alle [Männer] waren freundlich mit ihr und brachten ihr hübsche Geschenke: Vögel oder kleine Nachtaffen oder seltene Früchte und Konfekt” (Bülow, *Verheißung* 56). E. C. Nwezeh in *Afrika in French and German Fiction (1911-1933)* discusses this aspect of the savage woman who desires gifts as a way of manifesting love: “She only thinks of presents and jewelry, while her amorous reaction is always commensurate with
the expenses incurred by her lover or her husband on her behalf: ‘What would he bring her this time?’” (56).

Although Maria wants to be loved by the men, she is still a child at heart. Like a child, she is excited about presents she receives from the men, and like a child she plays with these gifts. But there is also a different side to this ‘child’. Maria flirts with all European men, especially with Krome, Maleen’s brother Rainer and Dephini. She is flattered when they admire her beauty and spend time with her. She even has a romantic liaison with Krome. On one hand, Maria seems to be a child who could need a mother to watch out for her; on the other, she seems to be a grown woman playing the men and manipulating them through her femininity. She seems to be immature in some aspects, but fully mature in others. She is im Zwischenland.

Lou Andreas-Salomé, a novelist, critic and essayist and a close friend of Frieda von Bülow, with whom she had traveled through Europe, wrote a book, based on her own childhood memories in Russia. The book’s five stories all deal with this “in-between-ness” of girls. Im Zwischenland (The Years between), published in 1902, not long after Bülow’s Im Lande der Verheißung, provides great insights into the psychological development of adolescent girls. As with Maria, in Salomé’s stories the young girls who are the protagonists are still playful like children but want to be adults with all the attendant rights and privileges. However, Salomé’s girls start to feel and understand the world as adults and the state of in-between-ness they find themselves in, accepting the privileges, but also the responsibilities.

The first of these five stories, which gave the name to this collection, Im Zwischenland, provides some of these insights mentioned above. In this story, we find a
young girl, Musja, with her brother Boris, living with their grandfather in Petersburg, Russia. Their parents are not present. A French governess, hired by the grandfather, is watching over them. It is Christmas time and Musja and Boris are impatiently awaiting the Christmas celebration. They both idolize a poet, Apollon Pawlowitsch, who lives across the street. Musja wants to surprise her brother by having Pawlowitsch look at Boris’ poetry as a Christmas present. She knows that Boris wants to be a poet himself and would like feedback from such a great artist. She also knows that she would not be allowed to visit Pawlowitsch, whom she worships and adores. Musja is aware that she is too young to visit Pawlowitsch alone but her passion for this poet takes over and she visits him. However, she is disappointed because Pawlowitsch is not what she imagined. She returns to her home and never tells her brother about her attempt. Her world is further shaken when Pawlowitsch is arrested for having conspired against the government.

This whole experience lets the reader view Musja as more than a child. Given her age, she is a child, but her maturity becomes evident throughout the story. Her oldest brother, who comes home for Christmas, describes the state Musja finds herself in as follows:

Kinder sind’s nicht, Erwachsene sind’s ja doch auch nicht – in der Klemme sind sie dazwischen! Rechts wohnen alle Erwachsenen, links alle Kinder, und ihr – ihr wohnt wohl nirgends oder so in einem Zwischenland ... (Salomé, Zwischenland 63).

Musja realizes the importance of what her brother is saying. She does not want to be in the Zwischenland. She tells herself: “Dort mußte man möglichst schnell hindurch zu den ganz Erwachsenen – ja hindurchgeführt werden – sie wußte wohl, von wem ...“ (Salomé,
Zwischenland 64). She wants the poet Pawlowitsch to bring her out of the Zwischenland into adulthood. Maria also turned to men to be brought out of the Zwischenland since she did not trust the women. The men loved her and one of them would eventually marry her. Musja learns that the man she admires will not be the man that would help her into adulthood. Maria also learns that Krome will not be the one to bring her into adulthood and thus womanhood. Maleen takes on that role even though Maria does not want her to. Maleen is there to provide the role of a mother to guide and protect her, at this crucial time in a girl’s development into a woman. She even jumps to Maria’s defense when her brother contemplates Maria’s in-between-ness and how that could serve his own desires: “Und sie ist kaum siebzehn Jahre. Alles könnte man aus ihr formen” (Bülow, Verheißung 123). Maleen wants to protect her from male exploitation, both as a child and as a native, who are compared to children in colonial texts. This concept will be further explored below.

Musja is still a child but there is a longing in her not to be little anymore (Salomé, Zwischenland 12). Unlike Maria, she is aware of her level of maturity. She has the same feelings for men as Maria but in contrast to her, Musja knows when men try to manipulate and use her. When her oldest brother comes home and teases and belittles her, Musja refuses his kiss, unwilling to be toyed with (Salomé, Zwischenland 18-19). Musja saw through her oldest brother and his intentions. Maria, in contrast, lets Krome toy with her, unaware of his intentions. She accepts a kiss, hoping for his love. She is not concerned about her reputation, proper behavior or responsibility. Maria believes that she is a grown woman who can do as she pleases and use her femininity to get her way with men.
Furthermore, Maria’s hybridity itself puts her in the Zwischenland. Leela Gandhi in her introductory work on post-colonialism also recognizes “the notion of ‘in-betweenness’ conjured up by the term ‘hybridity’” (131). The term ‘hybridity’ in this analysis is used in the context of Maria’s mixed race nature, which is considered the opposite of ‘pure’ by post-Colonial critics. With her hybrid nature, Maria is neither a full German nor an African, but an African-born German with Egyptian features which creates a dilemma of ambivalent identity and displacement which will be discussed below. It is also often found that people of mixed race, “noble savages” as I will also call them in this discussion and which concept I will further discuss in the next section, are often compared to children, inexperienced, naïve and halbwüchsig just like Maria. Ashis Nandy discusses the “subsidiary homology between childhood and the state of being colonized” (11) in her work The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism. Maria is seventeen years old, that is, almost a woman, and yet Maleen refers to her as if she were a small child. As established above, she addresses her with terms like “little one” and “child”. Gandhi also states: “This perception of the colonised culture as fundamentally childlike or childish feeds into the logic of the ‘civilising mission’ which is fashioned, quite self-consciously, as a form of tutelage or a disinterested project concerned with bringing the colonised to maturity” (32). The idea of the “civilizing mission” will be further explored in chapter five.

In addition, through her language itself, Maleen is refusing to accept the dark girl as a mature, independent subject; rather she is reducing her linguistically to a position of dependence that becomes apparent when she talks to her brother about Maria as a possible wife. She says: “... [Maria] ist gewiß sehr weich und anschmiegam, wie eine
kleine Sklavin, [...]. Maria Beta würde deine ergebene Dienerin sein und dein Spielding” (Bülow, Verheißung 122). On one occasion Maleen even calls Maria “ein ganz einfältiges kleines Ding” (Bülow, Verheißung 187). This is not what you would call a seventeen-year-old girl. Also, the reference to Ding shows that Maleen not only degrades her to the status of little child, but also to that of an object, as natives were viewed by the colonizers.

“The Other”: Hybrid and Noble Savage

Maria Beta considers herself to be a German girl. As she explains her romantic involvement with Krome to Maleen, she exclaims: “Wenn ein Mann ein deutsches Mädchen küsst, muß er es heiraten” (Bülow, Verheißung 187). She had every reason to consider herself German, since, under the laws of that time, she was indeed legally German (Shumannsfang 181). She is the daughter of a German missionary who is part of the German community of Ungudja in Germany’s colony of East Africa. She was raised a German by her German father. She is in constant contact with Germans and other Europeans. She acts as, speaks as, and lives the life of an average German girl in the colonies and it seems that she belongs to the local minority: the colonizers, for the most part. Most Europeans seem to consider her German and treat her as they would treat any average German girl.

Maria’s “true” identity is only gradually revealed to the reader. Although first she appears to be a “normal” German girl, as the story progresses, certain characteristics of her appearance are described and the reader realizes her “otherness”. Later in the novel, Maleen sees Maria, not in the typical German setting of her father’s garden, but crying in
a dark room in Ms. von Eltville’s clinic for natives. Maria is now found in a “savage” place. Also, the description of how Maria was found crying seems to refer to her “savage” nature: “Maria wandte sich ab und schluchzte nur noch wilder” (Bülow, Verheißung 151).

Maria’s “savage” nature can also be explained with her “wild” and “untamed” behavior. Maleen, aware that Maria lacks social skills and proper behavior, calls her “Wildkatze” (36), “Wildling” (58), “scheue, kleine Wilde” (122) and “junge Wilde” (160). For example, as a seventeen-year-old girl, Maria flirts with older men but asserts that she does not believe in the institution of marriage. She has a liaison with Krome, unaware of or not caring about the repercussions for her reputation. Maria insists that she does not need further education, that she does not believe in education, that she considers the instruction she received from her scholarly father to be sufficient and that she sees no need to attend a “proper” school for girls her age. Maria also sees no need for a mother in her life, since she feels she has adjusted adequately to her circumstances.

To go into further detail, Maria’s “savage” nature seems to be indicated by her outward appearance. Although Maria is the daughter of a German missionary, she is also the daughter of an Egyptian woman whom her father had converted and then married. Her mother never had the opportunity to rear her, since she died early, which explains why Maria never knew any culture besides that of her German father. Like her mother, Maria is a beauty with dark hair and eyes, an olive skin tone, and “Egyptian” features:

Maria Beta hatte eine bräunlich dunkle Gesichtsfarbe und im Nacken geschlungenes, pechschwarzes Haar. [...] Marias Gesicht erinnerte im Profil mit der schmalen, geraden, niedrigen Stirn, der sanft gebogenen Nase und den etwas aufgeworfenen Lippen an den Typus der Ägypterin. Dazu stimmten auch die schmal geschlitzten,
mandelförmigen, tiefdunklen Augen, die zwischen den langen Wimpern feucht aufglänzten (Bülow, Verheißung 46).

Although her European dress identifies her as German, her skin color and features prevent her from being recognized as such (Shumannfand 152). However, her beauty is praised by both the European men and European women in the colony. Even though she looks different from the others, she is still very beautiful.

Beauty is part of the identity of the “noble savage”. Hoxie Neale Fairchild in The Noble Savage explains: “There is a strong aesthetic element in the Noble Savage Idea” (9). Writers of colonial literature included the figure of the “savage” numerous times in their works, usually a black man or woman. These characters are depicted as ugly and terrible to look at (for example, Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre). In contrast, however, Maria is describes as beautiful which makes her a noble savage. E. C. Nwezeh points out: “Perhaps so as to minimize the unsavory impact of her looks on the European reader, the colonial writer, whether French or German, normally chooses a mulatto woman as the heroine” (55). The fact that Maria is a mulatto and very beautiful makes her a “noble savage”.

Writers of all ages, from Tacitus to Shakespeare to Defoe, have incorporated the idea of the “noble savage” in their writings. Tacitus’ description of the inhabitants of Germania, “savages” to Rome, but “noble savages” to Tacitus, lauds their family values and ethics even though they are of a “wild” nature. Shakespeare’s Othello is another “noble savage”. He was part of the “civilized” world, living an honorable “civilized” life, yet he still was different, a mulatto, therefore not fully accepted by all, always aware of his otherness and consequently obeying his “wild” nature in the end. Daniel Defoe’s
Friday would also serve as a model for many other “noble savages” in colonial writings (Warmbold 20). These are only a few examples among many from colonial writings that incorporate this idea of the “noble savage”.

Maria serves as the “noble savage” in Bülow’s novel. Barbara Shumannfong even goes so far as to say: “There is virtually an obsession with the mixed race other in this novel” (163). Maria is considered a “savage” by the others in the novel because of her inherited blood, “untamed” nature and outward appearance, however, she is a “noble savage” because she is beautiful in the eyes of the colonizers and she lives a privileged life as a somewhat accepted member of the dominant, oppressive and ruling group.

In post-colonial terms Maria is “The Other”. This term is often used in reference to the character of Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. Mason is “the other woman in the attic”, locked away by her English husband because of her insanity, behavior and appearance. She is the “noble savage”, a hybrid, a Creole, in whom the dominant is mixed with the subordinate. She belongs neither with the colonized, nor with the colonizers. She clearly illustrates the post-colonial concept of displacement, which will be discussed below in reference to Maria’s character.

Maria, like Bertha Mason, is also different. The question could be asked why she should be considered “The Other”, since she seems to belong to the group of the colonizers rather than the colonized. Maria herself seems not to be aware that she is “The Other”. She thinks of herself as a part of the German community. After all, her only parent is German. German is her mother tongue and she dresses like any other German girl. But still, she looks different than all the other Germans. She endures the climate of the African colony better than any of them. She is a ravishing beauty, the opposite of the
rather plain Maleen. In addition, Maria is “The Other” because of her social class. She is the daughter of a simple missionary with no wealth. Maleen and the other Europeans with whom she is in contact are all wealthy, have titles and are of noble birth. Thus Maria is “The Other”, both in terms of blood and social standing.

There are some Europeans, like Maleen’s brother Rainer, Krome and Maleen herself, who consider her different from other German girls in some respects and do not treat her the same the way they would treat a ‘true’ German girl. They recognized an “otherness” in Maria. In particular the men such as Rainer Maltron and Ralf Krome behave towards the unsuspecting Maria as “The Other”. Both men look at and treat Maria as their pet. They give her pet names, bring her presents but do not want to spend unnecessary time with her. For Krome, she is also a sexual object. Although he does not want to marry Maria, he uses her naivety to satisfy his own needs, even though he knows he might ruin her reputation. Thus, despite his age and experience, he shows no respect and concern for her person and her needs, degrading her to a “savage”.

In the same way, Maleen’s brother Rainer admits to his sister that he is in love with Maria, but does not consider proposing to her. He exclaims: “Wenn sie nur nicht Negerblut in den Adern hätte!” (Bülow, Verheißung 122). As the last in line to provide heirs for their proud family heritage, he insists that he does not want bastard children as dukes in his family’s lineage: “Ich bin der letzte meines Namens und meine Söhne müssen das Geschlecht fortführen. Die Stammmother der künftigen Grafen Waltron darf kein Abessinierblut in den Adern haben. Lieber will ich gar keine Kinder, als solche verpfuschte Rassenbastarde” (Bülow, Verheißung 123). In strong language, he describes Maria’s hybrid nature, which in his opinion would corrupt their bloodline. “Maria’s racial
background makes her both attractive in appearance and threatening to future German bloodlines according to the novel” (Shumannfang 159). In Rainer’s opinion, “Weiße Kinder aber konnten weiße Männer nur mit weißen Frauen haben“ (Mamozai 154). As in so many literary works, it appears that in the men’s minds it is acceptable to sexually exploit women of mixed race, but marrying them is out of question. Although Maria thinks of herself as German, she is also aware of her otherness and men’s reluctance to marry her. She explains to Maleen: “Ach, davon [vom Heiraten] wollen diese Männer ja niemals reden – weil ich arm bin – und meine Mutter ....“ (Bülow, Verheißung 189). She is aware of Krome’s and Rainer Maltron’s attitudes towards her.

Maleen also attests to Maria’s otherness with her reaction when she discovers her brother’s love for Maria and her relief when he refuses to propose to her. She also excuses her brother’s love for Maria by the absence of ‘true’ German girls. She states: “Weil du hier kein europäisches, kein wirklich deutsches Mädchen zu sehen bekommst! ” (Bülow, Verheißung 122). Maria’s image is conveyed to the reader by the attitudes of Rainer, Krome and Maleen, and so perceived as “The Other”, hybrid and the “noble savage”. Maria’s otherness is defined by the attitudes of the colonizers.

It remains a fact that Maria is Maleen’s “daughter”, despite Maria’s “wild” nature and her otherness. It might have been her very hybridity that convinced Maleen that Maria needed a mother to care for her. But was Maleen picturing the same future for Maria as she would have pictured for any other German girl? This question will be discussed in the following chapter, as I more closely examine Maleen’s character, her role in the colony and German women’s role in the colonies in general.
Maria’s hybrid nature is not only explained by her outward appearance or her mixed parentage. Her hybridity is also inherent in her character. Maria is the “wild” and “untamed” girl in the beginning of the novel, but at the end, she is the wife of an Italian inspector, has children, and stands at the head of the society of Ungudja. Through her marriage to an honorable and admired European man, Maria has been assimilated into the European society of East Africa. She started out by rebelling against any form of female authority, but in the end she seeks Maleen’s company, thus acknowledging the influence Maleen had on her. At the end of the novel, Maria has become less hybrid, less “savage” and less “Other”.

After the discussion of hybridity, it is now necessary to touch on the post-colonial concept of displacement. Displacement is frequently an issue with the colonized “Other”. Bill Ashcroft in the work The Empire Writes Back defines displacement as a crisis of identity. He explains that displacement concerns itself with “the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place”, as well as “the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model” (8-9). Taking Ashcroft’s definition into account, I now return to the character of Maria. Maria, unlike the Europeans, was born in Africa. None of the Europeans, including her father, feels at home in Africa in the way she does. She was reared completely in East Africa, is married there and has her own children there. She will probably never leave. The reader assumes that she has never visited the German motherland. This sets her apart from the others, which is a type of displacement; even though it would seem that the Europeans are the ones who are displaced. The Europeans alienate Maria because of her otherness, seeing her as displaced in the land they
dominate. To the colonizers, Africa is their dominion, while for Maria, it is her home. The definition of colonial space is different for the colonizer than for the colonized.

Maria’s displacement goes even deeper than this. With her marriage to an Italian, although he is a European, she is further set apart, displaced from her identity as a German. Although she considers herself to be German, Maria never had a “true” German identity because of her otherness, as demonstrated by Maleen’s wish to send her away to Europe to receive an education and thus to find her identity. Maleen never believed Maria had an identity because she lacked a model. Maleen should provide this model. After the murder of her father, Maria no longer has a direct German tie; in the end, she is further distanced from the other Germans because of her marriage to an Italian.⁴

⁴ Because other scholars have discussed the issue of race in *Im Lande der Verheißung* so thoroughly, I have only briefly touched on it in this chapter and will only do so in the following chapters.