IV. Maleen

In this chapter, I will first discuss the role German women played in colonial politics, and the support they rendered at home in the motherland or overseas alongside their husbands and as single women. I will then explore the white woman’s role in colonial literature before proceeding to discuss Maleen’s character and her role in the novel. The second half of this chapter will more closely examine the concept of imperial motherhood in reference to Maleen and also Maria.

The Role of German Women in the Colonies

In the beginning of the German colonial era, German women were required to have an adequate reason for participating in the colonial cause and especially for being present in the colonies. They had to show a need for their involvement and demonstrate the contributions they could make. German women offered a variety of reasons for their participation in the colonial cause. Among these was the call for nurses and the need for white women as mothers in an attempt to prevent race-mixing.

At first, female participation in colonial affairs started in the motherland. While men went on their dangerous colonizing adventures overseas, their mothers, sisters, fiancées and wives were left behind. While some were merely fearful about the safety of their loved ones, others were disappointed that they were left behind. These women believed in the colonial cause as much as the men they loved. They wanted to support German colonialism like the men but they knew that it would be difficult for them to go to the colonies themselves. Although this later changed, in the first stages, enthusiastic women could only support Germany’s colonial ambitions from the motherland.
Frieda von Bülow was one of these women who started to support colonization from the motherland. She was caught up in the excitement of colonial expansion in Berlin, after she had returned from her travels to Italy. In Berlin she met Dr. Carl Peters, the “founder” of German East Africa, who convinced her to establish a colonial women’s organization that would further the colonial cause. The Women’s Association for Nursing was established in 1886 (Wildenthal, Empire 203) by Bülow and Peters. This organization wanted to send nurses to the colonies to ensure the health of German men, support the colonial physicians and help establish hospitals and other health-care facilities. For this purpose, Bülow had the opportunity to travel to Zanzibar/East Africa—officially the first woman to do so (Warmbold 51) in 1887. Her task was to scout out the area and collect information on the need for nurses, while providing nursing care herself.

By this time, German women had established other roles besides just nursing in the colonies. Clara Brockmann, Bülow’s contemporary, wrote a book on women’s participation in the colonies, entitled Die Deutsche Frau in Südwestafrika: Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage in Unseren Kolonien. Published in 1910, this work explains in great detail the different roles available to German women, possible occupations with their tasks, and women’s duties in the colonies. Each chapter is devoted to one of the occupations or services that a German woman could perform in the colonies, from the wife of a missionary, to a civil servant, to a nurse or teacher, as well as others. Brockmann herself went to a German colony, which she documented in her work Briefe eines Deutschen Mädchens aus Südwest. She was sent to Southwest Africa as a civil servant and, hopefully, to become the wife of a colonizer, which would help ensure racial purity and the preservation of the German culture. Like Bülow, Brockmann went as a
single woman and did not get married as expected, but rather enjoyed her life as an unmarried woman in the colonies.

However, the occupations listed by Brockmann were just possible spheres of activity for women that masked the “true” purpose of German women in the colonies, as Brockmann states: “Es wird viel geredet und gewirkt für die Einwanderung der deutschen Frau in unsere Kolonie. Der Zweck liegt klar auf der Hand: Verhinderung der Mischehen, die den geistigen und wirtschaftlichen Ruin des Ansiedlers bedeuten, […], ferner die Erziehung der jungen Generation, ein Faktor von nicht zu unterschätzendem Werte, weil er den Kulturstand der wachsenden Bevölkerung bedeutet” (Brockmann, Frau 3).

Here, the ‘true’ purpose and role for German women in the colonies is clearly defined. This was also Maleen’s purpose in the novel. German women were to go to the colonies to either join their husbands or to find a suitable husband. Then they were to bear white children, to provide heirs for German colonization and to ensure an adequate presence of white people. Eigler confirms: “… colonial women were for the most part confined to the traditional gender roles of wife and mother. While women did not participate in the actual colonial expansion and military subjugation of the natives, they did participate” (Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop 72). Women’s participation in the roles of wife and mother in the colonies, the colonists thought, would help prevent race-mixing and preserve German hegemony. They were also to teach the next generation to maintain the German culture in the colonies. A verse from a poem, published in 1909 in Kolonie und Heimat by Wilhelm Rau, expresses the nationalistic feelings about teaching the next generation to establish and preserve German-ness in the colonies:

*And in this land*

*Under foreign sun,*
They held firmly to their customs
They had faithfully brought along
From their old homeland;
They held firmly to their language
Learned from their mothers,
Held firmly to their songs
They had once sung at home;
Passed on to their children
German feeling, German thinking,
Speaking only German with them always.
Valiant men, valiant women
They were, loyal unto death,
Loyal in their hearts to their old homeland,...
(qtd. in Warmbold 168).

Martha Mamozai in her work *Herrenmenschen: Frauen im Deutschen Kolonialismus* called these willing women who would pass on German “civilization” as mothers and wives in the colonies, “Hüterinnen der Kultur” (154).

Women and men alike voiced their opinion concerning the role of women in the colonies. Like Brockmann, young, single German women were encouraged to migrate to the colonies not only to ensure a German life style and uphold German culture, but also to ensure morality among the men, through offering a European alternative to marriage outside their race. Many German women and men alike were appalled by immoral behavior and mixed marriages. They believed that the mere presence of German women would prevent this from happening. As a general rule, the German women were more interested than men in preventing race mixing, since they recognized the possibility of losing some of their new empowerment. “Die deutschen Frauen in den Kolonien gehörten deshalb zu den eifrigsten Verfechterinnen des Prinzips der «Rassenreinhaltung»“ (Mamozai 154-155). Bülow also found race-mixing an atrocity, as her biographer states (Hoechstetter 21).
These women were sent to Africa by the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* to ensure that no race mixing would occur, and to fill such roles as housekeepers, governesses, cooks etc. (Mamozai 138). They were enthusiastic about German colonialism and of course the possibility of finding a suitable husband overseas. German women were usually welcomed by the men in the colonies. The women's arrival meant an overall improvement in their social standing and the general esteem of their gender. In the colonies women were often masters like the men. They had more power than in the motherland. They could actually contribute to the national cause. This empowerment fuelled their nationalism. However, they were only masters over the native population and still had no say in Germany’s colonial affairs (Mamozai 153).

In total, Bülow herself spent less than two years in Africa. This brief period did not make Africa her home. She certainly loved East Africa, as is shown in her writings and by her intention to settle there permanently. We know about her level of participation in colonial matters back home in the motherland where she founded a colonial women’s organization and later propagated the colonial cause through her writings, but she never accomplished what she set out to do in the colonies. Bülow failed to establish nursing facilities or provide nursing herself due to her own travels and her romance with Peters. For this she was reprehended by women of her organization and eventually ordered back to Germany. She did not fulfill any of the roles women were supposed to fulfill in the colonies: she did not do her job as a nurse, she never got married and she never bore white German offspring.

Nevertheless, Bülow’s nationalistic ideology and her belief in women’s participation in the colonial cause are evident in her novel *Im Lande der Verheißung*. 
“Bülow understood her nationalism to be not only a political position, but also a moral and ethical imperative” (Wildenthal, Empire 55). This becomes apparent through her character Maleen. Furthermore, “Bülow’s writing concerned itself with the carving out a place for German women in the German colonial enterprise” (Wildenthal, Weak’ 54).

In the novel, as well as other colonial literature, the white woman is not only found in the role of a wife, but also in the role of a model woman for the white as well as the black population. The colonial writer puts an emphasis on the “moral superiority” of white over black people (Kistner 67). The white woman is supposed to be a virtuous person who becomes the role model to everyone else. She must always stay pure and honor marriage. She has to overcome temptation and let the ideal triumph at the end. If she strays, she has to repent. Her fight for morality is comparable to a man’s fight for the colony (Oloukpona-Yinnon 304-305). “If several women are cast in a colonial novel, the noble role is assigned to the white woman in preference to the mulatto, and the latter plays a gentler role than the black woman” (Nwezeh 56).

Maleen’s character represents this kind of woman discussed above. She is the noble woman who comes to the colony to be an example to the white men as well as the girl of mixed race, Maria. However, as Wildenthal states: “Bülow’s typical heroine has […] inherent virtues, but her quirky status could easily tempt her toward ill” (Empire 59). Maleen fights for morality but fails herself to honor her marriage, being tempted to follow her heart instead of fulfilling her role as a model to all. However, at the end of the novel, Maleen repents by refusing to marry Krome, honoring her deceased husband and refusing to betray her motherland. She again fights for her ideal, thus providing a noble example to those around her in the colony.
Maleen was raised in Germany as the daughter of a baron. She received the best education a woman could receive in those days. She was introduced to her future husband Georg Dietlas, a man whose previous wife had died, by Ralf Krome. He convinced her to marry Dietlas, who, as an enthusiastic colonist, wanted to start his own tobacco plantation in East Africa. This provided Maleen with the opportunity to go to the colony herself and be actively involved in colonial affairs: “[…] sie heiratete ihn [Dietlas], so brauchte sie nicht sehnsuchtsvoll zurückbleiben, […] und konnte mit allen denen, die sie lieb hatte gemeinsam wirken” (Bülow, Verheißung 66). Krome convinces her of the importance of her presence in the colony:

Ich glaube, die Mitarbeit der Frauen wird von den Deutschen im allgemeinen weit unterschätzt. [...] Die Frauen haben eigentlich nur da zu sein, sich gut anzuziehen, schön, klug, und liebenswürdig zu sein, so wird sich alles um sie scharen und sich nach ihnen richten. Wie leicht hat es eine Dame auszuzeichnen und zu strafen! Und das ist Macht (Bülow, Verheißung 41-42).

To Krome, German women’s presence in the colony satisfied their involvement in colonial affairs. Their presence would ensure morality and German-ness in the colony. Krome described the influence women could have on those around them as an empowerment. His remarks might sound degrading in terms of women’s purpose, but he is also lauding their feminine attributes.

Krome had no intention of proposing to Maleen himself; he was too occupied with his own colonial ambitions. Maleen took Krome’s advice and married Dietlas, since she did not want to be left behind as a woman while the men in her life (her brother, Krome and her prospective husband Dietlas) went to the colony without her. She needed a legal way to join them.
Maleen is portrayed as a tall, blond woman who some considered pretty. She is described as follows:

Maleen war ziemlich hochgewachsen, wenn auch nicht so hünenhaft wie ihr Bruder. Ihre Haar- und ihre Hautfarbe war etwas dunkler als die seine [her brother is described as having light blond hair and blue eyes], ihre Augen grau. Sie wurde von einigen schön gefunden, von einigen kaum hübsch (Bülow, Verheißung 15).

Ulrike Kistner says about such description of “white” characters in colonial writers’ works: “Many authors emphasize the “Germanic” features of their figures in order to distinguish them from others. […] they also excel in “spiritual” properties. The religious virtues include piety, faithfulness, purity in body and soul, etc.” (Kistner 64). Maleen is said to look very aristocratic, a true lady. Maleen is a noble woman but she seems boring and lifeless compared to the vivacious mulatto Maria. However, Maleen’s enthusiasm for the German colonial cause, which seems to correspond to Bülow’s ideology of German nationalism, lets her appear as full of life and very fascinating. This is what attracted Krome to Maleen.

**Imperial Motherhood**

Marcia Klotz explores the concept of imperial motherhood. She defines the imperial mother as “mother of the nation” (White Women 8). Imperial motherhood is a two-sided concept. On one hand, it is literal motherhood, through which one bears white children to white masters to ensure dominance and Rassenreinheit. As Martha Mamozaï expresses it: “[Es] gab … für die weißen deutschen Frauen in den Kolonien nur eines: möglichst viele Kinder zu gebären” (155). On the other hand, one is to be a model to fellow countrymen and a keeper of German culture in the colonies. Salomé expressed it
this way: “Mutterschaft ist die «Kulturtat», die das Weib «von sich aus» tut, in der es «sich selber mitteilt»“ (Lächeln 33). “Imperialism was considered essential to the well-being of [German] fertility generally and motherhood in particular” (Said 107). Race-mixing threatened German hegemony and German women were expected to help prevent that.

Maleen, in her twenties and just recently married, has no children of her own. Considering her age and circumstances, it seems rather unlikely that she would be viewed as a mother. However, inherent in her gender and marital status is the possibility that she might become a mother in the colonies and bear children of her own. Interestingly enough, as was explored in chapter two, she does not become a biological mother, but rather assumes the motherly responsibility for Maria and even develops motherly feelings for her. This presents Maleen with an opportunity to actively further the colonial cause, which was not only to expand Germany’s empire and rule vast lands but also to “civilize” the world, or at least the lands under their protection. That is, they felt it necessary to force German culture, white supremacy and foreign policies on foreign lands and their peoples.

Maleen does not consciously take on the responsibility to protect and guide Maria. “Von sich aus tut das Weib ja nur eine Kulturtat und auch diese passiert ihr mehr dem Weibwesen nach, als daß es eine Handlung wäre: das Kind” (Salomé, Lächeln 101). Innately Maleen takes on the role as Maria’s mother, an act which reflects her enthusiasm for the colonial cause and her willingness to do her part to support Germany’s colonial ambitions. As Salomé explains: “Die «Mutterschaft geschieht dem Weib» zunächst passiv und wird dann zur aktiv zu bewältigenden Aufgabe: Sie muß das Kind «führen,
nähren, schützen, leiten“ (Lächeln 33). Marcia Klotz considers the position of being “mothers of the nation” as imperial motherhood. According to Klotz’s definition, Maleen can be considered an imperial mother, who attempts to “civilize” the German men and Maria.

As soon as Maleen arrives in the colony, she is greeted by the German men with the notion that things will now change in the colony because of her presence. They are convinced that through her refined character, values and model, she will raise the standards in the colony, turning this “savage” place into a home for Germans. She is considered the “mother” to all, the imperial mother. Salomé explains this role as follows: “Die Mutterschaft ist es, die das Weib in seinem weiblichsten Umkreis zurande leben läßt, daß es, einen neuen Lebenskreis aus sich schaffend, einer männlichen Wesenleistung nahe zu kommen scheint: zeugend, nährend, schützend, führend“ (Lächeln 240). In the role of an imperial mother, Maleen has found empowerment as a woman in an active role in the colony. Her mission is to “civilize” the unruly German men in the colony just by being present. Maleen’s brother states: “Uns fehlen die deutschen Damen. Wir Männer fangen immer schnell an zu verwildern” (Bülow, Verheißung 311). The reference here is obvious. Maleen was not only to “civilize” Maria, “die junge Wilde” (160), but also the German men who had gone “wild”. Maleen was to keep the white men civil and cause Maria, the “noble savage”, to become the same.

The men’s attitudes reflect Bülow’s belief in the necessity of having not just any women, but in particular aristocratic women, “true” ladies, present in the colonies. The German woman of noble birth was considered “die Hohenpriesterin deutscher Zucht und Sitte, die Trägerin deutscher Kultur, ein Segen dem fernen Lande: Deutsche Frauen,
deutsche Ehre, deutsche Treue über'm Meere” (qtd. in Mamozi 145). Salomé also points out that the feminine influence on morality both inside and outside of the family was one of the most important components of female influence on culture: “Wahrscheinlich die wichtigste Komponente des weiblichen Einflusses auf die Kultur besteht in deren Wirkung auf Ethik and Moral. Parallel zu ihrer Tätigkeit in Familie und Gesellschaft solle die Frau ihren wohlwollenden ethischen Einfluß auch außerhalb der Familie geltend machen" (qtd. in Kreide 59).

The example that Maleen is supposed to set for her fellow Germans and Maria as their imperial mother, however, evokes the question of double standard because of her romantic involvement with Krome despite the fact that she is married. The hypocrisy of the German “civilizing mission” will be discussed more in-depth in chapter five. Interestingly enough, as soon as Maleen’s husband dies and she is left without any protection, local gossip flares and her worsening reputation foreshadows her downfall. She will have to leave the colony because there is nothing left for her to do. She no longer can represent the role model of morality and German-ness. Only after repenting of her infidelity and after she refuses Krome’s long anticipated marriage proposal in honor of her deceased husband back in Germany, is she able to return to the colony where she still has to work hard to recover her reputation. There she takes on the role of the imperial mother once more by slowly winning over the German community through patience, resilience, long-suffering and by living a virtuous life, which brings her approval, recognition and admiration from the others. She also develops motherly feelings once again. Waldo Fabricius, an eighteen year old, who is Maleen’s landlord before her own
house is finished, often spends time with Maleen, who cares for him and spoils the young man:

Waldo Fabricius ist achtzehn Jahre alt und sie zweiunddreißig, so daß sie den Jahren nach allenfalls seine Mutter sein könnte. Sein Freimut und seine kindliche Zutraulichkeit haben rasch ihr Herz gewonnen. Sie kümmert sich in mütterlicher Weise um sein Wohl, und er weiß das zu würdigen. [...] Waldo darf ein halbes Stündchen bei ihr sitzen und sich verwöhnen lassen. Er plaudert viel und gern. Er erzählt ihr von seiner Mutter ...

(Bülow, Verheißung 387-388).

Bülow, Salomé and other women of their time, especially those involved in the Wilhelminian women’s movement, believed in a more active role for women in society. They also accepted motherhood as the highest calling of women (Kreide 98). Maleen’s role as the imperial mother amplifies both the traditional role of a mother and the extended role of woman as a mother to all in society. Married women without children, even single women were considered mothers. “... no woman was to escape motherhood: surrogate vocations of equal importance to the nation were to be found even for those who remained single” (Davin 51).

Maleen’s presence in the colony did indeed raise the morality of her fellow countrymen and was supposed to serve as an example to Maria, the noble savage. Ironically, Maleen, through her obvious love for Krome, became immoral in the eyes of her countrymen and other Europeans. As she lost her status as the exemplar of morality, and “first lady”, she also lost her right to play a role in the colony, and thus was forced to return to the motherland. In the eyes of her contemporaries, she could no longer fulfill her role as imperial mother, a model of morality to her fellow Germans and most of all, to Maria.
At the end of the novel, Maria has become the new imperial mother. She now is the “first lady” of the colony. She is married to an honorable man, has children of her own and is admired by the others, as Rainer tells his sister Maleen in a letter: “[Maria] ... hat drei niedliche kleine Kinderchen, und die Ehe scheint recht glücklich. Maria ist ganz ’große’ Dame geworden, macht ein Haus und wird gefeiert, wie einst Du” (Bülow, Verheißung 316).

Maria Beta’s name already foreshadows her future role as the imperial mother. Maria is not the typical first name of an African-born woman and Beta is not a typical German surname. Mary, the mother of Christ and thus mankind, is the religious metaphor evoked in Bülow’s novel in the character of Maria Beta. Maria, like the Virgin Mary, will be the mother to all, a role that her “mother” Maleen once filled. Also the meaning of Maria’s surname, which is the second letter in the Greek alphabet, foreshadows that Maria will be the second mother. By Maleen, Maria was brought out of obscurity, the Zwischenland and virginity into womanhood, and thus motherhood.

As I discussed in previous chapters, Maleen still does not fully accept Maria as being part of the dominant colonizing group. However, she wants to bring Maria as close as possible to the group, through education, “proper” upbringing and behavior, and a suitable husband. She wants to “civilize” Maria (make her a “proper” German woman) and bring her into womanhood. Maleen does not know that Maria will later fill her role as the imperial mother. She is merely trying to fulfill her role in the colony, such as helping and supporting the German colonial cause and its “civilizing mission” by bringing the noble savage, “the other” girl into “civilization” and thus furthering and justifying
Germany’s colonial ambitions and participating in its colonial affairs. This “civilizing mission” will be closely discussed in the following chapter.