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# The Other Clausewitz: Findings from the Newly Discovered Correspondence between Marie and Carl von Clausewitz



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## Abstract

The instrumental role Marie von Clausewitz played in the life of Carl von Clausewitz and the publication of his seminal work *On War* is often alluded to but seldom studied. The main reason for this is the fact that although Marie saved and shaped Clausewitz's legacy, few of her own letters were published and the majority assumed lost. In July 2012, the Prussian Privy State Archives in Berlin received a truly sensational find – the full private correspondence between Marie and Carl von Clausewitz. The most valuable among them are 283 never-before published letters from Marie to her husband. They finally allow her influence over the great military theorist and her contribution to his lifework to be studied in depth. Their intellectually intensive correspondence was often echoed in Carl von Clausewitz's writings. Marie von Clausewitz's connections and political activism provided her husband with insight and access into the highest circles of power. Finally, by editing and publishing *On War* she saw his life work fulfilled.

When Carl von Clausewitz unexpectedly died in the city of Breslau in 1831, his seminal work *On War* was just an unfinished manuscript. The military theorist had worked for more than fifteen years to create a comprehensive tenet on the changing warfare but envisioned further alterations and deepening insights. Indeed, he considered only the first chapter of Book I as complete. The difficult task of fulfilling his life's work and bringing to light in the best possible way the

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unfinished ideas now fell to Clausewitz's widow Marie, born Countess von Brühl. This required sifting through myriad pages, transcribing partially illegible drafts, and enlisting a small team of friends and scholars for proofreading. Despite Marie's grief, the first part of *On War* was published in remarkably quick fashion in 1832, and followed soon after by his remaining works.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in the long list of books, monographs, and dissertations examining Clausewitz's life and ideas, her relationship with the philosopher of war remains an understudied and underappreciated facet. There is no single scholarly article or biography exclusively examining Marie von Brühl's contribution, despite the fact that she saved and shaped Clausewitz's legacy, and played an instrumental role in his life. When it comes to studying women's roles and the home front, military history remains behind. But in this case, even if scholars have recognized the unusual extent of Carl and Marie von Clausewitz's intellectual partnership, they could study it based on only a few of her published letters and writings—insufficient sources for a detailed examination.

Fortunately, this gap may finally be closed. In July 2012, the Prussian Privy State Archives/Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz*) in Berlin received as a deposit the archive of the very old and wide-branched noble Buttlar family. Among the documents discovered by the archivists was the almost complete correspondence between the Clausewitz couple, including 283 of Marie's letters to Carl that were never published before. This significant discovery allows historians, at last, to examine in depth her influence and contribution. It provides further insight into Clausewitz's cultural and social milieu, the political processes that instigated his ideas, and the theorist's writing routine—all of which are crucial for understanding an unfinished text such as *On War*. In recent times, Marie von Clausewitz's role as editor also has come into question in connection with the debate on whether she might have been mistaken in declaring the undated note published in the preface of *On War* as written after the one from July 10, 1827. If the notes were actually composed in the reverse order, it means the military theorist left the manuscript in a much more complete state than previously assumed. While the correspondence lacks direct references on this issue, since it was written before Carl's death, a study of Marie's attitudes, understanding, and involvement provides clues about her decision-making process.

One thing the complete correspondence makes clear is that Clausewitz did not leave the manuscript of *On War* in the hands of Marie von Brühl by coincidence; it came as a result of their life-long intellectual partnership and her profound involvement with his life's work. Like the previously known letters, the 283 unpublished ones contain observations concerning events of the day, news of friends and family, and Marie's passionate love for Carl. Often written for his eyes only and five to six, sometimes even twelve and thirteen pages long, they contain enormous volumes of information and candid details about historic developments

1. After Marie von Clausewitz's unexpected death in 1836, Karl von der Gröben published the remaining two volumes of *Posthumous Works*.

and everyday life that could make them a great source for historians of gender and the early nineteenth century. For military historians, besides providing background concerning Clausewitz's personal life and intellectual endeavors (a curious enough subject), Marie demonstrated she was a shrewd observer of the Napoleonic Wars. She followed her husband on some of his campaigns and, while distancing herself from the battlefield, she remained close enough to visit Carl often during lulls in combat and remained ready to care for him in a worst-case scenario. Hence her letters reveal a unique and understudied view of warfare—that of the woman close to the bloodshed and combat.

The intimate correspondence between Marie and Carl von Clausewitz has never been lost, just forgotten for almost 200 years. Since the couple remained childless, the majority of their estate went to Marie's brother, Friedrich (Fritz) von Brühl and his wife Hedwig (the daughter of Clausewitz's close friend August Neithardt von Gneisenau). Fritz and Hedwig's youngest daughter, Franziska, was the first one who, according to the archivists in the Prussian Privy State Archive, attempted to arrange the papers and left notes on their protective jackets. Franziska von Brühl married the owner of the Venedien Manor (now in Poland), Ludwig von Lücken, and after her death the correspondence and other personal belongings went to their daughter Hedda. She married into the Buttlar family and, for over a century, the Clausewitz correspondence remained in their hands. Honoring these connections, the archivists in Berlin now have named the literary estate "Buttlar-Venedien."

After Helmuth von Moltke famously named *On War*, Homer, and the Bible as inspiration for his illustrious victories—and thus made the former a bestseller in Germany—the biographer Karl Schwartz received permission to look into the family archives.<sup>2</sup> In his book *The Life of General Carl von Clausewitz and Madam Marie von Clausewitz, born Countess von Brühl* from 1878, he published the majority of military theorist's letters, but only twenty-six of his wife's. It remains an open question whether Schwartz was uninterested in the countess's views or the family restricted access to the remaining 283 due to their often highly political content, bold remarks about then-still-living members of Prussian high society, occasional petty jealousies, and explicit references to intimacy and sex. Later editions of the Clausewitz's correspondence simply reprinted Schwartz's transcriptions without searching for the originals.<sup>3</sup> One letter written by Marie to her close friend Elise von Bernstorff immediately following Carl von Clausewitz's death is widely known.<sup>4</sup> Georg Heinrich Pertz and Hans Delbrück's biography

2. Karl Schwartz, *Das Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz und der Frau Marie von Clausewitz geb. Gräfin von Brühl*, in *Briefen, Tagebüchern, Aufsätzen und anderen Schriftstücken*, Band I (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1878), XIII.

3. Karl und Marie von Clausewitz, *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblätter*, ed. Karl Linnebach (Berlin: Volksverband der Bücherfreunde Wegweiser-Verlag, 1925); Karl und Marie von Clausewitz, *Ein Leben im Kampf für Freiheit und Reich*, ed. Otto Heuschele (Leipzig: H. Schaufuß, 1935).

4. Elise von Bernstorff, Geborene Gräfin Von Dernath, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit 1789 bis 1835. Aus Ihren Aufzeichnungen*, Band II (Berlin: Ernst Mittler und Sohn, 1899), 225-28.

of Neidhardt von Gneisenau also contains her complete correspondence with the famous war hero, who was a close friend of the Clausewitz couple.<sup>5</sup>

Although many of the letters in Prussian Privy State Archives are in poor condition, most are completely preserved. The occasional lack of an ending is the result of Marie's habit of writing on the envelope, the part of a letter that often was the first to disintegrate, get discarded, or be misplaced. In a handful of cases one might suspect that a family member destroyed pages due to long-kept secrets or harmful personal detail. Furthermore, Clausewitz meticulously kept his wife's letters, although they amassed to a bulky baggage during the ferocious Russian campaign and the Wars of German Liberation.

Even if Marie and Carl von Clausewitz's relationship has remained understudied, its peculiar character has been well known. Schwartz's very first biography bears both of their names. In modern times, Peter Paret asserted that Marie fostered within Carl a taste for Goethe's mature works and expanded his social circle.<sup>6</sup> The French philosopher Raymond Aron noted the appreciation for the art, music, and literature that Clausewitz developed after falling in love with the countess.<sup>7</sup> Maria Hartl remarked that Marie made Carl feel his way of thinking about the world was natural and acceptable.<sup>8</sup> Throughout their life together, the military theorist also worked mostly in his wife's presence and she supported him in his research. Sifting through the preserved Clausewitz papers, Werner Hahlweg observed that many of them contained passages written in Marie's clear handwriting.<sup>9</sup> The newly discovered correspondence, however, provides a more comprehensive analysis of her role in Clausewitz's life and work.

By the virtue of her pedigree and education, Marie von Brühl was well-positioned to play a momentous and prolific role in her time. She was born in 1779, a year earlier than her future husband. Marie's upbringing was distinctly different one from the humble home where Carl von Clausewitz grew up. His father had a dubious claim to nobility, rose only to lieutenant during the Seven Years' War, and later became a tax collector in the small garrison town of Burg bei Magdeburg. She was born in privilege as the granddaughter of Imperial Count Heinrich von Brühl, the notorious prime minister of Saxony and an intimate enemy of Frederick the Great. Raised by an enlightened, erudite, and loving father and an ambitious mother, Marie was an unusually well-educated woman for her

5. Georg Heinrich Pertz, Hans Delbrück, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen Neidhardt von Gneisenau*, Bd. III, IV, und V (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1869-1880).

6. Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State. The Man, His Theories, and His Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 103.

7. Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 17 and 37.

8. Maria Hartl, *Carl von Clausewitz. Persönlichkeit und Stil* (Emden: Kunst und Leben, 1956), 26.

9. Werner Hohlweg, "Das Clausewitzbild einst und jetzt," in Carl von Clausewitz, *Hinterlassene Werke. Vom Kriege. Neunzehnte Auflage*, ed. Werner Hahlweg (Bonn: Dümmler, 1980), 37-38.

era. Clausewitz occasionally expressed envy in his letters about the opportunities she had enjoyed in life.<sup>10</sup> Marie's father, Charles, served at the court of Frederick the Great's successor, Frederick Wilhelm II, as the governor to the crown prince, the future Frederick Wilhelm III.

The Brühls lived in close proximity to the Prussian royal family, and Marie benefited throughout her life from these intimate connections. She served as a lady-in-waiting for the queen mother, Frederika Louisa, and in this role met the young adjutant Carl von Clausewitz in 1803. Marie was also one of the closest friends of Princess Marianne, the politically active sister-in-law of Frederick Wilhelm III. For a couple of months before her marriage in 1810, Countess von Brühl served as senior lady-in-waiting for Princess Charlotte, the future Empress Alexandra Feodorovna of Russia. After Clausewitz's death, she became the chief lady-in-waiting for Princess Augusta, the wife of the future German Emperor William I.<sup>11</sup> In this capacity Marie also supervised the care and the education of the little prince who one day would be Emperor Frederick III; this was one of the highest and most prestigious positions a woman could achieve in Prussia.

Early on, she was a part of Berlin high society, interested in politics and art, and an avid reader of German classical literature. John Quincy Adams, the future U.S. president, his wife Louisa, and his brother Thomas Boylston Adams counted her and her family among their closest friends during Adams's tenure as ambassador in Berlin (1797-1801).<sup>12</sup> It was this air of intellectual sophistication and social influence that first drew the young lieutenant Carl von Clausewitz to the formidable countess. In a later letter, he admitted fantasizing about a friendship with one of the "bright" or "thoughtful" (*gehaltreich*) ladies he admired as an outsider at the Berlin court.<sup>13</sup> From all accounts, Marie von Brühl was far from beautiful but Clausewitz, remarkably, persisted in wooing her for years. As scholars have previously noted, it reveals something about the character and

10. Carl von Clausewitz's letter from 28 January 1807, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 82-85.

11. Paret mistakenly designated Marie as *Oberhofmeisterin* for Princess Marianne. The error is based on of the concurrence of names—both princesses were called in public after their husbands, who were both named Wilhelm. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 105. In recent texts about Empress Augusta, Emperor Frederick III, or nineteenth-century women's history in Prussia, Marie von Clausewitz has been correctly named as the *Oberhofmeisterin* at the court of Augusta between 1832-35. See: Justyna M. Krauze, *Vom letzten Preussen zum deutschen Kaiser: das Bild der Hohenzollernkaiser in Tagebüchern und Berichten ihrer Zeitgenossen* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2004), 48; Hans-Joachim Neumann, *Friedrich III.: Der 99-Tage-Kaiser* (Berlin: Be.Bra, 2006), 13; Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert (1780-1914)*, (Berlin: Gryuter & Co., 1989), 500.

12. Thomas Boylston Adams, *Berlin and the Prussian Court in 1798. Journal of Thomas Boylston Adams*, ed. Victor Hugo Paltsits (New York: The New York Public Library, 1916), 12- 14, 18-19, 26; Luisa Catherine Adams, *A Traveled First Lady. Writings of Luisa Catherine Adams*, ed. Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2014), 52, 69-70.

13. Carl's letter to Marie from July 3, 1807, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 128.

ambition of a poor junior officer lacking a pedigree that he had the audacity to court the daughter of an imperial count and an intimate of the royal family.<sup>14</sup>

On his way to the disastrous Battle of Jena-Auerstadt in 1806, Carl wrote long, passionate letters to Marie at every opportunity. The young lieutenant served as aide-de-camp to Prussian Prince August, and they both were captured near Prenzlau. The unpublished correspondence in the Buttlar-Venedien Family Archive begins in early 1807 with Clausewitz's departure for France as a prisoner of war. Probably because Marie was concerned the correspondence might be a subject of French inquiry, it contains few candid details about the situation in Berlin during the Napoleonic occupation, the mood in the patriotic circles in which she moved, or news about the court—by that time forced to escape to East Prussia. Instead the countess wrote long passages passionately confessing her love to Carl and forging plans for their future together, but also laying the basis for their intellectual partnership.

She never made a secret of her intentions to play an active role in Clausewitz's life. "No one observes you with more interest than [I do] and no one else could be so completely convinced of your merits. It's certainly no flattery but my most intimate conviction when I say that I believe you are capable of the greatest things," she wrote.<sup>15</sup> Despite her education and sophistication, Marie never seemed inclined to pursue an independent writing career. It was not just the hostility a woman writer would surely encounter, but also because she deemed her own writing skills insufficient to express all the complexities of her mind and soul. An avid reader of German classics, she cherished their sophisticated thoughtfulness and fine-tuned emotions. Seeing Carl as the more talented of them, Marie encouraged him to work on his texts and gently criticized her beloved when he failed to measure up to the standard. Ever striving, Clausewitz eagerly welcomed her attention and declared in early 1807 that whatever quality or skill she deemed necessary, he would "acquire it soon in your proximity and under the influence of your whole noble being."<sup>16</sup>

What he did not expect was the enthusiasm and perseverance with which Marie von Brühl would embrace the task. By that time Clausewitz surely was aware of Emmanuel Kant's theory on aesthetic judgment, but from the philosophy lectures at the War College rather than on reading *Critique of Judgment*. Under Marie von Brühl's influence, however, he started to develop aesthetic taste and knowledge. Although lacking academic education and training, she was a talented artist and passionate art scholar; unfortunately her only known work today is the portrait of General August Neidhardt von Gneisenau from 1816 now displayed at the German Historical Museum in Berlin. On the eve of Carl's trip to Paris in 1807, she encouraged him to visit museums and demanded a detailed report on

14. This point was made both by Karl Schwartz and Peter Paret. See: Schwartz, *Clausewitz* I, 172, and Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 109.

15. Marie's letter to Carl from September 16-17, 1807, in Prussian Privy State Archives/ Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (GStaPK), VI Hauptabteilung Familien Archiv und Nachlässe (VI. HA, FA) Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 56.

16. Carl's letter to Marie from January 28, 1807, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 83.

his impressions of art works—especially her favorite, Raphael. Clausewitz tried to avoid the subject by writing that Raphael's paintings might have been best situated in a church and added casual gossip about their price, naively thinking this would suffice, only to receive a long lecture from Marie on how he should not speak superficially about the great masterpieces but try to penetrate their ideas. In his next letter Clausewitz, half joking, wrote that he felt like a general, who despite all his cautiousness, had been lured into enemy territory and then suddenly discovered that "a hostile army was at his rear."<sup>17</sup>

He persevered in his aesthetic studies, although later writings suggest that his taste remained rather conventional. What really interested Clausewitz was not art *per se* but the inner psychological mechanisms of creation and perception, and he used the gained insight remarkably often to explain, in simpler and visually more compelling terms, the complex nature of war. "Architects and painters know precisely what they are about as long as they deal with material phenomena. Mechanical and optical structures are not subject to dispute. But when they come to the aesthetics of their work, when they aim at a particular effect on the mind or on the senses, the rules dissolve into nothing but vague ideas," he wrote in Book II of *On War*. In the same way, Clausewitz suggested, moral factors in war were difficult to pinpoint but any military action should take them into account and deal with them as well.<sup>18</sup> In Book VIII, Chapter II, he explained the difference between absolute and real war, and made clear the need to understand the theory about the former in order to be able to wage the latter. "A principle that underlies our thoughts and actions will undoubtedly lend them a certain tone and character, though the immediate causes of our actions may have different origins," Clausewitz wrote—and then compared it to an art technique: "just as the tone a painter gives to his canvas is determined by the color of the underpainting."<sup>19</sup>

The uneasy personality of Baron vom Stein and the circumstances surrounding Stein's dismissal in the late 1808 led to another prolonged epistolary debate between the two lovers. Marie von Brühl belonged to Prussian statesman's close social circle and was a great admirer of his ambitious reform program, believing that it would strengthen Prussia for the future fight against Napoleon. Her mother, Sophie von Brühl, strongly disapproved of the possibility of marriage to a man with lesser social standing, and enlisted Stein to find a better suitor for her daughter. After his return from France, Clausewitz found himself at the heart of the reform movement when he received a new appointment at the bureau of his old mentor from the War College, now *de facto* Prussian Minister of War, Gerhard von Scharnhorst. The court and the government continued to reside in Königsberg and there Carl tried to become closer to Minister Stein but was

17. The issue was debated in Marie's letters from April 26 and May 15, 1807, in VI. HA, FA Buttler-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 49 and 50; Carl's letters from March 29, April 8, April 28, 1807, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 102, 108-109, 113-114.

18. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 136.

19. *Ibid.*, 581.

disappointed when the latter still suggested as a possible husband for Marie the politician and later Minister of Interior Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten. These events, however, did not shake her admiration for the statesman.

When, under pressure from Napoleon, Stein was dismissed in 1808, she wrote to Carl that this could be considered as “almost the greatest misfortune” to come upon Prussia at that moment.<sup>20</sup> Clausewitz had a more restrained assessment, pointing to the minister’s impulsive character and political weaknesses. French agents had captured one of Stein’s letters where he openly expressed his hopes for a popular uprising against Napoleon. Carl wrote to Marie that he too highly valued the state minister’s ideas and energy and did not hold Stein responsible for his own political demise, but added that the baron was “not as I imagined him, firm and never-changing as a diamond.”<sup>21</sup>

The countess found the criticism of the statesman’s character at such a pivotal moment unacceptable: “I admit that perhaps one really could have behaved completely differently in these latter events, but then it would positively have required completely different people” (her emphasis).<sup>22</sup> For Marie von Brühl, a forceful character like Stein stayed above and beyond normal measures, and his personal failings that others wished away, in her understanding, were the essential source of this forcefulness. The apparent contradiction between flawed character and the need to rise to the occasion, in Marie’s view, was extinguished because only extraordinary persons could step outside of convention and bring change; average people simply declined to challenge the rules.

Debating another hero of their time—the leader of unsuccessful rebellion of 1809, Ferdinand von Schill—she expressed her notions about extraordinary personalities in similar terms. Both Brühl and Schill visited Luise von Voß’s patriotic salon almost daily and thus knew each other well. In the spring of 1809, Austria had opened again hostilities against Napoleon and hoped for support from the other German states. Inspired by the radical patriotic circles, on April 28, Major Schill defied Frederick Wilhelm’s policy of non-intervention and led his troops out of Berlin into an open revolt against the French. The bold act struck at the heart of the Prussian state, where the reform movement was just starting to create new citizens from old subjects of the crown. In the wake of Schill’s daring act, as one who knew him, Marie found herself besieged by shocked and excited friends and acquaintances. Many, even if they hated the French, were unprepared to break their oath to the king; yet the passionate, radical patriots saw Schill’s act as necessary in a moment of great need.

“What you as a military man will say about this daring act, I don’t know; but I cannot abstain from paying [Schill] the greatest respect,” Marie wrote to Carl. “The good Schill! [...] That those who cannot rise above the usual and conventional

20. The quote is from the already published letter written by Marie on October 4, 1808, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 171.

21. Carl’s letter from October 13, 1807, in *ibid.*, 173.

22. Marie’s letter from December 15, 1808, in VI. HA, FA Buttler-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr.79; this letter is partially published in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 191-2.



find him condemnable, I understand very well [...] but in such extraordinary times only the extraordinary can help, and it is much better to be saved by daring determination than to go down according to the rules [...] By the way, despite all his buoyancy I judge our hero as anything but reckless [...].<sup>23</sup>

The sober remark at the end might have let Carl agree with her this time, since Carl also admired the rebellious hussar but did not see him as an extraordinary person beyond the rules or give his revolt a real chance of success: “Schill’s act inspires great respect for him in me; because it speaks of exceptional strength of mind. Notwithstanding that I, in his place, would never have begun the way he did, he does not appear as a bad man in my eyes because of it.”<sup>24</sup> In Marie’s mind, the romanticist notion of the bold, radical idealist driven by passion and following an extraordinary fate became intertwined with the all-too-present frustration of Prussia’s inability to assert itself against Napoleon. Carl, on the other hand, analyzed first Stein’s controversial personality and deeds, and then Schill’s possibilities for a military victory in more somber manner.

This epistolary debate is a reminder how popular ideas concerning the *Kraftmensch* (man of power) dominated Carl and Marie’s cultural surroundings but also that he, seeing it colliding with reality, remained rather skeptical and later sought to develop his own concept of *genius*. Whole passages from *On War* are reflections on this debate about what constituted an extraordinary person and whether a volatile spirit could fulfill an exceptional mission. In the chapter on military genius in Book I, Clausewitz underscored that, in general, under the term “genius” one should understand both outstanding “intellect and temperament” that revealed themselves in “exceptional achievements.” He analyzed extensively the role of temperament, defining it as “an emotion which serves to balance the passionate feelings in strong characters without destroying them, and it is this balance alone that assures the dominance of the intellect.” Hence Clausewitz’s conclusion about what constituted an exceptional being ran in the opposite direction of the romanticist notion of the *Kraftmensch*: “Therefore we would argue that a strong character is one *that will not be unbalanced by the most powerful emotions*” (his emphasis).<sup>25</sup>

The intellectually intensive exchange and its echo in Clausewitz’s later writings indicate that Brühl’s letters should be studied as the context, or even the catalyst of his thought process. After all, the information and ideas shared in Carl’s correspondence often came as answers to Marie’s questions or musings. She demanded to hear his opinion on every new political or military development, challenged him to search for comprehensive descriptions, and complained if he failed to write extensively. Marie insisted that Carl share everything with her and encouraged him to reveal openly his thoughts about the events to which he was an immediate witness—circumstances that explain why Clausewitz’s letters to her

23. The quote is from the already published letter written by Marie on April 29, 1809, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 227.

24. Carl’s letter from May 10, 1809, in *ibid.*, 231.

25. Clausewitz, *On War*, 100 and 106.

have become the major source of information about the roots of his ideas and about how they subsequently developed. Most tellingly, he called Marie von Brühl “the dearest friend of my spirit,” similar to the description of his mentor Gerhard von Scharnhorst as the “father and friend of my spirit.”<sup>26</sup> From the point of view of modern scholars, her letters are the missing puzzle pieces that, once found and put in their proper places, create a more colorful and comprehensive picture of Clausewitz’s life and ideas.

With the years, the intellectual bond between the couple only grew stronger. Marie intuitively understood the initial process of crafting ideas together as crucial for their relationship. On June 23, 1831, Clausewitz requested, for example, that Marie write a report on the history of Luxemburg because of the duchy’s vital part in the unfolding Belgian Revolution. When she sent him a generic text, he responded with disappointment that he would have preferred one compiled by her because it would have been “more thorough.” While in this instance the military theorist referred to the report as for personal use, the casual nature of his request reveals that Marie’s research support not unusual. “I ask: How many men could give a similar assignment to their wives?,” he wrote, highlighting the extraordinary partnership, and added that their “bond of ideas” made it easy to share his thoughts with her.<sup>27</sup>

Even if from a modern-day perspective Clausewitz’s reliance on his wife’s intellectual partnership might appear exploitative, for her it was a way to participate and even make her mark on the great public debates of the time. In 1815, describing meeting Goethe for the first time and her disappointment of the poet’s disinclination to actively support the patriotic fervors for stronger political bond between various parts of Germany, Marie displayed a healthy self-confidence but also an understanding of her restricted role as a woman in early nineteenth century: “Especially at some of the twists in the conversation, I quite wished to have you there, so I could hear our collaborative opinion expressed with your spirit and your eloquence because I, of course, did not have the audacity to take it upon such opponents” (her emphasis).<sup>28</sup>

As the debate surrounding Schill’s unsuccessful rebellion revealed, in 1809 Marie von Brühl had become the more radical partner in their relationship. Raised at court, keeping an enormous network of correspondents, and skilled in politics behind the scenes, she sensed the slightest change in balance and cunningly navigated complex situations. Despite the enormous disappointment following Schill’s debacle, and encouraged by the Habsburg victories against French at Aspern, Clausewitz wished to transfer to Austrian service and fight against Napoleon. He started gathering the necessary letters of recommendation and, since the desired position—an officer on the general staff—could be easily achieved with assistance of the Austrian ambassador in Berlin, Johann Baron von Wessenberg, he tasked Marie with establishing contact.

26. Carl’s letter from November 5, 1808, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 179-180.

27. Carl’s letters from June 23, June 27, and July 9, 1831, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 455, 459, 463.

28. Marie’s letter from July 31, 1815, in VI. HA, FA Buttler-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 211.

Whether she would talk directly with Wessenberg on his behalf or instigate some of her friends to do so, Clausewitz wrote, "I have to leave it to your discretion."<sup>29</sup> Sensing the weakness in the anti-Napoleonic camp, Marie von Brühl delayed the conversation until the Austrian cause seemed definitely lost.<sup>30</sup> She remained a German patriot but did not lose sight of the most important personal goal. A hasty transfer to a foreign service might have jeopardized Clausewitz's rise through the ranks and their sincere wish to marry as soon as possible.

During this prolonged engagement, another important and far-reaching trait of their relationship emerged. Clausewitz could be an eloquent speaker but preferred to engage in disputes when the opposing view could be defended with integrity and eloquence. Clausewitz's spirit, as his long-time friend Carl von Gröben described it, was like the gentle "mimosa" flower—it opened up when it encountered trust and closed when it encountered suspicion.<sup>31</sup> Conversely, Marie had the "natural gift," as she expressed it, "to accommodate myself to other people" and she was, at least in public, rather charitable toward their mistakes and weaknesses; her more easy-going manner saved her from disappointments and reclusiveness.<sup>32</sup>

She tried to instill in her beloved this rather phlegmatic approach; especially regarding Stein, she sought to separate the personal frustration from the political alliance: "Your witty conversation with my friend pleased me as well, because, even if I unfortunately have to fear that we cannot expect from him any beneficial influence on our fate, I am still delighted by any act of rapprochement that happens between you."<sup>33</sup> In the case of Stein, Carl indeed came to value his ideas and energy despite the initial disappointment. Yet to allow in his close circle people whose character or abilities he did not admire remained something hard for Clausewitz to master, and with the years even more so. For him, debate and building elaborate arguments happened increasingly on paper.

The countess, on the other hand, could sometimes be ruthlessly pragmatic in her approach. In 1814, when Clausewitz had to serve with some of the most vehement critics of Scharnhorst's personality and military reforms, Marie advised him to swallow his feelings of anger. "Certainly such concerns of the heart should not play a role when it comes to practical issues," she wrote.<sup>34</sup> In the end, it would be this ability of hers to overlook weaknesses and tolerate adversity on which

29. Carl's letters from June 15-19 and 26, 1809, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 246 and 249.

30. She explained to Carl, for instance, that the delay was caused by her concerns that the ambassador might not react well if approached by a woman; yet he was actually a close friend of the equally outspoken Caroline von Berg. Marie's letter from July 18-20, 1809, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 106.

31. Carl Graf von der Gröben, "Vorrede zum Neunten Band," in Carl von Clausewitz, *Hinterlassene Werke. Neunter Band* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1837), XV.

32. Marie's letter from October 22, 1808, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 176.

33. Marie's letter from November 24-26, 1808, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr.75; this letter is partially published in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 186.

34. Marie's letter from March 15, 1814, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 192.

Clausewitz relied when he decided not to publish *On War* himself. He must have grown certain that his wife could handle criticism and see his life's work to a successful end, even in the increasingly hostile atmosphere of the Restoration so difficult for moderates and women to navigate. Clausewitz's decision that *On War* would be published only after his death had a significant impact on its quality, since he could think and write without time constraints and the pressure of public opinion, allowing him to be honest and uncompromising.

In 1810, Clausewitz was promoted to major, served as the chief of Scharnhorst's office, and gained enough recognition among patriotic circles that Sophie von Brühl could not ignore his quest for her daughter's hand any longer. After five long years of engagement, Marie and Carl finally became a family. While no letters from their first years of marriage remain, those from subsequent periods indicate that the newlyweds kept a busy social calendar. They welcomed many of the famous reformers and patriots at their home, including the future commander of the legendary volunteer Lützow Corp, Ludwig Adolf Wilhelm von Lützow. They also grew closer to August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, the hero of the siege of Kolberg in 1807 and future chief-of-staff for the victorious General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. Marie valued human connections as a way to stay informed in the sycophantic Prussian court and to place her husband in the vicinity of important individuals. In her mind, politics was a highly personal business—Madam von Clausewitz built friendships with the wives of prominent men and became a welcomed guest in their salons. She helped governesses find employment, and they briefed her *tête-à-tête* about family affairs; she granted small favors and in return received confidential information about the cabinet's future moves.

The domestic bliss lasted only a short while because in 1812 Clausewitz was among the patriotic officers who, exasperated by Frederick Wilhelm's continuing alliance with France, broke ranks and entered Russian service. Despite the pressure from patriotic circles and the dreadful prospect of sending his troops to fight for Napoleon in Russia, the Prussian king did not want to switch sides openly. Clausewitz's biographer Peter Paret wondered why Marie, otherwise such a skilled courtier, did not seek to dissuade Carl from an action that clearly would bring upon him Frederick Wilhelm's lasting anger.<sup>35</sup> The newly found correspondence reveals that when Clausewitz left Berlin, the couple thought of this not as a temporary solution but as a permanent step toward lasting service in Russia. Marie poignantly captured the mood thus: "It really is time to build a hut in remote lands."<sup>36</sup>

In the spring of 1812, Napoleon appeared still strong and the continuation of the Russian campaign for years was the rather plausible outcome. For some time Marie had entertained thoughts of traveling together with Carl, so they could settle down in Saint Petersburg before the war began. The uncertainty of travel

35. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 103.

36. Marie's letter from 12-13 May 1812, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 115.

and Clausewitz's appointment in Russian service led to the decision for her to stay behind, at least temporarily. Marie bitterly regretted this choice soon enough, especially because she had to wait for news and letters from Carl months at the time: "Had I been able to accompany you forthwith, I would have been spared at least this headache."<sup>37</sup> For the better part of 1812, Madam von Clausewitz searched for acquaintances and information about houses, prices, and living conditions in the Russian capital. The finality of their decision in 1812 would also explain why, in his letter of resignation, Carl committed a legal *faux pas* by failing to mention his intention to enter Russian service and ask for permission from the Frederick Wilhelm to do so.<sup>38</sup> If he did not think he would ever serve in Prussia again, he could bluntly disregard the protocol.

In Berlin, the resignation and the transfer of some thirty officers to a service under Tsar Alexander I led to a political storm. Despite downplaying the impact in her letters, Marie decided to weather it first at the estate of her friend Luise von Voß in Mecklenburg and, after a short stop in Berlin, quietly moved for an extended period of time to Bohemia, then a part of the Austrian Empire. By the summer of 1812, anti-Napoleonic passions in Berlin were brewing, and Marie actually found many sympathetic souls. Clausewitz's transfer to the Russian army made him, and by extension his wife, popular among the Prussian patriotic elite: "In general, all our friends wish that you keep them in good memory, especially Mademoiselle Bischoffswerder, Julie [von der] Goltz, Luise [von Voß], aunt Heinrich and so on. Even the old [General] Lestocq recently asked me to send greetings to you, to my great surprise," Marie wrote on June 29, 1812.<sup>39</sup>

As the letters suggest, Madam von Clausewitz's influential backers at the court might have been one of the main reasons why Frederick Wilhelm III and the reactionary circles never really set in motion their vengeful plans to convict Clausewitz for treason. He had no estate of his own and a potential penalty could be imposed only on his wife's; yet to punish a member of Prussia's high nobility, given the Brühl family's stature, would have been a controversial step. In the decades to come, Frederick Wilhelm III also demonstrably treated Marie differently than her husband. "When the king saw me, he crossed the room, greeted me amicably, and more or less apologized for not yet having been able to receive me; but then

37. The quote and the reports about her research are from Marie's letters from May 12-13 and June 1-7, 1812, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 115 and 118.

38. For more about Clausewitz's letter of resignation see Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 220.

39. Marie's letter from June 29, 1812, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 120. Anton Wilhelm von L'Estocq was a famous Prussian general, among others commanding the Prussian troops in the Battle of Eylau in 1807. "Aunt Heinrich" was Laura von Brühl, the widow of Marie's uncle, Albert Heinrich von Brühl. Julie von der Goltz was a lady-in-waiting at the court. Mademoiselle von Bischoffswerder, a lady-in-waiting as well, was the closest confidant of the crown prince, the future Frederick Wilhelm IV. See: Christa Diemel, *Adelige Frauen im bürgerlichen Jahrhundert. Hofdamen, Stiftsdamen, Salondamen, 1800-1870* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 1998), 128.

did not talk further with me. However, he spoke for a good ten minutes with my wife, who stood next to me, [and] at that about politics,” Clausewitz complained in his diary in 1830.<sup>40</sup>

Soon after the political balance shifted once more when, in February 1813, overwhelmed by Napoleon’s defeat in Russia and the popular support for alliance with the tsar, Frederick Wilhelm III finally switched sides again. Clausewitz re-entered Berlin as a victor in Russian uniform but his foreign-service experience was rather disappointing; now he sought to rejoin the Prussian army. Napoleon’s defeat in Russia fanned the flames of anti-French sentiments but many did not feel strong enough to oppose him openly. After the Battle of Lüneburg, the first major French defeat by the newly forged Russian-Prussian alliance on April 2, 1813, Marie wrote to Carl about the tangible relief on the streets of Berlin when the news came. “[News of General von] Dörnberg’s victory was posted on all streets corners the day before yesterday [...] and not in the dry newspaper style but in an avid, exalted one. Now is indeed a different time from when Calm is the most important civic duty was written on all the street corners” (her emphasis).<sup>41</sup> The enthusiasm and the growing polarization in Prussia meant, however, that the rules of war changed as well and now its population would not be treated by the French as an indifferent mass anymore. Marie, as the wife of a senior Russian officer and herself a prominent member of the patriotic circle, came to fear retribution.

Concerned about a possible French attack upon Berlin, together with her mother and close friend, Caroline von der Marwitz, Madam von Clausewitz left the capital in the beginning of May. In search of a concealed location and trying to avoid the French army, the women traveled southeast with the goal of reaching either Tetschen (now Decín, in the Czech Republic) or Prague. They discovered the roads, the inns, and the houses of their friends over-crowded with fellow refugees. Marie and her mother finally arrived in Landeshut (spelled in the correspondence as “Landshut,” now Kamienna Góra in Poland), a small town close to the Austrian border that appeared as a safer haven. “We have been reassured that the mountains surrounding us here and the close proximity of the border would make Landshut a reliable shelter for at least some time [...],” Marie wrote to Carl on May 26. “Madam von Gneisenau, who lives only a few steps away, secured for me the comfort that I will receive news of you.”<sup>42</sup> He was twenty miles away in Blücher’s headquarters in Schweidnitz (Swidnica) and answered hastily on May 31, advising her to leave the area because a battle and troop movements might occur in the vicinity; still he urged the women to remain calm. “If one could remove oneself in moments like this from the army, I would come personally to Landshut to calm you down,” he wrote.<sup>43</sup>

40. Carl von Clausewitz, “Tagebuch Clausewitz’s vom 7. September 1830 bis zum 9. März 1831,” in Schwartz, *Das Leben des Generals*, II, 302.

41. Marie’s letter from April 8, 1813, in VI. HA, FA Buttler-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 143.

42. Marie’s letter from May 26, 1813, in VI. HA, FA Buttler-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 153.

43. Carl’s letter from May 31, 1813, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 337-38.

The condition of Sophie von Brühl, who had fallen sick, made a prompt departure impossible. Yet Clausewitz, always soldier's soldier, abandoned the military camp only after Gneisenau kindly arranged for a short leave. He travelled to see his wife in Landeshut just for one night.<sup>44</sup>

If Madam von Clausewitz approached the battlefield in the first part of 1813 rather briefly and incidentally, in the fall 1813 campaign and those of spring of 1814 and 1815 she actively followed her husband's movements. The long separation and the torturous stretches without news during the Russian campaign led Marie to forsake the comfort and peace of the hinterland. To her delight, Carl not only agreed but found solace in having her in close proximity, so he could see her in the breaks between battles and movement.<sup>45</sup> It was apparent that Clausewitz, now chief of staff of the Russo-German Legion, served in an insignificant theater of operations in the north. "Until now we haven't had one real battle, and we have avoided them on purpose because we already found a way to keep the enemy at bay or at least to chain a heavy weight to its plans," he wrote to Marie on September 1. "The balance of power and other circumstances make such an approach a duty, and if someone calls us idle and indecisive and believes the reasons for that can be found in the character of [our commanding general] Count Wallmoden, you may brazenly think him an incompetent judge."<sup>46</sup>

Clausewitz's careful explanation and anticipation of criticism suggests that he expected Marie to disseminate information about the real conditions under which the Army of the North operated. By that point, she possessed an impressive network of correspondents—besides the prominent friendships with the royal princesses, Stein, and Gneisenau, she regularly wrote to her extended family both in Prussia and Austria, and to countless other spouses of officers searching for news about the war and loved ones.

After Napoleon's return from exile on Elba, Marie remained together with other wives closer to the French border. The correspondence from the Campaign of 1815 contains many gory details about the high human price of Napoleonic warfare and the experience of the women staying in the rear.

Düsseldorf, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1815

I actually have no right to complain about your silence, dear friend, because I too have not written you for quite a while, but I had so much to do recently that I did not know where my mind was[.] I cared for the sick, comforted the unhappy, visited the wounded [...] Poor [Madam] Stülpnagel was so shaken by three deaths in her family that she learned about all at once and without any preparation so that we feared she would fall quite seriously ill. Poor [Madam] Natzmer also occupied my attention, she finally has certainty regarding her fate, her husband is really dead and died a horrible death[.] He was badly wounded near Fleurus already on [June] 15<sup>th</sup> and fell into the

44. Marie's letter from June 2, 1813, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 156.

45. Marie's letter from August 28, 1813, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 175.

46. Carl's letter from September 1, 1813, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 349.

hands of the French who stripped him naked and left him lying in a remote abandoned hut; when the Prussians returned to the area on the 19<sup>th</sup> one of his soldiers found him in that condition, he had been languishing the whole time without his wounds being dressed and without food but was still fully conscious[.]<sup>47</sup> He squeezed the soldier's hand, charged him with saying his last farewell to his wife and gave up the ghost. The poor woman knows all these horrifying details, she is very sad, but every gesture of sympathy seems pleasing and comforting to her so I visit her often.<sup>48</sup>

Swept by patriotic enthusiasm but left to wait for news in the rear and without daily tasks to keep their minds and bodies occupied, the women became volunteers at the local military hospitals. Unlike the other wives, Marie von Clausewitz did not have children to care for and devoted most of her time to the wounded soldiers. Yet, as her account revealed, the idea of noble women nursing injured soldiers and supporting the doctors was quite novel and controversial. It would be almost forty years later when, during the Crimean War (1853-56), Florence Nightingale laid the foundations for professional nursing.

Düsseldorf, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1815

Forgive me, dear friend, when I express my deepest thanks for the two lovely letters in only a few words today. I have been very busy in the military hospital today, much as I was yesterday and the day before yesterday; and hence am quite at the moment and actually desire to sleep rather than to write [...] Our work is becoming more and more organized and we have really come to enjoy it, and I hope the doctors will not look at us with suspicion any longer, the way they did in the first few days when they seemed to see our visits as nothing more than insults directed against them out of distrust. We finally got them to make their own lists of the badly wounded and determine which special refreshments may be given to them, and we have taken over that distribution to ensure it is carried out diligently and on time. Admittedly, [the work] entails some really painful sights but it is also a great joy to be of at least some use [...] Only yesterday three hundred arrived, among them many who were badly wounded.<sup>49</sup>

The correspondence from 1815 provides interesting clues about Clausewitz's writing routine. It concerns an early version of another important text, *On the Life and Character of Scharnhorst*, finished during Clausewitz's time in Coblenz (1815-1818), when the military theorist also famously started working on *On War*.

Cologne, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1815

I dared to look in your papers for the essay on Scharnhorst you started, partly to read it thoroughly once more, partly to share it with Dohna as you had allowed me to do; but I couldn't find any decent beginning to it and must almost fear that one sheet of paper is missing [.]<sup>50</sup> To find it, I sifted through all the papers that I received

47. On the eve of Battle of Ligny.

48. Marie's letter from July 4, 1814, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 205.

49. Marie's letter from July 10, 1814, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 206.

50. Julie von Dohna-Schlobitten was the daughter of Scharnhorst.



from you, but to no avail. If this essay already had an introduction other than the rather fragmentary one identified merely by [the word] *Intellect* in the margin without mentioning S.'s name, then something must be missing [.]. And if so I ask you urgently to look whether that sheet did not chance end up in your briefcase and to send it to me, it would be such a pity if some of it were to be lost; but it also seems possible to me that you haven't written an actual beginning yet but only sketched your thoughts as they emerged.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, in the preserved letters, there is no answer to Marie's concerns. For obvious reasons, he seldom wrote from the battlefield; some of his correspondence was also lost. Marie's unsuccessful search in his papers was not unusual, and throughout the years she complained extensively about similar situations where her husband misplaced important letters and even a military map that he needed as a staff officer. Clausewitz's disorganized streak explains the circumstances almost twenty years later when, after her husband's death, Marie prepared his seminal work, *On War*, for publication. As she described, her brother Fritz von Brühl discovered the final revisions of Book I only after "careful[ly] checking and sorting the material."<sup>52</sup>

The story about the Scharnhorst manuscript also reveals that Marie knew or believed she knew well its content ("to read it thoroughly once more") but was not involved in the actual writing. Hence, she wondered about the missing beginning or whether the pages in her possession were only sketches of thoughts. Together with Marie and Carl's declared love for lengthy deliberations, this suggests that for the most part the military theorist presented, debated, and synthesized his ideas in the presence of his wife and only after that put them on paper. When he could not find a formidable opponent, as Madam von Clausewitz playfully wrote, the military theorist simply conducted lengthy soliloquys.<sup>53</sup> She therefore either listened to or vigorously debated, but was definitely acquainted with Clausewitz's ideas although often without actually, physically seeing what was written in his manuscripts. In 1831, Marie made a similar statement, noting that she had recognized in an anonymous newspaper article Carl's thesis and writing style but could not be sure of its authorship since she had not witnessed the text's composition. She therefore asked her husband whether her guess was correct.<sup>54</sup>

These clues concerning Clausewitz's writing routine are significant as an explanation about the circumstances of editing and publishing *On War*. In the preface to the book Marie wrote that "we shared everything," so "a task of this

51. Marie's letter from May 16, 1815, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 200.

52. Marie von Clausewitz, "Preface by Marie von Clausewitz to the Posthumous Edition of Her Husband's Works, Including *On War*," Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 67.

53. Marie's letter from May 20-21, 1812, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 116.

54. Marie's letter from August 2, 1831, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 298. The article in question was *Anonymous Letter on the Polish Insurrection*. The letter is partially published and translated in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 418-419.

kind could not occupy my beloved husband without at the same time becoming thoroughly familiar to me.” She seemingly contradicts herself a couple of passages later, however, by describing the tedious process of final revisions’ discovery (i.e., if she was so familiar with Clausewitz’s work, it would be expected that she knew immediately where to find the corrections).<sup>55</sup> The contradiction can be resolved only if one assumes Marie was involved in the deliberations and research without always following what her husband put on paper. These circumstances further gave her the conviction and authority later on to authenticate the revisions her brother found buried as indeed the last ones her husband had envisioned.

When Napoleon’s Hundred Days were over, Carl and Marie Clausewitz went to Coblenz, where he assumed the position chief-of-staff for the General Command of Rhine led by Gneisenau. In that probably happiest period of their lives, Carl started working on his theory of war. In late 1818, he was appointed as the administrative director of the War College and received the rank of major general; the couple spent the next decade in Berlin. The fairly trivial official duties did not match Clausewitz’s drive, and he spent most of the time working on his studies, usually in Marie’s drawing room.<sup>56</sup>

In the decade after 1815, the couple spent most of their time together and hence, unfortunately for scholars, they exchanged few letters. In this period Marie von Clausewitz’s outspokenness became more evident to their friends and contemporaries. A French agent reporting on the Prussian army described him as vehemently anti-French and even refusing to speak French. “His wife, whose opinions were even more extreme than his, encouraged him for a long time in that attitude,” added the report.<sup>57</sup> Her close friend Elise von Bernstorff described her as “our dear politically rather passionate Marie” and captured in her memoirs an occasion where she debated with Elise’s husband (Foreign Minister Bernstorff) the Greek Revolution so fervently that she, Elise admitted becoming “almost worried.”<sup>58</sup> Marie von Clausewitz’s political activity was far from harmless or irrelevant since, one can infer from the memoir, she tried to convince the man responsible for Prussia’s foreign policy of the rebellion’s virtue and positive impact on the world, and that during the uprising’s most crucial stage, when it badly needed international support.

Remarkably, Clausewitz never expressed any dissatisfaction or tried to dampen his wife’s outspoken political activism. Quite the contrary; throughout the years, he relied on her connections and her ability to navigate the public sphere. Yet while Marie and Carl lived, citizenship and politics became increasingly interconnected with military service and masculinity. To energize the masses to fight for Prussia, the state granted them more political and economic rights; after the Napoleonic Wars, the men demanded the fulfillment of the promises because they had

55. Marie von Clausewitz, “Preface,” 65 and 67.

56. Schwartz, *Das Leben des Generals*, II, 248.

57. As quoted in Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 325.

58. Bernstorff, *Bild aus der Zeit 1789 bis 1835* II, 23–24 and 184.

defended the state. In this discourse, politics became a sphere closed to women. Despite describing the manliest of all activities, however, in *On War* Clausewitz paradoxically left out any explicit masculine rhetoric of honor, glory, or sacrifice and wrote in sober philosophical language.

This has not remained unnoticed by gender historians, who have argued that by the time he wrote his seminal work, masculinity had shaped the discourse of politics and war so firmly that the military theorist did not need to evoke it explicitly.<sup>59</sup> In the context of Marie's unabashed political activism, this conclusion appears less certain. Clausewitz did not envision female suffrage, women assuming political posts, or even women serving in the military; but it would be hard to argue that he understood politics as a sphere exclusively male and divorced from any female influence. One trait pointing to the continuing relevance of *On War* to this day is its somber and realistic language free of gender-loaded terms.

When in 1830 Clausewitz left his position at the War College to head the II Artillery Inspection in Breslau (nowadays Wrocław in Poland) and then, after the November Uprising in Poland, to become the chief of staff of the newly formed Army of Observation led by Gneisenau, the correspondence between the spouses resumed. Marie cared for her sick mother in Berlin and continued to do what she did best: keep her husband informed about the political developments in the capital.

In August, Gneisenau died from cholera in Posen (now Poznań in Poland). Clausewitz hoped to inherit the position but General Karl Friedrich von dem Knesebeck, a renowned conservative, was appointed as the commander of the Army of Observation. Ever the shrewd networker, Madam von Clausewitz managed to befriend Knesebeck's governess, who reported to her daily prior to his appointment and departure to the headquarters.<sup>60</sup> Marie could not hide her frustration with the reactionary turn in Prussia that resulted in Carl's outsider status. The conservative faction's suspicion apparently concerned mostly his political views and not expertise in military affairs. Both Knesebeck and Madam von Knesebeck, another skilled operative behind the curtains, went to great lengths to befriend Marie and assure the chief of staff's support for his new commander.<sup>61</sup>

In early October, the remaining Polish rebels surrendered and the insurrection was over. On November 7, Clausewitz was back in Breslau; Marie arrived a couple of days later. Suddenly Carl fell ill and, on November 16, he died of cholera in his wife's arms. Until her own demise in 1836, Marie devoted most of her time, energy, and finances to publishing his works.

59. Stefan Dudink and Karen Hagemann, "Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750-1850," in *Masculinities in Politics and War. Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 3-6.

60. The episode is described in her letter from September 13, 1831, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 314.

61. Knesebeck's moves were described in Marie's letter from September 20, 1831, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 317.

In the wake of Clausewitz's shocking and untimely death, she wrote a letter to her friend Elise von Bernstorff that, as Peter Paret has commented, almost single-handedly created the perception of the military theorist as a depressed man, angry at the world that never recognized him.<sup>62</sup> Scholars like Paret and Christopher Bassford have published sensible and well-argued analyses debunking this image.<sup>63</sup> But Marie's descriptions still appear too damning to be easily dismissed: "On the whole he admittedly accomplished far more than he could hope for when his life began; this he felt this deeply and acknowledged with a thankful heart. But he never achieved the highest [things in life], and along with every joy granted him came a thorn to darken his joyful mood. He lived in such a great, glorious age but was never fortunate enough to witness a victorious battle [...]. He enjoyed in extraordinary degree the friendship of the noblest men of his time, but not the recognition that alone would have procured for him opportunities to be truly useful to his fatherland."<sup>64</sup>

A careful reading of Marie's letters could finally put the exaggerated perception to rest. We will never know if Madam von Clausewitz was unhappy with her husband's appointment as director of the War College, but in 1830-31 she clearly envisioned a more active role for Clausewitz and started looking for a high profile political job for him. "Truly, one should not let such valor rest, nor allow it to be confined to the realm of trifling matters (the War College and the like)," Marie wrote to her husband right after she admitted bringing up his name as a possible candidate for Bernstorff's foreign ministry.<sup>65</sup> Carl deflated her hopes; he preferred to end his career in line duty.<sup>66</sup>

The episode suggests that Marie was less content with her husband's humbler plans and hoped to see him in high politics. In this context too should the remarks in the preface of *On War* that she repeatedly tried to persuade Carl to publish it as soon as possible be understood.<sup>67</sup> In contrast to Clausewitz, his wife saw his theoretical work not as a parallel intellectual endeavor but as a possible stepping-stone toward greater influence and an illustrious public career on the European stage.

It is this background that explains Marie's vehement reaction and words in the letter to Elise von Bernstorff. Its carefully crafted form, contrary to her usual bulky and somewhat disorganized writing style, further suggests that Madam von Clausewitz intended the text to be read publicly in the popular Bernstorff salon. There politicians and leading members of the Prussian government met—exactly

62. The letter is published in Bernstorff, *Bild aus der Zeit 1789 bis 1835*, II, 225-28. About the perceptions, see: Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 431.

63. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 432-440; Christopher Bassford, "John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz," *War and History*, November 1994 1: 319-336. <http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/Keegan/> (Access date March 4, 2015)

64. Marie's letter to Elise von Bernstorff from November 1831, in Bernstorff, *Bild aus der Zeit 1789 bis 1835*, II, 227-28.

65. Marie's letter from August 4, 1831, in VI. HA, FA Buttlar-Venedien, v. (Dep.), Nr. 299.

66. Carl's letter from August 6, 1831, in Clausewitz, *Lebensbild*, 474.

67. Marie von Clausewitz, "Preface," 65.

the people Marie felt had not paid enough respect to her beloved husband, and who she was determined to remind of this.

If there was one person truly depressed by the lack of public recognition in his lifetime, however, it was not Carl but Marie von Clausewitz. Quite tellingly, she almost immediately tried to dampen the aggrandized image in a second letter for public reading sent to Elise's mother, Countess von Dernath, and then in the official obituary, written by Carl von Gröben in close cooperation with her.<sup>68</sup> But the damage was done.

For the editing of *On War* and the other remaining works, Madam von Clausewitz formulated a simple principle: all manuscripts should be published as they were found, "without one word being added or deleted."<sup>69</sup> Carl von Clausewitz had not rewritten the first six books in a clear copy but rather left instructions, revisions, and long amendments to be incorporated later; books VII and VIII remained in their raw state. The small team of proofreaders Marie gathered therefore had to sift carefully through the papers and compare notes. She did not supervise personally the preparation for publishing of all texts; her two collaborators, Franz August O'Etzel and Carl von Gröben, strictly followed her guidance for minimal intervention.<sup>70</sup>

While this principle initially appears easy to follow or even inconsequential, one should consider how difficult it was for Fritz von Brühl, as the editor of the second edition of *On War*, to refrain from rewriting the text. As Werner Hahlweg discovered, Marie's brother introduced several hundred changes, far beyond the necessary corrections of grammar and print errors or modernization of the language. He altered the meaning of whole paragraphs, with the most momentous and far-reaching change being the reversed relationship between policy and military. Where in Book VIII, Chapter VI B, Clausewitz emphasized that the military leadership should take its cues from "the cabinet," the revised text suggested the opposite: the military commander should be part of the cabinet, "so he could participate in the most important moments in its deliberations and decisions." According to the "Brühl's version," as Prof. Hahlweg called the 1853 edition, the military could dictate policy. The revision comfortably fit the Prusso-German general staff's desire for greater independence in the military realm while gaining influence over political decision-making. The edited text remained the standard until after World War II.<sup>71</sup>

Not all scholars assess Marie von Clausewitz's role as editor in a completely positive light. In 1935, Herbert Rosinski argued that she failed to highlight the

68. Marie's letter to Countess von Dernath from November 1831, in Bernstorff, *Bild aus der Zeit 1789 bis 1835*, II, 228-29. Although published anonymously, the obituary is almost certainly the work of Carl von Gröben and the details about the Clausewitz's forthcoming posthumous works suggest Marie's close involvement. Anonymous, "Nekrolog von Carl von Clausewitz," in Schwartz, *Das Leben des Generals*, II, 443-44.

69. Marie von Clausewitz, "Preface," 67.

70. Franz August O'Etzel, "Berichtigungen" in Carl von Clausewitz, *Hinterlassene Werke. Fünfter Band* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1833), VIII. Gröben, "Vorrede zum Neunten Band," V.

71. Hahlweg, "Das Clausewitzbild," 64-73 and 168-71.

later revisions in the manuscript made by Clausewitz and thus complicated the understanding of the work.<sup>72</sup> More recently, Azar Gat suggested that Marie von Clausewitz might have been mistaken when setting the timeline of the two last notes written by the military theorist about *On War's* state of progress.

The note from July 10, 1827 (named here Note A), famously revealed his discovery of two types of war, absolute and limited, and clearly stated that war is continuation of policy by other means. Clausewitz envisioned revisions to the first six books so the idea of the two types would be brought to the forefront. The second note (Note B) was undated but originally published by Marie with the remark that it appeared to be written “on a very recent date,” i.e. around 1830. Note B declared only the first chapter of Book I complete, called Book VI “a mere sketch” and revealed his intentions for Book VII and Book VIII.<sup>73</sup>

If, however, *On War* was read without knowledge of Note B, so Gat’s argument goes, Book VI appears quite finished since it comprises more than a fourth of the whole treatise and books VII and VIII are well developed. Marie’s timeline then created the wrong impression that the manuscript was left in a much more incomplete state than in reality. If Note A (from July 10, 1827) and not Note B, was indeed the last progress report about *On War*, this means that by then Clausewitz had finished, for the most part, books VII and VIII, revised Book I, and had only to incorporate his idea about the two types of war in the remaining parts. Thus by 1830 he probably had fulfilled much of his plans, and his seminal work was close to completion.<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately, the newly discovered correspondence lacks clear answers to the questions raised. Yet the clues about Carl’s writing routine and Marie’s understanding of his work are open for interpretation. Madam von Clausewitz’s plans from the summer of 1831 to find a more politically prominent occupation for her husband support the assumption that by then he was close to completing his life’s work. Knowing the importance of writing *On War* for Carl, Marie would have done so only if she believed it almost finished. Her remark in the preface that he had hoped to complete the treatise “in the course of the winter” of 1831 further reinforces Gat’s argument.<sup>75</sup> Yet when Marie opened the sealed bundle after Carl’s death, she discovered the manuscripts of books VII and VIII in a raw state and probably containing so much less than the ideas she was used to hearing—a situation similar to the essay about Scharnhorst in 1815. Madam von Clausewitz therefore declared the two books “cursory sketches and preliminary works.”<sup>76</sup> In light of the knowledge

72. Herbert Rosinski, “Die Entwicklung von Clausewitz’ Werk ‘Vom Kriege’ im Lichte seiner ‘Vorreden’ und ‘Nachrichten,’” *Historische Zeitschrift* 115, no. 2 (1935): 278 and 291–292.

73. See the first edition of *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz, *Hinterlassenes Werk des Generals Carl von Clausewitz*. Band I (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1832), XIX; the statement that the note was probably from 1830 was added by later editors and translators.

74. Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 255–263.

75. Marie von Clausewitz, “Preface,” 66.

76. Marie von Clausewitz, “Vorrede zum dritten Teil,” in Carl von Clausewitz, *Hinterlassene Werke. Vom Kriege. Neunzehnte Auflage*, ed. Werner Hahlweg (Bonn: Dümmler, 1980), 865.

gained about the couple's intellectual interaction through this newly discovered correspondence, Marie's remark should be read less as a statement about the actual qualities or state of completion of books VII and VIII than as an expression of her own disappointment about what they could have been.

This assumption, again, does not answer the question of whether she mistakenly ascribed the undated note to a later period. It clarifies, however, why she felt compelled to assign the note as Clausewitz's last report on the progress of his work.

References in Marie's letters indicate that Karl Schwartz, the first scholar to work with Clausewitz's correspondence, had published a shortened version of some of the military theorist's letters. Schwartz probably thought some of the personal information insignificant but missing details at least in one instance (concerning Carl's plans for his career in 1813 and discerning remarks about Frederick Wilhelm III) imply that there could have been a different intent in the editing. While for a nineteenth-century scholar the wish to protect the reputation of a great man was rather reasonable, for modern historians it raises the question of whether more painful issues or political views were deleted from the correspondence. This line of thought should prompt scholars to re-open and re-examine the originals of Clausewitz's letters in the Buttler-Venedien Family Archive.

Despite the great number of interesting details and the new paths for examination Marie von Brühl's correspondence suggests, it does not utterly revise the already known facts concerning Clausewitz's life or the creation of his seminal work. The study of the letters rather creates a richer and more compelling story about the extraordinary intellectual relationship between Carl and Marie, about the cultural and political movements of the time, and about the personal and historic environment of his writings. For modern readers especially, the greatest difficulty in understanding *On War* comprises scant knowledge about its context, and the story about Marie's role and influence could serve as a vehicle for comprehension. Feeling restrained in her role as a nineteenth-century woman, she devoted her time and energy to his career. Marie was not free from the fallacies of her time, but her keen personality indulged Carl's need to test ideas against a worthy opponent and often served as the catalyst for their development. A passionate patriot and proponent of social reforms, Marie connected her husband with the great cultural and intellectual endeavors of the time. Finally, by editing and publishing *On War* she saw his lifework fulfilled.

While this article highlights some of the most interesting aspects of the Clausewitzes' lives, the sheer amount of the newly found correspondence suggests the need for a new and extensive publication of their letters, especially in English. The translation and the access to the private papers have the potential to spark interest among scholars and a broader public not typically concerned with Carl von Clausewitz's work or military history in general. Thus telling of Clausewitz's life and achievements from Marie von Brühl's side, together with her equally fascinating personal story, opens the field to new and engaging points of view.

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