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The Last King of France's Letters:



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The Controversy between Helen Maria Williams and Bertrand de Moleville about the Translation of Louis XVI's Correspondence

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Abstract – This article examines *The Political and Confidential Correspondence of Lewis the Sixteenth* (1803), by Helen Maria Williams, in which she translates the letters by Louis XVI while she adds her own political commentaries. This translation received negative reviews and one of its harshest critics was royalist emigré Bertrand de Moleville. The first part of this article explores the controversy that surrounded Williams's translation and reveals that the letters were forged. The following part analyzes Williams's political arguments that legitimize the deposition of Louis XVI as the king of France. The last part explores Bertrand's *A Refutation of the Libel on the Memory of the Late King of France*, published in 1804. The article concludes that, regardless of the authenticity of the letters, Williams' work deserves reconsideration as it sheds light on her participation in the political debates of her time. Besides, the article shows that the misogynistic arguments employed by Bertrand contributed to the invisibilization of Williams's work.

Keywords – Helen Maria Williams; Louis XVI; Bertrand de Moleville; the French Revolution; translation.

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1. Introduction

British author Helen Maria Williams (1759-1827) is mostly known for her eyewitness account of the French Revolution, *Letters from France* (1790-1796), published in eight volumes. However, her involvement with political writing went beyond her chronicles and also permeated her work as a translator, a fact that becomes particularly evident in her translation of the correspondence of Louis XVI, entitled *The Political and Confidential Correspondence of Lewis the Sixteenth* (*Correspondence* henceforth). From the moment she landed in France in 1790, where she spent the rest of her life, Williams committed herself to the revolutionary cause, siding with the Girondins. The literary salon that she held in Paris received celebrated political figures of the time such as Jacques Pierre Brissot, Henri Grégoire, Manon Roland, Pierre Verginaud, Alexandre Pétion or Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne. Williams's involvement with the political sphere of the time and her politically charged writings put her under the radar of the law enforcement authorities, especially during the Napoleonic era. As a result, she put her facet as a chronicler aside for more than a decade. In *Narrative of the Events Which have Taken Place in France* (1815), Williams explicitly alludes to this period in her career and, presenting Napoleon's government as despotic, she writes that "the iron hand of despotism has weighed upon my soul, and subdued all intellectual energy" (Williams 5). Apart from her chronicles, Williams had worked as a translator and her English version of Bernardin de Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788), published in 1795, was a literary success. In the 1810s and 20s, she focused her efforts on translating the works of scientist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt. *Correspondence* is not as widely known as the aforementioned translations, but it nevertheless constitutes one of her most unique works. *Correspondence* is not easy to classify as it is a combination of both translation and political commentary. In three volumes, this work reproduces the letters penned by the French king from his accession to the throne in 1774 to the time he was imprisoned in the Temple, right before being executed in January 1793. Interestingly, most of the letters in the collection date from 1789 to 1792, coinciding with the outbreak of the French Revolution and the judiciary process of the royal family. In her translation, Williams includes the original letters in French, followed by her translation into English and a political commentary titled 'Observation'.

Williams's *Correspondence* was embroiled in controversy even before its publication, as the Napoleonic authorities seized the copies of the book before they were distributed. The heated discussion surrounding *Correspondence* provides an insight into the public perception of the Bourbon monarchy a decade after it was overthrown in France. Ben-Israel argues that, in the context of Britain, the debate around Louis XVI's execution was revived in the early 1800s, as a result of the works published by the émigrés settled in Britain (32). At the same time, in 1803, the British parliament was considering whether or not to resume war with France and the legitimacy of the king's execution became part of the deliberation. If Louis XVI's condemnation was considered to be unlawful, the hostilities against France would be justified. On the

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other side of the channel, censorship had become less strict and it allowed for a new trend in publications that, in a highly sentimental tone, aimed at redeeming the king by depicting him as a martyr (Douthwaite 98). Williams's stance is unique in this context, as she shows sympathy for the hardships undergone by the monarch while she continues to defend that a republic is the most fitting government for France. For this reason, her political opinions were misunderstood. Royalist author Bertrand de Moleville, former minister of the marine in France, answered Williams's work with *A Refutation of the Libel on the Memory of the Late King of France* (*Reputation* henceforth), which presents Williams as a fierce revolutionary, an idea shared by the British conservative press. By contrast, the Napoleonic police accused Williams of being too sympathetic to the royal cause. Adding to the ideological dispute, the veracity of the letters also aroused strong suspicions on both sides of the channel. A significant number of reviewers considered that the evidence of their authenticity provided by Williams was not convincing enough. Inevitably, this had a negative impact on Williams's credibility among her contemporaries.

For this article, I will examine both *Correspondence* and the reception of this work. First, I will contextualize its publication and discuss its reception. Then, I will analyze the political argumentation in her 'Observations' arguing that, regardless of the authenticity of the letters, Williams's comments provide significant insights into her political stance within the unique context of 1803. I will also pay attention to the reception of *Correspondence* in the British press and in Bertrand's *Refutation* in order to examine the combination of both misogynistic and anti-revolutionary attacks which eventually resulted in Williams's fall from grace and the lack of attention that her works received for almost two centuries. Williams's *Correspondence* deserves to be reconsidered since, compared to the rest of her translations, this is the one that has received the least critical attention.

2. Controversy

Regarding the authenticity of the letters, the *Imperial Review* regrets that "no positive documents have given to this publication a legitimate stamp of authority" (98). In the preface to *Correspondence*, Williams assures that the letters are genuine, however, she fails to mention how she obtained the original documents: "It is unnecessary to mention [...] the means by which these manuscript volumes fell into my hands. The only important point to be ascertained was that of their authenticity" (vol.I xviii-xix). Nevertheless, she defends that she has made sure that they are original. She explains that someone who had been close to the king, whose identity she keeps secret, has confirmed that the handwriting in the documents coincides with Louis XVI's. Williams's arguments were not convincing enough to satisfy the readers. The *Edinburgh Review* claims that "the story she tells in the preface is imperfect, and is told very foolishly" (211). Regardless of the lack of proof, the content of *Correspondence* was presented as original in the edition published in London, the one printed in New York, and the French, German and Dutch translations, all of them published in 1803. What is more, the same letters continued to be attributed to Louis XVI in three later editions that appeared in 1817, 1862 and 1864. It is known today that the letters were forged. Deborah Kennedy, citing Woodward, states that François Babié de Bercenay confessed in a letter dating from 1838 to have written the majority of the letters (244). Kennedy, the author of the only monograph in English on Helen Maria Williams, maintains that she did not participate in the forgery and that she was indeed convinced of their authenticity. As mentioned before, *Correspondence* has failed to awaken interest today since the letters have proven to be fake. Nevertheless, I am of the same opinion as Paolo Conte, who argues that, in spite of their authenticity, the political use given to *Correspondence* is worthy of analysis as it sheds light on the political debates of the time (4).

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As anticipated before, the publication of *Correspondence* became of interest to the police. Williams's activities had already become the focus of scrutiny since 1802, as she continued to receive in her salon influential figures such as Francisco de Miranda, Tadeusz Kościuszko or Alexander von Humboldt. Williams's problems aggravated when the authorities interpreted *Correspondence* as a publication in favor of Louis XVI, and, thus, considered it to be an anti-revolutionary work. As a result, the prefect Dubois seized the copies of the books until he reconsidered his decision two months later (Conte 1). Williams and John Hurdford Stone, her partner, earned their living out of the printing press that published *Correspondence* and, for that matter, Dubois's decision had a great impact on the family's economy. Finally, the book was allowed to circulate as the police considered that, despite the fact that it contained some positive comments on the king, it presented the Bourbons in a negative light. Strangely enough, while *Correspondence* had been interpreted as royalist in France, it was seen in a completely different light in Britain. Both Bertrand's response and the British press depicted Williams as a staunch and ruthless revolutionary who was justifying the king's execution. In the midst of this controversy, how did Williams position herself? and why did *Correspondence* provoke such a disparity of interpretations?

In order to answer the questions above, it is worth looking at Williams's 'Observations', that is to say, the commentaries that she places after every letter. Williams uses these commentaries to offer her own interpretation of the events while she displays her political ideas. Interestingly enough, most of the contemporary reviews of *Correspondence* attack these commentaries and consider them to be unnecessary. The *Edinburgh Review*, for instance, describes them as "long and senseless dissertations" (215) and it also criticizes the book's structure, which includes both the original letter and its translation. The reviewer believes that those who need the translation are unable to understand the original letters, and thus, the originals become superfluous. The *Monthly Review* also attacks Williams's observations. In this case, the reviewer believes that they show the translator's poor taste since, as they see it, Williams is putting her own words at the same level as the king's and they argue that she should have let the king speak for himself. The reviewer uses this instance to argue against Williams's democratic views for being disruptive of the social order. The *Imperial Review* is not as critical as the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Monthly* but it still considers her observations to be irrelevant when they state that "The information contained in these annotations is too scanty and insignificant to be useful to any class of readers" (104). Instead, they suggest that Williams includes a *clavis historica* to provide the readers with the necessary background to follow the letters but without interfering with their own interpretation of them. They expect the translator's voice to be detached from the texts, but this is far from Williams's purpose.

Williams aimed at contributing to the political discussion of her time, as she had done in her previous works. Due to her gender, she was denied a space in the political sphere. As a result, she turns to her travelogues and translations to explicitly state her own political views. It is not surprising then that some of the magazines, such as the *British Critic*, the *Edinburgh Review* or the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, attack Williams for transgressing gender boundaries. The *British Critic* explicitly shows its disapproval by declaring that every time they "find a woman pronounce with dogmatical and peremptory decision on matters which involve the fate of empires and the happiness of millions [...] it is impossible that we should feel any thing but a mixture of pity and contempt" (428). The *Anti-Jacobin Review*, for its part, alludes to Williams's personal life to attack her as they open the review with an allusion to Williams's partner John Hurdford Stone. Williams and Stone never married -or if they did, they did so secretly- but they did not hide their relationship. The reviewer alludes to Williams's relationship to ridicule her as it is evident when they introduce her as "a lady of whom it is so difficult to predicate whether she be maid (*spinster* we mean), wife, or widow. Whether she is to be called, or mistress, Williams or Stone, are knotty points which we shall not attempt to unravel." (9). These misogynistic

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attacks were recurrent throughout her career and, unsurprisingly, Bertrand de Moleville also disapproves of Williams's personal life in his reply to *Correspondence*, as I will explain in section 4.

3. Williams's 'Observations'

In the preface, Williams discusses the reasons why she decided to produce a translation of Louis XVI's letters. She explains that, since ten years have elapsed from the king's execution, the political situation in France in 1803 is comparatively less tumultuous than it was in 1793. According to Williams, this political stability allows her to look back and assess the events that took place from 1789 to 1793. However, she clarifies that, even though she's studying the king's correspondence, she has not changed her mind and she continues to adhere to the ideals of the French Revolution. She supports the emancipation of the French people from despotism when she writes that "the generous mind naturally places itself on the side of the oppressed multitude" (vol. I xi). At the same time, she considers that the king's execution should have been prevented: "we lament that this country was not spared the offence of his death" (vol. I xii). Taking into account Williams's ideology as disclosed throughout her previous publications, her position in *Correspondence* is coherent with the rest of her works. In her second poem, published twenty years earlier, in 1783, and entitled "An Ode on the Peace", she had already shown her pacifist views. However, she shows a clear support for a republican government insofar as it is understood as "a government of wisdom, of virtue, and of force" (vol. III 27). Then, if Williams insists on her republican views, why was *Correspondence* seen as favourable towards the monarchical system? The answer to this question is rooted in Williams' mode of expression. Williams shows sympathy for the king's misfortunes in sentimental terms. She partook of the trend of sensibility throughout her career and she consistently displays empathic feelings for those who suffer due to the political circumstances, regardless of their political ideology, and Louis XVI is not an exception. In a similar manner but with a completely different purpose in mind, the supporters of the old regime were making use of the same sentimental rhetoric to emphasize the cruelty of the revolutionaries and to depict the king as a martyr. Julia Douthwaite explains that, when the Terror ended, defenders of the monarchy turned to sentimentalism in order to reclaim the figure of Louis XVI as a virtuous man and leader who had endured the last years of his life in distress and had eventually suffered an unjust death (100). Douthwaite also explains that this trend was also used to highlight "the king's cowardice and profiteering" (99), which is closer to the position adopted by Williams in her observations.

Williams claims to have carefully studied the documents she is translating and observes how, at the beginning of the correspondence, before 1789, the king was in favour of political reform, an attitude that is particularly evident in the letters addressed to Turgot and Malesherbes. Williams notices that, unfortunately, the king changed his opinion as the Revolution advanced. She portrays the king as someone easily manipulated and impressionable and who lacks the firmness of character necessary to rule a country. For instance, she writes that

However great may have been the habitual weakness and irresolution of the King, sufficient evidence of which appear in the course of this correspondence, it must be admitted that his life hitherto had been a continued struggle against this fatal propensity (vol. II 11)

and similar claims are made throughout her observations. Without stating it explicitly, she criticizes the absolute monarchy as a form of government since it may place as the head of the country someone who is inapt to fulfill the role, as it is the case with the Bourbon king.

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In her observations, Williams accuses different figures of having exerted a negative influence on the monarch, including Marie Antoinette, Bertrand de Moleville or Baron de Breteuil, his Prime Minister. In fact, she accuses Breteuil of a scheme to achieve “a full and complete counter-revolution” (vol.III 89) and proves her point with a letter addressed to the king of Prussia dated December 3rd, 1791. This missive is included in a section titled ‘Supplementary Letters’. In an introduction to this section, Williams explains that the editors of the intended French edition had made a selection of letters they had collected in order to present a “complete justification of Lewis the XVIth” (vol. III 79). Nevertheless, she decides to include “a few other letters, which perhaps are not in the original collection, but which may tend to throw light on certain points left in obscurity”(vol. III 79). In this manner, she distances herself from the intentions behind the French edition, designed to restore the king's honour. In fact, this section allows her to argue that the king was unfit for leading France as he had betrayed the French people. In the letter addressed to Frederick William II, Louis XVI asks Prussia to join a coalition formed by Russia, Spain and Sweden to put an end to the Revolution in France. In this letter, the king appears to be willing to use military force against the French at the same time as he betrays the Constitution he had sworn loyalty to, which established a constitutional monarchy. In Williams's view, this letter is a proof of the king's genuine purpose: “The king had now accepted the constitution; and it would seem, from the letters inserted in the preceding collection, that he at times had an intention of conforming himself to its observance: but this letters proves that he had no such intention” (vol.III 94). Regardless of his treason and unsuitability to rule, Williams maintains that his death by guillotine should have been avoided.

Williams observes that the king's execution was counterproductive for the revolutionary cause as it had given the royalists a reason to depict the revolutionary cause as violent, ruthless and bloodthirsty:

If Lewis betrayed the cause of liberty, they covered it with dishonour: if he endangered its existence, they rendered it odious. By dragging the king to the scaffold, they contrived to ennoble what it was their interest to degrade: they performed a cruel tragedy, of which they made their convict the hero. Instead of rendering the king the object of indifference or contempt, they interested every feeling of our nature in his behalf. (vol III 78)

Williams explains here that the king's execution was convenient for the royalist cause, as it allowed for the construction of a sentimental narrative that presented him as martyr, which would evoke the pity of the readers. Besides, the shock that the king's execution provoked outside of France, deviated the attention from the principles of the cause of liberty to the transgressions committed in France. As a result, the focus was put on the misfortunes endured by the king and his tragic fate rather than on the demands of the revolutionaries and the complicated reality of the lower classes..

Williams argues that Bertrand de Moleville participated in this scheme to form an international coalition. Besides, she harshly criticizes his book entitled *Annals of the French Revolution* (1800), published in English in London, where Bertrand was living as a French émigré and where his work gained a certain degree of popularity. In fact, member of parliament Charles James Fox quoted Bertrand's *Annals of the French Revolution* for his speeches in Parliament (Ben Israel 31). Williams, aware of its popularity, criticizes Bertrand's work in *Correspondence*, especially in the second and third volumes, and explains a different version of the events. In his work, Bertrand claims to have privately worked for the king and to have maintained conversations with emigrés, foreign forces and with the Feuillants, the political party which was in favor of reform but wanted to adhere to the Bourbon monarchy. Williams accuses Bertrand of exaggerating his political power in his *Annals of the French Revolution*, and, paradoxically, she makes him responsible for the change of attitude the king had regarding the Revolution - since

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he had originally shown an interest for political reform. What is more, she blames Bertrand for the fall of the monarchy:

It is not difficult, after perusing M. Bertrand's *Annals*, to account for the speedy decline of the monarchy [...] What appears most singular in this history, is the candid manner in which M. Bertrand avows the active part he took [...] in hastening this catastrophe. If his book be not the most envenomed libel, it is the most complete and unanswerable act of accusation that has ever been drawn up against the court (vol.II 257)

What outrages Williams the most is not that Bertrand reveals that the court was in touch with political parties, émigrés of foreign courts. For Williams, the fact that they conducted these negotiations secretly is particularly appalling. In her view, the matter becomes even worse when she accuses Bertrand of encouraging the king to position himself publicly in favor of the Constitution and the Revolutionary Government, and then secretly conspiring against them. Historian of the French Revolution Lynn Hunt explains that, during the French Revolution, intrigue and conspiracy ended up being associated with the secrecy that was characteristic of court politics (39). As a result, French revolutionaries considered that affairs of state and political negotiations should always be open and transparent. Williams considered that the act of encouraging the king to participate in political schemes was as reprehensible as the schemes themselves.

4. Bertrand's *Refutation*

As mentioned earlier, Bertrand was the former Minister of the Marine during Louis XVI's rule. Due to his royalist views, he does not consider his participation in the intrigues as reprehensible actions. On the contrary, he prides himself on having devoted his efforts to preserve the king on the throne. Bertrand answers Helen Maria Williams's accusation in *A Refutation of the Libel on the Memory of the Late King of France* (1804). Even though it is presented as a reply to Williams's *Correspondence*, he attacks her career as a whole. The work is structured in four parts that answer one question each. The first one is entitled "What is this Helen Maria Williams, who is so big with our Revolution? and what part has she played in it?". Bertrand answers the first question over the course of 50 pages, almost half of the work. Here, he attacks Williams on personal grounds and criticizes her series *Letters from France*. Instead of focusing on what Williams explains in her observations, he follows the premise that, since she had shown her sympathies for the French Revolution in her previous works, *Correspondence* is consequently a work that tarnishes the late king's memory:

in a new fit of her revolutionary delirium, she [...] [committed] one of the greatest crimes that ever an execrable pen was made the instrument of; to calumniate the purest virtue, to insult misfortune, to revile the memory and to pollute the ashes of the best of Kings (27).

In his interpretation, there is no room for Williams's position, in which she regrets Louis XVI's execution while she continues to defend the ideals of the French Revolution.

As it has been explained in the previous section, Williams had sided with the Girondins in all her chronicles. Nevertheless, Bertrand presents her as someone who supported the Jacobins in order to associate Williams's name with the events that took place during the Terror. After the fall of Robespierre, British conservatives gave a negative connotation to the term Jacobin in order to further criminalize the French Revolution. The counter-revolutionary publication, the *Anti-Jacobin Review* constitutes an example of the negative implications of the term. According to Bertrand, Williams borrows her political arguments "from the Septembrizes, or the revolutionary tribunals; and every body knows that upon arguments equally conclusive thousands

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of innocent victims have been condemned and sacrificed" (87). By presenting Williams's arguments as borrowed from others, he belittles her own authority on political matters as he presents her as a writer who is not in full possession of a developed personal opinion. Instead, she is represented as someone who merely echoes the arguments of others. However, Bertrand's accusation oversimplifies Williams's political opinion. Throughout her *Letters from France* Williams openly criticizes the Revolutionary Tribunals. In the volume published in 1793, she discusses the September massacres, which had taken place the year before, 1792. She writes that the massacres are "a conflict between freedom and anarchy, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice" (3). With these words, Williams aims at distancing herself from the political leaders behind the executions but Bertrand insists on grouping them together. Bertrand goes as far as venturing to label Williams as "more pitiless than Robespierre" (47).

Bertrand frequently attacks Williams in a misogynist manner. This is evident from the beginning of *Refutation*, since the cover page includes the following quotation: "Her softer sex but aggravates the guilt; / In man 'twere base, and 'tis in woman wicked / To spot the memory of a king so just". By choosing these lines, Bertrand sets the tone for the rest of the work and shows his disapproval for women that write about political matters. In fact, he does not only believe that politics is not a respectable subject matter for women writers, he also states that they are incapable of it due to their inferior intellectual abilities: "one cannot be astonished that there is not a sentence in her [Williams's] work that has the slightest conformity to what is commonly understood by *politics*, in reasoning on which men make use of their understanding and judgement" (25). In order to further discredit Williams's work, Bertrand continues to turn to sexist arguments, for example when he discusses her personal life: "of the private life and adventures of Miss Williams [...] many would think it a libel, or at least a novel, and I should be ridiculed for the choice of a heroine in whom there is so little to interest the reader" (11). When he states that Williams's life story would be of no interest to the reader, he does not refer to the fact that it is tedious, but to the fact that no moral teaching can be extracted from Williams's experiences. At the time, female protagonists were expected to be a model of good moral conduct, since novels had to be instructive. As a result, Bertrand is in fact questioning Williams's lifestyle and thus, he insinuates that her morality is objectionable. He also presents Williams as a social outcast when he tells the reasons behind her migration to France. According to him, Williams sought refuge in France as a result of "the general contempt of her countrymen" (6). However, Williams had a good reputation in her home country before settling in France. As explained by Duckling, her early works, published in the 1780s, were received very favourably in Britain but, when she changed the course of her career from poet of sensibility to chronicler of the French Revolution, the British public opinion started to disapprove of her works (78). The misogynistic vein in *Refutation* goes as far as questioning Williams's mental stability and reducing her support for the French Revolution to a mere delirium. Bertrand states that her political arguments cannot be taken seriously as her head "was in a state of exultation or madness" (18).

As most of the reception of *Correspondence* is concerned with the authenticity of the letters, it does not come as a surprise that Bertrand also casts doubts upon their origin. He justifies his suspicions on the fact that he has worked closely with the king and, for that matter, he knows his mode of expression and concludes that it is far more plain and direct than it appears on the letters transcribed in *Correspondence* (94). Nonetheless, he does not consider that Williams is behind the fabrication of the letters:

If this correspondence be forged it would be very unjust to charge Miss Williams with the fabrication: the miserably literal translation she has made of them shields her from all suspicions of her kind. It frequently proves that she did not understand the original. (92)

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Bertrand explains that Williams has been fooled by the French editors and that she has fallen for the trick because her command of the French language is not sophisticated enough to perceive these nuances. By the time she translated Louis XIV's *Correspondence*, Williams had spent more than a decade in France and she had been in charge of translating Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* (1795) into English. It follows then that Williams's skills in French were not as deficient as implied by Bertrand. Nevertheless, by stating that Williams's command of the language is poor, Bertrand highlights her foreign status in France, and thus, he insinuates that she does not fully understand the events or documents that she analyzes in her works. As a matter of fact, he is discrediting her knowledge of the French Revolution and he implies that, being both a foreigner and a woman, she is not competent to delve into French political matters.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Williams's observations together with Bertrand's response sheds light on Williams's participation in the political debates of her time. The arguments used by Bertrand to discredit her whole career, such as putting her moral integrity into question, presenting her as a violent revolutionary or emphasizing her foreignness in France, coincide with the arguments employed in the British conservative press to question Williams's authority on political matters. As a result, Williams's work lost popularity in her home country, despite being successful at the beginning of her literary career. For that matter, Williams's writings were forgotten by later generations and, thus, her contribution to the ideological disputes about the French Revolution in Britain was invisibilized. Recently, thanks to the efforts by feminist scholars and the growing interest in recovering works written by women, Williams's works have received more consideration by the scholarship and she is now recognized as an author who took an active part in the political discussion of her time rather than merely being an eyewitness of the events. Nevertheless, *Correspondence* continues to be an invisible work even today, when compared to other of her works, especially *Letters from France*. *Correspondence* has received less scholarly attention since it was a polemic work even before it was published. Adding to this, the fact that the letters resulted to be fake, further stigmatized this work. Be that as it may, *Correspondence* offers materials worthy of analysis apart from the letters, especially Williams's commentaries and its reception. In fact, *Correspondence* displays Williams's political ideology at the turn of the nineteenth century. By making Louis XVI responsible for conspiring against the French, she is in fact legitimizing the French Revolution. It has to be taken into consideration that, in 1803 and 1804, coinciding with the publication of Williams's *Correspondence* and Bertrand's *Refutation*, the British parliament was discussing whether to resume the hostilities against France. In this context, the observations written by Williams to complement the king's letters reveal that she wanted to have her voice heard within this discussion and ultimately maintain peace between the two countries.

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