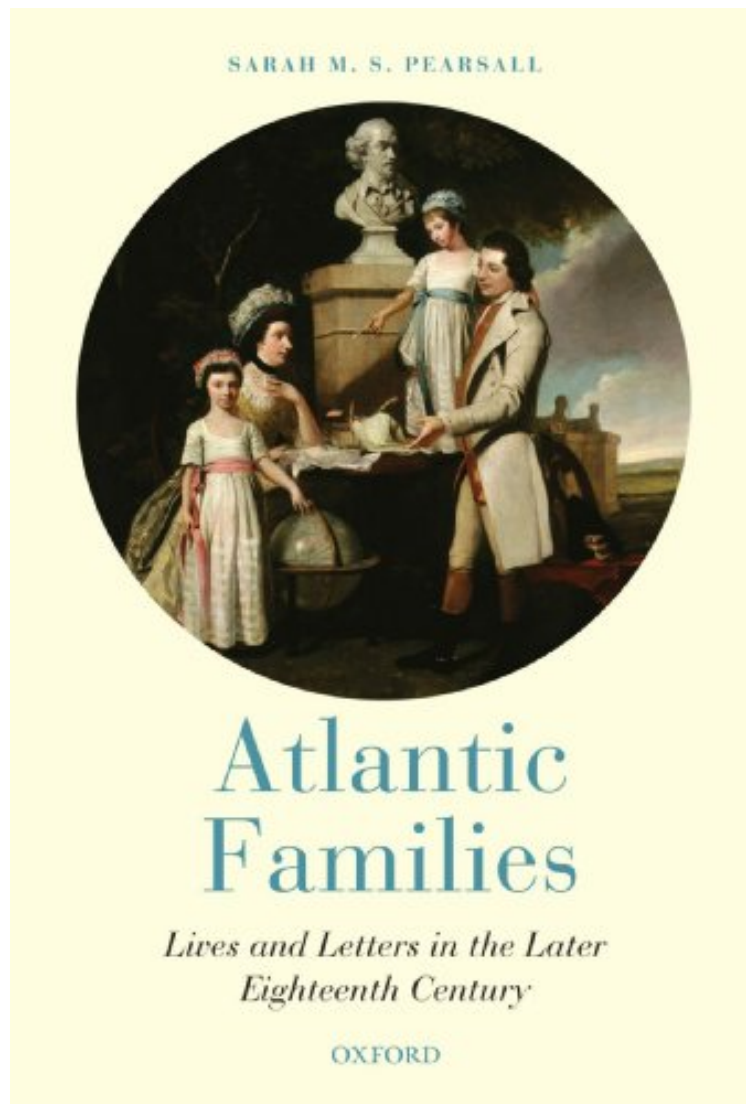


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# Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century

*Sarah Pearsall*

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**Sarah Pearsall : Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century:

The Atlantic represented a world of opportunity in the eighteenth century, but it represented division also, separating families across its coasts. Whether due to economic shifts, changing political landscapes, imperial ambitions, or even simply personal tragedy, many families found themselves fractured and disoriented by the growth and later fissure of a larger Atlantic world. Such dislocation posed considerable challenges to all individuals who viewed orderly family relations as both a general and a personal ideal. The more fortunate individuals who thus found themselves 'all at sea' were able to use family letters, with attendant emphases on familiarity, sensibility, and credit, in order to remain connected in times and places of considerable disconnection. Portraying the family as a unified, affectionate, and happy entity in such letters provided a means of surmounting concerns about societies fractured by physical distance, global wars, and increasing social stratification. It could also provide social and economic leverage to individual men and women in certain circumstances. Sarah Pearsall explores the lives and letters of these families, revealing the sometimes shocking stories of those divided by sea. Ranging across the Anglophone Atlantic, including mainland American colonies and states, Britain, and the British Caribbean, Pearsall argues that it was this expanding Atlantic world, much more than the American Revolution, that reshaped contemporary ideals about families, as much as families themselves reshaped the transatlantic world.

"Brings together heavy-hitting argumentation and delightfully entertaining soap opera." -- Books Culture  
"Valuable...[the book] demonstrates the historical and intellectual value of attending to the individual and contingent, revealed through the material traces of personal correspondence and the surprising capacity of letters to undercut stereotypes, to reinflect grand historical narratives of national or economic progress, 'and to reveal something new' about the Atlantic worlds of the eighteenth century." - Alison Searle, *William and Mary Quarterly*  
"Ultimately, Pearsall asserts that historians must again turn their attention to the history of the family, since the eighteenth century was not an era of independent and modern selfhood; instead, it was a complex and unnerving world of commerce, wars, and forced separations deeply grounded in family values. Letters forged connections between individuals, between family members, and between wider communities." -- *American Historical*  
"A sensitive and richly textured explanation of the fascinating stories, news, preoccupations, styles and relationships of the letter-writers....Pearsall writes warmly and evocatively....a nuanced, timely and fundamentally connective contribution to scholarship." -- *Gender History*  
About the Author Sarah M. S. Pearsall previously taught at Northwestern University, St. Andrews University, and Cambridge University. In 2010-2011, she is a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow at the Newberry Library, where she previously held another long-term fellowship. She received her PhD from Harvard University. Her articles have appeared in numerous books and journals, including *The William and Mary Quarterly*.