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Raising Royalty: 1000 Years Parenting

Carolyn Harris

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Raising Royalty: 1000 Years of Royal Parenting. By Carolyn Harris. Toronto: Dundurn, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4597-3569-9. 256pp. $35.00.

With all the children born into European royal families over the last few years, this book seems very timely. At first sight, however, it looks dangerously similar to David Cohen's *Bringing Them Up Royal: How the Royals Raised Their Children from 1066 to the Present Day* (2012). Even the cover picture (Queen Victoria and Prince Albert surrounded by their children) is the same as that book. The title and subtitle of Harris's book give the impression of a more general, wider study of royalty and child-rearing, but it is in fact also rather Anglo-centric: with a clear emphasis on the period since Queen Victoria, and especially the present. Fifteen of the twenty chronologically arranged chapters are concerned with English/British royalty. Indeed, it becomes clear early that the parenthood of the present Duke and Duchess of Cambridge—not covered by Cohen—is the true *raison d'être* of Harris's study, and they are referred to throughout the volume. While this approach does not quite match the ambitious title, it has nevertheless produced an overall interesting, informative, and enjoyable book.

Notwithstanding the timeframe, one may have expected a study more along the parameters of John Van der Kiste's *Childhood at Court, 1819-1914* (1995). Much of Harris's text is what one might call 'conventional' history: discussing succession problems, conflicts between monarchs and heirs, marriages, deaths, and so on. There is not much discussion of "parenting," of how children were actually "raised," how they were brought up, and by whom. One early important point—the choice of name for royal children—is not referred to properly until page 139, and then merely in an English context. The introduction and epilogue are the chapters that most address wider issues: for instance, nicely alluding to the clash between child-rearing advice for "commoners" and for royalty (12). There are further, very interesting contextualisations with contemporary (i.e. historical) writings on child-rearing, for instance in chapter nine. There could be more of this in the book, however, and what is discussed could do with more details and better references. In relation to Prince William, son of Queen Anne, we read that his Welsh page Jenkin Lewis "wrote a memoir about the prince's upbringing" (127). This is the sort of material that one would expect to be discussed in much more detail.

Some aspects of child-rearing fall almost completely under the table: for instance, that of religion, which was so important in former centuries, and for the British monarchy up to the present day. The changes brought by the Reformation are referred to in an informative but short passage that, again, could have done with better referencing (100). Similarly, the military

upbringing of princes is not discussed, even though it had such a decisive, almost traumatic, impact on the growing up of royals such as Frederick the Great or Crown Prince Rudolph. Generally, various other aspects could, and maybe should, have been discussed: to stay with British royalty, for example, Frederick, Prince of Wales famously played the cello, and his son George III (like Frederick the Great) played the flute. When and how did these royal children learn to play instruments? Musical or artistic components of education are barely mentioned in this book. In fact, we do not read much about royal schooling at all until the present Prince George's attending pre-school (201). Altogether, it is with the present that Harris has clearer opinions and more interpretational weight. Her well-chosen wording of the "identity as parents" and "wider cultural trends" in relation to Prince William and his wife Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (throughout colloquially referred to as 'Kate') underlines that such critical approach is somewhat lacking in the previous chapters (217).

One cannot but wonder why so much room was given to all the chapters on medieval royalty (almost all English, with a short reference to Scotland and one chapter on Spain). These chapters are full of fascinating details, but it is not clear what they bring to the overall picture. Medieval (royal) child-rearing is not really contrasted or contextualised with that of later centuries. This is especially true with the Tudors, upon whom the author writes as much on marriage as on child-rearing: while these two are clearly interlinked, the book's title promised a greater emphasis on the latter. Equally, the later chapters include broad discussions on succession rules and "absolute primogeniture" (207). While certainly very relevant to royal children, the relevance of these rules to their up-bringing becomes less clear. Altogether, the 1000-years-approach might be eye-catching, but it is not dealt with quite adequately in this short book and has detracted from the main topic.

Similarly, the few chapters on non-British royals (touching on Spain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands) appear as though they were added merely to justify the boastingly comprehensive title. chapter sixteen on the last Tsar of Russia and his family is long and detailed, and very interesting: but after all the preceding chapters on British royalty, it seems almost out of place. Yet, these five chapters are among the most interesting in the book, highlighting little-known details. For instance, Harris refers to Rousseau's ideas on child-rearing and shows that Marie Antoinette followed a rather modern approach (143-147). Harris is Canadian, and is probably writing mainly for Canadian readers. Hence, the Dutch royal family's exile in Canada during the Second World War, and the birth of a royal baby, which is the subject of chapter seventeen, is of particular interest. This is, at the same time, one of the best chapters, with a good contextualising approach, critical

evaluation, and citing of primary sources. The Canadian connection is otherwise not very much emphasised, and therefore when "Canadian history" is mentioned in relation to the seventeenth-century Prince Rupert, this comes a bit out of the blue, even though it is explained by his becoming "the first governor of the Hudson's Bay Company" (94). Nevertheless, this is a good example of how Harris manages to bring meaningful modern-day relevance and understanding into her historical accounts. Her text as a whole is well structured and written. The chapters are not too long and very readable, with neat links leading from one to the other.

Harris has given herself relatively little time to write the book: as she explains in the acknowledgements, she had the idea to write this book in 2015 and—notwithstanding the fact that she had previously taught courses on related topics—spent only "months" researching, before the book was published in 2017 (219). Considering such a short timeframe, the range of research and reading used is good. Yet, while most statements are sufficiently referenced in endnotes, it is notable that Harris has almost exclusively relied on secondary works. This means that most quotations are given through other authors, increasing the risk of misquotations, while the actual sources of the quotations often remain unclear and difficult to follow up.

Factual mistakes seem restricted to details: For instance, Frederick V of the Palatinate and Princess Elizabeth married in February 1613, not 1612, which is the year in Old Style (94). In 1700, Sarah Churchill was not yet "Duchess of Marlborough" (123); her husband was not awarded the title until after Queen Anne's accession in 1702. The volume is altogether well produced, but the copy-editing could have been stronger: there are various typos and/or missing or redundant words (for example, 96, 97, 101, 103, 106, 109). While some illustrations would have been desirable, this would probably have increased the book's price considerably.

Although some important aspects are missing, this study is overall an interesting read. It might not be thoroughly academic, but then, it does not pretend that it is. We do not really seem to learn anything new about how royalty was raised: what this study does, however, is stimulate thought about this very important, yet rather neglected, aspect of royal history. Many thanks for that!

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