

The Queen's Narrative : Femininity, History & Cultural Convergence in the Age of OTT

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Abstract

The emergence of OTT platforms has revolutionized the consumption of digital content changing the traditional viewing experience & creating space for historical narratives & cultural identities to be reinterpreted. This article examines the impact of OTT platforms, focusing on the critically acclaimed Netflix series - The Crown, which chronicles the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, through an analysis of its narrative structure & specific characteristics of the program in detail. This paper explores how The Crown engages with issues of femininity, power & identity. It serves as a lens through which modern audiences engage with past events by contextualizing The Crown in the Digital Humanities framework. This article argues that how OTT platforms function as modern intermediaries for cultural studies discourse on gender & new interpretations of history & it thus alters the way we perceive & interact with history & contemporary society.

Keywords: The Crown, OTT, History, Cross Cultural Study, Femininity

Introduction

Digital humanities are at its extremity of applying laptop-primarily based generation within the humanities. Initially known as 'humanities computing', the field has advanced tremendously over the last four decades. Initially the aim was on growing digital aids & the creation of archives & databases for texts, artistic endeavors, & various other materials. From these preliminary uses, & as computation evolved, computer systems provided more & more refined ways of handling & looking at a digitized lifestyle. For instance, with recent advances in digital storytelling, it's now possible for diverse people to share their life stories & creative imaginings with others. This new form of storytelling emerged with the coming of various accessible media production techniques. This practice helps students develop technical skills, research abilities, writing proficiency, critical thinking & creativity.

The key to understanding digital humanities is to discard the notion that the digital era is taking over academia. Computers had been used for humanist ends from very early on in their records, & not most effective, as one would possibly expect, as mere a garage for massive libraries of text. Computer networks, in particular the internet, have also enabled digital files for use from almost anywhere at the globe. This right of entry to data has had an excellent effect on the ability to undertake research within the arts & humanities – “we can thus say that the digital humanities—much of which affiliates with older humanities disciplines such as literature, history, classics, & the languages; with the remediation of older media such as books & libraries; & ultimately with the value of the old itself (history, archives, the curatorial mission)—are not the tribe of “new media studies,” under the sway of the design, visual, & media arts; Continental theory; cultural criticism; & the avant-garde new. Similarly, despite significant trends toward networked &

multimodal work spanning social, visual, aural, & haptic media, much of the digital humanities focus on documents & texts in a way that distinguishes the field's work from digital research in media studies, communication studies, information studies, & sociology.” (Liu, 409)

This paper, in particular, explores the transformative emergence of OTT (Over The Top) platforms, which belongs to the expansive & rapidly changing Entertainment Industry, & how it can be referred to as a new form of literature in the context of the evolving nature of storytelling & cultural narratives that engage audiences through visual, auditory, & narrative complexity. They are a contemporary medium that mirrors the role literature has historically played in society—reflecting, critiquing, & shaping cultural & social understandings.

People's perception & connection with entertainment, information & news has observed a noticeable & rapid transformation in a short span of time. As the internet facilities have improved across the world & broadband clarity has increased, OTT platforms have become more accessible & convenient to a large scale audience. Not only do OTT services operate on the concept of delivering content directly to their audience over the internet dodging traditional distribution channels, it provides their audience the access to viewing their content on a wide variety of devices, namely smart TVs, laptops, tablets & smartphones. “The emergence of OTT does not owe its origin to the pandemic but the immense popularity that platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Hotstar, Voot & others enjoy is undeniably due to people being restricted to their respective homes. Marketing strategies like subscriptions to these platforms accompanied by other services like Amazon Prime & Vodafone also contributed to the same.” (Rawal, 3)

OTT as a New Form of Literature

Media is often seen as a modern adjunct of literature because of its ability to communicate narratives, ideas, & experiences through various formats, just like traditional literary forms, such as novels, poetry, & plays. While literature depends on written language to describe & explore human experiences, media uses a range of aids, such as visuals, sound, dialogue, & cinematography, to create a captivating narrative experience. This multifaceted approach allows the media to build up storytelling by seizing multiple senses, by such means providing a richer & more engaging experience. Both literature & media play a part in similar aims: to contemplate, evaluate, & shape cultural & societal norms. They explore intricate themes such as human nature, virtues, contradictions, & social change, often showing the extremities of what is accepted or expected in society. Moreover, just like literary works, media content—such as films, TV shows, or digital narratives—time & again bring into play literary devices such as symbolism, metaphor, & allegory to express deeper meanings. Another similarity between media & literature is their shared part in documenting history & culture. Just as literature has been used for a longer time to archive the human condition & historical moments, media, especially in the digital age, presents as a strong forum to document contemporary experiences, recording the soul of a particular time period. For example, TV series like "The Crown" or documentaries like "13th" present both narrative & factual

depictions of history & social issues, which can be studied & comprehended much like a literary text.

Additionally, the emergence of digital & social media has expanded the boundaries of what acts as literature. Platforms like blogs, vlogs, & podcasts give space for creative expression, personal narratives, & social commentary, melding traditional literary qualities with new media formats. These forms of digital storytelling initiates interactivity & audience engagement, pushing the standard limits of literature as a one-way form of communication.

OTT platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, & Disney+ offer series, films, & documentaries that often share thematic, structural, & narrative elements found in conventional literature.

OTT content often looks into intricate narratives, exploring themes including identity, politics, social issues, & human emotions. Shows like "The Crown", "Black Mirror", or "Delhi Crime" address varied stories with subtle characters, concentrated plots, & thematic depth, much like traditional literary works. The recurrent use of literary techniques such as symbolism, allegory, & irony in, "The Handmaid's Tale", based on Margaret Atwood's novel, makes use of its narrative to evaluate societal structures & gender politics, resembling how novels use these aids to have its grip on readers. OTT platforms prefer different genres & formats—anthologies, miniseries, adaptations, & docu-series—that qualify for storytelling flexibility. This diversity allows creators to explore narrative structures & styles, comparable to how literature explores different genres like realism, modernism, & postmodernism. Moreover, OTT platforms are gradually becoming spaces for modification of classic & contemporary literary works. Series like "Pride & Prejudice", "Dracula", & "A Suitable Boy" bring traditional literature to life, which lets viewers be a part of these stories in a new visual & auditory form. Much like literature, OTT content fosters critical thought & dialogue. Shows like "When They See Us" or "Unbelievable" cause debate on race, justice, & societal issues, serving as cultural texts that contemplate & shape public discussion, very much like how novels such as "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "Beloved" have done in the past.

From a viewpoint of digital humanities, OTT platforms can be appraised as a part of a broader literary perspective because they contribute to the way stories are consumed, examined, & interpreted. Academic studies, which focus on "media as literature," look into how OTT content impacts cultural knowledge, depiction, & beliefs, very much like the study of traditional texts.

How OTT connects with Audiences

OTT platforms have transformed the way audiences acquire & engross with content, offering a wide range of films, series, & documentaries directly through the internet. This shift has enabled them to connect with varied audiences globally. By delivering personalized recommendations, creating high-quality original content, & continuing versatility in viewing options, these platforms serve the evolving inclination of viewers. "The convenience & accessibility offered by streaming services have empowered viewers to consume a wide array of content at their own pace & convenience. Binge-watching, once regarded as a niche activity, has become a cultural phenomenon, with

audiences fervently consuming multiple episodes or entire seasons of TV series in rapid succession. This binge-watching trend reflects not only a shift in viewing preferences but also a desire for immersive, uninterrupted storytelling experience" (Simlote, 184). This relationship is critical for their continued success in a progressively competitive media environment. By understanding how OTT platforms keep this engagement intact reveals the master plan that makes the audience come back for more. OTT platforms provide a very **wide range** of genres & formats, including dramas, comedies, documentaries, & reality shows. By algorithms in use to study viewer behavior & preferences, OTT platforms offer **recommendations for every individual's needs**. This customized style helps users find content that matches with their interests, making their viewing experience better. Many OTT platforms invest in developing **high-quality original content** that time & again challenges traditional media. Successful series & films, like "Stranger Things" or "The Crown", creates excitement & attract viewers, bringing up loyal audience support. OTT platforms are **accessible to a global audience**, usually offering content in multiple languages & regional variety. This scope allows them to connect with diverse cultures & societies. With on-demand access, viewers can **watch content at their convenience**. This flexibility serves modern lifestyles, which gives users the freedom to engage with the platform when it suits them. Many OTT platforms nurture community by uplifting **viewer interaction** through social media, forums, & live events. Engaging with audiences directly helps build a sense of being included & connected. OTT platforms regularly create or display content that shows **cultural relevance** by revealing the current social, political, & cultural issues, making their content more relevant to viewers' lives. This relevance is necessary to attain audience engagement & connection. **Effective marketing campaigns**, such as trailers, social media promotions, & influencer partnerships, builds up interest & excitement around new releases, helping maintain audience engagement. OTT platforms are **responsive to viewer feedback** & trends, allowing them to filter their content strategies & adapt to changing audience preferences over time.

The Crown - Femininity, History & Its Cultural Emergence

Netflix has presented a historical drama series - "The Crown" that chronicles the sovereignty of Queen Elizabeth II, where the audience takes a look at both her personal life & the political events that formed Britain & the world during her reign. The show looks into various sides of her & her family, depicting their struggles, relationships, crises & interactions with leading political figures. The show also narrates the important historical events like the Suez Crisis, the Falklands War, & the rise of Margaret Thatcher, offering a blend of historical precision & dramatization.

The show is praised globally for its production quality, acting, & attention to detail, especially in portraying the growth of the monarchy & its influence on British people. The series covers almost six decades & three generations, with multiple actors portraying the Queen & other key figures as they age.

Being produced by an OTT platform, The Crown has a **firm grasp & influence on the streaming technology** to reach the global audience, making the show's narrative handy

& impactful in ways that traditional broadcasting couldn't. This availability has made British history, specifically the monarch, more relatable to the diverse audience who might not be familiar with the history or facts before. The show is accessible in multiple languages, along with subtitles & dubbing, breaking the language barriers, making the audience feel connected to the series & the history it depicts. There are various such aspects which give series like, *The Crown*, the grand reach it seeks.

It would be safe to say that the OTT platforms have started the "binge-watching" culture & they cater to it efficiently, where viewers can watch an entire series or a whole season at their own pace. This format lets *The Crown* dive deep into the intricacies of the characters & the historical events without being bothered about losing its audience due to any production or scheduling disturbance. The series can narrate complex narratives & explore character developments over extended periods, making the historical drama more captivating. Its episodic form, covering different decades & showing three generations, keeps the viewers feel included as it evolves through the changing times, which makes them understand the progressive role of the monarchy. "Audiences fell in love with *The Crown* because its early seasons evoked a lost time and explored a single question. At only 25 years old, a woman born before the invention of television—a woman born into a dying empire, who never went to school, who grew up in a castle during wartime—became the ruler of a fractious kingdom, in a world that was just about to invent miniskirts, pop music, and the concept of the teenager. Would she, and the monarchy, survive?" (Lewis)

The Crown bridges historical events with contemporary themes, such as power & authority, media influence, gender roles, & cultural change, which strongly connect with today's audience. The show's dramatic portrayal of the events offers a way to analyze the current issues to many viewers— from the media's effect on public figures to debates & public discussions around colonialism & social justice. By analyzing the history in a personal, dramatized & in a broader manner, the series nurtures a deeper connection with the past while making the audience critique its relevance to modern-day politics & society.

The series remarkably impacts public perception about the British royal family by showcasing them as multifaceted humans with personal struggles, flaws, strengths & emotions. Presenting the perspective of the royal family was essential as the public was not familiar with them having emotions of their own, & by humanizing these iconic figures, *The Crown* forms viewers' understanding about the institution, its evolution & history, often stimulating discussions & debates about the validity of events & the morals of portraying real lives in such a dramatic way. "story lines on "The Crown" — like the suggestion of infidelity between Prince Philip and Penelope Knatchbull or young William and Harry's heartache after losing their mother — may have served to humanize people generally kept at a distance from the public." (Okundaye). This impact continues to shape opinions on crucial topics such as the Queen's legacy, Princess Diana's influence, & the future of the monarchy, making the show a significant cultural touch point. Speaking of significance on culture, *The Crown* has not only achieved critical success but also has highly influenced fashion, tourism, & public's perception of the Royals. The show has taken care of minute details, from the period costumes to sets, it has sparked a renewed interest in British Culture, encouraging discussions about traditions, styles, & the legacy

of the royal family. This has made the monarchy accessible to the younger & upcoming generations who couldn't engage with such historical chronicles before, which majorly impacts how the institution is viewed in a contemporary context.

The show's entrancing narrative structure has led to a significant growth in interest in British history, with a majority of the audience thriving to learn more about the real events portrayed. The blend of dramatization & historical facts often leads to the audience researching the actual events, developing a deeper understanding of the monarchy's role in global matters. The series lets the viewers explore the refined realities of history, while also acknowledging the artistic freedom in use while portraying certain events. Jenner agrees that the show has caused our perception of the Royals to shift – even as contemporary events are capable of reversing that. “It's inevitable that you warm up to characters as you watch,” he says. “There is something addictive about imagining what it's really like inside Buckingham Palace and I do think it's probably made us more sympathetic to the Queen and to Princes Margaret as well. It will be interesting to see whether it changes people's views on Prince Charles, arguably a more controversial figure.”; “Lacey mischievously notes that there is one key element that critics perhaps overlook. “The whole time we're seeing pumped-up, powerful and ambitious figures bowing to a woman,” he says. “It's one of the most appealing things about the show that, regardless of their own sense of self-importance, they have to come to her, talk to her and hear what she thinks.” (Hughes).

History brings together individual political events to illustrate the growing role of the British empire & its impact on British society during the Crown & the twenty-first century, making it more than just the stage setting of the show but also very central to the story. The audience gets to know about the important historical events & views them from the point of view of the royal family, understanding the influence these events had on the 'crown' &, in turn, how the 'crown' responded to them. “Historian Tracy Borman writes that “theirs is often heralded as one of the most successful royal partnerships in history – as well as the most ordinary.” (Evans). One such important example is that the viewers get to know about the failure of military interference during the Suez Crisis, where Egypt was attacked by UK, France & Israel because of the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The event marked a significant blow to Britain's influence worldwide, & symbolized the collapse of the British Empire. The series uses the crisis as a crucial example to depict Queen Elizabeth's growing awareness of her position not just as a symbolic figure but as someone with a duty to uphold Britain's reputation. The tensions highlight the monarchy's dainty balance between tradition & the shifting perspective of post-war global politics.

The Falklands War was addressed in later seasons, which became a significant moment for both Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher & Queen Elizabeth. Thatcher's leadership & the government's resolve were tested during the conflict between the UK & Argentina over the disputed Falkland Islands. The Crown uses this war to depict the difficulties of political-military decision-making & the Queen's role as a constitutional monarch who cannot interfere directly but still holds a symbolic influence. The portrayal sheds light on the monarchy's role & relevance during the time of a national crisis & Thatcher's will power to restore Britain's military standing. There is an episode on the Aberfan disaster in

season three, which showed the fatal landslide in Wales that killed over hundred children & nearly around thirty adults. The episode focuses on the Queen's delayed response to the tragedy, revealing her struggle to adapt to her emotional constraints with public expectations of empathy. The incident was presented as a turning point in her reign, depicting that the demands of modern monarchy required a more personal connection with the public. This portrayal showcases the shift in how the monarchy's role grew from being a distant authority to a more accessible & compassionate institution.

The introduction of Princess Diana in the series was a critical case that emphasized the media's growing influence on the monarchy. Her marriage to Prince Charles & the media's exploration that followed, brought unusual public interest & controversy to the royal family. "This portion of the series (the next six episodes are due to be released in mid-December) is dominated by the media attention Princess Diana gets, with paparazzi harassing her wherever she goes, whilst also showing her efforts to try & bargain with them to protect herself & her children. "Royal commentator & film critic Richard Fitzwilliams says this depiction "is pretty accurate" & goes as far as saying "she was hunted" by cameras." (Rackham). The Crown shows how Diana's struggles with mental health & her efforts to redefine her role within the institution rivaled the traditional attitude of the monarchy. Her social work & public sensitivity contrasted with the royal family's firm norms, which led to many discussions about modernity, celebrity culture, & the monarchy's place in a media-driven world.

The show also vividly examines the relationship between Queen Elizabeth & Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, exploring their varying views on leadership, politics, & social issues. "Their dynamic was famously strained, though Thatcher was always deferential to the monarch; as Dominic Sandbrook writes, the prime minister was "a dewy-eyed monarchist, who told an interviewer that she would have been a 'Cavalier' in the Civil War, and she treated the Queen with such exaggerated deference that her low curtsies became a palace joke" ; "In reality, writes biographer Charles Moore, additional unease came from the fact that "both were women, and neither had much experience of working with women at a high level" (Evans). Thatcher's tenure is marked by debatable policies that transformed Britain's economy but also caused social unrest. The Crown uses their conversations to depict the tension between the monarch's politically unaware viewpoints & the prime minister's estranged policies, revealing the delicacies of power dynamics in a constitutional monarchy.

The process of decolonisation is depicted as a central theme throughout the series, demonstrating how the British Empire eventually gave way to a Commonwealth of Independent nation. The Crown acknowledges the difficulties of this transition which reflected on Britain's declining global reputation & the Queen's role in familiarizing the Commonwealth to a new diplomatic reality.

The Crown is not just a show which is created to document the events related to the British royal family but, it serves as a medium too, to **bridge the cultural gaps** by making the culture, tradition & history of the 'crown' available to the world. The show efficiently achieves this due to many underlying factors.

The royals, in the series, are presented as intricate humans & not as restrained personalities. Queen Elizabeth was famous for not sharing the messy, human and

emotional parts of herself with her public, and for encouraging the rest of her family to do the same. “The public relations strategy “never complain, never explain,” considered a core principle of her reign, holds that silence is dignified and public expression damaging.” (Okundaye). As the audience gets familiar with the personal battles of Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, Princess Margaret, & others, they can resonate with universal themes of family, responsibility, love, loss & duty, irrespective of the varied cultural backgrounds they belong to. The depiction of human experiences & emotions surpass all cultural barriers, making the audience feel empathetic for the characters & easily understand various pressures & challenges that come with ‘The Crown’.

The show offers a deeper understanding of some of the major historical events to the audience from a British perspective, including the Suez Crisis, the Falklands War, & the miners' strike. These events may not hold much significance & understanding outside the UK, but the show puts them into perspective within the royal narrative, unfolding their influence on British society & the world. As the political & historical evolutions in the personal lives of the characters get constructed together, the viewers get to see the series, not just as history but as a series of events which had impacted real people.

One of the prominent themes of the show is the tension between maintaining the royal customs & tradition & adapting to modernity. The royal family's struggle in embracing the change in public's expectations & societal values is quite visible for a long time. For the audience which is not familiar with the complexities of the British class system or the crown's role, the show captures exclusive insights explaining the ‘why's’ and ‘how's’ of the importance of traditions and how often it is for them to clash with the modern outlook. Serious questions have been raised about the importance of the monarchy, which has encouraged the audience across the globe to critique the cultural system around them. The central concept of the show was to highlight women in leadership roles, including Queen Elizabeth II's seven decades long reign, Margaret Thatcher as the first female Prime Minister, & Princess Diana's social work, who is till date, widely known as the ‘People's Princess’, a title given to her posthumously by the former Prime Minister of UK, Mr Tony Blair. “Peter Morgan says, ‘It was her continuing to live vividly in the minds of those she has left behind. Diana was unique, & I suppose that's what inspired me to find a unique way of representing her. She deserved special treatment narratively.’” (Yossman). The series explores their different experiences in managing power & public life, which has connected with the global audience because of the varied cultural viewpoints through which people have started critiquing the view of feminism, leadership, & social influence. This portrayal has contributed to global debates on gender roles & the growing positions of authority for women in society.

The narrative structure of the show efficiently garners the interest of viewers across the globe, specifically the international audience, for them to explore the impactful historical & cultural context behind the episodes. It sparks discussions about colonialism, British influence, & the evolving dynamics of the Commonwealth, which gives us a deeper understanding of how these issues were interconnected to other parts of the world. As the audience starts studying the show's themes, they may start comparing their own cultural & historical experiences, which might create a shared dialogue across borders.

Elizabeth, Margaret Thatcher, & Princess Diana, were strong women figures, each dealing with their own crises in both their personal & professional lives creating a lasting legacy in history & amongst the public.

Queen Elizabeth II had to face many challenges while balancing her role as a devoted mother & wife with her duties representing the crown, throughout her reign. The 1980s is known as a rough period for the monarchy. In her family, her children's marriages faced issues while the institution itself went into increasing analysis. Her firm & calm public image became really important in order to maintain the monarchy's stability & reputation, all during the modernization & the pressures of the quickly transforming society. Queen Elizabeth remains balanced in political matters, even during times of tension, such as the Falklands War or when addressing rising tensions in Northern Ireland which has proved to be her biggest strength. Her tactful skills helped maintain the monarchy's relevance, giving a sense of continuity & flexibility.

Margaret Thatcher was the first female Prime Minister of the UK who was an intimidating leader and was in power from 1979 to 1990. While in power, she brought many alienating policies & notable socio-economic disruption. She was infamously known as the "Iron Lady", she introduced many such controversial economic improvements whose aim was to deduct government's interference & restrict the power of trade unions. At once, these policies did revitalize the British economy, but on the other hand, they also led to widespread unemployment & social instability. Her professional situations went along with her personal crises, such as facing public backlash against her leadership & uncertainties within her own party. But, her determination never trembled, she continued working hard to achieve the vision she had for Britain, even during the Falklands War, which tested her determination as a leader. Her will to stand by her morals despite the consequences, made her an incompatible & an undeniably impactful persona.

Known for her compassion & humanitarian work, Princess Diana emerged as an iconic figure during the same era. Her troubled marriage to Prince Charles was the main target of the media, which brutally followed & exposed the troubled private life of the royal family. Irrespective of the crisis in her marriage & being continuously targeted by media & paparazzi, Diana emerged with a new identity for herself as the "People's Princess". She used her privilege & platform to take a stand for causes such as HIV/AIDS awareness, landmine removal, & mental health. She easily connected with people & confidently expressed her vulnerabilities, this attitude contrasted sharply with the often-reserved image of the royal family. Such events reshaped the public's view of what a royal figure could represent. Diana's impact was much more than of her royal status, leaving a legacy of empathy & compassion.

The Crown & the Indian Audience

Netflix & shows like *The Crown* have successfully influenced the opinions of Indian audiences about British monarchy & Britain's history, particularly its colonial era.

For the majority of the Indian audience, British monarchy is solely associated with its colonial rule & its fatal impact. *The Crown* presents a more subtle narrative of them by humanizing important figures like Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip, & Princess Diana,

showing them and their struggles like those of any human, rather than portraying them as a symbol of royalty. By showing the internal conflicts, emotional dilemmas & changing roles of the royal family, the series makes the audience look at monarchy ahead of their colonial history, nurture a more neutral point of view of their cultural & historical importance.

OTT platforms make shows like *The Crown* easily available to the Indian audience, which bridges the cultural gap by presenting an in-depth look at British culture, politics, & historical events. For the upcoming generations of Indians who may not have strong historical ties to the colonial narratives, the series offers a more relatable & approachable way to learn about British history. This feature allows audiences to see the monarchy as a culturally relevant topic & not as a distant institution.

The dramatic narratives & visual appeal of the series has continued to drive the Indian audiences to study the actual historical events & figures presented in the show & this curiosity would lead to a more informed & multifaceted view of history.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Crown* as an OTT series has efficiently made use of the streaming platforms to present a historical drama which is engaging, accessible, influential, & which bridges the gap between the past & present for a global audience & also discusses themes of legacy, power, & the changing identity of Britain. The show has provided insights about the events & their solutions through the perspective of the monarchy while including the intersection of personal experiences & public expectations showing the monarchy's continuous growth & the need to stay connected to their people. It encourages the Indian audience to look at their shared histories with a fresh perspective & gives rise to indications towards monarchy's evolving role & relevance in today's world.

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