

Thursday 16 May

1pm Milgate Room, AD Hope Bldg, SLLL



Monique Rooney

Mediating Sovereignty: *The Crown* as 'Interbrow'

This paper reads *The Crown* as an example of narrative 'interbrow'—my coinage for middlebrow stories produced in the time of the internet. *The Crown* depicts British royalty as susceptible to middlebrow culture pervading late-twentieth century life, with its enmeshment of mass media networks. In its first two seasons at least, *The Crown*'s portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II positions her as a figure whose performance of detachment, and upholding of ideals of monarchical impartiality, are in tension with the commoditising effects of mass media. Billed as a 'Netflix Original', although written by respected playwright Peter Morgan, the series formally enacts and thematically explores the limitations and possibilities of the sovereign subject's autonomous judgement from within a culture conditioned by deeply mediated desires and consumer-based drives. This paper looks at the series' entanglement of middlebrow perspectives with twentieth- and twenty-first century media, revealing not only the way in which royalty fail to escape culture-industrial intermediation but also drawing attention to *The Crown*'s representation of tenuous yet tenacious bonds between women. It does so by focusing on two episodes that read together juxtapose the publication of a 'nude' photograph of Princess Margaret with her sister Elizabeth's embodiment of the crown.

Monique Rooney is a Senior Lecturer in the English Program, School of Literatures, Languages and Linguistics at The Australian National University. She is the author of *Living Screens: Melodrama and Plasticity in Contemporary Film and Television* (2015) and the co-editor, with Guy Davidson, of *Queer Objects* (Routledge, 2019). Her essays on contemporary intermedia have recently been published in *Angelaki* and *New Review of Film and Television Studies*. Her current project investigates the role of 'interbrow' in a range of contemporary media.



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