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 mediatised 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.

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