

All hail our Superwoman

By **Andrew Bolt**

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I know exactly when Queen Elizabeth mysteriously became our new head of state. It was when she left her four-day-old baby to give a florid speech at Kevin Rudd's summit, praising artists . . . like herself.

It was Saturday a week ago, when she left her four-day-old baby to give a florid speech at Kevin Rudd's ideas summit, praising artists . . . like herself.

How that crowd of our "best and brightest" cheered. And cheered again when she said she heard her baby cry in the corridor. Such hearing!

In fact, such was her hold on the audience that she looked less like Elizabeth for a moment and more like the magical Galadriel she'd also been, once more entrancing hobbits.

Then she sat with the self-possession she'd shown as Charlotte Grey, another of her heroic incarnations.

What a triumph it all was for the hardly more real character also known as Cate Blanchett, now cast as the country's most admired woman.

Fellow actor Hugh Jackman addressed her as "superwoman", and cried "she is flawless as a person".

But was she Superwoman, or the Madonna, for rarely has so much homage been paid to a child as it has been to Blanchett's third.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had days earlier rushed to Blanchett's birthing suite to deliver myrrh, or some such.

And at the summit, to which Rudd had invited Blanchett as the only woman bright enough to be a co-chair, a crowd that included Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson adored the infant, dandled before them by his dad.

The reporters were smitten: "Blanchett takes limelight at Australia summit," announced Reuters. "Superwoman has it all in hand," declared the Sydney Morning Herald.

Even as far away as London, expatriate writers such as Jacqueline Maley were entranced by this "Australian woman who combines a successful career with motherhood and a radiant skin-care regime: the incomparable Cate Blanchett".

And I do think it's that skin, actually, that explains this coronation of Cate. It's symbolic. Blanchett is acting out the wrinkle-free, have-it-all life that despairing women have dreamed of since Germaine Greer still made sense.

Observe the miracle: Thirty-nine and not a wrinkle; glittering career, yet a mum; Hollywood celebrity, yet mingling with the crowd; beautiful, yet hailed as a great mind.

It doesn't stop: Married, yet with a husband who minds the baby; a jetsetter, yet purely green; toast of the world, yet home in Sydney; a new mother, yet making grand speeches in high heels just hours after given birth.

This is the role of Blanchett's life, and it means more to many women, I'm sure, than any she's taken on screen. If this Blanchett didn't exist, someone would have to play her. Perhaps Blanchett already does.

Yet it's taken a few scriptwriters, not to mention Blanchett's millions, to knock up this image, because Jackman is wrong - no one is "flawless".

It suited Rudd, for example, to have Blanchett adorn his summit as the brightest of the bright.

But truth is that Blanchett, when forced to use her own words rather than those written for her, is no smarter than you or me.

Take the tosh that was her summit speech: "The arts binds communities, it liberates demons, it challenges authorities, warms our hearts and cools our tempers."

Hmm. In fact, as you know, the arts can also do the very opposite of all that, and in Australia usually does.

Elsewhere, too, the image of Blanchett as the woman who can have the yin with her yang won't fit.

For instance, Blanchett is admired as a green warrior, giving her that moral dimension a rich artist needs, saying: "I actually have little races with myself, thinking, oh no I'm not washing my hair, I only need to have a two-minute shower."

Yet this woman who even skips washing her hair to save the planet also included a new pool in her \$1.5 million "eco-renovation". That's a lot of greasy hair - which, miraculously, Blanchett never has, either.

The same kind of contradictions plague Blanchett when she plays both the Hollywood star and the defender of our culture from American tosh.

It is "culturally very foolish" to be "so in America's back pocket", says an actor who is a hero here for winning an (American) Oscar for playing (the American) Katharine Hepburn in (the American) film *The Aviator*.

But I'm quibbling, and you are steaming, because the Blanchett of our dreams has no contradictions.

She has no price to pay in wrinkles, in criticism, in logic, in swimming pools foregone or baby feeds missed. Goodness, she even had no baby bulge four days after giving birth.

She is acting the dream. She stars as the woman who finally has it all. And it's a sin that even now there's a man to warn it's not all that real.