

**MARVELING AT ELIZABETH:  
THINKING THROUGH THE  
CONJUNCTURE WITH  
HOMELAND'S PRESIDENT-ELECT  
BY TOBY MILLER**

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In endeavoring to comprehend the current conjuncture, I've been trying to think back a hundred, fifty, twenty, even ten years. Could I have imagined, just a decade ago, that the following would be progressive *nostra* today?

- Russia is an enemy, and US politicians who communicate with it are suspect
- The *bourgeois* press is laden with competent journalists

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- The CIA is a force for truth, justice, and the pursuit of happiness
- The State department is a beacon of rationality and probity
- The foreign-policy establishment is trustworthy
- The Pentagon is full of rational people seeking sensible resolutions to problems
- Technocrats are able and principled
- Court decisions on immigration are sacrosanct

- Globalization should be defended
- Protectionism is wicked; and
- Big science should be respected and left to do whatever it wishes

Perhaps not everyone reading this column believes all, or indeed any, of these things.

But they are newly powerful tendencies on the liberal left, indicative of a massive shake-up occasioned by the collision of four long-term tendencies:

- LBJ's mid-1960s civil-rights legislation

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- Nixon's late-'60s southern strategy
- Deng Xiaoping's 1970s release from tractor-factory re-education; and
- Climactic climate change

These points refer to:

- Our principal parties changing their ideological and electoral foundations
- Shifts in the new international division of labor; and
- Threats to the earth, as reserves of work, consumption, and fossil fuel are mobilized as never before

Such developments relate to crises of subjectivity.

So enter Elizabeth Marvel.

She confuses me. A candidate for President of the United States as Heather Dunbar in *House of Cards* in 2016, and President-elect Elizabeth Keane in *Homeland* in 2017, she's also played five different characters in the *Law & Order* franchise, and Kirsten Dunst's queer supervisor in *Fargo*. Last year, she was in the

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quickly-forgotten film, *The Congressman*.

Marvel says her portrayal of the Presidency was inspired by Shirley Chisholm and Bobby Kennedy, and describes the incumbent, Tiberius, as 'an unrepentant misogynist.' Others to influence her: Hill and Bill, George W Bush, Elizabeth Warren, FDR, and Joe Biden. She thinks Americans ultimately 'want a daddy' to be their head of state.

The recently-concluded season of *Homeland* has seen Marvel's character dealing with two things: the fact that the protagonist Carrie is a lying, cheating, crazy person who thinks of herself as a truthful, honest, and sane one; and a massive nationalist and quasi-Zionist conspiracy against Keane that distorts her fallen son's military death and kills at will in order to provoke right-wing populist violence.

There is a fabulous moment in the penultimate episode of 2017 when she confronts CIA-funded shock jock Elliot O'Keefe (Jake Weber), whose program is funded by a shady corporation working for rogue elements of the CIA (I say 'rogue,' but we are told they operate from the playbook of how the

Agency destabilized Salvador Allende *et al.*).

Kane refuses to be intimidated by O'Keefe's nasty insinuations about her and her late son. She speaks up for an accountable press that seeks out the truth, not lies, as a crucial part of democracy, versus one that fabricates with equal abandon the truth of war and the nature of a show's active audience (largely bots).

Heroic. Great to have a woman President. Right?

You need to watch the final episode. Her character is revealed (we think) to be a monster who knows how to manipulate, exploit, and punish, and has comprehensively played the simpleton Carrie (thereby joining an ever-increasing list).

The series' writers envisaged Marvel's character as a *mélange* of Tiberius and Hillary. Indeed she is. And the season was written with the participation of a former head of the National Security Agency. Alex Gansa, *Homeland's* showrunner, is proud that 'world events ... have caught up with the show'. The writers had to adjust to Tiberius' victory, so they redoubled their annual research efforts: 'We did our

usual field trip down to D.C. in February and talked to people for a long time. We met with, not just our intelligent [*sic*. I think he meant 'intelligence'] consults [*sic*. I think he meant 'consultants'], but House staffers and journalists.'

The result? As the wonderful Claire Danes put it, 'when Trump was elected and our country's fate was determined, I think our writers were really able to metabolize that.'

But FoxNews worries that the show has taken 'a left turn.' Real-life shock jock Rush Limbaugh, previously a fan, says *Homeland* now makes people 'feel angry, betrayed,' because it has been captured by 'political correctness and the leftist view.' This is despite Marvel's performance—he remains a fan of hers.

No wonder the program's viewership is heavily weighted on the coasts, specifically my two former home towns of Gotham and LA...

So I'm clearly not the only confused Marvel fan undone by the conjuncture and her performance. *New York* magazine decreed years ago that she 'has balls.' Nudography.com laments that 'We

don't have any nude pictures of her. Usually this means that she hasn't done any nudity yet. But we could also be wrong, so if you have some nude pictures of her'... they will be accepted, no doubt with glee. Celebdesire.com also needs help with her bra size, height, and weight.

Less confusingly, Marvel is an activist for #fairwageonstage, recalling her decades off-Broadway. At 30, she refused to undergo Botox "treatment" as proposed by some producers. When asked seven years ago, 'What do you think of Donald Trump?,' she replied 'Oddly, his mouth. It's small and puckered and makes me think of an ... well, fill in the blank.' Marvel even avows she'd rather have the oleaginous, murderous Frank Underwood from *House of Cards* as President than Tiberius. Frank is 'so much kinder and such a more decent human being.' Now I'm really confused.

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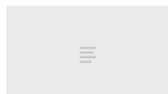
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