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QUESTION 5

Through the construction of their texts, composers have the ability to explore and document significant theories and ideas about the realms of culture and values, by extensively manipulating various language techniques. By analysing this, we can examine how a differing societal context impacts upon the shared beliefs, values and opinions of the composer, and what they convey to a responder. Four texts which demonstrate this concept are Elizabeth (1998), the film directed by Sholokov Kapur, Twelfth Night (1601), the play by William Shakespeare, "Suburban Sonnet" (1968), a poem by Australian poet Gwen Harwood, and the radio piece transcript "Heffernan sorry for barren remarks", (2007) by Peta Donald. All four of these texts variously exemplify how their respective composers have utilised their mastery of language to convey to the responder their perceptions on culture and values in their differing contexts.

In Kapur's Elizabeth, the title character is shown to be a victim of the values present in her patriarchal society. Although she is a woman in power, dominant, ~~assertive~~ and powerful, she still has societal expectations thrust upon her by all, most particularly concerning her lack of marriage and the persistent fact that she has no heir. Her advisor, William Burghley is most frequent to comment on this situation, ~~pleading~~ pleading with her to "let not the care of your diseased estate hang in the balance any longer. In marriage, and in the production of an heir, lies your own safety." Here, the combined aspects of his body language, facial expression,

emotive language, and concerned tone of voice all accumulate to form to Elizabeth the notion that her isolation as leader, and barren state, act as a negative impact on the strength of her position, an opinion shared by the culture of the time. However, in the final moments of the film, where Elizabeth has ruthlessly asserted her dominance at last, she states to ~~William~~ Sir William "Observe, Lord Burghley, I am married to England," the personification of the country ~~will~~ acting as an ironic subversion to Burghley's earlier pleas: she has found true power in her isolation, in a way, marrying her country, instead of a man. Thus, the societal context of the era's values on a woman's role in culture and society is contested by the character of Elizabeth and her position as monarch.

The theme of a "deliberately barren" woman in power is one which still relates to our society today, as demonstrated in Donald's radio piece "Heffernan sorry for barren remarks", where the composer ^{varied} once again explores the values and beliefs of people on the question of the role of women in politics, and what is expected of them. The victim this time is Julia Gillard, the context, the 2007 federal election. Through repetition of the phrase "deliberately barren" throughout the article, in relation to Julia Gillard, is used, like in Elizabeth as a trait to diminish her credibility as a leader in a political context. The main instigator of this was senator Bill Heffernan, who said that a leader "has got to understand their community", the high modality statement clearly demonstrating what he personally values in a leader. He adds to this further

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by stating how ~~valuable~~ "the most important thing in a community is family, and the relationship between Mum, Dad and a bucket of nappies", his colloquialism here again conveying how he values a leader who understands family. However, this opinion is clearly contrasted against that of the then Prime Minister, John Howard, who ~~very~~ assertively states that "whether or not you have children is not something that should be an issue in a political debate". The contrasting opinions between the two politicians on Gillard's "barren" state here demonstrate the conflicting values of today's culture, and hence the varied language use of the politicians explores how Gillard is still the subject of expectation in her position as a woman in power by today's society.

Even Harwood's "Suburban Sonnet" again conveys how the values of a society, this time of the 1960s, and its culture impact upon the perceptions of a composer. The title and form of Harwood's piece, alone, demonstrate her opinions on the values of womanhood in the patriarchal societal context of the 1960s. "Suburban", meaning domestic, and "Sonnet", an expression of deepest love, would seem to combine to form the idea that the persona of the poem is completely satisfied and happy with her role as housewife. However, this expected notion is ironically and satirically subverted by Harwood through the content of the poem, conveying the persona of the poem as being, in actual fact, thoroughly dissatisfied with the lifestyle society has forced upon her. For instance, the

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continued metaphor throughout the poem demonstrates this concept; "the sprung mousetrap where a mouse lies dead" metaphorically laments the position of the woman, crushed by the values that society has placed upon her and the role of housewife she is forced to play. The valued feminine trait of multitasking, a perceived one by renowned linguistic theorists such as Deborah Tannen, is ^{also} conveyed in this text, ~~but~~ but portrayed in a negative light. The persona is said to "play a juggle" (a ^{complex} musical balancing act of repeating melodies and harmonies working together), the juggle symbolically portraying the balancing act of her life. However, the juggle of her life is shown to ^{ironically} lack harmony, as "nausea overpowers subject and counter-subject", ~~thereby~~ demonstrating how the conflicting aspects of her family ("subject") and her music ("counter-subject") react negatively together to produce ~~the same result~~ a climactic result. The composer thus demonstrates ~~how~~ how the persona of the poem is valued by ~~her~~ patriarchal society as both a housewife and multitasker, and through Harwood's extensive manipulation of written language technique, we are presented ~~with~~ with negative perspectives of these perceived dual facets of what constitutes femininity and womanhood.

In Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, we are presented with yet another perspective on how women are valued throughout time in differing social contexts. Similarly to Elizabeth and Julia Gillard, the character of Olivia is portrayed as a woman in power who assertively dominates men. This is shown when she

imperatively ~~the~~ orders her courtiers to "leave me to my hearing", her ~~command~~ commanding tone of voice portraying a distinctly "masculine" characteristic. Linguist Robin Lakoff alluded to this idea of a commanding tone of voice as being a masculine trait, but Olivia subverts this by shortly after portraying more feminine characteristics. "I prithee tell me what thou thinkest of me", she pleads to Cesario, presenting the idea that she values others' opinions of her, and needs affection, a feminine trait (presented by Turner in her book You Just Don't Understand) which contrasts directly to the perceived masculinity of the character portrayed earlier in the play. This conflation of "gendered texts" by the character could be an element which contributes positively to her leadership, similarly to Elizabeth's actions in the Act of Uniformity scene. Here, Elizabeth is shown in both a feminine and masculine light, through Kapur's use of visual language technique - the parallel editing of the scene juxtaposes the ~~active~~ ^{active} feminine brightness of her bed chambers ~~with~~ ^{against} the sombre, black appearance of the courtroom, visually contrasting masculine and feminine aspects of Elizabeth's life against each other. This conflation of gendered texts is further present in her spoken lines, for instance when she asks a Bishop "How can I force you my grace? I am a woman.", her use of humour and irony in her position conveying her body language and spoken language to be of a contrasting nature with each other. Her positioning in the scene as being higher up, visually,

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than the Bishops adds to this notion. Thus, the two composers similarly portray Elizabeth and Olivia as presenting both masculine and feminine characteristics in their positions as dominant female leaders in similar contexts, resulting in a conflation of "genderlects" which inspires the women's respective subjects to more significantly value what their leaders say, exemplifying again how language has been used to explore and alter how womanhood and femininity are valued in society.

In conclusion, the four differing composers individually explore and document significant theories and ideas about culture and values through their manipulation of ~~both~~ visual, written and spoken language techniques. Thus, the four texts show similar and different aspects in relation to the value of women in differing societal contexts, and demonstrate the changing perceptions on the concept throughout time.

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