Henry V: Eccentric King

The word fashion isn't explicitly mentioned anywhere in Henry V, however it can be defined by the manner of doing something; the way a particular character may act in the play and their developments throughout.

Henry V in particular is a great example to define the way in which characters react and overcome events, essentially because he's the protagonist and hero of the play. He's often praised and idolised for his many qualities that make him the great King that he is often perceived to be; he presents himself as an unstoppable force that is cleverly used to persuade his associates through his speeches and pressure his enemies through his messengers i.e. Exeter is made to tell the King and Dauphin of France that the bloodshed will all be the King of France's fault if they didn't hand the throne to the rightful heir as he says 'Deliver up the crown and take mercy on the poor souls whom this hungry war opens his vasty jaws, and on your head turning the widows' tears, the orphans' cries, the dead men's blood, the pining maidens' groans for husbands, fathers, and betrothed lovers, that shall be swallowed in this controversy. This is his claim' – Even though Henry isn't directly delivering this speech himself, it portrays his potential of going to extreme lengths, even if it isn't what he desires and at the same time, poses as an example of the way he can sway men with words, albeit it's not necessarily him.

Additionally his claim to the French throne is driven more so from his urge to succeed rather than actually wanting to hold more power, as seen from scene one, when Canterbury and Exeter persuade Henry to take back France, even if it were for their own benefits. Often how he has been impacted by certain situations shows his ambitious nature and the lengths he would go to protect himself, for example, when the French prince sends Henry a crest of tennis balls when he is crowned, a symbolism of his past as a pleasure-seeker, it angers Henry and drives his ambitious nature to begin a war with France. Moreover, Henry is visualised as a far different man in comparison to the calculating King that he is at the time; his father (Henry IV) claims 'So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men, so stale and cheap to vulgar company, opinion, that did help me to the crown, had still kept loyal to possession' arguing that if he were to act the way the prince were acting at the time, he wouldn't have been king. This is quite contradictory to the in which King Henry is now described as holding a degree of charisma and intelligence that makes him a great king, especially in times of war - His uncle says that there's a difference between his 'greener days and these he masters now', further proving his development from a wild youth to redeeming himself and becoming a king.

Although he's a great ruler, his qualities aren't desirable in a normal person i.e. he is cunning, and often betrays and leaves his friends throughout the play, to secure his own power and fix his imagine on the throne. Henry is also quite manipulative in the way in which he presents himself as a commoner the night before Agincourt; his masquerade is presented as an odd and peculiar act and in that way, manipulating the people into believing that he is one of them. His strong leadership and selflessness will only reflect positively on him and secure his power over his people.

Catherine, on the other hand, is the ideal woman of the time – pretty, quiet and obedient. Almost in a different world as opposed to the war with France. She doesn't play an active role in the

play however is significant because she exemplifies the role of women at the time. She’s generally ignorant of the violence that goes on around her, which is typical of women of her time and especially of her status. The manner in which the two characters act and portray themselves from their language and persona show a contrast in their two very different worlds.