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The Improvisation of Power and Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy: A Greenblattian Approach

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Abstract: The current research examines Stephen Greenblatt's theories on the improvisation of power as well as tyranny in William Shakespeare's second tetralogy to investigate the complex network of non-violent psychological domination of human being's mind, by the manipulation of symbolic order through the stages of displacement and absorption. It examines how the Western psychic mobility and its embodiment in empathy and the improvisation of power affect the represented English society in the Medieval era and how the consequential power relationships impact on the ways of ruling the country. The improvisation of power deconstructs the vertical and hierarchical power relations and makes them more diagonal, horizontal or even upward. The represented Medieval English court is a dark labyrinth of conspiracy, intrigue, treason, and complicity. This duality roots in religious fundamentalism of Roman Catholic church. The tension between the two paradigms of court and church causes turbulence and chaos. The result is the absolute submission of the majority through the improvisation of power, which paves the ground for the Machiavellian minority to exert power and gratify their personal self-interest-driven plans, which are mostly tyrannical. Through the improvisation of power, the course of history could change.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Absorption; Displacement; Empathy; The Improvisation of Power; Tyranny.

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1. Introduction

The current research investigates Stephen Greenblatt's theory on the improvisation of power as well as tyranny in William Shakespeare's second tetralogy to examine the complex web of non-belligerent psychological domination of the human mind, through the manipulation of symbolic order in two stages of displacement and absorption. Symbolic order is a stage, in which a child acquires language, ideology, conventions, laws and the subjectification of self as well as intersubjective communications begin. The improvisation of power often complicates hierarchical relationship through an indirect power exertion methodology, which is usually done to fulfill Machiavellian tyrannical purposes, however in some cases, it is used in the favor of less devilish aims such as impeding the spread of tyranny or pursuing personal and non-political interests. In improvisation of power, the victimizer's desired structure should be along with the existing structures on victim's mind in order to be displaced easily.

William Shakespeare's histories mainly happen in the Medieval era, when Catholicism was the most dominant and widely-accepted discourse, which could help the Machiavellian hypocrites to justify their intention and try to disguise their personal ambitions to righteous Christian acts. Catholicism was not just a religion but an inclusive lifestyle imposed on his subjects. The monarchs had to do their best to reinforce and sustain church's power and authority. Reciprocally, the church guaranteed the court's political cohesion. However, the rivalry and conflict of interests between these two in some occasions could lead into chaos or collapse. Lawrence Stone, the English historicist, and Jonathan Dollimore, the British theorist, use Foucault's ideas to explain the situation of monarchs, represented in Shakespeare's plays. "Jacobean drama, Shakespeare above all, is said to reflect this long-term undermining of established institutions, an undermining which led to revolutionary collapse." (Cressy 126)

The improvisation of power was an efficient strategy for both courtiers and churchmen to influence others indirectly and impose their ideas in a non-violent way in order to achieve their Machiavellian aims. According to *First Folio*, Shakespeare's historical plays includes two tetralogies (the first tetralogy includes *Henry VI Part I, II, and III* as well as *Richard III*, while the second tetralogy includes *Richard II, Henry IV Part I and II* as well as *Henry V*) and two individual plays, including *King John* and *Henry VIII*. William Shakespeare's plays, particularly historical plays have a great capacity to find multitude examples of the improvisation of power. "...Shakespeare became the presiding genius of a popular, urban art form with the capacity to foster psychic mobility in the

service of Elizabethan power; he became the principal maker of what we may see as the prototype of the mass media Professor Lerner so admires.” (Greenblatt, “The Improvisation of Power” 185-186)

The tragic play of *Richard II* is in accordance with the Elizabethan ideas of “Great Chain of Being” and “Sacramental Kingship”. It challenges this very idea whether the kings are appointed by God and there is a divine order in the state, country, and the whole universe. If so, shall common people or even the noble courtiers disturb it? And in case of disturbance, what would be the consequences? Is the country led into chaos or does this entropy and inversion pave the ground for a new order in the state? In *Richard II*, the limits of kings’ power are investigated. No matter how powerful and authoritative the kings are, they would eventually die just like anyone else. Death has superiority over even the most omniscient sovereigns and as King Richard II puts it, death sits in their hollow crown. When a king passes away, just the individual body dies and the political body is transferred to his heir and successor immediately so that the statement of “the king is dead”, is always followed by “long live the king.” King is the emblem of the tradition of kingship, which all those ritualistic ceremonies, traditions, and courtly language are its manifestations. A king, stripped of his title and kingly power and monarchical features, turns into nothing.

In *Henry IV, Part I*, the country beside the foreign threat is at the edge of chaos and anarchy both at the levels of the aristocrats and the common people. As the court is the place of political intrigues, flattery, hypocrisy and lie; Prince Hal tries to recognize himself and cultivate his soul among the poor, criminals, and those who have been despised and rejected. Henry IV is overwhelmed by what he has done, swinging between past and present and looks at the wide gap between what he wished for his kingdom and what he has on hand. In *Part II*, everything is ready for the young Prince’s coronation. The mighty and crafty rebels are either dead or miserable refugees. He has gained the public opinion due to take his duties seriously. However, along with this bright side, there are some sinister shadows, as well. The nostalgic tone in the atmosphere toward Richard II’s death here and there refers to a general regret for the lost better days and the good world. There is a consciousness toward having been victimized by Bolingbroke and his complicity.

Henry V makes a national order and unity in the country, which his predecessors have sought. He is a new king, free of the burden of the guilt of regicide, that was on his father’s shoulders and used to create schism and split among both the courtiers and the common. The crusade turns into a realistic aim, invading France, and Henry V has been able to unite his army to reach the goal.

Although Shakespeare did not know Elizabeth I as a tyrant, but public concerns over the issues such as legitimacy and succession as well as the labyrinthine structure of the court and the complexity of the courtiers' characters and relationship made Shakespeare to look at the mirror of the past and try to project his concerns onto them to portray status que analytically and critically. "Shakespeare approaches his culture not, like Marlowe, as rebel and blasphemer, but rather as dutiful servant, content to improvise a part of his own within its orthodoxy." (Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power" 186). Shakespeare uses the cultural narrative as the raw material for the improvisation of power in the selected play and the representation is sometimes loosely coupled with the historical sources he uses, which are partly due to dramatic effects and partly to the playwright's prejudices and considerations in the specific historical-geographical context, in which the plays have been written. Yet as a great power improviser, Shakespeare managed to create characters more real than real, and we, as readers or audience, are so heavily influenced by his magic that we tend to remember monarchs as he has portrayed them. The improvisation of power creates a kind of post-modern ambiance in Shakespeare's history plays. We, as the readers or spectators, are so heavily under the influence of his magic that tend to remember the monarchs, the way he represents.

The current research examines Stephen Greenblatt's theories on the improvisation of power as well as tyranny in William Shakespeare's second tetralogy to investigate the complex network of non-violent psychological domination of human being's mind, by the manipulation of symbolic order through the stages of displacement and absorption. The objective of current study is examining how the Western psychic mobility and its embodiment in empathy and the improvisation of power affect the English society in the Medieval era, as represented by William Shakespeare in his histories, and how the consequential power relationships impact on the ways of ruling the country.

2. Approach and Methodology

The Mobile Personality: Empathy

According to Daniel Lerner, in *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, due to wars, famine, and many other imposing factors, the western people have been migrating from their homes and adjusting themselves to the changing rhythms of their lives and this constant physical mobility have been creating new psychological aspects such as empathy. However, the self-distancing and projecting oneself to the others, which he calls empathy, may be positive or negative and can arise interjection or projection. Lerner declares: "Projection facilitates identification by assigning to the

object certain preferred attributes of the self-others are “incorporate”...Introjection enlarges identity by attributing to the self-certain desirable attributes of the object...We shall use the word empathy as shorthand for both these mechanisms.” (49)

Greenblatt uses empathy to develop his theory, named the improvisation of power, which is quintessentially a kind of flexibility of identity and capability of self-alienation to get close to the other and get through their mind. It is a kind of self-translation to change the mental structures of the victim's mind without force or aggression, apparently in an empathic and friendly manner. “For Greenblatt, improvisation is ‘the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario’. Such improvisation is made possible by the subversive perception of another's truth as an ideological construct, yet one which resembles the belief system of the improvisator.” (Martin 353)

The Improvisation of Power

As Greenblatt explains in details, the improvisation is a mode of behavior that deals with ambivalence, hypocrisy, duality, and fraud. Improvisation is an indirect way of power exertion, which is done through a pre-planned, general aim while the sequences and tactics are done ad lib. At the heart of the improvisation, there is the art of disguise. The improviser pretends a structural and ideological resemblance to the victim and tries to gain his trust. It is a kind of intellectual colonization, which is done through two tactics: Displacement “By displacement I mean the process whereby a prior symbolic structure is compelled to coexist with other centres of attention that do not necessarily conflict with the original structure” (Greenblatt 167) and Absorption “By absorption I mean the process whereby a symbolic structure is taken into the ego so completely that it ceases to exist as an external phenomenon” (Greenblatt 167)

This creepy insertion into one's mind and manipulating the victim's symbolic structure so that they accept the improviser's imposing narrative and fiction, is the key essence of the whole process. The improviser is a great storyteller, who develops the plot through a complicated system of opportunism without any pre-planned scenario. The improviser has a general plan on mind to reach his/her target but the tactics are done on the spot. The improviser grasps every opportunity and turns it into an advantage to embellish the story and creates a narrative in the favor of his/her purpose. Improvisation is an indirect way of power exertion without any hierarchal limit. Kings can brainwash subjects through the improvisation of power, and vice versa. It is neither racial nor gender-bound. Anyone anywhere can be interpellated. The theory of the improvisation

of power makes us look twice the matter of mind freedom and authenticity of identities. As in his book review, named "Identity and Power in Tudor England: Stephen Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare", Richard Strier puts it: "Reading this book can lead to a newly reflective and properly uneasy sense of the ways in which literature and the psychic structures it represents and engenders can be implicated in the forms which power and domination take in a culture." (394)

In the current research, it seems that different kinds of improvisation of power are seen as this strategy is not limited to the traditional approach toward power exertion, which used to be mainly assumed to be vertical. The horizontal improvisation of power is supposed to happen between peers of the same rank. While the vertical improvisation of power apparently happens in the cases that the improviser has a higher rank, the upward or ascending improvisation of power occurs when the improviser is inferior. The diagonal improvisation of power is the result of interaction of two individuals from different institutes such as church and court. Such classification is not mentioned in Greenblatt's theory and is considered to be the findings and implications of the present study.

Tyrant

In *Tyrant. Shakespeare on Power*, Greenblatt focuses on the energy circulation between Shakespeare's plays and the political situation of England during the renaissance era. Greenblatt shows that how tyrant dictators are not born but made and the whole process of their gaining power and authority is based upon the naïve voters, simple-hearted supporters, and devoted enablers, who pave the ground for the tyrant blindly. Shakespeare shows us how a tyrant rises and falls and what hidden elements contribute in the different tyrannical authorizations.

3. Literature Review

The Cease of Majesty A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays by M.M. Reese is a scholars' recommendation. He pays attention to this point that in the current time, we have been used to chaos and disorder while it was new for the Elizabethan era. The previous order had been demolished and Humanism made everyone undergo self-fashioning and search for a new identity. In that situation, Shakespeare's quest was to redefine not the ideal king but the ideal social relationship and mutual collaboration between kings and subjects. As Shakespeare has depicted in his histories, when the subjects corrupt, the kingdom would fall apart inevitably.

Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V by Derek Traversi gives a full view of Shakespeare's four histories from *Richard II* to *Henry V*. It covers not only the public personality of the kings but also their private characters and moral struggles. He admits that although Shakespeare's histories may not be his masterpieces, they give a good opportunity to see his interpretation of the contemporary historical and political background.

The Greenblatt Reader edited by Michael Payne is an edited collection of the most significant articles by Stephen Greenblatt on Renaissance, New Historicism, Cultural Studies, and Shakespeare. It outlines the main features of New Historicism, which is far more than a literary critical doctrine. It is an approach and mind's habit to look at history and literature. Among the articles, published in this anthology, "The Improvisation of Power" is the focus of the current research.

Tyrant. Shakespeare on Power by Stephen Greenblatt relates with an oblique angle what Shakespeare thought about insatiable lust for unlimited power and absolutism in the mirror of the past and the Medieval English kings in his histories to more modern forms of tyranny in the present century, embodied in the rulers such as Donald Trump. Greenblatt clarifies the features of tyranny as well as the psychological and socio-economic aspects of a dictatorship formation.

Shakespeare's History Plays by Warren Chernaik examines Shakespeare's histories and gives scholarly commentaries on each. The present study focuses not only on the textual evidences but also theatrical and cinematic adaptations. The book begins with a preliminary introduction to Renaissance notion of history and Shakespeare's histories and continues with the controversial debates of the different critics. It deals with Chronicles of Hall, Tillyard, and Holinshed and different views of the contemporary sceptics, liberals, as well as New Historicists'. The remaining seven chapters belong to Henry VI, Richard III, King John, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VIII respectively.

4. The Argument

4.1. Richard II

The improvisation of power is a powerful strategy, where the lower classes may find the chance to exert pressure, authority, or influence on the higher ones. Such a perspective deconstructs the traditional view of vertical power exertion in hierarchies. In a dispute between Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, in the presence of King Richard II, Bolingbroke's tactic signifies a case of the upward improvisation of power, in

which the improviser tries to improvise regarding someone of higher rank. His aim is to defeat his rival, Mowbray, by convincing Richard that Mowbray is a traitor to king. "Bolingbroke...Come I appellant to this princely presence. – / ...Thou are a traitor and a miscreant, / ...With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat, ..." (*Richard II* 1.1.43-45). Such a claim elevates a personal dispute to a national issue. The structure is quite compatible with the kings' constant obsession and Bolingbroke is wise enough to use it in his interest.

The king seems to be impressed and these lines show that seemingly Bolingbroke has been successful in the displacement of the new symbolic structure on Richard's mind. "What doth our cousin lay to Mowbray's charge? / It must be great that can inherit us / So much as of a thought of ill in him." (*Richard II* 1.1.86-8). In the next step, he tries to make some narratives against Mowbray and by the means of fictionalization, continues his processes of absorption and naturalization. He claims that Mowbray has usurped the treasury and contributed in plotting the Duke of Gloucester's death. Mowbray tries to warn the king against the danger of getting manipulated. "O, let my sovereign turn away his face / And bid his ears a little while be deaf, / Till I have told this slander of his blood / How God and good men hate so foul a liar:" (*Richard II* 1.1.115-118). Bolingbroke tries to defend himself against the charge of improvising the king by threatening to cut his tongue since the improvisation of power is a verbal method of power exertion. "... Ere my tongue / Shall wound my honor with such feeble wrong / Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear / The slavish motive of recanting fear..." (*Richard II* 1.1.196-199). The verdict, which was already unfair because of Bolingbroke's improvisation of power, becomes even more unjust due to the familial favoritism.

The improvisation of power is a complicated multifactorial process and the success isn't guaranteed. When Duchess of Gloucester tries to convince Gaunt to interfere in the course of the judgment, as she has held grudge in the murder of Gloucester and wants to take revenge. Gaunt does not listen to her and asks her to take her complaint to God. Since Gaunt, as the symbol of tradition, believes in Great Chain of Being and kings' divine right and has no aim to disturb this hierarchical system. He believes that rebellion against the king is an unforgivable sin and avenge belongs to God. In the improvisation of power, the desired structure should be chosen carefully according to the victim's mindset, otherwise, it would be rejected as a foreign body. Moreover, although apparently the improvisation of power is not gender-based, because of subordinate status of women, the process might be more challenging and less fruitful. This is an example of a failed upward (At that time, women were supposed to be inferiors.) improvisation of power.

In the improvisation of power, there is the art of disguise and theatricality. The first step is a divorce between heart and tongue; therefore, hypocrisy and pretense are almost prevalent. Throughout Richard's explanation, it is revealed that although Bolingbroke refused to bid farewell to the king and his kinship, he has grasped the opportunity to propagandize and increase his power and authority among the commoners by answering their good byes and prayers kindly. Richard says his humble bow to the common people has guaranteed people's compassion to him and his belonging to the land. He shows in his diction, he has no care and commitment to the common and Bolingbroke uses this flaw in his own interest and tries to unite people through the vertical mass improvisation of power on his side. "...in Shakespeare's view, one of the tyrant's most characteristic qualities—is the ability to force his way into the minds of those around him, ...It is as if, in compensation for the pain he has suffered, he has found a way to be present—by force or fraud, violence or insinuation—everywhere and in everyone." (Greenblatt, *Tyrant* 28)

Not just Bolingbroke is a usurper and tyrant, but Richard shows tyranny as well by making up the empty treasury and providing the necessary resources to confront the Irish riot by confiscating Gaunt's wealth (Bolingbroke's inheritance). This mistake turns to be his biggest and if we consider the play as a historical tragedy, this would be when peripeteia happens. Gaunt hopes that the words risen from pain and death may move the king and bring him to his senses. "...Though Richard my life's counsel would not hear, / My death's sad tale may yet undeaf his ear:" (*Richard II* 2.1.18-19) . There are some limited chances, when improvisation of power is used for benevolent reasons, in most cases, it is for the development of tyranny. An intelligent person tries to colonize and dominate another one's mind to gain more power. The victim is like a puppet and behaves just according to the improviser's desire. The improvised one not only obey the improviser but also absorbs the displaced structure as if it has been his/her idea in the first place. In this way, s/he contributes in tyranny and becomes a tyrant unknowingly.

Richard resists his uncle's premonition and prophecy and tries to reject it despite getting terrified and pale-faced. "...Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son, / This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head / Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders." (*Richard II* 2.1.128-130). The upward improvisation of power fails at the stage of absorption. As the play proceeds, we see how the king's misdeeds, lack of foresight, and irrational decisions drive the noble and the common toward Bolingbroke. By the retirement of Welsh army, the last resistance fades out and Richard stands alone to face his destiny. "The crown is at once diminished to the unworthiness of its wearer

and expanded in identity with the realm of whose unity it is both symbol and guarantee..." (Traversi 22)

The network of supporters legitimizes and reinforces the kingdom. Bolingbroke, as a great improviser, knows his victim well and tries to turn Richard's weakness into his own strength. When he is sure enough of the public support, his true intention is revealed and it comes to light that he has not come back to administer justice but to usurp the throne. Richard shows a stunning flexibility and readiness to give up the kingship. The displaced structure is substituting the divinity of sovereignty into a sense of meritocracy. The whole process is done through mass manipulation by Bolingbroke using improvisation to gain power on one hand and Richard's reluctance and lack of self-confidence toward saving the crown, on the other. The power shift is done without any blood shed or violence. "Shakespeare repeatedly depicted the tragic cost of this submission—the moral corruption, the massive waste of treasure, the loss of life—and the desperate, painful, heroic measures required to return a damaged nation to some modicum of health." (Greenblatt, *Tyrant* 6)

The abdicated king equalizes losing his kingship with losing his life. He has been hypnotized totally and has accepted his destiny as a victim of his self-doubts and Bolingbroke's improvisation, therefore, he cannot see the true essence of Bolingbroke as a usurper. The improvisation of power is not a reciprocal process and the victim has no idea of the improviser's true intentions. When the displaced structure is absorbed, the victim thinks that it has been his own idea in the first place, so does Richard. He is convinced that Bolingbroke is a perfect monarch so he gives in without any resistance. "Bolingbroke's motives are ambiguous ...Shakespeare was always alert to a variety of historical processes and his political characters often behave theatrically- at worst being guilty of dissimulation, as best as though they are conscious of taking part in a play." (Hathaway 19)

The main objective of the improvisation for the improviser is gaining more power and dominance. At the end of the process, the victim may lose the sense of orientation. A king is defined through a network of royalist supporters. When his network is broken and his social capital is gone, he remains vulnerable with no identity, title, and power. Richard is confused about his self-image. He is an unkinged king, who has lost his position and does not know who he is anymore. He knows himself as a nameless grief-stricken king. "...O that I were as great / As is my grief, or lesser than my name! / Or that I could forget what I have been, / Or not remember what I must be now. (*Richard II*

3.3.140-143). As Warren Chernaik puts it: “Here and elsewhere in the play, right is equated with the naked exercise of power, and power is equated with the ability to inflict pain without restraint. The obscene ritual crowning is also a re-enactment of the crucifixion, affording York to release from suffering.” (40)

The lost identity should be substituted with another one. As Greenblatt believes in the improvisation of power, the characters’ self-refashioning is done through a chain of narratives. They find their identity through stories and storytelling based on their lives. “...Fictionalization...transforms a fixed symbolic structure into a flexible construct ripe for improvisational entry. This process is at work in Shakespeare’s play, where we may more accurately identify it as submission to narrative self-fashioning.” (Greenblatt, “The Improvisation of Power” 170). Richard knows his death is near and asks the queen to keep him alive by telling his story as the stories would save him from being forgotten. “In winter’s tedious nights sit by the fire / With good old folks and let them tell thee tales / ...Tell thou the lamentable tale of me, / And send the hearers weeping to their beds.” (*Richard II* 5.1.41-46)

Having stripped Richard of his identity and title, the last move of the improviser in this play is the total physical elimination, but not with a direct command as the consequences would be more grave and severe so just a gesture or implicit reference to the right person would be enough. “Exton. Didst thou not mark the king, what words he spake, / ‘Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?’” (*Richard II* 5.4.1-3). Around any tyrant, there are butchers, who are ready to slaughter the enemies without hesitation and so is Exton. There is no need to go far to get them persuaded. They are ready to do anything even without directly addressing them. Exton murders Richard II. The circle of supporters help the new king to turn into a full-scale tyrant. The way to power shift is usually washed with blood and on this red carpet the new tyrant ascends the throne. “The tyrant gives the order, but he obviously does not carry it out himself. And his collaborators include far more than the man with an axe; ...” (Greenblatt, *Tyrant* 50)

4.2. Henry IV (Part I)

A tyrant may seem confident and assertive but they are usually insecure and vulnerable inside. Though Henry IV seems pragmatic and determined to others but deep down is obsessed with sense of guilt because of Richard II’s murder and looks for a way for self-purification. He knows that a religious war in the name of Jesus Christ can both legitimize his reign and turn him from a regicide usurper to a devoted and piteous king and make the local forces put aside their disagreement and get united for a greater goal,

however, the existing situation does not permit him to proceed so his efforts of improvisation remains futile and no one listens to him. Despite the fact that a monarch can take advantage of his naked power any time but improvisation of power is a more complicated lingual and ideological process, which needs suitable infrastructure to succeed. Even kings may sometimes find it difficult to persuade others.

Being aware of Prince Hal's turbulent relationship with his father, Falstaff wants to take advantage of the situation by playing the role of his father. Through an upward improvisation of power, he wants Hal to accept him as his spiritual father, despite their complicated and equivocal relationship. Directed by pleasure principle, he tries to manipulate Hal constantly in order to extend his authority and fulfill his demands and wishes. His ultimate aim of his attempts to improvise is to promote his own social position and reputation after Hal's being king, so that he could fulfill his phantasy of ruling the country by controlling Hal through the improvisation of power. "... and resolution thus fobbed as it is with the rusty / curb of old father antic the law? Do not thou, when / thou art king, hang a thief." (*Henry IV, Part I* 1.2.56-58)

What he is not aware of is that Hal is too intelligent to be improvised easily. In fact, Hal resists Falstaff's constant attempts to manipulate him with aggression or at best indifference. In this monologue, Hal reveals the true nature of his relationship with Falstaff and his companions. He compares himself to the sun, which allows clouds to hide his beauty, but when he decides to be himself again, he would shine through strangling clouds and mists. He implies that his companions have no power on him to impress or manipulate him and his identity is intact and unaffected. "...a successful improvisational career depends upon role-playing, which is in turn allied to the capacity, as Professor Lerner defines empathy, "to see oneself in the other fellow's situation." (Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power" 171). We can interpret such a strategy as a mass improvisation of power. The desired structure to be displaced and absorbed is a mass approval on his competency and legitimacy as a king and he does it through creating sharp contrast.

The improvisation of power affects self-fashioning identities. The need to shape a new identity became the primary concern of the Renaissance man. The psychic mobility and empathy help improvisers to get out of their skin and adapt to the mindset of the victim. They can identify with the victim through a rearrangement. They can distance themselves and get closer to the ideology of the targeted person; think what the victim thinks and do what s/he does. improvisers are good actors. They can hide their true

intentions and play a role. They separate their language and their hearts, and create distance and duality between what they think and what they say. improvisers transform and adopt a new identity. They are no longer what they are.

Another evidence of failed upward improvisation of power happens on Hotspur's refusal to give in Mortimer, his brother-in-law and now a prisoner, to the king. His wife's attempts to improvise fail and he resists responding to her soft words, her feminine tricks like calling herself "a banished woman from my Harry's bed (*Henry IV, Part I* 2.3.41) or her asking him directly and desperately "Do you not love me? Do you not intend?" (*Henry IV, Part I* 2.3.98) as these words belong to the realm of eros, to which Hotspur is an outlander. "The tyrant ... is driven by a range of sexual anxieties: a compulsive need to prove his manhood, dread of impotence... a fear of failure. Hence the penchant for bullying, the vicious misogyny, and the explosive violence." (Greenblatt, *Tyrant* 65). Although Hotspur jeopardizes his life to help his brother-in-law, it has nothing to do with his wife. She should be kept out of it as women are not represented as trustworthy and wise. In this tetralogy, all the female characters are subordinate and submissive. In the patriarchal system, women are not considered that important to be subjected to the improvisation of power except in case of sexual and erotic proceedings. They are directly and frankly ordered or addressed and subjected to naked power exertion.

A key factor in improvisation of power is being enigmatic. The improviser should keep a proper distance with the improvised one to have supremacy and superiority. Too much intimacy and availability may end up in self-disclosure and would jeopardize the whole process as the victim may have the chance to know the improviser's true intentions. Henry IV tries to advise Hal not to be accessible to everyone and explains how his wrapping his presence in the curtains of shadows makes him a charismatic and enigmatic figure or as he puts it that rareness causes solemnity. He warns Hal that his availability takes his dignity away and decreases his power. A king, as an iconic figure, should not be always present in public. He tries to influence his son to be more enigmatic. "...And in that very line, Harry, standest thou, / For thou has lost thy princely privilege / With vile participation: not an eye / But is a-weary of thy common sight,..." (*Henry IV, Part I* 3.2.87-91). He confesses that Richard II was more legitimate and competent but Henry's strategy made him the king. The absence in presence protects improvisers against being decoded and read by the others. They can hide their true intentions better and implement their projects easier and faster.

Henry IV's relationship with Prince Hal is quite complicated. When he tells Hal about the danger of riots and adds that Hal is even more dangerous to him as he may work for Hotspur as his hired one and kill the king, it is not clear whether his words are a father's sincere heart-breaking complaint or a means of the improvisation to gain power in order to provoke Hal against Hotspur. Whatever his true intention is, Hal is moved and reassures his father to defeat the rebels and correct his reputation, indignity, and mischiefs. "K. HENRY. ...To fight against me under Percy's pay, / To dog his heels and urtsy at his frowns, / To show how much thou art degenerate..." (*Henry IV, Part I* 3.2.126-128). In this process, the displaced structure is Hotspur's rivalry over the throne and as Hal is well-focused on being a king, absorbs it fast and looks at it as an opportunity to prove himself right and correct the errors of the past. However, it is not quite obvious whether such a radical shift is due to the displacement and then absorption of the new structure, which his father has tried to insert or is the result of a new epiphanic insight he has gained in his quest.

Manipulating the truth and fictionalization are common strategies in the improvisation of power. Having heard about the king's promise of forgiving the rebels and making peace with them, Wor'ster and Vernon do not trust him. They think that even if Henry IV keeps his promise, he would look at them with suspicion and distrust and would always think that they had brainwashed the young and innocent Hotspur to rebel against him, therefore Hotspur may find the chance to be forgiven while they don't. So, they keep the message from Hotspur and he turns into an instrument in the hands of old rebels. "WOR'STER. There is no seeming mercy in the King. / HOTSPUR. Did you beg any? God forbid! / WOR'STER...He calls us rebels, traitors; and will scourge / With haughty arms this hateful name in us." (*Henry IV, Part I* 5.2.37-40). As Hal kills Hotspur, symbolically devours his traits and qualifications, in other words, Hal becomes Hotspur, with the same self-discipline, and thirst for glory and power.

4.3. Henry IV (Part II)

If the improvisation of power happens among the characters in the plays, in another level, Shakespeare improvises vertically, as well. He does it through different tactics and strategies. Using a character, named Rumor, as the alter-ego of the author is just one of them. The first chapter of the *Gospel of John* in the New Testament begins with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). This verse indicates the power of words and their divine magic. Rumor is based on spreading words created through fictionalization, which is one of the main elements of

the improvisation of power. In another layer, Shakespeare manipulates us through the improvisation of power. We believe his way of narration, his approach in characterization, and his method of historicity and accept them. As a magic storyteller, he dictates us his way of dramatization of history.

Among Hal's companions, it is just Poin, who sees Hal's true essence by calling him "I would think thee a most princely hypocrite." (*Henry IV, Part II* 2.2.50). While Poin can understand that the old links and bonds are broken, Falstaff is so self-centered that he cannot believe it. He desperately tries to keep his relationship with Hal through improvisation of power. Falstaff does not know that he is not the one who improvises the prince but is a part of Hal's master plan for mass improvisation of power. Through him, Hal creates the propagandistic image of a rebellious prince, who would change into a fully responsible king when the time comes. In fact, Falstaff is deceived and manipulated. The situation is quite analogous to what happens at Northumberland's house, where he is advised by his daughter-in-law (Hotspur's wife) not to join the rebels. She implies that as he has broken his promise to his son and left him to die, he has already lost his honor, so, there is no need to worry about it, anymore. "Who then persuaded you to stay at home? / There were two honours lost, yours and your son's..." (*Henry IV, Part II* 2.3.15-16). Northumberland seems to have been impressed. Lady Northumberland, his wife, advises him to escape to Scotland. Everything is settled.

While it seems that Northumberland is moved by his daughter-in-law's mourning and his wife's words, there is still doubt who is the true improviser. Apparently, two women are influencers, while in fact they are the influenced ones, who play their role unknowingly in persuading the improviser, who has already set his mind to escape. "The improvisational process we have been discussing depends for its success upon the concealment of its symbolic center, but as the end approaches this center becomes increasingly visible." (Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power" 185)

In the woods, when Archbishop talks about the tyranny and agony they have been through and how all unjust and wrong deeds have overwhelmed the country, Westmorland tries to manipulate him through the diagonal improvisation of power, as they are from different institutions of court and church and do not belong to the same hierarchy. As the displaced structure should be compatible to the victim's mentality, he uses religious discourse. "If improvisation is made possible by the subversive perception of another's truth as an ideological construct, that construct must at the same time be grasped in terms that bear a certain structural resemblance to one's own set of beliefs." (Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power" 166). The imposed structure is to see all the

events as an act of God since fatalism can turn a victim from an active man to a passive one. "O, my good Lord Mowbray, / Construe the times to their necessities, / And you shall say indeed, it is the time, / And not the king, that doth you injuries... (*Henry IV, Part II* 4.1.104-107)

While Archbishop seems to be impressed, Mowbray shows resistance. "There is a thing within my bosom tells me/ That no conditions of our peace can stand..." (*Henry IV, Part II* 4.1.183-184). Like his father, he knows that Bolingbroke and his sons have duality in words and deeds. In fact, Prince John is a great improviser just like his father, Henry IV, and his brother, Henry V. Without bloodshed, by the power of words alone, he gains their trust and disarms them, and once they become victims, he betrays their trust and arrests them. "He does not need a profound or even reasonably accurate understanding of his victims; he would rather deal in probable impossibilities than improbable possibilities." (Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power" 171). In this situation, two mechanisms contribute; one is Prince John's improvisation of power and another one is the supporting network of a tyrant, who help him fulfill his desire. The improvised victims start to reinforce John's improvisation unknowingly and help him achieve his goal.

Shakespeare emphasizes hypocrisy and duality of heart and tongue in the family. When Hal gives back the stolen crown, his heart-broken father says a truth about him. "...Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts, / Which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart, / To stab at half an hour of my life..." (*Henry IV, Part II* 4.5.106-108). This discrepancy between Hal's appearance and thoughts has already been mentioned by Poins. The king confesses how he usurped the crown in a crooked way and has paid for it with a chain of daily quarrels and bloodsheds. "...For all my reign hath been but as a scene/ Acting that argument..." (*Henry IV, Part II* 4.5.197-198). He advises his son of his political strategy to unite domestic forces under a presumed and hypothetical foreign enemy, for which Hal uses a complicated process of improvisation of power to fulfill, in *Henry V*. On the coronation day, Henry V does not need his companions anymore and his denouncement of Falstaff reminds us of "Power is itself a privilege so tremendous that it demands the sacrifice of everything else, and the ruler to sink himself in his office." (Reese 150)

4.4. Henry V

While Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Ely are planning a plot against the bill, which has been passed in the 11th year of King Henry IV's reign and now is about to be implemented and are looking for a way to improvise King Henry V to save their lands and assets, with a sharp twist, the opportunist king uses their plan as a means to proceed

his own. In improvisation of power, there is usually a general scheme but the tactics are improvised based on the situation spontaneously. Henry V's objective is proving himself as a qualified and legitimate king in spite of his dark background as a prince as well as his father's mischiefs in usurping the throne and regicide. As his father has already advised him, a foreign war can unite the opponents and reinforce his kingdom, he needs church and court support to implement it. Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Ely talk about the transcendental transformation, which the king has gone through after his father's death, and how rational and God-fearing he has become.

Manipulating such a complicated man would not be an easy task to do unless they bribe him and offer him a greater share. They know about the king's ambition and agree to compromise. "*Canterbury*. ...Which I have opened to his grace at large, / As touching France, to give a greater sum / Than ever at one time the clergy yet / Did to his predecessors part withal." (*Henry V* 1.1.78-81). Not just by providing him with the resources, they are persuaded to legalize the attack to France, as well. Canterbury accepts the responsibility of the invasion and at the same time referring to it as sin, contradictorily: "The sin upon my head, dread sovereign! / For in the book of Numbers is it writ: / When the man dies, let the inheritance / Descend unto the daughter. Gracious lord, / Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag, ..." (*Henry V* 1.2.97-102)

It seems that recognizing King Henry's claim to be the righteous sovereign of France is a part of his bribery to King to save the church's properties. The output of such double diagonal improvisation is win-win; the church saves its lands and the king can prove himself in the eyes of those who do not accept him as a qualified king. Moreover, concerning a foreign enemy would distract the court's attention from the domestic affairs. When Canterbury seems to succeed in the displacement of the new structure as the first step of the improvisation of power, Ely and then other noblemen such as Duke of Exeter, his uncle, Earl of Westmoreland reinforce and naturalize it by the process of absorption. "*Ely*. Awake remembrance of these valiant dead / And with your puissant arm renew their feats. / You are their heir; you sit upon their throne; ..." (*Henry V* 1.2.115-117). Ely tries to convince him that not only he is the most legitimate and righteous one but also, it is on him to follow the dead valiant predecessors' path.

Exeter reinforces the structure by paraphrasing Ely's words as the repetition accelerates the absorption. "Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth / Do all expect that you should rouse yourself, / As did the former lions of your blood." (*Henry V* 1.2.122-124), and then Westmoreland assures him of the loyalty and support of his subjects as a

king stands on the summit of a human pyramid and his power is the sum of all his subjects'. "... never king of England / Had nobles richer and more loyal subjects, / Whose hearts have left their bodies here in England / And lie pavilioned in the fields of France." (*Henry V* 1.2.126-129). In order to naturalize their improvisation and to make their argument more persuasive and considerable, they sometimes create a wave of disagreement and then resolve it at once. It seems a very sophisticated political plot, in which it is not clear who the true improviser is. While the clergymen bribe the king to vote against the bill and hereby save their wealth, the king seize the opportunity to make them play their role to justify his thirst to power and ambition to conquest under the cover of rightful claims and provide a great part of the war equipment and mobilizations from their resources.

The religious fundamentalism of Catholicism in the Medieval era is the source of the improvisation of power, as represented in the selected plays. The church's insatiable thirst for wealth and power accumulation and its constant interference in political affairs, on one hand, and the king and courtiers' hypocrisy and pretense to piety and righteousness despite their urge to peruse personal goals and ambitions created a common ground for both sides to collaborate and support each other. In the Medieval court of England, a group of clergymen, under the supervision of the Archbishop of Canterbury, used to do the monarchs' coronation service. The coronation ceremony, with its particular emblems and robes and oil anointment was quite similar to bishops' consecration. It was the archbishop, who put the crown on the new monarch's head, therefore, symbolically both the power and holiness were granted from the church to the court. So, the courtiers 'allegiance to the new king was a new oath to the church. However, such a complicated relationship could cause a lot of rivalry, competition, and tension due to conflict of interest in political and socio-economic affairs.

The duality between these two institutions could be the source of complication of relationship. The church was responsible in both legislation and jurisdiction and any disobedience would both be punished by excommunication. Therefore, in many cases, church and court authorities were not distinguishable and had overlaps in many fields and issues, which was the cause of tension whenever it was not collaborative. In the course of history, there have been few attempts to limit the church's authority, which mainly (with the exception of Henry VIII) did not work. In the 11th century, William I began to discord with church's' interference in political affairs and limit the church's authority. The successors, such as Henry II tried to find effective strategies against bishops' accumulation of wealth and power, which were not very successful. Each time,

the monarch had to repent his trespass and submit to the Pope once again. The dual system cause inconsistency in the characters' psyches as represented in William Shakespeare's histories. Lie, fraud, hypocrisy, abuse, manipulation, and the improvisation of power were among the consequential psychological issues. A court within the court used to complicate and stir up the hierarchical relationship, therefore, the direct vertical power exertion methods did not work and people had to seek more indirect ways to reach their goals. The discrepancy between reality and appearance developed hypocrisy in people who persuade power and wealth while wanted to seem pious Christians and genuine patriots.

It should not be forgotten that King Henry V is King Henry IV's son and he has inherited his eloquence and manipulative power to reunite his forces to achieve his goals. Both pretend that they are not men of words and what they are heartily after, is just their inherence, while both are eloquent and have high level of strategic intelligence. Henry V's character is quite complicated. "Hazlitt, disdainfully characterizing the warrior king as a 'very aimable monster' with 'no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy'" (Chernaik 147). Dauphin's sending him tennis balls is a gesture of humiliation and disrespect. He does not acknowledge Henry's sharp and radical changes and wants to remind him that he still knows him as a playful and frivolous prince. "*Ambassador...Says that you savor too much of your youth, / And bids you be advised there's naught in / France / ...You cannot revel into dukedoms there. / He therefore sends you, meeter for your spirit...*" (*Henry V* 1.2.250-254). The point in the improvisation of power is its spontaneous nature. The improviser grasps any opportunity and uses it in his/her favor. This gesture from Dauphin is the best chance to actualize what Henry V has in mind. He pretends to be offended, therefore, uses it as an excuse to justify his attack.

In wars, the atrocities may be justified as defense and counterattack in order to provoke the soldiers' sense of patriotism and persuade them to keep fighting as Henry V puts it "...When we have marched our rackets to these balls, / We will, in France (by God's grace) play a set / Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard..." (*Henry V* 1.2.261-263). Henry V justifies his brutality and his tyranny by claiming to be the true king of France. He knows himself as a Christian king not a tyrant while his misdeeds, violence, and savagery against the French contradicts it, therefore, he fills the gap with hypocrisy and the improvisation of power. He uses a theocratic discourse as the common ground for his improvisation of power. As a man of God, he tries to upgrade his ambitions into a religious quest, something like a crusade.

Henry V manipulates the soldiers both the noble and the common ones and reunites them to fight for him. In Henry V's ultimatum, there are signs of brutality and tyranny. Disguised and unguarded, he visits the army and talks to the English soldiers to keep their morale up and boost up their courage. Henry tries to sanctify the war and change their minds by saying "...methinks I could not die anywhere so / contented as in the king's company, his cause be / ing just and his quarrel honorable." (*Henry V* 4.1.128-130). He tries to improvise that they share the same goal in attacking France and this is their mutual dream.

The improviser gets improvised eventually, however, it is a matter of doubt whether the whole thing is improvisation of power or not. The improvisation of power is based on deliberate, pre-planned, and tactful series of actions to achieve the goal while Williams, the soldier, seems just to speak out his mind freely. Nevertheless, the result is the same. The desired structure is displaced and absorbed by the king. Williams believes that the agonies of war extend beyond the battlefield; but poor widows have to raise the children by their own and handle the financial matters and the sense of guilt and heavy conscience will torture those soldiers who live. Williams believes that the king brainwashes the army "Ay, he said so, to make us fight cheerfully; ..." (*Henry V* 4.1.197) and that the subjects neither have free will to resist the king's orders nor they have the power to punish the king if he betrays their trust. Henry starts to see the harsh reality of war quintessentially and the heavy costs that his fellowmen have to pay due to his ambition. In an epiphanic moment, he understands that what a burden is on his shoulders and suddenly he sees all the royal privileges are some insignificant ceremonies comparing to such responsibility "...And what have kings, that privates have not too, / Save ceremony, save general ceremony? / And what art thou, thou idle Ceremony?..." (*Henry V* 4.1.243-245)

The improvisation of power can disturb the existing power relations and impact the political power equations as represented in Shakespeare's histories. Greenblatt focuses on the more complex and indirect form of exercise of power, the improvisation of power, which can unbalance classical hierarchical power relationships. No one can claim to be safe and secure of such a means of intellectual and ideological manipulation. From this point of view, Greenblatt's horizontal perspective resembles that of the rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari and the idea of the development and application of power in a rhizomic pattern. The course of energy exertion may be both as much as down, reverse, or maybe horizontal concerning the social reputation and hierarchy of the improviser

and the victim. This matrix gives us a variety of power relations as well as a range of good to evil intentions and motivations behind them.

Still, his character is so complicated that it is not certain whether he has been improvised or just pretends to be educated by the soldiers in order to earn their trust. He uses others but deep down has no sense of respect to them. He calls them brothers while behind their back, he refers to them as fools, wretches, or wretched slaves with vacant minds and gross brains. It is a matter of consideration that Bates or Williams is not punished after criticizing the king so harshly. Has Henry V been truly improvised or pretends to be a democratic sovereign? Or in other words, whether it is an example of an upright or a vertical improvisation of power, is a matter of doubt. "Rulers allow and encourage the coexistence of subversion and containment to certain degree as long as the subversion does not endanger their actual interests and change the relationship between the ruling class and those who are ruled." (Gao 195)

Henry V uses vertical improvisation of power to persuade Katherine, the French princess, to marry him, as well. "Yet leave our cousin Katharine here / with us: /She is our capital demand, comprised / Within the fore-rank of our articles." (*Henry V* 5.2.94-97). He admits that he is just a soldier and is not familiar with the language of love and courtship. "*King Henry*. Fair Katherine, and most fair! / Will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier terms / Such as will enter at a lady's ear, / And plead his love-suit to her gentle heart?" (*Henry V* 5.2.98-101). In fact, he is a great improviser, and "the military dimension of his sexuality is paralleled by his linguistic domination of Katherine" (Holderness 122). Then he tries to impress her by transcending his personal emotions to a greater level. "... I / will have it all mine: and, Kate, when France is / mine and I am yours, then yours is France and / you are mine." (*Henry V* 5.2.179-182). The result of such improvisation of power is her accepting the proposal.

5. Conclusion

The current research examines William Shakespeare's second tetralogy in the light of Stephen Greenblatt's ideas on the improvisation of power and tyranny to focus on the ideological discourses of English court in 14th and 15th century. Shakespeare takes advantage of the history of the monarchy of England during the centuries before the Renaissance to reflect the image of the present in the mirror of past, to show how beside the direct exercise of power over the life and property of people, there is a complex web of intertwined power games, which may not be as radical and direct as naked power, but may lead to considerable changes and have far-reaching national and international

consequences. This wise and conservative strategy is called an oblique angle by Stephen Greenblatt, which was done to survive from censorship and the queen's powerful spy system. As Stephen Greenblatt theorizes, the indirect manner of applying power to others takes an awfully sophisticated strategy, named the improvisation of power, that quintessentially is an intellectual, ideological, and linguistic sort of power exertion.

The *Second Tetralogy* is about the miracle of the improvisation of power, which turned a banished convict to the king of England without any bloodshed and kept his reign stable despite all the domestic and international threats and, moreover, enabled his son to take another country and marry the princess. Both Henry IV and Henry V had a great capacity for the improvisation of power due to high psychic mobility and great sense of empathy. Henry IV could read Richard II's mind and feel his deep sense of insecurity and reluctance to be a king and did his best to propagandize among the courtiers and commoners through the improvisation of power to displace the structure of his being the more righteous and legitimate candidate to the throne. Furthermore, through the improvisation of power, he provoked Hal against the rebels to pursue two goals simultaneously: To educate Hal to be a qualified king and to quash the riot. When Henry V became the king, he used the same strategy to unite the whole country to attack France, both to prove himself as a national hero and to fulfill his ambition to rule over the two countries.

From the perspective of the researcher, the improvisation of power in the light of Shakespeare studies takes place on two distinctly different levels: he as a great improviser and he as the author of the characters who have sunk into the improvisation process. On another level, it examines how kings sometimes use the improvisation to power to legitimize their less rational desires. Such dualism roots in radical fundamentalism of Roman Catholicism and incongruity and discrepancy between the Christian moralities and personal self-interests and ambitions, which leads into a complex chain of lies, conspiracies, and deceptions.

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