Chapter VI

THE DIVERGENCE, PARALLELS
AND THE POINTS OF
CONVERGENCE
When read against the Christian humanist framework of the Elizabethan age, a thematic parallel between morality plays and major tragedies of Shakespeare can be drawn. Like their medieval predecessors, major tragedies, symbolically at least, explore mankind's confrontation with evil, the destructive power of evil and man's ability to attain salvation in spite of fall and destruction.

Each major tragedy—*Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*—explores the relationship between man and evil in a distinctive manner, which can be termed as pattern. In each play man is placed against evil and he reacts to it according to his bent of mind. On the basis of his reaction, four different patterns can be identified. To explore the underlying moral vision and man's relation with evil, each tragedy has a peculiar pattern which can be categorized in the following words: *Hamlet* explores the confrontation between man and evil through the pattern of growth to maturity. In *Othello*, the pattern is that of a virtuous man's fall through deception. The underlying pattern in *King Lear* is that of fall and regeneration thereafter. *Macbeth* chalks out a totally different pattern i.e. pattern of worldly rise and spiritual fall.

Out of this confrontation between man and evil, each play foregrounds a different kind of possibility. Interestingly, except man's nature, nature of evil and of cosmos remains same in all the four plays. Though each pattern is distinctive enough, nevertheless, it shares a kind of relationship with rest of the patterns i.e. certain points can be identified where one pattern either converges, diverges or runs parallel to rest of the patterns e.g. the pattern of *Othello* runs parallel with
Gloucester’s plot in *King Lear*. Like Othello is deceived by Iago to make a sinful moral choice: Gloucester is deceived by Edmund to disinherit Edgar.

As far as the confrontation between man and evil is concerned, each pattern runs parallel to others. Each play depicts mankind’s encounter with subjective or objective evil of this world. Each protagonist encounters evil at different stage of life and of play and he is perished, by the destructive powers of evil, to a great extent. Hamlet is too young when he confronts evil of the world and Lear is too old when he is destroyed, only to regenerate later, by the passions within. If Hamlet and Othello are destroyed by the objective evil: Lear and Macbeth are destroyed by the subjective evil.

Nature of evil is similar in all the patterns and its only motive is to destroy all that is good and virtuous in society. According to Ribner, “Evil is self sufficient which needs no motive beyond the fact of its existence.” The only thing that can be concluded out of these four patterns is that evil is the price of original sin and like morality Vice, its aim is to tempt man, to degenerate his rational self and to turn order into disorder.

The underlying pattern in *Othello* is that of a virtuous man’s fall through deception. The focus of the play is on the process of seduction i.e. how Othello is led to believe in his honest wife’s infidelity, which he was unlikely to, if not deceived, by Iago. Truly, if not worked upon by Iago, Othello was most likely to prove a “dear husband”, a fact accepted by Iago as well:
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, noble, loving nature;
And I dare think, he'\textquoteleft ll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband:

(II.i, 283-86)

The plot, very much in accordance with the pattern, develops the two characters i.e. of Othello and Iago, till act III scene iii i.e. the temptation scene in which Othello ultimately yields to evil.

Othello is undoubtedly a virtuous man and his nobility is apparent from his first appearance on the stage. Edith Sitwell admires Othello in poetic terms. He writes: “The greatness and simplicity of Othello are those of Nature before it was altered by civilization, and his utterances have in them, sometimes the noble heat of the sun under which he was born, sometimes a grave and planetary splendour, sometimes a sonorous and oceanic strength of harmony.” Matthew N. Proser too admires Othello for his conduct. According to him: “His conduct, restrained and self-possessed in the face of Brabantio’s accusations, is both accepted and admired by the Senators, and in Othello can be discerned the grandeur and nobility which must have attracted Desdemona”. Undoubtedly, Othello is “valiant”, “far more fair than black”, who successfully curbs the Turkish invasion.

If Othello is what he seems: Iago is just opposite to what he pretends to be. He boldly announces to Roderigo – “I am not what I am”. His very nature is deceptive from the beginning till the end. If there is any truth it is that under an appearance of sanctity lies a serpent. If he ever reveals his true self, it is either to Roderigo, that only to
deceive him, or in his soliloquies. The following soliloquy foregrounds his deceptive nature

Divinity of hell!
When devils will their blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows
As I do now:

(II. iii, 341-44)

His deceptive nature is the very essence of this tragedy. According to Theodore Spencer: “The concept of the difference between outer show and inner truth is not only important as a part of Iago’s character; it permeates the whole play. The essence of Othello’s tragedy is that he judges wrongly by appearances; he thinks that Iago is honest and Desdemona is false, and he is performing a just action in cruelly murdering his spotless wife.”

Ribner too echoes similar words. According to Ribner, “Iago is revealed to the audience as demi-devil, the incarnation of evil itself, and the negation of moral law. This is not, however, how he appears to the other characters in the play… To the rest of the world and particularly to Othello, he is always ‘honest’ Iago … Like the Claudius of Hamlet; Iago is evil in its traditional role, disguised as good.”

The height of his deception is such that Othello, even after Desdemona’s murder emphasizes on Iago’s honesty:

I say thy husband: dost understand the word?
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.
(V.ii, 154-55)

Deception, instead of virtues, is a matter of pride for him. He keeps on emphasizing on his deceptive nature as in his speech on master – servant relationship:
And throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by 'em, and when they have lin'd
their coats,
Do themselves homage, those fellows have some soul,
And such a one do I profess myself.
(I.i, 52-55)

Deception for him, instead of virtue, is a gateway for material prosperity. If he reveals his reality to Roderigo, it is only to deceive him, to gull him. If his aim, literally, is to “further” himself: symbolically, it is to destroy the order of this universe very much like the morality Vice. He keeps on tempting others only to destroy the harmonious pattern of the created universe.

Actual seduction between good and evil takes place in Act III scene iii. Iago has already won Othello’s confidence through his deceptive honesty as in Brabantio’s encounter, as in the ‘cashiering of Cassio’. He also knows that:

The Moor a free and open nature too,
That thinks men honest that but seems to be so:
(I. iii, 397-98)

Iago, thus, by working on Othello’s deficiencies, by and by, discredits Desdemona. Othello, already a man of defective understanding in domestic matters, ultimately yields to his deception. Undoubtedly, Othello alone is responsible for his fall, for he could have analyzed the given evidences in a better way. But the deception is such that his vision is totally discolored by Iago’s honesty and he, inch by inch, believes in whatever Iago has to offer.
Iago tempts him to make a sinful moral choice and he yields to him. Iago deceives a virtuous man to believe in his wife’s infidelity to such an extent that Othello decides to:

Damn her, lewd minx: O, damn her!
Come, go with me apart, I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death,
For the fair devil: now art thou my lieutenant.

(Il.iii, 482-85)

Undoubtedly, Othello alone is responsible for his fall but it is also true, if not deceived by Iago he was unlikely to make a sinful moral choice. According to Siegel: “In his greatness and weakness he showed the possibilities of human nature. That a man of nobility could fall as he did was a terrifying reminder of the fall of Adam, the noblest of men, and of man’s subsequent proneness to sin.”6 Due to Iago’s deception, “He becomes a man possessed; and this unseats his rational nature until he is entirely blind to truth, and disrupts his emotional nature until the emotions which he once gave least rein to, now entirely possess him. At almost the end, when he is in effect driven mad, he destroys the centre of his own life, and emerges as a nature which has been wholly ruined.”7

This pattern of a virtuous man’s fall, through deception is peculiar to Othello: nevertheless this pattern runs parallel to the pattern of Gloucester’s plot in King Lear. The two plots depict the fall of a virtuous man through deception. Iago and Edmund, both are evil disguised as good. If Iago deceives Othello and inspires him to believe in Desdemona’s infidelity: Edmund discredits Edgar from Gloucester’s eyes. Like Iago, Edmund wins his father’s confidence, led him to believe in Edgar’s treachery and inspires Gloucester to make a sinful
moral choice. Gloucester too is caught, very much like Othello, through his deficiencies e.g. "That thinks men honest that but seems to be so:"
Within a few moments a "dearer" son turns into:

Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain!
(I. ii, 73-75)

If Iago seems a 'motiveless malignity': Edmund is much more clear about his motive. So he announces:

Let me, if not by birth, have land by wit:
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.
(I. iii, 180-81)

Like Othello, Gloucester too fails to distinguish between 'seeming' and 'being' and takes 'seeming' for, 'being'. Owing to this kind of 'error of judgement' his fall is definite. Edmund uses the circumstances for his advantage and Gloucester, being a "credulous father" hardly ever tries to dig out his truth. According to R.B. Heilman: "Gloucester does not take the trouble to go beneath the surface, he falls in with whatever is going on about him: this is, his way of avoiding responsibility. When Edmund makes a specious case against Edgar, Gloucester falls right in with Edmund's plans; he shows what we come to recognize as his characteristic suggestibility, and he dodges the responsibility of finding out what lies behind the superficial evidence." Like Othello, Gloucester is defective in understanding and hence, is responsible for his fall. He is, nevertheless, seduced or tempted through deception. Till the last moment Edmund keeps on deceiving him, until Regan reveals his truth. Only then, Gloucester realizes his mistake. He says then:
O my follies! Then Edgar was abus’d.
Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!
(III. vii, 89-90)

Hence, the pattern of Othello runs parallel to that of the pattern of Gloucester’s plot in King Lear. Process of seduction, in both the patterns, is similar i.e. virtuous and men of noble minds are deceived to make a sinful moral choice.

In a way, Othello, Lear, Gloucester and Macbeth, all are caught in their own self-deceiving passion.

The pattern of Othello diverges from the pattern of Hamlet. This is not to say that Hamlet is not deceived and tempted by evil. He is very much deceived by his passions to avenge his father’s murder. Passions very much rage in his personality and he is deceived by his passions. He is tempted by his passions to resolve again and again as he does when he comes across Fortinbras’ army. He says:

O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.
(IV. iv, 65-66)

Critics interpret his rashness in terms of passions. Lily B. Campbell, in his analysis, shows that Hamlet has become the victim of passion when the play opens. But, like Othello, Lear, Gloucester and Macbeth, he never yields to the wicked passions, never transgresses any of the laws. His grief is dominated by his reason, which prevents him every time from transgressing the laws. According to E.M.W. Tillyard: “It may not be an accident that of the heroes of Shakespeare’s four tragic masterpieces, two, Othello and Lear, are defective in understanding and
two, Hamlet and Macbeth, in will." In a way, his corrupt will is impeded by his sound wit and the only time when he transgresses nature’s law, e.g. the killing of Polonius; he realizes immediately his mistake and is ready for the punishment. Deception is there in Hamlet but the protagonist survives this deception.

The pattern of Othello diverges from the pattern of Macbeth as well. Undoubtedly, deception is there in the play but that is a willing self-deception. His own ambition deceives him and he willingly and knowingly yields to it. A virtuous man does fall but by deceiving himself willingly. Macbeth willingly ignores the voices of conscience, his moral awareness. He is very much aware of his sinful moral choice and its cosmic consequence, which he professes thus:

```
Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
(I.vii, 16-20)
```

As far as the fall of a virtuous man is concerned, the two patterns of Othello and of Macbeth converge with each other; for Macbeth is undoubtedly a “valiant cousin” and “a worthy gentleman” who successfully curbs the revolt against his master. But the two patterns diverge as far as the nature of deception is concerned.

The pattern of Othello again converges with that of King Lear. Again a virtuous man is deceived to fall. Though, Lear is deceived by his pride instead of the objective evil of the world. Lear is a father who
expects, very much like Brabantio, the obedience of his children and their unconditional love.

Tell me, my daughters,
(Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state)
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?

Cordelia rejects to profess her love in exaggerated terms. This results in Lear's disappointment, since he fails to distinguish between 'seeming' and 'being'. Pride and loss of self-control result in lawless violence. Deceived by his pride of authority, he disinherits his daughter with whom he was planning to spend rest of his life. Under the sway of his pride, he fails to see, what ironically Kent can see, that by disinheriting Cordelia, he is also transgressing Nature's law.

Here I disclaim all my parental care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever.

(I.i, 112-115)

Deceived by his pride, Lear makes a sinful choice and transgresses Nature's law. Hence, the pattern of Othello converges with that of King Lear, as far as the fall of a virtuous man through deception, is concerned.

In order to show man's relationship with evil, Macbeth takes up a different kind of pattern i.e. of rise and fall. Initially, "Macbeth is highly esteemed for his valiant and honorable service to the state." According to Holloway: "He is the cynosure, the present saviour of the state." Undoubtedly he is a fine soldier who, initially at least, performs his
duties very much in accordance with the master-servant relationship. True it is that his thoughts are false; but his deeds are loyal to Duncan. He successfully curbs the revolt, defeats Norweyian powers and executes the traitor to death. Inspite of heavy odds, he victoriously returns from the battlefield. Rosse reports his victory to Duncan in the following terms:

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,
Curbing his lavish spirit: and to conclude,
The victory fell on us; –

(I.ii, 55-59)

For his bravery, his master Duncan duly rewards him. But then his 'thriftless ambition' for "solely sovereign sway and masterdom" deceives him, and in turn he deceives himself for he is very much aware of the consequences of his sinful moral choice. To rise is the material world; he willingly ignores all the consequences. His reason is strong enough to inform him about his wrong choice, but he yields to his corrupt will. Hence the focus of the play is on his worldly rise and fallen self. His rise and fall is juxtaposed to show the total corruption of man. His rise is also his fall, but then, he is not ready to return despite his consciousness of sin.

For mine own good,
All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far, that should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

(III.iv, 134-137)
According to Bernard Mc Elroy: “In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare focuses his attention fully upon a problem he had dealt with peripherally in *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*: that of the criminal who is deeply aware of his own criminality, is repulsed by it, but is driven by internal and external pressures ever further into crime.”

By materializing his cursed thoughts he tries to ascend, from a soldier to a king, in the hierarchy of rational souls but he descends to bestial level. Ironically he never enjoys “sovereign sway and masterdom” for which he willingly cancels “that great bond”. He himself confesses this:

```
my way of life
Is fall’n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have;
```

(V. iii, 22-26)

According to G. Wilson Knight: “On the ethical – as opposed to the metaphysical – plane, Macbeth fails through trying to advance from deserved honour as a noble thane to the higher kingly honour to which he has no rights. This kingship he attains. Yet never really possesses it. He is never a proper king: his regality is mockery. Now, through the murk which envelops the action, there are yet glimpses of this sensuous glory which Macbeth desires but which ever eludes his grasp.” Wilson Knight is apt enough, his fall is over all: ethical as well as metaphysical. He degenerates his self to the level of beast. “To be safely thus” i.e. in order to secure his throne, he even does not hesitate for a moment and makes his land a place where:
Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy:

(IV. iii, 168-170)

Under the sway of his ‘thriftless ambition’, he diverges his reason from
divine ‘Reason’, reverses the pattern of values, and turns every natural
order into unnatural one. Ultimately when “the ripeness is all” Macbeth
is overthrown and revenged by all the three orders which he was
disturbing so far. The cosmic world, the social world and the vegetative
world, all stand up against him and take a cumulative revenge. His rise
and fall can be summed up in the words of Siegel: “In Macbeth we are
shown evil as frighteningly present in all of us, ready at all times, given
the favorable circumstances and the relaxation of our will, to drag us
down to our doom... In his fall we see the latent possibilities for evil in
the murky depths of human nature.”

As far as the pattern of worldly rise and spiritual fall is concerned,
it is peculiar to Macbeth alone. No other pattern converges or runs
parallel to it. No other pattern e.g. that of Hamlet, of Othello and of King
Lear shares a kind of relationship with the pattern of Macbeth except
that it completely diverges from these patterns. There is no question of
fall in Hamlet for he never transgresses any of laws. In the words of
Siegel: “Hamlet never commits a crime that would have convinced the
Elizabethan audience that in prosecuting his revenge he had irrevocably
given himself over to the powers of darkness.” There is only growth in
Hamlet. The protagonist grows to maturity, he learns self-control, he
learns to cope up with evil, with the inevitability of death and he learns
the order of nature. He only rises. He enjoys fame in this material world
despite his death and ascends the spiritual ladder that is also the supposed aim of man on this earth.

As far as moral choice is concerned, the pattern of Macbeth again diverges from that of Othello and King Lear. In the case of later two plays the protagonists are deceived by Iago and by pride respectively to make a sinful moral choice. Undoubtedly choice is theirs but they are ignorant of that. Being a man of imperfect wit, Othello and Lear fail to understand the implications of their choices. Othello says about his deception thus:

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar’d my soul and body?
(V. ii, 302-03)

Othello knows that he has “Fall’n in the practice of a damned slave.”

Lear too realizes his foolishness. He confesses that he is “a very foolish fond old man” who is “mainly ignorant”. But in Macbeth’s case things are very different. Sinful moral choice is his own and he is very much aware of his choice. The only thing that impedes him from materializing his cursed thoughts is his moral awareness, which he ultimately overlaps to fulfill his “Vaulting ambition”. He very much knows what he is doing and what will be its implications:

Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.
(I. iv, 50-52)

Though, each protagonist except Hamlet is responsible for his fall: Macbeth alone is aware of his sinful moral choice, its consequences and despite this knowledge he moves ahead. Parker’s words support this
view: “For Macbeth closes not only the Platonic rift between being and seeming, so that to Macbeth, what is, also seems; it closes too the Aristotelian rift between intention and action, for Macbeth translates into action the corruption of the will.”

Moreover Macbeth keeps on transgressing the laws, one after the other, keeps on violating the divine order, keeps on reversing the pattern of natural and unnatural till his death. From Duncan’s murder, till his death he keeps on wading himself into one sin after another. Whereas Othello and Lear do not involve further in sinful activities.

If there is any parallel, one can draw, it is between Claudius, Iago, Edmund and Macbeth. All of them willingly diverge their reason from divine ‘Reason’. They are aware of their sinful choices; nevertheless they reject the notion of order willingly. Even here Macbeth’s character is greater than others, for no other villain again and again professes his moral consciousness and keeps on wading himself into sin as Macbeth. Each speech by Macbeth projects the agony of his soul and his determination to go ahead. Claudius professes his guilty conscience only once. Iago hardly ever does and Edmund professes it just before his death.

As compared to other patterns, the pattern of Hamlet presents an ideal. It foregrounds a totally different approach and that too very much in accordance with the contemporary optimistic beliefs of the society. Theologically it was believed that man was capable enough to survive the blows of fortune and that he could resist evil as well by using his reason wisely. The pattern of Hamlet i.e. growth to maturity exemplifies
the optimistic beliefs of the age. Tillyard in his book writes: “It is not in our power not to be stirred mentally by our appetite but it is in our power to translate them or not to translate them into action.”17 The pattern of Hamlet exemplifies this belief of the Elizabethan age. In the words of Cordelia, Hamlet is:

Th’ expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th’ observ’d of all observers,
(III.i, 153-55)

Nevertheless, Christian critics identify certain Christian flaws in his personality and, according to them, as long as he has those flaws, he would not be able to avenge his father’s murder. According to Ribner: “Hamlet makes one attempt after another to accomplish his goal, but each attempt is a failure because his plans are marred by those very human shortcomings which reveal him as neither a God-figure nor a pathological study, but as a symbol of ordinary humanity.”18 Lily B. Campbell too take the tragedy as a study in passion. He writes: “Yet I believe that if Hamlet is read against a background of contemporary philosophy, it will come to life as a study in passion.”19 According to him, Hamlet is melancholic and the cause is his own passions. “But at the beginning of the play Hamlet is changed from his natural humour through excessive grief... He is become melancholy, but his is unnatural melancholy induced by passion, and his melancholy is inevitably the sanguine adust.”20 Though Hamlet is mature enough not to commit any mortal sin under the sway of his passions, nevertheless, he is victimized by them and gives way to grief and rashness. Though he controls his passion through wit yet he is yet to learn self-control.
Moreover when interpreted in terms of theological beliefs of the age, his understanding about the ways of the world, nature of evil and purposes of divinity is immature. He has yet to learn about these metaphysical problems, which he has confronted at a very tender age.

Just like loss of self-control threatens loss of social identity in Lear, Macbeth and Othello, similarly it does in Hamlet as well. Hamlet’s lack of purpose and inner strength, his lack of worthy mettle is degrading for a king’s son. And it has transformed him from a prince to “rogue and peasant slave”. Mimetic actions of others e.g. professional players, Fortinbras’ adventure do stimulate him to confront Claudius directly but as long as he has divided comprehensiveness, his wit obstructs his way.

His growth lies in his final resolution to avenge his father’s murder. By that time he is a man of single comprehensiveness, instead of a divided one. He can boldly announce to Horatio:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon} & - \\
\text{He that hath kill’d my king and whor’d my mother,} & \\
\text{Popp’d in between th’ election and my hopes,} & \\
\text{Thrown out his angle for my proper life} & \\
\text{And with such coz’nage – is’t not perfect conscience} & \\
\text{To quit him with this arm?} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(V. ii, 63-68)

In short he is witty enough to check his passions because he can distinguish between passion and reason but then, at such a tender age, he is not witty enough as to resolve all kinds of theological controversies implicit in his task. He is provoked by his passions but under its sway he never commits any mortal sin.
Commenting on his last phase of life, Siegel writes: "This is a Hamlet of deep religious feeling, quite different from the one who with a malevolent determination to obtain a richly meet revenge had forgone killing his uncle when he supposed him to be purging his soul."²¹

Undoubtedly, Hamlet in his early phase is an ideal prince, an epitome of Renaissance nobility, but he is not as perfect as Horatio is, which he himself confesses. His grief over his father’s death is not dominated by reason rather his grief is excessive. Commenting on this early phase of Hamlet, Ribner writes: “The Hamlet Shakespeare shows us in his first act is an ordinary mortal bowed down by his human infirmities, by a sense of his own debasement which reflects the universal burden of original sin, and by a disgust with evils of the world which has led him to the brink of suicide.”²²

Instead of accepting the duty laid upon him by his father’s spirit, he curses his destiny:

O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.
(I. v, 196-97)

Instead of accepting sorrows and sufferings as a part of his earthly life, he wants to get rid of them. This divine world is for him full of evil. He displays thus a kind of pessimistic view of the world. Instead of avenging his father’s murder, he expresses doubts and fear about the significance of archaic values, of revenge itself.

As long as he does not learn self-control, he has ‘intellectual obstacles’ or in the words of Siegel, is trapped between ‘Christian-
humanist outlook’ and ‘cynical disillusionment with that outlook’ he is more a complexed personality instead of a mature one.

Nevertheless, his personality undergoes a major change during his voyage to England. He again regenerates as an idle prince instead of a ‘rogue and peasant slave’. By the grace of God he learns the nature of things, of evil and of his destiny. He is no more a troubled personality who makes resolutions only to dissolve them. He affirms his faith in the ways and purposes of divinity.

There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will –
(V. ii, 10-11)

He can now shed his “antic disposition”, his madness that in Shakespeare symbolizes unreasonableness, can throw an open challenge to Claudius. His matured personality can be summed up in the words of Theodore Spenser: “Hamlet is a very different man from the distracted undergraduate he was at the beginning. At the beginning there was a horrible split between his views of the world as it should be and the world as it is. At the end he is reconciled; and his reconciliation has both matured him … he is very different from the youthful rosy picture his Renaissance theoretical education had given him.”

His vision about woman is no more a tainted one though according to Stephen Orgel, men in Shakespeare’s time were in perpetual fear of feminization. In fact Hamlet’s hesitation is widely regarded as ‘feminine’. He has learnt that evil is a part and parcel of this world and he alone does not share it.
This pattern of growth to maturity converges with the pattern of *King Lear*. Despite transgressing Nature’s law, Lear is capable of growth. If Hamlet grows to maturity without transgressing any of the laws: Lear acquires growth only after his fall and consequent sufferings. If Hamlet’s way is impeded by intellectual problems: Lear’s growth is obstructed by his pride. He needs to see better but he cannot. Lear acquires this growth i.e. he learns his mistakes as a king and as a father, in his madness. His madness and sufferings transform him into a grown and regenerated soul. He is self-controlled, very much like Hamlet, and can regard love’s supremacy.

The pattern of *Hamlet* diverges from the pattern of *Othello* and *Macbeth*. Instead of growth there is only fall. Othello as well as Macbeth lose whatever growth they have. Othello loses his growth through deception and Macbeth does it deliberately.

Unlike Hamlet, Othello is a simple and resolute personality. He is not a reflective type like Hamlet and not even tries to dig out the truth. His confrontation with evil results in the loss of self-control. Loss of consciousness and his bloody passions mark one of the first stages of Othello’s psychological journey from contented new husband to wife-murderer. If Hamlet tries to distinguish between ‘seeming’ and ‘being’, Othello accepts ‘seeming’ as ‘being’. Hence he loses whatever growth he has. He himself realizes the loss of his self, of his growth:

That’s he that was Othello; here I am.

(V. ii, 285)
If Hamlet acquires growth to maturity and ascends the ladder of 'being': Othello loses his growth and by transgressing divine law descends in the scale.

Similar is the case in Macbeth. Instead of ascending spiritually, Macbeth prefers to ascend in the hierarchy of rational souls. Ironically he knows what it means nevertheless he willingly keeps all his moral qualms aside and transgresses Nature’s law. Unlike Othello, who is deceived to make a sinful moral choice: Macbeth deliberately breaks the ties:

Come, sealing Night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day,  
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,  
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond  
Which keeps me pale!  

(III.ii, 46-50)

Just like the pattern of growth is peculiar to Hamlet alone similarly the pattern of deliberate fall and willing loss of growth is peculiar to Macbeth. The fascination of worldly powers is too great in Macbeth to be curbed down.

His wit, sound judgement again and again prevents him, but he ultimately violates the divine order of the created universe. If Hamlet ascends to the highest point; Macbeth deliberately falls to the lowest from where growth and regeneration is almost impossible. Hence, instead of growth and regeneration critics find only damnation, complete degeneration. In the words of S.L. Bethell: “Macbeth’s last stand, however is no atonement for his sins: it is not manly but “bear -like” (V. vii, 2), beast like. According to The Governor, this is not fortitude but
desperation; it has no moral value, for those who “hedlonge will fall in to daungers, from whens there is no hope to escape”...So Macbeth, though we may pity him, presumably goes to hell.”

The pattern of *King Lear* mainly emphasizes on the process of regeneration i.e. how man can regenerate his lost self despite fall. Like rest of the protagonists Lear too confronts evil and yields to it. This all is but natural since every man on this earth is inclined to evil. Lear has already made a sinful choice by deciding to shed the ‘duties of Kingship’. According to the Elizabethan beliefs king was the deputy of God and he could relieve himself only after his death. He can never “unburthen” himself like Lear does. Hence, he is already a degenerated personality by the time the play opens. Commenting on the violation of laws in the play, Spencer writes: “Lear, like Gorboduc, violates natural law – and the law of nations as well – by dividing his kingdom, and his daughters violate natural law by their ingratitude, a vice which like the bestial jealousy that overcomes Othello, is called “monstrous” – it is outside the order of Nature.” His sin is the sin of pride, he thinks himself all in all.

Lear has not only confronted evil, he has yielded to it, before the opening. He again transgresses Nature’s law by disinheriting Cordelia from her birthrights. He keeps on committing mistakes till Act II. His decision to unburthen himself, to divide his kingdom, to disinherit Cordelia, to curse Goneril and Regan instead of waiting patiently for divine justice, all these violate divine laws one way or the other.
Consequent chaos and sufferings are but inevitable because of Lear's severe violation of Order.

The pattern in *King Lear* mainly focuses on Lear's sufferings and his regeneration out of these. If Macbeth fails to learn anything from his sufferings: Lear regenerates his self. Since Lear has already upset the cosmic order, has overstepped his 'degree', what remains to see, is its consequences. He suffers at the hands of his own daughters i.e. Goneril and Regan. The man, who gave them all, is not allowed even a fatherly respect. The filial ingratitude leads to mental and physical turmoil. Out of this turmoil emerges regenerated Lear who knows others and who knows himself. He sins because he neither knows himself nor does he know others. Hence, his regeneration is possible only when he is armed with the knowledge of others and with his self. His regeneration lies in his recognition. Initially he neither recognizes his children, nor himself.

His learning, hence, starts with the true knowledge of Goneril and Regan. He recognizes that he is no more "dearer than eyesight" but "an old fool". Recognition in Lear is slow and gradual. Despite the rash behaviour of his daughters he fails to learn that he alone is responsible for unleashing the forces of evil. He thinks that he is a man "More sinn'd against than sinning".

The storm-scene charts Lear's development "from an egocentric, imperceptive, arrogant old tyrant to someone with greater understanding not only of him but of others as well." The tempest in Lear's mind corresponds with that of the tempest in the physical universe and it churns out in Lear the knowledge of his real self. In the words of
Kenneth Muir: "His madness marked the end of the willful, egotistical monarch. He is resurrected as a fully human being." His journey through madness to recovered sanity is also a journey of a fallen man to regeneration. Cut off from his pride, he can see everything in a better light. The journey began with a sense of justice, ultimately ends with the knowledge of injustice done by him. If the hellish storm is set off by his sinful moral choices: this storm enlightens his inner self as well. The storm purges him of his pride and of follies. And if according to Ribner: "In the scheme of regeneration Lear must come to know himself," the following speech foregrounds Lear’s knowledge of self:

Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant.
(V.vii, 59-65)

At this moment, Lear is the most enlightened and regenerated man. He has recovered his rationality.

As far as the relationship with other patterns is concerned, the pattern of King Lear converges with the patterns of Hamlet and Othello as well as that of Macbeth.

Loss of self-control and lack of purpose and inner strength due to certain doubts and fears, concerned with the duty laid upon his soul by his father’s spirit, has undoubtedly transformed Hamlet into “a rogue” and a “peasant slave”. Instead of confronting Claudius like his foil character, Hamlet keeps on introspecting. No where we find a prince
whom critics call an epitome of ‘Renaissance nobility’. Though Hamlet does not degenerate himself through his sinful moral choice but then he is also not a “soldier”, “courtier” or “scholar” for whom Cordelia laments. Instead of a soldier, one confronts a man who is contemplating suicide:

O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d
His canon ‘gainst self- slaughter.

(I.ii, 129-132)

Nevertheless, once Hamlet’s personality has undergone a drastic change, he is again the same courtier, soldier and scholar that he was. If Lear recovers his lost self in this life, Hamlet acquires his regeneration in the words of Fortinbras, after his death. His is a sacrifice to purge his country of Claudius’s sin. Fortinbras commends him in the following words:

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov’d most royal;

(V. ii, 400-03)

These last words have regenerated Hamlet’s soldierly image.

Similarly Othello recovers his lost reason and regenerates his self. If his deficiencies and weaknesses lead him to make a sinful moral choice, he learns the error of judgement through Emilia’s revelation. He punishes himself for his sinful moral choice. By recognizing his error, he has recovered his lost self. Regeneration in Othello is confined to the last scene. It lies in Othello’s recognition of error, his remorse and in
his own punishment for the evil he has done. According to Blissett, “In
*King Lear*, as we have observed, recognition begins almost at once and
is spread over the widest possible dramatic field; so perfect is at the end
that it is not the protagonist but the spectators so far as they continue to
cling to the life of the self, who are in ignorance of their true condition.
In *Othello* recognition for the protagonist is postponed until the latest
possible moment and everything said and done there until is ironic.”

Regeneration and redemption are the two things denied by almost
every critic to Macbeth. According to them he is beyond regeneration as
well as redemption. Undoubtedly, how can any man regenerate himself
when he is deliberately and willingly wading his self into sin. He can
only degenerate his self. Nevertheless, on the basis of previous analysis
on *Macbeth* in this thesis, regeneration can be granted to the protagonist.
Undoubtedly he wades himself into more and more sinful activities, but
the moment of redemption in *Macbeth* can also be termed as the
moment of regeneration. Though Macbeth, till the very last moment,
neither recognizes his error, nor does he confess nevertheless he
renounces objective as well as subjective evil that was degenerating his
self and this renunciation of evil is also the moment of regeneration. He
says:

```
Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow’d my better part of man:
And be these juggling fiends no more believ’d,
That palter with us in a double sense;
```

*(V. ix, 17-20)*
By renouncing evil, Macbeth has recovered his manly self and is restored to his actual place in the chain of being. This is the very short moment when the pattern of *King Lear* converges with that of *Macbeth*.

In a way, each tragedy explores human nature through its distinctive pattern. In each tragedy, the major character is placed in an entirely different situation and he reacts to it differently. Because of inherent evil, each protagonist is inclined to sin and some of them e.g. Othello, Lear and Macbeth do fall. All of them confront subjective as well as objective evil of the world, tempted by it and destroyed to a great extent, nevertheless all of them show the ability to redeem their selves. Moreover, Shakespeare’s observation of human nature is evident in his tragedies of revenge and ambition. Macbeth pursues his goal so desperately in a selfishly mechanical way that he destroys his own chances for a place in the human future. Ambition takes the form of a desire to be reborn in some chosen ideal form, autonomous and powerful. But Macbeth forgets that his sin will lead him in a perpetual state of anxiety and self-alienation. His effort to extend the self ends up in self-division only. The two types of tragedy i.e. of ambition and revenge depict an unwillingness to be overpowered and the will to superior power. Tragedies of ambition depend on the protagonist’s illusion that an exception can endure: tragedies of revenge depend on the protagonist’s illusion that things can and must be made even. In both kinds of tragedy there is the loss of human greatness and protagonist’s inevitable fall from great heights.
To conclude, Hamlet, Othello, Lear and Macbeth, all of them severely confront evil and because of their own deficiencies, either corrupt wit as in the case of Othello and Lear, or corrupt will, as in the case of Hamlet and Macbeth, destroyed by the all pervasive evil to a great extent, nevertheless, in spite of fall and destruction they are capable enough to redeem their selves. Moreover, if these patterns foreground various possibilities out of this confrontation between good and evil: they all assert belief in just and benignant divine order for if good is destroyed, evil too does not survive.
References:


