

**Spectators on Stage: A Study of Eavesdropping Scenes in  
*Othello* and *The Winter's Tale***

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Two protagonists in *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, Othello and Leontes, are similarly jealous. They suddenly become suspicious of their wives' chasteness. Their jealousy puts them under the obsession of their wives' adultery with the men whom they have trusted. The culmination of their jealousy follows eavesdropping scenes in which Iago (or Iago-like language) works the protagonists' perspectives into self-deceptive ones.

This paper argues that the protagonists' spectatorship in the eavesdropping scenes is common to real audience in the theater; they experience a common process of interpreting what they see on stage by what they just heard. The scenes show the protagonists "ocular proofs" which they have required in order to conclude their suspicion. However, the suspicion was originally planted by Iago's delusive language, and their eyes have been so strongly affected that they misunderstand what they see as true "ocular proofs". The language may work on the audience watching the first act of *The Winter's Tale*, because Leontes' eyes affected by Iago-like language is the only interpreter to tell them what is going on the stage.

When the protagonists' points of view to depict what they see onstage in their asides to the audience infected by venomous power of language, it is important that Iago describes himself as a spider. The image of a spider appears even in a speech delivered by Leontes. Considering it as a key to analyze the presence of Iago in both plays, this paper also refers to spider-related expressions. As long as we say that Iago plays a role of a playwright controlling the world of his own play with his masterly words, the presence of Iago may give us a common ground to analyze how the worlds of the plays are made, controlled, and represented in the eyes of spectators both on the stages and in the seats.