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Reality Through Fiction

Both Stoppard and Williams have interesting ways of reflecting how their plays portray what really can occur in reality. Stoppard shows how humans are innately confused about life through his play “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” and Williams shows how humans are both confused and cannot accept what is going on around them. However, through their plays both authors show how completely random and arbitrary the world is by illustrating how random and weird the things going on around Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Blanche are.

In the plays, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” and “A Streetcar Named Desire”, the main characters, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Blanche, all do not understand what is going on in the world, or cannot accept what is going on. The fact that these characters are so confused about life parallels humans because, in real life, most people do not truly ever understand what is going on or they choose to not accept it. In “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead”, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz spend the entire play in confusion, much like real living beings spend their entire lives in confusion. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern start off the play unknowing where they are headed and how they even got to where they are, and end the play in complete confusion as to how each other died. This reflects real life because as a baby, a human does not know anything about where they came from, and they spend their entire lives trying to figure out life’s mysteries, much like how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spend the entire play trying to figure out what exactly is going on. Also, a human does not really know how they die, much like how Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are completely unaware of how the other dies at the end of the play. In “A Streetcar Named Desire”, things are a little bit different in that Blanche is confused as to what is going on around her; however, Williams accentuates the fact more so that she she cannot accept what is going on. For example, she does not understand Stanley and Stella’s relationship and never accepts the fact that their relationship truly relies on nothing but desire. Also, Blanche does not understand the real world itself. She lives in her own fantasy world filled with the polka song, “Varsouviana” and tries to forget her past by cleansing in a bathtub frequently. Blanche is the perfect example of someone that tries to forget what has happened in the past, but it always has a way of creeping up on her. This aspect contrasts Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are trying to remember their past, while Blanche is trying to forget hers.

In both plays, the authors, Stoppard and Williams both reflect on the idea that the universe is full of randomness. This randomness is not just in both the plays, however, but in reality itself. In “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead”, the unpredictability of the coin tossing scenes represents the randomness in the play, and in the world itself. The fact that the coin always lands on heads is completely arbitrary and just goes to show how no one ever really knows what is going to happen in the world. The fact that they always try to predict which side it is going to land on shows how they try to fathom why the world is so random, but they cannot. In “A Streetcar Named Desire”, the randomness is reflected in a different way than a coin toss. The weirdness of what is occurring outside Stanley and Stella’s apartment is random. The lady selling flowers, the Negro woman, and the prostitute all are people outside the Kowalski’s apartment that are doing strange things. However, while these things are randomly occurring they directly correlate to what is going on inside the apartment. The Mexican woman shouts “Flores para los muertos!” whenever Blanche is thinking about her dead ex-husband, the negro women talks about sex with Eunice when something related to “desire” is about to happen, and the prostitute is pursued by a drunk man when Blanche is getting raped by Stanley. The idea of what seem to be unimportant things going on behind the scenes is also reflected in “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” as well. The play that the Tragedians perform parallels exactly what is going on in “Hamlet” as well as what is going on in Rosencrantz’s and Guildenstern’s lives. The Tragedians play shows that the characters who are supposed to be playing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern end up dying in the end, which is exactly what happens to the main characters in Stoppard’s play. This goes to show that things are random in the world, but sometimes those weird occurrences can have more impact than one thinks. In both “A Streetcar Named Desire” and in “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” this is exactly the case, except that in these plays, the events going on outside their own actions directly reflect what is going on in their lives.

In Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire” and Stoppard’s “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead” there are several ways that the main characters reflect what happens in reality, rather than fiction. In both plays the protagonists either do not understand what is going on around them or cannot accept what is going on in her life. Also, The plays themselves portray how random the world truly is.