



## Metatheater and Modernity: Baroque and Neobaroque

By Mary Ann Frese Witt

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*Metatheater and Modernity: Baroque and Neobaroque* is the first work to link the study of metatheater with the concepts of baroque and neobaroque. Arguing that the onset of European modernity in the early seventeenth century and both the modernist and the postmodernist periods of the twentieth century witnessed a flourishing of the phenomenon of theater that reflects on itself as theater, the author reexamines the concepts of metatheater, baroque, and neobaroque through a pairing and close analysis of seventeenth and twentieth century plays. The comparisons include Jean Rotrou's *The True Saint Genesius* with Jean-Paul Sartre's *Kean* and Jean Genet's *The Blacks*; Pierre Corneille's *L'Illusion comique* with Tony Kushner's *The Illusion*; Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *The Impresario* with Luigi Pirandello's theater-in-theater trilogy; Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Pirandello's *Henry IV* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*; Molière's *Impromptu de Versailles* with "impromptu" by Jean Cocteau, Jean Giraudoux, and Eugène Ionesco. *Metatheater and Modernity* also examines the role of technology in the creating and breaking of illusions in both centuries. In contrast to previous work on metatheater, it emphasizes the metatheatrical role of comedy. Metatheater, the author concludes, is both performance and performative: it accomplishes a perceptual transformation in its audience both by defending theater and exposing the illusory quality of the world outside.

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## Metatheater and Modernity: Baroque and Neobaroque By Mary Ann Frese Witt Bibliography

- Rank: #2322384 in eBooks
- Published on: 2012-10-26
- Released on: 2012-10-26
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

[T]here are a few scholars more equipped than Mary Ann Frese Witt to lead the reader through the complex web of scholarship on metatheater and to break new ground on the subject. ... She takes into account every major study on metatheater since the birth of the term, and thus provides the reader with the most useful, accessible, and up-to-date bibliography for anyone working on the topic. *Metatheater and Modernity: Baroque and Neobaroque* is a necessary read for scholars working on the baroque and its twentieth-century legacy, or any student or scholar of theater history. ... [A]n innovative, passionate, and well-organized book. (*Comparative Drama*)

*Metatheater and Modernity* is the first book to link the concept of metatheater with those of baroque and neobaroque. It refines and probes these concepts through close analyses and comparisons of seventeenth with twentieth-century plays. Authors discussed include Rotrou, Sartre, Genet, Corneille, Kushner, Bernini, Shakespeare, Pirandello, Stoppard, Molière, Giraudoux, Ionesco.

#### About the Author

**Mary Ann Frese Witt** received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Harvard University and is now professor emerita at North Carolina State University.

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