



# **Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit: Ideologies of Self-Consciousness in Dunton, D'Urfey, and Sterne (Comparative Cultures and Literatures)**

*Garry H. Sherbert*

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Despite the prominence given to it recently by Mikhail Bakhtin and Northrop Frye, Menippean satire remains a neglected and misunderstood genre. Focusing on the eighteenth-century writers John Dunton, Thomas D'Urfey, and Laurence Sterne, *Menippean Satire and the Poetics of Wit* explores the excesses of these eccentric, transgressive writers who take their readers to the limits of language. As the outlaw of genre, Menippean satire exploits the improprieties supplied by a self-conscious use of wit, the principle of exuberance in eighteenth-century poetics. In fact, the exuberance of wit produces Menippean satire's central paradox that self-conscious writers lose their identity in the very pursuit of it. By tracing wit's exuberance through its abusive metaphors, or catachreses, to the abusive ideologies of class and gender, this genre-study provides a literary tradition for the postmodern deconstructive project, including the work of Jacques Derrida.

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