

Medical Discourse in Martial and Related Texts

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The humorous or satirical treatment of medical practitioners has a long tradition in ancient literature. As far as we can reconstruct, it starts in Greek comedy and is then further elaborated in Menippean satire, the mime and other types of satirical writings. Another genre in which doctors are ridiculed is epigram. The *Anthologia Palatina* contains a wide range of good examples, which seem to have inspired the Latin epigrammatist Martial (* between A.D. 38 and 41, † no later than A.D. 104) who repeatedly makes fun of bad medical practitioners, but also of the behaviour of patients.

In this paper, I will consider the evidence in Martial's corpus and discuss his approach to medicine and the representatives of this discipline under different rubrics which are, however, somewhat connected with each other: (1) the doctor as the bringer of death, (2) the doctor in a sexual context, and (3) other dubious doctors. I will also take into account material from several other authors, especially those collected in the *Anthologia Palatina* and Pliny the Elder.

Secondary literature (very selective):

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