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**Review Essay: Luis Garcia-Ballester, Michael R. McVaugh, and  
Agustin Rubio-Vela, *Medical Licensing and Learning in  
Fourteenth-Century Valencia***

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## BOOK REVIEWS

criticism. In this regard, *Dante Today* can be taken together with the 1990 issue of *Annali d'italianistica: Dante and Modern American Criticism* as both quantitatively and qualitatively representative of the very healthy state of Anglo-American Dante studies.

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Luis Garcia-Ballester, Michael R. McVaugh, and Agustin Rubio-Vela, *Medical Licensing and Learning in Fourteenth-Century Valencia*, American Philosophical Society, 1989, 128 pp., facsim., maps, \$15.00.

The authors of this study have provided a wealth of fascinating material for such a short book. They discuss the development and implications of the licensing of medical practitioners in the Kingdom of Valencia and provide thirty-one documents pertaining to this licensing and its results, printed both in the original Catalan and in English translation. These documents include legal requirements for obtaining a license, accusations of practicing without a license, and a number of recommendations that those examined be licensed to practice various aspects of medicine. They also provide a list of the municipal examiners responsible for this licensing between 1136 and 1400.

The licensing of medical practitioners—physicians, surgeons, and barbers—comes into prominence with the *Furs*, the lawcode of Valencia, of 1329. The *Furs* provided that each year two leading physicians would be selected to examine all prospective physicians in the kingdom. Before they could be licensed, candidates had to study the art of medicine for at least four years in a *studium generale* and then be found competent by the medical license examiners. Only if they met these requirements were they to be licensed to practice medicine.

The authors also discuss how this licensing was carried out and what its implications were for medical care. Valencia was far from being the first kingdom to pass laws requiring licenses for medical practitioners, but the Valencian situation differed from much of the rest of Europe due to its majority Muslim population and substantial Jewish minority. Lawmakers in Valencia, like those in the rest of Europe, were placing increasing importance on university training and professionalization in the practice of medicine. One of the more interesting peculiarities of Valencian licensing procedure is that the city of Valencia itself maintained the right to choose medical license examiners for the entire kingdom. It was certainly hoped that licensed physicians, surgeons, and barbers (and later

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apothecaries) would prevent the injury and debilitation caused by quacks and ill-trained medical personnel. Not surprisingly, though, the results were somewhat different from those anticipated.

If followed strictly, the provisions of the *Furs* would have kept all Jews, Muslims, and women from medical practice, since they were not able to attend a university for training and would usually not know Latin. In general, however, the laws seem only to have applied to the treatment of Christians. Jews and Muslims were left largely to their own devices, although several documents do contain recommendations that Jews be granted medical licenses. Women were forbidden to practice medicine, but there is much evidence to show that they did practice in the area for a long time. Despite attempts to force unlicensed medical personnel to cease practice, the reality of life was that there were too few doctors to serve the needs of the population. The authors' estimate that only six to seven licensed personnel existed (five if only physicians are counted) for every 10,000 inhabitants of Valencia. This number is comparable to the medical care available in the least developed portions of today's world, so it is obvious that a great demand for other healers would remain, despite royal and municipal attempts to control medical practice.

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Robert R. Edwards, *The Dream of Chaucer: Representation and Reflection in the Early Narratives*, Duke University Press, 1989, xvi, 192 pp., biblio., \$34.95.

Readers of Chaucer have long known that his early poems are cast as dream visions, while his later works offer a strong realism. In *The Dream of Chaucer*, Robert R. Edwards, chair of the Department of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo, argues that the seeds of this admirable realism lie deep in the ethereal world of the early dream visions. *The Dream of Chaucer* examines with considerable care, in the usually accepted chronological order, the *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame*, and the *Parliament of Fowls*. The early poems, explains Edwards, are linked together not merely by style, convention, or structure, although certainly all are there, but also by Chaucer's strong adherence to a poetically imaginative approach toward the nature of love, art, and the interpretation of experience (23). Chaucer depended on the poets and rhetoricians whom he read less for pieces and fragments to be reworked (although he did indeed rework pieces and fragments) and more for symbols of meaning. The result is a sophisticated courtly narrative,