Janekyn, and Jankyn her fifth husband, the ‘clerk of Oxenford’ who lives with her gossip (p. 146). But these are minor quibbles about a book which, with scholarly panache, provides a fundamental rethink of Chaucer’s relationship with Italian literature.

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In this wide-ranging and thought-provoking study, Jamie C. Fumo sets out to show that Chaucer took on, reshaped, and bequeathed a model of poetic authority in which the god Apollo played a significant part as ‘a mythographic icon of the classicizing poet’s self-image’ (p. 11). Thanks to his reading of Ovid above all, but also traditions deriving from Virgil, medieval mythography, and Christian allegory and polemic, Chaucer was heir to an ambivalent portrayal of Apollo as conqueror of Python, oracle, poet, healer, and artistic authority. In turn, Fumo argues, Chaucer’s successors appropriated his Apolline poetics for their own purposes.

Fumo’s interests are broad, and in practice the first half of the book is only tangentially concerned with Chaucer. Two lengthy chapters explore Apollo’s roles in Ovid and Ovidian tradition, and in medieval hermeneutics: Ovid’s ‘cynical recasting’ of Apolline myth repeatedly undermines the credibility of ‘a god who straddles precariously, rather than confidently mediates, the divine and human realms’ (pp. 33, 38). Fumo argues that this negative view is picked up by medieval English writers far more than their counterparts on the Continent. By contrast, chapter 2 delves into some mythographic writings more friendly to Apollo – including Christian allegorizations – alongside anti-pagan polemic. If somewhat unsystematic, and at times loosely tethered to the Chaucerian chapters that follow, this enterprising tour of mythography from Hyginus to the Middle English *Assembly of Gods* has an impressive scholarly range.

Three shorter chapters then cover Chaucer’s *Troilus* and the Squire’s, Franklin’s, and Manciple’s Tales, with some attention to *The House of Fame*. Fumo’s reading of *Troilus* as a ‘prequel’ to, and Augustinian critique of, Virgil’s *Aeneid* belongs to the tradition of interpretations heavily conditioned by the closing Christian polemic against ‘payens corsed olde rites’: the Apollo who is implicated in the destruction of the city as well as its original building must eventually be replaced by Christ. A particularly valuable section explores the connections between *Troilus* and Joseph of Exeter’s *Ylias*, locating some suggestive verbal connections between Troilus’ ‘double sorwe’ and the ‘geminos … dolores’ of the twice-sacked Troy, as well as broader literary correspondences between the two: this strand seems ripe for further development. Chapter 4 offers an intricate account
of the relationship between the Squire’s and Franklin’s Tales, making much of their shared allusions to Apollo. Fumo helpfully sketches a de-ironized reading of the former, in which the Squire has elements of Chaucerian self-portraiture; she regards the Franklin’s riposte as a self-interested misreading. A short but valuable section shows how writers from Lydgate to Spenser appropriated the poetics of both tales. By contrast, the final chapter on the Manciple’s Tale is not particularly interested in the teller, regarding the tale rather as Chaucer’s own ‘figurative idol-smashing’ in advance of the Christian verities of the Parson’s Tale, and persuasively emphasizing the quasi-oracular powers of the Crow.

This is a book whose energies go in many directions, and the sheer wealth of detail and range of citation throughout the study sometimes threaten to swamp its leading arguments. Nonetheless, what emerges is a valuable contribution to the study of Chaucer’s ‘proto-humanist’ (p. 20) sense of his own poetic authority in a richly intertextual environment. If Chaucer can seem constitutionally sceptical of the vatic authority of ‘olde bookes’, Fumo suggests, this is because he found such scepticism already fully-fledged in Ovid and the post-Ovidian traditions that shaped his work.

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The general argument of this book is clear and simple. David Carlson maintains that, throughout the fourteenth century in England, some poetry was written at the instance of the monarchic state for official, essentially propagandist, purposes, and that this process culminated in John Gower’s *Cronica tripartita* and ‘In Praise of Peace’, which were composed between c.1399 and 1405 to sustain the newly established Lancastrian regime, which had come to power through a murderous usurpation and which sought to sustain itself by, amongst other things, a ruthless manipulation of information. But, as Carlson also demonstrates, the modalities through which this state-sponsored propaganda were articulated and encouraged were complex and various – government writs, newsletters, pamphlets, some of which are still extant and of some of which Carlson, by patient and expert scrutiny of the attitudinal and verbal similarities of the various sources which may have used them, establishes the likelihood of existence. He also demonstrates, with great aplomb and some humour, that it is often difficult to know whether a text was commissioned or not. Some poets were adept, when there is no objective evidence of commissioning, at giving the impression that they were writing for a patron – as if trying to attract one. Others, who may have been commissioned, occlude the fact because the patron may not have wished to admit that he was paying for a panegyric. Richard of