9. *Greek Theatre Performance*. An Introduction. By David Wiles. Cambridge U.P., 2000. Pp. xii + 243, with 19 plates and 20 figures. Hardback £35.00, paperback £12.95.
10. *The Andromache and Euripidean Tragedy*. Oxford Classical Monographs. By William Allan. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xii + 310. £40.00.

Roman Literature
With the notable exception of Virgil's Dido, the role of female characters has been somewhat underplayed in the critical literature on Roman epic. Alison Keith's [B]*Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic*[1] sets out to rectify this omission; her slim volume is, however, something of a disappointment. One of the weaknesses of classical feminist analysis has been a propensity to crude generalization and a concomitant blindness to subtle distinctions and nuances; and K. has not entirely freed herself from these defects. A tendency to draw broad, general conclusions on the basis of too few examples is apparent throughout the five chapters; it may well be true, for example, that Ennius' Ilia is a passive figure, appropriately 'absorbed' into the male-dominated landscape of Italy by her immersion in the Tiber (42–6), but the same is certainly not true (39–40) of Lucretius' *Natura* (in many ways a more active, dominant figure than the 'heroic' Epicurus). K. argues in her fourth chapter that women are repeatedly represented in epic as responsible for the outbreak of war, and that this strategy allows a displacement of male anxieties about warfare onto the female; again, however, she has elided some important distinctions (between the active Dido and the passive Lavinia, for example), and also ignored further complicating factors such as the role of Cacus (a male analogue for the female Allecto?) or the notorious difficulties surrounding the motivation of Turnus. Ultimately, nothing very startling emerges here: Roman men are dominant and aggressive, Roman women are passive and disempowered; only occasionally does K. hint at ways in which epic might have sought to challenge or subvert the dominant ideology of patriarchal Roman society. Another topic neglected in recent scholarship – according to Emma Gee – is the astronomical aspect of Ovid's *Fasti*. G.'s monograph [B]★★*Ovid, Aratus and Augustus: Astronomy in Ovid's Fasti*[2] looks at the astronomical passages from a number of different angles, with particular emphasis on their relation to Augustan political discourse and to the Stoicism of Aratus' *Phaenomena*. She has interesting things to say about Ovid's 'fragmentation' of Aratus' unified cosmos, and about the poet's playful (or playfully subversive?) treatment of Julius Caesar's catasterism. The book still bears the marks, however, of its origin as a doctoral thesis: the mass of detail does not really add up to a coherent whole, and it is often hard to see where the argument is going. It is not always clear whether G. is arguing for a 'subversive' or a straightforwardly Augustan reading of the poem; her analysis of particular passages, too, is sometimes rather strained (I was not convinced, for example, by the argument [32–3] that divination and astrology are mutually opposed in Propertius 4.1). G.'s scholarship is nevertheless impressive, and her book will undoubtedly be of value to students of Aratus as well as Ovid. A more traditional, formalist approach to the *Fasti* is adopted by Elena Merli, [B]★★*Arma canant alii: Materia epica e narrazione elegiaca nei fasti di Ovidio*,[3] who inclines to reject the currently popular view of the poem as subversive in either the political or the literary sphere. Ovid's 'pacifism' and rejection of *arma* need not be seen – she argues – as either oppositional or parodic; rather, these tendencies are symptomatic of a rejection of old-style, Ennian epic

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and the kind of heroism it celebrates (represented in Ovid's poem particularly by the god Mars), in favour of a more sophisticated, modern, and Augustan system of values. It might be argued that the *Fasti* is a more slippery text than M. allows (when does 'rewriting' become 'parody'?), and resists her attempts – particularly in the first two chapters – to pin it down as a celebratory, Augustan poem; nevertheless, her analysis of particular passages (especially the Hercules and Cacus and Cremera episodes, discussed in chapters 4 and 5) is largely persuasive, and her reading of the poem as a whole at least has the merit of offering an alternative to what is fast becoming the consensus. In contrast to both Gee's and Merli's monographs, W. R. Johnson's [B]★*Lucretius and the Modern World*[4] is clearly aimed at a broad general audience; this is an example of that extremely rare phenomenon, a good popular treatment of a classical subject. J. sets out to give his reader a brief introduction to Lucretius' ideas and the modern reception of his poem; but the main thrust of the book is, essentially, that Lucretius was (or might have been) right. J.'s emphasis lies, naturally enough, on Epicurean ethics and theology and on the cagey attitude towards technological 'progress' displayed in the latter part of *DRN* 5 (his discussion of the latter in chapter 2 is particularly good). While there are one or two errors of detail here (the Epicurean gods, e.g., are not mortal, as stated on page 15; nor is it quite accurate to characterize Epicurean pleasure as a process rather than a condition, 24), it is immensely refreshing to read such a positive account of Lucretius' style and ideas, which stresses, above all, the essential optimism and attractiveness of the system. (At times, perhaps, J. goes a little too far: I suspect that not many readers of the poem feel that they are 'having mostly serious fun', 25!) In the second part of the book, J. gives a very readable account of modern reactions to the poem. The focus here is particularly on Lucretius' important role in the 'culture wars' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the nineteenth-century invention of the 'melancholy poet', and the gradual marginalization and 'demolition' of his claims as a serious thinker in the twentieth. J. ends with an impassioned plea for the reconsideration of Lucretius' ideas as an antidote to what he calls 'technomysticism' and the unbridled development of destructive technologies by 'bad scientists who work for bad technocrats' (154). Were Seneca's tragedies originally intended for stage performance? It is clear from the variety of opinions expressed by the twelve contributors to [B]*Seneca in Performance*[5] that we are as far as ever from achieving any kind of consensus on this old chestnut of literary history. The multiplicity of perspectives adopted in George Harrison's collection is, however, arguably its greatest strength. As is often the case with edited conference proceedings such as this, the quality of the material is somewhat uneven; but the best and most stimulating pieces succeed in various ways in transcending a simplistic dichotomy between recitation and full theatrical performance. An excellent introductory essay by John Fitch suggests that a range of different performance contexts might have been envisaged at different times by the playwright himself: some plays (and some scenes) are more 'theatrical' than others. Fitch's discussion is nicely complemented by that of Sander Goldberg, who contrasts the *verbal* power of Senecan drama with the *visual* presentation of violence in Elizabethan tragedy, concluding that Seneca does not *need* the stage, but 'is dramatic as declamation itself is dramatic' (227). C. W. Marshall argues that many supposed problems (such as those raised by Elaine Fantham in her discussion of scene changes and the role of the chorus in the *Troades*) disappear if we abandon the assumption that acting conventions were naturalistic. Other contributors

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make interesting comparisons with the *spectacula* of the arena (Shelton) and with contemporary domestic art (Varner), or draw on their own practical experience of modern staging (Volk and – less convincingly – Raby). Performance criticism has been equally prominent in recent work on Roman comedy, and David Christenson's commentary [B]*Plautus, Amphitruo*[6] – the latest addition to the Cambridge 'green and yellow' series – is no exception. A substantial section of the excellent introduction is devoted to issues relating to staging, and both introduction and notes make much of Plautus' playful and sophisticated metatheatrical games. Indeed, C. argues persuasively that this is not a tragicomedy in the modern sense: critics have been misled by their failure to envisage the play in performance into taking – for instance – Alcumena's famous monologue far too seriously. The introduction also includes a brief sketch of the history of Greek and Roman comedy, discussion of the play's possible models, and an exceptionally lucid and helpful account of Plautus' metres. C.'s commentary, too, is hard to fault: linguistic and metrical matters are handled with admirable clarity, while discussion of word-play, irony, and metatheatrical jokes does much to bring out the humour of the play. This is, in short, both a serviceable teaching text and an important contribution to the current renaissance in the study of Roman comedy. Another scholar who has done much to put Plautus and Terence back on the map is A. S. Gratwick, whose 1987 Aris & Phillips edition of the [B]★*Adelphoe*[7] is now reissued in a fully revised version. The most obvious difference between the two editions is the striking improvement in the physical appearance of the volume: gone are the horrible paper and badly-reproduced type, though it must be said that – in these days of desktop publishing – Aris & Phillips's production standards still leave something to be desired. Both text and translation have been revised, and some additions made to the notes and bibliography; the metrical appendix is replaced by a longer – though scarcely more accessible – discussion. G. has also somewhat modified his view of the play's ending: his second thoughts on this controversial question are set out in a new section appended to the introduction. Though I remain, personally, unconvinced, I can do no better than reiterate my distinguished predecessor's approval of G.'s 'intelligent, detailed argument that every New Comedy scholar will want to read' (Don Fowler, *G&R* 35 [1988], 208).

MONICA R. GALE

NOTES

1. *Engendering Rome*. Women in Latin Epic. Roman Literature and its Contexts. By A. M. Keith. Cambridge U.P., 2000. Pp. xii + 149. Hardback £35.00, paperback £11.95.
2. *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus*. Astronomy in Ovid's *Fasti*. Cambridge Classical Studies. By Emma Gee. Cambridge U.P., 2000. Pp. xi + 226, with 3 illustrations. £35.00.
3. *Arma canant alii*. Materia epica e narrazione elegiaca nei *fasti* di Ovidio. Studi e Testi 16. By Elena Merli. University of Florence, 2000. Pp. 356. Paper L.50,000.
4. *Lucretius and the Modern World*. Classical Interfaces. By W. R. Johnson. Duckworth, London, 2000. Pp. x + 163. Paper £9.99.
5. *Seneca in Performance*. Edited by George W. M. Harrison. Duckworth, London, 2000. Pp. xi + 260. £40.00.
6. *Plautus, Amphitruo*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Edited by David M. Christenson. Cambridge U.P., 2000. Pp. x + 339. Hardback £45.00, paperback £15.95.
7. *Terence, The Brothers*. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Notes by A. S. Gratwick. Aris & Phillips, Warminster, 2nd edition 1999. Pp. vi + 248. Cloth £35.00, limp £16.50.

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