Emotions in antiquity offer a relatively fresh topic, although erôs the passion and Erôs the early god of Hesiod and later imp of epigram and Pompeian painting have enjoyed close attention. The volume under review includes wide-ranging examination (Hesiod to Aelian) of the psychology, physiology, and phenomenology of ancient Greek erôs. It explores its language, imagery, customs, ideologies, and imaginary laws. The Greeks discussed this unruly appetite in different genres such as epic, lyric, and later epigram, tragedy, and philosophy (the last discipline, as usual and typically, even understandably but unfortunately, dominating modern studies of ancient emotion). The rich and diverse volume has been divided into four parts, each essay helpfully introduced by Thumiger: "Phenomenology and Psychology"; "Philosophy and Science"; "Divine and Human Erôs"; and “Imagery and Language”. This review follows the book’s somewhat baffling arrangement.

The Introduction addresses the inevitable and important question of whether assessments made across cultures and epochs are defensible. On the same page (4), Sanders and Thumiger state that such trans-cultural judgments constitute a “fallacy” and that “other cultures’ emotions are usually identifiable and relatable to our own emotions.” The present volume’s value is predicated on adopting the second view. Their examples of Greek/English orgê/anger and aidôs/shame as not coterminous but “clearly related” exemplify their position, although any term in this fuzzy area is fraught with the variable extent of denotative and connotative overlap. Consider, e.g., pathos/emotion passively suffered, epithumia/desiring active appetite, bdeluria/disgust. More often than one might expect, the Greeks don’t have a word for it, e.g., sexual jealousy (Sanders), although pace the usual procedures and positivistic prejudices of Classical Philology, this absence of convenient vocabulary equivalents does not mean that they did not experience the ‘feeling’ and symptoms in question.

Awkwardly sandwiching Medea and Sappho are Konstan on “why can’t animals have erôs?” and Smith on Aelian’s quirky interspecies eroticism. Konstan, who has written more than any other current scholar on ancient emotions, explores the vocabulary and mental world of erôs, then examines bestial “cross-species enamourments” (17), but discovers no love within [other] animal species. Their passions, infatuations, and so on fall short of human reciprocal love and their marriages can only be “figurative” (25). The collection endorses Konstan’s now largely uncontroversial theses for ancient passions: emotions are socially constructed and the classical period elevated a paederastic paradigm for love in life and (philosophical) literature.
Thumiger focuses on the destructive and predatory nature of erôs when it is central in tragedy (28), examining Aeschylus’ Supplices, Sophocles’ Trachiniae, and Euripides’ annihilating Medea. Even bewildered Deianira excuses her husband’s infidelity, in part, because the intensity of erôs overpowers even gods as well as humans (vv. 436-444). The overlaps of erôs, madness, and jealousy arise, an issue that Sanders too addresses in his essay. Tragic erôs is monstrous in its psychological trauma, a wound that often translates into physical damage. Clytaemnestra’s and Medea’s community-wrecking egocentrism brooks no conciliation or compromise (39). Erôs for blood-licking drives Clytaemnestra to murder (A. A. 1478). Thumiger’s intelligent essay somewhat flatly observes that tragedy has no truck with “happy, reciprocated erôs”.

Sanders explains that jealousy, socially disruptive and a generally taboo mood (like envy, phthonos, 52), unusually (for emotions) requires three people. In the one-upmanship world of ancient Athens, jealousy expressed itself differently from its manifestations in our post-Christian orbit. Sanders persuasively argues that the status-obsessed Medea revises her plan for revenge against Jason’s outrage, from killing his new wife and him, to killing his new wife and their mutual children, after she has learned, as a barbarian woman stranded among clueless Greek men, that Creon, Jason, and Aigeus are all obsessed with children to continue their lines (49). Medea betrays a maelstrom of victimization, having been belittled repeatedly (cf. Arist. Rh. 1378b14-15 on the techniques): offense at Jason’s hybris, envy of the Corinthian princess, hatred of Creon, also anger at Jason’s smarmy rationalizations. Sanders explains well why the oleaginous Jason must live, while so many other less guilty parties die: he must experience the extinguishing of his line.

D’Angour rethinks and rewrites Sappho fr. 31, trying to rid us of prejudices engendered by Catullus’ ‘version’. His essay seems too speculative to me, including four further stanzas of his own, although he has a good discussion of alla pan tolmaton, ‘all can be risked’, that allows it a more active and martial imagery and meaning than usual. Smith discusses the third century C.E, paradox-loving anecdotist Aelian. His de natura animalium sports some examples of interspecies erotic reciprocity (anteros), a boy and his frisky horse, boys and dolphins, human-animal affection, if not copulation (lagneia), etc. Smith could fruitfully pursue his point that Aelian “ironize[s] high-minded philosophizing, especially in the area of sexual morality” (89).

Part II explores philosophical and scientific comments on erôs. Essays question the unnatural views that Plato provocatively presents, in the Symposium and Phaedrus but also Republic and Timaeus. Eros is a noble kubernetes, epibates, parastates, hegemon, and soter, were we, or anyone, to believe the paradoxical speech of comic Plato’s tragic Agathon (Smp. 197d-e). Renaut finds Plato intellectualizing and rechanneling traditional beliefs about thumos and