Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East. Edited by SARA KIPFER. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, vol. 285. Fribourg: ACADEMIC PRESS, 2017. Pp. viii + 293, illus.

Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East emerged from a workshop held at the 61st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Geneva and Bern, June 22–26, 2015. As the editor states, the volume tries to redress the commonly accepted view that "ancient Near Eastern art does not represent any emotion" (p. 1). Such a view is rightfully perceived as obsolete, and it is a testament to the innovative nature of the present collection that the scholars who participated in the workshop attempted to rectify this situation. E. Wagner-Durand explains the state of affairs eloquently when she claims that "hardly anything is more human and therefore worthy of an anthropologically driven study than emotions" (p. 91).

The articles published in the volume address several questions: among others, "What can we learn about emotional concepts and the perception of emotion in the ancient Near East from visual art? … How do emotions such as "grief", "joy", "fear", "love", "anger" relate to social behavior, actions, and ritual practices that show up in ancient Near Eastern figurative art? … [and how does the function of emotion] relate to the ancient Near Eastern understanding of human, gender, body, agency, etc.?" (p. 10). These issues illustrate the ambitious goals of the organizers of the workshop and the contributors to the volume and speak to the necessity for a broader emphasis not only on the topic of the iconography of emotions, but also for an interdisciplinary approach to such a topic. It is safe to say that the volume delivers on all fronts.

Kipfer's introduction (pp. 1–23) gives a brief overview of the terminology, and, more importantly, provides the theoretical framework for the book as well as its scope. Clear and well sourced, Kipfer's chapter indeed sets the stage for the rest of the book, which is divided into two main sections for a total of eleven articles: "Facial Expression, Gestures and Body Posture: Different Aspects of Visualizing Emotions (Case Studies)" (pp. 25–156) and "Comparative Methodology, Linguistics and Art Historical Analyses: Theoretical Reflections on Visualizing Emotions" (pp. 157–286).

The first two articles, by O. Keel (pp. 27–54) and D. Bonatz (pp. 55–74), focus on the topic of portraiture. These studies have different purposes, however. Keel's, whose article was originally written in the 1990s, looks back at the history of the discipline and concludes that emotions were ultimately absent from the representations of Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian rulers alike. Bonatz's article focuses on the Neo-Assyrian reliefs to determine that whereas emotions are well documented in the royal inscriptions accompanying the reliefs, they are absent from the reliefs themselves. Indeed, in his opinion, "die assyrische Bildideologie keinen Raum für derart mächtige Gefühlsausbrüche des assyrischen Königs lässt" (p. 65). Both authors seem to agree in their assessment that the visualization of emotions in Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs was not articulated in the rulers' facial expressions.

The third article of part I, by E. Wagner-Durand (pp. 75–93), is a response to Bonatz. The point of departure, methodologically grounded in the field of psychology, is the importance of "a shared definition of the term emotion, despite its discussed ambiguity" (p. 77). Even with a working definition in place, Wagner-Durand stresses the challenges posed by the cultural divide that separates the modern researcher from the ancient subject. Her conclusions are somewhat pessimistic; indeed she states that "we are not yet able to understand the ways and mechanisms of emotions and their visualization in ancient Mesopotamia" (p. 91).

W. Zwickel's article on "The Iconography of Emotions in the Ancient Near East and in Ancient Egypt" (pp. 95–121) offers more encouraging results. Like Wagner-Durand, Zwickel also recognizes the divide between "us" and "them" and concludes that "emotions were represented differently in antiquity than in modern times" (p. 105). Unlike Wagner-Durand, however, Zwickel identifies some of the emotions represented in the visual arts and concludes that gender might have played a role in the representation of these emotions since "joy and mourning were more often connected with women than with men" (p. 105).

I. Cornelius' study (pp. 123–48) "takes Zwickel's article as a starting point and presents a short overview of the current state of research on the history of emotion" (p. 140). His conclusions are even more encouraging than Zwickel's: by focusing on representations of eyes, mouths, and noses of human

beings, Cornelius concludes that "perhaps there are *some* faces depicting some *sort* of emotion. At the very least there might be *tendencies* towards the representation of emotions in the visual material of the ancient Near East" (p. 142). In her response to Cornelius's study, S. Schroer (pp. 149–55) follows a more conservative approach and argues for the absence of facial expressions in ancient Near Eastern art (p. 151). This article concludes part I of the volume.

Part II, dedicated to broader theoretical issues, contains five articles of different scope. Those by Lippke, Jaques, and Wagner address different features in regard to the visualization of emotions. Whereas Lippke (pp. 159–84) examines the topic from a philosophical viewpoint, Jaques's approach is philological as she surveys Sumerian and Akkadian documents in search of "conventional" and "non-conventional expressions" (pp. 185–205, esp. 188–90). Her opening statement that "[t]he study of the expression of emotion in ancient Mesopotamia is subject to the boundaries implied by a language and a culture that disappeared two thousand years ago" reminds us of how fraught with challenges this topic is for the philologist (p. 185). Her classification of the vocabulary of emotion is a useful heuristic tool, and her rigorous discussion of the textual evidence allows Jaques to demonstrate convincingly that "[t]he texts show that a vocabulary of emotion existed in the languages of Mesopotamia" (p. 202).

Wagner, on the other hand, employs metaphor analyses to investigate emotions and, more broadly, mentalities (pp. 207–18). K. Sonik (pp. 218–61) provides the reader with a thorough overview of three potentially useful approaches for future researchers: first and foremost, she makes a very compelling case for a comparative approach while at the same time reminding us of the necessity of situating emotional experiences in their cultural, social, and historical contexts (pp. 233–34). Secondly, she argues that the volume under review should be considered as a starting point in the study of emotions, especially given the dearth of previous studies on the topic (pp. 234–36). Finally, Sonik highlights the inherent distinction between "the emotional 'content' of the artworks (… and) the emotions evoked by artworks" (p. 236) and further elaborates on the question (pp. 236–45). J. Baines's contribution, in the form of an epilogue (pp. 263–85), offers some preliminary conclusions on the subject under investigation and brings finality to the volume.

Visualizing Emotions in the Ancient Near East is an important interdisciplinary work on the study of emotions within and outside of Mesopotamia. The individual articles are well written and edited and their language is accessible to a broad audience, thus fostering the interdisciplinary collaboration advocated by Sonik in her article. These articles also offer a variety of perspectives and therefore provide much food for thought for those among us who are not currently investigating emotions in texts and art.

I have just two minor observations: First, I think the volume would have benefited from inverting the order of Parts I and II. This organization seems more logical to me—theoretical considerations placed before a discussion of case studies—but the one adopted by the editor does not take anything away from the overall quality of the volume. Secondly, most of the articles are accompanied by black and white plates. These are extremely useful, but the inconsistency of their location—sometimes within the body of the article, sometimes at the end—is confusing. Personally, I would have preferred to see the artifacts as they were described, and therefore in the body of the text.

Overall, this volume is a very informative contribution to a poorly understood topic. It highlights the challenges art historians and philologists face when dealing with the study of emotion's visualization in ancient Near Eastern art and, to a lesser extent, texts. It is to be hoped that rather than being a conclusion, the articles here published will provide a foundation upon which to build our further understanding of emotions in antiquity.

Alhena Gadotti
Towson University