The last chapter is devoted to 'agency' and environmental change, and seeks to explain the "behaviour of rock art", stating that "rock art may be the ideal subject for an exploration of prehistoric perception and cognition expressed in material culture" (p. 115). Could environmental changes have posed a threat to people's worldviews and to the rock art through which they expressed and promoted their understanding of the world? Theories of material agency are used here, and the main argument is: if rock art has agency, then it is an active entity that can have effects on, and be affected by, society and even possibly elements of the environment.

After a presentation of definitions of perception, cognition, landscape and that dreadful non-word 'taskscape', the author turns to "the agency of art" (p. 120). Robb has argued that the concept of agency is now almost redundant, but Nimura believes that it remains essential so as to postulate that rock art was not a passive entity, and that its powerful role in society enabled it to have an effect on and be enacted upon by human agents. This is the volume's core research theme, although it takes up only the last ten pages. Nimura guides the reader via material agency and actor-network theory, drawing inspiration from the work of Alfred Gell, who argued that "art is a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it" (p. 121); but why can it not be both and many other things besides? Nimura does not explain why she favours this theory or why she considers it better than others.

The final chapter claims that the volume has "evaluated theories that bestow great importance to the effects that environment and material culture could have on humans" (p. 125). But, in fact, there is no evaluation of theories anywhere in this book. Numerous authors and ideas are cited but uncritically; Nimura never indicates which ones might be more plausible than others or—heaven forbid—which ones are useless.

In any case, as the author accepts that the purposes of rock art differed throughout Scandinavia, and as one can assume that these purposes also changed over the course of time (some motifs being re-carved, others created and revisited over generations), why seek a single overarching theory in the first place? The last paragraph asks "would changes to the landscape such as shoreline displacement have affected the purpose and meaning of rock art for the communities that made and used these sites?" (p. 129). I would suggest that the common-sense answer is 'possibly', or perhaps even 'probably'. This question leads to what Nimura calls a second theory—that is, that the purpose of rock art might have been altered to have an effect on the disappearing sea. Here, she is on much thinner ice, as we have absolutely no idea. I do not believe that the application of agency theory here has advanced our understanding of this phenomenon or lessened the enormous uncertainties involved. In short, the major contribution of this volume, for which it can be highly recommended, is the presentation of the pan-Scandinavian rock art data.

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Dan Monah. *Anthropomorphic representations in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture*. 2016. viii+444 pages, 6 colour and numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-232-1 paperback £55.

If I had to characterise this volume in two words they would be 'vintage Monah'. From the opening sentence, it is clear that the framework within which the figurines of the Cucuteni-Tripolye groups of Old Europe (fifth to third millennia BC in Romania, Moldova and Ukraine) will be discussed is religion. Indeed, despite his own warning that "it is meaningless to invent mythologies and names of Gods" (p. 2), Monah's persistent rhetoric and recurrent arguments throughout the volume unequivocally relate these prehistoric figurines to Anatolian and Greek mythologies and their divine pantheons. Thus, not only are the human representations he studies termed "idols" (p. 6) and suggested to represent, among other divinities, *Potnia Theron* (p. 131), or to feature in rituals such as *hieros gamos*, but he also introduces an art-historical vocabulary (e.g. bas-relief, ronde-bosse) to describe these images. The theoretical foundations underpinning Monah's approach—comparative religion and the history of religion—is almost entirely borrowed from Mircea Eliade with minor additions from James Frazer, Erich Neumann and Olaf Höckmann.

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The introductory chapter may be of some interest for the non-Eastern European reader for examples of irrational attitudes to the interpretation of figurines, but it does not outline the content of the book. What is clearly stated, however, is that Monah does not favour statistical analysis, which reflects his selective use of numbers (e.g. in his discussion of cardinal points) and disregard for the overwhelming number of fragmentary figurines that do not support his interpretation (see below). Moreover, although it is clear that not all Cucuteni-Tripolye figurines are illustrated in Monah's volume, the introduction does not state whether all of the figurines that are illustrated are actually discussed in the accompanying text.

Chapter 1 deals with the history of figurine research, in which the legacy and longevity of some ideas are identified. Chapter 2, one of the longest, discusses site by site the conditions under which the figurines were discovered. Monah argues for a random distribution of figurines, which is his way of saying that the majority of the figurines were not found in primary contexts. He divides the contexts into ritual (e.g. sanctuaries) and non-ritual (e.g. pits), and thereby creates a circular argument—sanctuaries are defined through the presence of complete figurines, and figurines are ritual objects because they are found in sanctuaries. He further postulates an essentialist and deterministic relationship between complete figurines and sacred contexts, maintaining that any other combination (e.g. fragments in pits) is not representative of the function and use of figurines; the only exception is when broken figurines are taken to indicate 'ritual' breakage.

The key message of Chapter 3, 'Material and techniques', is that technology also has a deep, religious significance, namely the fact that the majority of the figurines are made of two halves. In later chapters, this finding is related to the 'binary' nature of the portrayed character: the 'duality of the spirit', androgyny, *coincidentia oppositorum* and so on.

The next three chapters present Monah's formal typology of Cucuteni-Tripolye figurines, despite his statement in Chapter 8 that "formal typology has no certain religious relevance, therefore to decipher religion, a different approach is needed" (p. 103). These chapters all follow the same structure; having defined his ten typological criteria—technological, dimensional, positional, compositional, modelling, ornamental, age, maternity, sexual and artistic—examples of each type are then discussed in detail. The total number of figurines of each type is unclear, but, if anyone is interested in large figurines (K_{IIC}) or seated statuettes with undifferentiated legs (K_{IIIB2a}), his classification is a very useful reference point. The discussion is an eclectic combination of detailed description of finds and contexts, Monah's own ideas and experience, references to key sites supporting his views, and concepts derived from his selected scholarly influences. The spatial distributions of figurines are often discussed, although no distribution maps are provided.

Chapters 7–11 refer to violin-shaped bone pendants, anthropomorphic pots and objects, ceramics with anthropomorphic decoration and garments, footwear, jewellery and hairstyles. The teleological rationale is that, even though made of different materials, these images share the common denominator of the human form and therefore should convey the same function and significance as 'sacred objects'. Thus, despite the weak links of many of these varied objects to ritual paraphernalia, in these chapters, Monah persists with his core topic, leading the reader into the final crescendo on great religious themes.

Chapter 12 explores recurrent themes including *Potnia Theron*, *hieros gamos* and concepts such as *coincidentia oppositorum*; but the overarching topic is the 'Great Mother'. Monah is clear that his conclusions are not necessarily valid across the whole of south-eastern Europe, but refer primarily to the Cucuteni-Tripolye region. He is also clear that what he offers is not a reconstruction of religion but a thematic typology of epiphanies and kratophanies, that is, the appearance and realisation of sacred power.

Monah's volume is an English version of two previous Romanian editions (1997; 2012). It presents a mixture of a very literate reading of the evidence interleaved with more abstract concepts (e.g. transubstantiation, simulacrum, sympathetic magic). The Western European scholar will struggle with the structure and the nature of the arguments, which are much more at home within the Eastern European literature. These arguments often take a diversion, which, although interesting, makes the overall style of argumentation difficult to follow. A better structure would have been to place the details and description in a catalogue and to have made the chapters more discursive. The English reader may also find the language arcane. The text would have benefited from editing and proofreading by a native speaker (the most embarrassing mistake being the repetition of the same title for Chapters 4 and 5).

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This volume by the late Dan Monah shows erudition in amassing all sorts of evidence, mostly from mythology and comparative religion, to make a case for the essentialist and universalistic religious associations of anthropomorphic images, which for sceptics like me remains unconvincing. Even if, however, the interpretation is not innovative, this does not diminish the value of the wealth of information presented in this richly illustrated volume.

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Ernestine S. Elster, Eugenia Isetti, John Robb & Antonella Traverso (ed.). 2016. *The archaeology of Grotta Scaloria: ritual in Neolithic southeast Italy* (Monumenta Archaeologica 38). 2016. xxviii+418 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, tables. Los Angeles (CA): Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press; 978-938770-07-4 hardback $89.

"Grotta Scaloria is the cave that everybody knows and nobody knows" (p. 369); yet readers finishing this comprehensive report will have reason to doubt the second clause of that statement by the volume's editors. Ernestine S. Elster, Eugenia Isetti, John Robb and Antonella Traverso have produced a meticulously detailed account of research at a site that is important both for Italian prehistory and for the history of archaeology more generally.

Scaloria Cave is located in Puglia on a marine terrace overlooking the coastal plain between the Adriatic Sea and the Gargano Promontory near the famous Neolithic ditched villages of the Tavoliere Plain. It is a steeply sloping interstratal cavern of irregular form originally entered through a sinkhole that leads down to the first of the cave's two chambers. This entrance collapsed in antiquity, obscuring the cave's existence until 1931 when Scaloria's Upper Chamber was accidentally revealed during the construction of an aqueduct. Archaeological reconnaissance by Quintino Quagliati recovered Neolithic pottery vessels of many styles, stone tools and human remains. Among the finds, pots with fine trichrome decoration were designated as 'Scaloria' wares and became a fixture in the Italian Neolithic pottery typologies of the twentieth century.

The Lower Chamber, below and beyond the Upper Chamber, is accessed with some difficulty by a low, narrow gallery and terminates with a shallow lake. Discovered in 1967 by amateur cavers and studied immediately by the late Santo Tiné, it became famous as the 'Cave of the Waters' thanks to dramatic evidence for the ritual collection of stillicide waters. Here, Tiné found some 40 groups of Middle Neolithic pottery vessels that were once filled with water dripping from the stalactites above. All were positioned close to broken stalagmites, some even placed directly atop the bases of truncated examples, with subsequent stalagmites issuing from them. Most groups were found near a small, water-filled basin cut into the chamber's floor or near the lake at the bottom of the chamber. The Lower Chamber of Scaloria provides one of the most spectacular examples of Neolithic cult practices known from Italy.

The archaeological potential of Scaloria Cave was recognised by Marija Gimbutas. She and Tiné collaborated in 1978 and 1979 to excavate the cave's exterior, its sinkhole entrance and the Upper Chamber, with work supervised by Shan Winn and Daniel Shimabaku, following a plan that employed then-new methods of American archaeology. The project was never fully published for various reasons, not least the fact that by then Gimbutas's interests had definitively shifted to the 'goddess' studies that preoccupied the rest of her career. Other than Robb's 1990 bioarchaeological study of the human remains, no further research was conducted at Scaloria, until now.

This volume brings together everything known about Scaloria, especially the unpublished Gimbutas-Tiné campaign. Old data are summarised and new studies are presented in a handsome volume that does not stint on colour illustration. The book is divided into seven chapters, each save the last comprised of two or more separate contributions, with short summaries in Italian. Ten online appendices provide a wealth

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