A scholarly consensus on issues regarding the closure and form of the Writings has been elusive. This volume seeks to address these issues in an introductory collection of essays by European authors focusing on the shape and formation of the Writings and the resulting hermeneutical implications. The editors of the book have written extensively on this subject and loosely arranged the book according to its sequence. Each essay uses a variety of methods and demonstrates an astute awareness of the relevant issues while furthering the conversation by raising provocative questions.

Steinberg and Stone ably introduce the collection with their essay “The Historical Formation of the Writings in Antiquity.” It is a well-balanced overview of the current debate and introduces the central themes of the subsequent essays. The authors both agree with and move beyond Brevard Childs by contending, especially with regard to the Writings, that the canonical process and the canon are both related in scope and shape. The final form of the books in the canon and the shape of the canon developed as a result of the canonical processes of thought redaction, composition, and compilation.

Peter Brandt offers a detailed and methodical investigation of the different final forms of the Writings in Jewish and Christian traditions in “Final Forms of the Writings: The Jewish and Christian Traditions.” From his analysis, he concludes that the editors of Christian Bibles shaped the books into different sequences that rarely corresponded to the Jewish collection. As a result of this diversity, Brandt insightfully states that, with regards to canonical hermeneutics, it would be best “to allow a certain plurality of arrangement and to appreciate the potential of several of the historically important orders for exegesis” (p. 84). Stephen Dempster examines the various placements of the book of Ruth within the Hebrew canon in his whimsically titled essay, “A Wandering Moabite: Ruth—A Book in Search of a Canonical Home.” He contends that the different locations and contexts of the book had implications for its interpretation and meaning.

Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger present a reflective treatment of the influence of the character of David on Psalms in the article “Thoughts on the ‘Davidization’ of the Psalter.” Their analysis follows several recurring themes, motifs, and images in Psalms that are grounded in the life and person of David as “king, poet, and musician” (p. 124) and that laid the foundation for later messianic interpretations. In “Reading Job following the Psalms,” Will Kynes maintains that reading the book of Psalms is a precondition to understanding
the book of Job. He supports his thesis by demonstrating several important intertextual and form-critical links between the two books.

Steinberg analyzes the theological ramifications of the canonical order of the wisdom books in his essay “The Place of Wisdom Literature in an Old Testament Theology: A Thematic and Structural-Canonical Approach.” As the title states, he uses a thematic and structural-canonical approach to address the problem of understanding wisdom literature within the context of OT theology. Of special interest is Steinberg’s solution, which suggests that creation theology, Israelology, and anthropology provide the necessary keys to this thorny issue. Stone’s essay, “The Search for Order: The Compilational History of Ruth,” addresses a topic similar to that of Dempster’s essay, yet he looks at the issue through the lens of the history of the formation of the Megillot. He asserts that the three different locations of Ruth in the canon (also noted by Dempster), which still exist today, were intentional and influential to the meaning of the text.

Negative views related to the placement of the book of Daniel in the Writings are addressed by Amber Warhurst in “The Associative Effects of Daniel in the Writings.” Interestingly, Warhurst counteracts this view by additionally offering positive aspects regarding this placement, specifically that the motifs of exile and of temple vessels connect the book to Ezra–Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles. The former motif may persist throughout Israel’s subsequent history, but God’s care and sovereignty are clearly evident. Hendrik J. Koorevaar’s essay “Chronicles as the Intended Conclusion to the Old Testament Canon,” focuses on the purpose and function of the book of Chronicles as the seal of the OT canon. This function solidifies the order of the canon and is evinced by its inclusive structuring, beginning with Adam and ending with Cyrus. Koorevaar’s assertion that the book of Matthew opens the seal closed by Chronicles is thought provoking.

Georg Steins again addresses the relationship between the book of Chronicles and canon closure in “Torah-Binding and Canon Closure: On the Origin and Canonical Function of the Book of Chronicles.” However, he notes that the closing aspect of the canon is inherent in the biblical text. Steins convincingly shows that the act of Torah-binding is accomplished by recapitulating Israel’s history and centering the text on the Torah. Finally, Stephen B. Chapman, in his essay “‘A Threefold Cord is Not Quickly Broken’: Interpretation by Canonical Division in Early Judaism and Christianity,” challenges John Barton’s and James Barr’s contention that ancient Jewish and Christian interpretations of the biblical text were “atomistic” (p. 283) and a “random assortment of proverbial proof-texts” (p. 304). He suggests the ancient designation and use of tripartite Scripture to undergird interpretation points to a holistic view of the text and a literary awareness. The book concludes with three responses by John Barton, Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, and Christopher R. Seitz.

This collection of essays, without exception, presents articles that are carefully and methodically researched and articulated. In addition, the essays raise insightful questions that further the discussion and conversation in the study of the formation, shape, and interpretation of the Writings. However, it is important to remember the editors’ caveat that there is insufficient data that addresses the canonical process directly (p. 9). Therefore it is difficult for any one position to be argued without uncertainty. Despite this obstacle, the authors
demonstrate that it is possible to glean from comparative studies and inferences about biblical texts some plausible theories (p. 9). Overall, Steinberg and Stone’s volume is a valuable and impressive contribution to the field.

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David Willgren’s The Formation of the ‘Book’ of Psalms is a revision of his Th.D. thesis completed at Lund University. In this six-part book, Willgren presents a thought-provoking challenge to the past few decades of Psalm scholarship, which has found intentionality behind the Psalter’s arrangement and formation.

Part 1 (“Framing the Task at Hand”) surveys modern scholarship on the formation of the book of Psalms. Willgren focuses much of his attention on the work of Gerald H. Wilson, who prompted the modern shift from Psalm-enexegese to Psalterexegese. Willgren also examines the notions of anthologies and paratexts, two concepts crucial for analysis of the Psalter’s formation. He defines an anthology as “a compilation of independent texts, actively selected and organized in relation to some present needs, inviting readers to a platform of continuous dialogue” (p. 25) and a paratext as “the very elements that bring a book together” (p. 30).

In light of this backdrop, part 2 (“Anthologies Compared”) investigates ancient anthologies such as the Sumerian Temple Hymns, the Hebrew Bible’s Book of the Twelve, the Hodayot (Thanksgiving Scroll), and the Homeric Hymns. Willgren concludes that significant variations exist between these anthologies’ different editions and that their paratexts always play a clear role on the perception of the collection to which they belong.

In part 3 (“The Artifacts”), Willgren examines the 41 Psalms scrolls attested at Qumran. He critiques the so-called “Qumran Psalms Hypothesis” that James A. Sanders put forth when 11Q5 was first published, arguing that 11Q5 does not represent a collection in competition with the Masoretic Text’s Psalter and that the varying forms of the Psalter at Qumran provide no evidence for a two-stage stabilization of the book of Psalms.

Part 4, “In Search of the Artificial,” challenges the identification of possible paratexts commonly thought to illuminate the Psalter’s formation. Willgren’s basic premise is that they do not in fact bring the Psalter together and affect its perception as genuine paratexts would.

First, arguing that treatment of Pss 1–2 as a preface is a modern concept, Willgren contends that these two psalms have no prefatorial function because they neither serve to get the book read nor provide instruction on how to read it properly. Second, Willgren argues that varying superscript traditions in the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls point to a lengthy process by which superscripts were added (ongoing “Davidization”) and psalms were juxtaposed, but does not point to the existence of independent collections. Third, he suggests...