S. TALMON, *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content.* 318 pp. The Magnes Press, Jerusalem; and E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1993. NLG 61, $35. This volume brings together ten essays (in revised form) that were previously published between 1963 and 1983. (For earlier collections of Talmon's articles see *VT* 37 [1987], p. 507, and 42 [1992], pp. 285-6.) The preface states that these essays are primarily concerned with two subjects: first, the use of the "comparative method" in the study of the Hebrew Bible as contrasted with "an interpretation based on insights derived intertextually from the biblical writings"; and, second, the "identification of specific biblical literary techniques" (p. 7).

The first article examines the use of the comparative method in general in various aspects of biblical study with examples, some of which are developed in other articles in the volume. Talmon concludes that the "interpretation of biblical features . . . with the help of innerbiblical parallels should always precede the comparison with extra-biblical materials" (p. 48). The second essay considers the way in which the references to *ṭabbûr hāʾāreṣ* in Judg. ix 37 and Ezek. xxxviii 12 have been interpreted in the light of extra-biblical references to the "navel" of the earth and used as the basis for far-reaching theories about comparable Israelite beliefs. He argues for "a realistic topographic-ecological" (p. 68), rather than a mythological, interpretation of the phrase in Ezekiel, and for a similar understanding of it in Judges. Talmon certainly succeeds in showing the weakness of a mythological interpretation of Israelite thought which has only two verses as a biblical basis. He also advances a good case for a topographical understanding, though it may be doubted whether he has shown the probability that the phrase in Ezekiel "defines the propitious situation of the people who returned to their land" (p. 67). The context is indeed concerned with such a matter, but it does not follow that is a necessary connotation of the particular topographical phrase.

An interesting essay on Hebrew *rᵉpāʾîm* and Ugaritic *rpu(m)* considers the "*literary* relation" of the former "to or its dependence upon the Ugaritic use of" the latter (p. 77). He notes that there are two groups of passages referring to *rᵉpāʾîm* in the OT: (1) people who are said to have lived in Canaan before the Israelite settlement—and some after it; (2) the dead (always in the plural) in Sheol. Talmon believes that only the latter have anything to do with the Ugaritic *rpum*. He suggests that the Hebrew association of the *rᵉpāʾîm* with the dead arose through a confusion of *mt*, "man", (as it appears in the Ugaritic phrase *mt rpi*, which is used of Danil in the Aqht text) with *mēt*, "dead man". The *rᵉpāʾîm* were thus thought to be the dead because of a confusion between two homographs.

The next essay asks whether an Israelite poetic epic ever existed, and answers the question in the negative. Talmon rightly finds the arguments advanced for an epic to be unconvincing, but his attempt to explain why there was no such epic literature in Israel is more questionable. He suggests that the reason was religious. "As the religion of Israel totally rejected polytheism with its rites and cultic paraphernalia, the practice of sorcery and witchcraft, so the Hebrew authors purged the epic song and the epic genre from their repertoire . . . The epic . . . fell into disrepute and never gained a foothold in Israelite letters" (p. 105). But was all Israelite religion always so enlightened? The OT itself scarcely encourages us to think so (cp. what Talmon himself says on p. 147). Incidentally, Talmon argues on pp. 95-6 that 2 Sam. i 18 ascribes to the *sēper hayyāšār*, not David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, "but rather . . . the song 'to teach the Judahites bow [shooting]' . . . which presumably served as a musical prototype on which was modelled the presentation of the 'Lament'" (p. 95). Even if *qāšet*

can mean "bow [shooting]", which is far from certain, it is unconvincing to understand *l^elammēd b^enê-y^ehûdâ qāšet* to be the title of a song or a phrase alluding to the purpose of a word for a song that is not recorded. It is more natural to suppose that the lament (*haqqînâ*) is the subject of the feminine singular passive participle *k^etûbâ*. The scholars are probably right who think that *qāšet* has arisen as the result of a scribal error.

The essay that follows is concerned, not with the comparative method, but with the "identification of" a literary technique. Talmon considers ways in which writers in Hebrew dealt with the problem of presenting "intelligibly two episodes which occurred synchronously under different circumstances and in different geographical settings" (p. 112). He describes several methods, but focuses attention on "resumptive repetition" or "Wiederaufnahme": "When an editor desired to incorporate something, he frequently inserted it, and then resumed the original narrative, repeating the last sentence before the break with more or less accuracy" (p. 117)—and Talmon believes that the method was used by authors as well as editors.

The identification of "resumptive repetition" is one of the criteria used by Talmon in an essay on 2 Kings xvii. His analysis of the elements in the chapter includes the isolation in verses 5-6, 25aα. 29a, 30-1 of an Ephraimite document, which "may well have had an Assyrian antecedent" (p. 152). The document was used by an editor "to derogate a 'syncretistic' form of YHWH worship still operative in his own days" (p. 154). Talmon dates the insertion of ch. xvii into 2 Kings in the post-exilic period and associates it with the outlook expressed in Ezra iv and Hag. ii 10-14, and "the total rejection by" those who had returned to Judah "of the population that remained in the territory of one-time Samaria" (p. 159).

An essay on eschatology and history in biblical thought begins by considering the meaning of the former term. "Biblical man . . . recognized a relative *before* and *behind* as seen from the standpoint of the speaker, onlooker or agent, but no absolute *foremost* or *hindmost* referring to extremities independent of the person concerned" (p. 166). ". . . in the Hebrew Bible, hope for the future within the framework of history predominates over the idea of an eschatological future set in metahistory" (p. 176). Hope for the renewal of the covenant means that "the old order has not been superseded: rather, it needs to be revitalized" (pp. 181-2). The "biblical vision of the future has its roots in actual conditions previously experienced in history" and the "pivotal factor, in the biblical picture of the future as well as in ancient Israel's attitude toward history, is humanity's responsibility" (pp. 190-1).

The concept of revelation in biblical times is discussed in another essay, in which a Jewish view is presented in contrast with some Christian approaches (especially as expressed in some works originally written in German). A study of the desert motif follows, in which Talmon seeks to refute the theory that the desert is idealized in the Hebrew Bible. He examines what was meant by *midbār* and discusses the significance of the motif both in the O.T. and in the Qumran texts. The final chapter in the book argues that the book of Esther is "a *historicized wisdom-tale* . . . an *enactment* of standard *wisdom motifs* . . ." (p. 262). "What the Esther narrative . . . does is to portray *applied* wisdom" (p. 263). The volume ends with indexes of biblical and other references, of authors, and of ancient authors, and with lists of abbreviations and of places where the essays in the book were originally published.   [J.A.E.]