Longacre believes pronominal object suffixes on verbs to be distinct in function from the independent object pronoun. The pronominal object suffix is used "to express a dominance pattern in which the participant(s) referred to by the object suffix is under the dominance of someone else". "Indication of the object participant via 'et + pronoun is the more neutral or unmarked form . . ." (p. 155). Ch. 7 examines the use of nouns and pronouns for speaker and addressees in formulae introducing direct speech, and explains the patterns in terms of the dynamics of the individual dialogues of which they form a part. Ch. 8 discusses the function of dialogue more generally within the Joseph story. Pp. 209-310 contain a display of the "constituent structure" of the Joseph story (at least till Genesis xlv), using indentation to show the hierarchy of various levels of analysis. There is a brief appendix on tagmemics (pp. 311-13). The proposals of the book are generally original, and are also sufficiently distinct from each other that overstatements in some areas do not undermine the value of other parts. [P.J. WILLIAMS]

R.E. MURPHY, The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature, second edition 233 pp. W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996 (first published by Doubleday, New York, 1990). This revised edition of what has become a standard text book on wisdom literature is to be welcomed. The basic text of the book remains unchanged, but each chapter is brought up to date as far as scholarly opinions are concerned, in a new supplement section (pp. 191-229). Each supplement section should be read in conjunction with the chapter which it brings up to date (and might have been better placed at the end of each chapter) and consists mainly of a review of scholarly work pertaining to the issues discussed in the main text. This is a helpful technique and the presentation is balanced and representative of the diverse attention that the wisdom literature is receiving in current scholarship. [Katharine J. DELL]

J. NOHRNBERG, Like Unto Moses: The Constituting of an Interruption. Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature. xx + 396 pp. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1995. " Interruption" is a term which echoes through James Nohrnberg's analysis of the biblical representation and impact of the figure of Moses, but its reverberations are most audible in concert with the crash of broken tablets at the foot of Mount Sinai. What, he asks, are the implications of Moses' role as temperamental intermediary in the divine law-giving?

Influenced, perhaps, by traditional Christian interpretations of the shattered tablets, Nohrnberg sees the interrupted revelation as a sign that "the basis for the covenant relation . . . is renewable from the covenant's very inception" (p. 72). He draws a fascinating contrast between otherwise similar ancient Near Eastern "suzerainty treaties" (as characterized by George E. Mendenhall) and the Sinai covenant, which, crucially and uniquely, puts "the vassal nation's rebellion right in the middle of its contracting narrative, while narrativizing the contracting amidst various pieces of the contract" (p. 70).

At the same time, Nohrnberg highlights the interplay between the Mosaic covenant and related biblical texts. The breaking and renewing of the tablets thus seems to him to establish a typology of break-down and restructurings which is variously reflected in the different codes of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, in the northern and Southern departures from Solomon, and in the reforms of the priest Jehoiada and the kings Hezekiah and Josiah, the latter of whom rediscovers the Book of the Law amidst the debris of the destroyed Temple (p. 66).

Having demonstrated a plausible typological relationship between the interrupted revelation at Sinai and the diversity and capacity for reform within legal and social structures in ancient Israel, Nohrnberg proceeds to show in great detail how the figure of Moses may stand in the text as an almost allegorical representative of the people Israel and its various institutions.

In this enterprise, Moses' qualities and characteristics, as well his actions and the events which befall him, must be brought to bear. Not surprisingly, Nohrnberg
interprets the circumstances of Moses' birth and adoption as a mechanism for dealing with another interruption, the narrative gap between Genesis and Exodus: "The bitumined ark in which Moses is set upon the Nile cannot help but allude to the ark in which Noah crossed the gap between the Sethite and Semite genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11" (p. 139). Moreover, the allusion to the flood, seen by Mendenhall as a way of explaining a gap occasioned by a failure of historical memory or by a period of accelerated change, is apt in connection with the birth of "the protagonist of an epoch" (p. 140).

As we have come to expect of expert practitioners of the literary approach to biblical interpretation, Nohrnberg catalogues the parallels between Moses' own story and the history of Israel with great confidence and authority. He shows how the facts of Moses' early life echo the patriarchal "family paradigm" derived from the Joseph story, only to transcend it with a theological and legal "national paradigm" derived from Pharaoh. Moses and Israel are not merely like each other; the nation's leader and its proto-history have actually "become assimilated to each other" (p. 146). To mention but the first and last of Nohrnberg's aleph-bet of similarities, Moses is born in Egypt and intervenes for his countrymen, while Israel finds itself in Egypt and is ministered to by Moses who intervenes with Pharaoh; Moses and Israel enter the wilderness beyond the Red Sea and eat manna, while Israel crosses the Jordan to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Nohrnberg's account demands an emphasis on Moses' deficiencies; if Israel sinned and broke the covenant, then so must Moses. In fact, Exodus Rabbah anticipated him on this point, and could have drawn the perfect circle: "when Moses realised there was no future for Israel he joined his fate with theirs. He broke the tablets and said to God, 'as they have sinned, so I have sinned in breaking the tablets. If you forgive them, forgive me too!"' (46.1). For better and worse, however, Nohrnberg is interested in a national proto-type whose faults run far deeper than this, and it is here that some readers may wish to part company with him.

Nohrnberg begins by assessing Moses at face value, and he is especially interested in the significance of his veil (Exod. xxxiv 29-35):

The veil may result from the intensity of the Mosaic illumination by God, but it may equally result from the Mosaic imperfection. What Moses' face could not sustain, neither could Aaron and the people. Thus Moses' veil may cover the shininess of a skin that, in the Sinaitic encounter with the divine, has been terribly burned. (p. 7)

The endnotes offer several rabbinic sources connecting Moses with fire in support of this reading. Yet, with one exception, the rabbinic texts cited seem to point in the opposite direction; Moses, like the burning bush, could not be consumed. Even the exception, a well-known midrash attributing Moses' speech defect to an angelically-engineered childhood brush with a burning coal, seems, with its vivid allusion to Isaiah's prophetic call (Isa. vi 6), to make an asset of a disadvantage.

A rather different instance of Nohrnberg's desire to find faults in Moses' childhood that subsequently resurface in Israel's history occurs in his discussion of the reversals and about-turns in Moses' first encounter with the Nile. Destined to be destroyed in the river, Moses is saved by it. He is adopted by the household for whom his fellows serve as slaves, and his enslaved mother henceforth "takes wages for nursing her own son. The despoiling of the Egyptians, a motif that turns up three times in the exodus narrative proper (Exod. 3:21-22, 11:2, 12:35-36), has already begun" (p. 136). Although Nohrnberg is quite right about the motif, one might reasonably ask whether this episode is really an example of it.

In the context of a long and intricately argued book, these may seem like minor disagreements, and in a sense they are. Yet it is, I think, important to express them.