

Akedah, the Holocaust, and the Limits of the Law in Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic"

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Aimee L. Pozorski,

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Thematic Issue ***History, Memory, and the Making of Character in Roth's Fiction***
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Abstract: In her article "Akedah, the Holocaust, and the Limits of the Law in Roth's 'Eli, the Fanatic'" Aimee L. Pozorski argues that Philip Roth's 1957 short story dramatizes the tension between the law on the one hand and the philosophy of ethics, on the other hand with the story's protagonist ultimately choosing ethics as evidenced by his identification with a displaced Hasidic Jew near the story's end. In reading the story through the inter-textual references to the Genesis story of the Akedah, Pozorski discusses the limits of the law in the face of vulnerable children and within the context of the history of the Holocaust.

Aimee L. POZORSKI**Akedah, the Holocaust, and the Limits of the Law in Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic"**

Philip Roth's 1957 short story, "Eli, the Fanatic," is about the function of the law: "The law is the law," says Leo Tzoref early on; "Exactly!" responds Eli Peck, the lawyer called upon to reinforce zoning laws in the town of Woodenton, New York (251). However, the meaning and efficacy of the law becomes much less clear as the story progresses, especially as it questions the relationship between the letter of the law and the lives of displaced Jewish children in the wake of World War II. Although the two protagonists — Leo Tzoref, director of the Yeshivah of Woodenton and Eli Peck, the lawyer brought in to close the school on account of zoning regulations — seem to be in agreement over the potentially reparative function of the law, they could not be more opposite in their perspectives. Whereas Eli, in the beginning of the story, seems to have accepted the role he must play in enforcing the law and to displace the eighteen children who live at the school, Tzoref provides the voice of distrust in the law by acknowledging that laws, ordinances, zoning requirements are all man-made fictions which can often cause harm.

On the surface "Eli, the Fanatic" provides a light-hearted view of a provincial small town in the U.S., the references to the vulnerability of children through their plight as Displaced Persons and survivors of the Holocaust relates to the biblical binding of Isaac and, in so doing, invests this story with a new understanding of ethics after the Holocaust (the dialect and exchanges between Tzoref and Peck seem to anticipate the comedy of the aging, bickering Jewish tenants in Roth's later work, *Letting Go*). As such, the story seems to dramatize an irreconcilable debate between the law and ethics: What would it mean to lose faith in the judicial system, in the law that seems to impose a moral code? And with what can we citizens in a post-Holocaust world — a world that had seen the likes of the Nürnberg Race Laws of 1935 stripping Jews in Germany of their civil and political rights — replace a failed system of justice? The answer seems to lie in an ethics of identification — of becoming an "other" — as by the end of the story Eli himself trades places with the mysterious man (a nameless, voiceless, black-hatted man) associated with the Yeshiva — and rejects the law he was called upon to uphold in favor of a so-called "crazy" alternative. When, at the end of the story, Eli marches into the hospital to see his newborn son after trading his lawyer's suit for the black caftan and the *arba kanfot* of the mysterious black-hatted Yeshiva man who works for Tzoref, he thinks: "all the time he quaked an eighth of an inch beneath his skin to think that perhaps he'd chosen the crazy way. To think that he'd *chosen* to be crazy!" (295; emphasis in the original). In a reading of this final moment, Howard Sklar argues that "Eli's diversion from the community's values is indicative of mental illness. Tensions such as these create a gradually building layer of separation between Eli and the community, essentially placing him between them and the yeshiva and ultimately leading to his 'empathic' identification with the black-hatted man" (71). In becoming the other, the "black-hatted man," Eli rejects the reason of the law in favor of the more subjective empathic response — a tension also at stake in the Akedah story as retold by Ted Heller, a Woodenton community member at the center of Roth's narrative.

The story's incessant questions about the law rely on a striking intertext, as at key moments throughout, it refers through the figure of Ted Heller to the story from *Genesis* chapter 22 when Abraham binds his son Isaac to the altar of Moriah in preparation to fulfill God's request that he sacrifice his infant son. The story itself is often used to exemplify God's imposition of his will in the name of faith — as a test of Abraham's faith in God — but, in Roth's context, the tale seems also to question the law of God, the Father: bordering at times on sacrilege, Roth's suburban characters of assimilated Jews question the teaching of such a story, focusing not on Abraham's faith in God, but upon the threatened infanticide of Isaac, Abraham's son. In *The Gift of Death*, Jacques Derrida argues that this biblical moment underscores the question or problem of ethics: according to the *Genesis* myth, if Abraham answers to God and sacrifices his son needlessly, then he betrays his son; and yet if he saves his son, he betrays God. Derrida articulates the conundrum thus: "I can respond only to the one (or to the One), that is, to the other, by sacrificing the other to that one. I am responsible to that one (that is to say to any other) only by failing in my responsibility to all others, to the ethical or political generality" (70). In Derrida's formulation, the conundrum at the heart of the text is: Which does Abraham choose, as he loves both? If he chooses to save his son, he betrays God; if he chooses to

kill his son, then he obviously betrays his son. In light of this vexed *Genesis* intertext, especially given its appearance in a story about eighteen child survivors of the Holocaust — children also ordered to be killed under the auspices of the law in Nazi Germany — I propose that Roth envisions a different ethical model in this story published originally twelve years after the opening of the death camps, one that rejects the law in favor of becoming the other. In the words of Victoria Aarons, Eli's ultimate identity "is forever linked to the identity of an other, the 'other,' the Jew who, ironically, indelibly, is indeed none other than Eli himself" (*What Happened* 77).

In looking through the lens of the Akedah story at the tension "Eli, the Fanatic" wages between the law on the one hand, and ethics on the other hand, I present a conversation with 1) biblical scholars of the Akedah such as Harold Fisch, Shalom Spiegel, Louis Berman, and Joseph Alkana, who have overlooked its representation in Roth's fiction and 2) with literary scholars of Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic," who focus their readings primarily on this question of identification and doubling at the expense of considering simultaneously Roth's representation of the failure of the law, an aspect of this contemporary classic that warrants far more attention than has been previously granted. I seek here to advance the conversation begun by scholars of "Eli" who have yet to consider the significance of Roth's interest in Akedah, the idea of ethics in the face of a double bind and, most especially, in the failure of the law to protect the children. In reading "Eli" beyond the significant ideas of doubling, identity, identification, and assimilation as proposed by Jessica Rabin, Debra Shostak, Judith Olster, Claudia Bruhwiler, and David Gooblar, I argue that in defamiliarizing the contemplation of a child's death, Roth calls for a post-Holocaust ethics that emphasizes, above all else, an understanding of responsibility that is often at odds with the law.

As Claudia Roth Pierpont reveals in *Roth Unbound*, the law as a discipline undoubtedly appealed to Roth from an early age, as he had wanted to become a lawyer for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith when he was a high school student, "protecting American Jews from legal bias and discrimination" (7). The appearance of the *Goodbye, Columbus* collection brought him closer to the law and to the Anti-Defamation League than he could have imagined, when a prominent New York rabbi wrote a letter suggesting, in response to his alleged offensive representation of Jews in his fiction: "'Medieval Jews would have known what to do with him'" (Pierpont 7). As Pierpont observes: in "'Eli, the Fanatic' the irate citizens who want to evict a home for Jewish refugee children from an elite suburban town are not the town's long-established Gentiles but its nouveau suburban Jews, who see the refugees as foreign, embarrassing, and a threat to their new American status — a threat precisely of the sort that the rabbis found in Roth" (8). For Pierpont Roth's own fiction predicts the very threat he poses as a new writer in the US-American Jewish tradition. That he wanted to work with the law in order to protect US-American Jews from discrimination is telling: Eli, the story's protagonist, is also a lawyer called upon to protect not the Jewish children and refugees, but the "nouveau suburban Jews" who would otherwise prefer to see the children go — a characterization of Jewishness that the rabbis took straight to the Anti-Defamation League. Roth was "blindsided" by such a reaction as he had suddenly found himself on the wrong side of both the Anti-Defamation League as well as the "Defenders of the Faith," who were, in this case, New York City's prominent rabbis (Pierpont 9).

As "Eli, the Fanatic" emphasizes, an institution we take for granted as always being just and true — the letter of the law — is actually unpredictable, suspicious, and doomed to fail on behalf of its most vulnerable subjects. The short story reveals that although the law is intended to protect society's weakest members such as the disenfranchised, the poor, the children, it all too often fails to protect them at all. In other words, there are two sides to the law: it is designed to protect, but it can also do irreparable harm. I posit that the story, rather than siding with the law, as was Roth's intention as a young man, sides with philosophy and what sense of ethics brings: embodying an other through empathy at great risk to one's identity. When Eli at the end of the story takes on the figure and identity of the very man he was hired by the law to evict, we see that such identification has its risks. But we also see that it is ethics itself that brings a certain kind of justice: the refugee children get to stay put, we presume, as Eli is taken away.

Given the story's emphasis on the identity conversion by the final scene with Eli mistaken for a Hasidic Jew and the Hasidic Jew mistaken for Eli, many scholars focused on the questions of identity formation, identification, and doubling — noting especially the setting: an Eden-ic, WASP-ish neighborhood in New York in which assimilated Jews, the area's new inhabitants, seek to oust the Yeshiva

not only based on the town's ordinances, but also because they seem not to want to be reminded of their shared past: persecution for religious practices, beliefs, and so-called "ethnic" otherness. The most offensive, for the townspeople, is the man who runs the errands for the school, the "hatted man" often referred to as "greenie" around town and, who, upon Eli's first sighting, was "wearing the hat, that hat which was the very cause of Eli's mission, the source of Woodenton's upset. The town's lights flashed their message once again: 'Get the one with the hat. What a nerve, what a nerve'" (253).

For Jessica Rabin, "Eli, the Fanatic" underscores many of the themes established in *Goodbye, Columbus* as a collection overall: "the tension between the public sphere and private life, the relationship between clothes and identity, the implications of survivor guilt, and the nature of post modern identity" (20). That Eli "performs" religious fanaticism in the form of taking on the Hasidic Jew's clothing suggests that identity is not essential, but a performance — a theory of identity Rabin borrows from the work of Judith Butler. What I posit is that the relationship between survivor guilt and postmodernism work the same way with regard to the law: the law, as Roth's story shows, is merely a performance of language. It is not essentially true or good. It can dispossess as easily as it can empower — something revealed by the publication history of the text itself. With a similar focus on questions of identity and identification, Debra Shostak argues that Eli "seeks, in the regard of the other to confirm an identification — a sameness — that would bridge and even belie their obvious difference. In ironic contrast to the fluid, assimilative promise of American material culture, he seeks a fixity of self as a stay against the confusion and unmooring that self-invention invites" (120). Also drawing on this idea of "sameness" — the unexpected sameness between Eli and the hatted man by the end of the story, Olster asks as to "What sort of second-self experience is this — the greenie who looks like Eli, Eli in Hasidic garb? It certainly is disturbing, as all such experiences are: a stranger comes to exert control over Eli's first self, his second self forcing the first to come to terms with that in his self-conception which he has left unrealized, left behind, excluded" (54). Such questions about the costs of assimilation and secularism are also raised by Claudia Bruhwiler (83) and David Gooblar (15-16) who link Roth's interest in the power of language in identity construction and representation (legal representation and literary representation as in the case of Gooblar) in order to clarify the stakes of "Eli's" ending.

Perhaps the reading of "Eli, the Fanatic" closest to my own is James Duban's interpretation of the story in light of Arthur Koestler, especially in its investment in the abuses of governmental policy. According to Duban, in "'Eli, the Fanatic' reverberations of White Paper policy illuminate obstacles to the settlement of the Yeshivah in Woodenton, as well as the emotional bases of ostensibly rational appeals to zoning ordinances. That recourse to legalism allows the Jews of Woodenton to dodge survivors' guilt that ... comes to overwhelm Eli" (172). Duban is interested in Koestler's understanding of the "emotive bases of the 1939 White Paper policy — under the Civil Mandatory Government of Great Britain (1920-1948) — to limit the influx of Holocaust survivors into Palestine and to obstruct the purchase and settlement of land by Jews" (171). But Koestler's work raises other questions about the efficacy of the law in the face of Jewish history, considering the Nürnberg Race Laws leading up to the nazi genocidal plot and the inefficacy of the law on display during the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, to name only two twentieth-century examples which reflect the shadow of the Holocaust in Roth's story.

Alan Berger notes the connection between the implications of Eli's identity switching and the history that forms the story's backdrop: "The crucial difference between Eli and the greenie was not clothes, but the Holocaust" (157). Thus here it might be prudent to note, especially given the provocative subject of the Holocaust in a story published in 1957 in the United States, that reading Eli as a hero who has rejected the law in favor of the ethical relation must also come with awareness as Hana Wirth-Nesher argues: "When viewed from Tel Aviv, Eli is less sympathetic, his born-again Judaism unsettling, even alarming" (109) and, further, in Aarons's understanding "Whether Eli's 'conversion' is 'good-for-the-Jews' or 'no-good-for-the-Jews' is not so easily estimated or negotiated in the serpentine contortions of Philip Roth's contentious fiction" ("Is It" 18). Nonetheless, Eli's evolution in the sense that he questions perpetually the value of the law he himself has called upon to uphold makes him a fairly credible character, despite or perhaps because of the (self) diagnosis of "crazy" he is given by the story's end. Especially when those moments of reflection on the uses and abuses of the law are juxtaposed with references to the voices of children or the birth of Eli's infant child, are we able to see that it is the very law itself that cannot be trusted.

As early as the second page of the story, the children are introduced even before the reader is provided with full knowledge as to why Eli would be visiting Tzuref at his school: "Tzuref struck a match and lit a candle, just as the half-dying shouts of children at play rolled in through the open window. It was as though Tzuref opened it so Eli could hear them" (250). In this context, Tzuref seems to call attention to the voices of the children, a point returned to a page later. The burning candle is also suggestive: at once a memorial candle, as well as a source of illumination, Tzuref lights a candle during almost every encounter with Eli. When Eli notices the children again, he reveals that "Some children ran under the open window and their mysterious babble — not mysterious to Tzuref, who smiled — entered the room like a third person. Their noise caught up against Eli's flesh and he was unable to restrain a shudder" (250-51). The babble here could be Yiddish, presumably a language the children and Tzuref know, but not Eli who is assimilated self-consciously in this Edenic outpost of US-America. But if the "babble" of these "voices" is also figurative in the sense that although the children cannot be deciphered by Eli, they nonetheless make a claim on him: Eli shudders at the sound of the children's voices perhaps in rejection of all they stand for, but also in the sense that they remind him of his responsibility, indeed, his response-ability. He has been called to defend the community members who want to see the children go away, but his visceral response suggests that he should be on the other side of the law protecting the children from the community's laws rather than protecting the community from the children who have been displaced in their lives already.

At this moment, with the children's voices heard outside, Eli broaches the conversation with Tzuref about his duty to the law: "Eli said, 'We didn't make the laws...' 'You respect them.' 'They protect us ... the community.' 'The law is the law,' Tzuref said. 'Exactly!' Eli had the urge to rise and walk about the room. 'And then of course' — Tzuref made a pair of scales in the air with his hands — 'The law is not the law. When is the law that is the law not the law?' He jiggled the scales. 'And vice versa'" (251). When Eli says that the laws protect the community, he already seems to be speaking in bad faith; after all, who is the community if not the children in the school? When Tzuref says that "The law is the law" (251), he seems to be agreeing with Eli, but then changes tactics. When Eli hears "the law is the law," he hears: it should not be questioned, doubted, or challenged. But Tzuref understands it differently. Although apparently talking in riddles, he makes a good point: the law is not meant to balance the scales, but ends up inevitably tipping them. For Tzuref, the law is faulty in the sense that humans use it to reach a desired end and it is often conjured by those in power against the disenfranchised minority.

After Eli repeats: "'Mr. Tzuref, that is the law. I came to ask you what you intend to do'" (252), he reflects on the burden of his work as in: "Eli rose and lifted his briefcase. It felt so heavy packed with the grievances, vengeance, and schemes of his clients. There were days when he carried it like a feather — in Tzuref's office it weighed a ton" (252). The burden refers to the echoes of the children's voices — does he really intend to use the law to close the school, to displace the children? — as well as to Tzuref's gesture referring to the scales of justice. To consider the contents of his briefcase in terms of the "grievances, vengeance, and schemes of his clients" is to hint at the somewhat misguided motives of the people paying for his services. The weight is psychic as much as it is physical: Eli's duty to uphold the law suddenly feels like an imposition. Such an epiphany is brought home a couple of pages later when Eli once again struggles under the weight of his duty to the law: "But sometimes Eli found being a lawyer surrounded him like quicksand — he couldn't get his breath. Too often he wished he were pleading for the other side; though if he were on the other side, then he'd wish he were on the side he was. The trouble was that sometimes the law didn't seem to be the answer, law didn't seem to have anything to do with what was aggravating everybody" (254). Eli understands his mantra newly: "the law is the law" as he sees it now as imperfect, as ineffective, rather than as a trusted institution. Perhaps the law is something people cling to — language that provides rules for living, codes of conduct — when there is otherwise so much gray area in subjective life. Eli's recognition that "the law didn't seem to be the answer" (254) suggests one of the story's important thematic concerns: that the law is inadequate to the post-Holocaust instability of the moment, regardless of how safe and secure the suburb of Woodenton seems to be.

As the voice of rationality — paradoxically, the voice against the rationale of the legal system — Tzuref once again asks Eli to see the error of his motives under the auspices of the law:

"Mr. Peck, who made the law, may I ask you that?" "The people." "No." "Yes." "Before the people." "No one. Before the people there was no law" ... "Wrong," Tzoref said. "We make the law, Mr. Tzoref. It is our community. These are my neighbors. I am their attorney. They pay me. Without law there is chaos." "What you call law, I call shame. The heart, Mr. Peck, the heart is law! God!" he announced. "Look, Mr. Tzoref, I didn't come here to talk metaphysics. People use the law, it's a flexible thing. They protect what they value, their property, their well-being, their happiness —" "Happiness? They hide their shame. And you, Mr. Peck you are shameless?" "We do it," Eli said, wearily, "for our children. This is the twentieth century." (266)

Tzoref uses a version of the word "shame" three times as a way of emphasizing for Eli the limits of the law in settling an ethical concern. Peck seems to suggest that people would act inappropriately without the law, to which Tzoref responds good behavior, acting in good faith, must come from within, from the heart, not from without in the form of the fear of a man-made law. Somewhat amusingly, Peck accuses Tzoref of speaking metaphysically, but it is the opposite: his reasoned approach to the origins of the law, as with the previous conversation, trumps Peck and makes Peck doubt his purpose. The final blow to Eli's logic is when he says people use law "for the children" — as if enforcing the city's ordinance by displacing the eighteen children could possibly be in their best interests. Or perhaps he is thinking about his own child or other people's children — secularized, assimilated children. Even still, the "mysterious babble" and the voices of the Yeshiva's children playing has taught him something more: that they are the nation's children too, that they ought to be protected under the law, not disenfranchised by it. Eli's claim that he is working on behalf of the children echoes Ted Heller, a paradoxical voice of the Akedah in the story in the sense that he worries about his daughter's exposure to the tale of a father preparing to kill his offspring. Ted is also the voice of the new Jewish citizens in Woodenton, claiming that what Tzoref teaches at the Yeshiva could well be harmful to the entire community. In conversation with Eli, he says: "Look, I don't even know about this Sunday school business. Sundays I drive my oldest kid all the way to Scarsdale to learn Bible stories ... and you know what she comes up with? This Abraham in the Bible was going to kill his own *kid* for a sacrifice. She gets nightmares from it, for God's sake! You call that religion? Today a guy like that they'd lock up" (277; emphasis in the original). Such a line foreshadows Ted's assumption that Eli is looking to kill his own son at the end of the story, but it also provides a secular gloss on the Akedah story in the wake of the Holocaust.

The weight of this traumatic history on the minds of Eli and Ted could also explain why Eli says in his conversation with Tzoref that laws are needed to protect the children because "this is the twentieth century" — presumably a century during which we have realized we cannot take the safety of our children for granted. On the other hand, it also misrepresents the *Genesis* story setting religious people up as straw men, preparing literally to kill their kids for sacrifice. The conversation ends with Eli's recognition to Ted that "You're exaggerating, nobody's sacrificing their kid," to which Ted responds: "You're damn right, Eli — I'm not sacrificing mine. You'll see when you have your own what it's like" (277; this moment foreshadows the ending when Ted believes Eli really would sacrifice his child presumably because of this appearance in the black caftan alone, since by all other accounts he seems to be looking wistfully into the nursery window at his newborn son [296-97]).

Following conversations about the law with Tzoref, Eli has a final chilling moment when he faces the unnamed, black-hatted man and sees himself — a moment that leads to a final ethical realization that he withhold judgment as the two figures are a single one: "And then Eli had the strange notion that he was two people. Or that he was one person wearing two suits. The greenie looked to be suffering from a similar confusion. They stared long at one another. Eli's heart shivered" (289). Eli's shivering heart is like the shudder he experiences in the presence of the children earlier in the story — it points to a recognition that he is more like these "others" than he previously thought. In fact, as Olster and Aarons point out, Eli sees himself as this other man and sees the other man as him. Such a recognition leads to the inevitable turning point, a moment where Eli, too, becomes the Abraham figure in the story and must make an impossible choice: does he change back into the assimilated man, the secular lawyer he once was in order to meet his child? Or does he walk into the hospital as the despised other — trading one identity for another before taking on the role of literal father? Eli sees this as a double bind similar to the bind of Abraham: "and not until he reached his own front lawn, saw his house, his shutters, his new jonquils, did he remember his wife. And the child that must have been born to him. And it was then and there he had the awful moment. He could go inside and put on

his clothes and go to his wife in the hospital ... What gave Eli the awful moment was that he turned away. He knew exactly what he could do but he chose not to. To go inside would be to go halfway. There was more ... So he turned and walked towards the hospital and all the time he quaked an eighth of an inch beneath his skin to think that perhaps he'd chosen the crazy way" (295).

For Eli, the crazy way is refusing to change back into "his" clothes — he has been wearing the black-hatted man's clothes since they exchanged originally — and therefore refusing to change back into his prior self. The "awful moment" — the same phrase is repeated twice — is that Eli has to choose to walk into his house to change, therefore choosing the assimilated, secular dream of the up and coming lawyer or to keep walking to the hospital as he is, embodying a new figure in old garb: a traditional Hasidic Jew who will soon be misread as a rabbi (298). The choice-less choice is this story's version of the Akedah: does he choose God or his child? As with every Roth text, the ending is not so straightforward: in choosing not to change his clothing, Eli seems to choose the side of ethics—of becoming an other, a transformation prohibited by the law — but in so doing, he is mistaken for a child murderer and sedated (298).

As I have been arguing, it is somewhat fitting that the character who arranges to have Eli dragged away for having "this Bible stuff on the brain" is none other than Ted Heller, the figure from the beginning who raised the story of Akedah in order to call into question the intentions and effects of the Yeshiva in Woodenton (297). Eli questions "What was Tzoref doing up there in that office? Killing babies — probably not" (280); nonetheless, Ted believes Eli has gotten caught up in the Akedah when Eli is there to see his newborn son, remarking: "'Oh Christ ... You don't have this Bible stuff on the brain — 'And suddenly he said, 'You wait, pal.' He started down the corridor, his heels tapping rapidly" (297). Eli's "relieved" response is somewhat mystifying, screaming finally, in the figure of Abraham: "'I'm the father!'" (297-98; emphasis in the original). In this recognition of himself as a father in the garb of a rabbi we see a reversal of the Akedah story from Genesis: Eli sacrifices himself for his son and for the Yeshiva children. Presumably, he is carried away out of fear that he is going to murder the new baby, as the "Bible stuff on the brain" articulated by Ted refers back to his own complaints about the echoes of child murder in the Akedah story his child learns at school. "I am the father!" are the last words Eli says, a different kind of father than God or Isaac or even what his wife Miriam expects him to be (298; emphasis in the original).

In conclusion, in being mistaken simultaneously for a rabbi and a murderous father, Eli's character has been utterly transformed — remade — in the name of history and of memory showing a new model of ethics after the Holocaust that rejects the law in the name of the children. As such, it may seem counterintuitive to end my analysis with Martha C. Nussbaum's interpretation who sees the role of ethics in that "the story does not simply chronicle a social moment, it intervenes in it — at a time when the stereotype was just beginning to crumble — subverting the rigidities of assimilation and changing the 'inner eyes' of its readers, so that they see something about themselves, and others, that they did not see before and take up a relation to others different from the relation they had occupied before" (5). In Nussbaum's reading, the significance of the story lies not simply in what happens to Eli in the end, in his remarkable transformation, but also what happens to the reader in the sense of their changed relationship to the text and to themselves: in taking up a different relation to others, we too participate in this ethical moment, one that exceeds the boundaries of the law and accounts for human subjectivity in the greatest sense, one that — we would hope — protects the children and preserves the future.

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