Deformed, Neanderthal, and Thoroughly Alien
Exploitation of the Other in Asimov's "Ugly Little Boy"

Sara Schotland

Abstract
In Isaac Asimov's short story "Ugly Little Boy" (1958), an ambitious scientist imports from the past a Neanderthal boy who is viewed as physically repellant. Initially, Dr. Hoskins values Timmie and markets the success of his time-transgressing experiment. Timmie is exhibited as a "freak" on television; his body is subject to extensive and excruciating tests. When a more profitable specimen can be re-animated from the more recent past, Timmie is expendable.
Timmie is the ultimate alien, in body, behavior, and origin. He is thus triply marked under Erving Goffman's Theory of Stigma. What can we learn from this cultural representation of a Neanderthal? This essay uses Asimov's story as a springboard to consider the exploitation of the Other. (i) Historically, individuals with anomalous bodies have been exhibited and exploited as "freaks." In Rosemary Garland Thomson's terminology, "normates" constructed a paradigm that allowed them to feel superior and exercise a domination over individuals with "extraordinary bodies." Today, stigma and discrimination continue; television and other media have replaced the circus tent as the site of the modern "freak show." (ii) As a powerless Other, Timmie cannot resist Dr. Hoskins's abusive battery of tests. Throughout history, test subjects have been drawn from among the poor, prisoners, or despised minorities. (iii) As an alien, Timmie has been imported into the modern world from a time and place so distant that it is unrelatable. Like a migrant worker, Timmie is an outcast who is discarded when his labor is no longer valued. (iv) In contrast, Timmie's nurse provides a nurturing care that resists, albeit unsuccessfully, his commercial exploitation. The nurse's care practice provides an alternative approach to dealing with a strange, vulnerable, and alien individual. "Ugly Little Boy" thus invites consideration of the moral philosophy now known as Care Ethics.

Keywords:
Stigma, Anomalous Body, Deformity, Freak, Alien

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In Isaac Asimov's short story "Ugly Little Boy" (1958), an ambitious scientist imports a Neanderthal boy from the past, who is physically repellant. Initially, Dr. Hoskins values Timmie and markets the success of his time-transgressing experiment. However, the amount of energy that the lab has available to overcome time constraints and successfully import individuals from the past is very limited. When a more recent and more profitable specimen from the Middle Ages becomes available, Dr. Hoskins decides that the opportunity costs of keeping Timmie in this world are too high. Timmie is enclosed in a time machine that will hurl him back to Neanderthal times; or, more likely, to his doom.

Timmie as a Neanderthal is the ultimate alien: he belongs to another time and place; he is not only exotic but extraterritorial; in body, behavior, and species, he is so different and strange as to challenge our imagination. Timmie is exploited in multiple ways. First, Timmie is exhibited on television as a freak to enhance the

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lab's reputation and profit. Second, Timmie is subject to painful laboratory experiments that could not be performed on a boy recognized as fully human. Finally, Timmie is, by virtue of his origin, an outcast; like a migrant worker he is cast out when his labor is no longer valued.

Admittedly, it is difficult to prove that reading fiction translates into empathy for others encountered in everyday life (Keen 2006). However, outsider narratives provide a vicarious experience of a life lived on the margins, subject to the customs and laws of a dominant culture to which one does not fully belong. Minorities, the poor, individuals with disabilities, and immigrants live in borderlands where they are sometimes accepted and other times degraded as less than human, less than equal. Asimov's story is the ultimate outsider narrative; Timmie could not be more alien, while still belonging to the genus Homo.

What can we learn from this cultural representation of a Neanderthal? What does this story contribute to the understanding of Otherness? This essay uses Asimov's story as a springboard to important issues/challenges faced by those whose body or origin mark them as anomalous. First, individuals with deformities and non-normative appearance continue to face stigma and discrimination. Employment opportunities are limited for dwarfs and other individuals with anomalous bodies (Gollust 2003). Aversion to the anomalous body may be instinctive but the exhibition of such as individual as a "freak" represents a degrading social construction. While circus side shows are now rare, the freak show continues to thrive on television, where viewers are invited to stare and gawk at those with extraordinary bodies (Backstrom 2012).

Second, as an "Other" – powerless, vulnerable, and allegedly subhuman – Timmie is subject to painful experimentation. Throughout history, test subjects have been drawn from the poor elements of the population, from prisoners, or from despised minorities (National Commission, Belmont Report 1979). Today in many

foreign countries desperate individuals engage in kidney sales; while sometimes defended as an autonomous choice, it is poverty that is the decision-maker.

Third, as a Neanderthal "import," Timmie has no rights to stay in the laboratory, comparable to the many foreign workers today who are employed in the U.S. without documentation or on temporary work visas that can be terminated at will when the employer no longer has use for the immigrant's services (Apgar 2015). As illustrated by the Mexican Bracero worker program, the United States has a history of inviting guest workers on temporary visas to perform hard work that other Americans do not wish to do and then terminating these foreign workers abruptly when their labor is no longer valued (Hazelton 2017). In addition, the United States hosts many undocumented workers and asylum applicants; these immigrants are expelled (deported) with scant concern for their safe return (Beltrán 2019).

Can this exploitation be overcome? The nurse whom Dr. Hoskins hires to watch over Timmie exemplifies the moral philosophy we have come to call Care Ethics. Nurse Fellowes comforts the lonely child, civilizes his savage behavior, and teaches him to talk and read. By entering into a devoted relationship with Timmie, the Nurse becomes a mother figure. Nurse Fellowes's nurturing care of Timmie contests, albeit unsuccessfully, his commercial exploitation. The story has no "happy ending" but Nurse Fellowes demonstrates that exploitation of the Other can be resisted.

Discrimination against the Anomalous Body

Stigmatizing those with Deformities.

In her landmark work, *Extraordinary Bodies,* Rosemarie Garland Thomson addresses "physically extraordinary" otherness, often conceptualized as "monstrosity," "deformation," "crippledness" or "physical disability (1996, 5). The

meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies are socially constructed to privilege the individual who is able-bodied:

> Consequently, the meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies reside not in inherent physical flaws, but in social relationships in which one group is legitimated by possessing valued physical characteristics and maintains its ascendancy and its self-identity by systematically imposing the role of cultural or corporeal inferiority on others. (7)

Thomson coins the term "normate" as an imagined everyman figure who is set off in contrast to those with physical difference or other disabilities:

> The term normate usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. Normate, then, is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them. (8)

This neologism is a special delight as it tags the able-bodied individual with a label that invites comparison with a "primate."

"Ugly Little Boy" is an excellent text with which to examine deformity and other physical anomalies as disabilities. Like Victor Frankenstein, Dr. Hoskins brings to life a physically repellant creature. Initially without language, education or acculturation, both Frankenstein's Creature and Timmie learn to read and to speak, claim identity as human beings, and reach out to form social bonds (Shelley 1993). But both Frankenstein's Creature and Timmie experience painful social rejection as a result of their extreme ugliness.

While Frankenstein's Creature begins by acting kindly, after a series of rejections from his creator and society, the Creature becomes a murderer. As Stephen Jay Gould writes: "Frankenstein's Creature becomes a monster because he is cruelly ensnared by one of the deepest predispositions of our biological inheritance — our aversion toward seriously malformed individuals" (1994, 20).

Nurse Fellowes's ability to overcome her instinctive aversion and to care for Timmie permits him to acquire speech, literacy, and sensitivity. She persuades Dr. Hoskins to provide Timmie with a playmate, the scientist's son. Jerry Hoskins,

taunts Timmie about his ugliness and difference. Although not violent like Frankenstein's Creature, Timmie does react aggressively when Jerry calls him an "ape boy" (330). Timmie's response to Jerry's degrading epithet deprives him of a playmate, and increases the isolation that Timmie feels, trapped alone in a laboratory bubble.

Jerry Hoskins torments Timmie by telling him about the kindergarten experience from which Timmie is excluded. It is a common trope in cyborg fiction that the protagonist aspires to be human. In Asimov's 1976 novella *Bicentennial Man*, an exceptionally talented robot is so determined to acquire the legal status of a human being that he makes the ultimate sacrifice: assuming mortality to show he is a man. The desire for inclusion is all the more poignant when a young cyborg seeks to be recognized as human child by his family and classmates. This is the theme of Brian Aldiss's short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long" (2001).[1] David is a cyborg who fulfills the role of substitute son for a young couple whose human child is in a coma. After their human child recovers, the parents neglect David, who yearns to be a "real boy" and recipient of his mother's love. The salient difference in Asimov's story is that Timmie is not a cyborg; he belongs to the genus *homo*, although he is of a different species.

Too often, individuals with non-conforming bodies are subject to invidious discrimination and stigma. In his landmark work, Erving Goffman divides stigmas into three categories: (i) "abominations of the body—various physical deformities;" (ii) "blemishes of individual character" inferred from conditions such as "mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction" and other discredited behaviors; and (iii) "tribal" affiliation, such as "race, nation, and religion" (1963, 4). Applying

[1] Aldiss's story was adapted by Stephen Spielberg as *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Cyborgs yearn to be humans in other films as well, including the replicant Rachel in *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982), the ultra-powerful robot girl in the Japanese anime *Metropolis* (Rintaro 2001), Spooner in *I Robot* (Proyas 2004), and Eva in *Ex Machina* (Garland 2015).

Goffman's rubric, Timmie as an ugly Neanderthal with uncouth behavior is triply stigmatized.

Stigma demeans the other individual for the alleged negative attribute or difference. As Goffman explains:

> While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive; sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. (1963, 12)

When there is a discrepancy between "virtual identity" (attributed identity) and "actual identity" (felt identity), identity is "spoiled" (1963, 19). The stigmatized person may react to his or her perceived distance from the norm by experiencing shame or self-loathing. Stigma can sometimes be managed, at least where the discredited status is not permanent. Thus an individual who is illiterate can acquire a G.E.D., an individual who is obese or an alcoholic can manage diet or cease drinking. Stigma may sometimes be managed through "passing"; hiding a criminal record, concealing a non-visible disability or addiction; feigning a heteronormative sex life. Stigma can also be resisted. Individuals who have been stigmatized can fight back, individually or as a group. For example, an individual can show that he or she can fully perform jobs and social roles although they are on the autism spectrum, or that they can be trusted in the workplace and in business transactions although they have a criminal record. Undocumented students can show their potential through academic achievement. Groups may seek to educate the public to diminish stereotyping or seek legislative change by way of remediation. However, a child like Timmie cannot easily divest himself of his stigma: his deformity and unrelatable foreign origin are permanent, even if he can, through education, gain literacy and improve his behavior. Timmie's experience, the inability to overcome stigma, reflects reality for many individuals with severe physical deformity.

Lucy Grealy's aptly named *Autobiography of a Face* illustrates the effect of stigma on an individual who has repeatedly been mocked for her anomalous appearance. After undergoing cancer surgery as a child that left her face severely disfigured, Lucy is cruelly taunted by other children: "Hey, girl, take off that monster mask—oops, she's not wearing a mask!" (1994, 115); "that is the ugliest girl I've ever seen" (124). Lucy begins to self-identify as a "freak." "I was my face. I was ugliness" (7). She avoids mirrors and other shiny surfaces that might reflect her face, and only "comes out" on Halloween. Her body determines her destiny, as she is the victim of prejudice and spoiled identity. While at the very end of the autobiography it appears that Grealy may have come to terms with her misshapen face, sadly for Grealy, physical scarring led to emotional scarring that never healed, and she died of a heroin overdose (S. Grealy 2004). The stigma was so powerful that deformity overdetermined her life.

Statutory Protections Against Discrimination are insufficient.

Until 50 years ago, deformity in the United States was not only a social stigma but punishable as a status crime. So-called "Ugly Laws" in effect in many U.S. cities from the 1880s until as late as the 1970s deemed it illegal for any person who is "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed so as to be a disgusting or unsightly object" to "expose himself to public view" (Schweik 2010, 1-2).

While Ugly Laws no longer exist, employment discrimination based on physical appearance remains a significant concern. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) precludes discrimination in employment for individuals who are disfigured, for example through facial scarring, but not against those who are perceived by the employer as ugly or unattractive. Under the ADA, a person may fall within the definition of disabled in three alternate ways: "by having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities," having "a record of such an impairment," or "being regarded" as having such an

impairment (42 U.S.C. §12102). The definition of "impairment" includes "cosmetic disfigurement" (29 C.F.R. §1632). The "regarded as" prong protects individuals who are regarded and treated as though they have "an actual or perceived physical or mental impairment, whether or not that impairment substantially limits, or is perceived to substantially limit, a major life activity" ((29 C.F.R. §1630.2 (l)). Thus, a dwarf might be regarded as having a disability covered under the ADA even if there is no functional impairment associated with his or her short stature. In 2009, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission required that Extra Space Management, a storage facility, pay $95,000 in damages for firing a maintenance worker whose face was visually scarred. The employee's manager said that the worker was "handicapped, deformed or something" and "couldn't get the job done," yet, in fact, the maintenance worker had been efficiently performing his duties (EEOC 2009). Like other statutes, this legislation can be circumvented: for example, although the ADA applies to hiring decisions (as well as promotion and other terms of employment), on occasion prospective employees with perceived disabilities may improperly be culled at the call back stage.

"Lookism" is defined as "prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a appearance" (Warhurst *et al*. 2009, 133). Studies show that attractive people are more likely to be hired even for positions with no conceivable relationship to appearance, and are more likely to receive higher pay (Bardack and McAndrew 1985, Desrumaux, 2009, James 2008, Johnson 1981). The ADA does not provide sufficient protection against discrimination against lookism because an individual who presents an unattractive appearance in the eye of the employer does not have a covered disability. Most courts have held that obesity, even morbid obesity, is not covered under the ADA unless it results from an underlying physiological disorder or condition (Batcheller 2016). Advocates for reform have sought the adoption of civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of unattractive appearance (Adamitis 2000, Gumin 2012, Zakrzewski 2005). In the District of Columbia, the

Human Rights Act prohibits appearance-based discrimination (D.C. Code Ann. § 2-1402). To date, only a handful of communities have such laws. Thus, while an individual with a more significant bodily anomaly enjoys the legal protections of the ADA, individuals who are othered because of an appearance that an employer finds ugly are not.

Exploiting Stigmatized Bodies in "Freak Shows."

The lab puts Timmie on display for television cameras as a "freak" to court publicity and boost laboratory profit. Disability theorists such as Thomson and Robert Bogdan have drawn attention to the degrading display of anomalous bodies in circus side shows. Bogdan observes that a "freak" is not a person with a unique physical state, but rather a socially constructed status, conferred by the manner in which he or she is displayed to the public (1990, 35). Often the side show performer was subject to long working hours, indignities from spectators, and difficult working conditions. In this "exotic subgenre," the promoter appealed to the audience's interest in individuals from remote countries and in man's bestial origins (28-29).

Thomson points out that freak shows became popular at a time when "the emancipation of slaves and female suffrage confounded previously reliable indices of status and privilege;" accordingly, "onlookers needed to constantly reaffirm the difference between them and us" (1996, 65). In Barnum and Bailey's side show, disabled black men were displayed under the title "What Is It?"

> Barnum's advertising poster challenged onlookers to make the distinction: "Is it a lower order of MAN? Or is it a higher order of MONKEY? None can tell! Perhaps it is a combination of both." Billed as "missing links," the "What Is It?" figures complemented after midcentury a growing interest in Darwinian distinctions between humans and gorillas. (69)

In Asimov's story, Timmy, who is mislabeled as an "ape boy," is similarly stigmatized as simian and a "missing link."

Today's freak show has shifted from the circus tent to the television screen where it is thriving.[2] Elizabeth Grosz focuses on the question why it is that the freak show was and remains such an important part of the cultural scene. What is the fascination of the freak? Grosz's insight is that the normate viewer needs the freak to confirm his or her identity and to confirm that they belong to "a proper social category" (1996, 65). The viewer must eject or expel from his self-image any resemblance to the monstrous being. The viewer fastens on the freak's difference in order to maintain the viewer's subjectivity and identity. Building on Thomson's observation of the popularity of the circus freak show at a time when white male identity/male supremacy was challenged by emancipation and suffrage (1996, 6), we may wonder whether those Americans who are insecure about race, social, and economic status find reassurance in their supposed physical superiority to individuals who have odd bodies.

For example, in 2008, BBC Television featured a *Missing Top Model* competition. While the series highlighted the beauty of women with missing limbs, there was a voyeuristic aspect in that the contestants were displayed as oddities; their bodily difference was commercially exploited. Dwarfs also remain a popular subject, including reality television shows such as *Little People, Big World*, in which dwarf families leading ordinary lives are portrayed in empathetic and relatable fashion. On the other hand, mocking and derogatory portrayals remain, for example, in television commercials.

In the television series *Ruby*, a highly overweight woman is portrayed as if she were a drug or alcohol addict (Backstrom 2012, 700). Her excessive weight predetermines her life; she is unable to work and unable to maintain a successful romantic relationship. Such negative media portrayals stereotype morbidly obese individuals as lacking in self-discipline; the obese body is equated with ugliness,

[2] With the passing of Barnum and Bailey, only a few circuses continue to feature freaks in side shows, including the Jim Rose Circus and the Coney Island Circus side show (Adams 2001).

moral failure, and poor impulse control (692). Apart from reality shows, telethons also function as a latter day freak show; viewers stare at "exceptional bodies to establish the supposed truth of the ordinary" (Thomson 2005, n.p.)

Timmie's exploitation is especially problematic. At least in circus freak shows and TV reality shows, performers are paid (although often paid quite poorly). If adult, the freak show performer has consented to display his or her physical difference. No one asks Timmie if he wishes to be exhibited; as a small child he is not competent to decide, and he has no legal representative. While some television shows can reduce stigma against those with anomalous bodies by showing them living meaningful, well-rounded lives, it is clear that Timmie will be subject to a demeaning gaze, mocked, and derided. Unlike the model who is missing a limb, yet nonetheless beautiful and popular, Timmie will be reduced to his ugliness, strangeness, and monstrosity. David Gerber emphasizes the exploitation of many performers, and argues that participation in the freak show is rarely truly voluntary. For Gerber, consent is not the same as choice: "One makes a free choice not only when one is uncoerced, but also when one has a significant range of meaningful choices" (2008, 42).

Here again, Asimov's story highlights a current reality faced by many individuals with anomalous bodies. Under conditions of economic duress, there is no free choice. Dwarf tossing is a highly controversial circus stunt. The Little People of America has condemned it as an odious exploitation; defenders, including participants, argue that given the reality of lesser earning potential, little people should have the freedom to use their bodies in this fashion should they choose to do so. Similarly, many within the Little People community are forced to participate in athletic stunts which focus on their bodily anomaly. An example is the television series *Half-Pint Brawlers*, featuring "midget wrestlers."

Vulnerability of Individuals Othered as Subhuman to Experimental Testing

In speculative fiction, the bodies of marginalized individuals are often abused and exploited. For example, in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, the master genetic engineer Crake explains that the human subjects for his experimental sterilization pills come "from the poorer countries. Pay them a few dollars, they don't even know what they're taking. …Whorehouses. Prisons. And from the ranks of the desperate, as usual" (2003, 296). In Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), clones are created as donors to provide organs for their fully human counterparts. When the clones reach their early 20s their bodies are harvested for organs through a series of surgeries. Before the clones are 30, they are sacrificed. The clones give their short "almost" lives so that "real humans" can live longer. The 2010 film version effectively portrays treatment of the clones as sacrificial animals: the corpse of a sensitive and intelligent female clone is tossed into the garbage after she has made her final donation.

In Asimov's story, Timmie is exploited as if he were an experimental animal. When Nurse Fellowes objects to the regime of needles, injections, and disgusting diet, she is told that the testing is ethical because the boy is not human (1990, 316); by contesting Timmie's biological identity, the lab implicitly recognizes that it is violating ethical duties owed to human subjects. Like a used-up experimental animal, Timmie is "sacrificed" at the end, by being sent back through time—no reader would bet on his safe arrival back in the Neanderthal world. [3]

By describing Timmie as being "on the edge of being human" and classifying him as an "ape boy," Dr. Hoskins seeks to evade ethical responsibility (1990, 313). In H.G. Wells's classic novella, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, a "mad scientist" performs painful vivisection experiments on wild animals. Dr. Moreau

[3] Together with Robert Silverberg, Asimov collaborated on a novel adapting "Ugly Little Boy" with very significant changes (1993). Among other significant plot and thematic differences, a *Child of Time* recounts the boy's return to the Neanderthal period.

teaches the Beast Folk to act like men -- walking on two feet, abstaining from meat, worshiping Dr. Moreau as if he were a god, and chanting the litany "Are we not men?" (2005, 57).

However, Neanderthals like Timmie are (or were) members of the genus *Homo*. Anthropologists tell us that Neanderthals occasionally mated with our *sapiens* species, and in fact have a somewhat larger brain capacity (Harari 2015, 14-15). Far from being simple-minded, they were versatile, adaptable, and developed sophisticated survival strategies (Finlayson 2004, 129-30). While GEICO made a splash with a television commercial advertising that their website was so simple to access that "even a cave man could do it" (Martin, 2004), the true Neanderthal was anything but stupid.

In a provocative article, "Mad Scientists/Impossible Humans," Andrew Bartlett argues that sympathy for cyborg suffering is misplaced:

> ...[T]he harder we try to humanize the impossible humans in the Frankenstein myth, the more injustice we do them. Let Shelley's Wretch be the wretch he uniquely is, let the Beast People be beast people, let the robots be robots and replicants be replicants. They speak to us from a place we cannot go on the other side of the tragic curtain that separates their fate from ours. They speak to us, more specifically, from a nonhuman place that we could not wish to be. (2014, 19)

Bartlett deplores the "victimary thinking" that seeks to humanize these "impossible humans" in order to "enlarge our sympathy for them" (16). In contrast, Timmie is not a cyborg: he is a human, albeit of a different species. "Ugly Little Boy" provides an opportunity to assess discrimination against an individual with liminal status, whose humanity is challenged. Dr. Hoskins is able to get away with his experiments because Timmie is marginal, alone, without any advocate save for Nurse Fellowes.

Historically, test subjects have been drawn from minorities and other individuals who lack political, social, or economic power -- experimentation that would provoke outrage if practiced on an individual or group in the majority. "Ugly Little Boy" calls to mind Joseph Mengele's sadistic experiments with individuals with physical or mental abnormalities. Responding to Nazi atrocities, the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that "no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation" (1966, Art. 7).

The United States has a sorry history of abuse of vulnerable humans in research experiments. In the notorious Tuskegee experiment, African Americans were enrolled in syphilis trials in the absence of informed consent, and tragically deprived of penicillin that would have cured their condition (Jones 1981). Between 1946 and 1953 researches from the United States and Guatemala subjected vulnerable Guatemalans to non-consensual experiments in which test subjects were also exposed to syphilis (Constantin 2018).

Timmie is involuntarily subjected to frightening experiments, prodded, probed, and fed disgusting diets (1990, 316). Nurse Fellowes protests that he is a human and that Dr. Hoskins has no right to treat him like a laboratory animal (316). Timmie is too young to advocate for himself and his only protector lacks the power to stop the excruciating testing. The short film version of *Ugly Little Boy* (1977) vividly illustrates Timmie's pain, as he writhes helplessly on a gurney while, horrified and helpless, Nurse Fellowes watches him suffer. In effect, Timmie is held as a prisoner with Dr. Hoskins in total control.

The Kefauver-Harris Amendments to the Federal Food and Drug Act (1962) encouraged the use of prisoners as subjects in pharmaceutical drug testing. By 1969, 85% of all new drugs were tested on prisoners (Hill 1994). In exchange for participation in pharmaceutical drug testing, inmates might be allowed favorable work schedules, more television, better food choices, or higher ratings in parole hearings. A report by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research condemned this practice. The Commission found that as a result of their status, prisoners consented to experiments that "persons better situated would ordinarily refuse," and that they generally failed to benefit from improvements in medical care that accrued to the

sponsoring company or society as a whole (1976, 7-8). As a result, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drastically curtailed drug testing on prisoners (Hill 1994).

In 2006, the Institute of Medicine proposed ethical principles to govern future research on prisoners. These include a "risk-benefit approach" to allow prisoners to participate in cutting-edge drug trials and treatments particularly applicable to inmates. There is concern that such an approach could prioritize research that is deemed beneficial to society as a whole as opposed to the risks and benefits to individual program participants. Among the questions posed: Is prison confinement inherently coercive such that free choice is illusory? How do these recommendations address prisoners' principal health concerns given overcrowded conditions? Is the real motivation to round up participants to help pharmaceutical companies that face a shortage of volunteers? (Obasogie and Reiter 2010).

The policy issues are complex and beyond the scope of this essay; but provocative fiction such as Asimov's story helps sensitize us to the implications of subjecting prisoners to experimental therapies. General ethical guidelines may not suffice to protect individual prisoners' health and best interests.

The Neanderthal as Immigrant: Exploited and then Cast Out

Timmie's liminal status can be compared to that of an immigrant: Dr. Hoskins imported the boy across eons of time and then deported him when he was no longer useful. By analogy, Chinese workers were encouraged to enter the United States as coolies when needed to build railroads and work in mines in the 1860s. In 1882, the door slammed shut on Chinese immigrants and remained a formidable barrier for 60 years (Ngai 1998).

"Yellow peril" cartoons depicted Chinese "coolies" with distorted and grotesque features as if they were disfigured and subhuman (Tchen and Yeats

2014). Deformity was a social construction, based on the workers' racial difference, not bodily uniqueness. Timmie similarly has an anomalous body by parochial twentieth century Anglo-American standards, with no indication that his body would have been regarded as "ugly" by his peers.

In 1942, the United States brought in 100,000 Mexican Americans annually as seasonal agricultural workers. By the late 1950s, approximately 2.5 million braceros came to the United States legally. The program ended in 1963, because the public became aware of the horrific condition in which migrants were working and because of the adverse effects on domestic workers (Morgan 2004).

Under the Trump Administration, immigrants from the Northern Triangle seeking to cross the Mexican border in hopes of obtaining asylum have been kept in chain link fence pens– labeled by guards and detainees alike as "dog pounds" (Miroff 2019). When campaigning in 2015, President Trump referred to Mexicans at the border as "drug dealers and rapists." (Newkirk 2018). In 2017, he characterized these individuals as "animals" (ibid).

> They don't want to use guns because it's too fast and it's not painful enough. So they'll take a young, beautiful girl, 16, 15, and others, and they slice them and dice them with a knife because they want them to go through excruciating pain before they die." (ibid)

Xenophobic rhetoric dehumanizes and alienates the majority against the migrant in two ways: emphasizing his foreignness and his strangeness, alienating him from our sympathy and compassion.

In July 2019, the Trump Administration implemented a new rule that makes migrants who seek to enter the southern border ineligible to seek asylum if they pass through another country on the way to the United States. The Administration points out that under U.S. and international law, an alien is ineligible to seek asylum if he or she has removed to a "safe third country" (Department of Justice 2019). Based on dangerous conditions that prevail in parts of Mexico and Guatemala, as well as administrative hurdles, the rule has been criticized. In the case of some

migrants, who seek asylum to avoid severe persecution, a decision to expel threatens severe bodily or emotional harm, and for some, possibly even death (American Immigration Council 2019).

As a result of Timmie's alien status, he has no legal right to remain in Dr. Hoskins's lab and to continue to learn and develop his human capacity. Nor does he have the political power to do so. Dr. Hoskins's elimination of Timmie is based on numbers (lab economics), as is the Administration's action (the large numbers of asylum applicants). Dr. Hoskins ignores Nurse Fellowes's protests that Timmie's tribe may have relocated or no longer exist; even if he could be returned there is no assurance that they will recognize him (1990, 332). Timmie's forced return voyage is yet more hopeless, as he is expelled on a dangerous journey via uncertain technology to a destination which may no longer exist, much less welcome his return.

The Nurse's Efforts to Save Timmie: Care Ethics as a Corrective to Exploitation of the Other

I argue here that Nurse Fellowes's commitment to care for Timmie embodies the moral philosophy of Care Ethics, and contrasts with the decision by Dr. Hoskins, the prototypical "economic man," who carelessly sacrifices Timmie's life to enhance the fame and profitability of the lab. Care Ethics is a moral philosophy that elevates empathy over economics. Empathetic caregiving recognizes the deep obligation that we owe to protect vulnerable individuals and groups from harm (Gilligan 1982). Care practice involves "everything we do to help individuals to meet their vital biological needs, develop or maintain their basic capabilities, and avoid or alleviate unnecessary or unwanted pain and suffering" (Engster 2007, 28).

Ethicist Eva Kittay draws attention to the overvaluing of the fiction of independence: it is common to extol one's independence as a virtue when in fact no one would be alive without being cared for as an infant; at some point in one's life

one will become again dependent on others for care (1999, xii-xiii). In fact it is *interdependence* that should be valued (1999, xiii). As originally formulated care ethics focused on caring for family members and close familiars, those whose needs we feel most compelled to meet, whom we are best positioned to attend to and serve (Noddings 1984, 46-47). However, care ethics has increasingly been invoked as a basis for the moral obligation to in the political arena and across borders (Tronto 1993, 145, 154; Robinson 2006, 21). Virginia Held states that "everyone must have been cared for as a child or would not be alive" (3); the shared experience implies that obligations of care ethics on a global scale (2005,158-89). Michael Sullivan advocates the extension of care ethics to immigration policy (2016, 263).

Care ethicists have vigorously debated whether care ethics is gendered: Are women more capable or willing than men to provide care to those in need? Many feminist ethicists argue that women are more able than men to offer dependent care by virtue of biology and their maternal role (Gilligan 1982, West 1999). Nel Noddings identifies a "maternal instinct" (2010 12) perhaps rooted in anthropological experience: in prehistoric times, children were more likely to survive when raised by mothers who gave them devoted care. As Eva Kittay observes, mothers of seriously disabled children will not neglect their duty of care even at great sacrifice (1999, 238). Other care ethicists reject type casting women as care givers when such a role may preclude more challenging or remunerative opportunities and perpetuate second class citizenship. It is argued that such essentialism assumes that all women must share their values and lifestyle. Critics suggest that it is sexist to imply that, on the one hand, women are destined to care for dependents and, on the other, men lack empathy and devotion (McClain 1992).

The debate about the extent to which caring is a female duty is in fact distracting. Even if, historically, women have been more likely to assume the caregiving role, care ethics need not be grounded on biology: its justification is gender neutral. Daniel Engster posits the obligation to care on each individual's

own need for care and the assumption of reciprocal responsibility to care for others in hopes and expectation of receiving such care when and as needed. Engster articulates a need based account of moral responsibility, a "minimal capability theory" (Engster 2007, 12). All human beings are dependent upon others to develop their basic capabilities, and that in receiving care, individuals tacitly and logically become obliged to care for others. Engster understands care as a set of practices that consist of attention, responsiveness, and respect.

In Asimov's story, care ethics is clearly gendered. In contrast to Victor Frankenstein, who abandons his ugly Creature on first sight, Dr. Hoskins initially assumes a qualified stewardship over Timmie. While Dr. Hoskins provides the child with a nurse, toys, and a playmate, he subjects Timmie to painful tests and unpalatable synthetic food. When Nurse Fellowes pleads with Dr. Hoskins to treat Timmie decently on the basis that the doctor is in effect Timmie's "father," he instantly rejects any such bond (1990, 322). His rejection of paternal responsibility contrasts with Nurse Fellowes's delight in accepting the maternal role. Ultimately, Dr. Hoskins abandons Timmie when a more sensational and marketable prodigy is revived from the Middle Ages. Timmie is discarded just as Dr. Hoskins had previously sent a superfluous rock back to Paleolithic times. Economics primes over empathy; power overcomes care.

From multiple perspectives, Nurse Fellowes is drawn into a caring relationship with Timmie. She yearns to have a parental relationship, and is moved when Timmie calls her Mother. As Timmie develops, he reciprocates her affection and enriches her otherwise lonely life. Second, she is committed to taking care of infants and children by her vocation. As a nurse, she finds the painful experiments conducted on Timmie to be appalling, a virtual torture that requires the child to overcome physical barriers to obtain food or water, and includes an electric shock treatment (1990, 322). Importantly, it is her recognition of Timmie's humanity that leads her not only to raise him as she would any other little boy, to advocate that he

be treated like a human child, and ultimately to accompany him on an ultra-hazardous, likely fatal, journey, back to the Neanderthal era.

Conclusion

The representation of Timmie as a Neanderthal is inventive and impactful. As a Neanderthal, Timmie signifies the ugly child whose youth elicits sympathy but whose body repels. Because he is on the border between man and ape, it is in the lab's interest to denigrate his status, concomitant to justifying his exploitation as a test subject. Because he is an import from another time and place, Timmie can be expelled from the lab when a more profitable replacement becomes available. The story has contemporary relevance for contemporary immigration studies where individuals may be deported to dire conditions when their employment in the host country is no longer needed.

Care Ethics, I have proposed, is an aspirational response to exploitation of the marginal alien. While the story does not directly anticipate the philosophy of Care Ethics yet we can see Nurse Fellowes as a prototype of the caregiver. For Nurse Fellowes, Timmie's very vulnerability – as an individual who is deformed, marginalized, thoroughly foreign and barely recognized as human – elicits an empathetic response. Nurse Fellowes emerges as Empathetic Woman in opposition to Economic Man. The story invites the reader to take the same leap as that made by Nurse Fellowes, to see the humanity in the Other and to assume a devoted caregiving role. The story promises no easy answers as her caregiving is ultimately unsuccessful in ending the exploitation.

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