

Ghiñn: A Reading of Disgust as a Literary Device in Subimal Mishra's Short Fiction

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The following paper will discuss some aspects of the emotion of disgust. It will focus on the history of the study of disgust and how that changes the ways in which we see disgust today. The paper will look into the existential aspects of disgust and relate them to the caste-class situation, focusing on the Indian subcontinent. Lastly, the paper will use the discussed concepts as a method of studying disgust in some literary works. Although it examines some works of Subimal Mishra, the goal is to establish how literature picks up disgust as a device little by little over a span of several decades. Literary works, like any other form of art, have always had an 'affect' on the readers through certain emotions since emotions are our sensorial tools to experience our *Being*.

Disgust is an aversive emotion we resort to the moment we meet objects that are out-of-order (Douglas 36-38). This aspect of disgust refers to the order of things that are individually and culturally decided according to history. A major part of the conception of this order is derived from geographic, environmental, and localised socio-political contexts. For example, dust on the ground is not considered disgusting; it would be considered disgusting when it is on food, clothing, and upon a person. Similarly, food on the plate is completely normal, but on the ground or when handled by people who are considered disgusting, it is considered corrupted and disgusting. We are disgusted by faeces in general, especially of "others," and in places, we do not want them to be.¹ But, if we imagine being disgusted by the faeces inside our body, it is almost impossible unless it is a symptom of a deeper mental disorder. What we see, therefore, is an existential concern regarding disgust; it strikes when the order of things is violated. However, there is also an order of things in society, or rather a hierarchy of people, and its violation also causes disgust (Douglas 40-41, 139-140). It is an existential as well as political emotion. Emotions help us understand ourselves as being-in-the-world, but they are inescapably related to materialist conditions and their manifestations through networks of power.

There is a change in the way disgust is read throughout Western philosophy. The initial works on emotions either dealt with disgust tangentially, or it was absent in it as a separate emotion, that is, during the classical period. In later years, we see a rise in the study of emotions, but it is riddled with the nature/nurture or mind/body dichotomy. Nonetheless, there were tangential discussions by Sigmund Freud and later by Friedrich Nietzsche,² but it would not be a singularly dedicated study of the emotion and its causes (other than some excerpts from Immanuel Kant and some stray attempts by medieval literary scholars). The first mention of disgust as part of a serious study happened in Charles Darwin's work, and it came with its own problems. In *Emotions and Expressions of Man and Other Animals*, Darwin theorised that a lot of emotions, disgust included, are part of the biological (albeit neurological in contemporary parlance) frameworks we inherit from our ancestors. Darwin describes disgust as a sensation, offensive to taste (Darwin 269, 270-271). However, his first example was a description of his own disgust when a native from Tierra del Fuego touched his cold-cut meat and was repulsed by someone eating cold meat. The dichotomies of cold and hot, Europe and native, and White and Black man are all important, but as Miller points out, the reverse retching of the native gives Darwin a real offence, which otherwise might have been taken as an action by an ignorant participant (W. I. Miller 3-4). What we see, thus, is that even if the study of emotions as a field had already been established since Descartes and Spinoza, a special look at disgust only comes within the context of a colonial Other. Disgust had undergone a change in Western philosophy and cultural logic over time, and it went through a steady aestheticisation (Robinson 555-562). If history teaches us anything about conservatism, then it is this: aestheticisation of politics is the pathway to marking, vilifying, criminalising, and discriminating against the Other. Thus, we see that the rise of the study of disgust and the spread of colonisation shared a correlative timeline.

While on the one hand, most of the dedicated theorists about disgust were phenomenologists or existentialists like Aurel Kolnai, Andras Angyal, and William Miller, yet there was an attempt to return to a political discourse through different methods. Notably, works by psychologists like David Pizarro and Paul Rozin offered a more materialist discourse on the cognitive aspects of disgust. There is also the work on disgust as affect by Sarah Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; however, a theoretical model focusing specifically on the dynamism and flux of emotions often tends to miss out on the deeper materialist positioning of the history of the emotion in the specific geopolitical space. For example, Ahmed's essay talks about the "stickiness" of disgusting terms (Ahmed 89-92). At one point, Ahmed goes as far as to point out that "what sticks 'shows us' where the object has travelled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object" (Ahmed 91), thus pointing out that at the surface level, a history, whether simulated or real, plays a crucial role in making the immigrants get stuck with elicitors of disgust. We will take cues from the problems mentioned above and develop a different method, acutely aware of the materialist conditions causing disgust in each social space, also acknowledging its existential questions.

A Turn in the Usage of Disgust

The usage of 'disgust' in the English language can be traced back to John Florio's translation of the word '*Sgusto*'—his preferred form of the word. It must be noted that though etymologically, the word is rooted in Latin, its use in Italian is relatively new, starting around 1600 (Robinson 553). Thomas Aquinas used the term 'odium' to refer to a sense of hate, loathing, and revulsion; this tendency to equate disgust with hate would continue well up to the modern age (Robinson 553-555). As Robinson argues, for a long time, disgust was bound to hatred, dietary metaphors, and ethics. In Milton, we find Satan ranting against God or praising Eve regarding her actions as well as tastes. We also find that Troilus and Cressida offer a short thesis on feeling and tasting, David Hume's treatise on tastes, and many other works that formalise the emotion of disgust into a form of taste or ethics (Robinson 555-562). Therefore, interest in disgust as a separate category of emotion starts much later and coincides with the timeline of colonialism.

I am not conflating correlation with causation; by no means am I assuming that Europe had started to *feel* the emotion of disgust since meeting the colonial other. I am pointing out that the rise of a certain interest in disgust (whether philosophical or literary) is related to colonialism's advancement. Phillip Sidney comments in *The Defence of Poesy*:

For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table; like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to (Sidney 246-247).

Sidney says that some people, like the Indians, cannot fathom what is good and aesthetically pure, as they lack the necessary faculty. The metaphor of over-sweetening and the usage of jewels in the nose and lips are equated to suggest a lack of aesthetic sense and evoke a repulsive sensibility against the Indians. We find a similar sense in the prose written by William Acton, especially in his treatise on the 'evils' of prostitution and its remedies. Acton refers to prostitution as one of the leading causes of moral and health decline in Britain. He constantly refers to prostitution in explicit terms of moral disgust and ultimately offers a few erratic solutions, notably among them is colonisation. Acton writes, "For the sufferings of labour, for the immorality of the community, my nostrum is to marry and colonise... colonise... colonise" (Acton 185). It is a way of equating and displacing the "most loathsome abodes of sin and misery..." and "lowest dens of filth and misery" to the already disgusting other space (Acton 2). There is the first-ever 'scientific' study of disgust done by Darwin, which contains problems of racism and colonial gaze that we have discussed. Other than these stray examples, disgust by the coloniser as a praxis has been

discussed by scholars such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, and others who contributed to anticolonial political thought.

Therefore, we find a turn in how the word disgust is used as we progress through time; its literary and philosophical resonance changes considerably. The dietary metaphors, the equating of disgust with hatred, and pure ethical use of disgust and related words to signify the emotion recedes to make way for disgust as an aesthetic category. This aesthetic categorisation of disgust inhibits the traces of Western colonial political vision as well. We find the bourgeoisie vision, the orientalist gaze, and the ideological manifestation of racial supremacism and colonial imperialism in it.

Tyranny of Matter and a Note on the Method

To read disgust, we need both phenomenological and political discourse. The *Dasein* of a conscious being is related to its societal history as much as its positioning as Being-in-the-World (*In-der-Welt-sein*). In the Indian context, disgust is irreconcilably related to the caste system and its various formations. We shall have to use terms borrowed from phenomenology to explain the structure itself but also to cross-question structures of Brahminism with a more 'scientific' term.

We can consider what Pauline Kollenda points out about sociologists coming to the conclusion that Hindu mythology and its worldview divides people not into individuals but as 'dividuals' (Kollenda 70). This means Hindus see themselves as an already coded body since the original 'Codeman' was Brahma, from whose different parts of the body came the different *varna*; the Hindu is already a coded product of the original coding of the God himself (Kollenda 69). The *jatidharma*, or one's duty both as a caste and an individual, is therefore hard-coded into the body and can be maintained in harmony if only one follows the right conduct for their caste. These coded particles (also *pinda*, meaning body) carried in sweat, hair, saliva, et cetera are easily transferred from one person to another and, therefore, must be regulated and be exchanged only with a higher caste than one's own (rather than a 'lower caste' if exchange happens at all). Therefore, a Hindu must work on not just avoiding pollution but continuously purifying one's coding through the right action (both labour and morality), right eating, and right marriage (Kollenda 68-70). So, there is no individual, only a member of a caste and how that caste situates itself in the world when it comes to pollution and purity in India.³

Apart from the immediate caste politics, there is a finer existential aspect to this system, specific to Brahminism. Any conscious being is conscious of their existence and experiences the world as an existence (contemplation is the quality of conscious beings) (Heidegger 11), which we can call *Dasein* (Heidegger 15-18). *Dasein* is not just *being* as a phenomenon in isolation, but it is being-with (*Mitsein*) others⁴ (Heidegger 111, 114-118). It is present with the feeling of a constant state of sharing the world with others of the same kind. However, at every step in this experience of Being-in-the-World (*In-der-Welt-sein*), there are tranquilising effects provided to this *Dasein*. This tranquilising phenomenon (*Beruhigend*) (Heidegger 171) results in Fallenness (*Verfallen*) or a complete lack of curiosity and interest in the questioning of the world as well as one's own existence (Heidegger 179-181). Therefore, structures of traditional interpretations, along with falling prey to the everydayness of popular interpretations, keeps the *Dasein*'s motion as a flight from freedom, which is only once in a while revealed upon encountering anxiety (*Angst*).

To put this into effect as a method of a political ontology of the caste system, one comes to realise and reveal the specificity of Brahminism as a traditional interpretive structure along with the layers it has as a structure in itself.⁵ Brahminism as a structure is not just economic exploitation, although it is historically tied to class history, it provides a religious and metaphysical structure that exceeds any class-based society. Firstly,

Brahminism provides a false ontological position. It assumes a ready acceptance of the ontologically preordained superiority of one caste (or sub-caste) over the other. In a way, it provides a framework where one assumes that their Being-in-the-World is superior to others; in a way, it provides an inauthentic *Mitsein* or being-with but also an isolation from a shared world with others. Secondly, the individual under Brahminism constantly finds itself falling prey⁶ to several tranquilising effects. A caste individual finds itself not just bound to economic and societal facticity of being but also finds the self constantly being isolated in a reassurance (*Beruhigung*) that everything is in “the best of order.” Lastly, Brahminism provides reassurance through several traditional structures such as *karma*, *jatidharma*, and other functions (even after death). Every object in the cosmos is created with an individual set of *dosha* (sins in-itself) and *guna* (purity in-itself), including castes. For Brahminism, as long as caste duties are followed, the essence of the self (*atmā*) returns to the ancestors or takes rebirth in a higher caste, and the cycle keeps turning till eternity. Disgust in the Indian context, therefore, is a glimpse of the collapse of the caste order, and it is sharper because the violation is not just of the self but of the entire structure itself and for eternity. It is sharper and more complex than class society because, at every instance of material exchange or interaction with the objective world, it brings in fear of pollution from the other. Disgust under Brahminism results from the violation of caste practices, but it also appears because of the many ways in which matter itself does not cease to pollute the self. Disgust, in the case of Brahminism, is primarily the tyranny of matter itself; for what is more disgusting than the illusion of the world (*Maya*) itself?

Subimal Mishra’s Stories, Disgust, and Disturbance of the Form

Subimal Mishra arrived in the Bengali literary scene just after the Hungry Generation and, in some sense, carried forward their temperament. Mishra was not just writing about topics, people, and relationships that were violations of sensibilities but also experimenting with the very form of writing. He visualised many stories not in the form of a story but as a shot from a film. He had his iconic style of using the lines, margins, the Bengali script, and the spacing of letters to create cinematic imagery with literature. Mishra also experimented with his narrative techniques to open up cinematic sequences. He would give a long-drawn description of one event with its surrounding atmosphere, a commonly practised technique known as the ‘establishing shot’. He often used his narrative style and form to flash-forward, flashback, creating a contrast of objects, montage, and several other techniques that are intrinsic to cinematic language (perhaps only to the cinema) (Dasgupta 18-19).

These attempts by Subimal Mishra are disturbing in terms of form since literature already has a longer and different history than cinema, as well as that it is a different medium. It is also disturbing because it defies the traditional idea that the literary world can only influence the realm of cinema and not the other way around. It becomes disturbing because the average reader is trained from early childhood to read a certain way, identify letters, fonts, scripts, and other details while reading, and make meaning from the written word. This experiment works not just with the narrative style or the plot itself but with the way the story is told through visual artefacts. The most exciting trait is his way of using elicitors of disgust in his narrative style, albeit a bit differently than his predecessors.

Mishra often uses statements in tandem with elicitors of disgust in order to turn the emotion into a literary device. It acts as a rollercoaster where all nauseating highs are juxtaposed with melancholic lows, producing a sublime experience through contemplation. The experience of the stories is aimed at producing a contemplative aesthetic pleasure rather than getting caught in the intensity of the explicit language. For example, we can look at “*Haran Majhir Bidhoba Bouer Mora ba Shonar Gandhimurti*”, or “Haran Majhi’s Widow and the Golden Statue of Gandhi (translation mine)” in English (Mishra 17-21). The story opens with Haran Majhi’s widow hanging herself by the neck and her body getting carried off by the muddy waters of the nearby canal. Her surviving one-and-a-half-year-old child with an enlarged liver was lying in the mud nearby and screaming. When her husband was alive, the

widow had a tough time because he would beat her up every other day if she returned home late after selling “muri” or puffed rice. He lost his job as a sharecropper when the government declared the new land taxes. Since the death of her husband, she had to fight poverty and, on the other hand, had to deal with sexual exploitation in “Bamun Para,” or the Brahmin side of the village. In the end, she got pregnant again and decided to kill herself. However, this was not the end of Haran Majhi’s widow. Shortly thereafter, her body started appearing at random places in the city, and then it appeared everywhere. It was discovered in the mayor’s toilet, then it was found blocking the ‘Writer’s Building’ (Provincial Administrative Office), under the beds of political leaders, inside almirahs, and then it finally appeared inside the imported golden statue of M.K Gandhi that the people had flown in from some other country. The plot is satirical, grim in its treatment of fantasy, and plays with dark humour, and yet the plot itself is not the main charm of the story. What is significantly grim and charming is the form in which it is written. The story is written using language that is explicit, descriptive, and has elements of dry humour. There is a passage that describes the canal through which the widow’s body was floating away:

The two sides of the canal were quite picturesque. People’s faeces were just bordering the edges of the water, huge amounts of garbage were dumped all around. A ragpicker was going around the dump with a sack on her back. Three buffaloes were standing still with their bodies submerged in water. A dead cat or dog floated by them, and even then, a crow sitting on it. People in Kalighat come here to wash away their sins with this water (translation mine) (Mishra 17).

The description of the canal begins with a sarcastic remark about the beauty of the two sides of the canal, which in reality, is in an abysmal state. However, the canal becomes a mnemonic symbol of the Ganges by the visitors of Kalighat. The irony lies in that none of the people consider the damage and quite possibly the “sin” that the environmental and socio-political scenario causes and that the canal itself is a standing example of the sins of the people. These disgusting and polluted spaces contribute to the feedback loop of purity and pollution, making people more conservative in trying to maintain their purity (Bataille 66-68) (Rozin and Fallon). Mishra continues with the story and describes how the unborn foetus slides down from the widow’s womb during post-mortem investigation and leaps up, saying, “the One who is your demise is being raised in Gokul.” The line offers an allusion to myths surrounding Krishna’s birth. The difference is that the line is four times the font size of the rest of the text. It carries the impression that when the foetus jumps up, it makes a prophetic declaration. Mishra is also critical of how the widow got pregnant:

The wombs of malnourished widows are the best place to lay babies... Haran Majhi’s widow used to say, “Damned old Brahmin geezer gives me a little morsel of food and in exchange tries to fuck all the time. In the next life, all of you will be born as dogs in hell...” (translation mine) (Mishra 18-19).

Here we see a return to the problem where coercive sexual exploitation of Dalit or “lower caste” women by Brahmin men has been kept out of the ambit of pollution since semen is seen as an exalted but excretory liquid that purifies if it trickles downward the caste hierarchy. The semen becomes symbolic of a carrier of the nobility and goodness of the man of that caste, hence becoming the agent that stops the defiling if it is released inside a woman (Kollenda 71-73). Disgust here is against the Brahminical exploitation of women and against the perversion of sexual exploitation of a malnourished body that seems closer to decay rather than the fullness of life. This brings our attention to the Brahminical nature of patriarchy in India, which considers women not only as property but also as tools to continue caste duties. For Brahminism, women are at the centre of this transaction in endogamy, and Brahminical Patriarchy ritualises female sexuality as an exchangeable commodity to maintain the integrity of this bounded caste group (Chakravarti 26). Uma Chakravarti reflects how *prakritii*⁷ of women is considered as an ambiguous *strisvabha* that must

be kept under control by *stridharma* (following the codes set up by Father-Husband) (Chakravarti 69-70). Thus, violation of the order in gender roles is inescapably related to the caste system, which repeatedly brings back the feeling of disgust.

Another story we can explore is "*Parkstreet er Traffic Post e Holud Rong*" or "The Yellow Colour in Parkstreet Traffic Lamppost (translation mine)." In it, a beggar is dying, and a madman who lives in the street goes out to beg for help. Throughout the story, we follow the madman as he goes to several people asking for help, especially from the upper classes, and is only met by indifference. We also find that the narrative deploys a language specifically against the upper classes that seems filled with contempt and moral disgust against wealth. The story begins thus:

The beggar is dying, lying under the monotonous light of the street. There is the crouching darkness on one side, and on the other side, the colourful lit streets of Chowringhee; the beggar lay in the middle and was dying. His stick, his begging jar, a rag tied in the waist, his beard, frothing mouth, the smell of shit between two legs, everything including his shrunken body, lay there dying. When the body gets taken away, it will rain, and women with flowy saree will chew peanuts and search for greenery in Maidan, and they will say to their partners, "I like getting soaked in the rain so-o-o- much" (translation mine) (Mishra 26).

The passage highlights the stark differences in one part of the city with another, one class of people with another, and most of all, one aesthetic sensitivity with the other. For Mishra, it was important that the contradiction is highlighted precisely because he was quite fond of the cinematic exercise of contrasts as well as putting a premise forward that disturbs the reader. The dying, smelly, and shrunken beggar does not care about the rain or the joys of the world. The converse is also true, people who are well-fed and content do not make an effort to sympathise with a beggar dying, let alone help him. The "so-oo-oo" is to explicitly state the difference between the experience of rain (emotional as well as materialistic encounter) by two different classes. Mishra also introduces dry and sarcastic humour at this point. He explains how there is a hunt for a crow who defecated on the national flag when the Prime Minister was giving his speech and that, indeed, the crow will be beheaded for this unwanted defecation. The rest of the story keeps coming back to the transgression of the crow, the madman's appeal to people from the upper classes, and repeated descriptions of the political society also being unaffected by death. The story creates an aura of carefully modulated resentment towards the ruling classes. There is a special reason for the usage of this language. The feelings of contempt or scorn do not come for people who are equal or higher in status. It can only be understood when one acknowledges the historicity of wealth itself (it has to be, even if rudimentary, a class consciousness). We find here a language of contempt and moral disgust, not the envy of one class of another's wealth, but a contemplative reaction against the ruling classes' apathy. This is not Nietzsche's "ressentiment" but moral disgust. The difference is that in the former, there is a passive repulsion of the ruling classes, while disgust takes a more visceral toll and operates as an active rejection of the ruling classes.

Aurel Kolnai argues that disgust is not concerned with the *Dasein*, the *being-in-itself*, but the *Sosein* or the *so-being* of the object (Kolnai 44-52). The *Dasein* of the object is its innate properties while *Daseinslage* or *Sosein* is the appearance of the object (ex: meatness of the meat vs. maggots on the meat).⁸ In other words, it depends more on the so-being or the object's appearance than the real properties of the object. However, there are instances when the being of the object itself generates disgust. A prime example is moral disgust; we call some action disgusting not because of how it appears but because of what it is and the outcome it produces. Subimal Mishra uses both explicit language and moral disgust of actions to generate a feeling of disgust against a class, a dominant and powerful group in society. Disgust, the emotion that is generally deployed by ruling classes against the

exploited classes, changes its position in Mishra's writings. Mishra takes a subtle path and addresses the gendered and caste-character of disgust, though not as explicitly as Dalit Panther and *Sathottari* Marathi writers. There is, however, another category that Subimal Mishra uses to generate a specific kind of disgust and often arrives at a different realisation.

Mishra, Sex, and Disgust

From the Hungry Generation, there was an impetus in the 1970s to rediscover the sacred and the taboo in society regarding sex and expose them. They held a mirror to society by foregrounding the most perverse desire. Subimal Mishra seemed to have a similar understanding of sex and sexuality, as explained by critic Dhiman Dasgupta (Dasgupta 92-96). Most of the stories written by Mishra carry some argument about the social repression of sexuality. Mishra would set up his characters where the pervert is the repressed, coming back to society but in another form. The moral disgust against the pervert is redirected to social order itself. In "*Porijatok*" or "Jasmine," Mishra presents a gruesome tale of lust, rape, necrophilia, and necrophagy. It is written from the perspective of Sukhomoy and the three other men with him there were Rajat, Tamal, and Dipen. They had managed to coerce a woman, Rani, to come to a beach resort with them. It was to exclusively use her as a sexual object and to enjoy having her as a sex slave. One day Sukhomoy comes after bathing in the sea and realises that Rani is dead. When the initial horror of the realisation of death passes away, they are again taken over by a perverse attachment to the now-dead woman's body. All of them reminisce how they enjoyed her body and start rationalising how it must have been 'consensual sexual slavery' on her part since all of them had done some favour or another for her at some point. They also decide that this whole ordeal is too ghastly to bear, and yet, since it has come to this, then they must make the most use of this ghastly situation:

Immediately they started carving and chopping off different parts of the body. Someone took his knife and plunged it deep in her bosom and carved out the perfect breast and held it in his hands. Another cut off a major portion of the lower abdomen and started licking it ardently. The third person was carving out another breast. Sukhomoy could not wait anymore; he joined the group. The whole body had large holes by now, and blood was spilling everywhere. Sukhomoy turned the body in different ways to find out a juicy spot to carve out. There was very little left after the onslaught of the other three. However, even from that disadvantage, he could spot the blood-soaked thighs. The knees were still intact as well. He deboned the entire flesh like the way we see being done to young goats. And then everybody started getting aroused according to their received part of the body (translation mine). (Mishra 47-48)

The description above is gory and mentions things that are both objects, as well as morally disgusting. Later in the story, we find that these men store the different pieces of flesh for "future use." What we see here is a perversion in its purest sense. To be clear, a pervert acts; they do not think or dream about what could have been. In this story, we meet the ideal perverts. They are perverts because they have managed to symbolically and, in reality, remove the object-fetish from the body. Desire could be fetishistic, where certain parts of the body or some objects are seen as sexualised objects. For most people, the fetish object is a medium to reach the sexual goal: intercourse. However, for perverts, the sexual goal is lost. Neither sexual intercourse nor sexual intimacy with the other seems important; the fetish itself has become the sexual goal.⁹ For these four men, the exploitation of the woman and repeated violation came with the price of her death. The woman's death also means these men lose their object fetish, which is why they did what they did. There are two different kinds of disgust in the story. First, there is *Matr Shakti* (feminine power) that is ascribed to women, primarily because women are not progenitors of caste but a vessel to carry caste-purity forward (Chakravarti 26). A daughter is given through *kanyadan*, which implies that

what is gifted is her sexuality, her reproductive system (and her ability to provide labour) to another 'caste brother;' in exchange for this 'gift', what the giving community receives is intra-caste purity, the equivalence of socio-political status and the purity of the reproduction of the conditions under which another such endogamic transaction takes place without the fear of direct incest (Chakravarti 30-31). Disgust comes spontaneously when the women exercise her own identity and invalidates the caste order. Secondly, we notice that beyond the "Bhadralok" lies a terrible monster, repressed by its own subject position and able to feel alive only by exploiting others. The necrophilia is described in detail, but we are partially disgusted and more enraged by the actions. The cases of necrophilia and necrophagy are most rampant during the early stages of a freshly deceased body; even for a hardened, deluded pervert, it is insufferable to eat or have sex with a decomposing body (Aggrawal 41-93). Perhaps we are not generally disgusted by death in-itself while encountering freshly deceased corpses, but the excess of life that comes out upon decomposition (W. I. Miller 40). We see here what Julia Kristeva highlights in her postulations on "abjection," especially the idea that the abject renders the subject incapable of withstanding the might of the *jouissance*. The relationship between abject and disgust is discussed in Kristeva's work; however, it is important to note the aspect of *jouissance*, i.e., the physical manifestation of emotional or any intense psychological experience. For example, when we experience sadness or anger that escapes language, we often start trembling, gritting our teeth, spitting, getting watery eyes, and various other symptoms. We do not will any of it; they come as part of the emotional experience. Nausea can be a physical manifestation of disgust or repulsion, but it can be a *jouissance* of intense existential dread. In this story, these men's *jouissance* comes from intense sexual experience from the severed limbs and parts of the body. They have entered a stage where pleasure is purest when it has detached itself from the original human, the object, and the abject has become one. I argue that this is Mishra's way of showing the vile fetishism that runs in the very fabric of both capitalist economy and Brahminical-Patriarchal society. Mishra has taken the disembodied consumer habit and pushed it to its logical extreme, where there is actual murder and necrophilia to achieve pleasure from the objectified body of the woman. There is yet another story that evokes an analysis of both the problems of a capitalist economy, a casteist society, and a space where women are treated as sexualised objects. The story called "*Archimedes er abishkar o tarpur*" or "Archimedes' discovery and thereafter" deals with a person's upward mobility in economic status but makes him increasingly steeped into a crude fetishism of the smell and taste of urine.

"Archimedes' Discovery and Thereafter" opens with the unemployed Niramoy, and his problems in making it through the day with a bare minimum amount of money. Often Niramoy must ask for money or other financial assistance from his girlfriend Dipa, and it is humiliating to ask her so frequently. One day while seeing off Dipa after she left for her home, Niramoy felt extreme pressure to urinate. He waited and searched for a place to urinate near Rashbehari crossroad; the only place he could find was overflowing with faeces, smell, and urine. Niramoy could not hold it anymore and simply turned around and started urinating on a wall. It was then that the idea came to him, just like an idea about buoyancy had once come to Archimedes. Niramoy decided to open up a urinal and charge people a meagre amount of money for using it. The moment he opened up the urinal for public use in exchange for two paisas, it became hugely popular, both for its use and as a place of some novelty. People would queue in and appreciate, make sarcastic remarks, and of course, use the toilet. Niramoy eventually made enough money to open up two separate sections for men and women and add another storey for his home upstairs. It was here in this storey where he finally let go of the voyeur and pervert in him. Niramoy would take a binocular and watch women urinate from a small hole. Niramoy also developed the habit of laying down all the coins and currency notes on his bed and then lying on them or sleeping on them. He realised that somewhere in his path of making this wealth from people's piss and faeces, he had forgotten about Dipa altogether. He would often remember her, fantasise about her, but only to forget about her in a short while. Until eventually, one day, Dipa came to the urinal

herself and went inside the cubicle to urinate. Niramoy watched Dipa urinate and got sexually excited, and right after she left, he rushed to the cubicle and placed his nose and face near the place where her urine fell. The story finishes during this event with an explicitly written inconclusive ending:

Slowly the smell of ammonia made Niramoy's head feel numb. He was losing all sense of reality and could not even keep his weight on all fours without being wobbly. Gradually he became numb all over, slipped, and fell in the very same place. His entire body was covered in piss, and the piss itself was flowing down the drain. He could not help himself from flowing with it. And then, he concluded, "This is for the best. Let's see how far we can flow in this sea of piss and where it takes me through the mazes of one drain to another". Suddenly he remembered the day his father took him to see the top of the Martyr's Monument. He had climbed to the top, holding his father's hand. While returning, he had to take one step at a time and thought it was extremely amusing. Just like that, Niramoy was also enjoying descending from one drain to another (translation mine) (Mishra 71)

We note a similarity with the previously discussed story in terms of the disassociation of the fetish object from the body of the original individual human. In the end, Niramoy turns and gets washed in urine himself. His voyeurism, his fetish, and his setting up of an otherwise successful business of pay-for-use toilet are all markers of a capitalist adventure of trying to make a profit from things that should be a public service. We discussed above how capitalism disowns the cleaning after itself, or the whole idea of cleaning, and leaves it to the state. This produces a more conservative society since the modern state under capitalist society is not powerful enough to curb the source of said pollution or take long-term actions. What we see through Niramoy Sanyal is a symptom of capitalism. It also offers a glimpse into the conservative *Bhadralok* caste, pushed towards the edge of meaning, where disgust and desire collide into an abyss. What can be more violating than a Brahmin owning a public urinal and rolling in it with pleasure? There is the quintessential style of Subimal Mishra at work, juxtaposing one line with another in a manner that feels like a violent "cut" in editing, transferring us to an unknown image. The lines towards the end about the monument come suddenly. This surprising turn, just at the end, levitates the character and all his perversion from being an individual perversion and folly into deep and sublime contemplation of exploitative socio-political structures, as well as its historically specific existential concerns.

Conclusion

The paper has established three interrelated arguments. First, emotions are our robust way of experiencing being-in-the-world and are deeply tied to individual or geopolitical ontic (or *existentiell*) aspects of being. Every individual and culture experience their emotions deeply connected to their materialistic conditions. Secondly, the aversive emotion of disgust is tied inescapably to an existential concern of the conscious self, as well as subject to a political-economic history of relations of productions. These two aspects of disgust must be studied together to understand the nature of disgust. In the collision of existential and political-economic history, we are able to read the political ontology of disgust. Lastly, the literary works by Subimal Mishra are different in using certain elicitors of disgust. Disgust has been previously used by Munshi Prem Chand, Manik Bandhopadhyay, Sadat Hassan Manto, and others, but for Mishra, the difference lies not just in the form of his writing and his scripts but also in his narrative techniques and choices. Mishra is fascinated with repressed sexuality and the realpolitik around the repressed classes. But, he takes fascinations to their logical extremes, based on the foul history of a third-world country where political dreams of repressed classes died a thousand deaths. The disgust in Mishra's works is a pessimist's look into the underbelly of third-world democracy.

Notes

¹ Faeces of the Other is, of course, the reminder of the excretion of the Other, the symbolic reminder of the Other's rejection.

² Notable works of Freud on this is *Three Essays on Sexuality* and *The Case History of Dora*. For Nietzsche, the aspect of disgust was more or less existential and ethical in nature. Nietzsche's argument of "ressentiment" is a direct reference to moral disgust, and "nausea" was the direct result of not being able to accept one's fate, should one repeat it eternally.

³ India, because there is yet to be any religion that has not taken caste system in its everyday practice upon being founded or brought to this subcontinent.

⁴ More specifically, §§25-27 in *Being and Time* discusses this aspect. However, §74 explains how Dasein is always present with its own history and forms its own conception of historicity, and in its facticity, tries to flee from freedom. Heidegger says, "the self is lost in they," meaning Dasein has a motion away from the realisation of Being-in-the-World as a finite but fragile presence and tries to lose itself in traditional interpretations which are inauthentic.

⁵ It is complete "in-itself" because it functions as a complete cyclical order that promises not to release the Dasein even after death, for it is only "right actions" according to the caste system that can ensure a rebirth into a higher caste, starting the cycle again.

⁶ Heidegger does not mean Falling Prey or Fallenness as a motion that is going downward from a higher position. Instead, it is an already present "equiprimordial" quality that is present in Dasein and its experience of being. What it does, however, is where Dasein experiences Disclosedness and finds itself as 'anyone' rather than as an authentic Dasein.

⁷ *Prakriti* is often translated as the nature of an object. A correct translation of the word is perhaps tendency, or a mixture of essence and telos.

⁸ Kolnai does not flesh out the idea of Dasein much in his work on disgust. However, it is safe to assume that his conception of Dasein is different from the Husserl-Heidegger route.

⁹ I will add here, albeit in short, that fetish is historical and subjective to the individual and culture. One's fetish is another's disgust (individually and culturally). However, a pervert does not have disgust – moral or real (primarily because the fetish object has become a sexual goal in itself). A pervert's only contempt (if not disgust) is aroused when he sees that what he does is perceived as perversion rather than as normative.

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