

Contamination, Infection, Disgust: Atomic Bomb Fiction, the Affective Proliferation of Disgust, and Dystopian Literature

LEE Jee-hyung*

Abstract | This paper examines the dynamics of disgust as portrayed in the work of Japanese novelist Inoue Mitsuharu in his writing on the atomic bomb, approaching patterns of disgust from the perspective of contamination and infection as it transfers and proliferates between “others,” heterogeneous minority groups, and heterogeneous communities. Through this examination, the paper also explores the possibility of defining atomic bomb fiction as dystopian literature. Inoue’s atomic bomb fiction, including *House of Hands* (*Te no ie*, 1960) and *Crowds on Earth* (*Chi no mure*, 1963), clearly lay out the processes and structures by which the generation and proliferation of disgust feeds into social discrimination. The affect of disgust, amplified by the synergy between a fear of “infection” through the “contaminated” bodies of atomic bomb survivors and an evolution-based intuition that wishes to avoid the hereditary transmission of illness or disability to one’s descendants, goes on to trigger socially discriminatory practices against atomic bomb survivors, including within marriage. This disgust is most forcefully enacted on women, particularly in relation to the idea and fact of “blood.” The unstoppable hemorrhaging of female atomic bomb survivors accelerates the affect of disgust prompted by repulsion against blood and bodily fluids, and sheds light on the female entity as abject, as opposed to subject or object. Notwithstanding the differences in discrimination that exist between different minority communities, the reality of disgust proves to be most harshly felt by women.

The atomic bombings and the literature that sprang out of this experience, make it clear that disgust and discrimination are not simply matters involving a small exceptional minority, but rather a ubiquitous issue that can impact anyone through external contingent circumstances such as unforeseen disaster and environmental change. The setting of “the atomic bombing and its aftermath” aligns with the characteristics of dystopia, in which human efforts at order and reason are disturbed and subverted so that human liberty and the diversity of lived experience comes to be negated, and uncertainty reigns. Inoue’s atomic bomb fictions testify to the need for intersectional and convergent discussions involving atomic bomb, pollution, disease, and post-3.11 literature in terms of dystopian and minority perspectives. The dynamics

* LEE Jee-hyung (leejh87@sookmyung.ac.kr) is a specialist in Japanese literature and Professor at the Department of Japanese Studies at Sookmyung Women’s University.

of severe disgust among minority communities including atomic bomb survivors, discriminated *burakumin*, Koreans, and Hidden Christians (*Kakure Kirishitan*) serve to show the difficulties involved in creating empathy and solidarity between minority groups. In this sense, what is called for in this “era of hate” is a large-scale reconceptualization that will strike a balance between the human and the inhuman, and between anti-anthropocentrism and the protection of human rights.

Keywords | atomic bomb fiction, disgust, contamination, infection, dystopian literature, Inoue Mitsuharu

Introduction

This paper focuses on the dynamics of disgust found in the atomic bomb fictions of Inoue Mitsuharu (1926-92), employing the lens of the contamination and infection of disgust to approach the processes of disgust’s transfer and proliferation between various heterogeneous others, minority groups, and communities. Through this approach, the paper also explores the possibility of defining atomic bomb fiction as dystopian literature. Among Inoue’s works, the paper centers on two fictional works that illuminate the structures by which the generation and proliferation of disgust feeds into social discrimination: *House of Hands* (*Te no ie*, 1960) and *Crowds on Earth* (*Chi no mure*, 1963).¹ “Disgust” is notoriously difficult to define,² but this paper will follow Martha C. Nussbaum’s definition in large part. Nussbaum argues that “the core idea of disgust is that of contamination to the self; the emotion expresses a rejection of a possible contaminant” (Nussbaum 2004, 99). On the basis of this insight, this paper defines disgust as “a complex feeling and affect that is premised on the separation of subject and object and encompasses both hate and dislike.” It is one of the goals of this paper to highlight both the material and affective aspects inherent in “disgust,” which is at once an emotion and an action.

1. Analyses of the text of *House of Hands* (1960) and *Crowds on Earth* (1963) are based on the versions published in *The Works of Inoue Mitsuharu* (*Inoue Mitsuharu sakuin shū*), vols. 2 and 3 (Inoue 1965).

2. The difficulty of defining “disgust” (*kenō*) is attested through the multiple terms used to refer to it in English: disgust, hate, hatred, aversion, repulsion, misogyny, detestation, loathing. The ways in which terms such as “disgust crimes” (*kenō hanzai*) and “hate crimes” (*sōo hanzai*) are used interchangeably also suggest such a difficulty of definition.

Atomic Bomb Literature and the Conditions of Dystopian Literature

What is dystopia? Dystopias, or anti-idealistic dark worlds, are often understood to be antithetical to utopias. It is through dystopian fiction that dystopia comes to have a specific and actualized image. Whereas utopian literature has a somewhat nebulous presence apart from its introduction in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), dystopian literature has marked itself out clearly as a genre through representative works such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *1984* (1949). This is due to the fact that while utopia, from its very definition as "an ideal world that cannot exist in real life," presupposes the impossibility of its realization, dystopias portrayed in dystopian fiction realistically and preemptively encapsulate the increasing and accelerating negative aspects of today's society.³ Dystopias are in fact complements rather than antitheses to utopias in that they present a world in which the artificial utopian ideals of homogeneous order and rationality are disturbed and subverted, resulting in the negation of human liberty and of the diversity of lived experience. Therefore, it can even be said that the essence of utopia can be found in dystopian literature, and that such imagination does not involve the future but rather emphatically builds on present realities. This approach opens up possibilities for rethinking the category of dystopian literature, often presumed to be "futuristic," and contemplate its relation to the present in more flexible terms. In other words, it suggests the possibility of "realist dystopian fictions."

Endō Toshiaki's *Theory of Dystopian Fiction (Disutopia-fikushon ron, 2019)* is useful for assessing the substance of dystopia and dystopian fiction. Endō analyzes the common motifs of dystopian literature under the categories of surveillance and control, power and collusion, transmission and division, bodies and gender, environment and war, and language, pointedly adding that "even works that do not make use of an overtly dystopian setting will be mentioned whenever appropriate, if they contain relevant motifs" (14). This comment suggests that it is productive to discuss works that share the underlying essential concerns of dystopian literature, even when they do not feature the typical form of science fiction or near-future narratives. Among these related motifs, those of the environment, war, bodies and gender are particularly well suited to current realities, in which the contexts of Japan and the wider world are interlinked

3. The term "dystopia" is a combination of the Greek *topos* (place) and the prefix *dys-* (bad, unfortunate). In contrast, "utopia" is a combination of the Greek *topos* and *ou-* (non-existent), but also evokes the prefix *eu-* (good), allowing for the double sense of "non-existent good place."

through circumstances such as nuclear disaster, the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even without referring to current contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the world can already be seen as “dystopic” enough on a global level due to changes to the climate and the environment, including global warming and fine-dust air pollution. Society-internal issues such as low birth rates and population aging are also relevant to notions of dystopia in that they are directly linked to the sustainability of the community. Without the regular reproduction of future members, communities cannot continue to exist. In addition, class conflicts due to the polarization of wealth and the ethnic and religious conflicts which have been glaringly exemplified in relation to various refugee crises can also be taken as global symptoms of dystopia. In such contexts, the dystopian situation of the twenty-first century can be considered as a global phenomenon that encompasses society’s interior and exterior, and both humankind and nature. The anxiety and rage arising in response to the idea of a society in crisis can easily be directed toward the most vulnerable members within—that is, its minorities. The recent spate of attacks on Asian Americans, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and the elderly, blaming them for things such as the spread of the pandemic when they are found at the peripheries of channels of infection, is a clear example of the affect of disgust directed toward minorities. It is this affect of disgust and hate, in fact, that spreads even more easily than the infectious virus.

Disgust directed toward the residents of Fukushima after the 3.11 earthquake also deserves a mention in this context. Former residents of Fukushima who were forced to leave their hometowns due to radioactive contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, along with their children, became targets of disgust from the locals resident within the areas that they moved to.⁴ This disgust is a typical example of how the dystopian trigger of a large-scale catastrophe quickly turns “average people,” or non-minorities, into disenfranchised minority populations.⁵ Survivors of the famous pollution-based

4. After the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, roughly 154,000 people were forced to flee to other areas as of March, 2013. Among them, forced evacuees fleeing areas under evacuation orders numbered 109,000, while voluntary evacuees numbered around 45,000 (Satō and Taguchi 2021, 33).

5. Yanagi Kōji’s novel *Gravemarker Komachi* (*Sotoba Komachi*, 2015) is a work that attests to the realities of disgust toward residents of Fukushima and the end results of such. The young mother Takano Yasuko, forced to leave her hometown because of the power plant accident, comes to join an anti-Korean protest after suffering from discrimination and alienation in unfamiliar regions. This strange ending, in which the protagonist finally finds peace of mind by deflecting the disgust and discrimination inflicted upon herself toward other minority groups (Zainichi Koreans),

Minamata disease (*Minamata-byō*) and their families also faced discrimination and disgust,⁶ which also presents an arguably dystopian situation born of environmental pollution due to industrialization. Representative fictions dealing with these phenomena include *The Emissary* (*Kentōshi*, 2014) by Tawada Yōko, which explores the 3.11 earthquake, and *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow* (*Kukai jōdo*, 1969) by Ishimure Michiko, which deals with the Minamata disease.⁷ These works provide paradigmatic cases of realist dystopian literature that strongly reflect the contours of reality, and show that discrimination and disgust are not inherent burdens upon by a small number of exceptional beings, but rather a ubiquitous problem that can overtake anyone due to external contingencies sprouting from disasters and other environmental factors. In this way, dystopian situations not only force minority groups into even greater marginalization, but also trigger the formation of new minorities. This provides a strong rationale for the necessity of discussing dystopian literature and minority literature together from an intersectional viewpoint.

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be mentioned first and foremost in discussions of dystopia in modern Japan. The atomic bomb, the apex of modern technology and science, which was used to put an end to the Asia-Pacific War, inflicted unfathomable shock and harm, not only to those directly affected but also in terms of the discrimination and disgust it triggered against its victims. Briefly putting aside discussions of Japan's role in the war, it is hard to deny that the context of "the atomic bomb and its aftermath" indeed fulfills all the conditions of dystopia, which is characterized by unpredictability and the disturbance and subversion of human efforts to create homogeneous order and reason, resulting in the negation of human liberty and the diversity of lived experience. The history of victimhood after the bombing, which Japan carries as a consequence of the war, also serves as a dramatic example of how dystopian situations produce minorities *en masse*. The atomic bomb survivors, though they escaped with their lives intact, lived out the rest of their lives suffering from illness and disability. What is more, their families and neighbors

evokes the seriousness of the problem of disgust in everyday life. Hibi Yoshitaka focuses on this particular novel as an example that sheds light on the strange sympathies that exist between socially excluded minorities and other communities (Hibi 2018, 418-23).

6. A notable study published recently in Korea regarding Minamata disease is Lee Yung Jin (2021), which includes a clear summary of the disease's history, a reconsideration of the perspective of social constructivism, the processes and results of Minamata disease-related lawsuits, and current remaining issues.

7. Valuable analyses of *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow* and the works of Ishimure Michiko published in Korea include O Mi-chōng (2019a, 2019b), papers focusing on anti-modernity and female language.

became victims of discrimination and disgust alongside them. Atomic bomb fiction gives literary form to the realities of the suffering and hardship brought about by the atomic bombing.

There can be no simple definition of atomic bomb literature (*genbaku bungaku*). This is partly due to a tendency in creative and scholarly work to link the atomic bombings, nuclear weapons, nuclear power, and 3.11 all together, as testified in the words of Murakami Yōko that “the domain of atomic bomb literature has accumulated works and research by expanding its scope beyond the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings to include all commentary on the nuclear threat” (Murakami 2015, 15).⁸ Despite this, it is surely the case that the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings mark the starting point of atomic bomb literature, and that Japanese dystopian literature is strongly informed by atomic bomb literature’s illumination of the pain inscribed on the bodies and minds of atomic bomb survivors, instantaneously made into a new minority, and of the disgust and discrimination that they suffered in its aftermath.

Inside and Outside of the Atomic Bomb Fiction

Atomic bomb literature poses a problem due to the complex and multilayered contexts inherent within it, which cannot be fully accounted for by technical definitions such as “a collective term for all literature about the atomic bombing.” According to Nagaoka Hiroyoshi, who laid the foundations for research on atomic bomb literature, the genre “is not limited to dealing with the visible effects of the atomic bombing, but rather deals with the reality that threatens and eats away at human existence from the inside” (Nagaoka 1973, 3). For Nagaoka, such work is also definable in terms of any “literature that aspires to show human dignity in contrast to the sum of the evils caused by the atomic

8. A case in point is “nuclear power plant literature” (*genpatsu bungaku*), which has freshly come into the scholarly spotlight when works with nuclear power plants as their setting began to receive renewed attention after the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake and the resulting catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. One good example is Kakitani (2011), which was published immediately after 3.11. Nuclear power plant literature, which involves some elements of entertainment in a nuclear plant setting, is informed by fears about nuclear and atomic power based on the tragedies of the Three Mile Island accident in the US (1979) and the Chernobyl disaster (1986) in addition to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Representative authors in the nuclear power plant literature genre include Nosaka Akiyuki, Mizukami Tsutomu, and Inoue Mitsuharu. Inoue, the author discussed in this paper, has written nuclear power plant fiction such as *Saikai Nuclear Power Plant* (*Saikai Genshiryoku Hatsudensho*, 1986) and *Transport* (*Yusō*, 1989) set in the nuclear power plant of Genkai in the author’s home region of Kyushu. For more on this, see Narita (2014).

bombings” (155). Nagaoka points out that rather than the visible harm inflicted by the bombings, what is more importantly at issue is the events inherently of “wondrous power,” the potential of it to drive “humans and society toward disintegration” (Kaneko 2015, 9), and the subsequent “aftermath of the atomic bombing” in which efforts to retain human dignity and to heal must face the pain and scars head-on. Yi Chae-sök (2002, 104-106) also calls for sympathy and reflection between various groups of others in relation to the tragedy, moving beyond the narrower scope of atomic bomb victimhood to say that “atomic bomb literature problematizes not only ‘my’ pain but the pain of ‘others,’ ... and unless ‘I’ accept this problem, no progress can be made in the research of atomic bomb literature.” Yi Chae-sök’s comment that the fundamental significance of atomic bomb literature does not stop with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings but rather continues on through its contact points with the essence of the pain exposed through its aftermath, is highly worth contemplating.

Yi Chae-sök’s argument also resonates with that of this paper, which seeks to discuss atomic bomb literature alongside pollution disease literature and post-3.11 literature as “realist dystopian literature” that deals with the disturbance and subversion of modernity and its unpredictability. In particular, the work of contemplating the newfound social issue of post-bombing disgust and discrimination calls for an expanded universal sense of involvement within it beyond the context of the survivors themselves. As well demonstrated by 3.11 and its aftermath, there is no safe ground from the unexpected terror of nuclear damage that can sweep in uncontrollably at any time. Building on Nagaoka’s definition, this paper defines “atomic bomb literature” as “literature that problematizes the atomic bombing and its aftermath from both inside and outside society.” The paper also builds on Yi Chae-sök’s insight that an attempt to engage with the idea of sympathy between the victims and non-victims of the atomic bombings represents the true essence of atomic bomb literature.

There are other, completely different ways of understanding atomic bomb literature. Some warn that whatever the intent of the author, atomic bomb literature serves the role of publicly announcing the horror and pain of atomic bomb victimhood, potentially contributing to the propagation of Japan’s victim mentality. The fear is that the responsibility of Japan as an active agent of war and perpetrator of pain may be overshadowed by the sense of atomic bomb victimhood. That is, the discourse of “the only nation to be victimized by an atomic bomb” may serve to “diffuse the weight of blame for Japan’s colonial conquests and aggressive wars” (Sim Chöng-myöng 2021, 191).⁹ Such cautious perspectives, usually arising from outside of Japan, are in step with the sense that the current Japanese government is slow to reflect on its own problematic

history of war and related crimes including sexual slavery. This is indeed a point that should not be forgotten, and has duly informed the hesitation of scholars to engage with atomic bomb literature. However, from the perspective of this paper as laid out above, that the significance and universality of atomic bomb literature can be better investigated in terms of the disgust and discrimination that follow in the wake of the atomic bombings, the aforementioned anxieties provide even more reason to undertake even more rigorous analyses of atomic bomb literature, rather than lay the genre aside.

A brief introduction to some representative pieces of atomic bomb literature is as follows. Among works published immediately after the end of the war, some notable books include *Summer Flower* (*Natsu no hana*, 1947) by Hara Tamiki and *Poems of the Atomic Bombings* (*Genbaku shishū*, 1951) by Tōge Sankichi. Hara, who was visiting his hometown of Hiroshima at the time of the bombing and luckily survived, wrote the hauntingly vivid short story *Summer Flower* based on his own experience of the horrors of post-bombing Hiroshima. Tōge is also a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing, having been only three kilometers away from the city center at the time of the event. His poem “Preface” (*Jo*), also known by the heart-wrenching title “Return the Humans” (*Ningen o kaese*), uses symbolism to express atomic bomb poetry’s themes of lament and requiem. The most famous among the works of atomic bomb literature is doubtless *Black Rain* (*Kuroi ame*, 1966) by Ibuse Masuji. This novel portrays the difficult life of an atomic bomb survivor couple who must take care of a niece whose marriage plans are destroyed because of a radiation-related disease (*genbaku shō*). This book clearly shows the reality of the discrimination and disgust directed toward survivors of the bomb, foisted upon them like some kind of original sin. What proved more painful for the survivors is not the diseases and disabilities caused by the bombing, but rather the harsh reality of discrimination and ostracization, in which they were shunned from jobs and marriages due to fears and anxieties regarding disability, deformity, and hereditary contagion. The niece, who narrowly survived being impacted by the bombing itself, was exposed to radiation from the titular “black rain” that immediately followed the bombing.

And finally, one cannot exclude the atomic bomb fiction of Inoue Mitsuharu in discussing the discrimination and disgust suffered by the survivors of the nuclear attacks. One of Japan’s foremost postwar novelists and a leftist progressive, Inoue indirectly experienced the atomic bombing as a resident of

9. In the same vein, Chōng Hyang-chae clearly points out that “the ‘limitation’ of atomic bomb fiction is that it can only be written from the perspective of the victims” (2017, 366).

Sasebo in Kyushu after having emigrated there from Ryojun (Lushun) in Manchuria, and began writing atomic bomb fiction in the 1960s. The most representative among Inoue's atomic bomb fictions are the five works included in Volume 5 of the fifteen-volume *Japanese Atomic Bomb Literature* (*Nihon no genbaku bungaku*, 1983), a comprehensive anthology of atomic bomb-related literary works in Japanese.¹⁰ Among these works, *House of Hands* (1960) and *Crowds on Earth* (1963) are particularly notable. Both works unflinchingly portray the reality of disgust toward atomic bomb survivors and the structures of discrimination they suffered, against the harsh backdrop of postwar Japanese society. Moreover, the works coolly capture the shocking mechanisms by which disgust transfers and proliferates among different social groups and communities, through detailed descriptions and revelations of the writhing masses of excluded minorities living in mixed conflict, disenfranchised communities which include not only atomic bomb survivors but also *burakumin*, Koreans, and other members of the lower classes. The following section will consider Inoue's work in more detail.

Contamination, Infection, Disgust: Inoue Mitsuharu's *House of Hands*

House of Hands and *Crowds on Earth* are often discussed together as representative works that expose the realities of disgust and discrimination suffered by the survivors of the atomic bomb. In addition, these works are notable for the ways in which they relentlessly portray the processes by which the crisscrossing and mixing of victim and perpetrator positions among multiple social minorities, including but not limited to atomic bomb survivors, deepens discrimination and prejudice through a series of ever-escalating stages, and the structures within which "disgust" comes to proliferate as a motivator of discrimination. The two books are important works of minority literature in this regard, as well as of atomic bomb literature. *House of Hands* features "Hidden Christians" (*Kakure Kirishitan*) who interact with the atomic bomb survivors, and *Crowds on Earth* similarly features discriminated *burakumin* and Koreans. These social groups create human networks of misery fueled by various desires and sadomasochistic relations.

House of Hands is Inoue's first work of atomic bomb fiction. It is a short

10. The other three works are *Summer Guest* (*Natsu no kyaku*, 1965), *Mother, Summer 1967* (*Haha-ichi kyū roku nana nen natsu*, 1967), and *Tomorrow: August 8, 1945, Nagasaki* (*Ashita: ichi kyū yon go nen hachi-gatsu hachi-nichi*, Nagasaki, 1982).

story that portrays the reality of discrimination and disgust toward survivors of the atomic bombing as it plays out around the marriage of orphaned survivor girls raised in the House of Hands, an orphanage on an isolated island near Nagasaki.¹¹ The main characters are four women, now in their twenties, who lost their parents to the bombing during their teenage years and found their way into the orphanage: Shigeno, Seiko, Rie, and Junko. All of them except for Junko are either married or soon to be married. The action of the story centers around the engagement of Rie and her fiancé Wajima, an elementary school teacher, and comes to a head as Wajima's uncle visits the island to meet Rie and give his consent to the marriage. The visit throws into harsh relief the realities of radiation-related disease and how atomic bomb survivors become objects of disgust and discrimination due to the effects of such. The situation portrayed in the story is dire. The oldest orphan, Shigeno, has already lost two children at a very young age, and just around the time of Rie's meeting with her fiancé's family, Seiko also miscarries three months into her pregnancy, followed by ten days of unstoppable bleeding that finally puts her on her deathbed. The death of newborns, the miscarriage of fetuses, and the unstaunchable bleeding of women—named the “unstoppable disease” (*tomaran byō*)¹²—are all presented in

11. The name “House of Hands” is a reference to a Catholic group residence of the same name in the mountains of northern Italy. It is said that just like the Kirimaru *buraku* in the story, the place holds a pottery oven in which the priest and his flock bake pots and bowls together (*House of Hands*, 153).

12. The so-called “unstoppable disease” often found in female atomic bomb survivors appears in atomic bomb fiction as a symptom that symbolizes the terror of atomic bombing inscribed upon the body like a stigma. This disease appears in Inoue's other work, *Crowds on Earth*. To give a brief summary of the traits of “atomic bomb disease,” it should first be known that the term applies to the whole of health impediments triggered by the explosion of the atomic bomb. They include external injuries through heat and wind, but by far the most serious are disturbances due to radiation, of which the most representative is leukemia, or cancer of the blood. The major symptom of this blood cancer, which is a result of the effects of radiation on the marrow, is “bleeding.” The unstoppable disease mentioned in Inoue's fiction should also be understood as cases of acute cancer of the blood. Other symptoms of atomic bomb disease include cardiac infarctions, cataracts, and chronic hepatitis. However, in order to have such diseases recognized as atomic bomb diseases by the government, one must provide objective proof that one was in or near the bombing area at the time of the incident. For example, in the case of leukemia, those who were “impacted by the atomic bomb not more than 3.5 kilometers away from the center of the bombing” are recognized officially as suffering from “atomic bomb disease” and receive government support. However, there are many for whom the effects of atomic bomb disease are widespread and difficult to gauge, such as those who seemed healthy immediately after the bombing but later suffered fatigue, loss of sight, and sudden death, or those who gave birth to unhealthy fetuses, or those who suffered from other symptoms that belatedly arose decades later. Another representative long-term effect of the atomic bombing is the so-called “autonomic-bomb numbness syndrome” (*genbaku burabura byō*), the major symptoms of which are intense fatigue and loss of physical strength.

the story as typical symptoms of the sickness that effects survivors of the bombing. Knowing this, Wajima suggests to Rie that they should hide the fact that she is a bombing survivor from his uncle, but Rie ends up leaving the meeting altogether to watch over Seiko's deathbed. Ironically, Seiko's last words of advice to Rie are to keep her survivor status a secret at all costs.

Even more interesting is the fact that the village of Kirimaru in which these characters live is in fact a community of Hidden Christians, or Christians that live in hiding. For nearly 250 years after the Tokugawa shogunate banned Catholicism in 1614 and into the Meiji period, Hidden Christians guarded their own faith through secret churches, as a social minority group not necessarily on favorable terms with more mainstream Catholics. When a new priest is dispatched to the House of Hands, an institution built by the Catholic church of Nagasaki, and attempts to rehabilitate the place, the locals show high levels of resistance. Both the antagonism of Hidden Christians toward the mainstream Catholic church and the general repulsion toward atomic bomb survivors are imbricated in this resistance. One finds here a "complex intersection of atomic bomb victim discrimination and internal conflicts within the Catholic church" (Kuroko 2005, 55). As a result, the locals begin to ostracize the atomic bomb survivor women who have already lived in their midst for the past ten years.

Seiko's corpse burns steadily. "Master, they say a priest is coming from Nagasaki to rebuild the House of Hands. Can't anything be done to stop him? If we don't, they may bring in masses of orphans. We only had four, and still there is all this trouble, with newborns dying and women bleeding endlessly after birth. If we bring in more atomic bomb orphans, everyone fears that our village will certainly be considered a lower class buraku (*eta buraku*) that no one from the neighboring villages will want to marry into." As soon as the funeral came to an end, Kunisada rushed to unburden his mind in front of the master craftsmen, as if to pour oil on the fire. (159; emphasis added)

The above quotation makes visible the locals' accumulated feelings of disgust as they erupt into explicit linguistic expression. The anger and discontent that the artisan Kunisada pours out to Kirimaru Hiroyuki, the master of the pottery workroom and the head of the village of Kirimaru, targets the orphaned women who have come to their island to stay at the House of Hands, and the Catholic church that brought them there. However, the above quotation with its mention of "lower-class *buraku*" makes clear that the true targets are the women who have become outlets for the disgust directed toward atomic bomb survivors. What the villagers fear is that the very presence of these women, with their disquieting bodies, will cause their entire community, including those who are

“able-bodied” to be seen as one and the same crowd, and thus be treated summarily as objects of discrimination and evasion. An affect of disgust that equates atomic bomb survivors with *eta*,¹³ that is, highly marginalized *burakumin*, underlies this perception. The elderly woman who curses under her breath that “we have had only misfortune after those women came to the House of Hands” (157) is in fact the mother-in-law of the dead Seiko, which alerts us to the fact that the perpetrators and subjects of disgust do not come from outside, but rather from inside the community, even from the very close vicinity of the objects of disgust. Faced with the tragic death of a young woman, the villagers cannot mourn her, but rather attempt to console themselves through active discrimination.

The most problematic element of the female atomic bomb survivors is their “blood” (*chi*). From the actual symptoms of unstoppable bleeding to the misguided rumors that the color of survivors’ blood has turned white in color,¹⁴ blood as a bodily fluid becomes the origin of disgust. The atomic bomb, a monstrous modern scientific creation, uses the “substance” of radiation to “contaminate” (*osen*) humans’ “biological bodies” as symbolized by blood. The atomic bomb survivors, as bearers of contaminated bodies, become objects of disgust and repulsion. The two models of contamination put forth by Charles Nemeroff and Paul Rozin are helpful for understanding this situation. The first involves material elements, the second psychological ones. The material elements can be removed by physical means such as washing and sterilization, but the psychological elements have permanence and are impossible to remove (Nemeroff and Rozin 1994, as quoted in Olatunji and McKay 2014, 18). The important element of “contamination,” which expresses itself along with disgust as well as causes it, is that it transfers from material elements to the psychological (including the emotional and the moral). Disgust arises due to the fear and anxiety that the destruction and harm of “contamination” will extend beyond material bounds to “infect” subjects on an ontological level.

Nussbaum, a legal philosopher, cites William Ian Miller’s argument in her book *Hiding from Humanity*, saying that “the core idea of disgust is that of

13. *Eta* is one of the lowest caste communities whose members were engaged in professions deemed unclean or tainted by death such as butchers and executioners.

14. What is surprising is that this preconception, that the blood of atomic bomb survivors turn white, was expressed by none other than Seiko, a survivor herself. One can see here an expression of how the victims of disgust themselves can internalize misunderstandings and biases against them in a form of self-disgust. (“Do you think it’s true that everyone who came to the House of Hands at the time all had their blood turned white?” Seiko repeated, having now expressed her anxiety”; 148).

contamination to the self” (Nussbaum 2004, 99). The person who feels disgust considers the object of disgust to be an infectious contaminant, and “at the moment one comes to believe that a certain group of objects can contaminate the self, disgust extends into forms of stigmatization and violence toward that group” (Yi Hyŏn-chae 2016, 34). This can be seen in how disgust toward the survivor women plays out in the form of the villagers’ self-consolation in *House of Hands*, and the fear of infection takes on reality through material, biological, and social mechanisms. Marriage, which creates biological relations and incorporates others into the social structure through the familial sharing of “blood,” thus stands out as a representative ritual enveloped with repulsion and disgust toward atomic bomb survivors. This is the reason that atomic bomb survivors often become the objects of so-called “marriage discrimination.” As objects of disgust to be discriminated against and ostracized, these people are now placed on equal footing with the historically stigmatized *eta*, as a modern form of the lower class. Or at least, they are considered as such. As can be clearly seen in new discriminatory terminology such as “unstoppable disease” (*tomaran byō*), “the unstoppable” (*tomaran sha*), and “unstoppable *buraku*” (*tomaran buraku*), the notion of contaminated blood triggers a fear of infection strong enough to usher in the creation of new disenfranchised communities that can, perhaps without hyperbole, be called “the new lower class” (*shin senmin*). *House of Hands* exposes the processes through which the affect of disgust seeps into society in the form of discrimination. Inoue’s next story, *Crowds on Earth*, portrays the internal structures of this disgust-based discrimination in even more specific and complex detail.

The Proliferation of the Affect of Disgust and Structures of Discrimination: The “Crowds” of *Crowds on Earth*

As its title suggests, *Crowds on Earth* (1963) is a ghastly narrative about “crowds.”¹⁵ Some take the work to be a sequel to *House of Hands* in terms of its content, but considering its novel-length scale and the depth and intensity woven by the narrative as multiple distinct minority groups intersect in conflict, it should rather be said that *Crowds on Earth* in fact heightens the thematic concerns of *House of Hands* by several degrees. As suggested by its title, the novel introduces “crowds” of various minorities exposed to discrimination and

15. *Crowds on Earth* was adapted into a feature film by the director Kumai Kei (1930–2007) in 1970. The script for this well-received film was a collaboration between the director Kumai and the original author Inoue.

disgust, including atomic bomb survivors and other minorities defined by status (discriminated *burakumin*), race (Koreans), class (lower classes), sexuality (women), and ideological identifications (leftist “Mountain Village Operation Units” [Sanson Kōsakutai]).

The narrative is relatively difficult to follow, playing out fretfully among numerous perspectives spread out between a host of characters each identifying with different minority groups.¹⁶ The main characters include the erstwhile Kyushu island miner and self-made doctor Unan Chikao and his wife Eiko, the lowlife Tsuyama Nobuo who is a survivor of the Nagasaki bombing, a discriminated *burakumin* woman named Fukuchi Tokuko who is raped by an atomic bomb survivor, her mother Matsuko, a woman named Ieyumi Yasuko with “unstoppable disease” whose menstrual bleeding has not stopped since it began in her youth,¹⁷ and her mother, Mitsuko, who has long hidden the fact that she is an atomic bomb survivor. Among these figures, Unan Chikao is the most central character of all, and a complex and multilayered one at that. His mother, from whom he was separated in his youth, was a discriminated *burakumin*, and he himself lives with the guilt of having raped a Korean woman (Chu Po-ja) when he worked as a miner, leading to her eventual suicide. Unan becomes the central node through which the narratives between the various minority groups of the novel intersect and visibly expand.

The relationship between the characters can be summarized in the following way. The novel is set in a seaside town in an area of Nagasaki impacted by the atomic bombing. The doctor Unan Chikao treats Ieyumi Yasuko for her unstoppable bleeding and suspects it to be a case of atomic bomb disease, but her mother Mitsuko denies any such possibility. Fukuchi Tokuko, a *burakumin* woman, is raped in the streets at night and asks Unan Chikao for a report documenting the rape, but is refused due to a lack of clear proof. Later, with the help of Tsuyama Nobuo who was almost framed for the crime, she finds out that the most likely suspect is a resident of Kaitō Shinden, a village populated by

16. Each chapter of the novel, consisting of eleven chapters, introduces a shift in focalization. Even within a single chapter, there is some shifting of perspective or ambiguity of focalization through sudden flashbacks or spatial movement. The main focal characters for each chapter are as follows: Unan Chikao (1, 6, 8, 9, 11), Ieyumi Yasuko (2, 4, 8), Tsuyama Nobuo (3, 5), Fukuchi Tokuko (7), and Tazawa Eiko (10). From this distribution, in which Unan Chikao graces the beginning and end of the novel, it can be seen that Chikao is the main focal character of the whole novel.

17. “After getting her first period, she would menstruate only rarely during the year, and when she did, she would bleed profusely for nearly two weeks, endlessly battered by pain so severe that she would lose consciousness” (318). The novel portrays Ieyumi Yasuko’s symptoms as similar to those suffered by an atomic bomb victim girl who died at the age of ten.

atomic bomb survivors (*pika don buraku*).¹⁸ Tsuyama Nobuo also lives in a similar atomic bomb survivor village, but due to their shared status as a minority, he sympathizes with Tokuko's pain as a fellow lower-class person. Using the clue that the culprit wore a white glove on his left hand to cover up a scar from a severe burn, he finds the suspect's whereabouts and identity and shares the information with Tokuko. Tokuko then visits the atomic bomb survivor village on her own and finds the suspect, but meets with fierce denial, and turns back. Tragedy ensues when her mother Matsuko visits the suspect's home again later that night. A heated argument ensues between Matsuko and the father of the suspect, in which the man insults Matsuko about her *burakumin* status and she rebuts him harshly with hate speech toward atomic bomb survivors. Immediately after, several rocks fly in from outside, hitting Matsuko and killing her on the spot. The next day, the news of the murder reaches Unan Chikao's hospital, and the victim, who he imagines to be Tokuko, is revealed to be Matsuko. Even more shocking is the fact that the killer of Matsuko turns out to be Tsuyama Nobuo, who earlier had helped Tokuko. Tsuyama had been eavesdropping on the conversation between the rape suspect's father and Matsuko, and hearing Matsuko insult atomic bomb survivors, had thrown rocks at her on impulse. Tsuyama flees from the police. Unan Chikao, hearing all of this information secondhand, is thrown into a deep and complex reverie in which he reflects on his past sins of having driven a Korean woman to suicide by raping her.

As can be seen even through this brief synopsis, the novel *Crowds on Earth* is a narrative of pathetic tragedy springing from intense conflicts and mutual disgust between distinct minority groups. If one takes the narrative of the novel to accurately reflect the division that existed among the Japanese lower classes in the postwar period, one could not help but agree with the observation of Kuroko Kazuo (2005, 56) that "those living on the lower margins of society should as a rule form a 'collectivity' through which they can work together

18. In the essay "An Old Woman Who Brought Home a Sick Dog: The Stage of *Crowds on Earth*" (*Yami inu o tsureta rōba: Chi no mure no butai*), the author Inoue describes the setting of the novel as follows. "I chose as my setting the landfill area of Daitō Shinden in Sasebo, which only held a garbage plant and barely any residential buildings, and formed the fictional atomic bomb victim *buraku* of Kaitō Shinden. And I chose this particular seaside region without hesitation as the place for the hospital of Unan Chikao, the protagonist doctor" (as quoted in Kaneko 2015, 17). According to Kaneko Akiyo, the term *kaitō* in the name of the atomic bomb survivor *buraku* means "grave of the ocean" (*umi no haka*), and the above details taken together support the speculation that the original meaning is "garbage dump" (*gomi sute ba*). That is, Kaitō Shinden was conceptualized as a fictional place in which the affect of disgust inheres, a space as "unclean and dirty" (*kegare*) as a seaside garbage dump.

toward liberation from pain, but in reality, they live deeply divided among themselves and trip each other up.” However, the preconception that minorities should sympathize with each other in solidarity can often overshadow the complexities of real life. From this more nuanced perspective, the true goal should be to figure out the structures undergirding those conflicts within which disgust and discrimination are intensified and accelerated. In this respect, *Crowds on Earth* provides meaningful insights, despite its relatively difficult-to-follow narrative. Further analysis is required concerning how the potential for sympathy, through which shared pain and mutual difference can be reconciled (such as that between Tokuko and Nobuo), can coexist with the easily triggered and ever-intensifying disgust toward the other.

As a work of atomic bomb fiction, the main focus of this book tends to be on atomic bomb survivors. Ieyumi Yasuko and her mother, Tsuyama Nobuo, and the people of the atomic bomb survivor *buraku* residents all fall into this category. The horror of atomic bomb victimhood arises in large part from the fear of “hereditary deformities due to radiation” (278), which extends beyond the immediate harm suffered by the survivors of the bomb itself. Both in *House of Hands* and Ibuse’s *Black Rain*, we see ample evidence of how “marriage discrimination” impacts the atomic bomb survivors themselves and their offspring, and how it leads the survivors and their families to hide the fact of victimhood or to monitor themselves severely. In one drastic case, Yasuko’s mother hides the fact her entire life, even from her own daughter. The notion of possible “hereditary deformity” indeed causes deep-set fears in the atomic bomb survivors themselves and in others through its unpredictability and the threat of spreading victimhood, while also serving as the greatest motivation behind the repulsion, disgust, and discrimination that atomic bomb survivors suffer from the rest of society. The desperate life of atomic bomb survivor Tsuyama Nobuo and the atomic bomb *buraku* formed by people pushed to the margins, quarantined from the social center, all result from the treatment of atomic bomb survivors as less than human, or even “inhuman” entities. Such alienation coming from external sources also goes hand in hand with the ways in which atomic bomb survivors come to internalize self-disgust.

Crowds on Earth distinguishes itself from earlier works of atomic bomb fiction in that it does not focus solely on atomic bomb survivors, but also explores in depth their relations with other minority populations. The first of these other minorities is the discriminated *burakumin*. Despite movements toward equality after the Meiji Restoration, the deeply rooted discrimination against these groups remains to this day. The status of *burakumin* involves innumerable prejudices and obstacles, as portrayed in the novel through com-

ments such as “I’m working together with you because we are in the middle of a war, but otherwise I would never deign to work with a *burakumin*” (306) or “I know all about your family history. If you reveal the rape, I will disclose that you are a *burakumin*” (308). What these minority figures most desperately wish to avoid is for their imperfections—that of their lowly social status or of being an atomic bomb survivor, which they have tried so hard to hide—to see the light of day. The disgust and discrimination that follows such a revelation takes a harsher toll on the weak and on women. The tribulations suffered by Tokuko clearly show this, and also serve to illuminate how discriminated *burakumin* and atomic bomb survivors become enmeshed with each other in relations of harming and being harmed.

The second minority group is Koreans. When Chikao was working as a miner in Tojima, he raped a Korean woman who was working there as a lantern-checker,¹⁹ but the community collectively turned a blind eye to the crime. The woman, having become pregnant against her will, took her own life. Even after leaving the island and making a new career as a doctor, this incident remains inscribed in Chikao’s interior psyche as a sense of guilt. These events serve to shed light on the discrimination against Koreans, an identity that triggers a level of disgust that verges on that directed toward discriminated *burakumin* and atomic bomb survivors. The third minority group is leftist activists. Although not commonly definable as a minority group, such figures in this novel are shown to be despairing people at the peripheries of society, unable to properly enter into its fold. A case in point is Unan Chikao’s friend Moritsugi Shōji, who died in his youth. As a member of the “Mountain Village Operation Units,” a part of the socialist movement, he hoped to collaborate with the discriminated *burakumin* living in mountain villages, but was ostracized and finally died of malnutrition. Moritsugi had been a companion of Unan Chikao’s in the socialist movement, and his wife Eiko had once been Moritsugi’s lover. The socialist movement functions as another burden for Chikao, who has left his ideals behind after his friend’s death. As such, the discriminated *burakumin*, Koreans, and leftist activists all play a role in this novel as representative minority groups other than atomic bomb survivors.

Even among these groups, it is the conflict between atomic bomb survivors and discriminated *burakumin* that intensely provokes the affect of disgust, something which spreads in explosive waves of infection that can truly be called “proliferation.”

19. Women who did the work of checking safety lanterns within the mines.

“What a mother and daughter. Like parent, like child, as they say. Barging into someone’s house randomly and talking about rape and whatnot. It really shows you how freakish those things from the *buraku* (*buraku no mono*) are.”

“Those things from the *buraku* ...” At first, Fukuchi Matsuko mumbled these words to herself so that one could barely hear her.

“Things from the *buraku*. You mean he knew my daughter was a lower-class wench and thought he could have his way with her ...”

She repeated the words, as if to make herself hear them.

A deep silence momentarily enveloped them all, so quiet that one could hear the sound of the receding tide, the kind of silence that locals call “the cry of the clams.” As the darkness filled again with the whispering of breaths let loose, Fukuchi Matsuko’s voice cut across the space, sounding like the oozing out of some black substance.

“You know full well what they call this place, Kaitō Shinden, out there in the world. Of course you do. If we are ‘*eta*,’ you are ‘unstoppable *eta*’ (*tomaran eta*) whose blood will never stop flowing. The blood of our *buraku* never changes, but your blood will rot from the inside, and be inherited down to all your future generations. They’ll call you ‘those wretches from the village of atomic bomb survivors,’ and no one will want to take your daughters’ hands in marriage or marry your sons. And at the end, the end of it all ...” (346)

The suppressed emotions of Fukuchi Matsuko, visiting the discriminated *buraku* to protest in her daughter’s stead, explode upon hearing the suspect’s father use the insulting phrase “those things from the *buraku*.” She retaliates by using hateful terminology such as “unstoppable *eta*” and “village of atomic bomb survivors” to stir up the atomic bomb survivors, and curses them in terms of the “hereditary transmission of tainted blood,”²⁰ provoking the ongoing pain felt by atomic bomb survivors as objects of marriage discrimination. In other words, she strongly evoked the alienation and discrimination that the atomic bomb survivors were compelled to undergo due to the mark of their contaminated blood. This retaliation, the result of a chain reaction of disgust and rage and of the proliferation of the affect of disgust, meets with catastrophically tragic results. Matsuko’s death is nominally due to a rock flying in from outside, but

20. A definite causal relationship between the impact of atomic bomb survival and genetic inheritance (*iden*) is difficult to prove either positively or negatively, and thus becomes an even more productive field for those investigating expressions of anxiety and fear. Matsunaga Kyōko, in an article on generic inheritance in *Cultural Encyclopedia to Read “the Atomic Bomb”* (“*Genbaku*” o yomu bunka jiten), discusses the dilemma around the possibility of a relation between genetic inheritance and atomic bomb survivorship in the following terms: “The argument that radiation does not have hereditary effects downplays the existence of actual ‘second-generation atomic bomb survivors’ who suffer from leukemia, cancer, or other diseases; at the same time, emphasizing that radiation effects can be inherited can cause negative perceptions of atomic bomb survivors having children, and thus can lead to ‘marriage discrimination’ against them” (Kawaguchi 2017, 296).

the essence of that attack stems from retaliatory rage and hate in response to her insulting speech. At the same time, this attack is the desperate action of an atomic bomb survivor, as representative of a group who have become equal to or even lower in social status than the historical lower class of the *burakumin* or *eta* through events beyond their control, i.e., the atomic bombing. In the book, the historically disenfranchised minority communities figures hold an unconscious desire to gain compensation for the wrongs inflicted on them by discriminating against other minorities. This is indicated through comments such as “If you reveal the rape, I will disclose that you are a *burakumin*” (308) or “Isn’t Kaitō Shinden even worse than the discriminated *buraku*?” (341). Here, one can already see the foundations for tragedy being formed in this moment of confrontation between those with “dirty blood” and “contaminated blood,” but the reasons for this tragedy lie much deeper.

“It’s not Mr. Tsuyama that murdered my mother.”

“Well, then who did it?” The policeman, who had been taking a phone call, stepped closer.

“It’s . . .” Fukuchi Tokuko was at a loss for words.

It’s not Mr. Tsuyama. It was everyone (*minna*) that murdered her; she may have been killed directly by someone from Kaitō Shinden but she was actually murdered by everyone. These were the thoughts that tumbled across her mind, but she could not quite put them into so many words. (347-48)

What Tokuko realizes through her conversation with the police is that what killed her mother was not the action of one individual, but the attitude of society in its entirety. The “everyone” that she tries to describe includes the social dynamics that structure society into intensifying rivalries between minorities who are already objects of disgust and discrimination, and the unspecified crowds of people that participate in those dynamics, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. However, Tokuko cannot concretely express this thought in her own words in front of the police. Who, then, is this “everyone” in more specific terms within the context of the book?

One cannot help but think of the novel’s central figure, Unan Chikao. He seems to be simply an observer of these situations of disgust and hate, but in fact he is both a bystander and an accomplice, a narcissistic figure through whom all elements of disgust converge in a mix of self-disgust and self-pity. How can this be? Unan Chikao, as a doctor, has all the outer trappings of an educated, upper-middle class person with a respectable job, but inside, he is a complex amalgam of all sorts of minority identities. He bears the blood of a discriminated *burakumin* mother, has been partially exposed to radiation while searching for

his father in Nagasaki after the atomic bombing,²¹ and has a history of serious crime, implicated in the death of a Korean woman after raping her. He has also self-consciously internalized the burden of betraying both his socialist activist friend and the ideals of social revolution that they once shared. Moreover, he literally has no clear idea of his roots,²² as he does not know precisely where he was born, whether it was Ryojun in Manchuria, Saga Prefecture in Kyushu, or somewhere else.²³ He attempts to overcome these negative aspects of his character by finally becoming a doctor. But even as a doctor he is powerless, and reduced to the role of a helpless intellectual who cannot save a girl who is suffering from atomic bomb-related unstoppable bleeding. In this sense, Unan Chikao is a character that stands for the impotence and contemptibility of modernity, which believes it has overcome and transcended the unscientific, barbaric, and disgusting conditions of premodernity, but in fact has not done so at all. He is, in fact, the very embodiment of a “bad world,” or dystopia. This is what ironically makes Unan Chikao the central character of the novel. He is a character who has continually held a stance of irresponsibility and indifference, both in the past and in the present; he embodies the indivisible nature of self-love and self-hate and acts as a mirror for the mediocre and base “everyone” in all of us. Chikao is none other than a portrait of “everyone” who believes that they are unimplicated in disgust and discrimination.

Focusing on the female characters and misogyny in the novel throws all of these insights into sharper relief. Often a context unduly swept under the rug in Japanese fiction, the target of the most severe disgust in atomic bomb fiction is in fact most often “women.” Not only are all four atomic bomb survivors in

21. People impacted by radiation due to staying briefly in the bombed areas (inner-city Hiroshima, etc.) after the bombing to seek out family members or to gather information about them were termed “early-entrant atomic bomb survivors” (*nyūshi hibaku*), to differentiate them from those who were directly exposed to the bomb blast.

22. Interestingly, the formulation of Unan Chikao's character was informed in large part by the autobiographical experience of the author. Inoue was also born in Ryojun in Manchuria, was separated from his mother at the age of four like Chikao in the novel, and was raised by his grandmother in Sasebo in Kyushu with his younger sister. He also worked in the mines of Sakito in Nagasaki to make a living during financial hardship. However, in terms of his relations with Koreans, he had a history of being detained by the police around the end of Japanese colonial rule for aiding and abetting the independence movements of Korean coworkers in the mines, which suggests that the episode of the rape of the Korean woman in the novel is a completely fictional addition, based on the author's sense of guilt toward Korean people in general. For more, see Itō (1968, 87).

23. “Unan Chikao did not know with any certainty whether he was born at the foot of the White Jade Mountain (Baiyushan) in Ryojun, or in Murisawa Sarayama in Imari in Saga Prefecture, or somewhere else altogether” (292).

House of Hands women, but the double appearance of rape in *Crowds on Earth*, that of Tokuko and that of the Korean woman by Chikao, also cannot be shaken off as a mere narrative ploy, but rather should be read as a true reflection of the asymmetry of gender relations in the real world. The most shocking of all in this respect is the series of criminal acts that Chikao perpetrates on his wife Eiko. Chikao, seemingly only half-heartedly cooperating with his wife's dear wish to have a child, is later found to have continually slipped her medicine to cause miscarriages, unbeknownst to her (336). This action is none other than a representative example of the secret and cruel violence perpetrated against the female body and to all women. There are imaginable psychological reasons behind the Chikao's actions to avoid having a child, such as the entangling of class hate and misogyny arising from the fact that his estranged mother is a discriminated *burakumin*, the self-hate springing from his past offense of having destroyed a Korean woman's life, and the fear that he himself may be impacted by the atomic bombing. However, a narrative structure in which the dregs of a man's internal psychological history is foisted upon an innocent woman should be considered the most primary portrayal of disgust underlying Inoue's atomic bomb fiction.²⁴

What is particularly worth noting is how the novel's misogyny problematizes women's "blood." The bleeding involved in menstruation and childbirth, characteristic of female bodies, does not only serve as a central target of misogyny, but intertwines closely with the roots of "disgust" itself.²⁵ The idea of woman as abject, rather than subject or object, springs from this aspect. The abject is an entity that can neither become subject nor object, an entity whose very existence is erased. Suggesting disgust's origin in evolutionary biology, Stuart Walton notes that "the provocation for disgust seems rooted in some physical example of noxious bodily secretions—spit, mucus, phlegm, earwax,

24. At the end of the novel, the wife Eiko, having already found out the whole truth, presses her husband about his responsibility in having refused documents to Tokuko, and reproaches him. This ending scene functions as a minimal act of revenge.

25. The bleeding within the novel does not involve regular blood, but rather is symptomatic of the bleeding particular to atomic bomb disease, including menstrual bleeding and bleeding after childbirth. This is significant in terms of the disgust response. Disgust is often connected to secretions from the so-called orifices of the body, including the mouth, anus, and sexual organs. The orifices have been the most culturally dismissed and alienated regions of the body due to their relation with disgust. These are the weakest channels that connect the inside to the outside, and in a sense, they are also barricades against physical contamination from the outside. Though they hold this ambivalent meaning, orifices have mostly been bound to negative contexts. An example that supports this idea is how in the case of hemophilia, although it is also a hereditary blood-related disease, the disease's image does not become strongly affiliated with disgust due to the lack of a direct relation with the orifices. See Olatunji and McKay (2014, 19).

urine, faeces, semen, blood (particularly menstrual blood)—or else the biological processes of decay and putrefaction” (Walton 2004, 89). Julia Kristeva goes one step further, and argues that the reason “abject” substances such as mucus, spit, and other secretions cause disgust is because they are “what disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva 1982, 4). This is the psychological and philosophical foundation underlying how disgust deems “its object base and low, thus constructing levels of persons and object” and certain “strata of human beings ... to be tainted and disgusting” (Nussbaum 2004, 83). Jews and women have traditionally represented the groups that trigger this disgust. In the end, “disgust is closely connected with traditions of social hierarchy” (83), and disgust becomes a “disgust affect” when it thus takes on in cultural, social, and communal forms.²⁶ This is why in *Crowds on Earth* it is women, regardless of the minority groups to which they belong, who undergo more harassment and are exposed to more explicit forms of disgust.²⁷

This leads us to reconsider “radiation.” Is radiation also a disgust-triggering phenomena, since it disturbs the body and causes excess secretion of the disgusting substance of female blood? Can the affective response toward radiation be termed a kind of disgust? Joseph LeDoux, author of *Anxious*, distinguishes anxiety and fear in the following terms, by way of Freud. “Anxiety” is related to a state, regardless of the object that elicits it, but “fear” is concentrated pointedly on that object. If anxiety is a state of expecting and being afraid of danger while the real source of harm remains unknown, fear focuses on the clear object of which one is afraid (LeDoux 2017, 21). That is, whereas fear has an object, anxiety does not (Heidegger 1998, 253-54). The two are clearly distinguishable by the actual existence of the feared object, or the lack thereof. From this perspective, the response toward radiation veers closer to anxiety than to fear. Radiation, as a colorless, odorless, and tasteless substance, does not quite exist as a visible reality. However, this invisible but emphatically existent substance is all the more an object of fear. Radiation damage impacts not only the atomic bomb survivors themselves but also their genetic descendants, due to the possibility that their pain will be reenacted and reproduced through the death, disease, and disability that springs from bodily contamination and blood inheritance. The terrible and unpredictable impact of

26. In this sense, the “affect of disgust” is “a power that makes one into an object of disgust, and simultaneously makes one disgusted at others.” For a definition of “affect,” see Lee Jee-hyung (2021, 55n10).

27. In the ideographic character “*ken*” (hate), which is included in the Korean term for “disgust,” one can find the radical for “woman” (*onna*), which suggests that misogyny is an underlying mechanism in the very origins of the concept of disgust.

radiation thus extends beyond anxiety to become fear itself, and atomic bomb survivors become the objects of that fear and disgust. Although radiation itself is not an infectious substance, disgust is an infectious, fast-transferring, and proliferating affect, as clearly shown in *Crowds on Earth*. Disgust makes possible and mediates the evolution-based evasion of the hereditary transmission of minority bodily traits to one's descendants, along with social discrimination.

Crowds on Earth is an apocalyptic novel in which there remains not even the slimmest chance of salvation. All are discontent, all are in pain, and all direct disgust toward one's own self and toward each other. Tokuko loses her mother; Mitsuko, an atomic bomb survivor, blames herself for the pain of her daughter's unstoppable bleeding; Eiko's body is violated by her husband's scheming, making her unable to have children; the Korean woman Chu Po-ja takes her own life far too soon. How about the men? Nobuo, who once helped Tokuko, is now on the run from the authorities as a murderer; Moritsugi the leftist activist dies of malnutrition; Unan Chikao lives every day mired in self-loathing. What can be more dystopian than this? There is no easy end to this dystopia in which the ideologies of modernity and its material conditions end up disturbing, rupturing, and subverting human life and the world, betraying its erstwhile ideals and promises. The world of *Crowds on Earth*, in which no one is close to gaining happiness in life, and where sympathy and solidarity have been proven impossible, is a case in point. The grimness of the title, which evokes "crowds" on "earth," can finally be understood in these terms. Even if it were not for the atomic bomb survivors or the discriminated *burakumin*, there will always appear new conditions and affects of disgust, and new objects of disgust will continue to be produced, with no end in sight. It is for this reason that this paper newly seeks out the value of atomic bomb fiction in its relation to dystopian fiction. The connection between the two genres can best be found in the "disquieting," or the fear-ridden anticipation of an unpredictable result (Yi Chin-kyöng 2011, 28).²⁸

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the proliferation of the affect of disgust and the structures of discrimination portrayed in the atomic bomb fiction of Inoue

28. The following passage from the novel also suggests that the essence of the disquieting lies in uncertainty: "In the case of humans, too, a child who was fathered by an atomic bomb survivor long after the bombing can be found born with the same genetic mutations as a child fathered two or three weeks after the bombing" (317).

Mitsuharu and has suggested possibilities for reading atomic bomb fiction as dystopian fiction. The analysis illuminates the harsh realities in which the possibilities for sympathy and solidarity between discriminated and alienated minorities become but an empty shell, due to the explicit expression of disgust-based violence between minority communities. In that this is undeniably a portrayal of the present real world, not an imagined or virtual one, Inoue's atomic bomb fiction seems to be at a distance from dystopian fiction despite all its accomplishments. However, the fictional creation of a non-existent atomic bomb survivor village in *Crowds on Earth*, and the setting of the isolated island of *House of Hands* as a space in which Hidden Christians attempt to coexist with atomic bomb victim orphans until the appearance of atomic bomb disease triggers strong disgust affects, shows how these works use realism to symbolize the violence perpetrated in virtual worlds, serving to show that Inoue's fiction has recognizable links with dystopian fiction.

Conceptualizing atomic bomb fiction in terms of the category of dystopian fiction allows us to focus on atomic bomb fiction as one primary medium through which the structure of today's massive global waves of disgust and hate can be understood. It also allows us to explore the essence of dystopias and dystopian fiction as an extension of such an understanding. My conclusions include the fact that the "aftermath" of an event is what structures disgust and discrimination, and thus deserves even more attention than the event itself, and also that the problematics of disgust and dystopia are closely interconnected. This leads to the hypothesis that post-3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake literature can be understood as a successor of atomic bomb literature and pollution disease literature. What is the fresh perception required of those of us living through an "era of hate" in which disgust triggers more disgust, and the objects of disgust themselves seek out ever new objects of disgust? I argue for a paradigm shift that will allow us to relativize the anthropocentrism inherent in the idea of human rights. The "human" presupposed by anthropocentrism is inevitably one based on the concept of "normality." The reason that atomic bomb survivors or discriminated *burakumin* are not treated like humans, despite their biological humanity, is because they are considered to be "inhuman," pushed beyond the bounds of normality. With this in mind, a serious consideration of the problem of disgust must take into account an intersectional understanding of the "non-human," including those outside the bounds of biological humanity such as animals and inanimate entities. This paper, which explores disgust from the perspective of the contamination and infection of substances and affects, is a tentative beginning.

• Translated by PARK Yea Jung

Acknowledgements | This article is a revised and translated version of the author's Korean article "Oyôm, kamyôm, hyômo: wôn'p'ok sosöl ro ponün hyômo chöngdong üi chüngsik kwa tisüt'op'ia munhak," published in *Hallim Ilbonhak* [The Hallim journal of Japanese studies] 39 (2021) with the permission of Hallim Taehakkyo Ilbonhak Yönguso [Institute of Japanese Studies, Hallim University]. The translation and English editing of this article were supported by the (Chae) Hakbong Changhakhoe [Hakbong Scholarship Foundation].

References

- Chöng Hyang-chae. 2017. "Hara Tamik'i tanp'yönjip haesöl" [Explanation: Hara Tamiki short story collection]. In *Hara tamik'i tanp'yönjip* [Hara Tamiki short story collection], by Hara Tamiki, translated by Chöng Hyang-chae, 353-67. Seoul: Chisik ül Mandünün Chisik.
- Endō Toshiaki. 2019. *Disutopia-fikushon ron: akumu no genjitsu to taiji suru sōzō ryoku* [Theory of dystopian fiction: Imaginations confronting nightmarish realities]. Tokyo: Sakuhinsha.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1998. *Chonjae wa sigan* [Being and time]. Translated by Yi Ki-sang. Seoul: Kkach'i.
- Hibi Yoshitaka. 2018. "Paejehyöng sahoe wa mainörüt'i" [Exclusionary society and minority]. In *Ilbon chönhu munhak kwa mainörüt'i munhak üi tanch'üng* [Fault between Japanese postwar literature and minority literature], edited by Han'guk Ilbon Hakhoe [Korea Association of Japanology], 418-23. P'aju: Pogosa.
- Inoue Mitsuharu. 1965. *Inoue Mitsuharu sakuhin shū* [The works of Inoue Mitsuharu]. 3 vols. Tokyo: Keisō Shobo.
- Itō Sei. 1968. *Shinchō Nihon bungaku shō jiten* [Sincho Japanese literature pocket dictionary]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha.
- Kakitani Kōichi, ed. 2011. *Nihon genpatsu shōsetsu shū* [Japanese novels of nuclear power plant]. Tokyo: Suiseisha.
- Kaneko Akiyo. 2015. "Inoue Mitsuharu no genbaku bungaku no gendai teki igi" [The implications for the present of Mitsuharu Inoue's *genbaku* (atomic bomb) literature]. *Seibu Bunri Daigaku Sābisu Keiei Gakubu kenkyū kiyō* [Journal of Department of Service Management, Seibu Bunri University of Hospitality] 27: 3-33.
- Kawaguchi Takayuki, ed. 2017. *"Genbaku" o yomu bunka jiten* [Cultural encyclopedia to read "the atomic bomb"]. Tokyo: Seikyusha.

- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kuroko Kazuo. 2005. *Genbaku wa bungaku ni dō egakarete kitaka* [How the atomic bomb has been depicted in literature]. Tokyo: Hassakusha.
- LeDoux, Joseph E. 2017. *Puran: puran kwa kongpò ūi noe kwahak* [Anxious: Using the brain to understand and treat fear and anxiety]. Translated by Yim Chi-wōn. Seoul: Inbensŏn.
- Lee Jee-hyung. 2021. "Ilbon hyōndae sosōl ūi sosuja sōng kwa hyōmo: noin kwa LGBT" [LGBT minority character and disgust in Japanese contemporary novels: Focusing on the elderly and LGBT]. *Hoengdan immunhak* [Transdisciplinary humanities] 7: 49-82.
- Lee Yung Jin. 2021. "Chilbyōng'ūi sahoejōk sam: Minamata pyōng ūi kyebohak" [The social life of "disease": A genealogy of Minamata disease]. *Ilbon pip'yōng* [Korean journal of Japanese studies] 25: 260-97.
- Murakami Yōko. 2015. *Dekigoto no zankyō: genbaku bungaku to Okinawa bungaku* [Reverberation of events: Atomic bomb literature and Okinawan literature]. Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai.
- Nagaoka Hiroyoshi. 1973. *Genbaku bungaku shi* [History of atomic bomb literature]. Nagoya: Fubaisha.
- Narita Ryūichi. 2014. "Kaisetsu: 'hibaku' to 'hibaku' o tsunagu mono" [Explanation: What connects "exposure to the bomb" and "exposure to radiation"]. In *Saikai Genshiryoku Hatsudensho / Yusō* [Saikai Nuclear Power Plant / Transport], by Inoue Mitsuharu, 344-61. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Nemeroff, Carol J., and Paul Rozin. 1994. "The Contagion Concept in Adult Thinking in the United States: Transmission of Germs and of Interpersonal Influence." *Ethos* 22(2): 158-86. Quoted in Olatunji and McKay 2014, 18.
- Nussbaum, Martha Craven. 2004. *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- O Mi-chōng. 2019a. "Kodosōngjanggi ūi ban kūndaejōk sangsangnyōk: Isimure Mich'ikō ūi Kohaechōngt'ō rŭl chungsim ūro" [Anti-modern imagination in high-growth period: Focused on Ishimure Michiko's *Kukai jodo*]. *Irō ilmunhak yōng'u* [Journal of Japanese language and literature] 109: 269-90.
- O Mi-chōng. 2019b. "Kohaechōngt'ō e nat'anan kongaebyōng kwa anggajumang: 1-inch'ing yōsōng ōnō nokirol hagi" [A Study on environment pollution disease and engagement of Ishimure Michiko's *Kukai jodo*: Writing in the language of a first-person female point of view]. *Asia munhwa yōng'u* [Asian cultural studies] 51: 135-58.
- Olatunji, Bunmi O., and Dean McKay, eds. 2014. *Keno to sono kanren shōgai: riron-asesumento-rinshō teki shisa* [Disgust and its disorders: Theory, assessment, and treatment implications]. Supervised and translated by Imada Sumio and Iwasa

- Kazunori. Kyoto: Kitaōji Shobō.
- Satō Yoshiyuki, and Taguchi Takumi. 2021. *T'al wŏnjŏn ūi chŏrhak* [Philosophy of nuclear phase out]. Translated by Yi Sin-chŏl. Seoul: Tosŏch'ulp'an Pi.
- Sim Chŏng-myŏng. 2021. "Oda Makōtō HIROSHIMA ka 'hirosima' rŭl munhakhwa hanŭn pangbŏp" [Writing "Hiroshima" in Oda Makoto's HIROSHIMA]. *Ilbon hakpo* [Korean journal of Japanology] 126: 191-215.
- Walton, Stuart. 2004. *Humanity: An Emotional History*. London: Atlantic.
- Yi Chae-sŏk. 2002. "'Genbaku,' 'genbaku bungaku,' 'watashi'" ["Atomic bomb," "atomic bomb literature," "me"]. *Genbaku bungaku kenkyū* [Journal of *genbaku* literature] 1: 104-106.
- Yi Chin-kyŏng. 2011. *Puronhan kŏt tŭl ūi chonjaeron* [Ontology of disquieting things]. Seoul: Hyumŏnisŭt'ŭ.
- Yi Hyŏn-chae. 2016. *Yŏsŏng hyŏmo kŭ hu, uri ka mannan pichŏ tŭl* [After misogyny, the abject we met]. P'aju: Tŭllyŏk.

