William I. Miller dealt with the most distasteful aspects of human life in his latest book — and has drawn worldwide attention from those who want to know more.

Miller, the Thomas G. Long Professor of Law, waded into the history and dynamics of what is revolting to us to write *The Anatomy of Disgust*, published in 1997 by Harvard University Press. Within a few days of the official publication, Miller was the inaugural interviewee on the Ann Arbor-based Community Television Network's new show *Rip-Rap*, subtitled *The Academic Book Television Program*. The interview with Miller aired last year.

Then, last summer, a television crew spent time with him in Ann Arbor — there are scenes of Miller relaxing at home by shooting baskets in his backyard, as well as an extensive interview in his office on the fourth floor of Hutchins Hall — for an hour-long special that aired last fall on German television.

The German documentary, a film by Claudia Wassmann, opened with idyllic scenes like Miller riding his bicycle through his neighborhood. It also portrayed what disgusts us with harsh images of human and animal viscera, maggots at work, death, and similar distasteful pictures.

"Once you start looking [into the idea of disgust], a whole world opens up," Miller told the interviewer. Miller spoke in English and a German speaker overdubbed his comments for the documentary.

"I believe that disgust is part of a lot of good," Miller says. "Disgust isn't just about bodily effluvia; for instance, so much of our moral discourse depends on disgust, as when we say 'that makes me sick.' And where would our sense of taste and discernment be without disgust?"

Miller says his interest in the role of disgust grew from his lifelong professional study of heroic societies like those of early Iceland. "What I'm interested in is norms and their violations and the sanctions that are imposed if you violate them," he told *Rip-Rap*.

"It's tough to find the tone to talk about disgust and signal to others that you are dead serious about this," Miller confessed. *The Anatomy of Disgust* has received critical praise in the United States and abroad. "One wouldn't have thought that the subject of disgust could exfoliate so elaborately, or throw off so many provocative insights, as it does in these pages, not only into the way we live now but into the way we have always lived," reviewer Joseph Epstein wrote in *The New Yorker*. "The capacity for disgust, it turns out, may be as significant as any quality we possess. Our antipathies define us as surely as our sympathies."

"Miller rightly perceives that disgust helps to define our identities, create hierarchies, and order our world; but I remain puzzled about its biological significance," reviewer Anthony Storr wrote in the United Kingdom's *The Observer*. "If animals can do without it, why can't we? Miller is courageous in tackling a subject that few authors have approached, but this is not a book for the faint-hearted."