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# '[I] hate girls and emo[tion]s':

## Negotiating masculinity in grindcore music

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### Abstract

The article confronts the construction of gender within metal, particularly the violent misogyny that can be found in some types of death metal and grindcore. Drawing on a case study of grindcore music in Melbourne, Australia, the author explores the nature of 'brutality' that is identified by scene members as the essence of its affect. Grindcore offers an affective 'intensity' that partially transcends representations of gender, opening up possibilities for female scene members. While misogynistic rhetoric and representation may suffuse metal scenes, it is undermined and ironized in various ways.

**Keywords:** death metal; grindcore; heavy metal; misogynistic representation

Grindcore is more than representational music. That is, grindcore scenic participation is less about how many lyrics you know, or t-shirts you own, than it is about an ability to enact an affective sensibility. Affect describes an embodied intensity, which is impossible to pinpoint through representative forms, such as writing (Masumi 2002: 77). Nevertheless, Lorimer (2008: 552) uses writing to define affect thus:

[A]ffect [is] properties, competencies, modalities, energies, attunements, arrangements and intensities of differing texture, temporality, velocity and spatiality that act on bodies, are produced through bodies, and transmitted by bodies.

I call the affective sensibility grindcore scene members experience 'feeling brutal' after the ubiquitous catchcry of 'brutal' heard at gigs. This utterance goes some way towards articulating the affective experience grindcore generates.

In this article, I use feeling brutal as an entry point for a discussion on how affect relates to, and troubles, metal masculinity. There is a recurrent assumption in metal studies that Western metal is sexist, masculinist, and even misogynist

(Arnett 1996; Kahn-Harris 2007; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). I ask whether grindcore participants really do, following a song title from band Blood Duster, 'Hate Girls and Emotions'.<sup>1</sup> I concur that metal imagery, particularly in death metal and gore-grindcore, regularly represents women as sexualized objects at best and objects for rape, torture and murder at worst. Metal signifiers, often literally, scream masculinity. In such a masculine discourse, it is rare for metal songs to articulate emotions, which are, in Western culture, feminized. Instead, the male protagonist is busy 'doing'—battles, riding motorcycles or, in the case of death metal, killing. As Massumi (2002: 27) emphasizes, affect is not synonymous with 'emotion'. Nevertheless, the difficulty in articulating affect means that representations of its intensities depend heavily on the language of emotions. Grindcore scene members regularly experience affect as feeling brutal. However, they also avoid articulated affect, that is, emotions, because they are categorized 'feminine' in Western culture.

A focus on affect yields a more complex understanding of metallers' relation to gender. In particular, feeling brutal veers from the masculinist cognitive response to music of critical distance. Affect allows for a sense of belonging that is not entirely bound to representations of scenic status. It speaks to the intense and inarticulable experience of being at a grindcore gig.

In this article, I draw out the relation between feeling brutal and gender through a case study of grindcore music in Melbourne, Australia. In the first section, I outline how grindcore is more than representational. That is, affective. In this section, I also unpack brutal in relation to gender. In layperson's terms, brutal connotes masculinized violence. However, brutal also implies the scenic experience of affective belonging. Affect, I suggest, is coded feminine and troubles the masculine connotations of brutal. Brutal in Melbourne grindcore encompasses both meanings, and thus gestures towards masculinity and femininity.

In the second section, I offer the interview as a demonstration of masculinized brutal sociality that builds scenic belonging on a representational level. Interviews, of course, differ, depending on context. I compare my ethnographic interviews, foregrounding my position as a woman, with grindcore media interviews. Both forms of interview build belonging. Yet, my ethnographic interview—mediated by my femininity—allows more room for the articulation of affect, than the by men/for men standard of grindcore media interviews.

Finally, in the third section, I present a close analysis of grindcore's relation to articulated affect (emotions). Through a case study of one Melbourne band's response to the pop-punk-rock genre emo, I highlight the tensions between the

1. This is a quotation from the title of a song by Melbourne grindcore band, Blood Duster, 'Hate Girls and Crusty Punx', which is on *Str8 Outta Northcote* (1998).

experience of affect (brutal and masculine) and the articulation of affect (emotional and feminine).

## Methods

Thrift's (2008) work on 'non-representational theory' (NRT) informs this article. NRT advocates a shift from reading sociality as a set of static signifiers. Instead, Thrift calls for accounts of the myriad, lively, and often contradictory, sensations experienced by people through social processes. Thrift (2004) also concedes the clunkiness of the NRT moniker. He emphasizes that the privileging of affect, which NRT requires, does not assume exclusivity from representational elements. Instead, he calls for understandings of sociality as more than simply representational.

I attempt to access this more-than-ness through an ethnography of grindcore music in Melbourne. I draw on interviews conducted with 25 scene members and participant-observation at grindcore events between 2004 and 2009. Having been a member of the scene since 2003 in a fan capacity, I drew on personal contacts and employed a snowball methodology to broaden my sample. The interviews were primarily in person, with two exceptions, conducted via email. I also conducted follow-up questions over email. While the verbal medium of interviews remains representational, scene members regularly highlighted the difficulty of linguistically representing affective experiences.

## 1. Fuck...I'm dead: brutal belonging and the evacuation of 'self'

### Brutal—meaning and context

Melbourne grindcore scene members constitute belonging by generating an affective intensity, which I label feeling brutal. Brutal is also a linguistic representation. In Melbourne's scene, and globally, it is the ultimate commendation. To yell 'brutal!' at the end of a set validates the performers as authentic grindcore scene members. The speed and intensity of play, particularly, measures authenticity:

[B]rutal means any music that sounds either harsh to the ears, very heavy, or sounds aggressive/physically taxing/intense to play... 'Brutal' has ended up being bastardized into a general term of approval among people into that stuff [grindcore] (Carsten, via email).

As Carsten points out, brutal is also a 'term of approval'. In venues, on fan forums and Myspaces, brutal is a welcoming salutation. The aesthetics of grindcore also incorporate intertextual understandings of brutality. That is, brutal represents the masculine aggression and violence present in media accounts of brutal crimes, which generally focus on crimes by men, against women. Brutality, then, indicates

grindcore's violent aesthetics, as well as the broader masculine significance of such actions:

Brutal: Punishingly hard or violent. (Mick, via email)

[Brutal] can be a...a bad thing...a brutal bashing. (Jim)

In fact, Melbourne lyricists cited media representations of crime as a significant influence:

I read about it in some... I don't know, I found it pretty disturbing where...two sixteen year olds...held up a service station with a diseased blood syringe... And I go 'fuck—that's so fucked up'... So I have to write about it. (Will)

[T]here's one song recently that I...got the idea from *Crime Investigations Australia*. About this guy who was called 'The Mornington Monster'... And he killed... his wife and kids with a bloody...spear gun. (Tommo)

Only the last example demonstrates a brutal crime where a man was the perpetrator. However, Will and Tommo's other examples regard deviant female subjects. That is, 'junkie mother[s]' and 'fucked up...young girls' who do not fit the normative parameters of femininity. Notably, these deviant females are categorized as working class. This is evident when Tommo discusses his inspiration for the song 'Barefoot and Shitfaced'. He explained how he was inspired by an article in daily Melbourne tabloid *Herald Sun* which quoted a 'junkie woman' (Tommo's words) describing a fellow resident from the Housing Commission as 'barefoot and shitfaced'. In Australia, the Housing Commission was the name of the department, established in the 1960s, charged with building public housing for low-income citizens.

### **Brutality—the uncontainable self and collective belonging**

However, brutality is also an affective intensity:

Firstly, to me it means something intense or uncontrolled. (Jim)

Brutal means heavy, short, fast [music]...blows you away. (Anita)

Scene members experience this intensity subjectively.<sup>2</sup> However, it is also externalized onto other scene members and scenic spaces. This process builds belonging in the scene—the scene member experiences the sense of sharing their affective intensity with other people and things. Anita's articulation that it 'blows you away' indicates something of the subjective bodily sensations experienced by scene members when feeling brutal. That is, Anita alludes to the sense that a cognitized sense of coherent self, and bounded body, evaporates when experiencing grindcore. This echoes Massumi's (2002) understanding of affect and belonging

2. Jim makes this explicit: 'brutal...is quite a subjective term'.

as the 'openness of bodies to each other and to what they are not—the incorporeality of the event' (76).

The Melbourne gore-grind band name 'Fuck... I'm Dead' unintentionally encapsulates this evacuation of the self, through the implication that the 'I' is, in fact, 'dead' when experiencing grindcore. This 'blowing away' of the self constitutes the process of externalization. Scene members immerse themselves in scenic events—experienced as brutal affective intensities. This builds a sense of belonging with other scene members.

The process of being, and becoming, brutal demonstrates that identity is processual, rather than fixed, and more about the projection and reception of diverse intensities of selfhood, than a solid self. This is evident in Carsten's description of his favourite gig:

Every band fucking killed. Every band played the best they've ever done...just about the best thing I've ever seen and I—couldn't contain yourself. (Carsten)

His sense of self was uncontainable; indeed it became an Other—'you(r)'—during the gig. This highlights the process of brutal externalization. While 'I' may be 'dead', the self's transgression of the bodily borders which 'contain' it allows for an intense sense of belonging with others to a particular space and music. This echoes Thrift's (2008) suggestions that bodily proximity is more conducive to affective encounters than mediated contact.<sup>3</sup> At a gig, scene members experience brutality collectively:

It's like the audience is one big living creature. (Jim)

jagodzinski (2005: 48), in his Lacanian analysis of pop music, contends that the experience of listening to a singing voice prompts an experience of *jouissance* similar to affect. He suggests that in the moment of listening, the listener can potentially experience an exhilarating sense of disembodiment. The audience and the performer(s) become 'all voice' (56). This experience, he suggests, grants the listeners a sense of belonging with their fellow listeners, as well as performers, in the moment of listening. Notably, jagodzinski emphasizes that such an experience is 'best felt "live"' (ibid.)—a notion to which Jim appears to agree.

Feeling brutal, nevertheless, stems from an individual sense of brutal-ness. It is partly a disposition, which allows the self to immerse in external subjectivities and events. However, it is through the externalizing of this disposition, transmitted via affect, that belonging in grindcore is constituted. Without feeling brutal, one cannot authentically claim scenic belonging.

3. He also, rightly, acknowledges Brennan's (2004) findings on affective intermingling (221–22).

### How does brutal affect impact grindcore sociality?

Massumi (1998: 59) suggests that affect suffuses 'the chaotic co-functioning' of the political, economic and cultural spheres, which he broadly dubs 'the social' (59). Thrift (2008: 207) concurs. Certainly, representation influences sociality. However, as Thrift (2008: 207) points out, sociality also uses a 'massively extended affective palette'. This manifests in what he dubs 'interactional intelligence' (207). Such intelligence depends on affective intuitions of social encounters. It is a shared and mutual expectancy of a situation or, as Thrift (2008: 208) puts it, '[a]ffect...act[s] as the corporeal sense of the communicative act'.<sup>4</sup> One scene member's account of how he feels during gigs indicates this, evident in his difficulty in describing affect as a vague 'something':

You just like look around you and go 'hey everyone! Yeeaaaah!' You know? It's, it's—I don't know, maybe it's—I don't know...*something*, I don't know... It's just—you share the love of the music. And I, I, I, I always find myself standing at gigs [*laughing*] with this huge, stupid grin plastered across my face, 'cause I just love it. And, ssssss—yeah—you've got, sort of these characters hidden in the crowd who sort of get everyone else feeling relaxed and that kind of thing. (Will, my emphasis)

Will's enthusiasm depends on sociality fostered through bodily proximity. In fact, for Will, the 'something' he describes is sociality—the act of 'shar[ing] the...music' with other scene members. Will's experience is more than simply the exclamation of 'hey everyone!' His grin derives from the inarticulable 'something' and 'ssssss' generated through affect. Such vagaries demonstrate Thrift's suggestion that the retrospective, (re)cognized description of affective experience is beyond words. It is beyond the representative structures of language.<sup>5</sup> As jagodzinski (2005: 49), again following from Lacan, points out, language 'devitalis[es] the body' through the exteriorization of affective experiences. Like Will, other scene members highlighted the difficulty of linguistically representing affective experiences:

It [going to gigs] is sort of a [*sic*] unspoken thing as well. Like, you can't really explain the way you feel. (Hayley)

It's really hard to describe... It's an energy rush. It's...nerve racking and highly exciting. (Jim)

4. Brennan's work (2004) is largely about this same intuition. See particularly her 'Introduction' (1–23), where she writes: 'The origin of affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without' (3). She also emphasizes the biological and physiological factors present in the 'transmission' of affect (1–23 *passim*).

5. See also Wood and Smith's (2004) work on the 'soundworld'. Here, music fans and musicians display a similar difficulty in expressing affect. Their participants say, 'you can just go jiiiii-jiiiii' (537). Massumi also discusses the impossibility of containing affect in discursive structures (2002: 1–21 *passim*).

It [singing] is just an expression...of that shit [laughs]. You know what I mean?  
(Graham)

For Hayley, Jim and Graham, grindcore's intensity is inarticulable. It is 'unspoken', 'hard to describe' or an expletive.

In fact, participants' descriptions of grindcore sociality lacked explicit reference to grindcore as an object for discussion or representation. Rather, they recounted an ambience where grindcore brutality is embodied in how people feel:

Oh—[I] feel pretty, what's the word? [pause] Can't think of the word. Comfortable! Comfortable...it's just, I don't know...there was just a lot of...good people.  
(Tommo)

[P]laying live I feel like I—something different comes over me when we play...or something like that...it just feels intense and the vocals are really [hits a fist into his other hand twice] bang, bang... Something does sort of—you can feel something sort of come over you like 'oorgh eurgghh' and, it is sort of kind of cool and it's just [claps hands]—lovin' it—you know? [laughs] (Will)<sup>6</sup>

These affective experiences could be understood, following from jagodzinski, as encounters with the Lacanian Real (2005: 39). That is, in the non-sense space prior to the subject's incorporation into the symbolic order as articulable language. An understanding of the brutal experience as pre-symbolic also accounts for the pleasure Tommo and Will describe ('comfortable!'; 'lovin' it—you know?') when at a gig. In the moment of brutality, when 'something different comes over' them, scene members can experience the affective *jouissance* of the pre-symbolic.

## 2. Affect and gender

### Brutal as masculine and more-than masculine

I have demonstrated how brutality enables belonging in the Melbourne scene. The sense of belonging experienced by scene members depends on the subjective ability to *be affected*, and, in the external movement, be affective. Interviewees generally glossed this as a 'good' feeling shared between performers and audience. However, affect is not necessarily an uplifting intensity. Power relations mediate affect. Gender identity, in particular, potentially enables or restrains scene members' ability to be 'blown away' by brutality.

The connotations of brutal are gendered masculine—in lay and grindcore parlance. In media representations, brutal murderers are usually men, while victims

6. Will's sense of affect's pre-cognitive and external ('something comes over you') position supports Brennan's (2004) work on the 'transmission' of affect between people, spaces and things. She offers compelling scientific evidence that such intensities are, in part, biological and move between subjects and objects through olfaction (Brennan 2004: 51–74).

of brutality are generally women.<sup>7</sup> Further, instances of extreme-metal taking the blame for male sexual violence against women are so common they are almost banal (Dunn, McFadyen and Wise, dir. 2005; Weinstein 2000).<sup>8</sup> Melbourne grind-core scene members rarely enact brutality as physical violence.<sup>9</sup> However, through its brutal sensibility, Melbourne grindcore becomes a masculine scene. This consideration of Melbourne grindcore is neat. Indeed, in terms of representation, brutal masculinity blasts from every t-shirt, lyric and line of on-stage patter. Yet, understanding brutality as also highly affective, opens the seemingly bounded 'masculine' grindcore scene to a more complex reading of gender relations.

*The brutal voice.* In grindcore, brutality is most present at live gigs. It is the affective sensations experienced by the audience and performers. However, brutality is also present, more specifically, in the voice of grindcore singers. The guttural, often pitch-shifted vocals of grindcore music distinguishes the genre from other forms of metal, particularly heavy and thrash metal. Further, non-fans often single out grindcore vocals as the key point for their dislike of the genre. During my research, I have regularly heard statements like 'oh you're writing about that roargh roargh roargh stuff? That's not music!' Grindcore's vocals push the genre from music into noise. It is here that brutal affect originates. The noise of grindcore vocals makes linguistic representation impossible. In the global grindcore scene, bands often compensate for the lack of lyrical enunciation with extensive liner notes, which include lyrics. However, in Melbourne, it is rare for bands to have printed lyrics, or lyrics at all. Tommo explains:

Well, I don't really have...lyrics—really. I cheat a bit—yeah. That song [Slowly Raped with a Chainsaw]...doesn't have any real lyrics... Yeah. Like Captain Clea-noff—he doesn't have one lyric... *He's just all noises.* (Tommo, emphasis added).

7. See Seltzer's (1998) work on serial killers, which looks particularly at the gendering of serial sexual violence. He writes that such crimes are 'nearly consisten[ly] gender[ed]...a male violence that is anti-female and anti-homosexual or more exactly a male violence that is directed at the anti-male or "unmale"' (67). Recent examples in Melbourne media to use the phrase 'brutal' when describing crime perpetrated by a man against a woman include: the murder of Tracey Greenbury by Leigh Robinson (ninemsn 2008); Peter Caruso's murder of his wife, Rosa (Oakes and Arup 2008); and Peter Dupas' alleged killings of multiple women (Norrie 2011).

8. Perhaps the most famous example is the serial slayings conducted by Richard Ramirez in the 1980s. He claimed the song 'Night Prowler' by AC/DC was an influence on his violence. The media ran with this idea, dubbing him, incorrectly, the 'Night Stalker'.

9. The only exception being, during my fieldwork, an incident when a group of 'right-wing... Nazi' (Carsten) black metal fans attended a grindcore gig. The black-metallers picked a fight with a male scene member who was wearing a dress and a brawl ensued. The venue where it occurred is now widely black-listed as a 'Nazi pub' (Boycott the Birmingham 2007) and no longer attended by grindcore scene members.



For Tommo, and the singer from Adelaide band Captain Cleanoff, the vocals are 'all noises'. Tommo's phrase 'all noises' is illuminating. It recalls jagodzinski's (2005) notion of 'all voice'—that is, in the moment of becoming 'all noise', the vocalist experiences something more than the bounded masculine body. The vocals (d)evolve into Lacanian *lalangue* the pre-symbolic and pre-gendered babbling of the infant. This is the affective moment of becoming brutal. As jagodzinski points out, noise is often considered 'ugly' (206), because of its deviance from normative ideas of melodic and harmonic music. Melbourne grindcore practitioners, following global grindcore trends, constitute an ugly aesthetic. This is demonstrated in song titles and artwork. The brutal grindcore voice is also ugly, not simply because of its difference from more popular types of music, but also because of its refusal to be anchored in a gendered body. The noise of the grindcore voice is disembodied—it is not sung—and it is produced by a subject who is 'all noise' and no corporeality. The brutality of the grindcore voice challenges the stability of the symbolic order; it affronts the common-sense reading of grindcore as inherently masculine and patriarchal.

Grindcore vocals are also growled and screamed. This obviously contributes to the overarching experience of the vocals as 'all noise'. However, growling and screaming can also elucidate the relation between brutality and gender. Screaming in music is often associated with men, particularly with rock and heavy metal (Apolloni 2008; Walser 1993). However, screaming is also feminized in dominant Western culture. The horror movies, which sometimes screen alongside grindcore bands performing in Melbourne, regularly feature a cowering, screaming young woman.<sup>10</sup> Pornography, too, often includes women screaming (Jensen 2007). Men's screaming is considered feminine. In his study of non-heterosexual men and house music, Amico (2002) quoted one informant as explicitly associating screaming with women. He said: 'in our society men just don't go around screaming' (368). Further, as jagodzinski (2005) points out, high-pitched screaming is associated with *castrati*, who were literally de-masculinized men, and latterly so-called 'boy bands'. Thus, screaming in music connotes both masculinity and femininity. In Melbourne's grindcore scene, I suggest, screaming constitutes the noise of brutal affect. Graham, the vocalist for Melbourne band Shagnum, explains his approach to performance:

10. The most telling example was Tasmanian band Intense Hammer Rage's tour of Melbourne in 2003. During their show at the Green Room, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper 1974) played on multiple screens. See my article on grindcore spaces in Melbourne, for a more in-depth discussion of the homology between horror movies and Melbourne grindcore (Overell 2010).

**Rosemary:** So do you have lyrics?

**Graham:** Um [pause] no—a lot of the stuff I do there—there will be set sections where I sing set lyrics, and then stuff in between, generally just comes out, ah... I just scream, 'cause I just feel like screaming... I don't wanna, I mean, I find with some lyrics that it's really trying to intellectualise yourself and make yourself—people'll think 'oh wow—there's—'... [T]here's some people that really—that is their calling, to write lyrics and have songs, like, songwriters basically. I'm not one of them—I just enjoy having a yell and getting the shit out of me, basically.

He concurs that Shagnum does have lyrics—though they are inaudible—which come from a cerebral, 'intellectual' place. Cerebrality and intellectualism are, of course, masculine traits. However, what Graham really enjoys is 'just screaming... having a yell'. His account of the pleasure of screaming is notable in that he positions it as the 'stuff in between' representation (the lyrics). That is, for Graham, screaming is outside the symbolic order. It is noise. The noise in between representation, and its affective potential, has been explored by other cultural studies of music (jagodzinski 2005; Smith 2000). However, these have focused on popular and classical music. Further, particularly in Smith's study, focus is placed on the near-absence of sound in between music. To follow Graham's understanding, however, of the in-between of grindcore vocals as screaming noise yields an excess of sound. This excess is feminine. In dominant, Western culture, excessive noise—chattering, nagging and, indeed, screaming—is feminized. Screaming, in particular, is associated with 'hysterical' women (Dolar 2006: 69). Graham's embrace of the in between moments of screaming, then, temporarily challenge his masculine identity. The space of the scream is beyond 'intellectual[ism]' where Graham can take pleasure in transgressing the bounds of masculinity to revel in the excess of screaming.

Melbourne bands The Kill, Super Fun Happy Slide, Vaginal Carnage and Roskopp use pitch-shifted vocals. Common in global gore-grind, pitch-shifters down-tune vocal screams to sound like a growl or gurgle. When growling, the masculine body is further displaced, the voice separates from the human body in a moment that jagodzinski (2005: 205) describes as 'becoming-animal'. This concept refers to the sound of the scream, 'stuck' (205) in the throat of the screamer. Growling is neither part of the symbolic order of speech, nor is it the affective *jouissance* of screaming. Like screaming, it is un-gendered and disembodied. However, when asked to describe the experience of performing, vocalists never mentioned growling or gurgling. Instead, they focused on screaming or making noise as the key moment of pleasure. This was even the case for vocalists who alternated between pitch-shifted and screamed vocals. Zak, the vocalist for Roskopp, described how it took practice to make pitch-shifted vocals feel 'natural':

I've, I've always just sort of done it and sort of experiments at practice with the pitch-shifter, though so, it feels really natural. (Zak)

Here, Zak acknowledges a sense that the technology of the pitch-shifter mediates the brutally affective experience (the Real) of screaming. Onstage, the brutal voice is expressed through noise and screaming. In the next section, I discuss what happens when scene members were asked to articulate the experience of brutality, and how this relates to masculinity, in the ethnographic interview.

### **Brutal responses in the ethnographic interview**

Articulated affect is feminized as 'emotion' or 'feelings'. My requests to articulate 'feelings' regarding live grindcore performances were often met with awkwardness:

**Tommo:** [T]his'll sound a bit funny—it [watching a band] gives me a warm feeling! [*laughs*]

**Rosemary:** So, how do you feel, like, say in [Melbourne band] Shagnum, when you're 'in the moment'—performing?

**Graham:** Um, [pause] pretty, yeah, pretty—I don't know... Um, it's—is—I actually haven't been asked that before! [*laughs*]

Tommo distances himself from the 'warm feeling'—affect—which live performances prompt through the acknowledgement that it 'sound[s]...funny' for a man to articulate affect. Both respondents use laughter to distance themselves from their affective responses.

The male aversion to articulation of feelings is, of course, culturally constructed and much discussed by feminists (Jensen 2007; Plumwood 1994) and even metal scholars (Walser 1993).<sup>11</sup> Affect is often erroneously elided with 'emotions', coded as female. However, as Massumi points out, affect is a 'pre-personal intensity corresponding to...an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act...an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body' (in Deleuze and Guattari 1987: xvi). This differs from emotion, which is the outward display of feelings, based on one's subjective history.

Elaborating on Massumi, I consider 'feelings' an articulation of affect. They are informed by history and culture in the sense that the shift from affect (something more than representational) to feeling (signified as emotion) is cognitive. The forced articulation of affect in the ethnographic interview troubles bru-

11. However, despite an awareness of the problematics of coding feeling, and thus affect, 'feminine', a large proportion of affect studies remain in 'Women's Studies' faculties (Clough 2007).

tal's masculine connotations. To articulate feeling is to acknowledge the 'blowing away' of the (masculine) self in the affective moment. Popular rock music is male-dominated. Yet, pop-rock performers are expected to express emotion on cue to fulfil their status as authentic artists and appeal to a wide audience. Extreme metal, including grindcore, is just as masculinist. However, the marginality of extreme-metal, and its proponents' aversion to rock aesthetics, means that verbally articulated affect is incongruous. Chart success is unlikely, and rarely a goal for extreme-metallers (Kahn-Harris 2007). Instead, they appeal to listeners, partly through blunt representations of masculinity, who share their brutal disposition. Indeed, the affective, uncontainability of the self in grindcore contexts is referenced, but also recuperated in the 'Fuck... I'm Dead' moniker. The swearword 'fuck' aligns the band with the supposed coarseness of male culture. The taboo of swearing also draws attention away from the notion of the self becoming 'dead'. The controversial use of 'fuck' becomes the focus.<sup>12</sup>

My respondents' awkwardness partly reflects my diversion from the standard interview and interviewer. As Graham notes above, it is rare for metallers to be asked about feelings in interviews. Firstly, my position, as a woman, was unusual. A look at contributors to global extreme metal magazine, *Terrorizer*, shows that the reporters are mainly men, though the editor is a woman (*Terrorizer*, n.d.). My gender, I believe, contributed to repeated questions about why I was studying grindcore and whether I 'really' liked it. When I revealed that my partner was a band member, interviewees generally took this as the only acceptable explanation for my presence in the scene and my academic interest. This matches the popular assumption that women generally form the periphery of rock scenes—as fans, groupies and 'girlfriends' (Apolloni 2008; cf. Garber and McRobbie [1975] 1976).

### **Case study: Blood Duster**

Apart from the gender of most interviewees of grindcore musicians, the interview structure fosters a masculine perspective.<sup>13</sup> 'Feminine' areas such as emotions are rarely discussed. Keeping it brutal means keeping it manly. Melbourne group Blood Duster is Australia's most successful grindcore band. A brief analysis of their media interviews demonstrates the normative masculine tone. I located four interviews with the band, in local and foreign press. This may seem a small

12. One acquaintance, not a scene member, on hearing my research was on the Arthouse, said 'oh I just love the band names they put up on the blackboard at the front—Fuck... I'm Dead—hilarious'.

13. The masculinist bias of media interviews is not peculiar to grindcore, or even extreme-metal. As Connell (2000: 81) demonstrates in his ethnography of masculinity and sports, 'media talk' reinforces dominant conceptions of masculinity.

number. However, relative to other Melburnian bands, this is significant, particularly because they are interviewed in *Terrorizer* (Christ 2009) and mainstream Australian rock press *Beat* (Wang 2007), as well as fanzines (Goreripper 2007; Ward, n.d.).

Firstly, it is noteworthy that all the interviewers used pseudonyms or nicknames. This suggests a fluid gender identity, for instance the handle 'Goreripper', or indeed any of the names, could be appropriated by either sex. However, the specific reference to the penis in two of the pseudonyms suggests that, even if one is a woman, it is better to identify as a man when interviewing grindcore musicians. The first is 'Nutso' Ward (n.d.), who interviewed Blood Duster for Sydney punk/metal zine *Unbelievably Bad*. Second is 'Bobus Wang' (2007), who interviewed the band for *Beat*. Here, I will focus on Ward's interview.

The *Unbelievably Bad* interview begins with a standard dialogue about the band's upcoming tour (Ward n.d.: 46). However, the interview becomes (brutally) masculine when discussion turns to the band's DVD *The Shape of Death to Come* (Blood Duster, 2005). Interviewee, Jason P. C.,<sup>14</sup> provides information that the disc features multiple 'tittie [and]...cunt shots' (Ward n.d.: 47). For Jason, this fits into the band's image as tasteless. He notes, 'we know...we can show a vagina as long as there's no penetration' (Ward n.d.: 46), conceding that the pornography on the DVD is an attempt to push legal parameters. Ward rises to Jason's introduction of pornographic subject matter by adopting the tone of a 'mate', swapping stories about female conquests:

I remember seeing you at Caringbah nearly a year ago and before the show the whole band was watching...while Tony ['Tonebone' Forde—vocalist] tried to pick up some chick. Apparently you needed one final shot to complete the DVD (Ward n.d.: 46).

Jason responds in a similarly matey way—imparting details of Tony's dalliances and describing how they incorporated footage of them into the DVD:

We got some...cool shots of him fucking this chick in Perth somewhere. He had her doing all kinds of shit and we thought it was hilarious—we all watched it the next day... [H]e's doing like full porno talk (Ward n.d.: 46).

Ward and Jason's conversation depends on understanding that women are sexual objects to be 'fuck[ed]', watched, re-watched and described by men. Importantly, the interviewer's identification as a masculine mate of Jason's allowed Jason to move from being a band-member recounting details of musical conquests, to a mate recounting sexual conquests. Further, the matieness that surrounds the con-

14. His name being a joke on 'politically correct'—he and his band deliberate try to be politically *incorrect*.

sumption of pornography normalizes, via complicity, the objectification and degradation of women that most pornography expresses (Jensen 2007).<sup>15</sup>

The rest of the interview follows this masculinist structure. Jason recounts a tale of an 'uptight' American grind band who took offence at his repeated reference to his partner as a 'cunt' (Ward n.d.: 46). Ward heartily agrees with Jason that this is outrageous; though still, apparently, an amusing—'classic'—anecdote (Ward n.d.: 46).<sup>16</sup>

The process of objectification allows the subject, doing the objectifying, to experience wholeness, in the face of the amputated partiality of the object. However, Jensen (2007) notes an interesting paradox within the objectifying process of pornography consumption. He suggests that male pornography consumers use pornography to objectify themselves (113–14). That is, pornography produces an 'emotional numbness' (113) which avoids facing sex as 'always *more than a physical act*' (114, my emphasis). For Jensen, this process maintains dominant masculinity, which represses female-coded emotions (26).

The avoidance of emotions is evident in the Blood Duster interviews I studied. They work in a cerebral, cognitive mode. That is, both Jason (he is the only band member to participate in interviews) and the interviewer appear to have calculated, clever responses, which always shy away from articulating affect. However, in such discussions masculinity depends on a relation to arguably the most affective of human experiences: sexual intercourse. The feminine Other is not simply the physical female—or in Wang's (2007) words, a 'gooey vagoo' (n.p.)—it is affect. Thus, it is necessary for both interviewer and interviewee to maintain distance from sex's affective elements. Sex, like the women and feminized emotions it prompts, becomes an object. It is something to be watched, categorized into bests, and discussed with detachment.

Thus, in my interviews, it was common for male interviewees to assert their masculinity through crass descriptions of sex and gender. Such responses evaded the necessity of speaking feminized feelings when articulating affect. In response

15. Jensen (2007) describes pornography's 'whisper' (33) to men as the voice of a friend who validates the male subject's masculinity by approving of pornography consumption: 'It's okay, you really are a man, you really can be a man...if you come into my world' (ibid.). He also notes that, in Western culture, most men are introduced to pornography as teens, through their male peer-group (38–40).

16. Other Blood Duster interviews follow a similar matey and sexist tone. *Terrorizer* asks: 'Which European country does the best porn?' (Christ 2009). *Beat's* Bobus Wang (2007) enquires: 'Which Suicide Girl would you most enjoy throwing one up? Personally I'd rev the guts out of that Ciara chick'. These interviews depend on the construction of a feminine Other to the interviewers', and interviewee's, brutal masculinity. The female figure is objectified in the bluntest manner: she becomes 'guts' (Wang 2007: n.p.); 'tits' (Christ 2009) and the ubiquitous 'cunt' (Christ 2009; Wang 2007; Ward n.d.) to be 'rev[ved]' (Wang 2007); 'pick[ed] up' and 'fucked' (Ward n.d.).

to a question about affect and performance, Leon asserted his masculinity through the literal invocation of the phallus:

**Rosemary:** ...So how does it feel when you're up there [onstage]?

**Leon:** A group of friends who are just being dicks.

Thus, for Leon, being brutal is synonymous with being male—represented by the phallic slang 'dick'.

### Feeling brutal/feeling ambiguous

Blood Duster's misogynistic 'brutality' is not indicative of the entire Melbourne grindcore scene, nor does it mean that a brutal disposition excludes affect. On the contrary, brutality as something not articulable through speech or representation, that is, 'feeling brutal', suffuses the grindcore scene. However, the moment of articulation—necessary to the ethnographic interview—requires recognition of brutality's affectiveness and a compartmentalization of such intensities into speech. Speech's inadequacies locate affect in the emotional and, thus, a feminine, register. For some respondents, my identity as a woman perhaps allowed a greater exploration of affective experience. Tommo, despite feeling 'funny', still conceded to experiencing the intensity of a gig affectively. Zak also described the affective experience in detail:

[G]enerally it's...sort of excitement. That kind of music, I think, um...sort of really strikes me more than, anything else does. I don't get the same kind of feeling from anything else. And, generally, no other music really sort of holds my attention, sort of, yeah, has the lasting, or strong sort of presence, as that. But, um, yeah, it's sort of, um, an excitement. And I find when I'm watching bands as well, it's—it's a funny thing... (Zak)

Further, discussions of the reactionary politics of black metal as well as gore-grindcore prompted a certain amount of reflexivity regarding misogyny in the scene. Many interviewees acknowledged grindcore's own reactionary elements and were emphatic that grindcore's apparent misogyny is, or *should* be, expressed from a critical distance:

[W]ith gore-grind for instance, in America, there was a lot of...really shitty bands that were like really, ...misogynistic, and, um, like just those sort of one-man bedroom bands that—when you look at it—you know, okay, this is obviously some sort of frustrated redneck guy who's seen all these bands with porn on the covers and shit. And thought 'oh cool! This is a good way to fucking write songs about...women who I hate' (Carsten)

Carsten's critique employs typical elements of distinction. Carsten is 'obviously', being a true grind fan, able to recognize 'shitty' gore-grind as being the work of a

(lower-class) 'redneck guy' unable to distance himself from the implied irony of pornography on gore-grind album covers. While scene members were generally assertive in their outrage at neo-Nazi black metal, their encounters with reactionary politics, in particular misogyny, in grindcore were more ambiguous:

I'm not singing about stuff like a lot of the gore-grind bands sing about... I find that, I mean, I can have a chuckle with all of them about—you know—some funny stuff they say or whatever—but I'm not into—into the violence and kind of, um, I guess the porn side of it as well, I'm not into that at all, either. (Graham)

Graham asserts he is 'not into [gore-grind] at all'. Yet, he admits that he does take an interest in the genre as humorous. That is, Graham feels he is able to assume the distance needed to find gore-grind's misogyny amusing while also claiming to be 'not into...the violence and...the porn' represented in the genre's lyrics and artwork.

### **3. Burning emos—disavowing articulated emotions in grindcore**

#### **Emo, femininity and grindcore**

Grindcore scene members' ambiguous relation to distanced/affective engagement with grindcore music is even more apparent concerning 'emo' music. Emo is a type of punk music characterized by its lyrical depictions of emotions (hence the 'emo' moniker). Musically, emo has heavy, punk riffs, interspersed with melodic, quieter parts. Vocalists wail, or scream lyrics during the heavy parts and sing during the quieter sections. Emo's chart success, particularly in the 2000s, led to a visible emo youth culture. Emo fans were identified in the media, particularly after a series of emo panics related to self-harm and suicide (ABC4 2007; CBS 47 2007; Fox 11 2007; TCN 7 2007; TCN 9 2007; WDAZ 2007). The media created a folk devil out of emos. They emphasized their androgynous 'uniform' of dark make-up, 'girls' jeans' and long fringes, as well as emos' supposed ascription to 'depressed' attitudes (ABC4 2007).

As Thornton (1996) points out, music cultures require an Other to maintain a sense of coherent scenic identity. Such Others are more likely to be from interdependent or related scenes. The relative musical similarities between the heavy parts of emo songs and grindcore make emo a proximate target of Othering by grindcore scene members. Scene members constitute emo's Otherness along gender lines. They position themselves as brutally masculine. Emo, on the other hand, is feminized. One online 'Grindcore Lifestyle' group declares it is 'anti-emo' (esclavodelgrind 2008) and has this to say to 'emo scen[e] fags': 'go fuck yourself [*sic*]!!!!' (esclavodelgrind 2008). Emo's association with femininity makes it



emphatically, as one online grindcore fan put it, 'Not Brutal At ALL'<sup>17</sup> (Aric-Anti-Emo-RickrollKing! 2008).<sup>18</sup>

Emo's femininity is not solely associated with surface signifiers of femaleness—women's clothing and make-up. The emotional nature of emo music cements its position as feminine. From a musicological perspective, emo regularly employs minor chords. In Western culture, such chords connote sadness and tragedy, due chiefly to their association with apparently sad classical music and their later use in pop-ballads from the 1960s onwards (Krimms 2007). Minor chords are unusual in rock and metal music, which follow a major chord structure. Minor chords' association with feminized music genres position emo as generically female.

Emo's lyrical themes also constitute emo as feminine, because emo focuses on the culturally feminized realm of feelings.<sup>19</sup> Further and unlike metal, or even most rock music, emo presents a passive lyrical perspective. Emo and rock both focus on human relationships for lyrical material. However, emo lyrics position the masculine narrator (emo bands being almost entirely male) as a passive victim within such, heterosexual, relations. This differs from both rock and metal music.

Emo men have plenty to articulate, but not much to do. The lyrics to a Hawthorne Heights' (2004) song, 'Ohio is for Lovers', are illustrative. This song focuses on a female partner being unfaithful. However, rather than deferring an articulated response onto a plea to another 'girl' to be 'his', the male lyricist / singer wails 'I can't make it on my own'. He goes on to outline how he will surely die without his female partner: 'fall[ing] asleep...until my final breath is gone'. The male protagonist is passive. Instead, the woman is, sadistically, active:

17. The full quote reads thus: 'the USED[a popular emo band]?!?!? Thats [sic] Not Brutal At ALL!!!! Im [sic] Mean BRUTAL!!!!... NOT EMO CUT YOUR THROTE [sic]\*\*\*\*!!!!!!!!!!!!' (Aric-Anti-Emo-RickrollKing! 2008). It was a reply to a post with the topic 'Brutal Song Names?' The homophobic response to emo echoes heavy metal's response to glam metal in the 1980s. Walser (1993) discusses heavy-metallers' obsession with denouncing glam as inauthentically 'feminine' in heavy metal fan media. He cites one fanzine that offered thrash metalheads a sticker declaring 'No Glam Fags! All Metal! No Make-up!' (Walser 1993: 130).

18. Mainstream heavy rock musicians also categorize emo as pejoratively female. Maynard James Keenan of hard rock band Tool describes male emo performers and fans as 'pussy-ass, makeup-wearing...mama's boys' (Draiman 2006: 67). Clearly, Keenan is a man concerned with emphasising his masculinity. The band's name means, in his words, 'exactly what it sounds like: It's a big dick. It's a wrench...we are...your tool; use us as a catalyst in your process of finding out whatever it is you need to find out, or whatever it is you're trying to achieve' (Zappa 1994: 15).

19. As Aklaksen (2006) points out, such lyrics are also, contradictorily, misogynist—regarding fantasized acts of violence against women who have wronged them. See also Greenwald (2003) and Simon and Kelley (2007) for journalistic discussions on emo and misogyny.

You kill me  
 ...  
 You kill me well  
 You like it too (ibid.).

### **Blood Duster and emo**

All Melbourne interviewees professed a dislike of emo. However, Blood Duster's response, again, illustrates grindcore's complex relation to affect and masculinity.

In 2007, Blood Duster released the album *Lyden Na*. It featured the song, 'THE NIGHT THEY BURNED OLD EMO DOWN' (TNTBOED), which regards 'the joys of burning down a venue full of emo kids' (Raw Nerve Promotions, 2007). This song's lyrics appropriate emo lyrical aesthetics of death and fire, and refer to emo fashion, as a way of expressing their hatred for the genre:

The studio now becomes a grave  
 ...  
 Licking flames they kiss the sky  
 The scene is swallowed in a cloud of dirty smoke  
 ....  
 Fire engulfs the back packs  
 Singes fringes and burns tattoos (*Lyden Na* 2007)

More significant, though, is Blood Duster's musical shift in TNTBOED. The song bears no grindcore signifiers, apart from its Othering of emo. Instead, it is an acoustic slide-guitar piece, with a guest vocalist<sup>20</sup> crooning the lyrics in a country style. This is a joke song, and has been described as such in interviews with band members (Goreripper 2007). However, the lack of musical brutality is telling. Instead, brutality is shifted into the realm of critical distance—the ability to 'take the piss'—as well as the more blunt violence of the lyrics. Blood Duster rejects the atypical helplessness—feminized passivity—of emo, despite the emo style of their lyrics. Of course, Blood Duster is holding the 'box of matches' which burns the emo venue to the ground. Through parodic appropriation, Blood Duster re-affirm their position as patriarchs—capable with tools (matches) and in control of those identities coded as feminine.

The easy appropriation of emo lyrical aesthetics dovetails with the wider rhetoric surrounding *Lyden Na*, which emphasized the supposed pretentiousness of emo culture. In interviews, band members position emo as shallow, manufactured pop music:

I don't really understand emo. To me it sounds like Florida death metal. It's Morbid Angel with a clothing endorsement (Goreripper 2007).

20. The vocalist was Craig Westwood, the lead singer of seminal Melbourne stoner/grindcore band Christbait.

Another band member, Leon, confirmed this attitude in my interview:

[I]t's [emo is] extreme music that's made to be not extreme...like Kmart metal... The whole 'scene' thing has just changed so much. Like, it used to be you started a band—you had a concept or an idea for everything—and then you'd get at more like an art thing. Now, it more comes from a commerce thing...everyone affiliates themselves with all the companies and stuff, and makes a fortune in a couple of years—'cause there's a consumer base readymade for it. Where, we're still going—rocking up to a place going 'we should've fucking printed some t-shirts'... It's just a whole different mindset.

Leon suggests that emo is incorporated into popular music's political economy. It is 'Kmart metal'—mass-produced and motivated by 'a commerce thing'. Leon presents emo's presumed commercialism as Other to the 'mindset' of Blood Duster. Emo musicians are market-savvy while Blood Duster are naïve—thinking more about playing music than 'print[ing] some t-shirts'. Leon goes on to say:

...we try and do everything completely in-house. You know, besides manufacture...all artwork's done by us... All recordings, you know, eventually up to the point where no-one touches anything.

Here, Leon aligns Blood Duster with grindcore's often mythologized (Mudrian 2004) relation to DIY punk, where multi-skilled band-members undertake all elements of production (O'Hara 1999). As Kahn-Harris (2007) points out, an association with the 'right' metal moments, ideals and figures is essential for maintaining extreme-metal subcultural capital. Blood Duster reiterates this in media interviews:

**Goreripper:** You've always had that punk ethic.

**Jason P.C.:** Yeah. Well I think some bands do well by not having fucking managers and by not having fucking mixers and shit, and be forced to fucking do something off their own bat (Goreripper 2007).

Of course, such acknowledgement of grindcore's, and Blood Duster's, punk roots depends on a synchronous establishment of an Other who do not 'do...thing[s] off their own bat'. The Other here is emo, which Jason P.C. had been discussing in the previous question.

### **Piss takes and pissing**

The sense that emo is a mass-produced cultural commodity is elaborated in *Lyden Na's* promotional image. Here, the band are dressed up as emos (see Figure on p. 217), further demonstrating the assumption, that, unlike grindcore, other forms of music are shallowly bound to mass produced 'image':

There's some emo photos...we're using for advertising for the album. We've put neck tats on ourselves, and fringes and eye-make-up (ibid.).

By simply 'put[ting]...on' emo style, Blood Duster imply that emo is superficial. It is something feigned,<sup>21</sup> presumably unlike grindcore brutality, which is something more than an affectation.



Blood Duster 'dress up' as emos to promote *Lyden Na* (2007), 'taking the piss' out of the style of emo bands (photo by Jason Fuller)

Emo's femininity is tied partly to lyrical content, which foregrounds representations of emotions. As noted above, grindcore scene members, keen to demonstrate masculine brutality, disavow articulated emotion, except from the distance of parody. Emo's lyrical form is also significant. In grindcore, song structure is based primarily around the heaviness of the music. Sung verses and chorus are non-existent. In emo, however, the traditional sung verse/chorus/bridge structure is used. Further, emo songs generally have a narrative, such as 'Ohio is for Lovers', which regarded a memory of a break-up and a description of the singer's

21. Blood Duster's caption for the Figure 2 photograph on the music website 'Reverb Nation' is 'emo grind is the new black' (Blood Duster 2010). This is an obvious linking between the fast turnover of styles in the fashion industry and emo music.

current state of mind. The emphasis on narrative builds emo's emotional register. The singer offers an apparently deep account of his feelings. This re-affirms connotations of femininity, through an association with so-called women's cultures of confessional television, agony aunt columns and self-help magazines.

Blood Duster provide an example of grindcore's rejection of deep narrative and thus also of the femininity it connotes. Their songs lyrics are soundbytes of taboo, generally misogynist, imagery.<sup>22</sup> For example, these lyrics from 'Simultaneous Pleasure Pinch':

Up the date  
And up the cunt  
With my fingers  
I will hunt (*Yeast*, Blood Duster 1996)

Further, unlike emo songs, which often stretch to 4 minutes or more, many of Blood Duster's songs are less than a minute. The shortest is the lyric-less, but no less misogynist, 'Bitch' (*Yeast* 1996) at 7 seconds.

Blood Duster also refuses deep narrative at gigs. That is, unlike rock and emo, grindcore bands are more likely to heckle audience members than thank them for coming along. This is, of course, considered a joke. So Blood Duster's regular lines, such as 'fuck you cunts', are yet another deferral of affect—the aggression and energy generated by performance—onto piss takes. Emo musicians, on the other hand, are effusive at live shows. Artists often entertain the audience with lengthy personal anecdotes between songs (Simon and Kelley 2007). Blood Duster's response to this story-telling rejects the feminized genre of confessional narrative. They affirm their brutal masculinity through a stifling of meaningful banter. Leon explains:

We've...been going through a thing lately...where we've been...telling stories that lead nowhere. You know, like, you, you tell a story that's really monotonous and they think it's going to lead somewhere and you tell it like 'and then the door just shut!'

This approach is intended to induce an affective response in the audience. Importantly, though, it is not intended to stimulate adoration from fans, but shame at having let themselves be mesmerised by the band. Blood Duster's repartee reminds audience members that the truly brutal remain detached from their emotions. Leon continues:

You know, we played in Adelaide...and um, after we played the last song, we acted like we were going to do an encore—that *there was a special moment*—so we convinced the whole crowd that they had to move back, like, ten or fifteen steps

22. Further, they are generally 'intro-ed' by soundbytes from horror or pornographic movies.

and it took a little while for everyone to do it, but we managed to get the whole venue back a few steps. And then we just said 'see ya' and walked off. And it was just like a big, collective 'ohhh', you know? Because they'd been let-down. Just letting down the crowd's, like, actually become heaps of fun (emphasis added)

Nevertheless, other members of Blood Duster still experience grindcore brutality through affect. Jules, like others, has trouble articulating affect, describing it as a 'buzz' and 'spin[ning] out' from himself:

[I]f you play in front of, say, like a packed Hi-Fi Bar. That's always a buzz...or whatever, so it's, um, yeah, it's good... Sometimes you spin out, sometimes you don't. You couldn't give a shit.

Like other scene members, Jules' attempt to speak about affective brutality demonstrates the loss of self experienced during performance. The sense of 'spin[ning] out' is described in the third person. This alludes to Jules' feeling that 'I' recedes and affect takes over. This is not a troubling experience ('*You* [the self separate from 'I'] couldn't give a shit'), because it avoids any association with articulated emotions.

Blood Duster's concern with distancing themselves from the Other/emo betrays a fear of identification with the Other. The Other manifests as emo culture. However, emo, of course, stands in for (feminized) emotions. Recently, emo has occasionally been literally proximate to grindcore in the form of mixed-bills. In Blood Duster's case, this proximity prompted a display of extreme masculinity in order to fend off any association with their bill-mates. In an interview, Jason P. C. firstly emphasizes that the bill was, of course, a joke:

Someone thought it would be funny to put all these emo bands on with Blood Duster and someone else, [Brisbane band] Fort I think it was (Ward n.d.: 47).

Nevertheless, the prospect of playing in front of emo fans, and with emo bands, required an assurance that emo remained a feminine Other and Blood Duster/grindcore was constituted as brutally masculine. Jason P. C. achieved this through a blunt display of masculinity: the exposure of his penis.

The emo kids [were there]...had their backpacks on and shit, so I'm standing onstage, pissed [drunk] as hell, and I could see them out there with their arms crossed, so I just pissed [urinated] on [guitar-player] Matt Collins' leg. It was just like, 'Yeah, fuck you, I'm drunk, I'm pissing on the stage, I don't give a fuck (Ward n.d.: 47).

Jason P. C. reveals his anxiety—over the invasion of emo culture into his brutal space of the grindcore gig ('I could see them out there'). He appears perturbed by the refusal of the emos to move ('their arms crossed'). Jason P. C.'s act of urination may simply have disgusted emo audience members. However, its purpose, I believe, was

largely to alleviate his own anxiety that the division between Blood Duster and emo was effacing. Thus, his 'pissing'—again, offered as a piss-take/joke—reassures Jason P. C. of his own masculinity and his distance from 'you', the Other. His identity, from his perspective, is bound to his ability to piss—'fuck *you*... I'm pissing'. Notably, this differs from Jules' affective experience of '*you*' referring to the self's immersion in the feminized Other of affect. Jason P. C. resists the 'spin out' (Jules) of the self into affect through his emphasis on the I/self bound to his masculine body.

## Conclusion

In this article, I contended that grindcore is a more than representational music culture. Using the concept of feeling brutal, I established grindcore music as prompting an affective intensity, which grants grindcore scene participants a sense of belonging. Through an ethnographic case study of Melbourne's grindcore music scene, I proposed that feeling brutal potentially makes room for a feminized grindcore subject. This subject contradicts understandings of metal, in particular extreme metal, such as grindcore, as inherently masculine.

However, I also showed how 'brutal's masculinist connotations, associated with representations of brutal male criminals in the media, also suffuse Melbourne's scene. An analysis of Blood Duster's media interviews showed that being brutal sometimes also means articulating a misogynist rhetoric. Nevertheless, this rhetoric was also openly contradicted or at least rendered ambivalent in the ethnographic interview context. This was potentially because, unlike most grindcore media interviewers, I am a woman.

Finally, I presented a case study of grindcore's response to emo music as a means for teasing out scene members' complex responses to affect and articulated affect (emotions). Again, a case study of Blood Duster provided a fruitful example. I suggested that the brutally masculinist responses of the band to emo masked an acknowledgement of the affective experience of 'feeling brutal'. I proposed that this experience troubled some scene members enough for them to effect a masculine-coded response, often shrouded in the phallicly inspired notions of 'piss-takes' and literal 'pissing'.

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