 Brutal Belonging: 
affective intensities in, 
and between, Australia’s and Japan’s grindcore 
scenes
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requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the experience of affective belonging in the grindcore music scene. Presenting an ethnography of how scene-members in Australia and Japan participate in grindcore, my thesis shows the experience of affective belonging in three ways: spatially, socially and through the transnational exchanges between both scenes. My thesis formulates the concept of 'brutal belonging' as a metaphor for the intense, sometimes violent, sensation(s) of affective belonging in grindcore, to argue that fans experience belonging via shared affective intensities rather than scenic signifiers. My thesis focuses on how grindcore metal music scene-members in Australia and Japan experience belonging affectively.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that

- the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,
- due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices or the thesis is 94,527 words as approved by the RHD Committee.

Signed

______________________________________________________________
Rosemary Therese Overell
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I hope my thesis captures the passion that grindcore scene-members hold for ‘their’ genre. Thus, this work is dedicated to one of the most passionate, indeed brutal, scene-members of all: Chris ‘Reeky Bits’ Morris (RIP).
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ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

*: indicates that an interview was conducted ‘on-the-spot’ in a ‘participant-sensing’ mode, at a live performance of grindcore

§: indicates English translated from Japanese language

AFL: Australian Football League, the national body for ‘Australian Rules’ football, popular in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia

AmeMura: Amerika Mura, or America Village

CBD: Central business district

DPD: Die Pigeon Die, a Melbourne band

DIY: Do-it-yourself punk, associated with anarchist politics

Footy: Australian Rules football

FID: Fuck ... I’m Dead, a Melbourne band

FSO: ‘Freestyle Outro’, an annual hardcore, metal and hip-hop festival held at Studio Partita, Osaka

DTBM: Dad They Broke Me, a Melbourne band

JIA: Japanese Imperial Army

NER: No Escape Records

NRT: Non-representational theory

PMRC – Parents Music Resource Centre

TDEBN: The Day Everything Became Nothing, a Melbourne band

WAP: White Australia Policy
INTRODUCTION

HYPOTHESIS

My thesis examines the experience of affective belonging in the grindcore music scene. Presenting an ethnography of how scene-members in Australia and Japan participate in grindcore, I show the experience of affective belonging in three ways: spatially, socially and through the transnational exchanges between both scenes. My thesis formulates the concept of 'brutal belonging' as a metaphor for the intense, sometimes violent, sensation(s) of affective belonging in grindcore, to argue that fans experience belonging via shared affective intensities rather than scenic signifiers. I focus on how grindcore metal music scene-members in Australia and Japan experience belonging affectively.

In this introductory Chapter, I present the context and motivations for the formulation of my hypothesis. I begin with a brief overview of global grindcore music, focusing particularly on how, and why, it has been largely neglected in academic research. Next, I detail the concept of ‘affective belonging’. I argue that the experience of affective belonging generates multiple, if not always ecstatic, cadences for grindcore scene-members. I propose that cultural formations may also constitute an affective belonging that might also be brutal (violent, intense and
unrestrained) belonging. The metaphor of ‘brutal belonging’ forms the primary framework for my thesis. Following from this, I look at how existing studies of metal music have accounted for belonging as a network of representational relations. In the final section of this Chapter, I demonstrate that, in order to study the experience of belonging in grindcore fruitfully, it is necessary to account for its more than representational, that is, its brutally affective, elements.

SECTION 1: SETTING THE SCENE – GLOBAL GRINDCORE MUSIC

I begin by specifying exactly what grindcore is in order to understand how it relates to the affective experience of brutal belonging. Grindcore music emerged in Birmingham, in the United Kingdom, during the 1980s as a sub-genre of death metal. Death metal is a type of heavy metal music, characterised by screamed, guttural vocals and fast, loud guitar riffs. Its lyrics focus on gory, violent, and sometimes misogynist, imagery. Grindcore, like most music genres, has a well rehearsed origins story. The Birmingham band, Napalm Death, is considered the ‘first’ grindcore band. Accounts of Napalm Death’s origins frame its early members as pioneers, creatively deviating from the strictures of thrash and death metal (Mudrian 2004).

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1 For a detailed outline of death metal, as well as its relation to grindcore, refer to Adrian Mudrian’s journalistic account of the genre Choosing Death: An Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore (2004). For an academic account of death metal, see Purcell’s Death Metal Music: The Passion and the Politics of a Subculture (2003).

2 Kahn-Harris provides a discussion of death metal and patriarchy in his book (2007). See, in particular, Chapter 2, ‘The Scene and Transgression’ (27-49), where he discusses Cannibal Corpse’s album The Bleeding (1994) which includes tracks such as ‘She Was Asking For It’ and ‘Fucked With a Knife’. See also Kahn-Harris (2003).
Grindcore adopted death metal’s singing style, some of its aesthetics, and loud volumes, but merged these forms with punk style and politics. Bands play short, fast songs, characterised by punk riffs, extremely fast drumming (dubbed ‘blastbeats’) and screamed vocals. Unlike heavy, and some death, metal, grindcore is not melodic and does not feature guitar solos (cf. Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). Similar to death metal, violence predominates in grindcore lyrics. However, this aggression mainly targets the machinations of late capitalism, and identities that are seen as complicit with this culture. This differs from death metal, where violence is usually directed against women. The key complicit identities targeted in grindcore lyrics are a generalised ‘hippie’ subject, represented as a self-absorbed dilettante who has pretensions to politics but is not radical. Left wing politics still forms a key element of contemporary grindcore music (Agathocles 2009; Agathocles 2010; Axiom 2011; Blood Duster 2007; Brutal Truth 1999; Brutal Truth 2009; Firewitch 2007; Schifosi 2005). There has also been a recent shift towards gorier imagery that is simply violent, rather than violence with a radical message (Cock and Ball Torture 2004; Die Pigeon Die 2008; Fuck ... I’m Dead 2000; Fuck ... I’m Dead 2001; Fuck ... I’m Dead 2006; The County Medical Examiners 2007; The Kill 2003; Undinism 2001; Vaginal Carnage 2002). Such violence is often levelled against women, echoing death metal, and is labelled ‘gore-grindcore’. The key difference between grindcore and death metal approaches to violence, however, is performance. Death metallers offer apparently serious diatribes on

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3 For example, see Brutal Truth’s album _Goodbye Cruel World!_ (1999) which features songs such as ‘Choice of a New Generation’ and ‘Stench of Profit’ which critique capitalist ideologies, and in particular, globalised capital. This is a live album, with these tracks taken from earlier studio albums. See also Napalm Death’s _Scum_ (1987), the cover of which features monstrous men in suits standing on a pile of rubble made of transnational corporate logos, such as McDonalds and Columbia Records.

4 One of the bluntest examples of anti-hippie discourse is evident in a popular tee-shirt distributed by Australian band, Blood Duster proclaiming, ‘HIPPIE KILL TEAM’.
murder and rape (Cannibal Corpse 2009), while grindcore practitioners use violent and gory imagery in an attempt at, admittedly puerile and often sexist, humour (Fuck ... I'm Dead 2006). The ‘joke’, in grindcore, depends on how far one can push the boundaries of good taste. As many of the participants in this thesis describe, pleasure arises from the presumed shock which such transgressions produce in ‘mainstream’ music fans, but also ‘serious’ death metallers.

Since Napalm Death released Scum in 1987, grindcore music has been disseminated globally through official and unofficial channels. Official distribution, whether in material or digital form, is usually significant on first release. However, the unofficial tape-trading networks, earlier developed by the punks who later became grindcore fans, were crucial in developing grindcore fan bases in countries where official distribution was limited or slow. More recently, the internet has become the key site for distribution of grindcore. Napalm Death’s original label, Earache (a part of major label EMI since 2007), now has a sophisticated website where fans can buy Napalm Death’s back catalogue and other grindcore and extreme-metal releases. There are also numerous web-based independent grindcore and extreme-metal labels and distributors which ship worldwide and are often based away from the original grindcore ‘centres’ in the UK and the USA. These sites are usually run for minimal (if any) profit, by grindcore scene-members. Informal trading of cassettes, LPs and CDs still exists; however, this is generally seen as a nostalgic act by completist fans (grindcore.com 1999-2011).

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5 Popular online distributors specialising in grindcore include Grindhead Records (from Australia), Amputated Vein (from Japan), and Reincarnage (from Spain) (Amputated Vein Records 2002-2011; Grindhead Records 2011; Reincarnage Distribution 2011).
Nowadays, then, grindcore is produced, performed, consumed and disseminated at multiple local, national and global sites. It is true that most punk, hip-hop, and popular (pop) music are also produced, consumed and distributed in a similar way. Unlike these other genres, however, the majority of grindcore music, including that produced in Australia and Japan, is not prominent in official, commercial networks of production, distribution and consumption. Grindcore is distinct from its counterpart, death metal, because it has achieved little mainstream or even ‘alternative’ success. Its practitioners generally remain unsigned by major labels. Certainly, none of the bands interviewed for this project were signed to major labels. While grindcore remains largely excluded from commercial databases such as iTunes, websites such as MySpace and lastFM host information and (usually free) downloadable tracks of key grindcore bands.

Grindcore, then, has never experienced the ‘gushing up’ effect of other music-scenes, whose aesthetics have been appropriated and re-signified as pop music (Thornton 1996). Here, I define ‘pop music’ as music included in the Top 40 countdown charts. That is, pop music is music which often, though not necessarily,
is mediated by major labels, and coalesces around the sale, online or otherwise, and commercial airplay of singles. I distinguish it from the broader concept ‘popular music’ as including all music not defined as ‘classical’. Grindcore’s alternative networks demonstrate a form of transnational cultural production and consumption outside of the global commodity market of globalised pop music, or even ‘independent’ or ‘alternative’ music (cf. Straw 1991).

Globalised pop is often proffered as a kind of Esperanto, because it covers ‘universal’ themes, such as love, betrayal and desire. Global pop events, such as ‘Live 8’, claim to break down national borders through the performance of pop music in multiple city spaces. The rhetoric around such events focuses on belonging: belonging to a ‘global village’, but also to a global human collective with the revellers physically proximate and sharing in the event with you (McQuire 2007). These spectacular instances of global music offer a simplistic representation of globalisation as flawed, but ultimately ‘fixable’ via charity, or even simply through the consumption of pop music. Pop songs celebrate the assumed universality of themes such as love and betrayal. These are interspersed with equally breathless celebrations of the amazing synchronous release of tie-in commodities commemorating the event. When events, such as Live 8 as well as Band-, and later Wave-, Aid, do engage with the disparities between rich and poor, they capitulate to a suggestion that such inequalities are an act of God and solveable via philanthropy, rather than the result of late-capitalism’s global machinations.

Grindcore, with its partiality to radical-left politics, offers a different perspective on the global context. Many bands tackle global inequality in their material and
offer anarchist or socialist revolution as the only suitable solution (Brutal Truth 2009; Disrupt 1988; Disrupt 1992; Napalm Death 1987). However, it is worth noting that charitable musical events were not universally sneered at by the participants in this project. The 2009 Australian bush fires prompted fundraising events in the Australian grindcore scene, as did the 2010 floods. In Osaka, Japan, which emerged relatively unscathed following the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, bands and music venues organised fundraisers for victims in the Kanto and Fukushima regions. Despite this identification, membership in the grindcore scene does not preclude other types of, potentially contradictory, belonging to other, more ‘mainstream’, cultural formations. I do not wish to position grindcore as an authentic, or pure, cultural formation, completely opposed to a monolithic global pop music scene.\(^\text{10}\) Despite its exclusion from Top 40 and alternative charts, grindcore music does not exist in a vacuum. Scene-members interviewed expressed an awareness of pop music, and constitute their own identities partly in opposition to more mainstream music scenes. Even if a scene-member refuses the various interpolations by global pop outlined above, it is unlikely that they have not encountered it altogether. Further, grindcore scene-members are distinct from the subculturalists who apparently coalesce around a particular kind of musical culture to the exclusion of everything else discussed by Hebdige (1979) and others (Baulch 2007; Clarke, Hall et al. 1975; Cohen [1972] 1980; Thornton 1996; Willis 1977; Willis 1978; Willis 1993). The participants I interviewed profess multiple sites of musically-based identification, adhering more to Muggleton’s (2000) ‘post-subculturalist’ identity. Grindcore, however, was their main musical focus.

\(^{10}\) For an insightful discussion of the myriad problems of establishing so-called ‘subcultural’ formations in binary opposition to ‘mainstream’, or pop, music, see Huber (2006).
Although grindcore is a global music scene, it is also mediated by local cultural contexts. I do not advocate a return to the myopically local accounts of early subcultural studies. Yet, it remains important to acknowledge the potential limits constituted by particular local spaces. That is why I have chosen to focus on two emerging centres of grindcore production, distribution and consumption: Melbourne, Australia, and Osaka, Japan. Each city’s local context mediates the global flow of grindcore in and out of its geographical borders. The relatively small handful of book-length academic studies of extreme-metal (rather than heavy metal) music (Baulch 2007; Kahn-Harris 2007; Purcell 2003) offer a global perspective of the genre, or a focus on one local scene scene. This thesis shifts focus to two off-centre sites of grindcore music – and explores the global and local tensions which mediate the scene.

Grindcore’s multiple glocalised sites of dissemination and consumption, and its ‘outsider’ status with regards to pop music, make it a fruitful genre for research. Grindcore’s attributes, particularly its apparent misogyny, also make an interesting context for grindcore scene-members’ constitution of belonging. In particular, the experience of doing grindcore (playing, listening, moshing) lends itself to an affective analysis. The next section will look at affective belonging and music scenes, in particular metal and extreme-metal music scenes.

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11 Grindcore bands in Haifa, Israel, sing about local geopolitical issues directly affecting scene-participants (Kahn-Harris 2007), while Gothenburg bands draw on Nordic mythologies in their work (Hagen 2005; Heesch 2010; Spracklen 2010; Taylor 2010). The latter is most likely due to the spectacular and much publicised connection between ‘black’ (satanic) metal and nationalism in Scandinavia. Refer to Moynihan and Söderlind (1998) for a discussion of these events. For Nordic-themed metal, see Entombed’s album *Wolverine Blues* (1993). Some Cultural Studies work on music remains influenced by early subcultural studies that tie cultural formations to demarcated local areas and political-economic contexts. See Shank’s (1994) account of rock in Austin, Texas; and Stahl’s (2004) work on Montreal and the indie rock scene. Even though these authors discount ‘traditional’ subcultural studies, the willingness to ‘place’ their respective scenes owes much to Hebdige’s (1979) work on London punks and even earlier work in Cultural Studies binding youth cultural formations to particular localised sites (Cohen [1972] 1980).
SECTION 2: SCENIC HOMES – AFFECTIVE BELONGING AND BRUTAL BELONGING

Before detailing the relations between metal music and the experience of affective belonging, it is essential to delineate what ‘affect’ and ‘belonging’ mean in this thesis and why it is necessary to expand this concept to account for brutal belonging.

2.1: Affect

Affect is an unwieldy term in academia, and one aim of my thesis is to elaborate and more clearly define it in the context of music cultures. It is necessary to offer a brief definition here, in order to understand affective belonging. Affect draws primarily on work by Deleuze and Guattari (1992), who in turn drew on a variety of theorists, most notably Spinoza’s Ethics (1989 [1677]). Affect describes an embodied intensity, which is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint through representative forms, such as writing. Nevertheless, Lorimer 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 [and] are produced through bodies and transmitted by bodies … [Affect refers to] social fabrics and practices … not locked in to rational or predictable logics, and often are visceral and instinctive (2008, 552).

Deleuze and Guattari’s approach challenged the structural, semiotic, approach that was dominant in humanities work in the 1970s (and even up until the 2000s). Only recently has there been what Clough and Halley (2007) dub an ‘affective turn’ in
humanities disciplines. This ‘turn’ attempts to account for the visceral experiences Lorimer outlines above by foregrounding the experiences and sensations of everyday life which refuse neat, structural, positioning. Affect has informed studies of politics (Massumi 2002; Saldanha 2010); cinema (Deleuze 1986; Sobchak 1991); labour (Gregg 2010; Patton 2000) and, particularly, gender studies (Clough and Halley 2007; Colebrook and Buchanan 2000; Colebrook and Weinstein 2009).

The influence of affect on gender studies is because articulated affect is regularly feminised as ‘emotion’ or ‘feelings’ in Western culture. Despite an awareness of the problematics of coding feeling, and thus affect, as ‘feminine’, a large proportion of affect studies remain in Women’s and Gender Studies departments (Berlant 2000; Clough and Halley 2007). 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” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, xvii). This differs from emotion, which is the outward display of feelings. Massumi also rejects a synonymy between affect and feelings – citing that feelings are a ‘personal’ sensation premised on one’s history (ibid.). His emphasis is on pre-cognitive – or personal – intensities; what he labels ‘affect’. Elaborating on Massumi, I consider ‘feelings’ an articulation of affect. They are informed by history and context in the sense that the shift from affect (something more than representational) to feeling (represented as emotion) is cognitive.

2.2: Belonging

Belonging is also an unwieldy term. It is broad and is regularly manipulated in both the academic and popular cultural spheres. In academia, belonging draws
particularly on three frameworks. The first positions belonging as primarily political-spatial. These studies often centre around the notion that belonging is anchored in a material ‘home’ space (Blunt and Dowling 2006; hooks 2009; Papastergiadias 1998). More specifically, spatialised studies of belonging have focused on how governmental frameworks mediate the ability to feel comfortable, or ‘at home’, in a particular space (Collins, Noble et al. 2000; Hage 1998; hooks 2009; Ley 2004); and the gendered politics of belonging in the Western domestic home (Massey 1994; Pratt 1999; Rose 1993). The second framework looks at belonging as represented space. This builds on the first framework through closer analyses of how signifying structures, such as written immigration policies (Cresswell 1996; Gregory 1993); media representations and constitutions of home-space (Fiske, Hodge et al. 1988; Healy, Ferber et al. 1994; Johnson 1993; Morley 2000) and the nation-space (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009); and taste (Bennett, Emmison et al. 1999; Bourdieu 1992), mediate who belongs to particular macro, and micro, cultural contexts. This framework focuses on how significations interpolate or exclude particular identities.

2.3: Affective Belonging

The final framework for approaching belonging looks at how belonging is an embodied, affective, experience. This approach consciously attempts to move away from a focus on representation. Maffesoli’s (1996) work on neo-tribes, as building belonging through shared “ambiences, feelings and emotions” (11), is foundational.

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12 In particular, these critique, and respond to, Tuan’s (1991) celebration of home as a material space where people seek and find refuge from the often negatively coded ‘world outside’. Tuan’s work is part of the ‘humanistic’ geography movement within cultural geography. Its practitioners were particularly informed by Heidegger’s (1971) ‘dwelling perspective’ and Bachelard’s (1994 [1957]) concept of home, outlined in *The Poetics of Space.*
to such studies. Massumi pushes this idea further in his challenge to the hegemony of representation and explicit engagement with affect and belonging in *Parables for the Virtual* (2002). Massumi argues that belonging is a continual process of becoming (71; 76). This process in neither wholly individual, nor collective. Rather, belonging is a “collective individuation around a catalysing point” (71). That is, the experience of belonging depends on the individual’s shared experience with others in relation to a particular object, event or subject. Massumi goes on to note that “[p]ost-emergence” (77), affective belonging is “captur[ed] and contain[ed]” (77) in representation; it becomes a mappable, static representation.

Massumi and Maffesoli’s work looks at how the subject’s experience of the body alters during the affective moment. In particular, Massumi claims that the experience of becoming in relation to affective belonging effaces one’s bodily borders. This constitutes a potentiality; a potential unity between the subject and object, self and other. Stewart (2007) expands on this potential in her work on ‘ordinary affects’. According to Stewart, affect is brought into being, or becomes,

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13 Though it remains problematic, for a number of reasons, not least of which is his appropriation and essentialisation of the word ‘tribe’, which has obvious colonial connotations (Pambazuka News Editors 2008). Firstly, Maffesoli conflates affect with emotions which muddies the movement between the pre- and post-cognitive experience. Further, Maffesoli – most likely due to his position as a sociologist – appears fixated on a teleological understanding of sociality. Despite his rejection of dialectics, he claims that the emotional community represents a significant shift away from rationalism. While this is arguably true, it maintains a, relatively neat, ‘grand narrative’ of Western society which in fact de-privileges the ‘untidy’, chaotic aspects of sociality. Finally, Maffesoli ultimately submits to the dominance of representation. He focuses particularly on legible signifiers of ‘tribalism’ and their semiotic codings, such as punk hairstyles.

14 Using the metaphor of team sports, Massumi describes how players operate collectively and individually simultaneously. In particular he emphasises how the distinction, between the active or passive subject, and the taken-for-granted social map which mediates them is unstable. That is the, he would argue artificial, separation between subject and object is easily blurred. The individual player’s sense of separate subjectivity from the team, the field and the audience, becomes “disconnected” (75) once play begins. No longer is the body a distinct, border signifier of the subject. Instead, the player becomes “dynamism” (76) and is open to the other bodies and objects on the field. This is not chaotic, but implicitly co-ordinated, and results a sense of belonging to the team (77).
only through the desire to connect with others and the material world (59).

Stewart also enlivens homeliness, through understanding the domestic as a collection of affective experiences.

For Stewart, affective instances are inherently political. The limits of agency make it easy for affect to be constituted or appropriated by dominant culture; such instances mediate who can and cannot belong (93). In particular, the body's represented inscription of a particular race or class may predominate over affective responses and constitutions.

The review above indicates that affective belonging is experienced through the body. Embodied processes generate a feeling of being in place. This is more than simply representing a space as a site of belonging, or home. Cognitive and social psychology research, however, regards embodiment simply as the process through which the body – hands, face etc. – represents human psychology (Barasalou, Niedenthal et al. 2003). Though this perspective acknowledges the body, it privileges the mind, and cognition, as the key site, and process, for human behaviour. This is perhaps due to the prefix 'em' which implies a distance between the body and the subject. The mind and body are not unified. Instead, the body embodies the mind – that is, it represents the mind. A similar gap is produced in studies of how embodied practices work to represent wider cultural norms. For example, Bourdieu's (1992) notion of habitus – the 'naturally' occurring embodied

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15 Stewart writes: “The affective subject is a collection of trajectories and circuits. ... Out there on its own, it seeks out scenes and little worlds to nudge it into being. It wants to be somebody. ... None of this is easy. Straight talk about willpower and positive thinking claims that agency is just a matter of getting on track ... As if everything rests on agency’s shoulders. But there’s always more to it than that” (59).

16 Stewart notes: “The ordinary moves in the articulations of who cares / laizzez-faire attitudes with the apartheidesque hardenings of the lines of race and class” (93). See also Berlant’s (2000) edited collection for a discussion of similar issues.
actions of the subject – positions the body, and its actions, as a representation of a subject’s class. Other studies propound a similarly representational understanding of embodiment. Some feminist, gender and queer cultural studies work, especially, trouble the 'body' category through analysis of cultural mediation (Butler 1990; Connell 2000; Connell 2005; Davis 1997; Gorman-Murray 2006; Gorman-Murray 2007; Haraway 1991; Jensen 2007; Lupton 1996; Orbach 2009). These studies suggest it is necessary to qualify embodiment with an understanding of whose bodies and feelings are privileged to experience belonging in dominant contemporary culture.

2.4: Brutal belonging

Feminist, gender and queer studies’ accounts of embodiment are generally representational. However, some do gesture towards the 'more than', affective, aspects of embodiment. Haraway’s cyborg-body is porous, for example, especially when online. 17 Nevertheless, I propose it is necessary to build further on this ‘more than-ness’ to account particularly for the multiple, if not always ecstatic, cadences which affect generates. I use the label ‘brutal belonging’ to describe this more than representationality.

Brutal belonging is a particularly useful framework for understanding grindcore scenes. It partly refers to grindcore’s generic attributes. Extreme-metal has been

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17 According to Haraway, new technologies become incorporated with the body through interaction. This is more than a ‘network’, such as the understanding of human-technology relations offered by Actor-Network-Theory (Latour 2005). The cyborg body is not bound by the fixed cultural representations of ‘female body’ – it is expanded to unite with technology as one organism. Gorman-Murray (2006) also looks particularly at how embodied practices produce an experience of affective belonging which challenges the hegemony of belonging as primarily representational. He focuses on how gay men ‘Queer’ hetero-normative understandings of home through ‘ unhomely’ (that is extra or non-heteronormative) practices in the home. Queering also occurs, he asserts, through the movement of gay male bodies between the ostensibly private house-home space and homely public spaces such as bars and beats.
the subject of numerous moral panics, regarding its perceived propensity to
instigate ‘brutal’ violence among its listeners and practitioners. "Brutal!" is a
catch-cry at live shows. However, brutal belonging also expands beyond
grindcore. In my thesis, it refers to the myriad everyday manifestations of affect,
which defy an easy positioning as 'positive' or 'negative'. Within grindcore
discourse, 'brutal' is generally positive. It refers to an ecstatic experience in the
mosh pit and an appreciation of a performer’s technique. In lay terms, however,
the term brutal means something quite different. It holds connotations of
unrestrained violence – a challenge to dominant cultural norms of 'good
behaviour'. Brutal, therefore, is also a useful metaphor for affect. Affect refers to an
intense energy. Similar to brutality, affect has the capacity to generate violence on
a symbolic, virtual, and material/physical level. Like brutality, affect is, in its
essence, unrestrained. It is a 'more than'; more than normative understandings of
everyday culture.

To belong brutally, therefore, is to engage with the more than spaces beyond the
normative cultural-political structures of late capitalism. However, brutal
belonging, like affect, is not an 'escape chute' from representation, or late
capitalism. Its embryonic unrestrained-ness is regularly mediated by official
structures. Thus, brutal also refers to those moments where affect's contingency
on dominant cultural structures is violently crystallised. It refers to the violence
contained in the disparity between the affective moment in the mosh pit and the
actuality of everyday work in an unskilled job; and the symbolic, but often physical,
vviolence of excluding those who do not 'belong' in the scene.
Brutal’s connotations of ‘more-than-ness’ also expand to include the porosity of scene-members’ bodies while experiencing grindcore. During a gig, participants regularly yell ‘brutal’ as a means of expressing their sense that their subjectivity has become unstuck. They ‘can’t contain themselves’ in their excitement to see a band or mosh with their friends. In these moments, scene-members feel a collective sense of belonging with other fans at the event. The self, as a bordered, individualised subject, is effaced via the affective intensity of the gig. It is these complexities of brutal belonging that I wish to foreground.

SECTION 3: A GRISLY SCENE? EXTREME-METAL MUSIC AND BELONGING

These accounts of affective, and indeed brutal, belonging form a backdrop for a discussion of how affective belonging intersects with grindcore music cultures in Melbourne and Osaka. In his work on extreme-metal, Kahn-Harris (2007) draws on Straw’s (1991) work to offer ‘scene’ as a means for understanding the globalised cultural formation of extreme-metal.\(^{18}\) As Kahn-Harris points out, ‘scene’ is a term regularly used by extreme-metalheads to describe the integrated networks of production, distribution and consumption that characterise extreme-metal (14). He emphasises that scene is both flexible – it accounts for the multiple sites of extreme-metal culture – but is also bounded, and characterised by who is (and is not) a ‘scene-member’ (21). I agree with Kahn-Harris that a ‘scenic view’ of

music cultures is most fruitful. Certainly, participants in both cities used the term ‘scene’ or shin to describe their local grindcore culture.

There are a number of approaches in cultural studies of music scenes, to how belonging is constituted, experienced and understood. These often focus on how music-based belonging is spatialised. That is, through participation in music cultures, scene-members identify with particular spaces – both material and imaginary. These studies can be divided into three broad categories: 1) music cultures as a symbolic and material place-making project on official (for example, by local governments) and less official (by fans and musicians) levels, where music offers belonging locally and, sometimes, nationally; 2) music as providing a resistant sense of belonging to dominant sites for minority subjects; and 3) music as constituting imagined, and desired, utopian spaces, away from the site of the listening subject. Sara Cohen’s (2007) work on Liverpool, England, is a key example of the first approach. She looks at how music not only represents or mediates spaces, but it also constitutes particular locations following interventions by government and music scene-members. Cohen presents a detailed account of how music was utilised in Liverpool as a part of city branding.19 Other scholars have looked at similarly governmental phenomena and its effect on music scenes elsewhere (Brown, O’Connor et al. 2000; Cohen 2007; Gibson and Homan 2004; Homan 2003; Lobato 2006; McCann 2007; Mommaas 2004; Overell 2007; Roberts 2006; Webb 2005; Zimmerman 2008). The second way that cultural studies researchers look at music and belonging is through the lens of the empowerment

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19 In the mid 1990s, Liverpudlian councillors began work on constructing an image for Liverpool as a “music city” (131). Increased council funding of music related projects was intended to ensure local musicians did not move to London (144), and various music festivals (usually with a Beatles focus) were sponsored. Of course, as Cohen points out, Liverpool is not unique in harnessing music as part of a re-branding strategy. Memphis, Manchester and Seattle follow similar patterns.
of non-dominant subjects. Gilroy (2005 [1987]), for example, looks at how West-Indian migrants’ participation in Caribbean music in London is bound to an identification with a particular, usually Othered (by dominant culture), place, in this case the Caribbean. The, perhaps classic, studies of the empowered belonging through music thesis are found in class-focused subcultural studies (Cohen [1972] 1980; Gelder 2005; Gelder 2007; Hebdige 1979; Willis 1993). More recent research, on scenes particularly, has also looked at music’s potential for allowing racialised minority citizens a sense of belonging in ‘majority’ cities and spaces (Forman 2002; Hernandez and Garafalo 2005; Mitchell 1996; Mitchell 2002; Mitchell 2009; Stahl 2004; Watkins 2005). Lately, the third approach to music cultures and belonging has been understanding music as manifesting belonging to imagined, utopian spaces. Sterling (2010) looks at Japanese reggae fans’ desire for belonging in ‘their’ imagined homeland of Jamaica.20 Daynes (2009) also takes this approach. To a lesser extent, Condry’s (2006) analysis of Japanese hip-hop proffers this approach. The J-rap scene-members, rather than desiring a national geographical place, desire the flexible space of genba – which is applied to any site where scene-members expend energy on J-rap (6).

3.1: Heavy metal and belonging

To understand how belonging operates in extreme-metal cultures, such as grindcore, it is necessary to outline how belonging works in extreme-metal’s parent genre: heavy metal (hereafter, metal). Studies of metal music and belonging follow a similar line to those found in studies of other music genres, although

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20 According to Sterling, some scene-members held such a utopian vision of Jamaica that, when travelling there, they were disappointed it did not accord with their imaginings. Japanese reggae fans also developed a strategy of building ‘elsewhere’ in their present location. By creating a ‘Babylon East’ – that is ‘Jamaican’ spaces in Japan – scene-members could experience belonging both in their physical, and imagined homelands.
heavy metal was mostly neglected in early cultural studies of music, save for a mention in Willis's (1978) study of bikers. In fact, it was denigrated as middle-class music by Hebdige, and opposed to the, presumably working-class, subculture of punk. Academic research specifically on metal is relatively recent, beginning in the 1990s, and generally understands metal as a globalised, multi-classed, scene. Like studies of other music cultures, metal belonging is often considered spatially. These approaches to metal have appropriated from subcultural studies in their analysis of metal as an ‘outsider’ culture due particularly to its popular image as a ‘folk devil’. Within the culture itself, however, academics emphasise the sociality of metal. Scenic belonging is discursively built through proclamations that metalheads do not belong to dominant, or mainstream, culture. Instead, mettlers supposedly find belonging with other ‘misfits’ who share similarly divergent (from the norm) tastes.

The image of metal as an outsider culture is cultivated by metalheads themselves, but is also affirmed and distributed by institutions, such as popular media. The media frames mettlers as outsiders due to the genre’s supposed lack of musicality and social conscience and metalheads’ assumed adherence to non-normative ideologies and practices. This constitutes metal as brutally distinct from dominant culture. Beginning with Black Sabbath’s eponymous album (1970), metal was popularly associated with violent deviance from normative society. In particular, and following the ham satanic antics of Black Sabbath (parodied in the popular

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21 The popular memoir *Hell Bent for Leather* (Hunter 2005) demonstrates this discourse. The blurb touts the book as “a moving story of adolescence ... of living with parental disapproval and of struggling for acceptance ... while you are gripped by an embarrassing obsession” — a fandom of metal. The author begins with an anecdote displaying his awareness that metal fandom is outside mainstream music cultures. He describes telling a friend that his ‘special topic’ for a television quiz show would be “a subject that ... I knew more about than any other. And it wasn’t ... cool. ... I covered my mouth with my hand. ‘[My special topic would be] Heavy metal,’ I said quietly” (x).
metal ‘mockumentary’ *This is Spinal Tap* (Reiner 1984)), metal was aligned with devil worship and the occult (Moynihan and Søderlind 1998). The outrageous heretical rhetoric of early British heavy metal bands, on and offstage, led to a moral panic in the UK, and in the USA (Davison 2010). Dominant media represented heavy mettlers as homologously deviant. They were long-haired, white men, dressed down in jeans and concert tee shirts (in contrast to the glam rock style popular at the time), and most likely engaged in delinquent behaviour. Indeed, like Thornton’s clubbers, the media helped constitute metal as ‘outside’ regular pop music.

Again, though, as with electronic music, heavy metal ‘gushed up’ to chart pop by the late 1970s with Black Sabbath achieving number one in the British charts for *Paranoid* (Black Sabbath 1970). However, the metal fan, though perhaps not ‘underground’, retained the negatively framed image of an outsider who deviated from normative society.

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22 Such as stage shows and album artwork featuring Satan and Satanic imagery (inverted crosses, pentagrams, and so on). Bardine (2009) discusses a number of ‘Satanic’ motifs, particularly in British heavy metal, including the album artwork of Black Sabbath’s *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* (1973) and the significance of Iron Maiden’s impish mascot, ‘Eddie’. Offstage, British metal bands during the 1970s were just as outrageous. Led Zeppelin, Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath were renowned for their drunken, drug-fuelled partying, and Ozzy Osbourne claimed in popular media to be ‘really’ Satanic. Further, Jimmy Page, of Led Zeppelin began to collect books and materials related to arguably Britain’s most famous occultist, Aleister Crowley. He currently retains the largest collection of Crowley material in the world. Crowley is something of a fixation among British metal. Ozzy Osbourne released a song called ‘Mr. Crowley’ on his solo album *Blizzard of Ozz* (1980) and Iron Maiden’s Bruce Dickinson wrote the screenplay, and was included on the soundtrack, for a film about Crowley (Doyle 2008). British heavy metal was not the first genre to borrow from satanic imagery. Blues and even popular rock (such as the Rolling Stones) also used imagery of the devil and the occult as part of their aesthetic. Moore (2009) touches on this in his writing on metal.

23 Hecker (2010) also traces a moral panic surrounding Turkish heavy metal.

24 Wallach (2008 [1992]) suggests that the casual look of metal musicians and their fans articulates metal’s ‘anti image’ – that is, the refusal to be particularly spectacular, at least sartorially. Wallach goes on to suggest that the clothes fit homologically with the “unaffected and down-to-earth” (ibid.) attitudes of metal musicians off-stage.

25 This was done partly through high circulation newspaper and magazine articles regarding the assumed ‘danger’ of the apparent deviance of metal culture (Wallach 2008 [1992]). However, as Brown (2010) points out, metal’s own magazines (such as *Kerrang!, Terrorizer*), also play a key role in disseminating metal’s difference from “legitimate rock culture” (109).

26 Although, as Earl (2009) points out, the supposed relationship of opposition between heavy metal and ‘mainstream’ music “has never been stable” (33), with bands such as Led Zeppelin experiencing the dual label of ‘heavy metal’ and ‘rock’ music as early as the 1970s.
British cultural studies, too, shared this image of metal. Less obviously politically radical than punk, and wrongly assumed to be predominantly petit-bourgeois. Hebdige dismissed metal fans as “idiot[s]” (1979, 155). Spatially, in British cultural studies, metalheads occupied the maligned reactionary sites of organised sports (Hebdige) and, worse, high street record shops. Andy R. Brown (2010) critiques such negative understandings of metal, claiming that metal was “negatively constituted” (112) as rock music’s inferior Other by academia, from the 1970s. Further, the elitist discourse of ‘rockism’ (110), found in music journalism, valorised the supposed authenticity of rock music (seen as having musical proficiency as well as a discernible social ‘message’) and regularly positioned metal, and its fans as, to quote one rock journalist, “a malformed idiot thing” (Murray op cit, 111).

In North America, heavy metal produced a similar discourse. Thrash bands, such as Slayer, sang about taboo topics such as the Holocaust and, like their British counterparts, appropriated from occultist and satanic imagery (Slayer 1986). Following the ascent of the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC) in the 1980s, which vilified heavy metal along with other music genres, and a series of crimes

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27 As Dee (2009) and others (Moore 2009; Nilsson 2009; Taylor 2009) have noted, from its origins in the working-class city of Birmingham (Black Sabbath’s home town), heavy metal has been produced and consumed by working-class people. Of course, it was also produced and consumed by middle-class people, but there is a convincing argument, articulated best by Moore (2009) and Berger (1999), that metal is symptomatic and reflective of working-class conditions, particularly of deindustrialisation. For a more sensational account, see Gaines (1990), who also accounts for middle-class consumers.

28 Eight songs of the PMRC’s ‘Filthy Fifteen’ list could be classified as heavy metal. These include songs classified as offensive, due to occult, sexual and violent imagery, by Judas Priest, Motley Crue, AC/DC, Twisted Sister, W.A.S.P., Def Leppard, Mercyful Fate, Black Sabbath and Venom. For extended discussion of the PMRC’s cultural and political impact, see Grossberg (1992)
allegedly linked to heavy metal music, metal and its fans became shorthand for juvenile criminality.

The outsider status of metalheads was spatialised in two contradictory ways. The first relegated metal to the ‘no go’ (indeed ‘Skid Row’) working-class areas of major cities. This is most clearly depicted in Spheeris’s documentary, *Decline of Western Civilisation II: The Metal Years* (1988). *Decline* offers a snapshot of heavy metal culture in late 1980s Los Angeles. Most of Spheeris’s footage is drawn from venues and the area surrounding the Sunset Strip. Sunset was home to numerous strip clubs and working-class bars during the 1980s. These material elements, along with street prostitution and open-air drug dealing meant Sunset gained a reputation as seedy. In 1980s metal culture, this was celebrated by metalheads (Lee, Strauss et al. 2002). However, as Spheeris’s film shows, bastions of dominant culture saw the genre’s association with such a taboo site as proof of metal’s deviance. Following earlier media representations of metalheads, the fans and musicians in *Decline* are generally white, working-class, males who apparently engage in over-the-top socially deviant behaviour such as excessive drinking, drug use and promiscuous sex. The now standard long hair predominates and the fans remain casually dressed, though some of the more popular musicians have adopted a more ‘glam’ persona. Nevertheless, Spheeris’s documentary frames metal as a cohesive, predominantly masculine, working-class, culture, in which

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29 Most notably, serial killer Richard Ramirez claimed that AC/DC had inspired his crimes (Carlo 2006). See Wallach (2008 [1992]) for an early discussion of metal’s reputation as “a social problem” (3). He quotes a headline from *Esquire* magazine: “Five Out of Five Kids Who Kill Love Slayer” (op cit, 12).

30 The ‘metal women’ represented in the film are largely passive (the lead singer of W.A.S.P.’s mother watching helplessly as her son gets drunk in his swimming pool; exotic dancers who entertain fans at a Sunset Strip venue between sets; lingerie-clad [and silent) women sharing a bed with Paul Stanley of KISS). This was potentially deliberate on Spheeris’s part as some scenes include such over the top sexism, it seems almost parodic, if not critical, of the Los Angeles scene and the wider heavy metal culture.
fans distinguish themselves from wider society through their behaviour and clothing. The film includes interviews with metalheads and musicians, but also with moral gatekeepers, such as a probation officer.\textsuperscript{31} The latter, representing dominant social institutions, equates heavy metal with a Satanic cult that requires “demetalling” in order to make its fans compliant citizens. The fans and musicians, in Spheeris’ film, also consider themselves ‘extreme’ and distinct from those who produce and consume popular music.\textsuperscript{32}

The second way metal was spatialised in 1980s North American media was with the concomitant panic surrounding Satanic ritual abuse (SRA). The association between metal and SRA had its origins in the, PMRC approved, assumption that metal music was an example of ‘back masking’ Satanic messages. In these formulations, metal was positioned as within middle-class suburban space; occupying an unseen and sinister underground. In more extreme, often Christian fundamentalist, accounts, metal is situated literally underground: in the mysterious red basements located throughout American suburbia, where it formed a part of satanic rituals (Rashcke 1990).\textsuperscript{33}

By the 1990s, particularly in North America, metalheads had acquired an image in popular culture as nihilistic and anti-social. Post-PMRC, the conflation of SRA with metal abated. However, metal remained situated in the American suburbs in the popular imagination. MTV’s \textit{Beavis and Butt-head} (Judge 1993) is perhaps the best

\textsuperscript{31} Interestingly, the probation officer is a woman and one of the only females in the film who speaks for an extended period.

\textsuperscript{32} This perhaps echoes Morbid Angel’s slogan ‘Extreme Music for Extreme People’. See Chaker (2010) for a brief discussion of how ‘extremity’ works as a point of identity for metalheads.

example of the 1990s image of metalheads as vapid, alienated outsiders constituted by, and constituting, sterile lower middle-class suburbia. A similar sentiment was reflected in academic analyses of heavy metal culture, which began to be published in the 1990s. North American researchers Arnett (1996) and Gaines (1990) suggested that heavy metal fandom was symptomatic of young people’s anomie under capitalism. Gaines, in particular, locates metalheads firmly in the suburbs. Weinstein (2000 [1991]) and Walser (1993), however, found a thriving, cross-classed, sociality in the North American scene, but, they both categorised this sociality as masculinist and, sometimes, even misogynist. Nevertheless, these academic approaches all affirmed the difference, indeed ‘outsideness’, of heavy metal from popular music cultures. This outsideness, however, was not completely discrete from the dominant. Rather, metal existed right in the heart of hegemonic culture – in the suburbs – as a deviant, even resistant, anomaly.

In contemporary popular culture, heavy metal continues to hold an ‘outsider’ image, despite the incorporation of thrash and speed metal into the popular rock genres of nu-metal and, more recently, emo-core. Nu-metal combines metal with hip-hop styles and sometimes includes rap sections in songs. Its lyrics generally focus on what Kahn-Harris dubs the “dysfunction of the singer” (2007, 135). Lately, nu-metal has been re-styled as ‘emo-core’. This popular genre draws on metal, as well as the hardcore punk genre of emo, and often includes ‘clean’ (non-growled, or screamed) vocals, down-tempo bridges and verses that contrast with heavier choruses. As with nu-metal, emo-core’s lyrical themes focus on emotional

34 Other examples include the character of Otto from *The Simpsons* (Groening 1989-) and, the main characters in *Wayne’s World* (Spheeris 1992) as well as *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure* (Herek 1989).
dysfunction: male loneliness, heartbreak and alienation. Despite the relative chart-based popularity of these metal genres, they remain dependent on the cultivation of an image of metal as an outsider culture. Again, suburbia (and even the teenage male’s bedroom) is fetishised as the site of metal consumption, production and the constitution of outsider emotions. Bands such as Panic! At The Disco emphasise their own experience as adolescents in suburbia in their press-releases and lyrics (Kalil 2005). Nu metal and emo videos also regularly represent ‘ordinary’ teenagers in the suburbs, experiencing a sense of isolation.

With the increasing speed and ease with which media products are distributed, heavy metal (inclusive of emo-core and nu-metal) forms a distinct ‘taste formation’ and commodity culture. Major labels interpolate heavy metal consumers as different, indeed outside, from ‘ordinary’ consumers. This is despite the, seemingly thorough, incorporation of heavy metal into commodity culture in the form of purchasable music downloads and videos; merchandise and spectacular tours and festivals by popular metal bands. Apart from music releases, there are many other products for metalheads to consume in order to constitute and display their heavy metal taste. For example, the television programme Metalocalypse (Small and Blacha 2006 - ) offers a humorous take on metal stereotypes and is popular with many metalheads. The show even pokes fun at the notion that metalheads are

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35 Most recently, Ozzy Osborne has organised ‘Ozzfest’, a musical festival in various American cities showcasing local, up and coming metal bands as well as (occasionally) a reformed Black Sabbath (Divine Recordings 2012). Metal’s incorporation is perhaps most blatant in Metallica’s stance against peer-to-peer file sharing. The band’s championing of major label control of the production and distribution of their music demonstrates how metal has become increasingly part of mainstream music. Though some fans disagreed with Metallica’s position, the band continues to be successful. Their current success, however, partly derives from ‘diversifying their product’; they focus more on tours and featured in a successful ‘rockumentary’, Some Kind of Monster (Berlinger and Sinfofsky 2004).
angry, alienated suburbanites. The recent foregrounding of emotional issues in nu metal and emo-core is reflected in the ‘real’ dysfunction of Ozzy Osbourne and his family in MTV’s successful reality programme *The Osbournes* (Taylor 2002-2005). Further, advertisers regularly use metal music to sell particular commodities, even practices, as outside of ‘mainstream’ culture.

Beyond the loosely formed and multi-platform heavy metal market, popular culture continues to position metal and metalheads outside of ‘normative’ society. Recent examples include the inclusion of vampiric metallers as a Satanic cult in the popular drama serial *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (Campanella 2010). Heavy metal also remains in the Western news as a ‘folk devil’ blamed for suicides (Nine Network 2007); murder (Bagnall 2005; Robertson 2011; Rohter 1990; Steel nd); rape (Janssen 2011), and even terrorism (Khatchadourian 2007). Again, metal is characterised as the ‘outside’ within the normative; as underneath mainstream, suburban, culture. These popular images, of course, further cement the heavy metal marketeers’ image of metallers as outsiders.

Two, relatively successful, documentaries about heavy metal and its fans were also made during the 2000s: *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (Wise, Dunn et al. 2005) and *Global Metal* (Dunn and McFayden 2008) and continued to purport the notion that metallers were outside hegemonic culture. These films, however, did not depict metalheads negatively. Rather, metallers were represented similarly to those in Weinstein and Walser’s respective books. Metalheads are framed as part of a distinctive social group, enthusiastic about their preferred musical genre. The musicians and fans interviewed repeatedly articulate their dislike of, and apparent

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36 For example, in one episode one of the characters has a birthday party, throughout which he is miserable (Schnepp 2006)
distance from, popular music and dominant culture. In *Global Metal*, Dunn and McFayden also depict metalheads as finding belonging outside dominant culture, not only in North America, but in Japan, India and other non-Western cultures.

In these documentaries, metal moves from being exemplary of Western suburban anomie, to sites of utopian, global, togetherness. Wise, Dunn et al. focus particularly on the camaraderie experienced at music festivals. In *Global Metal*, this utopian outlook is emphasised in the focus on Japanese stadium spaces hosting mega concerts by KISS and Metallica. **However, *Global Metal* also represents** metal space as an imagined utopian space, desired by metal fans who find it difficult to be metalheads, due to their location. Dunn and McFayden's sections on Iran and Indonesia look at how metal belonging is located in an imagined understanding of the United States as a site where metal might be freely consumed.

### 3.2: Extreme-metal and belonging

Apart from the academic work of the 1990s on heavy metal (Arnett 1996; Gaines 1990; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000 [1991]), there is also a growing body of recent academic literature on metal and its various sub-genres (Avelar 2003; Bardine 2009; Bayer 2009; Bogue 2004; Brown 2003; Brown 2010; Dee 2009; Earl 2009; Floeckher 2010; Heesch 2010; Moore 2009; Nilsson 2009; Spracklen 2010; Taylor 2010; Weinstein 2009). **However, for the sake of space, in this section I will focus particularly on academic work referring to belonging in extreme-metal genres, such as death, thrash, black and grindcore metal, rather than metal generally.**

Studies of belonging in extreme-metal are few, and take various approaches, based predominantly on analyses of representation. These include: belonging as
constitutive of an outsider status through the acquisition and display of ‘extreme’ subcultural capital; and extreme-metal as an expression of (g)localised belonging. Both these approaches have foundations in the notion that metal is an ‘outsider’ (sub)culture. One final, unusual, and potentially fruitful approach to extreme-metal is Berger’s (1999) phenomenological understanding of how death metal might generate a sense of belonging. Like the broader music and metal cultural studies above, these approaches also spatialise metal belonging.

Extreme-metal studies build on the notion that metal is a music scene outside popular music where belonging is cultivated through various brutal expressions of extreme transgression. Some articles have suggested that there is radical, resistant, potential in metal’s outsider status (Bogue 2004; Dee 2009; Floeckher 2010; Moore 2009; Nilsson 2009; Sarelin 2010; Spracklen 2010). Dee’s (2009) work on grindcore in Britain is illustrative of contemporary framings of extreme-metal as presenting an alternative space of belonging that is resistant to dominant culture. In the “dark, discordant” (ibid.) spaces of grindcore production and consumption, according to Dee, lies a democratic and radical space beyond capitalism. He suggests that grindcore practitioners and listeners occupy a potentially conscious and critical position due to their awareness of the abject reality of capitalism. This is evident, according to Dee, in the overtly radically left songs of Brutal Truth and Napalm Death and the (perhaps brutal) realism of gore grindcore aesthetics.37 Sarelin (2010) also positions extreme-metal as radically different to normative

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37 Through an application of Kristeva’s (1982) notion of abjection, Dee claims that British grindcore’s expressions of the abject – for example – Carcass’s use of autopsy photographs for the cover of *Reek of Putrefaction* (1988), transgresses the assumption that we are bounded, passive individuals and ‘jolts’ listeners into a heightened awareness of the machinations of dominant culture (63-64). See also Davisson (2010) for a highly readable account of the history of extreme-metal’s association with extreme (right and left) politics.
culture. He focuses on how two Finnish black metal bands challenge the predominantly masculinist and heteronormative discourses of extreme-metal. In these accounts, extreme-metal works as a resistant ‘outsider’ to dominant culture, due to the radicality of its aesthetic and content. Baulch (2007) suggests Balinese death metal could be read as a form of resistance to Suharto’s promotion of Javanese-Indonesian culture in the early 1990s (150). For Balinese metalheads, participation in the scene was rebellious due to metal’s difference from Indonesian pop and the reggae music popular with Western tourists on the island. The scene’s illicit activities and promotion of apparently anti-nationalist cultures (that is, Balinese and Western culture) during the Suharto regime further enhanced its image as radical. Matsue (2009) also notes that Japanese metallers constituted themselves as ‘outside’ of dominant culture. They perceived themselves as *angura* (a Japanese interpretation of ‘underground’) relative to the Japanese culture of company work and the popular music culture of J-pop.

Matsue and Baulch’s work, particularly, spatialises extreme-metal. To belong in the scene, Matsue writes, depends on a savviness with *angura* spaces: the live houses where the music is performed. In Suharto’s ‘New Order’ Indonesia, in Baulch’s account, metal spaces became highly regulated due to their designation as too Western and even dangerous. Suharto’s government required gig organisers to obtain a permit for performance. With metal’s negative image, it was difficult for many Balinese scene-members to perform live, legally. Thus, *ad hoc*, often private,

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38 See also Wallach (2005), who discusses how Indonesian extreme-metal, rather than the usually considered more radical punk, was more involved in the movement against Suharto. Wallach also discusses these ideas in his address to the American Anthropology Association (2002), and elaborates on extreme-metal in South East Asia in his chapter for *The Metal Void* (Wallach 2010).

39 This was particularly following the so-called ‘Metallica riots’ in 1993. The events surrounding the ‘riots’ sparked a moral panic about metal music (and Western music generally) in the Indonesian media. Baulch discusses this in her chapter ‘Metal Blossoms’ (145-176). *Global Metal* (Dunn and McFayden 2008) also looks at the ‘Metallica riots’.
spaces were required for gigs and rehearsals. These spaces became public sites for the expression of Balinese death metal identity during the performances, which often drew huge crowds (156).

Kahn-Harris also posits extreme-metal as an outsider culture. However, he does not frame metal as particularly resistant or radical. He emphasises the role “transgressive subcultural capital” (127) plays in establishing authenticity, and finding belonging, particularly for black metal fans.⁴⁰ Transgressive subcultural capital refers to the subcultural capital gained via acts which transgress dominant culture norms. These acts range from the mundane – setting up a DIY (Do it yourself) label,⁴¹ rather than working a regular job (125) – to the more extreme.⁴² In its most extreme form, transgressive subcultural capital in extreme-metal manifested itself in the ‘true Norwegian black metal’ crimes of murder and church burning during the 1990s (128). These events and practices maintain the scenic discourse of metal as an ‘outsider’, deviant, culture.

Kahn-Harris also looks at how scene-members constitute belonging to particular spaces, through transgressive actions. He traces the link between politicised spatial (local and national) and scenic discourses. Extreme-metal’s reputation as transgressive of dominant norms is sometimes enacted through the articulation of nationalist discourses. Here, belonging to a particular national space is as, if not more, important than belonging to the global extreme-metal scene. The obvious example here is Norwegian black metal, of whose fascism the media and popular

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⁴⁰ See also Bogue’s (2004) chapter on violence and extreme-metal, where he writes, “clearly, much of the impetus behind [extreme-metal] lyrics is to shock and offend” (108).
⁴¹ DIY in this context refers to the ‘DIY punk’ movement, who were concerned with musical autonomy and often involved in anarchist politics.
⁴² See also Kahn-Harris’s (2004) chapter in After Subculture which focuses particularly on mundanity in the extreme-metal scene.
non-fiction has well documented (Hunter 2005; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998; Mudrian 2004). Kahn-Harris, however, delineates a story other than that of Varg Vikernes, Euronymous and Dead. Instead, he describes Darkthrone’s pejorative use of the word ‘Jew’ in their liner notes for Transylvanian Hunger (Darkthrone 1994) as an example of the Norwegian scene’s often explicit Nazism (152-3).43 In the same liner notes, Darkthrone assert their members’ identity as “Norsk Arisk Black Metal” (“Norwegian Aryan Black Metal”) (Darkthrone 1994). Their allegiance to Nazi ideology is bound to a simultaneous assertion that their identity is “True Norwegian” (ibid.). Apart from the blunt declaration that they are “Norwegian Aryan[s]”, written in large gothic letters on the back of the compact disc, is the heading: “True Norwegian Black Metal” (ibid.). These direct assertions of Norwegian-ness are complemented by Norwegian lyrics and the CD’s incorporation of Norse mythology into their lyrical themes. In Darkthrone’s case, their strident claim to belong to a “true”, “Aryan” (ibid.), Norwegian identity sits in opposition to a Jewish identity. The liner notes mention that the band would disregard any criticism of the album, as naysayers were “obvious[ly] Jewish” (ibid.). As Kahn-Harris points out, this blunt transgression of taboos regarding Nazism gains Darkthrone a hefty amount of transgressive subcultural capital. I would also suggest that the discourse surrounding this transgression – the emphasis on “true” Norwegian black metal excluding Jews, and being solely the domain of “Norwegian Aryans” firmly embeds the band belonging, not only within

43 Kahn-Harris also discusses anti-Semitism experienced by Israeli scene-members (77); the most shocking example of which was a letter bomb, allegedly sent by Varg Vikernes (ibid.). Kahn-Harris, himself Jewish, also witnessed anti-Semitism in the British scene during his fieldwork (25).
the black metal scene which, in Scandinavia particularly, favours fascist ideology, but also to the Norwegian nation.44

Spracklen’s (2010) study of online black metal message-boards in the United Kingdom also demonstrates the importance of transgressive subcultural capital. He notes that both fans and non-fans, particularly the media, framed the genre as “something beyond the bounds of normal, respectable society” (83) because of its association with Satanism and fascism.45 One forum poster defined black metal as: “a musical and ideological [sic] form seperating [sic] myself from the flock of sheep that is modern life” (84). The assumed difference between “modern life” and black metal makes it, for some fans, the “most metal” (86), and therefore most authentic, of all metal genres because of its transgression of social taboos.

Extreme-metal studies have also applied Thornton’s (1996) Bourdieusian concept of subcultural capital more broadly. In extreme-metal scenes, belonging often hinges on the articulation of cultural knowledge associated with the scene as well as in the embodied habitus of ‘knowing’ how to behave in scenic situations (Baulch 2007; Kahn-Harris 2007; Spracklen 2010).46 Habitus is, of course, mediated by cultural contexts. For example, in Bali’s death metal scene, subcultural capital depended partly on one’s competence in Western metal knowledge and prowess.

44 Spracklen (2010) also looks at the explicit Nazi ideologies found in some black metal bands. In particular, he notes that some fans use black metal’s discourse of misanthropy and apparent celebration of death as a justification of some groups’ denial or celebration of the Holocaust (90). See also Taylor (2010) for a discussion of how the fascist politics of ‘True Norwegian Black Metal’ can only be understood within the context of mainstream Norway’s latent racism. While the right-wing nationalism of some metal bands is troubling, Kahn-Harris (2007) is quick to point out that non-racist, localised, metal potentially challenges a “homogeneous and monolithic globalised music future” (101) of dislocated popular music.

45 Spracklen writes about an online poll on a British black metal forum where 11% of respondents (n=51) rationalised the Nazi ideologies of some bands as adhering to black metal’s generic requirement “to be bad” and “provocative” (87).

46 Wallach (2008 [1992]) writes that metalheads cultivate a “secret knowledge” (9) of metal which allows them to feel distinct from “the larger population” (ibid.). He writes: “Sharing this esoteric knowledge with fellow cognoscenti forges powerful social bonds between [scene] members” (ibid.).
According to Matsue, this was also important in the Japanese metal scene, and manifested in the appropriation of Western metal aesthetics and the English language (128-9). Some local practices remain important for displaying subcultural capital, however, such as the sharing of local alcohol, arak, in Bali (54) and the regard of social hierarchies in Tokyo. Matsue suggests, however, that, unlike in other public spaces in Japan, one’s profession (outside the scene) is less important in scenic spaces, such as venues.\(^47\) As Kahn-Harris points out, in the Scandinavian metal scene, a fondness for Viking imagery and occasional use of local dialects is important and works as a tribute to, and articulation of, national and regional Scandinavian culture, as well as scenic subcultural capital (106).\(^48\) Spracklen also notes the crucial role of a familiarity with scenic history, discourse and behaviour for black metal belonging.\(^49\) Across metal scenes, a willingness to ‘put metal first’ is particularly significant.

Sometimes the production and circulation of subcultural capital manifests as ‘elitism’. Spracklen notes that many of the black metal forum users construct their identity as an intelligent ‘elite’, through the vilification of British working-class “chav” (83) culture. Baulch’s study found that Balinese death metalheads regarded themselves as more authentic, and superior, to “trendies” (popular music fans, There were, of course, exceptions to this positive understanding of Tokyo’s extreme music scene. Matsue herself experienced some sense of not belonging, due partly to her visible identity as “A Foreign Woman in the Field” (13). Once she became involved with performing with one of the bands, however, Matsue garnered enough subcultural capital to be more included in the scene (18). Further, she describes an incident where some scene-members were upset by another scene-member’s use of illicit drugs (30). Matsue’s work does not explicitly engage with belonging, rather she offers a rich cultural analysis of the whole scene; however, her focus on the importance of ‘fitting in’ in order to feel comfortable in scenic spaces, as well as the significance of Western metal’s influence on the Tokyo scene, is valuable.

\(^47\) See also Heesch (2010) for an examination of the old Norse language and myths and the role they play in Scandinavian metal music. Also refer to Ayik (2010) for a discussion of how the Turkish band, Pentagram, expresses ‘Turkishness’ via the use of traditional Turkish instruments and musical style.

\(^49\) Baulch and Kahn-Harris’s book-length studies also find that a knowledge of local, and often global, extreme-metal is significant for the accrual of subcultural capital.
Matsue found a similar elitism towards pop music fans in the Tokyo hardcore scene. One 'live' Matsue discusses was even named ‘Opposition to Pops’ (sic) (1-4). To belong to the *angura* scene, members had to rehearse the discourse of their distinction from pop music.

The second approach to extreme-metal belonging is more explicitly spatial. Recently, researchers have studied non-Western manifestations of the scene as examples of 'glocal' belonging. Baulch (2007), in particular, focuses on how extreme-metal relates to, and helps constitute, glocal belonging to place in her study. She describes how Balinese death metallers developed a localised identity, sometimes informed by local Hindu cultures (161), but also influenced by Western metal (50).

Baulch locates the Balinese scene at particular sites used for the production, distribution and consumption of metal music. She emphasises the highly localised nature of these spaces – cafes, informal recording studios and scene-members’ homes – as examples of multiple, micro “home territories” (146). Baulch argues that through scenic practice in such spaces, they qualify as ‘metal’ spaces where Balinese metalheads felt at home. Practices in such territories included playing, selling and listening to metal music, which constituted scene-members’ sense of belonging to the space.

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50 Later in her book, Matsue asserts that, for *angura* scene-members, “[t]he most significant issue in defining the aesthetic at play here arguably is that it was NOT J-pop” (her emphasis) (39).

51 A space’s home status was also drawn, literally, through graffiti-ed inscriptions of metal bands on bedroom walls (160). In scene-member Ari’s bedroom “[n]ot a wordless space remained” (ibid.) on the walls. Ari had covered them in metal band names and slogans. Further, he had encouraged family members – other metalheads – to do the same. This practice of inscription helped build Ari’s bedroom as a metal ‘home territory’.

52 See also Kahn-Harris (2010, 97), where he discusses Israeli and Jewish metal, with some bands explicitly drawing on “Jewish texts, legends and symbolism” (97) to foreground their Israeli identity.
Like Baulch, Matsue looks at smaller sites, such as venues, for the articulation of belonging to the scene. She cautiously claims that scenic spaces were generally non-hierarchical sites where members could feel at home with people they might not usually encounter. In particular, Matsue suggests that raibuhausu (venues) provided a space where women were able to ‘play’ with gender, by performing “attitudes typically reserved as masculine” (107), which enabled them to feel “welcom[e]” (ibid.) in the space. Class, too, was also apparently transcended in live houses. Matsue asserts that there “was no single unifying class system at play” (106) in most venues and that the unemployed mingled easily with the (rare) salaryman scene-members, due to a shared interest in underground music.

While Balinese and Japanese scene-members carved out localised sites for metal belonging, they were also, like the Japanese reggae fans described by Sterling, “gestur[ing] elsewhere” (Baulch, 49) – to the West. This manifested in lyrics and fan material written in English, as well as the adoption of Western metal aesthetics. Belonging, for Balinese metallers, and Tokyo hardcore scene-members, was translocal. They felt part of the local scene as well as the wider global, particularly Western, metal scene. In fact, in order to belong locally, scene-members necessarily displayed proficiency in Western metal cultures. Baulch notes the lyrical similarities between Balinese and Western death metal bands (62-3). Matsue finds a similar correlation between Tokyo and Western lyrics. That is, imagery of gore and violence, standard in Western scenes, are common to the

53 Apart from deliberately etnik (ethnic) bands, which foregrounded their Balinese identity by using local dialects in band material (although not always lyrics) (161-2). Etnik bands also sometimes incorporated local cultural practices into their live performances, most notably the ritual sacrifice of chickens (161).
Tokyo and Balinese scenes. Baulch also acknowledges that the circulation of scenic knowledge, as well as spatial, contexts mediated belonging in Bali’s death metal scene. Both these modes of belonging operated on a local and global level, often simultaneously.

Berger’s (1999) study of death metal in Akron, Ohio, departs from understandings of metal belonging as either based primarily on subcultural capital, or a glocalised sense of place. Instead, he focuses on how belonging might work via small group sociality. Following Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological work, Berger offers metal as an “interworld” (21). That is, he suggests metal cultures derive from the metal subject’s personal experiences, but also through their interaction with other subjects (ibid.). For Berger, metal is not simply a static object, but an ongoing experience mediated by one’s subjective “perception, memory, imagination” (ibid.) and interaction with others. Berger focuses on metal as an immediate experience – rather than a cognitised aesthetic object. He suggests that metal blurs the socially constructed boundary between self/subject and thing/object (19). Metal, Berger says, “constitute[s] a pulse” (9) of its own.

Berger particularly discusses these ideas in relation to live performances of death metal. During a gig, he suggests, band members “feed off” (168) each other’s energy and produce an experience that moves between an embodied individual (as in listening for the drummer’s rhythmic cues) and collective, though still embodied, (spontaneously improvising together) experience (159). Berger also argues that the improvisatory impulse may be initially subjective; however, the

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54 This differs from the most popular (with the island’s many tourists at least) genre of music in Bali: reggae. Baulch claims that Balinese reggae bands actively constructed a potentially Orientalist aesthetic of Bali as desirably “peaceful and relaxing” while also being a subordinated “third world holiday destination” (77).
process of making an improvisation work with the rest of the band depends on a reflection on the improvisation as an object. This process is often instantaneous and constitutes what Berger dubs a “feedback loop” (ibid.) between an affective, subjective, response and a cognitised objectification of one’s actions, which in turn prompts another subjective response, and so on.

Berger does not explicitly apply his phenomenological ideas to belonging, save to note that the subjective/objective feedback loop depends on a kind of broad sociality. That is, it depends on literally ‘riffing off’ other band-members and, sometimes, the audience (164). Instead, Berger alludes to belonging in the Ohio death metal scene through the lens of community, based on informants’ representations of comfort within the scene. Berger’s main informant, Dann, expressed the standard metal discourse that he was an ‘outsider’ and that belonging in the scene meant building friendships with other ‘outsiders’. Dann’s self-identifying as outside normative culture helps him build a narrative that he was ‘naturally’ drawn to metal because he was “[a]n outsider in high school” (262).

In the death metal scene, Dann found a social network, with other ‘outsiders’ that he could not establish at school.

Part of Dann’s sense of belonging to the scene depends on a verbalised articulation of his outsider identity. He has a taste for relatively obscure local, and overseas, bands and claims, by doing shift work in a factory, he has rejected the ‘9 to 5’ type of life modelled for him by his middle-class parents. Dann frames his outsider identity as non-conformist, a “robust individualist” (264) whose sense of

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55 Berger writes: “Early on, Dann explained to me that he didn’t want the standard-issue life that so many Americans live: go to school, get married, have 2.3 children; work at a pointless job, come home, eat dinner, go to bed, get up, and do it again” (266).
homeliness depended on spending time with other like-minded, metalhead, “critical thinker[s]” (ibid.), rather than the “slug[s]” (266) he sees as conforming to dominant culture. He notes the pleasure of recognition and “instant connection” (274) when he sees another person wearing a death metal tee-shirt on the street.

Importantly, Dann’s sense of belonging is not principally bound to particular sites. Instead, his interviews reveal a certain rootlessness and sense of belonging wherever he can communicate with other death metalheads. He emphasised to Berger his love of road trips and enjoyment of travelling interstate to large metal events like the Milwaukee Death Fest. Further, Dann was a prolific letter writer and tape trader who experienced a sense of “intimacy” (274) with metal pen-friends in countries all over the world. Instead of belonging being bound to local spaces, as it is particularly in Baulch’s account, belonging to the death metal scene in Ohio depends more on commonality; a shared like, and knowledge, of the genre.

3.3: Reflections on extreme-metal and belonging

The relatively few academic works written on extreme-metal enrich understandings of how belonging operates in the scene. However, these texts privilege representation as the primary mode for the expression of belonging. There is a rigorous focus on metal lyrics; the ‘language’ of subcultural capital; and even tablature, rather than accounts of the affective, embodied experience of being in the scene. Obviously, the works above had different agendas to the present project. However, I feel that, by overlooking the significance of affect, particularly

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56 Dann’s individualist ideology, of course, could also be seen as conforming to the American mythology of the ‘self made man’.
its importance with regards to the constitution of belonging, erases an important element of the extreme-metal scene.

Listening to and playing extreme-metal is an intensely embodied experience. That is, it is an affective experience. I recall dragging one non-metalhead friend to a grindcore gig in Melbourne early in my research. She left after only one or two songs. Extreme-metal, especially during a live performance, is deafeningly loud. However, this is not why my friend left early. Instead, she told me later, it was because the music “invaded” (field notes) her body. My friend described how the unavoidable sensation of the music pulsing through her body made her nauseous.

Certainly, anyone who has attended an extreme-metal gig would concur that you do indeed feel the blastbeats, riffs and screams in your body. Scene-members, of course, enjoy this experience. My friend, however, was a fan of lo-fi and acoustic indie music and found the bodily breach of the barrier between the music and herself disorienting. She claimed she could not understand how anyone could “connect” (ibid.) with grindcore because the visceral experience was so distracting. For her, connection with music was on a cognitive level. She enjoyed listening to the lyrics of indie songs and experienced connection through a thoughtful process of identification with the lyrical themes.\(^{57}\) In this case, there was a clear distinction between herself, as a listening subject, and the music – as an object, which potentially reflects one’s subjective experience. I would argue that what disturbed my friend was grindcore’s ability to command (through its unavoidable loudness) connection by breaking down the distinction between subject and object as the affective experience of the music pulsing through the audience member’s body.

\(^{57}\) A literal example of my friend’s identification with indie lyrics is her email address, which is a quotation from a song by indie musician PJ Harvey.
transforms them into transmitters of the music to which they are listening. This experience also, I would argue, enables a sense of belonging, for metalheads, in the scene.

Extreme-metal also generates an affective experience in other ways. The scholarship above rightly notes the physical intensity of the mosh pit as an element of extreme-metal culture. Surprisingly, however, such a crucial part of scenic practice is strangely minimised. Kahn-Harris positions moshing as primarily an (albeit “bodily” [44]) example of extreme-metal’s transgressiveness, rather than potentially generating a collective experience of belonging. Baulch does not discuss moshing in detail, and, when it is mentioned, it is associated more with punks than death-metalheads (100; 136). In his book, Berger offers a rich, but short, description of a mosh pit, in a rare acknowledgment of the death-metal audience (70 – 73). However, despite his interest in the phenomenological aspects of the musical experience, he posits the mosh as a site of structured dancing, rather than affect. It is true that moshing, particularly the ‘circle pit’ style he describes, requires a certain amount of forethought, lest one end up injured. Nevertheless, he places what I regard as an exaggerated emphasis on the ‘ordered’ aspects of moshing rather than how it is primarily experienced by audience members as affective.

Kahn-Harris (2007; 2010) suggests a scene’s coherence, and therefore its position as a legible cultural formation in which scene-members desire or experience belonging, depends on a shared language of ‘extreme-metal’. That is, a series of recognisable generic features that interpolate extreme-metalheads to become part of a local, national or global extreme-metal scene. While there is room for deviation
outside the scene’s codes, a cognition of the scene’s patterns, narrative and practices is necessary for accruing the subcultural capital required to belong. In his 2007 book, Kahn-Harris devotes two chapters to textual analyses of extreme-metal lyrics and album art. Further, despite his rigorous ethnographic approach, relatively little is made of how metalheads experience the scene through embodied participation. Instead, his interview material is textualised and deconstructed in the same manner as, say, his analysis of Cannibal Corpse lyrics. Though he mentions Maffesoli’s work, it is only to deem it as inappropriate for thinking through extreme-metal: “the concept [of affective neo-tribes] is of little use as an analytical structure, since it is essentially a description of a form of sociality ... that arises from ... dancing in nightclubs” (18). Speaking from experience in both nightclubs and extreme-metal events, I would venture that these experiences actually do share a common ‘form of sociality’, and as many grindcore fans speak of ‘losing themselves in the music’ through the shared experience of head-banging as ravers do about dancing.

Baulch follows a similarly textual approach in her analyses of lyrics and scenic media. In fact, key to the Balinese death metallers’ sense of translocal belonging is a competence in, and display of, Western metal style and the English language. Balinese death metal argot is peppered with English words such as ‘underground’ (which, in turn, was opposed to another English word: ‘commercial’) (147). Further, Baulch focuses on how zines, graffiti and lyrics help cohere the Balinese death metal scene as distinct from broader Indonesian popular music, and Balinese reggae. Unlike Kahn-Harris, however, Baulch does present descriptive analyses of ‘being in’ the scene; travelling between ‘home territories’, and attending gigs.
These are analysed textually (for example, the differences in clothing styles between punks and death metallers at a festival), yet they do gesture towards the affective intensity of belonging in the scene (156). In particular, Baulch distinguishes the mosh pit as a site where the scene “came to life” (ibid.). Implicit here is a sense of the urgency of embodied expressions of belonging in extreme-metal; that is, the experiences which go beyond the static – if not lifeless – articulations of ‘metalness’ found in lyrics, tee shirts and graffiti, to constitute a sense of homeliness in the scene.

Matsue’s account is also predominantly textual. She offers detailed analyses of clothing, fliers and lyrics and how they operate to grant scene-members angura status. Out of all of the writings on extreme-metal, however, Matsue probably spends the most time discussing the experience of being at a live event. Each chapter includes excerpts from her field-notes describing raibu (live performances). These excerpts enrich her representations of the scene. It is unfortunate, though, that Matsue does not expand her analysis to look at the affective experience of being in a raibu (“live”/live performance). She gestures towards the “shared moment of ‘the live’” (83). However, her primary understanding of how scene-members find belonging is through the articulation of knowledge and enjoyment of angura music; that is, through representations of subcultural capital and habitus.

Even analyses which account for the move from the material, and arguably relatively ’readable’, scenic spaces of pubs and clubs towards virtual sites of extreme-metal belonging depend on textual analysis. Spracklen’s chapter affirms Hodkinson’s (2004) claim that online subcultural practice mirrors, and
complements, face-to-face subculturalism. That is, instead of hanging around on street corners (to paraphrase Clarke et al.), contemporary youth hang out online in structured cyber-spaces. In fact, reading Spracklen’s account it becomes evident that online expressions of extreme-metal community might even be more hampered by linguistic structures than the potentially spontaneous and affective experience of being in a scene in ‘real life’. On the British black metal forum he analyses, language is the primary mode for expresses one's belonging in the scene.

The exception here is Berger’s work, which explicitly discusses affect and the embodied experiences of scene-members. Because of his concern with affect I have devoted more space to him. His examination of how death metallers experience performing live is enlightening as it accounts for the gig as a malleable process – rather than a static object that can be interpreted linguistically. Further, Berger accounts for the difficulty in discussing affect through his notion of ‘feedback loops’ – where the affective moment is swiftly cognitised into a recognisable ‘death metal performance’. He also highlights the importance of death metal generating an affective experience (be it of sadness, ecstasy, or rage) for its performers.

There are a number of limitations, however, to the useful application of Berger’s work to my current project. Firstly, he does not explicitly account for how affect might also generate belonging to an extreme-metal scene. As noted above, Berger’s understanding of belonging depends on a standard, arguably straight subcultural, application of ‘community’ based on the representation of shared interests. In particular, he emphasises his key informant’s letter writing and recognition of death metallers based on their clothing style as primary for constituting community. Secondly, Berger’s work lacks a detailed analysis of the experience of
being a death metal fan, or audience-member. The privileging of (male) performers’ experiences may echo much earlier academic neglect of fans as feminised, passive and therefore unimportant. Whatever Berger's motivation, however, overlooking the audience’s experience is a regrettable oversight, particularly because in the small world of extreme-metal there is regularly an overlap between the categories ‘performer’ and ‘audience’. Further, the audience experience might have worked as a powerful example of a metal ‘interworld’ where the line between subject (audience) and object (the band who perform) is blurred.

Further, like Kahn-Harris, Berger also devotes much of his attention to textual scrutiny, though, rather than lyrics, Berger’s work incorporates musicological analyses of tablature. Further, Berger’s ethnographic framework limits his work because his interviews take place outside the moment of live production and consumption of death metal music. He claims to privilege the phenomenological instant. Yet, his methodology means that moments of affective engagement are lost. He favours in-depth interviews, usually in non-field contexts, where participants reflect on their experiences. These are informative, but the distance between the moment of affective linking with other band-members during a performance, and the interview with Berger, makes his work more about representations of affect than actual engagements with it.

Of course, part of the reason the existing work on extreme-metal focuses on representation is due to the scene-members themselves. As Berger and Kahn-

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58 By this, I mean Berger conducts interviews outside of the music performance spaces (bars, clubs) which form the focus of his work. Of course, the domestic space, where he mostly interviews his participants, is also a field-site, if one is focusing on consumption and practice of music. However, Berger is not, and therefore his interviews are quite literally distant from the space and time on which his interviewees are expected to reflect.
Harris, in particular, demonstrate constituting, articulating and, indeed, *believing* in a narrative of one's involvement in the scene is crucial for identifying as an extreme-metalhead. Further, the constitution, recognition and circulation of subcultural capital certainly depends, at least in part, on a competence in the scene's aesthetic and practices, both of which can be reduced to a knowledge of the significance of particular symbols and symbolic practices. This is clear, not only in the work above, but also in my own research. All my participants attached a narrative to their grindcore identity and were conversant in their local, and usually also the global, scene's subcultural capital. However, I argue that there is more to belonging to grindcore, extreme-metal – indeed any kind of music scene – than simply the things we can identify as signs of 'belongingness'. More than representational elements are mentioned in the studies above, yet such mentions are fleeting and generally relegated to being less important than the scene's representational elements. It is not my aim in this thesis to simply invert what I regard as a hierarchicised privileging of representation. I do not claim that affective modes of belonging are of more importance than any other. I do, however, claim that affect is a crucial aspect of extreme-metal and needs to be acknowledged as such.

What is needed, then, is an approach to extreme-metal that accounts for affect *as well as* acknowledging representation's role in constituting scenic belonging. In the next chapter, I propose a methodology that accommodates this need.

**CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an introduction to the key concepts and frameworks that inform my thesis. It demonstrated that global grindcore is a music cultural
formation ripe for analysis. In particular, its position outside pop (chart-based) music makes it an interesting object for research into belonging, due to the absence of widely disseminated points of identification.

I introduced the concept of ‘brutal belonging’ as a useful analytical framework for my thesis, as a supplement to the broader notion of regarding the experience of affective belonging, which accounts for the peculiarities of the grindcore scene. Further, I suggested that brutal belonging might also extend understandings of affective belonging as potentially more complex, and not necessarily always uplifting. Most importantly, brutal belonging accounts for the more than representational experience of being in the grindcore scene – experiences which have not, as yet, been explored in academic work on grindcore, or extreme-metal.

Apart from the methodology (Chapter 2) and conclusion (Chapter 6) chapters, this thesis is divided into three key chapters, which offer insights into both the Melbourne and Osaka scenes. I begin on a micro level, looking at how the experience of brutal belonging manifests spatially in grindcore venues and expand to look at brutal belonging as a type of grindcore sociality. Finally, I focus on the implications for brutal belonging when local scenes interact on a transnational level. In Chapter 3, I look at how brutal belonging is experienced by scene-members in the various scenic spaces where live music is performed. In particular, I look at how the affective experience of ‘being grindcore’ constitutes not only belonging within the scene, but also to the spaces in which it is produced and consumed. In Chapter 4, I look at how brutal belonging manifests and constitutes sociality in the scene. This chapter focuses particularly on how affect is mediated by, and mediates, gender relations in the scene. Up to Chapter 5, I offer a
comparison between the Melbourne and Osaka scenes. However, in Chapter 5, I will look particularly at how both scenes interact and collide on tours and when musicians relocate to the ‘Other’ city. I especially focus on how this might build a different type of brutal belonging.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis vitalises cultural studies of extreme metal through an exploration of how belonging in grindcore music is an experience of affective, or what I call ‘brutal’, belonging. Cultural studies of music have predominantly focused on representational and textual understandings of how individuals garner belonging in relation to music. However, I contend such studies are limited due to their marginalisation, or erasure, of the intense and embodied experience of being in and belonging to music cultures. To account for the more than representational elements of grindcore music necessitates an engagement with the affective experience of the scene. To do this, I employed a form of participant-observational ethnography. However, the routine objectification of qualitative data through textualised analysis presented a problem for a project focused on the more than representational. Thus, I used recent work in ‘non representational theory’ (NRT) as a means for accessing, interpreting and discussing brutal belonging.
In this chapter, I present the contexts and NRT based methodology of my thesis. In section 1, I summarise Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes as a way of contextualising my research. In section 2, I outline NRT. In section 3, I demonstrate NRT’s usefulness for this project as a means for revitalising ethnographic methodologies. In the final section of this chapter, I present my NRT-informed research methodology. Here, I present information about my sample, as well as outline my data collection and analysis techniques.

SECTION 1: GRINDCORE MUSIC IN MELBOURNE AND OSAKA

The grindcore scene is a transnational cultural formation. I could have chosen any number of cities in the world to anchor my research. However, I chose Melbourne and Osaka for particular, strategic, reasons. Firstly, I believe that research should draw as much as possible on one’s own experiences. This allows for a critical self-reflection which is less possible when research is conducted in a field that is completely ‘Other’. Here, I am following Morris’s (1997) imperative that cultural studies work should stem from a “localised affective relation” (297) to one’s research material. Thus, I have chosen to focus on an aspect of my own everyday life: my involvement in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes.

I first heard grindcore in 2003, not in Melbourne or Osaka, but in the small city of Launceston, Tasmania. I had accompanied my partner and his band (all from Melbourne) on a tour of Tasmania. The aural assault of grindcore music was compounded with the extreme aesthetics of the venue ‘The Cathedral’ (it featured an inverted crucifix and graffitied church pews). My initial revulsion at the music – it seemed tuneless, deafening and aggressive – turned slowly to mild interest, to
something close to enthusiasm. So much so, that I moved to Osaka for two years to conduct fieldwork on its grindcore scene. I still have moments of disliking grindcore, particularly when confronted with lyrics that flirt with, or openly advocate, ideological positions I reject. However, I believe my ambivalence towards grindcore music is productive; it encourages the reflexivity vital to the ethnographic methodologies I employ. Before continuing, however, it is necessary to give a general outline of the cities on which I have chosen to focus.

1.1: Melbourne and Osaka

Melbourne is the capital city of the Australian state of Victoria. It is located in the south-east corner of Australia and has the country’s second largest population of nearly 4 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). Like the rest of Australia, prior to British occupation in the late 18th century, Victoria was populated by Indigenous Australian people. In 1835, Port Phillip was settled by convicts and British soldiers, though it did not boom until gold was discovered in regional Victoria in the 1880s. Port Phillip became ‘Melbourne’ in 1837. The city, like Sydney and Brisbane, being settled predominantly by criminals ‘transported’ from Britain, has had something of a ‘down to earth’ reputation, compared particularly to other cities such as Adelaide, in South Australia, which was built largely by free settlers.

In the decades following the gold rush, Melbourne’s manufacturing and commercial industries grew. The city flourished and rivalled Sydney in population and economic might. For a time, Melbourne was the capital of Australia, before it

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1 This progression 'into grindcore' is one which many of my participants describe. However, they are more enthusiastic about grindcore than myself.
shifted to Canberra in 1927. Like most Australian capital cities, Melbourne is characterised by suburban sprawl. Melbourne gained worldwide attention in 1956, when it hosted the Olympic Games. This event helped to crystallise the city’s image as a ‘sporting city’.

Since the recession of the 1980s and 1990s, much Melbourne based industry has moved overseas. Further, under a conservative government during the 1990s, many of Victoria’s public utilities were privatised and jobs cut. This has led to a process of re-gearing the city towards experiential commodities – such as tourism and its auxiliary products. Key to this is the promotion, in tourist material, of Melbourne as a ‘sporting city’, which hosts a Formula One Grand Prix, the Melbourne Cup horse racing carnival and the Australian Football League (AFL) Grand Final (Visit Melbourne 2012). The City of Melbourne (the central business district’s governing body)² has also focused on promoting Melbourne as a place with an energetic live music scene (City of Melbourne 2012). Broadly, Melbourne has shifted towards ‘creative industries’. These industries can be defined as the “conceptual and practical convergence of the creative arts (individual talent) with the cultural industries (mass scale), in the context of new media technologies.

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² Australia is a federation of six states and two territories. A constitutional monarchy, political governance occurs on three levels. The first is at a federal level, where laws are passed that affect the whole country, by a bicameral parliament. Australia’s head of state is officially the Queen of England (her Australian proxy being the Governor General); however, convention rules that the Prime Minister governs the country. The second level of governance is at a state or territory level. Here, a Premier (or Chief Minister in the territories), and their legislature, executive and judiciary, make their own laws in areas not governed by the federal government. The final level of governance in Australia is local government, or local councils. Each state is divided into small ‘local councils’, of which the head is a local Mayor. Local governments focus particularly on community services, such as libraries, rubbish collection and disposal, kindergartens and some health services. For more information on Australia’s system of governance, refer to the Australian Government website (Australian Government nd).
(information and communication technologies) within a new knowledge economy, for the use of newly interactive citizen-consumers” (Hartley 2005, 5).³

Osaka is located in the southwest of Japan, in the Kansai region of Honshu. Osaka is the largest city in Kansai, with a population of over 2 million (City of Osaka 2008).⁴

It is the economic and industrial hub of Kansai’s three cities (Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe), earning the nickname ‘City of Smoke’ in the early twentieth century (Sorensen 2002). However, it is worth noting that Osaka’s dominance is also mediated by its strong association with commerce which has historically been considered vulgar in Japan (Wakita 1999).⁵ Thus, it is often considered Japan’s ‘second city’ in relation to the current imperial seat, and capital, Tokyo.⁶

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³ See also Evans (2001) for an outline of creative industries. He uses a quote from Britain’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport which defines creative industries as: “those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (op cit, 153).

⁴ Like Australia, Japan is a constitutional monarchy. The Diet is Japan’s national parliament. It is also bicameral. The Diet legislates for the whole country. Beneath the Diet are forty-seven prefectural governments led by an elected governor. Within each prefecture are smaller cities, or shi, and districts, gun. Osaka has a local city government (Osaka City Council), led by a Mayor, under which are twenty-four wards which, like local councils in Australia, focus on community services.

⁵ This image is also evident in Minami’s traditional status as the space for the production and consumption of ‘junk’ foods. According to Tada (1988), these were foods made up of ‘landfill’ ingredients such as carp and sardines (40). Such ingredients rarely feature in the refined cuisine for which Kyoto is famous. Osaka’s embrace of what Tada calls ‘down-to-earth’ culture is still evident today and works to distinguish the city from both Kyoto and Edo. In recent analyses of Osakan culture, such as Tada’s work, an emphasis is placed on this ‘earthiness’ as evidence of Osaka’s authenticity, opposed to the high cultural pretensions of the old, and new, capitals (see also Wakita 1999).

⁶ This relation has a history extending back to the 16th century when, after General Toyotomi Hideyoshi boldly built a castle in Osaka, Tokyo became affronted, starting a war which heralded the beginning of a long rivalry between the two cities. The power ultimately resided with Tokyo, due particularly to the ‘system of alternate attendance’ (sankin kōtai seido) (Hall 1983, 168; Sorensen 2002, 17). This system was designed to drain regional daimyō of financial resources as well as political and martial power. Thus, despite quickly becoming a major trading centre, Osaka had far less samurai than the capital. However, alternate attendance also served to support and invest in a burgeoning infrastructure of roads in regions that lay between castle towns and Edo, which remain the foundation for contemporary transport infrastructure in Japan today (Sorensen 2002). Further, sankin kōtai seido established a ‘travelling culture’ which meant formerly relatively closed places, such as Osaka, became stopping points for samurai on their way to court. As Varley (1984) points out, this led to a fruitful cosmopolitanism in Osaka. Further, as the samurai were agents of the Shogun, this meant that Osaka had relatively more autonomy than other cities where samurai were more plentiful.
Osaka's relatively marginal status also meant that it had more contact with namban ('southern barbarians' or Western traders) than Tokyo. The Tokyo-based Shogunate declared an era of seclusion that lasted from 1603 until 1868, with the forced 'opening' of Japan by Commander Perry. During the seclusion, Japanese people were forbidden, by official decree, to leave the country; and foreigners were not allowed to enter. However, there were numerous exceptions to the Shogun's ruling. In fact, ordinary Osakans had more contact with namban than other cities, especially Tokyo (then known as Edo), during the Tokugawa period because of its status as a commercial centre and an important stopping place for traders on their way to the capital.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Osaka retained its position as the merchant city. Its main industry was textile production, earning it the nickname Tôyô no Manchesutâ (Manchester of the Orient) (Sorensen 2002, 133). Along with the rest of Japan, Osaka 'boomed' after World War Two, and was a key centre for the production of electronics and machinery. After the economic downturn in the 1990s, Osaka has shifted, like Melbourne, to focus on growing its creative industries. In particular, its industries have shifted focus to high technologies, such as robotics, but also cultural tourism, which highlights Osaka's 'down to earth' image (City of Osaka 2008; Osaka City Government 2008). The City of Osaka also

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7 Foreigners already in Japan, mostly Portuguese missionaries, were deported or killed. See Varley (1984) Chapter Six 'The Country Unified' for a discussion of this period (124-145).

8 There were also other exceptions to the ruling. The Shogunate conceded that that the port city of Nagasaki in Kyûshû remain open to Dutch traders. Further, traders were obliged to make an annual pilgrimage to Edo to pay their respects to the Shogun. Even then, it was impossible to stop the flow of transnational bodies and commodities. Despite the visible presence of namban, especially in Nagasaki, a discourse of closed Japanese nationalism prevailed, at least officially. This indicates something of the anxiety prompted by transnational presences, and the desire to invisibilise such presences through national rhetorics. In reality, Japanese towns at the time bore the influence of Dutch and Portuguese culture - muskets, oil painting and some appropriated words in particular (Varley 1984, 134).

9 See Sassen (2001) for a table displaying the increasing employment in service industries in Osaka (162).
emphasises the city’s live music scene as part of its city branding (City of Osaka Recreation & Tourism Bureau 2007).

These brief summaries provide a backdrop for the following discussion, which outlines the rise of grindcore in both cities.

1.2: Grindcore in Melbourne

Since the debut of Napalm Death in the 1980s, grindcore has spread across the globe, enabled first by DIY tape-trading and occasional overseas tours by more successful bands and, more recently, by web-based distribution networks. In the small amount of literature on grindcore music, key hubs are located in Birmingham, England, and New York City in the USA (Kahn-Harris 2007; Mudrian 2004). However, more recently other places have spawned successful grindcore groups and have gained an informal reputation as grindcore supportive cities. Houston, Texas, and Cleveland, Ohio are a few more recent examples. Melbourne and Osaka, too, have lately become key places on the global grindcore map. Australian scene-members often refer to Melbourne as the “home of grind” in Australia. Osaka is similarly associated with Japanese grindcore history and hosts an annual ‘Eliminate’ grindcore festival.

In Melbourne, the grindcore scene grew out of the small, but active, punk and death/thrash metal scenes in the early 1990s. Both punk and extreme-metal depended on a transnational network of letter writing, zine swapping and tape trading. Both scenes lacked representation on mainstream radio and in record shops. Certainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, key overseas punk and extreme-metal bands did not tour Australia. In order to listen to foreign bands, it
was necessary to trade dubbed cassettes with pen-friends. For older Melbourne scene-members, their first encounter with grindcore was often through dubbed or traded cassettes.

Local grindcore music emerged in Melbourne in the early 1990s. They were often consciously influenced by overseas acts. Tape listings in Melbourne zines regularly described local bands as ‘sounding like’ various overseas groups, or included endorsements by other overseas bands. Blood Duster, which formed in 1991, is widely considered the first grindcore band in Melbourne, indeed Australia (S 2007). They released their first demo, *Menstrual Soup*, in 1992 (Blood Duster 1992) and their debut EP, *Fisting the Dead*, in 1993. They are largely credited with establishing Melbourne’s ‘gore-’ and ‘porno-grind’ grindcore aesthetic (ibid.).

Blood Duster was influenced by the abject lyrics and imagery of overseas bands such as Carcass, but also the nascent gore and porno-grind work of The Meat Shits and Gut. The porno-grind sub genre combined the obsession with bodily waste and pitch-shifted vocals of gore grind with, usually misogynist, pornographic imagery.

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10 For example, *Long Gone Loser* (Long Gone Loser nd c. 1995) describes one band as “Iggy [Pop] meets [Black] Sabbath meets Kiss!” (np.). Another band, Nunchukka Superfly, who regularly play gigs in the contemporary Melbourne scene, is described as sounding like “The Jesus Lizard” while sounding “nothing like the Hard Ons” (np.). All the bands listed as ‘sounds like’ are American except the Hard Ons who, interestingly, are from Melbourne. Joel noted in one participant-sensing (on the spot) interview that listening to a particular band was just like “listening to old [German band] Pungent Stench – that’s the only way I could describe it” (Joel, Melbourne).

11 This is, of course, a highly contended title. Ballarat band Damaged also released an EP in the same year, *Art of Destroying Life* (Damaged 1992). Damaged, however define themselves as ‘Hatecore’ and claim to be more influenced by death metal, than by grindcore (Lord 2001). They did, nevertheless, regularly gig with Blood Duster and *Art of Destroying Life* was produced by the same producer as Blood Duster’s *Menstrual Soup*.

12 Blood Duster re-released the tracks from *Fisting the Dead* as a ‘bonus’ on their first album *Yeest* (1996).

13 Bassist and vocalist Jeff Walker’s inspiration for the lyrics and titles on *Reek of Putrefaction* (1988) was a list of diseases from his sister’s nursing textbook (Mudrian 2004, 217).

14 Blood Duster songs also regularly included audio samples from pornographic films (Blood Duster 1996; Blood Duster 1998). This was carried over into visual representations of the band.
EPs, LPs and cassettes were sold at independent record shops in the central business district (CBD), such as Missing Link and The Pipe, via mail order, or at gigs. Blood Duster’s *Menstrual Soup* and *Fisting the Dead* swiftly found their way into the global tape-trading network (taliehelene, 2008). Brutal Truth, a seminal North American grindcore group, and other overseas bands toured Melbourne during this period, offering local bands the position of support acts at gigs. For a short time, Brutal Truth’s lead singer, Kevin Sharp, even became the vocalist for Melbourne band Damaged (Lord 2001). Thus, from its beginnings, Melbourne grindcore was part of the global grindcore network.

However, transnationality does not jettison the national, or the local, in favour of an homogenous globality. Importantly, Blood Duster boasted its status as having ‘supported overseas acts’, namely Brutal Truth, as a means for declaring Melbourne’s scenic superiority to the Sydney grindcore scene. In the early to mid 1990s, Sydney had no local grindcore bands. When touring Sydney, Melbourne grindcore bands played with crusty-punk, stoner rock or death metal groups. Blood Duster's crude cosmopolitanism echoed wider inter-city rhetorics, which position Melbourne as more sophisticated and worldly than Sydney.

During the 1990s, and even recently, it was difficult to organise grindcore gigs with an all-Australian line-up in Sydney. Venues were mostly Returned Servicemen’s bars or Rugby League clubs, which favoured ‘Aussie rock’ and cover bands. Thus, Melbourne bands were generally only able to play in Sydney when supporting overseas groups, who played at ‘alternative’ venues, such as university unions and

Pornography adorned drum-kits and was featured on their album covers (Blood Duster 2001; Blood Duster 2004) and on their tour DVD (Blood Duster 2005). More recently, Blood Duster’s official website features a topless woman holding their CDs as an advertisement for their back catalogue (Blood Duster 2011).
the Gaelic Club.\textsuperscript{15} Even now, when Melbourne bands venture north without the
kudos of overseas acts, they are relegated to playing at punk squat spaces, such as
Maggotsville, in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville.

By the mid 1990s, other grindcore bands began performing in Melbourne, such as
Damaged, Shagnum, Gudgeon and Undinism. Undinism, in particular, followed
Blood Duster’s porno grind aesthetic. They played in pubs almost exclusively in
Melbourne’s inner North. Venues included the Tote, in Collingwood, the Punters’
Club in Fitzroy, the Royal Artillery Hotel (The Arthouse Hotel and Backpackers) in
North Melbourne. The Great Britain, in Richmond, was an exception, being just
South of central Melbourne (Figure 2.1). These venues were public bars during the
day and hosted bands and DJs in the evenings. A variety of independent music,
spanning rock, hip hop and techno, was played at these pubs. Gigs did – and still do
– start at around 9pm and often don’t finish until past midnight. Being held in pubs
means that attendees and musicians generally drink excessively during and after
gigs. Many scene-members also smoke marijuana during the event (albeit usually
outside the venue). For a time in the 1990s and 2000s, some scene-members also
took heroin at gigs. A relatively small cover charge (usually between $5 and $15) is
paid by attendees. This money is divided between the band and the pub manager.
The band usually only covers the cost of transport, and perhaps rehearsal venue
fees and production expenses. They are, however, generally provided with a ‘rider’
of eight to ten free beers.

\textsuperscript{15} The most recent example is Carcass’s 2008 tour. They played the relatively large, and definitely
mainstream (that is, a venue which mainly hosts pop and rock bands) Palace (formerly Metro)
Nightclub when in Melbourne. However, in Sydney, Carcass played the small and ‘alternative’
venue, the Gaelic Club. It is also worth noting that Blood Duster remains the key Australian act for
supporting overseas grindcore bands, gaining support for Carcass’s, as well as Napalm Death’s
2008 tours.
DIY punk venues also host grindcore bands. These spaces are often collective warehouses, such as the Pink Palace in Northcote and Irene’s Warehouse in Brunswick. DIY gigs operate more like a private party, where fans bring their own alcohol. Some spaces, usually run by ‘straight-edge’ punks, run alcohol-free events. DIY events often have a small cover charge which goes towards an activist cause. Bands do not make money out of these gigs, save for any profit made on merchandise sales.

Playing in Melbourne was, and is, not always straightforward. After the initial boom, centred around the Punters’ Club and the Great Britain, many venues changed musical direction or closed. In the late 1990s, the Great Britain shifted to focus more on electronic and drum and bass acts. Further, the loud and violent aesthetics of grindcore made it difficult to fit into the burgeoning industry of inner-city marketing fostered by local governments’ cultivation of creative industries. Shopping strips which included pubs that used to host grindcore bands were re-branded as fashionable and creatively valuable in local media, traders’ association pamphlets and in official council policy. To take one example, in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, the local governing body, the Yarra Council, pushed for revitalisation of the strip which included rezoning surrounding industrial buildings as residential. These spaces were turned into renovated warehouse apartments, occupied by young professionals who were ‘tolerant’ of the grungy aesthetics of Brunswick Street so long as it did not disturb their sleep. Grindcore gigs at the Evelyn were banned by management and the Punters’ Club closed down in 2002 and re-opened as a pizza bar named ‘Bimbo Deluxe’.
During the 1990s, the state government sponsored ‘FReeZA’ all-ages gigs that sometimes hosted grindcore alongside punk and death metal bands. Independent all-ages events that included grindcore bands were also common in DIY punk spaces. These events provided a gateway for many key Melbourne scene-members during the 2000s. Through participation in the all-ages scene, grindcore fans met older scene-members. When younger fans turned 18, they were encouraged to continue to support the scene by attending ‘official’ gigs at pubs such as the Tote and the Arthouse. During the 2000s, the porno grind trend continued in Melbourne with the work of new bands such as Vaginal Carnage and Fuck ... I’m Dead (FID).

In 2002 a weekly radio programme called Flesh Ripping Sonic Torment, on community radio station PBS, began. The show’s presenters particularly highlighted local bands and also organised a number of all grindcore gigs as fundraisers for PBS. These gigs were held at key venues, such as the Arthouse, but

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16 The programme name was taken from the title of an early Carcass demo (Carcass 1987).
also in the PBS radio studio. Younger participants often cited the programme as an inspiration for their own Melbourne bands, formed in the early 2000s. The ascendancy of the internet during this period and the availability of digital downloads also encouraged scene-members to get involved in the local scene. In fact, the early 2000s is looked back on fondly by many scene members as the ‘heyday’ of the Melbourne scene.

However, by the mid-2000s, participation in Melbourne grindcore declined, largely due to the death, by accidental heroin overdose, of one of the scene’s key members, Chris, in 2004. Chris was the vocalist for Vaginal Carnage and Garbage Guts. At the time of Chris’s death, many in the scene were using heroin and amphetamines. After he died, a number of scene-members decided to stop using hard drugs, and felt that leaving the scene was a necessary part of the process. Between 2004 and 2006 there was noticeably less gigs in Melbourne and many bands went on hiatus.

Some of these participants and bands have since returned to the scene, and, more recently, Melbourne grindcore has experienced another resurgence. Bands such as The Kill, FID and Garbage Guts reformed in 2006 and new venues began to host grindcore shows, particularly The Green Room and Pony, both in central Melbourne. At this time, Flesh Ripping Sonic Torment stopped broadcasting. However, its presenters went on to form a local grindcore record label, No Escape Records (NER). NER represented key Melbourne bands like The Kill, FID, Die Pigeon Die (DPD) and The Day Everything Became Nothing (TDEBN). They also

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17 During the period between the mid 1990s and early 2000s, Melbourne more broadly experienced a rise in heroin users and heroin related deaths (Department of Health 2011; Duffy 2008).
worked as the Australian distributor for a number of overseas grindcore bands.\textsuperscript{18} Between 2006 and 2010, NER occasionally hosted ‘No Escape’ gigs with only grindcore bands on their label. This most recent chapter of Melbourne grindcore peaked with the NER-organised ‘Grindcore’ events on Australia Day 2008 and 2009. These gigs were held at the Corner Hotel, Richmond.\textsuperscript{19} The line-ups featured Australian, primarily Melbournian, grindcore bands on two stages.\textsuperscript{20}

However, the grindcore scene has also recently faced a number of challenges. In 2009 the Tote hotel was closed after it was no longer deemed profitable by management. Although it soon reopened, in 2010, its new management favours indie and alternative rock music, rather than grindcore and extreme-metal. More recently, in 2011, key scenic venue the Arthouse also closed due to lack of financial viability. Its final show, however, was a grindcore event. Since the Arthouse’s closure, bands occasionally play at pubs with recently opened band rooms such as The Bendigo Hotel and The Gasometer Hotel, both in the inner Northern suburb of Collingwood. In 2010, NER folded due to the rising time commitments involved, particularly in pressing vinyl EPs and LPs, and a decline in popularity for material (i.e. not digital) music. Gigs with a complete grindcore line-up still occur approximately once a month; with ‘classic’ bands like Blood Duster and FID playing alongside more recent groups such as Trench Sisters and Shit Weather.

\textsuperscript{18} Including Clit Eater (Czech Republic), Exit Wounds (Poland), Gruesome Stuff Relish (Spain), Putrescence (Canada), Neuro-Visceral Exhumation (Brazil) and Skullhog (Netherlands).

\textsuperscript{19} The Corner Hotel was considered an interesting venue choice by scene members. Prior to the ‘Grindcore’ events, the Corner rarely hosted grindcore bands. However, due to the surprising popularity of pre-event ticket sales, the organisers had to approach a larger venue. Thus the Corner was chosen.

\textsuperscript{20} In 2008, the only non-Melbourne band was Captain Cleanoff, from Adelaide, South Australia. In 2009, Captain Cleanoff played again, as well as Sydney based-band Beyond Terror Beyond Grace. Otherwise, the 2009 line-up was made up of Melbourne grindcore bands.
In the 2000s, a new dynamic arose in Melbourne's scene. Japanese, mainly Osakan, bands began to tour Melbourne regularly, and vice versa. Prior to 2004, Japanese bands had only occasionally toured. Again, punk and metal tape and zine trading helped nourish this network. Connections made, either through trading or on online music discussion boards, led to Japanese grindcore bands, such as Unholy Grave, playing and staying at co-operative punk warehouses in Melbourne in the late 1990s. However, the main influence on the newly vitalised touring network between Melbourne and Osaka was the return of a number of Melbourne scene-members, who had been living in Osaka, in 2003. Using connections made through their involvement with the Osakan scene, these Melbournian scene-members began to organise tours between both cities.

In the period between 2004 and 2011, a significant number of Osaka-based bands have toured Melbourne, often more than once.\(^{21}\) The Green Room, the Tote, the Arthouse, Pony and more recently the Gasometer have all hosted Japanese grindcore bands. Such events were, and remain, popular with Melbourne audiences, and usually include local bands on the line-up. A number of Melbourne bands have also toured Osaka and other cities in Japan.\(^{22}\) The tours generally follow DIY protocol with touring bands ‘crashing’ at local band or scene-members’ houses to save on accomodation costs. Alongside gig-related socialising, most tours are accompanied by other organised social events, such as barbeques or pub ‘counter’ meals in Australia or uchiages (after parties) and picnics in Japan.

\(^{21}\) Often, though not always, Melbourne is part of a wider East Coast tour which also visits Sydney and Brisbane. Bands have included, palm, Birushanah, Ryôkuchi, Cybeme, Realized, Damage Digital, Sensei, Coffins and Gate.

\(^{22}\) Including Baseball, True Radical Miracle, Agents of Abhorrence, Dad They Broke Me, Whitehorse, Fire Witch, Pisschrist and Heirs.
1.3: Grindcore in Osaka

The Japanese grindcore scene also grew out of punk and metal trading networks, though it began earlier than Melbourne’s scene. In 1989, Napalm Death released a split 7 inch EP with then unknown, outside of Japan, Osakan thrash/grind band S.O.B. (‘Sabotage Organised Barbarian’). Further, on Napalm Death’s first overseas tour, also in 1989, they travelled Japan with S.O.B. Many older Osakan scene-members credit the S.O.B./Napalm gigs (known as raibu/‘lives’ in Japan) as well as the cassettes and records which came out of the tour as helping constitute their interest in grind music.

S.O.B. moved to Tokyo in the early 1990s and signed briefly with a subsidiary of Sony records. They remained, however, the key grindcore band in Japan until Yoshimoto Suzuki committed suicide in 1995. After his death, S.O.B. began to incorporate more electronic elements into their music and were largely thought by fans to be no longer authentic grindcore (Biographicon.com nd). Like in Melbourne, Osakan grindcore groups began with a ‘sounds like’ style (guraindoko) with S.O.B being the key act. The scene also constructed its identity in relation to local and national contexts. Paralleling Melbourne’s rivalry with Sydney, Osakan grindcore rehearsed broader ideas of inter-city competition, particularly with Tokyo.

As outlined above, Osaka is historically considered less sophisticated than Tokyo (Tada 1988). Locals rework this positively – as a ‘down-to-earth’ friendliness (ibid.). Tokyo’s grindcore scene is relatively small and lacks scenic infrastructure.

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23 Brutal Truth’s Kevin Sharp replaced Yoshimoto on their 1995 tour, further adding to S.O.B.’s credibility in the global grindcore scene.

24 There is a similar discourse surrounding one of Carcass’s later albums, Heartwork (Carcass 1993) which incorporates proto-melodic death metal aesthetics.
Music in Tokyo is associated more with rock, J(apanese)-pop and hip-hop music (Condry 2006; Stevens 2008). Osaka, whilst also having a strong rock, pop and hip-hop scene, also has a strong grindcore scene. Osakan bands reclaim and celebrate their city’s vulgar reputation, and align themselves with global grindcore aesthetics, through band names such as Bathtub Shitter, and Carcass Grinder. Such bands have built networks with overseas gore grindcore bands, including bands from Melbourne.

In the 1990s, however, the Osakan scene also developed what many scene members perceive as a uniquely Osakan grindcore sound. The band Corrupted is largely considered the catalyst for this sound. Corrupted formed in 1994 and began experimenting with combining grindcore with slower ‘sludge’ metal. They released their first EP Nadie in 1995 (Corrupted 1995). Corrupted soon built a strong following in Osaka after playing regularly at local venues such as Namba Bears. Although all of Corrupted’s former and current members are Japanese, their songs and liner notes are almost entirely written in Spanish. This has led to their popularity in the South American and Spanish grindcore scenes, although they have not toured there. Corrupted never give interviews, nor take publicity photographs. I approached Corrupted’s founding member, ‘Chew’ Hasegawa, for an interview for this thesis. He declined.

As noted above, Osaka’s City Council has recently focused on establishing Osaka as a creative city. Run-down areas that once fostered grindcore music are becoming gentrified. Kagura, in the ‘AmerikaMura’ (‘AmeMura’/American Village) area of Shinsaibashi, was one of the early spaces to host grindcore acts. However, it was

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25 Though they have toured the USA and Europe.
closed in 2004 due to noise complaints from the shopkeepers surrounding it. Nevertheless, the scene has sustained, with Shinkagura ('new' Kagura) swiftly opening in a different venue on the outskirts of the same area. Unlike in Australia, where venues are generally public bars, run by businesspeople, venues (called raibuhausu/‘livehouses’) in Osaka are usually devoted to raibu, and begun by dedicated fans with spare capital. Raibuhausu often specialise in a genre of music. The venues which host grindcore bands usually only show metal and other types of ‘extreme’ music, such as noise. Kagura, and later Shinkagura, were established by a scene-member who was, and remains, a member of a number of key Osakan bands, including Corrupted. Kagura’s owner also runs the Japanese extreme-metal label SMD records, and has lately opened a ‘sister’ venue, Hokage, downstairs from Shinkagura. Other Osakan venues run by scene-members include Namba Bears, Socio and Fandango (Figures 2.2; 2.3; 2.4).

Japanese raibu are run differently to Australian gigs. During the day, raibuhausu are closed to the public. In the early afternoon, however, the evening’s bands will conduct a highly organised sound check to ensure their set will run no longer than twenty minutes that night. Doors open to the public usually between 4 and 5pm and bands start by 6pm. Lives are significantly more expensive than Australian events, with tickets costing between ¥2,000 and 4,000 (AU$20 to AU$40) each. The door charge includes one alcoholic drink, worth ¥500 (AU$5). Almost all the money from the raibu goes to the venue. Bands, instead, see raibu as a means of promoting their music product and attempt to make money from merchandise sales. Occasionally the overlap between activism and grindcore leads to fundraiser raibu, where a portion of the takings support various radical left causes. During the
raibu, bands generally follow a hierarchicised line-up order, beginning with the youngest band and ending with the oldest. Line-ups rarely change. Because of the early start, raibu usually finish by 10pm, ensuring attendees can take the train home (many fans travel from Kobe and Kyoto). The bar, however, remains open and DJs play music until early morning for those wishing to stay. Unlike in Australia, heavy drinking does not usually begin until after the bands have finished. Band-members do not generally stay long at the raibuhausu, after the raibu is finished. Instead, it is customary for all band-members, and their inner coterie, to attend an uchiage at a local izakaya (pub).

As in Melbourne, there has recently been a shift towards ‘festival’ style events with predominantly grindcore line-ups. In 2009, the first ‘Massatsu’ (‘Eliminate’) event was held at Socio in AmeMura. Featuring a line-up of almost thirty, mainly Osakan, bands, the event sold out and lasted from 10am to 10pm. Hokage also holds an annual New Year’s Eve event. In 2008, Hokage organised an outdoor music festival at Tamagawa camping ground in Yamanashi in the Chubu region. The line-up showcased Osakan bands, as well as death metal headliners Coffins, from Tokyo. Unfortunately, the event was financially unsuccessful and was not repeated. Massatsu, however has since become an annual live.

Kagura was the venue where the network between Osaka and Melbourne’s grindcore scenes was primarily established in the early 2000s. A number of Melbournian scene-members moved to Osaka in 2002 to work as English teachers. They sought out and became involved in the local grindcore scene, frequenting venues in AmeMura such as Namba Bears and Kagura. Within a year, the Melbournians were invited to join local groups and those not in local bands formed
gaijin (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) bands that played with Osakan grindcore groups. Importantly, in 2003 the Hokage network was established, by the Osakan scene-member who runs Shinkagura and Hokage. Ostensibly an Australasian online community promoting grindcore and other extreme metal music in Asia, New Zealand and Australia, Hokage’s main participants were from Melbourne and Osaka. Tours were organised in both cities. At the time of writing, the connection between both scenes remains strong; most recently Cyberne, Gates and Sensei toured Australia and Pisschrist toured Japan in 2012.
SECTION 2: NON-REPRESENTATIONAL THEORY

2.1: The limitations of a scenic view

The cultural context of Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes has inevitably influenced my research methodology. My personal involvement with, first the Melbourne, and later the Osakan, scenes called for an ethnographic approach. My aim – to account for the experience of brutal belonging in the scene – complemented participant-observation as, in order to understand the intensity of both scenes, I needed to experience grindcore live, at gigs. Having conducted participant-observation based ethnographies previously (Overell 2009), I initially took a standard ethnographic approach. I attended gigs in Melbourne and conducted extended qualitative interviews with individual participants.

Ethnography is a research methodology used in the humanities. It refers to a quantification (‘graph’), of ‘humankind’ (‘ethno’) and is used in disciplines such as anthropology, geography and, lately, cultural studies. Ethnography is based on fieldwork by a researcher in an ‘Other’ culture. Usually, the researcher ‘immerses’ themselves in the culture being studied, by living and socialising with the culture’s people (participant-observation). To supplement participant-observation, ethnographers often conduct interviews, surveys and encourage participants to keep written or aural records, which are then shared with the researcher.

Ethnography has an admittedly murky history. It was used as a legitimising instrument for imperial conquest and is regularly criticised for presuming

26 In this section I am drawing on Karen O’Reilly’s (2005) book Ethnographic Methods, especially Chapter One ‘Introduction to ethnographic methods’ (1-24), here she provides a “critical minimal definition” (3) of ethnographic methodology.
objectivity when the researcher is often a key element in the ‘field’ they are researching.  

However, ethnography, particularly participant-observation, does allow an embodied interaction between researchers and their research subjects. I feel that the corporeal encounters which ethnography demands are fruitful, if not imperative, for any account of affect in relation to cultural formations. Let me be clear, however, that I am not implying that ethnographic pathways to understanding affect reveal a social or cultural ‘truth’. Instead, I suggest that embodied ethnographic fieldwork simply allows for a perspective on affect that sidelines secondary, academic sources, in favour of the personal intensities of being in a cultural formation. Of course, my interpretation and my participants’ interpretations of affective experiences are also mediated. Yet, while ethnography may not bring me closer to a ‘truth’, it does potentially bring me closer to affect, and the experience of brutal belonging.

Early in my research, however, I found that participant-observation and qualitative interviews were insufficient for a detailed exploration of the constitution of brutal belonging in grindcore. My technique, of writing or recording my thoughts about a gig after it finished, seemed flat. I could not describe the experience of actually belonging with the crowd. In many cases, despite feeling belonging in the moment

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27 Ethnologists and, later, anthropologists, conducted primarily quantitative surveys of non-Western cultures. Crucial to these surveys was ‘fieldwork’. That is, the researcher had to conduct his or her surveys on-site in the non-Western countries. These studies often worked as ‘proof’ of the inferiority of non-Western peoples, and thus justified the ‘civilising’ rationalisations of imperialism. Importantly, the ethnographer’s position, as ‘prover’ of imperial assumptions, rested on their having ‘been there’ on-site. The rational truth-value of quantitative data also lent support to their ‘proof claims’. It was thought that embodied proximity to one’s subject matter allowed a simultaneous proximity to an empirical ‘truth’, obscured in secondary accounts.
of the gig, I would reflect on it later and become convinced that I was an imposter, or inaccurately representing the scene:

I feel odd, because I really enjoyed the music at Grindcore 2008, especially The Day Everything Became Nothing and The Kill, I even did some head-banging, and we stood at the front for both sets. However, now I think about it I, keep thinking about my own objectifying gaze – not least because John kept making jokes about it! I suppose I did most of my ‘observation’ when I was less ‘taken’ by the music and between sets (field notes 27th January 2008).

This gig made me really reflect on the work of ethnography. I attended under the auspices of participant observation but afterwards it didn’t seem to make sense. Firstly, Ramzy, Ceridwen, Simon and Duncan came along, so I really was ‘participating’ in a social event. These guys being my mates, I felt rotten trying to look at how ‘they’ perform in the space, especially when they kept ribbing me about why I didn’t ‘take notes’. … With all this going through my mind, I felt terribly guilty about engaging in this project at all: who gave me the right to treat these people as objects, a tribe, as something me – the brainy academic – can analyse and understand better than themselves? (field notes 3rd March 2008).

Further, my supplementary approach of interviewing scene-members outside of scenic spaces (on the university campus) also lacked the vitality we all experienced at gigs. I needed to alter my approach to account for the complexity that is ‘real’ life.28

I began reading Nigel Thrift’s (2004; 2005; 2008) work on NRT and found it a fruitful way of thinking through my methodology. Arising from recent work in cultural geography, NRT privileges affective, ‘more than representational’ approaches to cultural formations and has expanded beyond Thrift to include

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28 ‘Mess’ has, of course, become a serious concern in recent cultural studies work, see Law’s book After Method: Mess in Social Science Research (2004).
many practitioners, from disciplines outside geography (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Gregg and Seigworth 2010). It acknowledges that determining theoretical concepts cannot always account for those excessive intensities that defy slotting in to the dualised structures found in post-structuralist humanities disciplines. In particular, NRT helped me understand that my ‘scenic view’ of, or representational approach to, grindcore was limiting my ability to access affect. This is partly due to the initial influence on my work of standard cultural studies approaches to music, found in subcultural and post-subcultural studies. These studies generally followed a dichotomised formula where the music cultural formation was either complicit or resistant and could be ‘read’ semiotically. My method of writing up outside of the gig moment stymied my exploration of the intensity of the event. I needed to shift my approach towards the active, affective and embodied idea of ‘making a scene’. That is, I needed to account for my own role in producing, and experiencing, brutal moments and privilege the embodied elements of grindcore. Grindcore is not a scene one simply ‘views’, it is something one does, makes and experiences.

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29 NRT is particularly critical of what some of its practitioners regard as a ‘cultural studies’ approach to space (Rose 2006). That is, the primarily Lefebvre (1986) and de Certeau (1984) influenced frameworks for understanding the inter-relation between ideology, representation and spatialised action (Lefebvre), and the potential for human agency to resist hegemonic structures of power (de Certeau). As has been rehearsed in cultural studies critiques of cinema studies (though these critiques are often overlooked by NRT writers), and its privileging of the gaze (Turner 1990), the gaze is a static concept that assumes textual meaning inevitably determines subjective responses to representations. When applied to ‘real’ – as in not ‘screened’ – space, such as that described in de Certeau’s account of the World Trade Centre, the gazing eye fixes the world around the viewer as a static, readable representation. This ‘deadens’ space, and refuses to acknowledge the fact that we are in space, rather than outside it, gazing onto it (Thrift 2004). Thrift writes that such perspectives follow the “logic of the corpse, interested in the broken, the static, the already passed” (83). Further, Wylie explicitly critiques de Certeau’s approach in his article on landscape as a Deleuzian (via Leibniz) ‘fold’, rather than a representation (2006).

30 For example the notions of compliance and resistance found in subcultural studies were also the backbone of cultural studies work outside of subcultural studies; see Hall (1973) for a discussion of resistant or complicit ‘decoding’ of television programmes. Further, the influence of this approach remains visible in more recent cultural studies work. For example, Jenkins’s (1992) study of fans positions fans as ‘resistant’ compared with other ‘passive’ television consumers. This also builds on Fiske’s (1987) earlier ‘active audience’ approach.
NRT provides a way of thinking through these issues. In the next sections, I outline how NRT assists in the active process of scene making through a discussion of two of NRT’s key sites of engagement: space and performance.

2.2 Making scenes: space

NRT, being originally coined in the discipline of cultural geography, calls for an engagement with cultural spaces, which privileges moments where spaces become sites of moments in excess of representation. That is, NRT advocates a focus on affective relations with, rather than static ‘looks at’, spatialised cultural formations. Much of this work draws on The Phenomenology of Perception by Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1962). That is, NRT practitioners attempt to account for the sense of being in space through a focus on moments of pre-cognition. Further, they attempt to circumvent the Saussurean approaches to langue as determining social structures beloved of cultural studies. NRT theorists engage Merleau-Ponty’s work in Signs ([1960] 1964) which focuses primarily on parole. That is, the moment when langue is enacted. However, unlike Merleau-Ponty, theorists such as Thrift do not entirely give over to an assumption that, outside of language, there is an innate meaning to the things around us. Rather, NRT practitioners temper langue with a privileging of parole.

Of course, as with much phenomenology, and phenomenologically influenced work, NRT is difficult to represent and challenging to apply. The strictures of academic form, style and methods mean that more than representational moments are always already cognitised. However, the incorporation of Merleau-Ponty has

31 See Lorimer's (2006) work on reindeer herders; relations with the lived landscape of Scandinavia and Wylie’s (2005) article on the affective experience of hiking in Southern England.
allowed for some novel inter-disciplinary approaches. Most interesting is the employment of Bataille’s (1985) and Deleuze’s (1992) conceptions of ‘the labyrinth’, as a way of accessing phenomenological moments. M. Rose (2002), draws on these ideas to suggest that human practice establishes meaningful spaces, which are potentially infinite. These labyrinthine landscapes contain multiple possible significations simultaneously. The grindcore scene links with various meanings through the actions of particular human agents – for example, live performances – and the presence of particular material objects, such as guitars, band banners and patched denim jackets. These representations, following from M. Rose, open up to more-than-representational space and render such spaces present in the particular moment of encounter. Wylie (2006) also draws on these ideas, particularly from Deleuze’s Leibnizian labyrinth to understand contemporary spatiality. Here, space is understood as an “infinite series of curvatures” (Deleuze op cit in Wylie 2006, 529) characterised by a constant ‘folding’ of subjects and objects through embodied and affective practices. This folding is “the smallest element of the labyrinth” (ibid.) and produces not just what we see, but also what we apprehend, feel and experience as space. That is, NRT is concerned with how people engage affectively with the world around them. A scene is a labyrinthine space, the meaning of which is bound to contingent, multiplicitous understandings of the cultural practices and people linked to it. It is also a site that surpasses understanding – that is, the labyrinth refers as well to the affective sensations, which move beyond linguistic representation and cognition.

NRT also accounts for how affective perceptions of space relate to inter-subjective and -objective sociality. M. Rose suggests that, through an affective engagement
with space, individuals make space “come to matter” (457) and to be comprehended as coherent and bounded. Such understandings are not fixed. They are temporary understandings that potentially, and simultaneously, diverge from other affective spatial engagements, which may construct a different comprehension of the space. Importantly, M. Rose, and others (Laurier and Philo 2006; Simonsen 2010), discuss the impact social interactions have on spatial understandings and subjectivity. Subjects are understood as constituting space collectively, through their affective interactions with others. These temporary and shifting constitutions of subjectivity echo Straw’s conception of music scenes as a process of affective linking.\(^{32}\) They privilege a horizontal perspective of spatialised sociality, rather than individualised subjectivity, through a focus on moments on commonality and belonging.

Admittedly, however, this perspective often errs too much on the side of celebration and leaves little room for accounts of power (cf. Laurier and Philo 2006).\(^{33}\) In this thesis, I mediate such horizontality with the verticalised structures of power that often inflect sociality. However, a horizontal perspective should not be rejected entirely. It is important for understanding the affective belonging scene-members experience, which is often articulated as a feeling of egalitarian sociality and belonging.

NRT also highlights the double sense of bounded coherence and porous ambiguity found in contemporary music scenic spaces. For example, M. Rose posits labyrinths as a way of attempting to fix space, which is constantly undermined as space is re-made through alternative interactions within it, and understandings of it. However,

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\(^{32}\) Refer to Wylie (2010) for a detailed outline, and analysis, of NRT’s relation to subjectivity.

\(^{33}\) See Thien (2005) for a critique of the celebratory timbre of much NRT work.
as he notes on his work on the national significance of Giza’s pyramids (Rose 2002), some attempts to fix a space’s meaning can be relatively successful. My project is concerned with this process of ‘coming to matter’; and how scene-members use affect as a way of constituting belonging to the scene. However, on a spatial level, grindcore’s relatively marginal position means its members’ attempts to fix spaces such as bars and raibuhausu as meaningfully ‘grindcore’ are also hindered by other more powerful stakeholders’ understandings of such spaces.

2.3 Making scenes: performance

NRT also invigorates cultural studies’ understandings of performance. Cultural studies regularly uses the concept of performance as a way of analysing identity formation and ideology. That is, cultural expressions – say of gender, ethnicity and class – are understood as representations of broader ideological frameworks (Butler 1990; Connell 2005). This is a useful tool for comprehending the often oppressive structures of class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability and gender. However, this notion of performance implies a distancing between the, ideologically mediated, representations being performed, and some ‘real’, authentic persona underneath. The lay connotations of performance are apt here; performative understandings of culture construct the world similarly to a play with actors playing parts contra to their ‘offstage’ selves. Unseen writers and directors organise the action.

Some more recent studies of performance account for subjective reflexivity regarding one’s position. Kahn-Harris (2007) offers the global black metal scene as an example of reflexivity. Scene-members counter potentially disturbing aspects of their performances through an understanding of the live show, and by extension
band-members’ band identities as ‘just an act’ (150). This is further bound to the theatrical metaphor; the grindcore audience, many of whom are in bands themselves, are most likely aware that the band has ‘rehearsed’ its songs and may even have a ‘script’ – the set-list. However, this distancing still implies that the performance is a representation. It becomes an object, scripted and mediated by the, potentially ideological, intentions of the band-members (Auslander 1999; Fonarow 2006).

Thrift (2000; 2008) notes the limitations of understandings of performance as a ‘text’ mediated by ideology, and distanced from authenticity. In fact, he advocates a return to the lay notion of performance as a dramatic show – an ephemeral event which (he quotes from Schiefflin): “create[s] ... effects and then [is] gone – leaving ... reverberations behind” (op cit 2008, 135). Following from Schiefflin, Thrift argues that performance needs to be understood as inherently present and affective; as an “art of now” (ibid.). Performance is not solid, nor able to fit neatly into given categories. It is unstable, like the labyrinth. Performance constitutes “spaces of possibility, ‘as-if’ spaces” (136).

Thrift also builds on the cultural studies notion that performance constitutes everyday life and culture. Thrift advocates a shift from the spectacular performance to a “heighten[ed] awareness of everyday behaviour” (135) as performative, a sentiment echoed by other NRT writers (Wylie 2010). Thrift’s valuation of mundane performances (embodied and affective, as well as representational) complements Stewart’s (2007) affective ethnographic work,

34 This, incidentally, like a programme for a play, is reified by fans and often forms part of a wider collection of fliers, posters and other grindcore ephemera.
which has been a key influence on NRT. Stewart writes on what she dubs “ordinary affects” as:

[T]he varied and surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergences (4).

Stewart’s idea of “continual motion” (ibid.) suggests the processual nature of everyday performance. To account for affect, and the diverse happenings of the everyday, one must necessarily also account for its “varied and surging capacities” (ibid.).

A willingness to account for these sensations is unusual in academic work. However, it is also unusual in the grindcore scene. Throughout my fieldwork I experienced multiple ‘weird looks’ when I asked participants to tell me how they ‘felt’ the experience of performing. Moreover, my academic integrity was questioned on one occasion when a Melbourne participant could not account for (that is, rationally compartmentalise) why a ‘serious’ account of grindcore was academic at all, let alone how his ‘feelings’ might be of interest.

SECTION 3: AN AFFECTIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

3.1: Non-representational theory and ethnography

NRT's affinity to affect provides a highly useful approach to an ethnography, which is focused on accounting for affect. Firstly, NRT ethnographers focus on the embodied, immediate experience of fieldwork, rather than simply the notes that it generates. Crang’s (2003) analysis of NRT as a qualitative methodology argues for a de-privileging of representational “ways of knowing” (500), such as looking and
reading, in favour of ‘haptic knowledge’, that is “learning through our bodies’ responses” (499) to ethnographic contexts. This approach also acknowledges the key position of the ethnographic researcher. He emphasises how affective responses to field contexts mediate our approaches, relations, as well as our final ‘writing up’. An awareness of this mediation refuses the arrogant assumption that ethnography is an unmediated gateway to an authentic ‘truth’.

Davies and Dwyer (2007) also discuss NRT’s value for ethnography. Their work calls for a shift from “comprehension” to “apprehension” (258). That is, they suggest that methodologies fixated on comprehending social and cultural fields, and tying down such fields to an ultimate interpretive meaning, is exhausted. Instead, Davies and Dwyer offer apprehension as a way of accounting for other “kinds of knowing” (ibid.) the world through affective, embodied responses. They focus on what is often left out of humanities work: the moments, processes and actions that exceed representation. Further, and similar to the Crang, Davies and Dwyer position, the ethnographer is an important constitutive agent in the making of ‘the field’ (260).

Wood, Duffy et al. (2007) also challenge ethnographic norms through a critique of the methodology of participant-observation. Instead, they propose ‘participant-sensing’ as a new approach to immersive ethnography. This method privileges the inevitable absorption of the researcher in the event occurring, and refuses a dichotomy between what Wood, Duffy et al. describe as: “one mode of data collection or one mode of being at [the ethnographic site]” (879 emphasis added). They suggest that an awareness of this ‘split’ between objective observer and subjective participant allows for attentiveness to the ethnographer’s contingent
position. Via NRT, Wood, Duffy et al. acknowledge that such contingency prompts “emotions [that] overflow” into academic work (885). Such emotions, they posit, are often wrongly unaccounted for in post-event field notes. They argue that the ethnographer's participants experience a similar kind of ‘splitting’ when asked to represent their experiences verbally post-event. Thus, they insist on ‘on-the-spot’ interviews and participants’ self-recording not only their voices, but ambient sounds as well, as a way of accessing the sense that some events and contexts are unspeakable (ibid.).

Wood and Smith’s (2004) work also looks at how ethnographers might access their own, and their participants’, modes of identity-formation through the application of NRT. They suggest ethnographers may gain a different pathway in understanding individuals’ ‘senses of self’ through a concentration on “self-feelings” (534), rather than how a participant may represent their identities in an in-depth interview context. According to Wood and Smith, self-feelings position individuals within a “network of human and non-human relations which literally make sense of the world” (ibid. emphasis added). That is, through affective interactions with other humans and non-human objects and spaces, participants are able to constitute the world in which they are embedded.

3.2 Non-representational theory, ethnography and music cultures

These applications of NRT ground the ethnographer in their context and privilege the varied affective responses experienced by participants and researchers during fieldwork. More specifically, NRT-informed ethnographies of music cultures offer innovative methodologies for engaging with music. Smith's work (2000) on the 'soundworld' notes that understanding music aurally constitutes a reflexive
position on ‘music as a cultural text’. That is, the soundworld challenges understandings of music as primarily read or seen. The very notion of a cultural text obviously implies a type of representationality that cannot account for the experience of performing and listening to music. Smith suggests an approach that focuses on these experiences – through interviews with performers and audience members, as well as note taking by the ethnographer during the ‘listening moment’. Of course, this approach is limited by the ultimate mediation of the musical experience by representation – in the form of writing up, and publication of findings. Smith is aware of this, and calls for new approaches to music ethnography (634). However, her insistence on a privileging of aural engagements with music is an important shift away from textual analyses of music cultures.

Smith’s emphasis on the importance of the body – of both the listener and performer – in constituting music spaces is also useful (632).

Smith’s collaborative work, with Wood (2004) and Wood and Duffy (2007), also demonstrates the usefulness of NRT for ethnographic approaches to music. Wood and Smith’s article suggests music provides a ‘way in’ to understandings of affect and its infusion in everyday life (536). This is because musical performance spaces privilege ‘feeling’ in a way that contradicts how affect might be marginalised in mundane life. This is relevant to my work as I suggest that belonging in grindcore scenes depends on feeling at home. That is, belonging is affective.

Further, they insist on the importance of the audience, in a dynamic relation with the performer and the music, as a key producer of affective meaning in the performance space (537). This dynamic also constitutes a sense of intimate group belonging, not usually expressed in public space.
Smith, Wood and Duffy’s work focuses on developing a methodology that engages “the creative, nonrepresentational qualities of musical performance ... [and] a continually becoming world” (882). In particular, Wood et al. posit ‘musicking’$^{35}$ as processual rather than something that can be objectively analysed. Of relevance to this thesis is their connection between the abstract ‘soundings’ of music and the material spaces that it co-constitutes. This idea can be used to understand why particular sites of grindcore production and consumption become grindcore spaces of belonging. Further, Wood, Duffy et al. offer music as a means for accessing affective, inarticulable responses to particular spaces and cultural context (884).

I wish to supplement these NRT approaches to music with the work of Dolar (2006) on ‘the voice’. Dolar’s writing complements much work in NRT, though current practitioners do not always explicitly acknowledge him. He writes on the audible moment where speech surpasses representation and becomes what he terms the voice. Dolar is primarily influenced by Lacan. However, his emphasis on the affective dimensions of the voice vitalise Lacanian psychoanalysis and gesture towards NRT. When music moves into the realm of the voice, Dolar writes, it becomes ‘senseless’ through a “depart[ure] from its textual anchorage” (43) in lyrics. This senselessness potentially disturbs its listeners; its incoherence is shocking. However, Dolar also notes that such senseless noise is also seductive (ibid.). Such an understanding of music is also highly relevant to grindcore. Grindcore noises – the vocals and instruments – defy lyrical and tonal

$^{35}$The term ‘musicking’ is appropriated from Small’s (1998) work on classical music and phenomenology *Musicking. The Meaning of Performance and Listening.*
comprehension, and disrupt the signifying chain crucial to coherent representation. The grindcore voice is affective.

Duffy’s (2008) individual work on Australian folk music festivals employs the participant-sensing approach coined by her, along with Wood and Smith (2007) and complements Dolar’s ideas. Duffy supplies festival participants and non-festival-going locals with mini Mp3 recorders. She asks them to record ‘audio-diaries’ of sounds around the town and at the festival which constitute meaningfulness and belonging for them.36 Further, Duffy attempts to capture the moment of listening and performance by asking participants to audio-record their feelings before, during and immediately after listening to or performing music. Duffy feels this captures something of the ‘pre-cognitive’ moment that is lost during interviews that take place after the event. Of course, the oral description of feelings is representational, and indeed cognitive. Yet, Duffy’s approach seems to close the gap, at least a little, between the affective musical moment and the more clinical moment of the ethnographic interview. If we follow from Dolar, these moments of ‘voice’ – without the mediating bodily presence of the, often authoritative, ethnographer37 – may potentially reveal interesting insights into the ‘soundworld’ of participants. Duffy has also experimented with the presentation of her academic work. She produced an audio compact disc of experimental music to

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36 Duffy’s approach draws on photographic elicitation methodology where participants take photographs of meaningful spaces. For a brief outline of photographic elicitations’ influence, see Wood, Duffy et al. (2007).

37 Though I acknowledge that the Mp3 recorder is something of a proxy for the body of the ethnographer.
accompany an essay (liner notes) on new approaches to music ethnography (2007).

SECTION 4: RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE INFORMATION

NRT-influenced ethnography, and NRT music ethnography in particular, informed the methodological approaches used in my thesis. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Melbourne and Osaka between 2008 and 2010. I drew on primary data from multiple sources including participant-sensing, interviews, questionnaires and scenic media.

This data was collected in a number of stages, which often overlapped. In Melbourne, during 2008, I increased my attendance at gigs to one a week; next, I conducted interviews with scene members, after which they were asked to fill out a questionnaire on email. I followed the same sequence in Osaka, between 2009 and 2010. However, I also had to translate some interview and questionnaire data from Japanese, as a final step. The data gathered was extensive; however, it is not my intention to produce broad statistical analyses. Instead, my fieldwork served primarily as an orientation for my inquiry into grindcore and affect. Thus, no statistical data is included.

See also Duffy's collaborative work with Waitt and Gibson (Duffy, Waitt et al. 2007). NRT also informs Morton's (2005) article regarding live Irish folk music. Morton adopts a similar approach to Duffy; supplying participants with digital recorders. She suggests this is a way of drawing attention to identities, events and spaces “in the making” (668). That is, Morton focuses on field-spaces as dynamic flows and processes, rather than fixed sites, already made and objectively analysable. She notes that much of the experience of live music is non-verbal – that is, non-representational. Instead, live music experiences are expressed through embodied movements and feelings: stamping, clapping and nodding (673). Like Duffy, and Smith and her collaborators, Morton also argues for a co-constitution of musical spaces. Through ‘sense’ – affect – participants, including the ethnographer, ‘sense-make’ spaces as meaningful places of belonging and musical activity.
Concurrent with my fieldwork, I conducted content analysis of grindcore scenic material. This was intended as a supplement to my primary ethnographic work, as scenic data was largely representational, taking the form of music press, zines, web content and other ephemera.

What follows is an outline of my data collection methodologies and information on my sample.

4.1 Fieldwork

My primary ethnographic methodology was participant-sensing. Participant-sensing encompasses my ‘in the moment’, recorded reflections on my attendance at grindcore events, such as gigs, rehearsals, tours and recordings in Melbourne and Osaka. Between 2008 and 2010, I tried to attend at least one grindcore event per week. This was hard in Australia, as there was often nothing scheduled, or a number of shows clustered together. Sometimes I would attend two over one weekend and have the following week off. In Japan, it was relatively easy to attend at least a *raibu*, if not a rehearsal, weekly. I generally attended alone, due to my partner's work routine. However, I had friends who I would meet up with at events in both cities. Following Smith's imperatives, I privileged listening as a part of my participant-sensing. Following Crang (2003) as well as Davies and Dwyer (2007), I reflected on how my body, and those of the grindcore fans around me, was positioned within scenic spaces. Thoughts in response to these contexts, following Duffy, were recorded on the spot, in a notebook or aurally on my digital recorder, and in a reflective ‘listening diary’ after the event.
To immerse myself in both scenes was challenging. In Melbourne, I knew many of my participants. However, shifting from ‘mate’ to researcher was inevitably difficult and some scene-members often shied away from making parts of their grindcore participation visible, particularly drug use. In Osaka, I barely knew any scene-members and used my brother-in-law’s status as the former drummer of Birushanah as a way of introducing myself in the scene. While this allowed me privileged access to scenic spaces and key scene-members, it was also a hindrance as I was constantly questioned about my brother-in-law and why he, or my partner, were not accompanying me to gigs. In Osaka, it was an anomaly to find a Caucasian, or women, at lives. Thus, my presence drew much attention – and concern – that I was not chaperoned by a man. However, after persistently attending gigs for two years in Osaka, I eventually made friends and was made to feel relatively welcome.

These experiences of brutal un-belonging enriched my understandings of affect and belonging in grindcore. I vigilantly tried to enable the experience of belonging through different ways of engaging with grindcore events and spaces, as part of the participant-sensing process. I focused particularly on embodied practices, rather than representation in order to ‘fit in’. I did not feel it was necessary for me to adopt grindcore fashion style, though I did occasionally wear local band tee shirts as a way of showing support. In Osaka, especially, I regularly arrived at raibu straight after work, in business attire. Jettisoning scholarly sobriety was one way of feeling part of the group and I always drank alcohol at gigs (though generally not excessively). This was particularly important in Osaka, where some bands incorporated drinking rituals into their sets. I also ensured I moshed, headbanged
and danced at gigs and raibu, which provided a completely different affective experience to standing back and watching. Some evenings I focused on the liminal moments between songs and sets, and took care to record interim noise, following Smith’s (2000) call to temper ‘official’ representations of music with the excess elements that sit outside, but contribute to, them.

However, the subject of this thesis is not me, but grindcore music and the experience of brutal belonging. Following Smith’s suggestion that the embodied practices of individuals constitute spaces, and a sense of belonging to that space, I also focused on the experiences of grindcore practitioners and fans at scenic events. I did this primarily through on-the-spot digital sound recordings of twenty-one scene-members’ responses to grindcore. Further, I also supplied a number of participants with digital recorders to record their experiences, without me being present. Some scene-members participated in this way more than once. The symbol ‘*’ marks quotations from these recordings in my thesis. I also occasionally recorded digital video footage of bands and their audience.

To supplement my participant-sensing, as well as to challenge scene-members to consider their experiences of affect in the grindcore scene. I generally interviewed participants individually in non-grindcore spaces, such as at the University of Melbourne, in Melbourne and in karaoke boxes, in Osaka (one of the only quiet spaces in the city).39 There were two exceptions, however, when scene-members requested to ‘bring a friend’ to the interview, who was also keen to be involved in the project. Interestingly, both exceptions concerned a male scene-member

39 An exception to this were two telephone interviews I conducted with Melbourne scene-members who were unable to schedule a face-to-face interview (See Appendix 3 information on participants).
bringing his female partner, and both were members of the Melbourne scene. Interviews generally lasted between forty-five minutes and one hour.

The interviews followed a loose structure based around sixteen questions (refer to Appendix 1 for a copy of the questions), which covered the scene-member’s involvement in grindcore as well as their personal experiences of belonging in the scene. The flexible approach to the interviews allowed participants to explore tangential questions and issues surrounding grindcore and affective belonging.

I supplemented my interviews and participant sensing by asking participants to fill out a short, nine-point, questionnaire on their music tastes and social backgrounds (refer to Appendix 2 for a copy of the questionnaire). This was to establish scene-members’ position in relation to broader culture, in terms of class, gender and ethnicity. Participants either filled out a hard copy and posted it back to me, or I emailed them a digital copy, which they filled out and emailed back. Not all participants finished the questionnaire and returned it to me. I established this data collection methodology early in my research and it lacks a focus on affect. As my research progressed, my study shifted and the questionnaires became less useful. I did, however, continue to give each interviewee a questionnaire to complete. Altogether, I distributed thirty-five questionnaires of which only fifteen were returned.

I did not conduct formal follow-up interviews for this project. Nevertheless, some participants volunteered extra information and thoughts, via email, after the interview and questionnaire were completed. I have used some of this email data in my thesis (indicated by ‘via email’).
4.2 Translation and language

Japanese is my second language and, prior to moving to Osaka in 2009, I had learnt Japanese for only one year. I continued study in Japan and had much cause to use it in my everyday life. There were Osakan scene-members who spoke fluent English and, at first, I connected mostly with them. They were the first people I interviewed and with whom I conducted on-the-spot recordings. However, as my Japanese improved, I was able to ask scene-members in Japanese to participate, sometimes asking my bilingual participants to help as translators for extended interviews. Most scene-members spoke a little English, and a number insisted on conducting an English interview supplemented by a print out of the questions in Japanese and some moments of Japanese language, which I later translated. For extended interviews in Japanese, which I conducted without a translator, my Japanese sensei (teacher), Hiroshi Matano, assisted in translating, after the event. These interviews were most difficult, as my Japanese (and certainly my Osaka dialect) was not sophisticated enough to respond spontaneously to participants’ responses. That is, in these cases, I asked the scene-member the set interview questions, which they answered in Japanese with little room to elaborate, particularly on affect.

Translation was a necessary part of my research. I do, however, acknowledge the problems with this methodology, particularly with regards to NRT. In translated material, ideas are doubly represented and removed from the affective moment. This data, though, did yield some interesting material, particularly as, speaking in their first language, Osakan scene-members were sometimes more comfortable articulating the affective experience than they would have been after labouring
through thinking in Japanese, then mentally translating it to English. I indicate translated material with a ‘§’ symbol.

In my thesis I follow the Hepburn Romanisation system of translation, with long vowels indicated with a macron, except in cases where words have entered common use in English (Osaka, for example), and with people’s names where the person prefers their name be Romanised. A glossary of Japanese terms, in kanji (Japanese script), can be found in Appendix 4. Japanese names are presented in the order of family name first, personal name second, as is Japanese linguistic custom. Sometimes, however, after initially introducing a participant’s full name, I will refer to them primarily by their preferred name in the scene.

4.3 About the sample

My sample consisted of thirty-five participants: sixteen from Melbourne and nineteen from Osaka. The relatively small sample size is representative of the marginal position of grindcore, and the methodology associated with in-depth, qualitative interviews. In Melbourne and Osaka, I managed to talk to at least one, if not more, members of the cities’ key grindcore bands as well as fans.

I initially drew participants through acquaintances and friends in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes. My methods for selecting, approaching and interacting with scene-members for my thesis varied widely between the two cities. In Melbourne, I had numerous close friends in the scene and it was relatively easy to convince them to participate in the project. Through these connections, I used a ‘snowball’ methodology for expanding my Melbourne sample. Again, I found most participants to be willing – if not enthusiastic – about my thesis.
In Osaka, I used my initial contacts with bilingual scene-members and my relation to the drummer from Birushanah as an entry to the scene. I had also briefly met a few scene-members previously, when they had toured Melbourne. Here, I also depended on a ‘snowball’ approach with scene-members putting me in touch with other participants who were interested in the project. I also approached some scene-members ‘cold’, after seeing them regularly at gigs, and asked if they would like to participate. This was also generally successful.

I tried to gain a representative sample of the make-up of both cities’ scenes. This is of course a contrived process, and my ad-hoc snowball method meant that I often interviewed people I had not planned to involve. In both cities, participants ranged in age from 22 to 40. This is reflective of the age range of the scene more broadly. My sample also reflects the dominance of men in grindcore music. As noted above, women form a minority in the scene, both as musicians and fans. In Japan, I was regularly the only woman in attendance. Thus, for this project, twenty-eight of my thirty-five participants were men. I also attempted to draw participants from different class backgrounds. In Melbourne, this was relatively easy. Included in my sample are university students, teachers, designers, storepeople and unemployed people. In Osaka, a broad class spectrum was more challenging. As I will detail in Chapters 3 through to 5, the majority of Japanese scene-members are from working-class backgrounds. My participants reflect this. All but four (two of whom own raibuhausu and bars) are employed in menial labour. However, my Osakan sample also differs from my Melbourne sample because it also includes non-local scene-members: gaijin. These participants were all middle-class, white Melbournians, employed as English teachers for Japanese companies. As there
were no Japanese scene-members residing in Melbourne, I did not have the opportunity to conduct a similar sample in that city.

In order to situate the participants it is necessary to provide a short description of each. The following paragraphs also demonstrate the smallness of both cities’ scenes. Scene-members are often related by family and move between fan and performer. Further, many of the musicians were in multiple bands. For further detail on the participants, however, refer to Appendix 3. All participants are referred to by pseudonyms. The band-names, however, are real. I chose to preserve their actual names because of the difficulty in replicating similar band-names, and also the significance for some of the names in relation to brutal belonging.

In Melbourne, I began by interviewing the members of Dad They Broke Me (DTBM), who are my friends. Joel, the drummer in the group, was 31 years old at the time of my interview, and a high school English teacher. He and fellow band-members, Graham and Mick, lived in Japan during the early 2000s. Mick, the guitarist, is also a high school English teacher and was 31 years old. Graham was the vocalist for DTBM and a graphic designer. He was 32 years old. I also interviewed Joel’s brother Phil who is the bass-player for Shagnum. He was 34 years old and a high school history teacher.

Through Joel, I contacted a number of other, younger scene members. These included Will, a member of a number of bands, including Super Fun Happy Slide (SFHS), who worked as a labourer and was 24 years old. Don was also relatively young, at 22 years old. With his band, Fire Witch, Don had toured and recorded in Osaka. He worked as a bartender and an administrative assistant at a recording
studio, as well as running his own record label. Carsten, who plays drums in a
group of bands, including Roskopp and Trench Sisters, was 28 years old and
works in a record shop. Carsten was one of the most active scene-members,
hosting the ‘Flesh Ripping Sonic Torment’ radio programme, and running NER up
until 2010. Carsten ran the radio programme and NER with Shawn, a storeman
packer, who was 30 years old. Shawn plays bass in FID. I also interviewed
Carsten's younger brother, Zak, who sings in Garbage Guts and Agents of
Abhorrence. Zak was 27 years old and a multimedia artist. Carsten also introduced
me to his partner, Hayley, who was unemployed. Hayley was 24 years old, a keen
metal fan and originally from New Zealand. She also edits Vomitose fanzine.

I also interviewed other members of FID, including Andy, the band's singer who
works with Shawn as a storeperson. Andy was one of the older scene members, at
36. Carlos, FID's guitarist, was a 26 year old graphic designer and is also in
Roskopp and The Day Everything Became Nothing (TDEBN). TDEBN's vocalist,
Jules, 34 years old, was also interviewed. Like Andy, he was one of the older scene-
members and was actually most known for singing in seminal Melbourne band
Blood Duster. Jules worked at Melbourne Airport.

Along with Jules, I interviewed Leon, the bass-player and founding member of
Blood Duster. He was 35 years old and the only participant in the Melbourne scene
who manages to make a living from the music, by running a vinyl press and label
that works with grindcore and other ‘extreme’ bands. Jim, Blood Duster's
drummer, was also interviewed. He worked as a private music teacher and was 29
years old.
Finally, I interviewed Anita, a draftsperson, who was an active fan of Melbourne grindcore. Despite being only 27, she had a long history in the scene, due to her participation in all-ages events.

In Osaka, I began by interviewing a friend of Joel’s, Tanaka Nobuhiro, or ‘Nobu’. Nobu was a *sempai* – or senior – scene-member and the vocalist for Infernal Revulsion. Nobu, who was 27 years old, was unusual in the Osakan scene, because he was half-Japanese and half-European-Australian. He was thus bilingual, and worked as translator for a professional Japanese rugby team. Nobu and I became friends and he often worked as an informal translator for me at gigs. He also introduced me to his band-mate, Okamoto, or ‘Oka’, who was slightly younger than Nobu, at 25 years old, and studying philosophy at university.

Once in Osaka, I followed up with Osakan scene-members I had met during their tours to Melbourne. From this group, I interviewed Higashiyama Kôki, 27, who played drums in *palm*. Kôki, as he was known, worked as a private English teacher. Also from *palm* was Matsumoto Masakazu, or ‘Masa’. He was also 27 years old, and played bass in *palm*. He worked as a labourer. Unlike other scene-members, Masa was from the *burakumin* caste – traditionally the lowest caste of Japanese society and a group towards whom there remains discrimination.

Tarukawa Katsufumi sang in *palm* and was also 27 years old. He edited *kreativ* magazine, which was the ‘newsletter’ for Kagura Enterprises. In the scene, he went by ‘Katsu’. Age-based hierarchy is significant in Japan and, like Nobu, the members of *palm* were all the same age and considered *sempai*. Masa and Katsu both spoke a little English.

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40 *palm* spell their name in lowercase.
Kazuno was also 27 years old and in the band Lost. He also ran his own record label. Having grown up in the United Kingdom, ‘Kaz’ was bilingual and taught English at a juku, or ‘cramming school’. Takeda was another scene member the same age as Kaz and the members of palm. He was previously homeless, but had since been granted a job as manager of one of the scene’s key clubs, Hokage. He played taiko (traditional Japanese) style drums in Birushanah. Unlike Kaz, Takeda could not speak English.

Birushanah’s front man, known as ‘Sensei’ in the scene, was a participant in the project. He was considered the most senior scene-member, due partly to his bass-playing in Birushanah and Corrupted, but also because he owned two key venues, Hokage and Shinkagura. He also ran SMD (alternately ‘Suck My Dick’ and ‘Shinto Music Dance’) records, the label on which many of the Osakan bands were signed. He was only two years older than the participants already introduced, but his ownership of the venues and label, as well as his reputation as a hard man (he had been to jail), gave him considerable clout. Toshi, Birushanah’s drummer, was also 29 years old. He was certainly sempai, but did not command as much respect as Sensei. Toshi worked as a stevedore. Neither Sensei nor Toshi spoke English.

The oldest scene-member I interviewed was Kobayashi who was 45 years old. He was the vocalist for seminal Osakan grindcore band, Fortitude. He would not disclose his profession but did inform me that he was a member of the Japanese Communist Party.

Fukuda Masaru (Fukuda) was also the same age as Sensei and Toshi. He remains the vocalist for another early Osakan grindcore band, Stubborn Father. He would not tell me his occupation and regularly used heroin. He did not speak English. His
younger brother was known as ‘Bâbon’ (‘bourbon’) due to his position as the *kohai* supplier of whiskey shots to *sempai* bands performing at Hokage. Bâbon worked as the door person at Hokage, spoke no English and regularly complained that he was not earning enough money. He was not in a band but was a keen fan of *burutaru* music and sometimes left the door unattended so as to enjoy the *raibu* himself.

I also interviewed four other Osakan fans of grindcore. The first was Yumi, a 23 year old *furîtâ* who lived at home with her parents. *A furîtâ* (a combination of ‘free’ and the German word for work, *arbeiter*) refers to young people who are outside the standard *kaisha* (company) employment system. They work in un- or low-skilled professions such as in retail or as wait-staff. Yumi worked purely to support her love of grindcore, and death metal. She saved money earned from working at a ‘100 ¥’ shop, bakery and a plastic food modelling workshop to travel all over Japan, and the world, to see her favourite bands. She spoke some English – taught to her by American fans she met when travelling around the United States.

The only other Japanese female scene-member I interviewed was Yôko. Unlike Yumi, she was employed by a *kaisha* as an ‘OL’ (‘Office Lady’) or administrative assistant. She was 30 years old, and only attended *raibu* on weekends due to her busy work schedule. Yôko hoped that, one day, she would be in a band, but was happy travelling around Kansai to see her favourite performers. Yôko did not speak English.

The final two fans I interviewed were Fujî Mitsuyuki and Ryûchi. Fujî was a nurse for physically disabled people and was 37 years old. He spoke some English and preferred to be called by his chosen English name of ‘Mike’. Mike was a fan of palm and attended all their *raibu* in Osaka. Never one to let work interfere with his
passion for grindcore, he regularly brought his wheelchair bound patients to *raibu*. Mike was married, with two children. In the Osakan scene, marriage was unusual, Sensei was twice divorced, but none of the other performers were married. Ryûchi, another fan, was married. He was 36 years old and ran a small bar called ‘Jokerman’ in AmeMura, around the corner from Hokage and Shinkagura. Ryûchi’s bar specialised in playing grindcore and punk music, as well as 1960s American folk rock. Ryûchi was passionate about Osaka’s scene and regularly attended gigs and sometimes hosted bands for *uchiage* (after party) at Jokerman. He also sold Japanese pressings of Western grindcore music to a global market. He was a former member of the Japanese Communist Party.

I also interviewed two *gaijin* in Osaka. Ant and Lucy were a married couple who were members of Melbourne’s scene and had moved to Osaka to work as English teachers. They were both 30 years old, and had completed university degrees. Ant and Lucy had both been in bands in their hometown of Hobart, Tasmania, as well as in Melbourne. Once they moved to Osaka, they had formed a new band, with another Australian *gaijin*, called ‘Thrall’. Thrall played a number of *raibu* at Hokage and Club Socio. After two years of living in Japan, they returned to Melbourne in 2010.

### 4.4 Primary data analysis

After translation and transcription, I studied my data closely, highlighting responses that related to the key ideas, which inform this thesis. That is, responses that speak to the following questions:
• How do grindcore scene-members constitute, experience and comprehend affective belonging in the scene?

and

• How is belonging in grindcore different to that in other music scenes (how is it brutal)?

My primary data source was participant-sensing due to its grounding in NRT and privileging of affective experiences. I supplemented this with interviews and a questionnaire. I also conducted a survey of grindcore scenic materials, mostly text-based, as a way of contextualising scenic culture in both cities. In particular, I looked at gig/live fliers, zines produced by scene-members (Long Gone Loser in Melbourne and kreativ in Osaka); and websites focusing on grindcore in both cities (including Grindhead Records; band MySpace and facebook pages such as Aussie Crust and Grind; and venue webpages). My interest in this textual data followed the same imperatives as my participant-sensing material. I analysed these sources for articulations of the experience of brutal belonging.

CONCLUSION

So far, my approaches are derived from the NRT methodologies outlined above.

How will my approach differ? Further, what does it add to scholarship in cultural studies, ethnography and NRT? Firstly, my work is concerned with two, transnational spaces. The NRT practitioners who write on music privilege the ‘flows’ of the ethnographic field. However, this work remains bound to particular local spaces, or even particular venues and events. For example, Duffy focuses on Daylesford’s festivals in Victoria, and Morton limits her work to Galway pubs. My
thesis will foreground the flows – of people, objects and music – that constitute multiple grindcore spaces and build scene-members’ experiences of brutal belonging. These spaces are material (such as pubs and raibuhausu), but also virtual (such as online and in scene-members’ imaginations).

Further, while the NRT theorists above account for the flow of individuals in and out of music-spaces, the wider transnational networks that inform such movements, and indeed the music itself, is left unaccounted for. I rectify this absence, by positioning grindcore within wider economic and cultural transnational networks of exchange. Thus, I wish also to trouble the flows, often unproblematically put forward in NRT.

My project is also the first to apply NRT ethnographic approaches specifically to grindcore and extreme metal music. I propose that grindcore is a potentially fruitful site for an analysis as it defies the unreflexive association between NRT studies, of music and affect, and ‘feminised’ music genres. As noted in Chapter 1, affect is regularly maligned due to its elision with the devalued realm of ‘emotions’ and ‘femininity’. The NRT work on music outlined above focuses on music-forms often coded as ‘soft’, indeed even feminine. Smith looks at classical and Duffy at folk and art music. Of course, I do not wish to position these musical forms as essentially ‘feminine’. All these forms are consumed, and often performed, by men. Simply, I wish to emphasise that, compared with the masculine connotations of rock music (Garber and McRobbie [1975] 1976), these genres are relatively feminised in broader cultural networks of meaning. For example, classical music...
consumption carries particularly passive, that is, feminine, connotations compared with, say, the activity associated with mosh pits at rock concerts.\footnote{I do acknowledge, that rock has been feminised to some extent through emo music – which explicitly mediates rock machismo with feminine ‘emotion’. However, as Aslaksen (2006) points out in his work on emo, this mediation is problematic. Misogyny is worked back into emo discourse through the rehearsal of emotional and physical violence against women in emo lyrics. The women represented in emo lyrics, as Aslaksen notes, are generally framed as ‘deserving’ such violence because they are seen as to blame for the ‘emotional’ heartache etc. that the emo male carries. He draws on bands such as My Chemical Romance and Dashboard Confessional as examples. The idea of the female ‘Jezebel’ is, of course, sexist. Further, emo’s claim to newness is problematic as themes of heartache leading to emotionally charged misogyny make up a core element of rock music. See also Overell (2010) for a discussion of the masculinist discourses of emo in Australia.}

I believe the foregrounded masculinity present in grindcore scenes offers a productive perspective on NRT methodologies. For example, in Duffy, Smith and Wood’s work they unproblematically note that their participants are willing to engage in self-recording their emotions. However, in my fieldwork I found it more difficult for grindcore scene-members to articulate their affective responses to scenic participation. I consider this particularly useful for NRT approaches as it says something about how affect is gendered. Further, work on grindcore indicates how this gendering impinges on individuals’ abilities to outline, indeed represent, how they ‘feel’. I propose that, in a scene, which constitutes and promotes masculinity, it is difficult for participants to engage with practices and feelings coded as ‘feminine’, that is, emotions and affect.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter forms the first in a trio of Chapters in this thesis. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, I will look at how grindcore scene-members constitute, experience and articulate brutal, that is, affective, belonging in Melbourne and Osaka. I follow my definition of ‘brutal belonging’, outlined in the Introduction, as an experience of affective belonging peculiar to the grindcore scene, from which the phrase ‘brutal’ is drawn. Over these three chapters, I move through the spatial, social and transnational modes through which brutal belonging is experienced. Findings in these chapters are based on qualitative data I collected through interviews, questionnaires and participant-sensing.

This chapter is about grindcore spaces – the venues where grindcore is played and consumed. I look at how brutality is represented in grindcore spaces, and how scene-members’ experiences of brutal belonging relate to, and challenge, these representations. This chapter looks at the spaces – the pubs and raibuhousu – that host both cities relatively small grindcore scenes.
Specifically, this chapter asks: How do scene-members experience brutal belonging in relation to particular spaces? I suggest that brutal belonging is less about material places than the abstract intensities of feeling, or affect, generated through participation in grindcore music. To describe these sites of affective belonging, I use Thrift’s (2008) notion of ‘affective spaces’. That is, an ephemeral constitution of a meaningful site, produced through inter-subjective and -objective human practices, which generate affect.

However, I emphasise that grindcore scene-members’ belonging is not necessarily exclusive of ‘representational’ elements. As Thrift points out, affect is inter-relational and self-reflexive (175). The relations between bodies, things and spaces prompt an intensified, though often unconscious, consideration of the self and its location within the world. Within this field are myriad representations and signifiers, which mediate affect. A focus on affect looks for a supplement to representation. Such a focus feels its way to the intensities which signifiers cannot wholly articulate. One can see and interpret the “visible ... outer lining” (177) of a thing, person or space. Yet, this visibility results from ongoing affective processes and encounters that are not (re)cognised, but felt and experienced. In this chapter, I privilege affect in grindcore scenic constitutions of spaces of belonging. However, such affect also inter-mingles with representation.

Firstly, I look more closely at what ‘brutal belonging’ means to scene-members in both cities, and how ‘brutal’ connotes both violence (symbolic or physical), and an affective experience. Then, in section two, I outline the key sites for grindcore

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1 Clough (2007) expresses a similar notion in her work on affect. She writes that affect “might itself be described as marking an intensification of self-reflexivity in information/communication systems, including the human body; in archiving machines, including all forms of media technologies and human memory; in capital flows, including the circulation of value through human labour and technology; and in biopolitical networks of disciplining, surveillance and control” (3).
music in Melbourne and Osaka, and how these spaces signify brutality through representations. However, belonging is not always bound to material sites. Instead, affective encounters constitute transient spaces, which foster belonging so long as scene-members can build, and experience, particular, in this case ‘brutal’, practices. I argue, in section three, that key to belonging in Melbourne and Osaka’s scenes is the constitution of a ‘homely’ (or uchi, in Japanese) feeling in grindcore spaces. I focus on Thrift’s suggestion that affect generates new spaces through an NRT-based analysis of spatial dynamics in the Melbourne and Osaka scenes.

SECTION 1: SIGNIFYING BRUTALITY

1.1: Brutal representations

Grindcore scene-members constitute and experience belonging through the generation of an affective intensity, which I label ‘brutal’. However, brutal is also a linguistic signifier. Melbourne’s and Osaka’s scenes, use brutal representationally in similar ways. In this section, I look closely at how both scenes use brutal linguistically. Here, ‘brutal’ represents scene-members’ subcultural capital, which helps signify their membership in the scene.

‘Brutal’ is a word commonly used in metal cultures, especially grindcore. It works homologously as part of a wider scenic language which emphasises ‘outsider-ness’ through representations of violent transgression. Brutal fits with album covers (and tee-shirts, and stickers, and artwork) depicting murder (Die Pigeon Die 2008; Infernal Revulsion 2010), and songs that sample horror movies (Blood Duster 1996; Blood Duster 1998). Though it is an English word, it is used in non-English speaking scenes, such as in Mexico (Aldebaranus 2012) and in the Czech Republic.
In Melbourne, and Osaka, ‘brutal’, or ‘burutaru’ in Japan, is a key part of grindcore scenic argot. It is polysemous; it is a welcoming salutation, similar to ‘hello’ and a way of praising a particular artist, as these ‘posts’ on Infernal Revulsion’s and FID’s MySpace pages show:

- **HEY GOOD BRUTAL SOUND** *(Raped By Pigs)*
  
you guys are fucking sick! alot [sic] better than the heaps of shit being released these days!

- **KANSAI BRUTAILITY!!** *(Purpuric Cytoskeletal Glucid Oxidise)*
  
Really great and killer musick [sic]! Stay fucking BRUTAL! *(Brutalpussy)*

- **Stay brutal .. Bloody Regards. (BLOODLUST)*** *(Infernal Revulsion 2010)*
  
- **[What’]sup you brutal cunts. ... been on the us [sic] tour yet??? (Empty The Throne)*
  
hey brotherssss ... i like your fucking noissee!! stay brutal, your sicks friends from mexxxico *(Gore and Carnage)*

- **So brutal! thanks for the add and long li** e to you! *(Eating Shit)*

- **THANKS FOR THE FUCKIN ADD! BRUTAL AS FUCK. I LOVE IT! STAY PISSED! (Patrick Hewlett)*** *(Fuck ... I’m Dead 2010)*

These examples demonstrate the grindcore lexicon. Brutal works syntagmatically alongside other words, with violent or obscene connotations, re-signified to indicate admiration of a band. It is notable, also, that the comments are made by Western as well as non-English speaking background bands – from Slovenia (Purpuric Cytoskeletal Glucid Oxidise), Mexico (Gore and Carnage) and France (Eating Shit).

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2 These are just two examples chosen due to the relative popularity of Mexican and Czech grindcore in the global scene. The word ‘brutal’ is also found in other non-English speaking grindcore scenes.
In both Melbourne and Osaka, it is a commendation to yell ‘brutal’ at the end of a set. It positions the performers as authentic grindcore musicians and scene-members. Fans measure authenticity – and worthiness for the label ‘brutal’ – by the speed and perceived skill of play:

[Br]utal 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, Melbourne, via email).

[W]e got a very good reaction [at our first gig], even though ... none of them knew our songs. But, they really got into it. ‘Cause we were like the first guttural ... brutal ... metal band in Osaka (Nobu, Osaka).

The names of live events in both cities also use a similarly brutal vocabulary. For example, venues in Melbourne have hosted gigs named ‘Flesh Ripping Sonic Torment’ (The Arthouse, July 2003) and ‘A Night of Pure Hatred’ (The Tote, 2008). In Osaka, event names included ‘Fuck Gig’ (Hokage, 2010); ‘Kansai Brutal Reign’ (Hokage, 2009) and the annual ‘Brutal Golden Massacre’ event (Hokage, May 2009 and 2010).

Brutal, however, often extends beyond the commendation of a particular musician or group. For many scene-members, it is used in everyday life to indicate something they enjoy, or like:

Brutal = The best; in the best possible way incompassing [sic] all elements or being the best (Shawn, Melbourne, via email).

Brutal means to me something that is good (Andy, Melbourne, via email).
In Osaka, *burutaru* regularly peppered scene-members’ Japanese conversations, outside of discussions of *raibuhousu* and music. I heard *burutaru* used to describe clothing, alcohol and even a scene-member’s preference for extra mayonnaise on his *okonomiyaki* (Japanese omelette).

Brutal is such a commonplace word in grindcore that, for some scene-members, it works as a synonym for grindcore. Nobu, above, describes his band not as ‘grindcore’ but as “brutal metal”. Andy, lead singer of Melbourne band FID, shares a similar sentiment:

> Brutal definitely means awesome and, of course, what grind is also *(Andy, Melbourne, via email)*.

Crucially, scene-members emphasise that these significations of violence remain at a distance from ‘real’ behaviour in the scene. In Melbourne, scene-members stressed that grindcore was not a violent scene:

> I reckon in the five years, or whatever, I’ve been going to grind gigs, I have probably seen less than five fights *(Will, Melbourne)*.

> I’ve only really seen one serious incident of violence. Like, that is pretty – it’s a pretty good indicator that, generally, the crowd is fairly mellow *(Carsten, Melbourne)*.

Only once, during fieldwork in Melbourne, did I witness violence and it was instigated by a touring American band (Insect Warfare) who were widely disliked due to their right-wing political stances and their aggression towards women:

> Unfortunately there was a blue [Australian slang for fight] after the show, involving a moshing dispute and, surprisingly, Christoph [a member of Roskopp]. Someone, according to Simon [a member of Shagnum] a neo-Nazi band-member from Insect Warfare, had knocked his girlfriend *(Melbourne field-notes, 2nd March 2008)*.
One scene-member, Andy, emphasised the distance between the Melbourne scene and the touring band by focusing on Insect Warfare’s “full Texan” identity:

When Insect Warfare come over here – their drummer was right-wing as! Like – full Texan – talking to us about ‘goin’ huntin’. Like, he offended my girlfriend so bad – she _hated_ him – ‘oh he’s a fucking redneck asshole!’ You know, he’s going on about how many guns he’s got. He goes ‘if you come to the States, you’ve gotta come to my ranch and we’ll go shootin’’. He had a ranch and everything – it’s fucking weird that he plays in a grindcore band (Andy, Melbourne).

It is also notable that Andy was at pains to distance the band from grindcore, as a whole. He stresses that it was unusual (“weird”) for a grindcore band to harbour conservative members. In fact, some scene-members felt physical violence was a justified response to what they deemed as politically incorrect behaviour:

This band, Kutabare, played, you know, a grind band, but, their singer used to be in Bestial Warlust which is one of those, sort of, real war – right-wing sort of thing. ... But um, yeah apparently – after that show Fab from Vaginal Carnage was living in trees [as part of an anti-logging campaign] at that point ... and one of his hippie friends came along, who was wearing a dress or something like that. One of these guys who came to see Kutabare – thinking it’s a black metal band maybe – was like ‘Oh look at this fucking faggot’ or something. And so Fab – who’s a fucking hot-head – but he’s a nice guy. He arked up [became angry] and started yelling and it ended up with this huge brawl that got really nasty (Carsten, Melbourne).

Melbourne scene-members also manage to distance their repeated linguistic references to violence, from brutal physical violence through parody. That is, participants regularly said they were ‘aware’ of the blunt violent connotations of scenic discourse, but minimised it as ‘a joke’: 
A guy in Sydney … did a zine – a hardcore zine – picking on Vaginal Carnage saying ‘we shouldn’t accept this misogyny; this woman-bashing music blah, blah, blah’. And then he – Chris [the vocalist from Vaginal Carnage] got really upset! He was like: ‘all our songs are about toilets and farts and shit like that’ (Carsten, Melbourne).

[T]hey’re just joke lyrics, things we find – poo bum dicky wee jokes – things – a 16-year-old humour. … Because the last record was, ahh … half of it was political and half of it was gore and, you know, violence inspired, I guess (Leon, Melbourne).

In Osaka, I witnessed violence more often at lives. In fact, during the 1990s and early 2000s, the scene had a reputation as violent. However, scene-members played down contemporary eruptions of aggression as being ‘old school’, perpetrated by outsiders to the scene and antithetical to current scenic culture:

He was pretty old school [a former ‘leader’ in the scene] – you know with, um, violent, with his fist … Now, everything’s changed, he’s gone. … And me and Katsu and everyone else is pretty, kind of, friendly guys (Nobu, Osaka).

Things are really peaceful now, but we experience[d] that kind of violent thing when we are [sic] young … I was suffering from the – kind of ah – people telling me ‘I don’t want to go to that show, where people are, like, smacking each other’. ‘… So, um – what we are telling people now is ‘please enjoy the way you want’ and don’t, you know – you can just stand and watch, or you can do the mosh, or you can headbang – it’s up to you. But, just enjoy (Kaz, Osaka).

[Speaking about a male scene-member who began a fight] I think maybe he would [have] be[en] drunk. [This action is n]ot usual in our scene (Kôki, Osaka).*§

1.2: Melbourne: intertextual brutality

In Melbourne, scene-members’ competence in the English language meant their definition of brutal also incorporated intertextual, everyday understandings, of
brutality. That is, brutal represented the aggression and violence present in, say, media accounts of ‘brutal’ crimes, generally committed by men, against women:

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

[I]t can be a – a bad thing ... a brutal bashing (Jim, Melbourne).

In fact, Melbourne’s grindcore lyricists cited media representations of crime as an influence on their writing:

[L]ike, ahh ... I read about [it] in some ... I don’t know, I found it pretty disturbing where, like, two 16 year olds ... held up a service station with a diseased blood syringe. ... And I go ‘fuck – that’s so fucked up - these young, young girls’. ... So, I have to write about it. It’s good copy (Will, Melbourne).

[The song, 'Barefoot and Shitfaced' is about] junkie mothers. Well, that's from an article – I read an article in the newspaper and it ... actually said 'she was barefoot and shitfaced'. I was like – that’s the best idea for a song ever! ... It was in the [daily tabloid newspaper] Herald Sun! ... It was about, like – housing commission people – about how they live their lives. I actually think it was actually a quote of someone going [puts on a working-class Australian accent] ‘ahhh she was barefoot and shitfaced’ [laughs].

... [T]here’s one song recently that I saw on, um – pro- well I got the idea from [commercial television programme] Crime Investigations Australia. About this guy who was called ‘The Mornington Monster’ ... And he killed ... his wife and kids with a bloody, um, spear gun (Andy, Melbourne).

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3 'Shitfaced' is Australian slang for drunk or stoned.
4 The ‘Housing Commission of Victoria’ was a state government body begun in 1938 and tasked with the provision of public housing for Victorian residents in a low socio-economic bracket. Public housing estates were erected in many Melbourne suburbs and some regional areas. Since the 1960s, the architecture generally followed the ‘high-rise’ model used in the United Kingdom and North America. Though the Housing Commission has since become the Office of Housing, and no longer follows the high-rise model, the phrase ‘Housing Commission’ remains common in Victorian parlance to signify public housing projects, usually in a negative manner.
Again, particularly in Andy’s case, the actual violence of the crime is deflected onto a parodic ‘joke’, complete with the appropriate ‘impressions’ accent. Violent signifiers in lyrics and other band material were also sometimes justified through the anarchist revolutionary politics that gave rise to grindcore. Scene-members who identified as politically left-wing radical felt that violence was a necessary part of revolutionary change, and this was reflected in the lyrics of Andy’s earlier band, Heads Kicked Off, with songs such as ‘Ignored Fascism’ (1997) and EPs such as *East Timor: A Nation Betrayed* (ibid.). According to Andy, the former singer and lyricist for Heads Kicked Off, the violence represented in the songs was a necessary part of addressing “social issues”:

> [T]he lyrics in that band, I actually sat down and wrote about social issues and things that were going on. ... you know, two bands [Open Wound and Heads Kicked Off] I’ve been in have been very political – very left-wing *(Andy, Melbourne)*.

He went on to say that his current band, FID, was more inspired by reports of brutal crime than everyday “things … going on”. He associated this shift in style with what he deemed a less “smart” approach to politics:

> I still got all the lyrics at home. I read them sometimes and go ‘you were actually being smart – instead of being a dickhead’ [laughs] *(Andy, Melbourne)*.

### 1.3: Osaka – borrowed brutality

In Japan, grindcore fans are generally not fluent in the English language. *Burutaru* is an English loan word in Japanese. This status adds another layer of significance to brutal’s linguistic meaning in Osaka’s grindcore scene. Other loan words used in Osaka’s scene belong in the same violent lexicon as brutal (such as the event names listed above).
A loan word is a non-Japanese word that has become incorporated into Japanese language. Japan began using loan words over 2,000 years ago, after interactions with modern Korea and China (De Mente 2004; Hall 1983). Prior to the period of seclusion, the Japanese language also adopted Portuguese words from traders (De Mente 2004). However, post-Meiji and particularly after World War II, the Japanese language has mostly borrowed from English (resulting in a large set of vocabulary known as *wasei eigo* – literally ‘borrowed English’). Loan words proliferate in advertising and media. English signifies Western culture, cosmopolitanism, sophistication and, even, happiness (De Mente 2004; McConnell 2000). Matsue (2009) claims English loan words in non-mainstream music scenes also build scene-members’ subcultural capital. English connotes distance from J-pop songs, which she perceives as being usually in Japanese, save for the chorus hook (130). Stevens (2008) disagrees in her research on Japanese pop, which demonstrates the regular use of *wasei eigo* in contemporary J-pop. Stevens does, however, concur that English usage grants performers cultural capital (134).

It is important to note that loan words often do not retain exactly the same meaning in Japanese as they do in English. Usually, English is used in an incongruous manner, due to the Japanese emphasis more on what ‘English’ as a concept implies, rather than the specific meaning of the word. This presents an interesting counter to stereotyped perceptions of Japan as a ‘nation of copiers’ (cf. De Mente, 2004). As Cox (2008) points out, Japanese appropriation of other

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5 Of course, the strongest example of this is the Japanese *kanji* (characters), which is, in fact, Chinese characters.

6 This is the subject of countless ‘quirky Japan’ articles and blogs, poking fun at so-called ‘Japlish’ or ‘Janglish’. For example, see the ‘Japlish’ website (Flack nd) and the ‘Janglish Signs and Products’ entry on the ‘Tubby Gaijin’ blog (Tubby Gaijin 2010). 'Engrish' is another derogatory term for Japanese use of English, explicitly referring to Japanese people's supposed inability to pronounce the English 't' sound. See Engrish.com (Engrish.com 2012). Stevens (2008) also discusses 'Japlish' in her book on popular Japanese music.
culture's technologies, words and customs comprises a specific type of incorporation that reworks the 'copied' object as 'Japanese'. Further, it is important to note the racist implications of the assumption that the Japanese are, as De Mente so bluntly puts it, “copycats” (2004). This stands in contrast to the dominant understanding of appropriation practices of the West, which is assumed to appropriate, improve and take on as their own, other cultural products.

Iwabuchi’s (2002) work on ‘Japanisation’ further challenges the copycat stereotype. He suggests that Japanese appropriation of Western cultural practices and materials involves a process of Japanisation. This renders products, paradoxically, simultaneously “culturally odourless” (mukokuseki) (28) and subtly Japanese. Thus, such products seem neither Western, nor strongly Japanese; neither old original, nor new copy. Instead, according to Iwabuchi, Japanisation involves a process of transculturation that “creat[es] a new style” (40).

In Osaka’s scene, burutaru is not always understood as implying violence and aggression. It is usually not linked with violent crime in popular, as well as scenic, culture. Rather, it comes to signify authentic ‘grindcore-ness’, in the scene, due to its association with Western grindcore scenes. As Nobu, a Japanese-Australian Osakan scene-member, points out, there is a perception in the Japanese grindcore scene that singing in Japanese does not ‘fit’ the genre, because it is originally Western:

‘Cause it doesn’t fit to a grindcore song. Musically it doesn’t fit (Nobu, Osaka).

7 There were, however, exceptions to this: in a participant-sensing interview with Fukuda, he described his performance as ”Brutal. Psycho – to the max"*. Notably, despite the rest of his recording being in Japanese, these words were in English.
Stevens’ participants, in her research on Japanese pop and rock music, expressed a similar sentiment. One composer noted that “Japanese … doesn’t match music easily” (2008, 135). English, however, according to her informant, is “easier” (136) to match to a pop or rock melody.\(^8\) This attitude differs from Japanese hip-hop, where, despite ostensibly being a ‘Western’ genre, most emcees rap in Japanese language (Condry 2006).\(^9\)

Another motivation for Osakan grindcore bands to sing in English, and enhance their brutal authenticity, was their ambitions to gain popularity in Western countries:

[T]hey want their … band to be big, and [they] want to go all over the world. So, they have to sing in English. I guess so (Yumi, Osaka).

SECTION 2: GRINDCORE PLACES

The linguistic signifier of ‘brutal’ is also used to describe the sites where grindcore music is performed and consumed. In this section, I begin by outlining the key grindcore venues in Melbourne and Osaka. Following from this, I look at how two venues – The Green Room in Melbourne and Jokerman in Osaka – attempted to build brutality, and interpolate scene-members to belong, through material representations of ‘brutal-ness’. In this section, I focus on places, as embedded in representation. In the next section, I turn to spaces that enable the experience of brutal belonging.


\(^9\) Sterling (2010) also looks at the role of language in Japanese music appropriated from non-Japanese cultures. In his discussion of reggae music in Japan he notes that Japanese language is used, but it is, however, combined with Jamaican patois as a means for claiming authentic ‘reggae’ identity. See his chapter ‘Music and Orality: authenticity in Japanese sound system culture’ (63-99).
2.1 Melbourne places

Since 2005, numerous grindcore venues in Melbourne have closed. DIY venues such as the Pink Palace, in Northcote, and Catfood Press, in Brunswick, were pushed out after numerous noise complaints and a tightening of planning laws (Overell 2009). Licensed venues, such as The Green Room, also closed due to noise complaints (Judd 2005). Thus, scene-members had to make do with venues less focused on extreme metal and punk music.

The grindcore spaces briefly summarised below are primarily venues located in Melbourne’s CBD (The Green Room, Hi-Fi Bar and Ballroom, Pony), the inner Northern suburbs (After Dark, The Arthouse, The East Brunswick Club, The Tote) and the inner Southern suburbs (The Corner Hotel). Please refer to Figure 2.1, in Chapter 2. I also describe a transient space – in the inner north – underneath a busy traffic overpass, which works as another site for the dissemination of grindcore music and the constitution of scenic belonging. The concentration of venues in the CBD and just directly north of that area reflects the residence of the majority of Melbourne scene-members.

The Green Room opened in the middle of Melbourne’s CBD in 2003. During this period, the local council relaxed liquor and planning laws. This allowed dozens of ‘micro-bars’ to open up in retail and industrial spaces left vacant by Melbourne’s shift towards creative industries. The new bars catered to a younger clientele, rather than the working-class and public service patrons whom CBD pubs traditionally served. Melbourne’s revitalisation included typical elements of gentrification (Smith 1999). Most of these new spaces were located in ‘seedy’ parts
of the CBD, which, through the increased presence of younger, multiethnic, and wealthier people, were re-signified as cosmopolitan.

The Green Room was located in such a part of town – near the central railway station, at the intersection of Flinders and Elizabeth Streets. However, unlike other CBD spaces, it has yet to experience gentrification and the ascent to cosmopolitan status. Instead, The Green Room area was, and in 2012 still is, the site of $1 pizza slices, bong shops and 'liberated' bookshops. Further, The Green Room was located in the basement of ‘The Joint’ complex – a building housing a youth hostel, bottle shop (liquor store) and a discotheque. To indicate something of the calibre of this building, it is notable that The Green Room was formerly a TAB betting venue (Hicken 2004).10

The venue was accessible by lift from the disco and hostel above, as well as down stairs from street level. Its layout differed markedly from older pub-venues, in that The Green Room was L-shaped. When you entered via the stairs, turning left yielded a small stage area and P. A. A right turn led down an empty passageway ending at a long bar and a ‘lounge area’ with chairs. Most interesting were the dozens of televisions mounted on its walls – left over from the space’s days as a betting venue. The Green Room was primarily a live metal venue. It hosted gigs as well as metal DJs and was open until the early hours of the morning. The Green Room closed in 2005, after repeated noise complaints from its neighbours, including the hostel upstairs (ibid.). At present, the space operates as a strip club.

10 As the venue's former manager and band booker describes it, The Green Room space "was a worn out, torn down gambling venue" (Judd 2005).
The Tote hotel, in the inner-northern suburb of Collingwood, is another key grindcore venue. It is located on the corner of Johnston and Wellington Streets. Warehouses, public housing and the ubiquitous $1 pizza-slices surround it.

Collingwood is a traditionally working-class area that, only recently, has begun experiencing gentrification (realestatetaste.com.au 2012). The Tote is an old hotel, first opening in the 1870s (The Tote Hotel nd). It operated as a working-class pub named ‘The Ivanhoe’ until the early 1980s when it was sold and redecorated as a band venue. At this time, it was renamed ‘The Tote’, after the ‘Totaliser’ illegal betting shop, which ran during the early 20th-century and was located nearby The Tote hotel (ibid.).

The Tote has a front-bar, which still caters for many working-class locals. Behind the bar is a band-room with a slightly raised stage and an adjacent bar area. This room opens onto a courtyard loosely described as a 'beer garden'. Upstairs, is a cocktail bar ‘The Cobra Lounge’, decorated with kitsch 1950s décor. It also has a small, audience level, performance space.

Unlike The Green Room, The Tote hosts various music genres. Grindcore acts regularly played in the 1990s. Later, though, performances at The Tote shifted towards hard rock, downstairs and post-rock upstairs in The Cobra Bar. However, grindcore bands still occasionally play there, though they are usually relegated to Monday and Tuesday night slots.


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11 The same totaliser, run by John Wren, was immortalised in Frank Hardy's (2000 [1950]) novel Power Without Glory. See the Collingwood Historical Society (2011) for more information.
12 An exception to this is the 2011–2012 New Year’s Eve gig, organised by local band Blood Duster which featured a grindcore line-up as well as 'Dirty Punk Mutha', a cover band of Melbournian early stoner/grindcore band, Christbait.
2009, 2). Following a vocal campaign against the licensing laws generally (Ranger 2008; Wotherspoon 2008) and The Tote particularly (Murfett 2010; Wood 2010), it shut down on January 12th 2010 only to reopen again, under new management, later that year. Grindcore gigs are less frequent in The Tote’s new incarnation; however, it is widely regarded as a ‘classic’ venue by Melbourne scene-members:

[T]he Tote is a great place to see a band, it’s got an excellent system there … out the front [of the stage] it always sounds excellent (Carlos, Melbourne).

The Corner Hotel is in Richmond, an inner southern suburb with a strong working class history. Like The Tote, its history stretches back to the nineteenth century (Johnston 2005). Up until the late 1990s, The Corner was a working-man’s pub that drew most of its business from the nearby Richmond train station and patrons of AFL matches nearby. Though there was an ample band room on the ground floor, bad management had allowed it to languish until renovations in 1995 (ibid.). For many scene-members, their early memories of The Corner are of a derelict pub covered in graffiti. The Corner’s rough image complemented its 1980s, and early 1990s, clientele, made up mainly of local working-class men and punk squatters. It hosted crusty punk and thrash metal gigs, which some of the older grindcore scene-members attended. For these older scene-members, The Corner was often their first encounter with live grindcore music:

[G]oing to see Blood Duster more than anything [got me involved in the scene]. When they first started in – I was into – I’ve been into sort of metal since probably eight-years-old, ’cause my brother was fifteen years older than me. … And he’d be playing it in his room. I

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13 Seminal Melbourne grindcore band Spiderbait was included in the ‘final gig’ bill.
14 This seedy image was so notorious that Mick Jagger chose it as a humorous venue for a ‘secret’ solo gig in 1988 (Johnston 2005).
15 During the 1980s and 90s, Richmond was a key site for crusty punk squatters and anarchist political organising, and bands such as Heads Kicked Off were based in the suburb (Overell 2009).
was always wanting to go and see shows when I was a kid. And ’cause I’m – I’m bigger – like I’d sneak in – I used to be able to sneak in to over-age shows pretty easily ... I remember when – [I used to] sneak into The Corner hotel when I was fourteen, but I was six foot at fourteen, so [laughs] (Andy, Melbourne).

The Corner’s renovation, in the early 2000s, indicates the wider process of gentrification that occurred in Richmond. The suburb shifted from working-class to one of Melbourne’s more expensive inner city areas (realestaste.com.au 2012a). However, pockets of Richmond remained, and remain, seedy. Like Collingwood, Richmond has a large public housing estate. The area where The Corner is located is chequered. Expensive cafes sit beside kebab bars and the large discount sundries shop ‘Dimmeys’. This contradiction is crucial for gentrification to occur. The titillation of the perceived ‘danger’ of working-class culture is requisite for building a gentrified area’s image as ‘interesting’ and ‘risky’ (Smith 1999).

The Corner reflects this contrast in its renovated layout. It is a doubled-storeyed pub. Downstairs is the former workers’ haunt – the ‘Front Bar’. It is a grubby room with fraying carpet, booth seating, a cigarette machine and an automated teller machine. Next door is the band-room. There are two raised stages, with a bar at the back of the room. The space is grimy. The carpet is soaked in beer. It sticks to your shoes.16 Upstairs, however, represents the ‘new’ Richmond. Here, is a renovated restaurant and beer garden. The menu is expensive, the furniture modish, and the area decorated with palm pot-plants. However, what most reflects the contradiction of gentrification is that the same middle-class clientele frequent both storeys of The Corner. Downstairs ‘seediness’ becomes proof of the venue’s live

16 The stickiness of The Corner’s carpet is so notorious that Melbourne’s daily newspaper, The Age named their live gig reviews section ‘Sticky Carpet’ in its ‘honour’ (Fitzsimmons 2010; Sticky Carpet nd).
music authenticity – an attractive selling point to some recent home-buyers in the area.\footnote{As one online review put it, The Corner “feature[es] ... a grungy rock’n’roll [sic] front-bar and a world class bandroom”  (247Network 2008).} This, of course, indicates the complex and uneven geographies of gentrified spaces. That is, authentic ‘character’ is generated through the incorporation of local working-class cultures. In turn, working-class residents are unwelcome in reified appropriations of their spaces. Though they remain, at least for a little while, in newly gentrified spaces, working-class residents are often relegated to the edges of an area (Krims 2007; Smith 1999). The area around the public housing estate remains a working-class space. Any other presence becomes a nostalgic novelty – such as Dimmeys – or simulated – as in The Corner’s Front Bar.

Musically, The Corner has shifted from the punk scene of the 1980s and 1990s. It has hosted international rock bands as well as local jazz, rock and acoustic acts. It still occasionally hosts grindcore bands – particularly overseas acts, such as Napalm Death. Most importantly, The Corner is the site of the ‘Grindcore’ event organised by Melbourne grindcore label NER. The venue’s association with ‘big name’ performers lent the ‘Grindcore’ event an authenticity its organisers felt would not have been garnered at a smaller venue:

[T]he other thing I like about having it at The Corner, like, to make it – to make the event, like, more special, you know? ... [Y]ou know lots of people that would be exposed to their music – that might not otherwise come to a ... kind of a [another Melbourne venue] Pony show, or whatever (Shawn, Melbourne).

The Arthouse (Figure 3.1) was another “alternative music venue” (The Arthouse Hotel and Backpackers 2009) which, like The Green Room, has closed down. Along with The Tote, scene-members considered it one of the premier grindcore venues
in Melbourne. It was located in the former Royal Artillery Hotel in North Melbourne – a working-class Protestant pub that operated from the mid-19th, until the late 20th century (Parliament of Victoria 2004). The pub was multi-storeyed, in the style of colonial period hotels. In 1991, the Kelly family purchased the hotel, renamed it The Arthouse and redesigned its interior as a band venue downstairs and youth hostel upstairs. Similar to the other venues discussed, The Arthouse was in a slowly gentrifying area, though there remains some industrial activity nearby.

![Figure 3.1: The Arthouse hotel in North Melbourne, 2005. The line-up, written on the chalk board, advertises a gig with Melbournian and Osakan bands. (Photograph: Duncan Box).](image)

The Kellys divided the ground floor into two areas. On one side was a small bar, raised stage and a large P. A.; on the other was a room with chairs and 1980s video games. There were various colourful murals on the walls and tie-dyed material covering the ceiling, cultivating a ‘hippie’ aesthetic. Upstairs was a beer garden, a recording studio and the hostel. From the outset, The Arthouse hosted grindcore bands, because the Kellys were fans of that music. Because of this, some Melbourne scene-members consider it as having the best sound system for grindcore in the city:
I mean The Arthouse is good and it’s got a kind of P. A. that’s too big for the room. So, it always sounds great and it’s really loud (Shawn, Melbourne).

But, it’s a great – it’s a great room, it’s a great P. A. – I’ve seen heaps of great shows there (Carsten, Melbourne).

Its redesign by the Kelly family was contemporaneous with the inception of Melbourne’s first grindcore bands. The Arthouse also had a ‘regulars’ ten-pin bowling team, which included a number of grindcore scene-members. There was little security at The Arthouse and Kelly family members mostly staffed the bar. The Arthouse was, like The Corner, often the first over-age venue scene-members attended:

I started going to hardcore shows when I was about sixteen, and they were like under-age sort of – all ages kind of DIY shows and there was a few grind bands playing there, like Warsore and Unit 174 and, I think when I was about eighteen, I started going to The Arthouse more and seeing more of those shows and sort of ended up more into that style (Carsten, Melbourne).

The Arthouse closed on the 1st of May 2011, its final gig featuring a complete line-up of Melbourne grindcore bands.

Scene-members also attended and performed at other band venues. Pony (Figure 3.2), located in the Melbourne CBD, is an all-night “rockin” bar with a low stage (Pony 2011). After-dark is a bar in the inner-city suburb of Thornbury. It also has an audience level stage and, like The Tote, hosts a variety of acts, including grindcore. The East Brunswick Club is a renovated pub in the inner-north that has a raised stage and a large performance area. It also features various genres of music, including folk and reggae, as well as grindcore. Hi-Fi Bar and Ballroom (Hi-Fi) is in Melbourne’s CBD. It is a large venue that often hosts overseas metal and
grindcore (as well as pop and alternative) acts. Local bands, usually in a ‘support’ role, occasionally play at Hi-Fi. It has a raised stage. During the 1990s, it hosted the ‘Hell’ club night once a week, which specialised in extreme-metal performances and DJs.

Figure 3.2: Shagnum play at Pony Bar, in the CBD, 2005

In my final example of grindcore scenic spaces in Melbourne, I look at a space never intended to host musical performances. ‘Bridge Gigs’ take place intermittently – underneath an overpass which lies between the inner-northern, and gentrifying, suburbs of Northcote and Clifton Hill (Figure 3.3). The overpass spans four lanes, with a small traffic island in the middle. The bridge, made from bricks and concrete, crosses the Merri Creek. Underneath the bridge is a riverbank covered in sand, dirt and weeds. Access underneath is difficult. One must enter from a residential street, navigate a steep, muddy slope and make one’s way covertly across building works through a cyclone wire fence. Once on the bank, it is a short walk to directly underneath the bridge.

Bridge gigs are relatively spontaneous eruptions – decided upon the morning of, or a few days preceding, the event. Organisers carry down amplifiers and P.A.s and set up using a generator. There is no advertising for bridge gigs, as they are illegal.
Instead, organisers circulate details via instant messaging on mobile phones. There is no cover charge and patrons bring their own alcohol. Though illicit, such gigs have never been shut down. The bridge and the traffic above, incubate the surrounding area from hearing the loud music.

Figure 3.3: Thugz ‘n’ Playaz improvise a drum kit, underneath a bridge in Clifton Hill, 2005 (photograph: Duncan Box)

2.2 Osaka places

Like Melbourne, Osaka has a relatively small number of grindcore venues. As outlined in Chapter 2, these raibuhousu are more like small clubs, rather than Australian pubs. While gentrification has affected some raibuhousus’ viability, compared to Melbourne, Osaka’s venues appear more financially stable. The venues described in this sub-section are located in the ‘Amerika Mura’ area in the minami (south) Osaka area of Shinsaibashi, unless otherwise stated. Amerika Mura (AmeMura) is a shopping and entertainment district used primarily by young people. It translates as ‘American Village’ and hosts a number of Western chain-shops and vintage clothing stores selling American retro and Ame-kaji (American
casual) fashions (Osaka Convention and Tourism Bureau 2008; Rowthorn, Bender et al. 2003). It is a popular area for young Osakans to visit, shop and ‘hang out’. As Cameron (2000) points out, AmeMura is considered the most ‘fashionable’ area in Osaka (180), if not Kansai. This is partly due to the presence of clothing shops, but also because AmeMura, and the central, concreted, ‘Triangle Park’ in particular, have become sites for the public display of various subcultural fashion styles. Dubbed sutorîto fasshon (street fashion), AmeMura is an area where ordinary young people show off their particular style and look at others’ fashions. AmeMura is also a tourist attraction. In this space, visitors can “check out the hordes of colourful Japanese” (Rowthorn, Bender et al. 2003, 389). AmeMura has a number of live music venues ranging from small, such as the raibuhousu, which feature grindcore music, to large, which host international and Japanese pop and rock acts. The area also has hundreds of small ‘standing bars’ and numerous second-hand record shops, both of which often specialise in particular genres of music, including some which focus on grindcore and extreme metal.

The first venue I wish to introduce is Hokage, which opened in 2006 as part of the ‘Kagura Enterprises’ (KE) complex in AmeMura. KE is a five-storey building housing Hokage (basement floors 2 and 1), an ‘extreme’ clothing shop and jewellers named ‘Peacemaker’ (floor 2),18 Kakurega recording studio and rehearsal space (floor 3) and Shinkagura raibuhousu and bar (floors 4 and 5).19 The fifth floor also hosts the office for KE’s magazine, kreativ, a form of mini-komi (mini-communication media) aimed at a niche market, in this case grindcore scene-

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18 This shop has a close relationship with Kagura enterprises. Peacemaker often sponsors gigs, such as ‘Grand Peace Osaka’ which included Osakan grind/sludge band Birushanah.
19 The first floor is simply an entrance space, of which more will be discussed later, and lift. The space directly above Hokage and below the clothing shop is a hip-hop clothing shop. This shop is not a part of KE.
members. Hokage is open from 4 o’clock in the afternoon and closes when manager, Takeda, is “ready to close”, usually in the early hours of the morning.\textsuperscript{20} Hokage hosts a number of musical styles within the ‘indies band’ (unsigned to a major label) genre, such as noise, punk, crusty punk, shoegaze and stoner-rock music. However, extreme metal acts make up the bulk of its gigs. Notably, grindcore and death metal bands are usually scheduled for the prime Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening slots. Hokage’s rotation specialises in domestic (Japanese) music, particularly Osakan and Kansai acts. Occasionally, overseas bands play. Significantly, during the period of research, roughly half of the foreign bands scheduled at Hokage were from Melbourne.\textsuperscript{21} Hokage, Shinkagura, Kakurega and kreativ are run by scene-member, and KE CEO, Sensei, who also plays bass in Birushanah and was formerly a member of Corrupted.

Like many venues in AmeMura, Hokage is small. To enter, patrons must walk through the entrance space on the first floor. This space is open to the street, where a whiteboard stands with the evening’s gigs listed on it in Japanese and sometimes English. Once inside, there is a small corridor lined with band fliers and posters. To the right is a small stand with current KE fliers, kreativ and an old grey couch. The corridor leads to a lift and a fire escape. Turning right, stairs lead down to the first basement floor. A heavy steel door, also covered in fliers, opens on to a small room, most likely formerly a stock room, converted into a music space. The room is L-shaped. Through the door a left turn leads onto the band area; moving straight-ahead is a small standing area and a very large Western-style bathroom.

\textsuperscript{20} However, I did receive an email from kreativ’s editor informing me that he “drank until noon” (Katsu, Osaka)\textsuperscript{§} after one gig at Hokage.

\textsuperscript{21} The other half were from the USA. The Melbourne bands who played at Hokage during my research were Pisschrist, Agents of Abhorrence, WOG and Heirs.
The live space is not marked by a raised stage. Instead, an area in the back left corner of the room is covered in thick ‘Oriental’ style rugs, on top of which are the venue’s drum kit and amplifiers. To the right is a small, roughly made, mezzanine, which houses the mixing desk. Basic red and white stage-lights and a mirror ball hang from the roof. In between sets, UV-sensitive lights light the area. There is one narrow bench, and one tall circular table, to the right of the stage. Raised, unstable, ashtrays litter the floor area. During a grindcore show, a circle or mosh pit usually forms in front of the performers. The lack of a raised stage means that musicians can easily move into the audience – sometimes becoming a part of the mosh pit – if they like. Audience members who are less keen to mosh congregate around the bench and table, or in the doorway.

Below the performance space, on basement floor two, is Hokage’s bar. Again, entry is gained through a heavy steel door. A sharp left yields two merchandise areas. One is essentially in a crawl space below basement floor one. It has enough room for a small table and a seated merchandise seller. Opposite is a larger table, where the bulk of band merchandise is sold. Behind this is the band area. To the left is a change-room, to the right are large lockers for band-members to place their belongings. Walking back to the large merchandise table, a sharp left reveals Hokage’s sunken bar and mezzanine. The bar and a number of stools lie about three feet below a mezzanine, which hosts tables and chairs. There is also usually another merchandise table on the mezzanine. Next to the bar is a large, sunken, booth table. This is generally occupied by Sensei, band-members or friends of KE staff.
Unlike in Australia (apart from, perhaps, The Arthouse), who runs the raibuhousu is significant to scene-members. This is because almost all the grindcore venues in Osaka are managed or owned by scene-members. Nobu, for example, chose Hokage as his favourite venue because of what he regarded as Sensei’s good taste:

[I prefer Hokage because] the bands that play there, um, are really bands that I like, for instance like, um, Birushanah, of course, palm ... and who else? The bands that Sensei brings – yeah (Nobu, Osaka).

The respect for particular venues due to their management’s perceived status reflects the Japanese cultural institution of sempai (senior)/kôhai (junior) hierarchy. In Melbourne’s scene, there is a notional respect for older scene-members, who are often seen as possessing high subcultural capital. However, in Japan, sempai / kôhai relations are formalised in everyday life (Davies and Ikeno 2002, 188), including in the grindcore scene. In general, Japanese people are obliged to respect their elders through various traditions, including Shinto ancestor acknowledgment and devotion. More recent phenomena, such as corporate capitalism, have incorporated these traditions into a hierarchicised kaisha (company) system where one is expected to ‘know their place’ and work their way up the ranks, with due respect to their (Beholder of The Brutal & Bodacious Beats) boss. Notably, and perhaps because the kaisha system was, and remains, male-dominated, sempai/kôhai refers to men. In fact, beginning in junior high school, Japanese boys are encouraged to refer to older male students with the
suffix 'sempai' as a display of respect. Thus, venues associated with sempai scene-members, such as Sensei, are highly valued by Osakan grindcore fans.

Namba Bears (often abbreviated to Bears) is also run by a scene sempai: a former member of Osakan noise band, Boredoms. Bears opened in 1987 and is also in the Minami area, in the light industrial precinct surrounding Namba station. There are no other raibuhousu in the vicinity. It is open seven days a week, from 6.30pm until “late” (Namba Bears 2010). Bears hosts local Kansai and Osakan bands, as well as numerous bands from overseas. Unlike Hokage, Bears almost exclusively features extreme metal, punk and noise acts. Its long history means scene-members consider Bears the premier raibuhousu in Osaka:

My favourite venue? ... Hmm – now Bears. Namba Bears – because, erm, they have so many metal bands (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Bears is small. On street level, there is no sign saying ’Namba Bears’, simply a steep staircase leading down to a door. During a show, this staircase is usually crowded with fans smoking and drinking. Inside the door, to the left, is a ticket desk. Here, Bears merchandise, such as tee shirts, badges and hats, is also available. On the right is another door, leading to the band/backstage area. Next to the ticket desk is yet another door. This opens onto the performance space. Between both doors is an icebox filled with cans of beer. This is Bears’ bar. They have no contract with a

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22 For example, to a younger student, an older boy named Takahiro (normally Takahiro-san to indicate a person’s name) will be called Takahiro-sempai. Davies and Ikeno (2002) note that in Japanese schools kōhai must “give a small bow or say hello respectfully to their sempai when greeting them” (191). This institutionalized hierarchisation has been criticised recently for enabling ijime or bullying at schools (Onishi, Ogawa et al. 1999; Taki 2001).

23 In Japan, noise music is considered generically similar to grindcore and bands sometimes do lives together.

24 The station building houses three stations (Kintetsu, Nankai and the Osaka city subway) and a bus terminal (OCAT).

25 In Matsue’s study of Tokyo hardcore punk, she quotes one participant’s thoughts on Bears: “at the small, but famous raibuhousu Bears ... the sound was bad, but Bears has the ’best culture’ ... they [the participant’s band] were happy to be back [at Bears] as it is a ’classic place’” (2009, 62).
beer company, so the brand of beer varies from raibu to raibu. Drinks are purchased at the ticket desk.

The performance space is a small, dark, L-shaped, room. On entering, a left turn yields the ‘stage’, a right turn shows the band merchandise area. Walking straight ahead, one finds the Japanese-style toilet. The walls of this space are covered in posters and fliers of previous and future raibu. However, the low lighting makes it difficult to read them. However, the well-lit bathroom features similar wall decoration, which is easily readable. Notably, the posters in the bathroom include fliers for upcoming shows at different Osakan venues, such as Hokage (Figure 3.4). The ‘stage’ area of Bears, like Hokage, is not raised. A number of large amplifiers and the in-house drum-kit designate the stage. To the right of the stage is the mixing desk. Sometimes – if there are many bands performing – there is also a small merchandise table here.

Tall tables are dotted along the walls of the performance space. With no ‘bar’ area, drinkers congregate around these tables. Like at Hokage, circle and mosh pits form in front of the ‘stage’. Those who do not want to mosh lean against the walls, stand behind the amplifiers or at the merchandise tables. If someone is injured in the mosh pit they are usually ushered away by other fans to these ‘non-mosh’ areas.
Studio Partita diverges from the Osakan venues discussed above. It is part of the Art Complex project. This is a privately owned creative company. Art Complex runs a theatre in Kyoto, named ‘Art Complex 1928’ with adjoining artists residences; a 40,000 square metre disused dockyard (Namura) in Osaka which hosts live music, large-scale art exhibitions and festivals; a renovated warehouse (Black Chamber), also near South Osaka’s docks, which has a theatre, numerous artist-run galleries, ateliers, studios and residences; and a bar in central Osaka (Salon). Studio Partita is part of the Namura project. Studio Partita occupies the same space as Namura. It is simply the moniker given Namura when it hosts live music events. Hereafter I will refer to Namura as Studio Partita.

Unlike the other live music venues discussed, Studio Partita is not in central Osaka. It is, however, in Osaka’s south, in the suburb of Kagaya. From the Kagaya subway station, one must walk for ten minutes, following complicated directions outlined on Studio Partita’s website (Art Complex 2007) to reach the dockyard. This area is very open. It has a large shed towards the back, with a big shed frame in front of it. To the left is open space, which drops away to the sea. During an event, makeshift
fences are erected, from construction site supplies, in front of this space. Art Complex staff supervise selling tickets at a small – also temporary – ‘gate’. When a festival occurs, the open space beyond the gate becomes a ‘market place’. Here, vendors sell food, alcohol and merchandise. To the right, in the shed frame, a DJ booth and stage are erected. This area is flood lit and features huge banners advertising Studio Partita’s and Art Complex’s corporate sponsors. Heading further back, towards the actual shed, there is a bar and toilets. Inside the shed is the main stage area. This area is roughly equivalent to a medium sized venue in Australia; it holds 700 people (Art Complex 2007). It has a raised stage, in front of which moshers and dancers gather. During an event, the mosh/dance area is usually very large and energetic.

As it occupies such a large space, Studio Partita is most accommodating to music festivals with many bands, usually with a Western band headlining. Festivals at Studio Partita roughly occur once a month and last all-night (Creative Complex Osaka 2010). The music at such events is usually ‘indies’. Recent and upcoming performers fall into the hip-hop, rock and electronic genres (ibid.). However, Studio Partita also hosts the annual Freestyle Outro music festival. This includes grind-, metal- and hardcore music, graffiti and skateboarding demonstrations, a “block party” and a “foreign food market” (ibid.). In 2010, Freestyle Outro 7 also featured motocross demonstrations.
Other venues mentioned in this chapter, and the following chapters, include Fandango, Club Drop, Shinkagura and Jokerman. Fandango is a punk venue, in the west Osakan suburb of Juso. It has been open since 1987 and has hosted many legendary Japanese and international grindcore acts. In particular, seminal Osakan band S.O.B. considers Fandango their ‘home’ raibu housu and still occasionally performs there, for a greatly reduced cover charge. Although, now, it is run like any other bar business, it began as a co-operative, with local punks organising shows. However, this history remains a strong part of Fandango’s identity as “independent” and “original” (Fandango 2010). Fandango is a large venue, perhaps because of its suburban location, and is tucked down a side street, behind an innocuous and only minimally labelled door. Some of the original punk trappings and practices survive. There are political murals and banners near the stage, and activists often have stands at lives (Figure 3.6). Club Drop is in AmeMura and is a small, underground bar with an ample live performance area.
The final venue, Shinkagura, which is in AmeMura, is a part of KE and also operated by sempai scene-member, Sensei. It opened in 2003, after the owner’s original raibuhousu, ‘Kagura’, closed. Shinkagura is on the fourth and fifth floors of the KE building. From the building’s entrance, patrons must take an external staircase to the fourth floor. During a live, a KE staff member, usually Katsu or Bâbon, is stationed behind a desk at the landing between the third and fourth floors. This individual provides patrons with a ticket to the show. On the fourth floor, is the performance space. There is a small landing, with walls covered in gig posters. To the right is a unisex bathroom. To the left, like Hokage, entry to the live space is gained via a heavy steel door. The live space is smaller than similar spaces in the other venues discussed. The room is square. Upon entering, there is a small area where non-moshers gather. Straight-ahead is a raised mixing desk. To the left is a slightly raised stage. Amplifiers sit beside and in front of the stage. Like other venues, Shinkagura has a ‘house’ drum kit. This is onstage.

On the floor above the live space is Shinkagura’s bar. The stairway between the fourth and fifth floors is decorated with posters of previous and upcoming lives. Smokers often congregate in the stairway, as do non-smoking fans, keen to find a quiet place to chat. Once on the fifth floor, the landing yields a small area with trestle tables set up for performing bands to sell their merchandise. To the left is a bar. Behind the bar, on the left hand side is the kreativ media office. Behind the office is a veranda. Access to the office and the veranda is restricted to staff, friends of staff and performing band-members.
Jokerman, also in AmeMura, is not a raibu housu, but a standing bar that specialises in playing extreme metal and crusty punk music. Like many standing bars in Japan, Jokerman is located in a room in a converted office block. The block is shabby and the stairs leading up to the bar are grimy. Once upstairs there is a hallway, lit by bright fluorescent lights, off which are dozens of doors on which bar names are daubed. Jokerman is about halfway along the corridor and sits next to a rock and roll bar. Once inside Jokerman, there is a narrow bar with three stools. Next to the bar is a couch, which comfortably sits two people. There is a Japanese-style toilet behind a door at the back of the room. Metal posters and albums adorn the walls (Figure 3.7) and there is always metal playing on the sound-system behind the bar. Jokerman closed in 2010 after Ryûchi, its owner, decided to pursue a more conventional career in a kaisha due to the lack of money he was earning running a bar.
2.3: The brutal economy of grindcore spaces

The previous sub-sections describe the spaces where grindcore happens in Melbourne and Osaka. The various incarnations of Kagura and the closing and re-opening of The Tote demonstrate that the wider political-economy of independent music in both cities is relatively fragile. Further, the closure of venues such as Jokerman, The Green Room and The Arthouse suggests that venues committed to playing grindcore music are financially less viable than venues that offer bills that are more varied.

The broader Australian and Japanese music industries differ. Australia’s industry is relatively small, especially compared with Japan. As Stevens notes, Japan has one of the largest music industries in the world (2008, 1). Japanese music production (including physical and digital sales) contributed US$4,244.5 million in 2009 (RIAJ 2011, 24) to Japan’s GDP of US$5033 billion (Trading Economics 2012). Australian

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26 See also the report by the Japan External Trade Organisation, which outlines Japan’s cultural commodity power in Asia, and the world (Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) 2005).
music production contributed only US$442.7 million (ARIA 2009, 3) to the national economy of US$924.8 billion in the same year (Trading Economics 2012a). In both countries, however, pop music is the key arena for profits, with local pop stars appearing on television, commercial radio and in other popular media.27 This is particularly true in Japan, where J-pop aidoru are often also television and even film stars (93-8). Though both countries’ music industries are structured differently, major labels dominate both Australian and Japanese pop music.

There are, of course, music scenes independent of the pop industry and the major labels in both places (Matsue 2009; Overell 2009; St John 2001) – grindcore being one of them. Grindcore, though, accounts for little of the music production figures above. Grindcore music forms a shadow economy, where little, if any, of its profits are recorded as ‘music profits’. Melbournian and Osakan grindcore releases are not sold in chain record shops, or on iTunes, even in their own countries.28 In Osaka, two independent record shops, both in AmeMura, stocked local grindcore music. In Melbourne, second-hand record shops in the inner city sometimes stocked local bands, as does Missing Link, an independent record shop. Instead, fans primarily purchased grindcore products – albums and merchandise – at gigs. The experience of a live performance is also a grindcore commodity, materialised in the cover charge at the door. These exchanges, of relatively small amounts of money, go unrecorded as specifically ‘grindcore’ income. The booking managers I spoke to in both cities said that door charges were calculated into general ‘takings’, along with alcohol and food sales.

27 See Stevens’s chapter “The business side: connections, culture and contexts” (2008, 68-100) for a discussion of how the J-pop industry operates. For a perspective of the Australian industry, see Homan (2003).
28 American and British grindcore, however, is generally available at big record shops in both cities. I saw Brutal Truth and Napalm Death albums in Tower Records, Osaka and in JB Hi-Fi, Melbourne.
Venue managers in Osaka, and Melbourne, stated that cover charges for, and drink purchases during, grindcore gigs were negligible, if not negatively profitable. The bands, also, made little money from performing. In Melbourne, whatever money was made was generally put back into band coffers and used to cover production costs or rehearsal space rental:

>You don’t make any money. At the most you hope to cover the costs of the mixer and rehearsal space *(Joel, Melbourne)*.

**Rosemary:** So, do you feel like you can live off that music?

**Leon:** Nah – there’s no way. ... We all do jobs [outside of grindcore] and shit like that. ... Umm, we get paid for all the shows and all that kind of stuff. And there’s money there – but not enough to live on. You’d be better off on the dole [laughs]. ... When you’re playing – when you can play capital cities like once every couple of months, you know, you’re not making any money – or any real money, anyway *(Leon, Melbourne)*.

Leon is a member of Blood Duster, one of Melbourne’s most successful grindcore bands. Despite this, he admits that the payment from live performances is “not enough to live on”. He supplements gig takings with a vinyl pressing and audio mixing business.

Osakan scene-members noted a similar situation. They were, however, more reticent to discuss specific amounts of income from performances at *raibuhousu*. A key difference between the distribution of cover charge takings in Osaka was the impact of the ‘pay-to-play’ system in Japan. This is standard practice in *raibuhousu* across musical genres in Japan. The system requires each band to sell twenty or so tickets each to ‘hire’ the space. These tickets, being more expensive than Australia at ¥2,000 to 4,000, means than the price of performing is often around AU$700.
Japanese bands depend on merchandise sales to make money for their coffers. As in Melbourne, Japanese band-members worked regular jobs to support their participation in the scene.29

Scene-members, apart from Sensei of KE, and Ryûchi, the proprietor of Jokerman, were generally not entrepreneurial. They regarded grindcore as something outside their daily obligation to work usually in un- or semi-skilled jobs. Scene-members found pleasure in attending venues – as either musicians or patrons. In both cities, scene-members rarely spoke of a desire to make money from their music. They regarded the creative labour of performing as a pleasurable *shumi* (hobby) for which they required no monetary dividend.

Of course, this obscures the economic mechanics of the scene, where venues were profiting monetarily from their labour – no matter how negligible. This was especially clear in the case of KE in Osaka. While Sensei was also a band-member, his *sempai* status was bound to his role as the owner of Hokage and Shinkagura. He regularly complained that neither venue made money, yet he owned multiple homes, in Kansai and Shikoku, and vehicles. This was in stark contrast to most of the other scene-members. Sensei employed three scene-members in his various businesses. Katsu and Bâbon worked as door attendants for Hokage and Shinkagura, Takeda was Hokage's manager and Katsu also edited *kreativ* magazine. They all professed they appreciated being able to work in the scene, yet admitted they remained financially unstable:

29 Joel laughed when I asked if he made more money in Osaka from gigs, compared with Melbourne: “You make nowhere near [enough money]. Of course not. In fact, a lot of the way things are set up over there it's almost a – well it is a 'pay to play' system – where the band basically purchases, you know, say twenty tickets, off the venue, and then it's the band's responsibility to go out there and sell those tickets” (Joel, Melbourne).

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I am the working poor (waakingu pua). Working here (at Hokage) is good, but sometimes it is also bad (Bâbon, Osaka).*

I dress rough because I have little money. I pick up lost things or wear something that was given to me. ... I am lucky to be working for Sensei (Takeda, Osaka).*

Grindcore music also contributes, albeit in a small way, to the overall image of each city’s ‘independent’ music scenes. Melbourne and Osaka both boast thriving music cultures (City of Osaka Recreation & Tourism Bureau 2007; Hicken 2004; Osaka Rock Day Staff / 大阪ロックデイ の staff 2012; Thor 2011). While scene-members proclaimed aesthetic distance from ‘mainstream’ music, their presence in grindcore spaces and their surrounds helps build the lively music scene image. Their performances and consumption of grindcore may be ostensibly motivated by pleasure, but it also builds the grindcore spaces’ commodity value. This value may also be transposed onto the city itself. It is rare in both cities to see mention of grindcore in official or popular media representations of each cities’ respective music scenes. However, I did find two instances of grindcore building broader commodity value for the cities. In Melbourne, grindcore was featured in a discussion of Melbourne music in the nationally circulated monthly magazine, The Big Issue (Wallen 2012). According to the author, it demonstrates Melbourne’s “to each their own” (40) – cosmopolitan – attitude. In Osaka, KE mainstay, palm, were invited to play at the Osaka Rock Day event in 2010, held at Sun Hall, a medium sized venue in AmeMura. This event was an “underground rousing rally” § (Osaka Rock Day Staff / 大阪ロックデイ の staff 2012) and comprised a broad range of independent rock bands hailing from Osaka, including Shonen Knife, a punk rock band which has achieved some success in the West. Osaka Rock Day was organised by a volunteer group made up of promoters, bands and fans located mostly in
AmeMura (ibid.). Importantly, Bears, Hokage and Shinkagura as ‘supporters’ of the event had their logos included on some promotional material and links to their respective websites were provided on the event’s webpage (ibid.) and MySpace (ibid.).

This section has outlined the key venues where grindcore music is performed and consumed in Melbourne and Osaka. I described how such spaces run, particularly in terms of how profits from shows are divided, and the differences between bars (and even bridges) in Melbourne and raibuhousu in Osaka.

In the following section, I present spatialised case studies of two key venues, one in each city. I look at how each venue harnessed brutal representations in an attempt to make the space ‘brutal’, and whether such imagery produced a sense of belonging in the space for scene-members.

SECTION 3: PLACE STUDIES FROM MELBOURNE AND OSAKA

Grindcore places in Melbourne and Osaka interpolate scene-members to belong through the display of representations of brutality. In both cities, brutal signifiers refer to the popular connotations of violence outlined above. In this section, I offer a close analysis of a venue in each city, focusing on whether material signifiers of brutality enable the experience of brutal belonging.

3.1 Melbourne place study: The Green Room

The year 2003 was particularly healthy for Melbourne’s grindcore scene. Many scene-members link this to the opening of The Green Room, which frequently
hosted ‘mixed bills’ of grind and death metal bands. Speaking about The Green Room, Andy says:

You’d average a hundred-and-sixty people to a show. Easily. ... [With] Fuck ... I’m Dead headlining ... we would get... over two hundred regularly. *(Andy, Melbourne).*

![Figure 3.8: The Green Room logo and flier.](image)

The Green Room’s interior decor reflected its position as a metal venue through representations of brutal metal, and popular, discourse. Metal gig posters plastered The Green Room’s walls. Death metal motifs, such as skulls, often hung from the ceiling or decorated the stage area.\(^30\) This foregrounding of metal differed from the approaches of the other venues described above. The Corner and The Tote usually sidelined metal posters in favour of touts for more popular music, such as rock and, later, acoustic acts.\(^31\) This was a deliberate move, according to

\(^30\) For a non-academic discussion of death-metal aesthetics, see the film *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (Wise, Dunn et al. 2005). Purcell (2003) offers a sociological take on death metal aesthetics.\(^31\) For example, Grindcore 2009 was held at The Corner Hotel in Richmond. Its front windows are covered in posters advertising upcoming gigs. Although Grindcore 2008 mustered over 500 patrons, the 2009 event’s poster was limited to an A4 sheet at the bottom of a full-length window, even one week before the show. Posters that were prominent were mainly rock and acoustic singer-songwriter acts.
The Green Room’s former manager, who states that the venue was a materialisation of “Melbournians turn[ing] their backs on doof [electronic music] and the pokies [poker machines]” and shifting their tastes towards heavy music (Judd 2005). Melbourne scene-members, such as Will, singer from Super Fun Happy Slide and The Kill, appreciated The Green Room’s aesthetic, particularly in comparison with other venues:

[S]ome venues they’re just not that good. And, ahh, yeah I’ve had trouble ... [w]ith The Tote, I think it’s more sort of, the popular stuff has to come first, ‘cause they are a big venue and all of that (Will, Melbourne).

The Green Room also used similar sexist imagery to that in some heavy and extreme metal album art. The venue’s logo was a cartoon of a nude woman with devil horns squatting behind a ‘flying V’ guitar (Figure 3.8). This image, and its variations, featured on The Green Room’s sign, fliers and were on display behind the bar.

The death-metal aesthetics of its logo and posters allowed death-metalheads a point of identification with The Green Room space. However, this was not necessarily a taste shared by grindcore fans. Some male participants expressed a dislike for the sexist imagery associated with death metal:

I find it [death metal] can get a bit mired in some of the misogynist, sexist kind of content (Zak, Melbourne).

This perspective fit into wider scenic discourse where scene-members claimed that, despite its often-obvious representations of misogyny, grindcore is more “welcoming” for women than death-metal:
[In grindcore] we’re never like violent or, um, like ... for instance there’s a really big – it’s that American-style brutal death with a lot of like ‘butcher the whore’ mentality (Carsten, Melbourne).

Well, it [grindcore]’s different – oh well it’s a different culture ... To see [defunct Melbourne gore-grind band] Vaginal Carnage – I was just blown away with the – everyone was so accepting, especially being a woman ... It was so, so refreshing, and, just, I felt so welcome, and I was just like ... it’s exactly what I wanted (Hayley, Melbourne).

Supplementing the sexism of its logo, The Green Room also screened horror films that featured dozens of female victims, such as The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Hooper 1974) and The Hills Have Eyes (Craven 1977). Such imagery gestures towards gore-grind aesthetics, where horror movies form part of grindcore’s wider violent lexicon. The contradiction between the misogyny of horror films, and scene-members’ proclaimed rejection of misogynist discourse, however, was minimised by scene-members’ positioning of horror’s attraction as purely aesthetic:

  I love the style and I love the music and a lot of the stuff – like, the aesthetic of that [sniff] ... gory artwork, like, I’ve always enjoyed that sort of shit ... horror movies, or just like old monster comics and shit like that. So, that appealed to me [in gore grindcore] (Carsten, Melbourne).

  You know, it’s similar to loving horror movies, or something like that – I just love dark, evil music – or harsh, nasty music – whatever it is, it makes me feel good [laughs] (Will, Melbourne).32

32 Scene-members’ MySpace pages support this idea, with many of Melbourne’s scene-members listing ‘horror’ as their favourite film genre. As the drummer from Super Fun Happy Slide puts it: “Horror/gore/zombie/fucked up shit abominations” (Beholder of The Brutal & Bodacious Beats 2009).
These films also complement death-metal aesthetics. However, during all-grindcore line-ups, Z-grade and camp films were also screened, such as *Pink Flamingos* (Waters 1972) and *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (Wood 1959). Rather than following the "butcher the whore" (Carsten) narrative, such films offer potentially non-normative representations of gender and, particularly, masculinity (Studlar 1997).

Between sets at The Green Room, the films were often a talking point, with many scene-members laughing and sometimes talking along with the dialogue. Like their relation to the violent representations in the scene, an ironic appreciation for ‘trash’ culture demonstrates one’s scenic credibility. Such appreciation fits alongside scene-members’ parodic engagement with violence, exemplified here in Leon’s definition of brutal:

> I would use it ['brutal'] to describe anything I like. Kinda like what "right on" was to hipsters in the 70s ... good and heavy – like a brick in a cop’s face (Leon, Melbourne, via email).

Grindcore music, particularly gore-grind, revels in what scene-members perceive as ironic grotesquery. The exaggerated imagery, together with the standard jokey patter between songs make the verbally represented violence and misogyny appear ridiculous and distanced from the singer and band. However, at The Green Room, jokiness only extended to the camp films screened. Notably, however, when performing there, bands rarely bantered between songs. They usually just ran

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33 There is, of course, an argument that *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* et al. also possess a camp appeal. However, the seriousness with which most death-metalheads engage horror imagery appears to cancel out the irony necessary for a camp reception. For apparently deadpan explanations of death-metal and horror, see again *Metal: A Headbanger’s Journey* (Wise, Dunn et al. 2005).
through their set. As Leon, a member of Blood Duster, describes, a lack of banter generally indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the gig:

[Y]eah – sometimes it’s really dull. Sometimes it’s just like going through the motions, other times you’re drunk and wild, you know? Having a good time – it just depends on the crowd, you know, the venue … you know, we are just a band cracking jokes and just trying to make each other laugh – we just try and do stupid stage moves to amuse ourselves, you know, and junk – junk like that (Leon, Melbourne).

At The Green Room, the violence represented through fliers and horror movies constitutes a blunt brutality. Despite these literal gestures to ‘brutal’, and a regular line-up of grindcore bands, many scene-members disliked the venue. They found The Green Room lacked the ability to generate the experience of brutal belonging. Scene-members articulated this through discussions of an “atmosphere” that is sincere in its intensity, rather than “pretentious”. Phil and Anita sum up:

The Green Room was a complete dump. It was cold and had zero atmosphere (Phil, Melbourne).

I used to hate going to The Green Room … ‘cause … I just felt … the whole space was really pretentious … And you’d get people there who were just, you know, not into grindcore … I didn’t really like it that much (Anita, Melbourne).

3.2 Osaka place study: Jokerman

The Japanese interpretation of brutal as burutaru – signifying Western ‘grindcore-ness’, more than violence – is more common in Osakan raibuhousus. This does not mean that violent imagery was not present. In fact, unlike Melbourne, the few fliers I collected which represented violence, particularly against women, were often more extreme, and verged on pornography. However, the primary means for
building material brutality in the Osakan scene was through representations of what scene-members perceived as authentic grindcore, often conflated with a broader understanding of ‘metal-ness’.

In Japan, it is more common to find venues like The Green Room, which attempt to cater for one genre of music. In AmeMura, there are hundreds of small raibuhousus and standing bars, many of which are geared towards a single genre. Fans would regularly attend generically themed bars, making specialisation more viable than in a smaller city like Melbourne. There are multiple ‘reggae bars’ and ‘dancehalls’, for example, which feature stereotypical signifiers of ‘reggae-ness’, such as ‘rasta hats’ in the Jamaican flag’s colours, fake palm trees and posters of marijuana.

Thus, a place such as Jokerman, which plays mostly grindcore and crusty punk, is not unusual in AmeMura. Notably, it is not a raibuhusu; rather, it is a small bar devoted to extreme music. Jokerman is run by a scene-member, Ryûchi, who quit his job as a manager at a supermarket to open the bar. He has made an effort to make Jokerman brutal through the display of grindcore and crusty signifiers. His side business is selling vinyl pressings of Japanese grindcore, and Japanese editions of Western grindcore and crusty music. Much of Ryûchi’s stock sits behind the bar. However he has also covered Jokerman’s walls with record covers of his “favourite design” (Ryûchi), including albums by Osakan bands such as Bathtub Shitter and Corrupted, but mostly American bands.

Ryûchi’s choice of music also signifies Osakan understandings of brutal as signifying Western grindcore. His turntable is perpetually playing Brutal Truth and Nasum, though he does sometimes play local and other Asian bands. Ryûchi shares his enthusiasm with his clientele. During the evenings I attended Jokerman, he
encouraged me and other scene-members to ‘get behind the decks’ and play our favourite grindcore tracks. He even had a ‘theme song’ for my husband and I, ‘Walking Corpse’ by Brutal Truth. Ryûchi’s fandom for Western grindcore extended to collector’s editions and bootleg cassettes of gigs, which he regularly showed patrons. Ryûchi associated brutality with Western, particularly American, grindcore. His record dealing business had led to many contacts in the USA and he travelled there annually, staying with American record collectors.

Other material factors indicated Jokerman’s status as a brutal, grindcore space. Ryûchi revelled in the dinginess of his bar, thinking it lucky that it fit grindcore’s aesthetics:

[You know, this building is really old [laughs] I don’t mind [that] it’s dirty – I think it’s lucky to find here … it’s small, dirty [laughs] – good – good for grindcore (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Further, his own practices – drinking shots of whisky and chain-smoking – practices that he also encouraged in his customers, built an image, of himself and the bar, as brutal:

I like drinking, smoking cigarettes. … Brutal … brutal music with the alcohol on this bar (Ryûchi, Osaka).

However, Jokerman’s brutal image only held when Ryûchi was working there, and his customers were fellow scene-members. He co-owned the bar with his brother, who worked there one evening a week, and was a fan of salsa music. When Ryûchi’s brother was working at Jokerman, he played what Ryûchi described as “Cuba[n] music, salsa, ummm some kind of South American music”, though the grindcore decorations remained. When Ryûchi’s wife visited him in the bar, he would play Motown hits because “she doesn’t like [it] … she hates brutal music”,

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preferring soul music. Further, Ryûchi often received *salaryman* customers who would complain about his choice of music. Rather than tell them to leave, and spend their money elsewhere, Ryûchi had a folder of “all classic rock – old rock – and Bob Dylan and other American music” on his computer, which he would play.\(^{34}\) Jokerman was not particularly popular with other scene-members who I knew. My partner and I ‘discovered’ Jokerman after seeing a sandwich board advertising its ‘underground music’ in AmeMura. Though we did take scene-members to Jokerman – it was the site of our wedding reception – and they enjoyed listening to Ryûchi’s records and chatted to him, Ryûchi told me that they never came back without me or my partner’s accompaniment. Like The Green Room, Jokerman’s brutal aesthetics did not automatically endear it to scene-members.

This section has presented two case studies of venues in each city that used representations, and material signifiers (the venue’s location; cleanliness), to build a sense of ‘brutality’ and grindcore authenticity. Despite such attempts, scene-members did not always find belonging in these spaces. This demonstrates that spatialised belonging in both scenes is linked to something more than representations of metal brutality. That is, scene-members did not automatically feel ‘at home’ in venues that ostensibly reflected their brutal, grindcore tastes.

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\(^{34}\) The name ‘Jokerman’ is even a reference to a Bob Dylan song (Dylan 1983), so as not to put off potential patrons.
SECTION 4: FUCK ... I’M DEAD: BRUTAL BELONGING AND BRUTAL SPACES

So how is a space conducive to brutal belonging constituted, if not through the brutal aesthetics of places such as The Green Room and Jokerman? I argue that scene-members find belonging in places that enable a brutally affective experience. That is: brutal belonging builds brutal spaces. To unpack this idea, it is necessary to move beyond representational understandings of brutal and focus on ‘brutal’ as an articulation of affect. Here, brutal belonging – experienced individually and collectively – imbues the site of the affective experience with brutality.

4.1 Affective brutality – the uncontainable self

Representations of ‘brutal-ness’ signify violence and grindcore authenticity. However, it also refers to Melbourne and Osaka scene-members’ experience of affective intensity when encountering grindcore music:

Brutal can represent a few different things. Firstly, to me it means something intense or uncontrolled ... In a musical sense ... something that is intense in its playing or sound (Tim, Melbourne).

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

Music that is intense (Don, Melbourne, via email).

Rosemary: How did you feel, just now, during the set?

Mike: Burutaru! I feel one thing only: I forget myself. (Mike, Osaka).* §
Scene-members experience this intensity subjectively. However, it is also externalised onto other scene-members and scenic spaces. This process builds belonging in the scene – with other people, but also in grindcore spaces. Anita’s articulation that it ‘blows you away’ indicates something of the subjective bodily sensations experienced by scene-members when ‘feeling brutal’. As does Mike’s notion that he “forget[s]” himself during a *raibu* (Figure 3.9). Anita and Mike both allude to the sense that a cognitised sense of coherent ‘self’ evaporates when experiencing grindcore.

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, allows the process of externalisation. Scene-members immerse themselves in the scene – experienced as a series of affective intensities, which constitute a sense of brutal 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, pretty much ... just about the best thing I’ve ever seen and I – couldn’t contain yourself (*Carsten, Melbourne*).

His sense is that the self was uncontainable, indeed it became an Other – “yourself” – during the gig. This highlights the process of brutal externalisation.

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35 Tim makes this explicit: “brutal ... is quite a subjective term”. 
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 through their engagement with grindcore music. Japanese scene-members expressed a similar experience:

I have a passion in my heart for drums ... expressing this feeling means that I dive into other people’s hearts. Only music can do this. I wish to share my experiences through drumming (Toshi, Osaka).* §

Significantly, Toshi suggests an instantaneous connection between affective sensation ("passion") and its expression through his body ("my heart") rather than through speech or representation. Toshi’s affective experience grants him a sense of belonging within the scene. He feels that, through music, he can “dive into other people’s hearts” and share his “passion ... for drums”. Hiroshi professed a similar desire to harness his affective experience during lives as a way of building a grindcore community:

I feel like I am making and exploring emotion only in the moment when we perform ... I wish to pass our emotion to our fans (Fukuda, Osaka).* §

This is also echoed by Melbournian scene-members:

It’s like the audience is one big, living creature (Tim, Melbourne).

[I]t’s that experience of becoming something – when it works – it’s becoming something greater than the sum of its parts. You become, not an individual, you become part of a collective organism (Ant, Melbourne).

Rosemary: How did you feel during the set?

Will: Well, I just sort of disappeared into that circle – the crowd – in a way (Will, Melbourne).*
Feeling brutal, nevertheless, stems from an individual sense of brutal-ness. It is partly a disposition, which allows the self to become immersed in external subjectivities. However, it is through the externalising – sharing – of this disposition, transmitted via affect, that brutal belonging in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes is constituted. To ‘feel wrong’ about being brutal means one cannot legitimately claim scenic belonging.

4.2 Brutal spaces: the transmission of energy and \textit{enerugii}

Experiencing brutal belonging builds the spaces where this experience is enacted and experienced as brutal spaces. This pertains to affect’s role as a ‘trans’ form. It moves between people, things and spaces (Brennan 2004; Clough and Halley 2007; Deleuze and Guattari 2007 [1987]; Thrift 2008). The internal disposition of being brutal constitutes an authentically ‘grindcore’ self. It bolsters scene-members’ ability to feel comfortable – to belong – with other scene-members experiencing the same brutality. These social relations also generate new spaces. The brutal experience is externalised onto the spaces of grindcore production and consumption. Scene-members feel ‘at home’ in such spaces.

The Arthouse is the home of Melbourne grind \textit{(Hayley, Melbourne, via email)}.

Sometimes you go there [to The Corner Hotel] and – [Melbourne/Adelaide grindcore band] Captain Cleanoff played with Napalm [Death] … and I was like ‘man! This isn’t a Cleanoff show! It isn’t the same!’ Like, it’s not like at The Arthouse where everyone’s going nuts and everyone’s jammed in there and shit \textit{(Carsten, Melbourne)}.

Carsten expresses the sense that a gig’s worthiness lies in the crowd “going nuts” in a space that encourages bodily proximity. Graham noted a similar feeling after a performance at The Arthouse:
It feels great – it’s The Arthouse – the energy – I was flat as a tack before [the set], but now I’m ready to go all night (Graham, Melbourne).*

These responses indicate the importance of brutal affect to the constitution of grindcore spaces, and vice versa.

Figure 3.9: Mike (in the white bandana) moshing at Shinkagura. (Photograph by Harrison Webber).

Masa, an Osakan scene-member, also associates particular venues with affective experiences. However, rather than being generated by the crowd, as in Carsten’s description, he values the *enerugii* (energy) created by bands:

> It was a special night at Hokage – seeing Takeda reunite with Birushanah. The *enerugii*[^36] was brighter [than the other bands]. [pause] Yes, that’s the only word for it: Hokage was thicker, brighter (*Masa, Osaka*).

When asked to nominate a favourite grindcore venue, participants in both cities chose spaces where something more than representations granted the venue

[^36]: Masa spoke English in this interview. However, he used the *wasei eigo* 'enerugii' instead of energy here.
brutality. For Carsten and Masa, for example, the affective experience is paramount for a gig being pleasurable, indeed brutal.

4.3 Brutal stages: the audience and performers' experiences of affect

Grindcore participants particularly experienced brutality in relation to the stage. The sense of brutal belonging – of giving over to the affective intensities of the gig – was associated with proximity to the stage. For Melbourne audience members, being close to the stage was an intensely pleasurable experience:

Like ... up the front just going ‘rrrrrrrrrrrr’ [laughs]. And, ahhh, yeah ... people just love it when it's fast and intense and brutal (Will, Melbourne).

Yumi, from Osaka, shares a similar perspective, articulating the affective experience as “emotional”:

Ohhh, it’s – if they are a good ... band I feel so, ummm, emotional. Ahhh, wanna headbang (Yumi, Osaka).

Echoing Anita's definition of brutal as something that ‘blows away' the self, Andy experiences being “carried away” by grindcore when he is near the stage:

[I] get a bit carried away sometimes. If I go and see a band ... Oh. Sometimes you get goose-bumps or, you know, feel a bit fired up – especially if it’s really going well – you feel the blastbeats get going... I always try and go up the front. [I]ike, I was thinking ... it’s pretty hard not to get into it physically – ’cause the music’s quite – it hits your body (Andy, Melbourne).

Andy's thoughts emphasise the pre-cognitive, bodily, aspects of brutality. Like Toshi, above, he experiences the music as a series of physical sensations, rather than cognitised expressions. Andy feels goose-bumps and the blastbeats, in his
body. Mike expressed a similar feeling in his ‘on-the-spot’ interview directly after a palm show:

I felt impact \( \text{[impakkuto]} \) (\text{Mike, Osaka})! §

For Andy and Mike, being near the stage, experiencing grindcore music, becomes something more than simply notes and tunes. It becomes material, and moves between the performers and the audience: “it hits your body” and, as Jim stated earlier, the audience becomes “one big living creature”. Carsten also used a similar metaphor in his definition of brutal as something experienced through the body:

In a musical sense [brutal is] ... something ... really assaultive and draining to ... listen to (in a good way though) (\text{Carsten, Melbourne, via email}).

Performers, also experience a sense of affective immersion into the grindcore performance. That is, a sensation that the cognitive, thinking self recedes as the intensity of performance takes over:

[I felt] Alive ... just – in the millisecond – in the moment – no thoughts (\text{Joel, Melbourne}). *

When I’m on stage I’m playing in the moment and just flow – let it flow how the music goes – I think that’s one of our best shows and I’ve only done that once or twice. ... [W]hen I’m swept away – I think that’s the best shows (\text{Nobu, Osaka}).

[Describing his favourite performance] [W]e didn’t have, like, you know, hesitation [in playing] or anything.... We just played ... There is nothing more we can do, you know (\text{Kaz, Osaka}).

I’m wandering around the stage and ... doubled over for most of the thing. But, ... that’s just because I find that – that is what naturally – my body naturally does. ... But, I don’t sort of think about it in those kind of terms. I just sort of do – I just do – trying to express and get...
that sort of, you know, cool kind of sound out and that sort furious, kind of, noise [laughs]

(Zak, Melbourne).

Zak’s sense of just “do[ing]” without “think[ing] about it” and Kaz’s declaration that the best lives are those played without “hesitation” indicates the affective intensity of grindcore performance. Ant and Carsten echoed these sentiments in their thoughts on live performance:

When – when I like it the best it’s when it’s just unconscious and intuitive (Ant, Melbourne).

When I’m up there … I’m not sort of thinking … just enjoying it (Carsten, Melbourne). *

During a participant-sensing interview with Ant, he noted how technical issues with his guitar made him feel negatively about a set. Interestingly, he was not concerned about his band sounding bad, but that such events impeded his affective experience:

We were plagued by technical problems … it compromised my will – like, if you’re channelling something … and you start thinking ‘oh that’s [the guitar] not working’, you start thinking – instead of putting all my power into it (Ant, Melbourne). *

Scene-members, from both cities, state that the process of becoming brutal onstage has little to do with pre-meditated, cognitised representations of ‘brutal violence’. Instead, it is their embodied (“what … my body naturally does” [Zak]), “intuitive” (Ant) experience of affect that indicates their brutality. In fact, for Nobu, cognition was a sign of a failed show:

If I’m always conscious of ‘how we are playing’ and how the crowd’s going and how I – I’m moving – how my, my stage presence are [sic]. So, I’m thinking how we are doing – like, how my band’s doing – I don’t think that’s a good show (Nobu, Osaka).
The stage, therefore, is regarded as a brutal space. Scene-members indicated that distance from the stage meant a less affective experience. In fact, scene-members suggest that moving away from the stage space allowed for a cognitised, critical engagement with the performance:

I don’t go up the front and head-bang ... I prefer to stand ... and watch closely and, so, um, enjoy the music ... I really like just watching them and, um, just ... hearing songs that, you know, um – well written stuff – bands. ... I just, yeah, just really enjoy watching it and concentrating on it, you know? All the kind of going berserk, moshing, err, I feel I couldn’t concentrate on it as much (Shawn, Melbourne).

[If I’m not really pissed or I’m not really psyched I wouldn’t do that [go up the front] anymore. Mm, I just sit at the back and try and listen to the drums – how well he plays (Nobu, Osaka).

Unlike the affective experience of being near the stage, distanced viewing and listening renders the experience as representational. The performance is an object to view, indeed ‘analyse’, rather than something in which to become immersed.

4.4 “Stageless, flat”: countering the “complete isolat[ion]” of the raised stage

Gigs build brutality through a spatialised relation to the stage. While proximity to the stage built brutal belonging, Melbourne participants singled out venues with a low or non-existent stage as even more conducive to such intensity:

I reckon Pony is definitely my favourite ... it’s chaotic. ... There’s a nice, low stage at Pony ... it’s just a fun night, you know? People really get into it (Will, Melbourne).

Fonarrow’s (2006) work on audience distribution at an ‘indie’ music gig alludes to this idea, though she does write directly about affect.
If you’re playing in ... the After Dark where it’s sort of a bar space where they put a band in but it’s not traditional ‘stage/audience’ set-up there’s more energy – it’s more fun (Joel, Melbourne).

We played ... at Catfood Press, where – it was just a little room and we were down on the floor, and basically the whole audience was just crowded around the band – sort of, as close as they were all willing to go ... it was a good, loud little room. And that felt really comfortable (Zak, Melbourne).

Lucy: You actually feel like you’re amongst it [at the Tote].

Ant: It’s more intimate ... We prefer more integrated...

L: - playing on the same level and having no stage (Lucy and Ant, Melbourne).

In Japan, only a few venues had a raised stage. Scene-members consistently chose raibuhousus without a raised stage, such as Namba Bears and Hokage, as their favourites:

Rosemary: Which venues do you most enjoy seeing and playing grindcore music?

Oka: Hokage – any venue like this, without a high stage (Oka, Osaka). §

In fact, on Hokage's website, its lack of a raised stage is a selling point:

The inspiration for Hokage was to produce a truly grind-style place. The introduction of 'stage-less, flat' floor means everyone comes together, artists and audiences (Hokage 2008). §

“Stageless, flat” places enable intermingling between the crowd and the performers, as emphasised in Hokage's copy. In my experience, band-members in both cities were more likely to offer the audience the microphone to ‘sing along’ with the band at stageless venues. Performers cited that “in your face” proximity with fans is crucial for generating the experience of brutal belonging:
When there’s a nice decent crowd there. All so – pretty much – in your face, so it’s nice and hot and sweaty. .. [i]t’s awesome ahh, it’s good seeing people just being there – when there’s no-one there and they’re not getting into it, I just don’t get into it (Jules, Melbourne).

I do feed off the crowd. If the crowd gets into it, I get into it [laughs] (Nobu, Osaka).

Jules and Nobu, both vocalists, allude to the immersive qualities of affect in their reflections. They claim that in order to “get into it” they needed to be physically near the audience. Further, Jules suggests that the audience, too, needs to be “getting into it”. Rather than standing back and “watch[ing] closely” (Shawn), the audience needs to “just be” – that is, they need to give themselves over to the affective experience of brutal belonging.

Thrift suggests that bodily proximity is more conducive to affective encounters than mediated contact. He discusses contact improvisation dancing where participants move between partners – their movements dictated by “responsive” (Albright cited in Thrift, 142) contact with another’s body. According to Thrift, in such dance, there are no ‘steps’, simply responses to the bodies surrounding participants. Music occasionally forms the background for contact improvisation ‘jams’. As one adherent notes:

[D]ancers are not required to move in a way that mimics a particular audible beat. Instead, the timing of the dance may be set by a kind of internal physical and emotional rhythm. Thus, anything that inspires an emotional or physical response can in principle help to guide a dance (Burke 2003).

That is, engagement with one another, rather than particularly the music is, of key importance. To return to grindcore, the contact between fans, and fans and

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38 He also, rightly, acknowledges Brennan’s (2004) findings on affective intermingling (221-222).
39 See also Derek McCormack’s (2002) work on dance and dance therapy, which engages with affect.
musicians, was seen as a site for the enactment of communal connection. Despite
the mosh appearing violent, due to its incorporation of stylised kicks and punches,
scene-members claimed that, in grindcore, participants pre-empted each other’s
movements and did not “hit”:

We’re used to a really, really physical scene [in Melbourne], like, when we started playing
music – people danced! And people moshed and people threw each other around ... people
– people didn’t hit (Ant, Melbourne).

The ‘integration’ between performer and fans, and between fans, is crucial to a
venue’s value in enabling a brutal experience. In fact, some participants disliked
venues with traditional, raised stages because it meant separation from the crowd:

I mean, the sound is good at Club Drop – no problem – but the stage is high and there is [a]
barrier. It is not my best [favourite] place to do a live (Masa, Osaka).

If you play Hi-Fi and places like that ... it’s just weird – like, playing, the bigger the stage
gets, the more out we feel. But if – when you go to The Tote – you can just drink with the
owner or, you know, everyone working there (Leon, Melbourne).

If you play at The East Brunswick Club, which is you know, it's supposed to be this
beautiful venue but ... it's not a really enjoyable experience playing there ‘cause you, you
know, you're completely isolated from ...it seems to lack a bit of atmosphere because you're
up on this big stage (Joel, Melbourne).

Masa, Leon and Joel’s responses indicate the difficult task of articulating the
affective sensation of playing proximate to the crowd. They all note a sense of
separation from the audience scene-members, but also with the space itself. Joel
feels “completely isolated” when he is “up on ... stage”. Leon’s notion of feeling
“out” is significant. It suggests that the stage’s establishment of a strong divide
between audience and performer also disallows an affective connection with
grindcore music: “the bigger the stage gets, the more out we feel”. ‘Out’ also connotes a sense of exposure – a heightened consciousness of the self being on display. This is obviously distant from the positive descriptions of the ‘blown away’ or ‘forgotten’ self offered above.

The “weird[ness]” (Leon), or “lack” of brutal “atmosphere” (Joel), prompted by playing on a high stage belies the crusty punk roots of grindcore music. Crusty punk, in both cities, is still chiefly played at warehouse home/gig spaces where makeshift stages are often on level with the audience. In Melbourne and Osaka, most grindcore bands begin playing at crusty spaces, with crusty bands, then move on to pub-venues, or raibuhousus. After playing ‘lounge room’ sets in warehouses, the height and apparent seriousness of a stage, becomes unsettling.

One way of dealing with such weirdness is to flout the stage’s barrier and interact with the crowd. Katsu, singer in Osakan band ‘palm’, often incorporated the sometime presence of a barrier between the stage and the audience into his interaction with the crowd (Figure 3.10). He would balance on the barrier and screamed “sakuru sakuru” (circle circle [pit]) at the crowd. Once the sakuru formed, Katsu would join in. Further, from his position on the barrier, Katsu found it easier to stage dive and crowd surf while still singing. After these antics, Katsu usually ended up in the centre of the circle pit. On the occasions when his microphone cord tangled in the barrier, fans stepped in to untangle it. After a gig at a raibuhousu

40 For example, at Irene’s in Brunswick, a former warehouse turned into collective home and gig space. Catfood Press, formerly in Brunswick, is another example. It was housed in a shopfront, with residential upstairs. Fandango, in Juso, was originally a punk co-operative space, though it has a raised stage.

41 Says Leon: “we just kind of slotted into ... punk and the crust scene ... I think the whole idea of grind is – to me – it's more of a punk scene”. And Andy: "Probably the first band that [I played in that] had any grindcore influence was called Heads Kicked Off. ...it was very punk – it was more punk, sort of crust band".
with a raised stage (Shinkagura), Katsu still described the gig as an affective experience. Echoing Toshi’s notion of the Self effacing as he “dive[d] into” the audience’s “hearts”, Katsu commented in response to my participant-sensing question ‘Why was it a good raibu’?

Because I could share myself with other people (Katsu, Osaka)! * §

Figure 3.10: Katsu singing in the audience, the raised stage is behind him, 2009. (Photograph: Duncan Box).

Katsu’s refusal to allow the physical barrier between the audience and himself to curtail his affective experience demonstrates that, no matter the surrounds, bodily proximity can spread brutal affect. Andy, from Melbourne, described a similar experience:

I remember playing The Tote – there wasn’t many people there, and I .. worked out I had this really long lead – and because .. pretty much everyone’s just standing, you know, and there’s only about ten people there: ‘we don’t care’. And I’m walking off the stage – I was in the crowd going to people and putting an arm around [and screaming] ‘Arrrrrgghh’ (Andy, Melbourne).
Andy’s story recalls when FID were playing at a rock event. They were the only grindcore act. The band enacted their standard brutal image through representations of violence onstage. They donned butcher’s aprons covered in fake blood and announced every misogynist song title (‘Slowly Raped with a Chainsaw’; ‘Bury the Cunt in Shit’) with relish. However, it was only by forcing proximity between himself and the audience that Andy felt comfortable in The Tote space. He made the space brutal. He yelled his trademark “Arrrrrrghhh” growl into the faces of patrons as a way to “bring ’em into it”. That is, to constitute and share a new, affective space:

The rock fans were laughing – they thought it was great, you know? Afterwards [they were] coming up to me going ‘I don’t usually listen to this [grindcore] – but you’re fucking all right!’ So, I mean, you just gotta bring ’em into it (Andy, Melbourne).

The Tote was otherwise empty of any grindcore signifiers. Framed posters of ‘Oz rock’ stars adorn the walls and the jukebox blasts The Clash and Jane’s Addiction between sets. However, by crossing into the audience, and “bring[ing] ’em into it”, Andy transformed a rock space, with a raised stage, into an affective, brutal, grindcore space.

4.5 Brutal bridges

So far, I have looked at venues – that is, pub and club spaces which in some way, makeshift or otherwise, are established to accommodate live music. Lastly, I turn to the ‘bridge gigs’ held in Northcote, Melbourne. Bridge gigs are an example of Thrift’s proposition that affective spaces are often transient spaces (175). That is, temporary expressions of a collective identity or idea, which are only shortly

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42 This relish is evident on Fuck ... I’m Dead’s DVD/CD Gore-Grind Thrash Attack Live (Fuck ... I’m Dead 2006). Here, the banter between songs has not been erased.
visible (that is represented) but individually, or collectively felt during, and beyond, the space’s initial constitution. Despite their erratic occurrence, scene-members fondly recall bridge gigs, categorising the space as brutal despite its lack of material signifiers of grindcore, or representations of brutality. Indeed, the bridge does not even materially indicate a live music space. However, the presence of grindcore fans enjoying music, and mixing with one another, creates the bridge area as grindcore space. Joel explains:

It’s good fun playing under the bridge, that’s great fun. ... I think with those kind of ‘venues’, you get people who go to the shows ‘cause they really wanna go. There are less people there who just happen to be in the pub anyway who are thinking ‘what the fuck's that noise going on?’ You know everyone there is interested in being there and interested in music and say, you know, that way you’ve generally got more of the audience engaged in what’s going on (Joel, Melbourne).

Joel’s reference to the commonality and engagement of grindcore fans at bridge gigs suggests that it is affective encounters, which constitute the space as what he goes on to describe as “usually better” (ibid.) than pub shows. Bridge gigs are not brutal because of violent aesthetics. Brutality at such shows is expressed through the peculiarly grindcore usage of brutal, meaning – in Leon’s words, “right on”.

43 Although not acknowledged, Thrift echoes Maffesoli’s (1996) notion of ‘emotional community’ with this idea. See also Ingold’s (2000) work on processual landscapes and human/animal ‘traces’.
5.1 Melbourne’s homely spaces

Scene-members considered places where brutal affect was routinely generated as homely spaces. Almost all Melbourne participants nominated The Arthouse as their favourite venue, and spoke of it affectionately. Hayley even nominated it as “the home of grind”. In the women’s toilets, there was this graffiti, presumably written in the last days of it being open, which explicitly linked homeliness to the experience of brutal belonging:

This is my home forever more & I’m sorry to say that now I’m gone ... I will be back so remember that you have and always will Anarchy xx BRUTAL.

For Melbourne scene-members, The Arthouse’s homeliness was also linked to its perceived encouragement of sociality. Speaking about the origins of FID, Andy cites the venue as a key place to network within the scene:

I ended up meeting him, I got to know Shawn, through The Arthouse. We used to have Arthouse bowling on Sundays. At Essendon Bowl ... So I got to know Shawn through that.

(Andy, Melbourne).

Carsten goes as far as to jokingly refer to The Arthouse as the home to a distinct “bunch” of grindcore fans. Speaking about the reaction of black metal fans to grindcore scene-members at a mixed bill gig at the Birmingham, in Collingwood, he says:

They [the black mettlers] were all like ‘Oh look at these – the fucking vegetarians from The Arthouse – you bunch of hippies!’ (Carsten, Melbourne).
The Arthouse was often the first venue scene-members had performed or watched grindcore, and met other fans. Its role in their personal grindcore biographies loaned The Arthouse a homely significance:

[The Arthouse] would be the number one [venue I like] ... because it’s probably the venue that I’ve been to the most (Anita, Melbourne).

I started going to The Arthouse ... going to shows ... just sort of going with mates and stuff ... after that, Chris from Vaginal Carnage sort of started talking to us and trying to get us to come over to his joint and listen to records and stuff and got us involved in the scene (Carsten, Melbourne).

I just found out when they were playing locally and stuff and started going to gigs at The Arthouse. And then, after a few gigs ... ahhhh, I met Carsten ... and, ahh, his brother Zak ... And talked to them ... just met a few people through them. Umm and one day the vocalist, Chris, who’s now unfortunately passed away, from Vaginal Carnage, came up to me and just started, said hello and said ‘hey, I see you at a lot of gigs’, you know, and introduced himself and was just really friendly (Will, Melbourne).

The association between The Arthouse and regular gig-goer and performer, Chris, made scene-members particularly sentimental when discussing the venue’s significance. After Chris overdosed, photographs of him drinking and performing at The Arthouse circulated online (herrollo 2008; Pierre 2005). In fact, those who mentioned him in interviews usually did so in association with The Arthouse.

Other venues were deemed favourites because of the perceived friendliness of the staff and other gig goers:

[When you go to The Tote – you can just drink with the owner or, you know, everyone working there and all that kind of stuff so, you know (Leon, Melbourne).]
That's a great venue um, the Gr- the old Great Britain when – back in the day – that was always – that was fucking awesome! That’s where I saw Blood Duster ... Oh – I felt pretty, what’s the word? [pause] Can't think of the word. Comfortable! Comfortable there – 'cause it was pretty dingy and dark, you know. But it’s just, I don’t know, that time there was just a lot of – heaps of good heads going out. Good people (Andy, Melbourne).

Interestingly, Andy notes the homology between the Great Britain and grindcore signifiers. It was “dingy and dark”. However, what is more significant for making the venue homely was the sociality the venue enabled, the fact that there were “heaps of good heads” there.

In Melbourne, participants used “home” to designate spaces where they felt comfortable playing and consuming grindcore music. Carsten, after describing his fantasy Cleanoff gig at The Arthouse (with the crowd “going nuts”) said:

The Arthouse – it sort of feels like home ... It’s ... a comfort thing (Carsten, Melbourne).

This is because he feels that The Arthouse enables bands, and the audience to experience affect:

In the right sort of venue and circumstance, they [FID] are such a good band, but when they’re not, it’s just really funny watching them. Like, they – you almost don’t know what to do ... And they were still great – but it just – like, when they’re not in their element, they’re, they’re not everything they can be (Carsten, Melbourne).

Like Jules above, Carsten valued bands who generated affect ‘naturally’ (“just being” [Jules]) rather than trying to impose it on a crowd. He associated such contrivances with venues other than his “home”, The Arthouse:

... at the Hi-Fi [Bar], it's kind of annoying when you see those bands that are trying to push to like [puts on voice] 'Oh we gotta get everyone into this right now!' ... And you're like
'fuck this – just chill-out – like, fucking do whatever you want, and don’t worry about what you might look like, or what people might think if – if, you like, if you sort of believe in your own band you shouldn’t really care if you’re performing to the standards of some motherfucking band you’ve never heard of, or whatever. Like, I just, I don’t know – do your own thing (Carsten, Melbourne).

Anita also noted the affective qualities of The Arthouse. In particular, she articulates a sense of the transmission of affect; she describes the venue as “a part” of her Self:

And, it’s, you know, when you start going somewhere all the time it just becomes a part of you, so, ummm, yeah, it’s all about familiarity, in, um, you know, feeling comfortable in a place (Anita, Melbourne).

Comparing The Arthouse to The Green Room, Anita also associated the venue with being natural, or “real”:

[T]he Arthouse is just like a real – you know, it’s real, there’s no pretensions about it, you know (Anita, Melbourne)?

5.2 Osaka’s uchi spaces

Like in Melbourne, scene-members in Osaka felt at home in venues where they could experience brutal affect. However, the Japanese word uchi (home), in this sense, implies a more formalised relationship with a venue. As Matsue (2009) points out, bands in Japan often have a ‘home’ venue, where they play the most gigs, know the owner and generally feel most comfortable (64). She notes that by designating a place uchi, scene-members are claiming that they feel the other ‘home’ bands and patrons are their family. Importantly, uchi raibuhousus are
opposed to *soto* (outside) venues, where Matsue claims, bands feel less comfortable.

During my fieldwork, I noted a similar structure. Hokage and Shinkagura, due to their association with scene-member, Sensei, were considered *uchi* to scene-members who were friends with Sensei before he began KE. The idea of *uchi* forms a part of the institution of *kôhai* and *sempai*. A *sempai* being a senior in the scene usually means he has experienced going to *raibuhousu* for a longer period. Many in the scene are from the same ‘year’, notably the members of palm, Infernal Revulsion and Sensei himself. Their *kôhai* respect them and, accordingly, they are made to feel at home in Sensei’s venues. When I attended *raibu* at Hokage, Sensei would sit with the other *sempai* in a booth at the rear of the bar. Drinks, for the *sempai*, were usually ‘on the house’ and brought to the table to save the *sempai* queuing. Sensei’s personality was generally aloof and even a little forbidding. Though he was the same age as the other *sempai*, they clearly treated him as their superior due partly to his position in the scene. He also traded on his reputation as a former *bosozuku* (motorcycle gang member), and having spent time in jail, allegedly for smashing a beer glass in the face of a *salaryman*. He was spoken of in hushed tones by *kôhai* as ‘Sensei’ (the teacher) or even just ‘*sempai*’, rather than the usual surname-san.44 His *sempai*, on the other hand, were able to joke and chat casually to Sensei, though they certainly remained reverent. I attended one Hokage event with a scene-member who was a year older than Sensei. This gave him license, as Sensei’s *sempai*, to jokingly refer to Sensei as ‘Sensei-kun’ – kun being a

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44 Until the very end of my time in Osaka, I was confused as to what Sensei’s name actually was. I found out in a most banal way, on my return to Melbourne, when he ‘added’ me as a ‘friend’ on facebook.
Japanese diminutive. Osaka’s *sempai* scene-members mostly experienced *uchi* at KE venues:

I feel really at home playing at Shinkagura or Hokage … simply because I know everyone there, and, if I go there, there will be someone who I know – who I can really, you know, relax and talk and drink [with] *(Nobu, Osaka).*

My favourite place is Shinkagura and Hokage, because it was [sic] familiar place for me *(Mike, Osaka).*

**Rosemary:** What kind of venues do you like?

**Kaz:** Mm. Mm. Mm. Ummm, Shinkagura … I like their idea about music and what they are trying to do so I fully support them *(Kaz, Osaka).*

Nobu went on to explain how *raibu* at Shinkagura were crucial to *sempai* scene-members’ constitution of the Osakan grindcore scene. Like the Melbourne scene-members passion for The Arthouse, the Osakan *sempai* felt they were a part of a “Shinkagura Scene”:

[W]hen we first played, ummm, we had to, um, bring the bands over from Tokyo or Fukuoka … to organise a show, ’cause there was no bands [laughs]. … [I]t was just us. Playing, well there was death metal bands – back in the day – but they split up, or they’re not active, they’re just releasing albums and don’t play shows. And our first, first show was with Birushanah, palm and – this band already split up – but this band from Tokyo called ‘Coal’ and Hydrophobia, from Fukuoka … It was a ‘Shinkagura scene’ *(Nobu, Osaka).*

Kaz also credits Sensei’s *raibuhousu*, band and KE with constituting the Osaka scene:

[F]rom my point of view, um, Sensei changed a lot [in the scene], since he started doing venues and labels and *[kreativ]* magazine. … Katsu and Nobu and Masa and I are all the
same age and all the same generation. And – so we're – we talk a lot about, like, how things
... changed and how we want to make things – the music scene – from now on (Kaz, Osaka).

Kaz's comments also display the importance of his position as *sempai* for experiencing belonging in the scene. He emphasises that he and other key scene-members are “all the same generation” and how, as a group of *sempai*, they “made – the music scene”.

For scene-members in bands, a venue's uchi-ness also depended on the affective experience of performing. When asked about the best venue he had ever played in, Nobu chose a festival space in California, USA. Despite only playing there once, he maintained its “historical” importance to him, because of his affective experience onstage:

[I]t's my challenge. It was gonna be my historical day. ... Oh, it went – it was great. ... You know, all the crowd were getting into it and – and you see the big circle pit going – and, even the security guys got – took their shirt off – and started moshing. [Afterwards the security guard] said 'oh you guys were so great! Can I have your autograph?' ... Mmm. 'Cause, like, before that he had a torch in his hand and he used to just, like, stop guys moshing. 'Get out!' you know, 'you're being too violent'. And he was the most violent guy in the pit [laughs] (Nobu, Osaka).

As with Jules and Andy in Melbourne, Nobu's preference for a venue is linked to the live experience. Paramount is the crowd “getting into it”:

I should be at the same level all the time, no matter if there's only one crowd or two or three at the back, just watching, or if there's thousands – you know, ah, but I don't have to be the same level; I do feed off the crowd. If the crowd gets into it, I get into it [laughs] (Nobu, Osaka).
Similar to Andy, Nobu places an emphasis on converting unexpected people to fandom of his band. For Nobu, the shift in the security guard from “stop[ping] guys moshing” to asking for Nobu’s autograph is proof that Nobu rose to his “challenge”. This experience galvanised the festival venue as Nobu’s favourite, despite its lack of association with KE or other more obvious signifiers of uchi-ness.

Masa also placed an emphasis on crowd responses to his band’s performance as key to feeling at home in a venue. For him, like Anita in Melbourne, homeliness depended on a place’s perceived “real[ness]”:

**Rosemary:** Which raibu was better, Club Drop [in AmeMura] or Okayama [a prefecture outside of Kansai, in Chugoku]?

**Masa:** I think [they were] the same ... but different. At Club Drop we played new hardcore style – I mean our music did not change – we did not play new hardcore style music – but our – for example [mimes typical hardcore ‘thrashing’ of the guitar] and strong aggressive emceeing. Same song and good technique [at both events] but I feel Drop was not real palm. That’s what I feel. At Okayama, I felt we were ourselves *(Masa, Osaka).*

His ability to express the “real palm” was mediated by the presence of other non-uchi, non-grindcore, bands. Masa went on to describe another live at one of his uchi raibu, Shinkagura, as enabling palm to be “ourselves” and “natural”:

**R:** What about your show at Shinkagura?

**M:** Yes, I think this was good. It was natural ... at this show it was only natural, there were no new hardcore bands playing *(Masa, Osaka).*

For Masa, a venue’s homeliness depends on his ability to feel sincere in his performance. This ability is linked particularly to the crowd and the line-up. During mixed-bills with hardcore bands, for example, Masa felt a pressure to
perform in a hardcore style. This sensation was not linked to the venue's architecture or décor. Instead, the line-up and fans prompted Masa's experience that palm were not being “ourselves”.

For other scene-members, however, a venue’s *uchi* status depended on how well it enabled a communal experience. These scene-members regularly participated in moshing and headbanging very close to the stage.

Mike emphasised the importance of “shar[ing] time with other people” as making a good *raibu*. For Mike, in particular, “meet[ing] ... friends” helped also constitute Shinkagura as his favourite venue. In fact, the performance – combined with the energy of the crowd makes a Shinkagura “scene”. Through his engagement with other fans, Mike experiences brutal belonging (as he said above, Shinkagura “feels familiar” to him) to both the venue, and the scene.

Ryûchi also felt *uchi* was contingent on crowd friendliness. He chose Namba Bears as his preferred *raibuhousu*:

> Rosemary: Yeah. So, at Namba Bears – it’s good for – because it’s small – you’re – you’re very close to everyone else up the front, so do you feel connection with the others?

> Ryûchi: Oh, yes, yes. It’s like being a friend of [the] bands so, ummm [laughs], I have no care for who is them [the band and the crowd]! But, yeah, it’s great *(Ryûchi, Osaka)*.

Ryûchi generally attended *raibu* alone. However, at Bears he felt part of a community during performances: “it’s like being a friend of [the] bands”. This was particularly due to the smallness of Bears, which means, at a crowded *raibu*, you
are shoulder-to-shoulder with the other audience-members and sometimes the band. Ryûchi’s profession that he has “no care” for who the audience or the band are further emphasises the communal experience enabled by Bears’ audience-level stage and lack of barrier. During the moment of the raibu, Ryûchi experiences brutal belonging, where everyone is his “friend”.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the importance of affect for cultivating the experience of brutal belonging among grindcore scene-members. Using the notion of ‘brutal’, I outlined an affective sensibility experienced by grindcore scene-members, which constitutes scenic belonging. Brutal describes the sensation of immersion into the scene – its music, spaces and members. This builds brutal belonging. The self is ‘blown away’ as scene-members experience grindcore as a collective network between people, sounds and spaces.

I elaborated on this through a discussion of scene-members’ relations to each other and/in grindcore spaces. My close analysis of two of the many grindcore sites I visited – The Green Room in Melbourne, and Jokerman in Osaka – and their use of representational signifiers of brutality revealed that such representations were unnecessary for the experience of brutal belonging. Instead, scene-members experienced affect and, thus, brutality, in relation to particular ‘grindcore actions’ in various venues and sites. I acknowledged the architectural constraints mitigating brutality in some gig-spaces. However, I also noted the ability of scene-members to build brutality processually – through the transgression of
audience/performer barriers and an ‘in your face’ attitude to prompt an affective response in the audience.

This chapter focused on space; the relations between people and space, and people, mediated by space. However, how is brutality maintained between scene-members without the mediating factor of the gig? How do social identities, and the tensions between them, become ‘affected’? And, most importantly, how is the feminised notion of affect reconciled with the masculine implications of brutality briefly signposted in this chapter? These questions will be addressed in the next chapter.
I HATE GIRLS AND EMOTIONS:

BRUTAL SOCIALITY

INTRODUCTION

Grindcore places are more than representational spaces. That is, they are spaces that constitute, and are constituted by, the enactment of brutal affect. Further, scene-members consider some spaces homely sites of belonging, contingent primarily on whether they allow the transmission of affect between the material place and the grindcore subject.

In this chapter, I turn to the brutal social relations, which occur within brutal spaces, and enable, or disable belonging. I ask the question: Who does, or does not, belong? And, further: Why do they, or don’t they, belong? In short, I look at how scene-members enact, and experience, brutal belonging socially.

Brutal sociality in grindcore concerns gender. There is a recurrent assumption that Western metal is sexist, masculinist, and even misogynist (Arnett 1996; Kahn-Harris 2007; Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000 [1991]). I concur that metal imagery, particularly in death metal and gore-grindcore, regularly represents women as
sexualised objects at best and objects for rape, torture and murder at worst. Metal signifiers, often literally, scream masculinity, or even misogyny. The title of this chapter is drawn from such a discourse; it is a paraphrase of a Blood Duster song called ‘Hate Girls and Crusty Punx’ (Blood Duster 1998).

In such a masculine discourse, it is rare for metal songs to articulate emotions. Instead, the male protagonist is busy ‘doing’ – battles (Manowar 1982) and riding motorcycles (Saxon 1980) in heavy metal; or, in the case of death-metal and gore-grindcore, killing and raping (Cannibal Corpse 1994; Cock and Ball Torture 2004). This adheres to the binary distinction between masculine as active/doing, and feminine as passive/feeling – or affective. The woman is the object of the male singer’s conquests or murder-sprees. I suggest that scene-members avoid articulated affect, that is, emotions, especially in discussions of the affective experience of brutal belonging. This is because emotions are categorised ‘feminine’ in Western culture and appear to contradict the masculinity of the scene.

So, how does this reconcile with the affective experience of brutal belonging gestured to by my interviewees? I propose that it is not so easy to construe metal along binary lines. The ‘cave-man’ image is reductive and based primarily on representational analyses. Further, it reinforces wider assumptions – in academia and popular culture – that metal is a cardboard cut-out genre, consumed and performed by, to use Hebdige’s (1979) words, “idiot[s]” (155). A shift, to focus on affect, yields a more complex understanding of metallers’ sociality in relation to gender. This is not to say that grindcore scene-members do not actively disavow articulated ‘feminised’ emotion and foreground their masculinity, just that their parallel accounts of affect complicate the standard ‘I Hate Girls’ reading.
In this chapter, I tease out such complications. In section 1, I look at how affect mediates social relations. Specifically, in section 2, I elaborate on how grindcore scene-members constitute ‘Others’ through discourse suffused with allusions to the possession and articulation of affect. In Melbourne, Otherness (un-brutalness) is assigned to musical genres outside of, but proximate to, grindcore. These genres are deemed shallow and too focused on their (representational) image. In Osaka, scene-members are relatively less perturbed by non-grindcore genres. Instead, they proscribe Otherness to those they perceive as conformist. However, this perception also depends on an understanding of such ‘conformists’ as image obsessed and hollow, compared to their own affective, and presumably deeper, experience in grindcore. Those who are Othered – who are not brutal – are excluded from the scene.

From this outline of grindcore sociality, I move to an analysis in section 3, of how affect relates to a particular form of sociality: gender relations. Brutal represents masculinised violence in popular, but also metal, discourse in Australia. In Japan, it signifies metal authenticity. However, feeling brutal is also the articulation of scene-members’ experience of affective, indeed brutal, belonging. Brutal belonging troubles the violent, masculinist connotations of ‘brutal’, because it encompasses a recession of the (predominantly masculine) self in favour of a collective identification with grindcore music, scene-members, and the spaces where grindcore is performed. Gender is backgrounded. Brutal belonging is more than the bordered, masculine body. It is the moments when the intensity of grindcore brings the bodies – in the audience, and onstage – together as a collective experiencing ‘feeling brutal’ together. Brutal sociality incorporates both meanings.
of brutal – as a signifier of masculine violence, and the more-than-gendered experience of affective belonging. Brutal sociality is ambiguous because it gestures towards both highly masculine representation, and the more-than-gendered, collective experience of brutal belonging.

In a close look at Melbourne’s scene, I offer ‘the interview’ as an event that demonstrates the constitution of brutal belonging. Interviews, of course, differ, depending on their contexts. I compare my ethnographic interviews, where my position as a woman was unusual, with grindcore micro-media interviews, generally conducted by men. Both forms of interview attempt to articulate brutal belonging. Yet, my ethnographic interview – mediated by my femininity (and the prospect of a low readership) – allows more room for the articulation of affect, than the ‘by men/for men’ standard of scene media interviews. The key difference hinges on the duality of ‘brutal’. In scene media interviews, interviewees build brutality and assert belonging through linguistic representations of ‘brutal’. Brutality, here, is masculine and aggressive and interpolates global grindcore’s patriarchal norms. My interviews, conversely, usually focused on ‘brutal’ as an affective experience, articulated as feminised ‘emotions’, and embedded in positive sociality.

In this section, I also look at how gender relations are represented in Osaka, through a discussion of grindcore event fliers. Next, I discuss how my position as woman tempered my ability to experience brutal belonging in Osaka’s scene.

Finally, in section 4, I draw issues of sociality and gender together in a close analysis of grindcore’s relation to the punk-rock genre ‘emo’. I present a case study of how Melbourne grindcore scene-members respond to emo. Here, I highlight the
tensions between the experience of affect as ‘brutal belonging’ – and authentically grindcore, and often authentically masculine – and the articulation of affect in emo, as inauthentic and feminised.

SECTION 1: BRUTAL SOCIALITY IN MELBOURNE AND OSAKA’S GRINDCORE SCENES

Massumi suggests that affect suffuses the “chaotic co-functioning” (1998, 59) of the political, economic and cultural spheres, which he dubs ‘the social’. Thrift concurs (2008, 207). Certainly, representation influences sociality. However, as Thrift points out, sociality also uses a “massively extended affective palette” (ibid.). This manifests in what he dubs “interactional intelligence” (208). Such intelligence depends on affective intuitions of social encounters. It is a shared and mutual expectancy of a situation, or as Thrift puts it “[a]ffect ... act[s] as the corporeal sense of the communicative act” (ibid. my emphasis).¹ Scene-members’ accounts of their interactions with others during gigs indicates the affective nature of such sociality. This is evident in Will’s difficulty in describing his experience as anything other than a sense of “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, Melbourne).

¹ 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 emphasises the biological and physiological factors present in the ‘transmission’ of affect (1-23 passim.)
Will’s enthusiasm depends on the same sociality fostered through bodily proximity required for a space to become brutal. In fact, for Will, the affective ‘something’ he describes is social – the act of “shar[ing] the ... music”, and experiencing belonging, with other scene-members. Will’s experience is more than simply the exclamation of “‘hey everyone!’” His pleasure derives from the inarticulable “something” which connects him with those “characters ... in the crowd” generated through affect.

Will’s response to affective sociality is similar to the experience of the ‘soundworld’ offered by Wood and Smith (2004). In their work on music-fans and musicians, a similar sort of difficulty in expression is evident. Their participants use nonsense expressions to communicate their experience of affect. They say, “you can just go jiiiiijiiiiijii” (537). Instead, Will offers his inarticulable “something” as “ssssss”. These noises demonstrate Thrift’s suggestion that the retrospective, (re)cognised description of affective experience is beyond words – that is, beyond the representative structures of language. While the verbal medium of the ethnographic interview remains representational, scene-members highlighted the difficulty of linguistically representing affective experiences:

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

Mortalized are the best band playing tonight; they are, like, um, I don't know how to say [pause, punches the air], brutal [burutaru]! (Bâbon, Osaka).* §

It's really hard to describe. ... It's an energy rush. It's nerve racking and highly exciting at the same time (Jim, Melbourne).

It's – fuckin’ oath. It's just fucking – I don’t know (Joel, Melbourne). *
When I’m really pissed [drunk] I do go into a pit and just go [waving arms] ‘wao wao’

(Nobu, Osaka).

It [singing in his band] is just all an expression of – of that shit [laughs]. You know what I mean? (Graham, Melbourne).

Ant: [I]t’s just destruction –

Lucy: Anarchy (Ant and Lucy, Melbourne).

This is not to say that the distinction between affect and its linguistic representation is binary. As Brennan points out, the cognition of affect may also be affective (120). The very difficulty interviewees had in articulating their experiences indicates how the process of cognitising affect is often done “in the dark” (ibid.) which leads to an affective sense of linguistic imprecision. These articulations demonstrate the difficulty of finding the words to describe an intensity that is beyond words. It is something “unspoken”, “hard to describe” (Jim), a gibberish word, an expletive or explicable only through metaphors of “destruction” (Ant).

In fact, descriptions of grindcore sociality often lack any explicit reference to grindcore as an object for discussion or representation. Rather, participants recount an ambience which, for them, is hard to describe, where grindcore sociality is embodied in how people feel:

[H]mmm, grindcore is very, very special music. Special – I don’t have the good words to describe (Ryûchi, Osaka).

[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 ‘ooorgh eurgghh’ and it is sort of kind of cool and it’s just [claps hands] – lovin’ it – you know? [laughs] (Will, Melbourne). 2

I made lots of fuck-ups, but, you know, at the end of the gig – that ten seconds when I’m doing my kick pedal – and I’ve just got all those endorphins rushing through me – it’s like ‘okay now – I’m shaking it all off – I feel great!’ (Lucy, Melbourne). *

[Playing live] It’s like an orgasm! The greatest thing in the world! It’s everything, really (Fukuda, Osaka).* §

Will and Fukuda’s descriptions of playing grindcore as “something [that] … come[s] over you” and “like an orgasm” indicates the affective intensity in the scene. In particular, they both gesture towards the dynamic between the external, brutal, ambience, generated by the crowd, and the highly intimate, embodied, sensation of that ambience when it “come[s] over you” (Will) and becomes “everything” (Fukuda). This dynamic characterises the affective sociality in grindcore – what I call ‘brutal sociality’ – which is crucial for scene-members, experience of brutal belonging.

SECTION 2: GRINDCORE AND ITS ‘OTHERS’ IN MELBOURNE AND OSAKA

Scene-members’ articulations about their experiences of sociality in the scene are generally positive. They indicate that, through brutal sociality, they are able to experience belonging in the scene – that is, they are able to relate to other scene-members. Yet, as Thrift (2008) points out, sociality, and affect, do not preclude

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2 Will’s sense of affect’s pre-cognitive and external (“something comes over you”) position supports Brennan’s 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 (51-74).
negative intensities; what he calls “misanthropic aspects” (208). Thus, sociality also encompasses exclusion and violence. Thrift emphasises that far from only indicating “liking others” (ibid.), sociality includes physical violence (the ‘brain snap’ or ‘I just lost it’) as well as mundane social activities of symbolic violence, such as “malign gossip [and] ... petty snobbery” (ibid.). Grindcore scene-members’ attitudes towards other scenes demonstrate this counter-meaning of affective sociality. Importantly, participants suggested that grindcore’s superiority lay in its members’ constitution of the experience of brutal belonging. This was particularly evident in descriptions of both cities’ scenes as open and friendly. Most participants made this claim. Here, however, I will quote only one participant from each city:

I think hardcore, ummm, has – it has its share of friendly people, but it also has some people that you wouldn’t wanna sort of, associate with, you could say. Whereas, grindcore, I think, is a fairly open, um, scene and sort of, as I keep saying, very friendly (Anita, Melbourne).

[I]t’s all about community and the friends (Kaz, Osaka).

There were, of course, exceptions to the standard assumption that grindcore was a friendly scene. Shawn, for example, emphasised the need to align oneself with older scene-members, who had higher subcultural capital, as important for feeling welcome:

Rosemary: ... did you feel like people were friendly towards you and everything?

Shawn: Ahh, to be honest not, not really. ... [W]e kind of knew everyone, but then ... I mean, I, I actually felt a little bit like I wasn’t accepted in the scene. I don’t know why, like, I wasn’t trying particularly hard to be accepted – I was just playing some grind – but I felt ... a little bit funny about it. I don’t know why. And then it was kind of like, you know, Andy was a
cool dude in the scene and, so, when we asked him to be in Fuck ... I’m Dead, I kind of knew him, I don’t know how. But, then, once Fuck ... I’m Dead started, then it was like a, um ... [I] felt totally comfortable. Because like they’re, they’re, I don’t know, the band – that band was accepted. I mean, that band wasn’t that – it was just funny – I don’t know. There was a period maybe of, like, a year or something like that, that were – it felt a little bit funny, you know (Shawn, Melbourne)?

Shawn’s narrative demonstrates the processual and contradictory nature of affect. That is, his affective experience of the scene shifted between negative and positive. He also shows how grindcore sociality is brutal sociality in a double sense. It is affective – Shawn speaks entirely about ‘feelings’ and even went on to say “they didn’t actually do anything negative”. However, he also alludes to the pain that his initial lack of acceptance caused him. For Shawn, this pain gestures towards the standard notion of ‘brutal’ as (symbolically) violent and hurtful.

In Osaka, scene-members’ perception of grindcore as ‘friendly’ was also mediated by their social position in the scene. However, more important than one’s subcultural capital was one’s position in the sempai kōhai hierarchy. I was discouraged, by sempai scene-members, from interviewing kōhai scene-members. “They don’t know anything”, Nobu told me. Sempai were welcomed. Kōhai, on the other hand, were marginalised or excluded:

[T]here’s – I still really have that sempai kōhai thing. They – I’ve met like, [a] young, young guy who wanted to play in the band and come to our shows and get involved; [he wanted to] come to the after party and everything. And, if they – if the young guy would come up and go ‘hey you are so cool!’ and started talking to me so friendly, I would say ‘Who the fuck are you?’ (Nobu, Osaka).

Nobu went on to explain further:
[Relating to] *sempai* and friends – totally different … I still can't go up to him [my *sempai*] and go 'heeyy' or anything like that. I’d be like 'oh, oh' [bowing] 'domo' – [I’d] bow and shit

*(Nobu, Osaka).*

Further, as women are positioned outside of the *sempai kôhai* hierarchy, female scene members also felt excluded:

**Rosemary:** ... did you make, um, friends with people quickly?

**Yumi:** Um, no [laughs]. ... Maybe – [there are] other places [that] are – people, metal bands and bars – that are more friendly than ... Osaka. ... In Osaka, they are, like, like nice. But, I think, um, there are some group[s], like ... in other places, maybe, everybody [is the] same. [They] get together and can talk. But, [in] Osaka [it] is so – hard *(Yumi, Osaka)*.

Yumi fantasises of “other places” in Japan where “everybody [is the] same” rather than hierarchically structured. However, due to being outside the male hierarchy, Yumi found it easier, in some ways, to fit in to the scene than a male *kôhai*. Yumi (who was the same age as some of the *kôhai*) and the *kôhai* men attended gigs weekly, but Yumi was more quickly accepted as a friend (not a girlfriend), who sometimes drank and moshed with the *sempai* while the *kôhai* continued in their role as drink servers, and respectful fans. Certainly, I never saw Yumi share Sensei’s table at Hokage. But, in his absence, the other male scene-members included her at the table. Partly this was because Yumi was an anomaly in the scene. Female fans were unusual, particularly female fans that participated in moshing. Further, Yumi was completely devoted to grindcore – even more so than most of the *sempai*. She worked three unskilled jobs to support her gig-going. Despite her good grasp of English, and high school diploma, her ‘metal look’ – of army pants, band t-shirts, tattoos and a partly shaved (and tattooed) head – made it difficult for Yumi to find skilled work. Furthermore, she had trouble committing
to a regular job because of her frequent trips throughout Australasia and the Americas to see her favourite bands.\(^3\) However, despite her devotion, and relative acceptance in the scene, she was disappointed there were not more women like her involved.

Sometimes I see lots of girls, but they ... um, they doesn't [sic] like metal but her boyfriend is playing, so they come in like that. So I can’t talk to them (Yumi, Osaka).

For Yumi, brutal sociality was “so hard” due to her limited ability to “talk to” other women, but also, as she implies above, any other scene-members.

2.1 Melbourne “idiots!”

Whenever there was new people coming to shows he [Chris] was always the first one to go ‘oh hey, I’m Chris, how you doing?’ ... I think that – that was definitely one of the things that probably made a big difference in why I got so into the grind scene in particular ... ’cause, like, it was so small and it’s such a marginalised music style that you can’t really be that fussy about if someone looks like a jock or if they look – whatever. Like some of the concerns ... hardcore ... fell prey to (Carsten, Melbourne).

Carsten, like his fellow scene-member Anita, above, emphasises that Melbourne grindcore is friendly. However, his celebration of brutal sociality paradoxically hinges on a criticism of another scene – hardcore – presumably with which grindcore fans are less friendly. Will also selected hardcore as less friendly than grindcore:

\(^3\) These trips were entirely funded through her three low-paid jobs. Yumi lived with her parents, so she was able to save a significant portion of her wages. Yumi’s enthusiasm for grindcore was demonstrated by the fact that, by the time I left Osaka, she had moved to Mexico purely because of its strong grindcore scene.
I sometimes go to, like, hardcore gigs ... There's a bit of people checking you – checking each other out, kind of thing – because it brings along a ... fashion element. ... Yeah, the grind's always sort of, just, yeah, just relaxed I think (Will, Melbourne).

Both Will and Carsten perceive hardcore scene-members as superficially concerned with representing their 'hardcore-ness' through fashion. Such a concern with image is seen as shallow and pretentious, compared with the “relaxed” (Will) grindcore scene where it does not matter “if someone looks like a jock or ... whatever” (Carsten).

In fact, Melbourne's grindcore scene-members viewed sartorial representations of metal as a sign of one's lack of brutality. Will recounted an encounter with prominent Melbourne 'hate-core' metal musician, Matt 'Skitz' Sanders, on a suburban train:

**Rosemary:** Matt Skitz takes himself very seriously.

**Will:** [laughing] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah he certainly does. He actually approached me one day on a train. I was going to a gig ... and he just came up to me all, you know, with the leathers and all this kind of shit. Like, ‘what?! Who is this guy?’ I think he expected me to know who he was. And at this time I had no idea. And um, he's like [puts on a deep voice] 'do you like metal bands?' And I didn't really have much to say [laughs]! I wasn't too enthused to talk to him for very long (Will, Melbourne).

For Will, Matt's metal style of leather jackets and desire to talk metal were evidence of 'taking it too seriously', rather than impressive signs of brutality.

Other scene members also shared the renunciation of symbolic signifiers of 'grindcore' identity in the form of clothing:

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4 The band, Damaged, dubbed themselves 'hate-core', but are generally thought of as a death metal/thrash band. For a discussion with Matt 'Skitz' on the 'hate-core' label, see Lord (2001).
You know we don’t – no-one’s there to judge, you know? You can turn up in a bloody pink patterned dress if you want, you know? (Andy, Melbourne).

There’s definitely not much of a uniform. ... I mean, um, yeah, I think it’s fairly, it’s fairly broad really and, I mean, generally, generally people wear t-shirts of bands they like. And ... that’s not even ... a fashion statement, it’s just supporting the bands that you actually enjoy listening to (Carlos, Melbourne).\(^5\)

A sense of ‘being’ grindcore – of possessing a grindcore identity – is bound to brutal sociality. That is, of enabling and experiencing the affective intensities of jocularity encouraged through social interaction, rather than representing brutality through clothing. Instead, a competence in the cultivation, and experience, of brutal affect is required to experience belonging. Returning to Carsten’s thoughts above, this is expressed as scenic ‘friendliness’ or ‘welcomeness’:

Everyone just, is friends with each other, and yeah … I’ve been welcomed into that (Will, Melbourne).

There’s not a particular style … like, sort of black metal … like the leather jackets and jackets with denim and studs and shit. … Then the hardcore thing with … the fish tattoos and shit like that. There’s not a very definable style, at least not in Melbourne anyway. Like it wasn’t really the sort of thing people get into on an aesthetic level, first off. So, if anyone did come to shows and was sort of vaguely interested, if someone sort of made the effort to say ‘oh hey’ and made you feel welcome, it made a big, big difference and whether they’d come back and whether they’d invest any sort of their own time and effort into it (Carsten, Melbourne).

\(^5\) Sometimes, the rejection of a scenic “uniform” (Carlos) led to interesting sartorial choices. Many scene-members dressed in an ‘anti-fashion’ style, in cheap tracksuits and runners, without even the ubiquitous metal t-shirt. During mixed-bills, some grindcore bands were even heckled for not being ‘metal’ enough and dubbed ‘bogans in trackies’ by the death metalheads in the crowd. In response, Blood Duster, whose members often wore tracksuits onstage, recorded a tongue in cheek song ‘Tracksuits are not appropriate metal attire’ (Blood Duster 1998).
Carsten implies that the representational aesthetics of black metal and hardcore attract what Will might call “a fashion element”. Such scenes, Carsten suggests, form a shallow sociality based on shared aesthetic tastes. Conversely, he positions grindcore as premised primarily on social interaction around a shared (“invested”) interest in the music.

The contradictory rhetoric of ‘our’ scene’s friendliness, as opposed to ‘their’ scene’s unfriendliness, is common in music cultures. In Thornton’s (1996) work on clubbing, she notes the mutually dependent relation between techno and pop music. Stock Aitken Waterman’s chart hits incorporated clubbing aesthetics. Conversely, club culture required the pop Other to retain a solid subcultural identity. In Melbourne’s grindcore scene, however, a distance from popular music is taken for granted:

[T]he pop scene – oh god! I don’t know. Unknown. It’s just invisible to, to – like, eugh, I don’t even know where they would play, sort of thing, probably nightclubs, I assume. ... Between [grindcore and] other sorts of music like pop … there’s no – as far as I know – there’s no interaction (Phil, Melbourne).

Club music and pop music share some basic similarities that are less obvious between grindcore and pop music. As Lacan (Lacan 2006 [1977]) points out, subjects perceive the Other as radically different (93-95). Nevertheless, the focus on such difference belies a similarity between the subject and designated Other. Thus, grindcore scene-members construct other genres of metal or heavy music, that is proximate music, as an Other. In fact, many scene-members were happy to report listening to pop but not other types of metal, or heavy rock music:
**Jules:** [Y]eah I can listen to some, ah, ‘radio friendly’ music, umm, a lot of old, eugh, some old 70s stuff. ... Ah, I don’t mind a bit of hip-hop, here and there – Cool Keith. Umm, all that funny shit – 50 Cent – he’s a brilliant dude.

...

**Rosemary:** What would be a ‘shit band’ [quoting a previous comment from Jules] then?

**Jules:** Just an average metal – death metal band I think’s pretty boring, so – yeah. (*Jules, Melbourne*).  

**Rosemary:** Is there any music that you wouldn’t get into – like that you wouldn’t listen to?

**Leon:** I hate Hendrix. That’s pretty much my rule. ... I just don’t get that. ... But everything else, I’m pretty cool with – I’m pretty open with pretty much everything (*Leon, Melbourne*).

Zak was the only participant who articulated a dislike of pop music and then it was in the context of defending grindcore’s apparent misogyny, compared with what he perceived as worse misogyny in pop:

I mean some of the most misogynistic music I’ve heard is by Michael Franti ... and I heard some song by Pete Murray where he was going on about ‘oh she left me, she’s a bad woman’ and I was thinking ‘good on her’. She did the right thing. Yeah, so called ‘normal’ music is much worse (*Zak, Melbourne*).

Melbourne scene-members considered death-metal especially antithetical to grindcore. They felt death-metal could not generate the same sense of intense enjoyment as grindcore, and thus could not generate brutal belonging. The death-metal Other is often literally proximate to grindcore. ‘Mixed-bills’ of grindcore and death metal bands meant both scenes’ members sometimes attended the same gigs.

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6 Other scene-members’ MySpace lists of music likes demonstrate a similar eclecticism and lack of self-consciousness regarding the circulation of subcultural capital (Thornton 1996) in relation, at least, to pop music. For example Christoph (Christoph 2009) lists Cyndi Lauper and the B-52s, and Dunstan (Dunstan 2007) lists the Rolling Stones and Nick Cave.
Melbourne grindcore fans considered death-metalheads too serious. Rather than taking joy in the music, death-metallers were seen as over-thinking their performances and, indeed, over-'representing' through pretentious bragging on stage:

> It [death metal] is sort of meant to be a bit more ‘powerful’ and whatever. ... [laughing] And it just seems like the dudes that go for it are just, kind of like more cheese-ball kind of dudes? They have this sort of serious attitude, you know? It’s weird *(Will, Melbourne).*

Will continues:

> **Will**: You know, they’ll put their foot up on the fold-back and they really ‘mean it’, you know?

> **Rosemary**: Yeah.

> **Will**: Like, *[putting on a gruff voice]* ‘I’m gonna play a riff now!’ you know, ‘Take that, idiots!’ *(Will, Melbourne).*

Here, Will characterises death-metalheads as pompous “idiots” for taking themselves so seriously. Instead, Will takes pride in grindcore’s perceived position as less serious:

> I don’t know why you would take it seriously [being in a band]. You know, it’s just fucking around *(Will, Melbourne).*

Will’s impersonation of a death-metal performer assumes that sincerity doubly implies that the artist and his (death metal is also dominated by men) audience are “idiots”. Will’s upper-middle-class background likely contributes to this stance. His

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7 Will’s assumption that death metalheads are “idiots” and thought to be “idiots” by death-metal performers echoes Hebdige’s (1979) infamous pronouncement of metal as “idiot music”. See Andy R. Brown’s (2003) chapter for a critique of this position.

8 A famous example of such seriousness might be, Deicide’s Glen Benton, who claims that he really *is* Satanic (Mudrian 2004). Benton’s claim, however, was recently disputed by metal scholar, Deena Weinstein (Weinstein 2009).
father is a barrister, and he lives with his family in an upscale beachside suburb.

Despite grindcore’s and, indeed, Will’s working-class affectations (he only wears tracksuits on and off stage)\(^9\) he makes a class-based distinction. Will, the middle-class subject claims an aesthetically critical distance from cultural-forms of which working class “idiot” subjects are presumed incapable.

Andy elaborates Will’s position, though with a less bourgeois bent.\(^{10}\) He suggests that death-metallers’ seriousness – here interpreted as ‘being metal’ – is inauthentic:

My main thing is ... especially in metal, and death metal – people are so fucking serious. You know – you get up there, all puffed up, going [death metal voice] ‘We’re fucking metal! Let’s go!’ And you know that’s part of being metal, but I just wanna remain a bit light. Take the piss a bit, you know? Take the piss out of our own band; take the piss out of everyone’s that’s there. Just have fun. ... You’re talking to the crowd and people are giving you shit, you’re giving them shit back and, I don’t know, people relate I reckon. Instead of just being screamed at about how brutal this band is – you know how brutal I am (Andy, Melbourne).

Like Will, Andy positions grindcore at a distance from the ‘heavy’ sincerity of death metal (‘I just wanna remain ... light’). However, rather than claiming artistic distance, Andy asserts that distance allows an ironic engagement with the music – an ability to “take the piss”. Yet, also like Will, Andy expresses contradiction. He claims that distance from the music makes grindcore unique. However, he also suggests that grindcore is the true mantle of brutality – an affective experience defined by a very lack of distance from the music. The perceived seriousness of

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\(^9\) Will was often heckled about his tracksuits, albeit in a friendly, joking manner. Other scene-members, perhaps taking into account his background, would yell “why don’t you use the door charge to buy some new duds [trousers]?!”. ‘Your trackies are looking worn out – can’t afford a new pair, hey?!’. Will would usually ignore this.

\(^{10}\) This is most likely due to Andy’s working-class background and his current occupation as a store-person.
death-metal performances lacks the affective spark, which makes “people [the audience] relate” to the band and each other – that is, generates brutal sociality. Andy emphasises that brutality lies not in representations of brutality (“scream[ing] ... about how brutal this band is”) but in grindcore practitioners’ embodiment of brutality on stage – “you know how brutal I am” (emphasis added). One who shares grindcore’s brutal affect registers the brutality of a band, ‘naturally’.

Will explains a similar situation:

There were a few shows that I went to early on with just awesome line-ups – or they were sort of line-ups with grind bands and maybe a couple of death metal bands. I just never got into the death metal bands nearly as much and they just weren’t as much fun to watch on stage. Not as good – ummm, it’s always the grind bands that stuck out. (Will, Melbourne).

For Will, death-metal’s lack of “fun” undercuts his sense of a line-up’s “awesome” status. His establishment of death-metal as inferior to grindcore also hinges on his earlier perception that grindcore is more “relaxed”, and less pretentious, than death-metal.11 Again, Will’s thoughts display contradiction. Death metal is at once too sincere (“really mean[ing] it”) and pretentious. The pretentious sincerity of death metal is, in fact, what produces the distance between Will and death-metal performances. For him, ‘getting into’ a band, requires the same collapsing of distance implied by Andy above. That is, literally, ‘getting into’ the music and experiencing it as affective – as brutal.

Like death metal, black metal is an offshoot of thrash – characterised by double-kick drumming, distortion and speed. Its chief differences from death and

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11 This perspective was echoed by Lucy who described Melbourne’s grindcore scene with one word: “unpretentious” (Lucy, Melbourne).
grindcore are high, wailed vocals, slower tempo and sometimes the inclusion of synthesisers. Sartorially, black metallers share a very specific style. This is characterised by black ‘armour’ clothing and corpse paint make-up. Black metal is often highly political. Some bands espouse right-wing radicalism and Satanism (Mudrian 2004). Further, black metal, globally, is regarded as very serious, more so even than death metal.\footnote{12} It is also perceived by some grindcore scene-members as, like hardcore, overly concerned with representing “underground” image, as this interview, with a member from Blood Duster, shows:

I like some [black metal bands], but others are absolute shit – I don't care for the image much ... I like stuff NOT underproduced [sic] for the sake of being underground – that whole attitude takes it up the ring (Irene 1994).

The black metal scene in Melbourne is extremely small, and mostly disbanded or no longer based in the city centre. Key bands, Bestial Warlust (1993–1997) and Destroyer 666 (1994 –) do not explicitly advocate right-wing politics. Nevertheless, many of their fans did, and racist, sexist and homophobic propaganda was regularly distributed and represented at their gigs. Grindcore bands never shared gigs with black metal bands during my fieldwork. Some former black metal band-members, however, have moved into death and grind bands, and still attract their old black metal fans. Melbourne’s grindcore scene-members viewed black metal, like death and hardcore, as taking representational elements, such as corpse paint and Nazi imagery too seriously:

\footnote{12}{Though, as Kahn-Harris (2007) points out, there are also moments of humorous black-metal reflexivity (144-152).}
We went to see ... Sadistik Exekution. ... and there was some other, ahhh, black metal bands playing, it was awful. ... there was even people there wearing make like cor- ... corpse paint etcetera. Which we found hilarious (Phil, Melbourne).\textsuperscript{13}

I've been to some of those [Destroyer 666] shows and it fucking disgusts me. Like, people walking around with ‘Hitler World Tour’ t-shirts and, like, Nazi tattoos (Carsten, Melbourne).\textsuperscript{14}

Black metal’s right-wing politics form the key mode through which grindcore fans distance themselves from the scene. Many scene members had been or were currently involved in left wing or anarchist activism.\textsuperscript{15} Gigs were often benefits for activist causes. For some in the scene, music provides a powerful expression of such politics. This echoes the radicalism of classic grindcore bands, such as Napalm Death and Brutal Truth (Green Left Global News 2005) which offered “lyrics that tackle what’s going on in society ... not just about cars or girls, or cutting up girls” (Norton 2009).

A left-wing perspective on social issues excluded almost all Melbourne interviewees from enjoying black metal music. Melbourne grindcore fans were concerned to distance grindcore metal and its politics from the black metal scene. Two Melbournians, however, had tried to begin a black metal band. Notably they started the band in Osaka, where black metal and grindcore bands often share line-

\textsuperscript{13}There is some debate as to whether Sadistick Execution is black, or death, metal. Their aesthetic – some instances of high vocals, Satanic imagery – fits black metal, and many of the band’s fans, as Phil points out, identify as black-metalheads. However, front-man ‘Kriss Hades’ has disputed this in interviews and the band even went so far as to release an album We Are Death ... Fukk You! (1994) emphasising their death metal identity. Their death metal credentials were again potentially challenged by their submission to Giroux’s (2009) Hellbent for Cooking: The Heavy Metal Cookbook – a black forest cake decorated with a pentagram.

\textsuperscript{14}Carsten took particular offence, because he is Jewish. However, he also said he was not game to confront these black-metal fans, due to his fears that they were neo-Nazis. Kahn-Harris (2007; Kahn-Harris 2010) discusses anti-Semitism in the global extreme-metal scene.

\textsuperscript{15}Campaigns scene-members have been involved in include the Maritime Union of Australia strike in 1998; the ‘S11’ anti-capitalism protests since 2000; vegan and animal cruelty campaigns; and anti-logging activism (Overell 2009).
ups. Aware of the distaste for black metal’s politics in Melbourne, they attempted to justify their rationale for playing black metal through appeals to left-wing discourse:

I don’t know – it [black metal] is some kind of big blackness … I’m trying to push forward.

‘Cause – well, part of what I reject in modern life is mindless consumerism (Ant, Melbourne).

[T]he crux of it [black metal] is that it’s a rejection of – of modern marketing of modern life, of the way that humans conduct themselves. And it comes into that misanthropic thing where humans could do so much better – but we don’t (Lucy, Melbourne).

Apart from Lucy and Ant, Melbourne scene-members avoided mixed death/black metal bills by avoiding particular ‘sympathetic’ venues. The Birmingham Hotel in Collingwood was the most significant venue. Since the early 1990s, Birmingham patrons included a number of neo-Nazis. Gig line-ups regularly consisted of right-wing punk and black metal bands (Boycott the Birmingham 2007). A boycott of the hotel lasted until late 2008, when the venue was sold and re-branded under the slogan “It’s not shit anymore” (Adams 2008) and apparently no longer supported neo-Nazi groups or patrons.

In fact, black metal and grindcore fans occasionally came into open conflict at gigs including black metal and grindcore musicians and punters, as Carsten’s story outlined in the previous chapter, about a fight at a Kutabare show, demonstrated. Notably, the grindcore victim of the brawl was a “hippie … wearing a dress or something like that” (Carsten). This provides an interesting counterpoint to Andy’s claim, above, that one would still be accepted wearing a “pink patterned dress” to a grindcore gig. There is a gap between the scene’s mythology that everyone is welcome and the reality, that non-normativity is sometimes aggressively policed
by other gig-goers. Of course, scene-members maintain this mythology by placing bigotry onto ‘black metallers’ who mistakenly attend grindcore shows, rather than being authentic scene-members. Brutal sociality is achieved through sharing the experience of brutal belonging with performers and audience. However, it is also achieved through the, sometimes violent – indeed brutal – exclusion of those ‘Others’ outside the scene.

2.2 Osaka’s Others and ikigai

[B]rutaral music with brutal lyrics and brutal guys – not wanker[s] [laughs] – it’s ah, hmm–

I love it maybe, hmmm, maybe ‘til death. ‘Til death (Ryûchi, Osaka).

In Melbourne’s grindcore scene, grindcore’s Others were positioned against an understanding of grindcore identity as ‘brutal’; that is, naturally able to experience affective – brutal – belonging. Andy emphasised that death-metallers’ tendency to contrive ‘brutalness’ through representations separated them from grindcore scene-members, who simply were brutal. In Osaka, burutaru also connotes an authentic grindcore metal identity. However, the designation of ‘un-brutal’ people and scenes is less generically based than in Melbourne’s grindcore scene. More important than one’s musical taste was one’s perceived position in relation to dominant Japanese culture. Osakan scene-members regarded themselves as rebels, outside of mainstream society. To them, ‘Others’ were conformists who lacked the conviction to follow their ikigai (true dream). Further, Osakan participants construed Otherness, like the Melbourne scene-members, as being associated with a shallow adherence to image; that is – representation. Such people, as Ryûchi puts it above, were considered “wankers”, following the British derogatory term for
pretentious people. Osakan scene-members singled out their affective connection to the scene and their pursuit of *ikigai* as what made them different, and superior, to Others.

Unlike in Melbourne, Osakan grindcore bands regularly played with hardcore bands and some even incorporated hardcore aesthetics into their performances. Nobu’s band, Infernal Revulsion, for example, appropriated the hardcore practice of posturing as a crew or a gang bound to a particular region. Their MySpace page announces, “Infernal Revulsion – Spreading Kansai Brutality Throughout the Universe” (Infernal Revulsion 2010), and includes numerous pictures of them standing in front of graffiti inspired by the band. As Masa mentioned in Chapter 3, his band, palm, often “played ... hardcore style” when sharing the stage with hardcore bands. An acceptance, or even enjoyment, of hardcore music was partly due to the overlap between the scenes. Many scene-members began by playing in hardcore bands before, as Nobu says, “progress[ing] from ordinary ... music to ... brutal music”. While scene-members felt most at home in Sensei’s grindcore-based ‘Shinkagura scene’, they did not particularly other hardcore musicians or their fans.

More important to Osakan scene-members was a sense that one’s commitment to any scene was sincere. However, this did sometimes manifest as Othering based on music genre, particularly in relation to popular music, which was regarded as shallow and conformist. A number of scene-members professed that they listened

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16 Ryûchi had learnt this term through tape and record trading with British punks.
17 Notably, the graffiti photographs were taken in America. Graffiti is relatively uncommon in Japan and heavily penalised.
to popular music. However, unlike Melbourne scene-members, such listening was always placed in the past, before their ‘progression’ to brutal music:

Oh, um, I was into this, um, ah, Japanese band called, uh, ‘X’\(^{18}\) ... glam rock. Yeah, yeah, KISS kind of make-ups. Yeah, well, actually, a lot of the bands that are active right now – playing metal – got into music because of HIDE [the lead guitarist of X].\(^{19}\) I was into that. ... Then like Cannibal Corpse just kicked me in. But, you know, X and Cannibal Corpse are totally different (Nobu, Osaka).

Here, Nobu puts popular music in its place – as a stepping-stone towards “kick[ing] in” to heavier music. Kaz shared a similar story:

He [HIDE from X] had red hair and – the way he acts was – the way he acted was a bit different from anyone. And he was a bit like Sid Vicious, but more soft. ... Yes – I used to – I used to be, um – I used to listen to them a lot (Kaz, Osaka).

However, Kaz went on to emphasise that his youthful consumption of X was naïve, compared with his later discovery of metal:

But, maybe, I was not listening [to X] like I was – I am listening to, um, metal band[s]. ... Or, um, anything like that. I was listening because everyone was listening to them ... [Later] I went downtown with my friend; he suggested [to] me to buy a tape ... of Megadeth[’s] first album. *Killing is my Business and Business is Good*. And I was, uh, really impressed by that tape and I, um, ahhhh – and then I started buying all the metal albums (Kaz, Osaka).

Here, Kaz suggests that consumption of popular music is conformist. He only listened to X “because everyone was listening to them”. Yumi expressed a similar perspective; that pop fans were shallow and concerned solely with an image of what is ‘cool’:

\(^{18}\) Known as ‘X Japan’ outside of Japan.
\(^{19}\) All the members of X wrote their names in capital letters.
[Speaking about Arashi, a J-pop boy band, managed by the famous Johnny’s Entertainment] the [female] fan – just loves them – he’s a guy, so, [she] doesn’t care [about] the music, I guess (Yumi, Osaka).

The notion, of conformism, not only in relation to music taste, was often singled out more generally by Osakan scene-members as Other to grindcore. Unlike in Melbourne, where almost all scene-members had ‘day jobs’ and many had families, Osakan scene-members often actively eschewed the shūshoku katsudō (the recruiting process into stable, mainstream employment), preferring to stay in casual, low paying jobs. Only one of my interviewees, Yōko, worked for a kaisha (big company). Though I often saw men in suits at lives (sometimes head banging), they usually attended alone, and left early (Figure 4.1). They were not included in the grindcore coterie because scene-members regarded salarymen as conformists, particularly when compared to their own self-image as outsiders:

I felt really different from anyone at school – because everyone else was listening to, like, hip-hop and I – I had long hair. Maybe, everyone at school thought, um, I be, like, um, [a] strange person or crazy (Kaz, Osaka).

When I am working, people stare me [because of my metal clothes and hair]. Yeah, I don’t like it! But, so – but – but I don’t care (Yumi, Osaka).

As far as family and work commitments go, I don’t really think about fitting in (Takeda, Osaka). §

I don’t think about what others think. It’s best to be myself, always (Yōko, Osaka). §

20 In wider Japanese society there is a rise in a so-called furitā class of young workers who eschew shūshoku katsudō and work in unskilled or service jobs to earn just enough to sustain an active social life (Driscoll 2007; Katsumata 2000). Notably furitā are often not from a working class background. They are sometimes middle-class youth who have ‘dropped out’, some even after experiencing life working for a kaisha (Mathews 2004, 128). However, in the grindcore scene, the fact that almost all participants were furitā is unusual, compared with other social scenes. Yumi, who worked three unskilled jobs to fund her involvement in grindcore was a furitā. Further, in Osaka’s scene, most of the members were from working-class backgrounds.
Kaz and Yumi both expressed their difference from mainstream culture through representation (their clothing and hairstyles). Many other scene-members followed a similar aesthetic. All those interviewed had tattoos, apart from Yôko who worked at a *kaisha* as an *OL* (‘Office Lady’). Tattoos are still considered relatively taboo and associated with organised crime in Japan. Some participants also had facial piercings. These set them apart from the suit and tie of the *salaryman* and the skirt and blazer of the *OL*. However, scene-members also associated conformity with particular practices, such as working in a professional job or getting married:

**Rosemary:** What about if you got a salary job?

**Nobu:** Why would you do that? You’re still in the band. You know, you gotta have the band first priority. Quit that job [laughs].

**R:** What if someone got married?

**N:** Why would you get married [laughs]? *(Nobu, Osaka).*

I think it’s pretty hard [to be in the scene when you’re married] for many reasons. Maybe as long as you don’t have [a] baby. Maybe you can still be in a band, but things get more complicated when they, ah, have kids *(Kaz, Osaka).*

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21 Tattoos were popular in the scene and tattoo parlours even sponsored some of the bigger lives such as ‘Freestyle Outro’. Further, scene members mostly had visible, large tattoos, such as on their lower arms. Others complemented these tattoos with more traditional, indeed *yakuzo*, style tattoos of dragons on their backs.
Joel, a Melbourne scene-member who lived in Osaka and was a part of the scene there, also noticed “an active dislike” (Joel) of salarymen:

I remember talking to some of them, and there was an active, like, I don’t know ‘hatred’ is a strong word, but there was an active dislike to salarymen. … You know ‘suits’. They hated the corporate world and you know people walking around in suits and people who were just out to, you know, who were just salary-whores for their companies and that sort of thing (Joel, Melbourne).

To experience brutal belonging in Osaka’s scene – to feel at home within the grindcore milieu of brutal sociality – one must ensure that grindcore is your “first priority”. For the scene-members I interviewed, belonging to Osaka’s grindcore scene was their ikigai. Literally translated as ‘to live’, ikigai is similar to the
Western notion of finding one's calling, or pursuing your dream.\textsuperscript{22} As Mathews (2003) points out in his ethnographic work on *ikigai*, some of the post-war generations, particularly those in their late twenties and early thirties, reject the received assumption that a man's *ikigai* should be loyalty to the *kaisha* where one is employed, and a woman's to her family duties. There is a growing percentage of *salarymen* leaving their jobs to pursue their *ikigai*, which, for Mathews's interviewees, was often raising a family. The popular rhetoric surrounding *ikigai* implies that to submit to one's *ikigai* is to be one's authentic self. In Osakan grindcore, this was opposed to the notion of conformity – associated with ‘old *ikigai*’ of a salaryman life, patrilinial obligations and ‘traditional’ Japanese culture.

Osakan scene-members constituted their own form of *ikigai* through a rejection of what they regard as conformity – working a company job, but also having a family. Instead, scene-members articulate their involvement in the scene as ‘naturally’ evolving:

> Grindcore is just like clothing, food and housing. Sleeping, eating and sex. Being involved in the scene is so natural to me (*Katsu, Osaka*). §

> Grindcore music is – is – in my heart (*Masa, Osaka*).

> [Explaining why she does not like pop music] I think – I don't know, when I was, um, eight I saw Black Sabbath on cable TV and I loved the music. And when I was thirteen, um, I found death metal ... my mum is into metal ... Yeah. I have [share] CDs with her (*Yumi, Osaka*).

Katsu and Masa experience grindcore as a “natural”, organic part of their life – embedded in everyday routines and, in Masa's case, his body. Yumi even implies

\textsuperscript{22} Mathews (2003) translates *ikigai* as “that which most makes life worth living” (109).
that her *ikigai* for the scene might be genetic, considering her mother also enjoys metal. This echoes Andy’s claim that he just ‘is’ brutal, above.

Osaka’s grindcore scene was regarded by members as enabling their *ikigai* because it allowed them to ‘feel’ good:

> The scene is important to me because I can feel it. In my job – I don’t feel good, but at a *raibu* I feel better (Yôko, Osaka). §

Here, Yôko refers to the affective experience of being at a live performance – as improving her mood, and opposed to her *kaisha* job.

Osakan grindcore scene-members’ celebration of their non-conformity, as part of their *ikigai*, sometimes obscured their class position as outside *salaryman* culture ‘naturally’ due to their family background. While they perceived themselves as rebelling against dominant culture, their career paths into unskilled labour in fact conformed to their class position (cf Willis 1977). Most of my interviewees lacked tertiary education. The majority had not even finished high school. Most scene-members came from poor families and some had even experienced homelessness (including Sensei, the CEO of KE). A working class background in Japan makes it difficult to achieve a company job (Roberson 2003) simply because it is unlikely one can attend a highly ranked university without expensive *juku* (*‘cramming’ school*) classes to prepare for exams. Further, some scene-members were involved in minor crimes during their adolescence – mainly participation in motorcycle gangs. A criminal record also makes company employment difficult.

Notably, two scene-members were part of social groupings widely discriminated against in contemporary Japanese culture due to their perceived ‘outsider’ status.
Nobu was biracial – half Caucasian, half Japanese. Although biracial people are becoming more common in Japan (Kim and Oh 2011), they still experience discrimination, sometimes being seen as not ‘really’ Japanese (Fish 2009). Upon moving back to Japan, after growing up in Australia, Nobu found it difficult to find employment due to what he perceived as “half-caste discrimination” (Nobu). Instead, he immersed himself in AmeMura’s “not ordinary” culture:

> When – when I first came here [to Osaka] I real, really struggled. ... But – when I got work in the shop, obviously those people were not ordinary, you know? They were into fashion and music and everything. ... So, ahhh, but, one of the guys who worked there was, ummm, had a girlfriend who plays in – who played in a grindcore band ... and I got into the band (Nobu, Osaka).

Masa also found refuge in grindcore due to his social position as a *burakumin*. *Burakumin* is a low caste identity category first legally designated under the Tokugawa Shogunate. They were associated with ‘dirty’ professions, such as leatherwork and undertaking. Their name derives from the small hamlets (*buraku*) on the outskirts of towns in which the Shogunal legislation forced them to live. These spaces were off-limits for ordinary townsfolk. While the *burakumin* had a place, they were still considered both *kitenai* (dirty) and *soto* (outside) of society, or other recognised ‘Japanese’ spaces. They were also associated with the early incarnations of the *yakuza* (Kaplan and Dubro 2003). After the Meiji Restoration, the caste system was ostensibly abolished and official discrimination against *burakumin* was repealed. However, discrimination remained, and remains, common (Neary 2009), especially in Kansai where there have been recent cases of (illegal) background checks of job-seekers and even potential marriage partners (Alabaster nd; Boyle nd).
Masa was uncomfortable discussing his background, but claimed that, in the scene, people “don’t care about my job, or my family”. He opposed this to life outside the scene, where he had, most recently, been rebuffed by a girlfriend due to her family’s disapproval of his background. Nevertheless, despite being the same age as the other *sempai* in the scene, Masa was often excluded from the song-writing process (despite his keenness) and did most of the ‘loading in’ work at *raibu*. His job, as a labourer, was typical of the majority of contemporary *burakumin*.

*Ikigai*, however, can also imply sacrifice for one’s life pursuit. In Mathews’s research he, in fact, wrote of a guitarist who eventually decided his *ikigai* was not music, but fatherhood, and he gave up music. Others Mathews interviewed had given up lucrative careers to pursue their, less financially secure, *ikigai*. Thus, there is a sense that one’s duty to *ikigai* might also be a challenge, and include sacrifice.

Ryûchi, who ran Jokerman, expressed his satisfaction of achieving his *ikigai*, but also described the financial sacrifice he had to make to open the bar:

> [M]y old job [as manager at a supermarket] is, er, only for making money – yet, now [my new job is for] enjoyment. I killed – I killed my feeling[s] – all for money. That money – for money. But now – now I don’t get so much money, but, er – oh it’s really good for my mind

(Ryûchi, Osaka).

Ryûchi articulates the notion that, by following his dream, he is living a better life, which is “good” for his “mind”, despite earning less money. Notably he associates his prior professional job as repressing affect – “I killed my feelings”. Since

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23 When the lead guitarist left palm, Masa was hopeful that he would take his place (he could play guitar, as well as bass) and contribute to writing palm’s songs. Instead, the drummer and vocalist organised one of their friends to take the lead guitar position.

24 My interviewees often spoke of ‘challenge’ (another *wasei eigo* – ‘*charenjii*’) in the same context as *ikigai*. For example, Nobu described playing at a metal festival in the USA as the ultimate experience of *ikigai*, but also as his greatest challenge.
following his *ikigai*, Ryûchi is more able to experience affect or, in his words, “enjoyment”.

Katsu shared a similar sense of satisfaction with his job in the scene, as editor of the magazine *kreativ*:

> I’m fortunate to be able to work in such an environment where they understand my passion for grindcore (*Katsu, Osaka*). §

Further, Katsu suggests that his experience of affect (“passion”) in relation to grindcore complements, or even enhances, his job.

Sensei, who had gained the most success from his *ikigai* by beginning KE, compared investment in Hokage with *salaryman* style “Japanese … business”, claiming his *ikigai* pursuits had more “soul”:

> Japanese company and business style is not good – everything is for money – business.
> Culture is not important. In other music places, music culture is not really even important. I – I want to have a good venue, where the soul is important – the music and the soul – everyone should be drinking beer – happy – music, so, yeah (*Sensei, Osaka*).* §

Like Ryûchi and Katsu, Sensei alludes to the more than representational – that is, *affective* – elements of both the grindcore scene and *ikigai*. He used the *wasei eigo* ‘sôaru’ for ‘soul’ to refer to something beyond the material world – an ambience, presumably, conducive to brutal sociality.

Sensei often joked that KE made little money. Nevertheless, the bars and recording studio remained open. For many, the lack of money made in the scene was further proof of their brutality – their commitment and sacrifice to *ikigai*:
Bands in Osaka are ... unique. I get the impression that they do not sell out and stick to their ideals (ikigai) (Oka, Osaka).

Many bands who would do that – [move to] Tokyo [after being signed by a record label] – has broken up – ‘cause it’s – they’re more focused on, um – they can speed up their band and make money, but, at the same time they break up really soon. ... [W]e [his band] believe in what we are playing and ... we believe in playing for a long time ... it’s really hard ... but we always think ‘this is for our friends’ – for the scene (Kaz, Osaka).

Unlike in Melbourne, Osakan scene-members placed a high value on taking the scene seriously. It was important that scene-members prioritised their commitment to grindcore – and grindcore sociality (“this is for our friends’) – and made it a key part of their everyday lives. However, both scenes did share a sense that being brutal was bound to an authenticity – an ability to connect with a ‘true’ self – whether through bodily engagement (“getting into it” in Melbourne), or following one’s ikigai in Japan.

SECTION 3: BRUTALLY GENDERED SOCIALITY

3.1 Affect and feminised emotion

In Osaka and Melbourne, Otherness is bound to a lack of authentic grindcore ‘brutality’, which enables the brutal sociality that constitutes brutal belonging. Brutality, in both scenes, depends on the subjective ability to be affected, and, in the external movement, be affective in relation to grindcore music. Interviewees generally glossed this as a positive feeling shared between performers and audience. However, affect is not necessarily always an uplifting intensity. Power relations mediate affect, as is clear in scene-members’ relations to Other music and identities. Gender identity, in particular, potentially enables or restrains scene-
members’ ability to be ‘blown away’ by brutality, and experience brutal belonging to the grindcore scene.

The connotations of ‘brutal’ are gendered masculine – in both common and grindcore parlance. ‘Brutal murderers’ are usually men, while victims of brutality – in media representations particularly – are generally women. Lyrics, such as FID’s ‘The Mornington Monster’ sometimes even refer directly to ‘brutal’ crimes. Further, instances of extreme-metal taking the blame for male sexual violence against women are so common they are almost banal (Weinstein 2009; Weinstein 2009; Wise, Dunn et al. 2005). Grindcore scene-members in both cities rarely enact brutality in the sense of physical violence. However, through its brutal sensibility, Melbourne and Osakan grindcore becomes a masculine scene, replete with masculine spaces for the performance of brutality. This consideration of Melbourne grindcore is neat. Indeed, in terms of representation, brutal masculinity blasts from every tee 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 forced articulation of affect in the ethnographic interview (both the participant-sensing and extended interview formats) troubles brutal’s masculine

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25 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 ‘unnmale’” (67). Recent examples in Australian media to use the phrase ‘brutal’ when describing crime perpetrated by a man against a woman include: the murder of a woman by Wayne William Roberts-Barlow (O’Brien 2012); David Hopkins’s murder of his girlfriend (Ross 2011); and a young man’s murder of a female nurse (Marcus 2012).

26 Other Melbourne grindcore songs about crime include: ‘Jeffrey Dahmer’s Cookbook’; ‘Shotgun Facelift’ (about Melbourne crime victim Kay Nesbit) (Fuck ... I’m Dead 2001) and ‘jandimara’s Burning’ (about a young boy who was set on fire in Queensland) (The Kill 2003).

27 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 the ‘Night Stalker’ (Carlo 2006).
connotations. To articulate feeling is to acknowledge the ‘blowing away’ of the (masculine) Self in the affective moment. **Popular rock and even ‘alternative’ rock music is male-dominated** (Bannister 2006; Jagodzinski 2005). Yet, this is somewhat tempered by the expectation that pop-rock performers ‘express emotion’ partly to fulfil their status as ‘meaningful’ artists and appeal to a wide audience (Jagodzinski 2005), as well as counter-discourses representing the rocker as a ‘family man’.

Extreme-metal, including grindcore, is just as masculinist. However, the marginality of the genre and its proponents’ aversion to pop-rock aesthetics means that verbally articulated affect is incongruous to a brutal disposition. There is no obligation for extreme-metal practitioners to cast a wide net of appeal. Chart success is unlikely, and rarely a goal (Kahn-Harris 2007). Instead, extreme-metallers appeal to listeners who share their brutal disposition, partly through blunt representations of masculinity. 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 ‘roughness’ of both male culture and grindcore’s association with transgressing taboos. Swearing is, of course, ‘unladylike’ and also draws attention away from the notion of the self becoming ‘Dead’. The controversial use of ‘Fuck’ becomes the focus.\(^{28}\) This does not mean that a brutal disposition excludes affect. On the contrary, brutality as something that cannot be articulated through speech or representation – that is, brutality as affect – suffuses the grindcore scene. However, the moment of

\(^{28}\) 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”. Osakan bands also used (English) swear words in their band-names, also to create controversy, and reference Western grindcore; two examples are ‘System Fuckers’ and ‘Bathtub Shitter’.
articulation – particularly necessary to the ethnographic interview – requires recognition of brutality’s affectiveness and a compartmentalisation of such intensities into speech. Speech’s inadequacies locate affect in the, feminised, emotional register.

3.2 – Brutal interviews

My requests, in interviews, to articulate ‘feelings’ regarding live grindcore performances were often met with awkwardness. This awkwardness came particularly from male participants who thought it was odd to be articulating ‘feelings’:

[T]his’ll sound a bit funny – it [watching a band] gives me a warm feeling [laughs]! (Andy, Melbourne).

Rosemary: So, how do you feel, like, say in 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]! (Graham, Melbourne).

Rosemary: How do you feel when you’re watching palm play at a live?

Mike: [long pause] I have no idea, sorry [laughs, then pauses] Sorry, I am tired (Mike, Osaka).

Andy distances himself from the “warm feeling” – affect – which live performances prompt through the observation that it “sound[s] ... funny” for a man to articulate affect. All three respondents use laughter to distance themselves from their affective responses.
This awkwardness partly reflects my diversion from the standard interview and interviewer relationship in the grindcore scene. As Graham notes, it is rare for metallers to be asked about their 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 all men, though the editor is a woman (Terrorizer nd). I often felt that male scene-members were ‘on their best behaviour’ during our extended interviews. This manifested in sexist, ‘chivalrous’ activity, such as holding the door open for me, or offering to pay for the coffees I usually purchased before we began recording. When misogyny in the scene was broached, male interviewees often looked sheepish or responded facetiously:

I’ve gotten – you end up getting into trouble sometimes. ... Early on we played a show in Canberra – and it was a song called – that song ‘Slowly Raped With A Chainsaw’ and, this girl wouldn’t – *didn’t get it*. She was just going ‘You shouldn’t sing about raping women!’ I’m going ‘It’s not about raping women!’ It’s about raping anything with a chainsaw. I was like ‘I don’t know – that chair there – and you hit it with a chainsaw’. You know *(Andy, Melbourne).*

During one Melbourne interview, the participant received a phone call, from a fellow band-member. His tone, and language switched immediately. He answered the phone: “How ya going, ya fat cunt?” After the call, he apologised for his bad language – presumably because, as a woman, I was likely not to “get it” and be offended.29

My gender, I believe, also contributed to repeated questioning in both cities of why I was studying grindcore and whether I ‘really’ liked grindcore. However, when I

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29The mediating fact of my presence was also evident in the participant-sensing interviews I conducted in Melbourne. When I gave male scene-members a digital recorder to use to record their experiences, they regularly belched and swore – anything rather than articulate their experiences onstage. When I interviewed scene-members directly after a show, however, responses appeared more thoughtful or checked. As Mick said in one interview I conducted straight after his set, “You don’t want me being a smart-arse do you?” *(Mick, Melbourne).*
revealed that my partner was in a band, interviewees generally took this as the only acceptable explanation for my presence in the scene and my academic interest. This, of course, confirms popular assumptions that women generally form the periphery of rock scenes – as fans, groupies and ‘girlfriends’ (cf. Garber and McRobbie [1975] 1976).

Apart from the gender of most interviewers of grindcore musicians, the interview structure fosters a masculine, if not macho, perspective.30 ‘Feminine’ areas such as emotions, or family life, are rarely discussed. Keeping it brutal, means keeping it manly in metal magazines. 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 number. However, relative to other 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 nd).

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 (nd), who interviewed Blood Duster for Sydney

30 The masculinist bias of media interviews is not peculiar to grindcore, or even extreme-metal. As Connell (2000) demonstrates in her ethnography of masculinity and sports, “media talk” (81) reinforces dominant conceptions of masculinity.
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. However, the interview becomes heavily (brutally) masculine when discussion turns to the band’s DVD *The Shape of Death to Come* (Blood Duster 2005). Interviewee, Jason P. C., provides information that the disc features multiple “tittie [and] … cunt shots” (Ward nd). 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” (ibid.), suggesting that the pornography on the DVD is simply 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 (ibid.).

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 really 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 (ibid.).

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31 His name being a joke on ‘Politically Correct’ – he and his band deliberate try to be politically incorrect.

32 Another Melbourne grindcore band, Undinism, included similar pornographic images in their DVD (Undinism 2005). As one reviewer described it “this one show [on the DVD] stays in the realm of pretty family-friendly entertainment … Well except maybe for the menus which are basically pornographic close-ups of twats and stuff” (Pierre 2005).
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 ‘mateyness’ which surrounds the consumption of pornography normalises, via complicity, the objectification and degradation of women most pornography expresses (Jensen 2007).33

The rest of the interview follows this masculinist structure. Jason recounts a tale of an ‘uptight’ American grindcore band (in fact, Brutal Truth) who took offence at his repeated reference to his partner as a “cunt” (ibid.). Ward heartily agrees with Jason that this is outrageous; though still, apparently, an amusing – “classic” – anecdote (ibid.).

Other Blood Duster interviews follow a similar matey and sexist tone. Terrorizer asks: “Which European country does the best porn?” (Christ 2009).34 Beat’s Bobus Wang enquires: “Which Suicide Girl would you most enjoy throwing one up? Personally I’d rev the guts out of that Ciara chick” (Wang 2007). 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” (ibid.), “tits” (Christ 2009) and the ubiquitous “cunt” (Christ 2009, Wang 2007, Ward nd) to be “rev[ved]” (Wang 2007), “pick[ed] up” (Ward nd) and “fucked” (ibid.). The process of objectification allows the subject,

33 Jensen 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).

34 Jason’s response fits the same structure: “Fucked if I know I’m not really listening for an accent. I’m too busy looking at vaginas and getting my jerk on” (Christ 2009).
doing the objectifying, to experience wholeness, in the face of the amputated partiality of the object. However, Jensen notes an interesting paradox within the objectifying process of pornography consumption. He suggests that male pornography consumers use pornography to objectify themselves (113-114). That is pornography, produces an “emotional numbness” (113) which avoids facing sex as “always more than a physical act” (114, my emphasis). That is, it seeks to achieve an avoidance of sex's affective element. For Jensen, this process maintains dominant masculinity, which represses female-coded 'emotions' (26). I would extend Jensen's argument to include a parallel avoidance of affect – the inarticulable 'something' prior to its representation as emotion.

The avoidance of emotions is obvious in the Blood Duster interviews. They work in a cerebral, cognitive mode. That is, both Jason (he is the only band-member to participate in media interviews) and the interviewer appear to have calculated 'clever' responses. These always shy away from articulating affect, despite focusing on sex. Sex, like the women and feminised emotions it prompts, becomes an object. It is something to be watched, categorised into 'bests' and discussed with detachment. By objectifying femininity into representative parts, they distance themselves from the physical 'female' – in Wang's words, a “gooey vagoo” – and tout themselves as 'masculine'. However, in this objectifying process, Jason and Wang also mark a distance from the emblematic female – emotions and their precursors, affect – associated with sex.

In my Melbourne interviews, it was common for male interviewees to assert their masculinity through crass descriptions of sex and gender. Such responses evade the necessity of speaking feminised feelings when articulating affect. In response
to a question about affect and performance, Leon, a current member of Blood Duster, 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. (*Leon, Melbourne*)

Thus, for Leon, being brutal is synonymous with being ‘male’ – represented by the phallic slang ‘dick’. He went on to rationalise his band’s blunt misogyny as simply another example of their brutal transgression of social norms, in particular ‘political correctness’:

> [W]hen the scene got really politically motivated and that whole ‘P. C.’ thing started [in the 1990s] ... We kind of reacted against it and went ‘this is fucking bullshit’, you know. Like, you know – I thought that scene was more... Like, for a scene that was supposed to be no rules and anti-society, they seemed to really push their view of what a society should be – without any, you know – and really militant about it, which was just insane (*Leon, Melbourne*).

He gave an example of putting up McDonald’s ‘golden arches’ flags at gigs to “stir up” the more radical-left scene members.\(^{35}\) This example was rather innocuous, compared to the countless instances of misogynist ‘political incorrectness’ enacted at their shows. However, I felt this was because I was a woman – I was told a sanitised ‘lady-like’ version of events, presumably so I would not take offence.

Other Melbourne scene-members acknowledged the misogyny of bands such as Blood Duster, but again I believe my gender mediated how they framed their responses. Mostly, they justified such sexism as simply an example of grindcore’s

\(^{35}\) Andy, another scene-member, also brought up this story, saying that because he was “very political” he was annoyed at Blood Duster’s routine of “not giving a shit about anything”. So, “we used to have a song in it – a song called ‘McDuster’ – we gave them shit about their McDonalds’ flag” (*Andy, Melbourne*).
rejection of ‘mainstream’ culture, and a demonstration of how ‘extreme’ the genre is. Zak, however positioned his enjoyment of misogynist music as the result of wider patriarchal culture, which he was powerless to resist:

I think most Melbourne [grindcore] bands would say ‘Oh I didn’t think about it like that’. That’s the thing – often you don’t think about it. I mean, I think I’m anti-misogyny ... but sometimes like to listen to this music that is, you know, misogynist. I mean you’re conditioned – conditioned from when you’re born – to think something about women – that they’re sex objects and stuff. That that’s normal (Zak, Melbourne).

As noted above, Zak went on to insist that pop music was more misogynist than Melbourne grindcore. Carsten also defended what appeared to be blunt misogyny in Melbourne’s scene:

Like Vaginal Carnage for instance, they got a lot of bad, sort of – people making bad judgements about them and stuff, and saying ‘Oh they’re called Vaginal Carnage, they’re a bunch of this and that’. ... Chris [the singer from Vaginal Carnage] was always going ‘Oh I’m really embarrassed by this name’ and all that. ... There was an article written by a guy in Sydney ... He did a zine ... picking on them saying ‘we shouldn’t accept this misogyny; this woman-bashing music blah blah blah’. And then he [Chris] got really upset! He was like ‘all our songs are about toilets and farts and shit like that’. I mean there were some songs that you might say they were slightly sexist (Carsten, Melbourne).

Though he admits that Vaginal Carnage was “slightly sexist”,36 Carsten emphasises that the members of the band may not have shared the views the band name (and songs) espoused. Instead, he went on to construct a division between what he perceived as ‘real’ misogyny – in the form of physical violence against women –

36 Carsten’s claim might be something of an understatement, considering Vaginal Carnage’s repertoire included songs such as ‘Is This Ya Slut?’, ‘Slab of Sluts’ (Vaginal Carnage 2002) and the eponymous ‘Vaginal Carnage’ (Vaginal Carnage 2001).
and the misogyny of Vaginal Carnage and Blood Duster, which was apparently only on a symbolic level. Carsten’s partner, Hayley, agreed:

**Carsten:** But they [Vaginal Carnage] were never like violent or, um, there was never that kind of like – like, in New Zealand for instance there’s a really big – you know – it’s that American style … like ‘butcher the whore’ mentality.

**Hayley:** Well, it’s different – oh well it’s a different culture anyway – but, in, in New Zealand, like, the things they sing about actually do happen? Like, with the woman-beating and stuff like that. That happens there all the time, it’s not unusual to go to a show and see, you know, girls getting thrown against the walls – things like that.

C: Hayley got punched in the face and one person stood up for her.

**H:** Yeah. Things like that happen all the time. And it’s so acceptable over there. … Because, they’re so used to shows being a cheap excuse –

C: To show how –

**H:** To fight, or, you know, show off that really bullshit macho sort of attitude ([Carsten and Hayley, Melbourne](#)).

Nevertheless, even this behaviour was somewhat excused by Hayley who, like Zak, attributed the New Zealand scene-members’ violence as an aspect of patriarchal culture:

It’s so ingrained! Like, it’s so ingrained. Like, it’s the whole lifestyle ([Hayley, Melbourne](#)).

Graham was one of the few participants who acknowledged reservations with some of the scene’s aesthetics. His band, Shagnum, consciously avoided the imagery of bands such as Blood Duster:
I’m not singing about stuff like a lot of the gore-grind bands sing about – I’m not interested in that. ... 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 (Graham, Melbourne).

Despite his band’s avoidance of misogynist imagery, Graham lacked the conviction to reject the misogynist culture of Blood Duster completely. He positioned his dislike of goregrind, as an aesthetic for Shagnost, as matter of taste and acknowledged that he sometimes enjoyed watching Blood Duster:

I find that, I mean, I can have a chuckle with all of them about – you know – some funny stuff they say or whatever (Graham, Melbourne).

All these responses minimised the blunt misogyny in the Melbourne scene. Even Carsten’s attempt to excuse Chris due to his ‘embarrassment’ of the name Vaginal Carnage positions misogyny as a taste, albeit one which Chris recognised as tasteless. That is, like Graham, Carsten was keen to display that he – and Chris – were aware that the scene could be perceived as “slightly sexist” – and the embarrassment arises from a concern about what outsiders may think – rather than an active rejection of misogyny. Unfortunately, the dominant understanding of Melbourne grindcore from scene-members was like Zak’s – that patriarchy was “conditioned”, solid and irresistible.

Interestingly, Melbourne scene-members’ concern to downplay or disregard misogynist representations complemented the experience of brutal affect. That is, in interviews, they foregrounded their (positive) affective experiences in the scene. Whatever cerebral awareness they had of grindcore’s misogyny, they felt brutal sociality outweighed it. Returning to Andy’s facetious rationalisation of ‘Slowly
Raped with a Chainsaw’ as not, particularly, about women, it is evident that a focus with representation incompatible with brutal sociality:

Rosemary: Was this all on stage, she was heckling [you about the misogyny of the song]?

Andy: No, no – this was straight after we’d finished. And it wasn’t even heckling – just arguing with me, straight after – [she was] going [saying] I was ‘sexist’. And I’m like ‘there’s nothing sexist about me – about what I sing about’. One thing I make sure of is that there’s nothing sexist about it. ... But that song – song – isn’t – nothing. I eventually just had to give in and go ‘fair enough’ to get rid of her – ‘cause she was just obsessed that the song was about raping women, and it’s not – at all (Andy, Melbourne).

For Andy, the woman was unreasonably “obsessed” with the representations he, and FID, put forward onstage. Due to her response, she was excluded from grindcore's brutal sociality – and experiencing brutal belonging. In order to belong in Melbourne’s scene, feminist scene-members, like Hayley, had to focus on the more-than-representational, affective, aspects of the scene, rather than ‘obsess’ about represented misogyny:

To see Vaginal Carnage, I was just blown away (Hayley, Melbourne).

3.3 Brutal fliers

Brutal masculinity and misogyny also occur in Osaka’s grindcore scene. However, my encounters with misogyny were quite different in the Japanese scene. Partly, this was due to the language difference. In the West, the limits of English vocabulary regularly places affective experience in the feminised realm of ‘emotions’. In Japan, however, affect is less likely to be automatically feminised. Japanese, like English, is a difficult language in which to articulate affect. Further, affect is also often uttered as an emotion. However, in Japan, emotion is not as
starkly feminised as in the West. There is not the long history of dualism between rational masculinity and emotional femininity, as in post-Enlightenment Western culture. Authentic masculinity is associated with a deep emotional attachment to community obligations (to family, neighbourhood and company) as well as the Japanese nation. Affect, then, and its regular articulation as emotion is not always considered feminine in Japan. Nevertheless, grindcore scene-members were at pains to distance themselves from many aspects of traditional Japanese culture – particularly those aspects they considered “weak” (Nobu) such as conformity, but also familial obligations and relationships. This fits with the Osakan understanding of ‘brutal’ as authentically Western grindcore. That is, many scene-members enacted a brutal disposition mediated by Western cultural norms, making articulations of affect oppose a brutal identity.

Fliers most obviously demonstrated misogyny in Osaka’s scene. Fliers are more significant in Japan’s music scenes than in the West (Matsue 2009). They are usually slickly produced and act as informal meishi (business cards) between bands and fans. At the end of a live, kōhai queue outside the venue handing out fliers for their bands. Many of these fliers included images of what Ryûchi describes as “big macho guy[s]”:

[B]rutal means hate man – big macho metal guy [laughs] (Ryûchi, Osaka)!

The “big macho guy” to which Ryûchi refers is a global stereotype of desirable and normative masculinity. Connell (2000) notes that, while there are local variations on the theme (rugby and AFL players in Australia, baseball players in Japan), the hard, muscular, sportsman’s body is a globally recognisable signifier of manliness
Even in the ‘softer’ discourse of the now ascendant form of masculinity, metrosexuality, the muscular, sportsman’s body predominates (Coad 2008) albeit in fashionable clothes. In Japan, the “big macho guy” is prevalent as a desirable form of male identity. Takeshi ‘Beat’ Kitano, star of multiple yakuza films, has been in dozens of advertisements that play on his image as a ‘tough guy’. Further, advertisements often use Western celebrities as signifiers of desirable masculinity in Japan. For example, Brad Pitt has been the face of Edwin jeans in print and on television since the 1990s. These promotions emphasise Pitt’s muscular frame and apparent sporting prowess.

In Osaka’s grindcore scene, band promotional material sometimes emphasises a similar stereotype. The fliers for Freestyle Outro 6 and 7 (Figure 4.2) provide a fruitful example. Freestyle Outro (FSO) is an annual event held at Studio Partita organised by the lead singer of Kobe hardcore band, Sand. It showcases Kansai-based hardcore, grindcore and hip-hop artists alongside a headlining overseas band. In 2009 and 2010, the headlining band was American. FSO is a huge event that lasts 12 hours. As well as music, FSO features skateboarding and motocross demonstrations, graffiti artists and numerous food and drink stalls. Organisers tout FSO as an “independent festival” (Office Chocolate 2012). It is sponsored by numerous small businesses peripheral to the hardcore, grindcore and hip-hop scenes in Kansai.

FSO’s fliers are a montage of promotional photographs of the featured artists against a black background, punctuated by fireworks. In the flier for FSO 7 (2010), the flier also features motocross riders. Both fliers only feature men, except for a

See also Jensen (2007) for a discussion of dominant ideals of ‘manliness’ in Western culture in his chapter ‘A Pornographic World: What is Normal?’ (37-50).
small image of ‘MC Ami’ on the 2010 example. Contrary to her name, MC Ami was not an emcee in the hip-hop style. She was aligned with a vodka company that sponsored the event and danced, scantily clad, while a male DJ played rap music in the area outside the main stage. Occasionally she would take the microphone and encourage people to dance, and try her brand of vodka. Her role at FSO was as an object of the, predominately male, crowd’s gaze. Her role followed standard advertising norms, of using female sexuality to sell a product – the DJ and vodka.

Apart from MC Ami, the bodies in the FSO fliers are hard, male bodies. They are strong, muscular and tough. Nobody cracks a smile for the camera. In Japan, smiling bands and singing artists are associated with popular ‘J-pop’ music. Aidoru appear relatable to their legions of fans through friendly smiling posters and postcards. The hip-hop artists display an American hip-hop aesthetic. The oversized tee-shirts, American baseball team caps and bandannas connote globalised American hip-hop style. They signify ‘gangster’ in their fashion. The images of the hard- and grindcore bands have slightly more variety. Rather than through their clothes, their bodies signify hardness. The singers of fate in spiral38 and Numb are shown, muscles flexed, screaming into the microphone. In their image, palm loom over the other performers, intimidating despite their casual dress.

Significantly, the American bands’ images dominate both the fliers. Like the implication that one cannot be a ‘whole man’ without knowledge of English and Western cultural idiosyncrasies, Madball and Skarhead operate as the Western models for the Japanese hard men in the flier. In the FSO 6 (2009) flier (Figure 4.3),

38 This band name is written in lower-case.
Madball are literally placed higher than the rest of the bands. In both fliers, the American bands’ photos are larger than those of the Kansai bands. Both bands feature members with big muscles. Like their Japanese counterparts, they do not smile. In the West, too, smiling musicians are associated with pop music.

After attending FSO, I interviewed Masa ‘on the spot’ about how he felt about the event. His response was a series of impressions:

Hip-hop; hardcore – many musics [sic]. Sexy dancers. Junk food, motorcycles, skateboard ramp, alcoholics (Masa).39

The “sexy dancers” to whom Masa referred were the women promoting alcohol and cigarettes at the event, such as MC Ami. However, Masa also pointed out that many of the young women at the event were dancing “sexy style” during the live performances. He acknowledged this was unusual at grindcore events and went on to say, “this style is a very hip-hop girl style”. Indeed, at raibuhousu grindcore events, women rarely danced. However, the image of the “sexy” female or sexualised female was present in grindcore representations. As in Melbourne, the image of a bikini clad woman holding a guitar or dancing is common. This follows standard generic signifiers of metal, which echo soft pornography. Occasionally, however, venues used more extreme pornography as inspiration. For example, a flier advertising the band Umagundan (horse brigade) provides an example of the violent objectification of women in Osaka’s grindcore scene. In this image, a young woman is bound to a pole and blindfolded (Figure 4.3). A metal stick is shoved into her mouth and stomach. It is possible that the woman is, in fact, a child as she has

39 When I asked Yasuaki to elaborate on his choice of “alcoholics”, I discovered that he meant people drinking alcohol, rather than alcohol addicts/abusers. In this case, ‘alcoholics’ was the only English word he could think of to describe people drinking.
an undeveloped female body. Here we see the actual violence alluded to in scenic discourse in both cities. Fluid dribbles down her chin, caused by the oral penetration of a stick/phallus. The mask obscures the woman’s face; she becomes a receptacle for violent penetration. Without a discernible face, the woman is dehumanised. Her apparent inability to move – due to the restraints – further pacifies and objectifies the woman.

Figure 4.2: Promotional material for the ‘Freestyle Outro’ 6 event in 2009.

Similar to the interviews with Jason P. C., discussed above, Osaka’s grindcore fliers appear to epitomise patriarchy. However, does affect temper this aggressive masculinity? Like the Melbourne participants, Osakan scene-members evaded discussion of affect. However, when they did articulate affective experiences they, like the Melbournians, veered from the masculinised, rational bounds of language,
into sounds, expletives and nonsense words, potentially opening a new space, apart from “big, macho guys” (Ryûchi). This was not, however, always automatically female friendly or supportive space. In fact, my own affective experiences of being a woman in the Osakan scene demonstrate otherwise.

Figure 4.3: Misogynist representations of women in Osakan grindcore fliers. The Umagundan event flier is on the top left.

As noted earlier, I was shocked by my relegation to 'Duncan's wife' or worse, 'John's brother's wife',40 despite my commitment to attending gigs, speaking Japanese and participating in the scene. I often noted down my feelings in field-notes:

I'm getting a bit sick of people kowtowing to this mob [Sensei and his band]. Duncan wouldn’t even deign to take a photo of them rehearsing, even though John was allowed.

40 Though, I suppose, the real worst was: 'that girl who got drunk and vomited at the squat we played at in Sydney' by Toshi.
Also interesting that we wouldn't even be at the rehearsal if not for John (field notes, Osaka).

I always feel awkward talking to Sensei – he doesn’t want to talk to me (field notes, Osaka)?

Chatted to Bâbon for a while – had a drink with him. Usual steely reception from Sensei (field notes, Osaka).

My closest friend in the scene, perhaps not surprisingly, was Yumi, as she was also sometimes on the outer, when Sensei was in attendance. Sensei’s treatment of me, particularly, reflected his perspective on women in the scene. For almost a year, he completely ignored me, though we had been introduced a number of times, including years before, when his band toured Australia. His reputation as a ‘hard man’ extended to stories of his treatment of women. He was alleged to have beaten his ex-wife and to have controlled what she wore (long sleeves, long skirts).

In the final weeks of my fieldwork, his attitude towards me changed. This was due to the arrival of John, my brother-in-law, who had previously been in a band with Sensei and was widely revered in the scene. I attended a number of raibu with John and was finally allowed access to Sensei’s sempai table. This gave me a chance to quickly interview him and other sempai, such as Toshi.

Apart from Sensei – whose attitude was significant because of his position as sempai – other male scene-members were friendly, but, like in Melbourne, baffled at my interest in grindcore. More so than questions on my fandom or my research, I was asked “Where is Duncan?” or “Where is your husband?” Many scene-

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41 Though I did write in my field notes I “got the usual feeling she wasn’t keen to be seen with me … I wanted to ask her some ‘on-the-spot’ questions but I feel too embarrassed!” (field notes, Osaka).
42 This was even before we were married.
members were shocked I was attending a raibu alone. When asked, male interviewees admitted that women were marginal in the scene:

**Rosemary:** I was going to ask about the uchiage – how do women sit within that group? Are they expected to, sort of – like a woman in a band or something – are they expected to drink as well? Like do they do all the same stuff the men do?

**Nobu:** Hm. Ohhhhh – in the scene, I don’t really sssss – there is no women involved. But, um – actually I never, ever drank at uchiage with a girl band or even a girl in a band. ... Like, if they bring their girlfriends, I mean that’s a different story, you know?

**R:** What are they expected to do?

**N:** Nothing.

**R:** Oh right.

**N:** They just sit there *(Nobu, Osaka).* 43

Kaz also acknowledged women were rare in the scene, going on to suggest that most of the “girl[s]” he encountered were groupies:

[S]ome of the people – they, they can’t tell which is bass and which is guitar. So, um, the other day I was asked by a girl fan who wanted to talk to bass player but she was, she keep telling me ‘where is the guitar player?’ And I – I found a place and brought him to her – I brought him to the girl. But, she said ‘no, no, no, not this player’. ... [S]he still didn’t know that the bass was different to guitar. ... Or, maybe they don’t really care. ... [laughing] She saw us as aidoru [pop idols] *(Kaz, Osaka).*

Though not as explicit as Blood Duster’s recounting of their sexual encounters while on tour, Kaz still expresses the assumption that women involved in the scene are shallow, stupid and interested primarily in sex with band-members.

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43 I reminded Nobu that he had told me his first band featured a female bass player. However, he pointed out “that was, er, irregular”.
More explicit was Nobu’s use of the English word “pussy” to describe what he perceived as weak, male scene-members:

I never want to be weak in that area. Like, ‘oooh I can’t drink anymore’ or, ‘we have to go home, ’cause we’ve got work the next morning or some shit like that’. I think that’s pussy. ... [It] just makes me – make me sick ... And if you hear, ‘oh that band’s so cool, but they don’t go out drinking’ that sounds – it kind of sucks. Kind of pussy – they just play music, you know, go home to your mum and eat your mum’s dinner and shit like that (Nobu, Osaka).  

This is the inverse of Leon’s positive declaration that the members of Blood Duster were “dicks” on stage. Nobu casts “pussy” men negatively as Other. They are conformists and they lack the dedication to the scene, beyond “just” the music, he requires. Ryûchi went so far as to proclaim women were unable to be brutal:

[E]r, I saw many women in, in America and Europe – fully involved in underground music – not like Japan. But, they don’t like music because it sounded so brutal. But, they like lyrics, or lifestyle or something – the attitude. In Japan – sadly, Japanese grind bands don’t – don’t have women. The music – how fast they are – how brutal – lyrics, and lifestyle, hmmmm, they – women – really lack that, I think. Hmmm (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Like Kaz, and most of the men I met in the Osakan scene, Ryûchi takes it for granted that women do not ‘really’ like grindcore. While he does not claim their interest is in sex, like Kaz, he suggests that women can only engage with it on a representational, or image, level as “lyrics, or lifestyle” rather than affectively. Women, then, are ‘naturally’ excluded from being brutal in Osaka’s grindcore scene.

44 Here, Nobu echoes broader Japanese concerns about the rise of sôshoku danshi ‘herbivore’ men in Japan, who are considered ‘ladylike’ men with little interest in sex. See Chen (2012), for a discussion of the ‘herbivore’ identity and the surrounding media panic.
So far, I have discussed how affect constitutes and mediates brutal sociality in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes. In particular, I have looked at how scene-members understanding of, and relation to, their ‘Others’ (musical or otherwise) is tempered by their perception of the Others’ ability to experience and generate affect. The feminised Other, discussed in this section, is particularly illustrative of the ambiguous nature of affect in both cities’ grindcore scenes. Articulated affect – emotions associated with female subjectivity – are avoided and a misogynist conception of femininity is regularly Othered by members of both scenes. However, there is also an exclusion of women based on their perceived inability to embody brutal affect. That is – being often seen as nothing more than appendage to ‘real’ (male) scene-members; groupies; or nagging wives and mothers – they are rendered superficial and unable to experience the ‘deep’ connection to grindcore music that brutal affect requires.

SECTION 4: BURNING EMOS – DISAVOWING ARTICULATED EMOTIONS IN MELBOURNE GRINDCORE

In this final section, I present a case-study of Melbourne scene-members’ responses to ‘emo’ music, to closely explore how brutal sociality is mediated by gender and scene-members’ complicated relation to affect and emotion. Despite their affective engagement with the music, Melbourne grindcore fans often claimed a critical distance from their aesthetics. This distancing rehearses the conscious insertion of a gap between (feminised) affective brutality and (masculinised) represented brutality. Scene-members account for an inarticulable ‘something’, but avoid representing this ‘brutal’ experience as ‘emotions’ due to their cultural
connotations as ‘feminine’. Contradictorily, experiencing brutal belonging is positively framed (albeit as an ambiguous ‘something’ or ‘hard to explain’), but participants also posited their distance from the music as proof of their superiority to Othered, apparently too sincere, metal genres.

Instead of offering a case-study from both cities, I have chosen to focus on Melbourne and, particularly, the Melbourne band, Blood Duster. This is because I feel the Blood Duster example is strong. But also because, in Osaka, emo music is less popular and has not, yet, been the subject of Othering by the grindcore scene. In Osaka, prejudice based on ‘being emotional’ focused on popular music, which was indeed feminised and associated with fan-girls, which I have discussed above.

4.1 – Grindcore and emo

Emo is a type of punk music characterised 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 Western chart success, particularly in the 2000s led to a visible ‘emo’ youth culture. Emo fans were identified in the Western media, particularly after a series of emo ‘panics’ related to self-harm and suicide (Overell 2010). The popular media created a ‘folk devil’ out of emos. These reports emphasised their androgynous “uniform” of dark make-up, tight jeans and long fringes as well as emos’ supposed ascription to “depressed” attitudes (ibid.).

The musical similarities between the heavy parts of emo songs and grindcore make emo another proximate target of Othering by Melbourne’s grindcore scene-members. However, unlike their relation to death-metal, scene-members explicitly

45 This is most common in the sub-genre ‘screamo’.
constitute emo's Otherness along gender lines. Grindcore scene-members position themselves as brutally masculine. Emo, on the other hand, is feminised. This division echoes the tensions between one of grindcore’s 1980s forefathers (and they were forefathers) – thrash metal – and glam-metal in the 1980s (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000 [1991]).

Emo offers an update on glam metal. Its contemporary performers cultivate androgynous images through make-up, long fringes (bangs) and ‘feminine’ accessories. Further, their live shows are often spectacular. For example, the popular emo band, Panic! at the Disco, embarked on a circus themed tour in 2006.46 Like glam, male performers dominate emo. Also, echoing glam, emo draws slightly more women than men as fans. Further, a wider panic about emo’s association with femininity is evident in mainstream media. In Australia the heavily publicised ‘emo suicide’ victims were women (Overell 2010). An American report on Fox 11 News (Fox 11 2007) adopts an hysterical tone when noting emo women “wear big belt buckles” (apparently a men’s fashion item) and men wear “girl pants ... and make-up, from powder to eye-liner” (ibid.). Other American reports posited “gender-bending” (ABC 4 2007; CBS 47 2007) as a worrying aspect of emo culture. These reports also emphasise ‘Emo Boys Kissing’ fan-sites, which feature male fans and performers kissing (Emo Corner 2008). Psychologists are called in as experts, warning parents that emo is “dangerous” (Channel 7 2007).

Such reports also reinforce the division between emo and extreme-metal. Fox 11 (2007) shows footage of an extreme-metal band’s ‘Emocide Festival’ and quotes the singer warning emos to stay away from the Californian suburb of Riverside.

46 The tour featured stilt-walkers, belly dancers and contortionists and was, in fact, described as “affected” – in the sense of pretentious – by the New York Times (Sanneh 2006).
Also like glam metal, mainstream heavy musicians categorise 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). This attitude is shared by many in the global grindcore scene. 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!!!!” (ibid.). Emo’s association with emotional, rather than affective, femininity makes it emphatically, as one online grindcore fan articulated it, “Not Brutal At ALL” (Aric-Anti-Emo-RickrollKing! 2008).

However, emo diverges from glam-metal in a key aspect. Its femininity is not solely associated with the surface signifiers of ‘female-ness’, characterised by women’s clothing and make-up. The ‘emotional’ nature of emo music cements its position as feminine. Emo’s lyrics constitute emo as a ‘feminine’ music form, because emo focuses on the, culturally feminised, realm of ‘emotions’. 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 (Greenwald 2003). Rock band, Jet (2003), sings about seeing ‘their’ female partner “with another man”. However, the male singer’s response is “ain’t got much to say” except to repeat “are you

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47 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).

48 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?'

49 As Aslaksen (2006) points out, such lyrics are also, contradictorily, misogynist – regarding fantasised acts of violence against women who have wronged them. See also Greenwald (2003).
gonna be my girl?” For Jet, the lyrics and upbeat music recuperate any jealousy. The singer instead moves on, to ask another woman if she would like to ‘be his girl?’ Rock lyrics are about men taking action rather than articulating emotions – they ‘score’ women and, drive down the highway, party and play guitar.

Emo men, on the other hand, have plenty to articulate, but not much to do. The lyrics to a Hawthorne Heights’s (2004) song, ‘Ohio is for Lovers’, are illustrative. This song also 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 describes his sense that “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”. In ‘Ohio is for Lovers’ the male protagonist is passive. The world “keep[s] rolling on” without him. In fact, the woman is, sadistically, active. He sings, referring to his ex:

You kill me
You know you do
You kill me well
You like it too ... You never stop until my final breath is gone (ibid.).

The positioning of emo performers as passive through lyrics further builds the genre as ‘feminine’.

Like most emo songs, ‘Ohio is for Lovers’ has a strong narrative developed through the musical form verse/chorus/bridge. The emphasis on narrative builds emo’s emotional register. The singer offers a ‘deep’ account of his feelings. This re-affirms connotations of femininity, through an association with ‘women’s cultures’ of confessional television, agony aunt columns and self-help magazines. In grindcore,
emotional profundity is absent, in favour of a focus on the heaviness of the music. As is the rejection of the narrative form: sung verses and chorus are non-existent.

4.2 – Pissing and piss-takes: Blood Duster and emo

All Melbourne interviewees professed a dislike of emo. However, the responses from members of Blood Duster (Jim, Leon and Jules) are particularly illustrative of grindcore’s Othering of emo, and scene-members’ complex relation to affect.

In 2007, Blood Duster released the album *Lyden Na.* It featured the song, ‘THE NIGHT THEY BURNED OLD EMO DOWN’, 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 and refer to emo sartorial style, as a way of articulating 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 (Blood Duster 2007).

Imagery of graves, cemeteries and death is popular in emo music, as are prosaic ‘natural’ metaphors, such as fire and storms, for emotions. However, in this case, the lyrics are not metaphorically standing in for heartbreak. Blood Duster is writing about killing emos.

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50 The Kill, another Melbourne band, also have a song about disliking emo: ‘Fuck Emo’ (The Kill 2003).
51 For example, see Fall of Troy’s ‘F.C.P.R.E.M.I.X’, which features these lyrics: “I don’t wanna see the day, my words cannot make it safe. ... Her heart in my hands, it’s too bad, no regrets ... I don’t wanna see the day, her tears are falling on my grave” (2005). As well as My Chemical Romance’s self-explanatory ‘Cemetery Drive’ (2004).
52 See Hawthorne Heights’s ‘Dissolve and Decay’ for fire imagery: “Dissolve and decay, there’s nothing left for me. (Right now) / This fire’s dying down, there’s nothing left to see. (Right now)” (2004a). Silverstein uses imagery of snow: “You see my ghost and you’ll never forget it /My face is as white as the snow that haunts me” (2005).
More significant is Blood Duster’s musical shift in ‘THE NIGHT THEY...’. The song bears no grindcore signifiers, apart from its Othering of emo. Instead, it is an acoustic slide-guitar piece, with a guest vocalist\textsuperscript{53} crooning the lyrics in a country style. This is, obviously, a joke song, and has been described as such in interviews with Jason P.C. (Goreripper 2007). However, the lack of musical brutality is telling. Instead, brutality is shifted, again, into the realm of critical distance – the ability to ‘take the piss’ (Australian slang for making a joke of someone or something) – as well as the more blunt violence of the lyrics. Blood Duster rejects the atypical helplessness – feminised passivity – of emo, despite the emo style of their lyrics. Of course, Blood Duster are holding the “box of matches” which burns the emo studio 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 \textit{Lyden Na}, which emphasised the supposed pretentiousness of emo culture. In interviews, band-members position emo as shallow, manufactured pop music:

\begin{quote}
I don’t really understand emo. To me it sounds like Florida death metal. It’s Morbid Angel with a clothing endorsement (Goreripper 2007).
\end{quote}

Band-member, Leon, confirmed this attitude in my interview:

\begin{quote}
[I]t’s [emo is] extreme music that’s made to be not extreme. So – is it like Kmart metal or something? ... 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
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{53} The guest vocalist is Craig Westwood from Melbourne, proto-grindcore, band Christbait.
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, Melbourne).

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 is naïve – thinking
more about playing music than “print[ing] some t-shirts”. Leon goes on to say:

[W]e try and do everything completely in-house. You know, besides manufacture, so you
know, all artwork’s done by us… All recordings, you know, eventually up to the point
where no-one touches anything (Leon, Melbourne).

Here, Leon aligns Blood Duster with grindcore’s mythologised 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 ‘correct’
metal moments, ideals and figures is essential for maintaining extreme-metal
subcultural capital. Jason P.C. 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.

The sense that emo is a mass-produced cultural commodity is further elaborated in Lyden Na’s promotional image. Here, the band ‘dressed-up’ as emos (Figure 4.4), 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 tatt[oo]s on ourselves, and fringes and eye-make-up (ibid.).

By simply “put[ting] ... on” emo style, Blood Duster imply that emo is superficial – purely an image, or representation. It is something you can put on, presumably unlike grindcore brutality, which is something more than an image. It is an affective experience. Further, Blood Duster’s play at being emo rehearse the critical distance from emotion necessary for grindcore brutality. By parodying emo, Blood Duster affirm their ability to ‘see through’ emo as being feminine. Emo’s femininity is the object of ridicule. Such ridicule implies that, as they are the ones doing the parody, Blood Duster is inherently distinct from emo. As emo is coded feminine in mainstream media and in Blood Duster’s rhetoric, the members of Blood Duster code themselves ‘masculine’ by implication.
Blood Duster's songs also reject the narrative model (verse/chorus/bridge) favoured by emo. Their songs lyrics are ‘sound bytes’\textsuperscript{54} of taboo, generally misogynist, imagery. For example, these lyrics from ‘Simultaneous Pleasure Pinch’ from \textit{Yeest} (Blood Duster 1996):

\begin{quote}
Up the date
And up the cunt
With my fingers
I will hunt (ibid.).
\end{quote}

Further, unlike emo songs, which often stretch to four 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’ (ibid.) at seven seconds.\textsuperscript{55}

Blood Duster continue their refusal of narrated (represented) emotions through a reluctance to pander to their audience at gigs. That is, unlike rock and emo, Blood

\textsuperscript{54} Further, they are generally ‘intro-ed’ by actual samples from horror or pornographic movies.

\textsuperscript{55} Short songs are common in grindcore, after Napalm Death released ‘You Suffer’ (1987), which holds the Guinness World Record for shortest song, at 1.316 seconds (Mudrian 2004, 200).
Duster’s members are more likely to heckle audience members than thank them for coming along. This is standard for Melbourne grindcore bands and is, of course, considered a joke. Blood Duster’s regular lines, such as “fuck you cunts”, are yet another deferral of affect – the intensities generated by performance – onto ‘piss-takes’. Emo musicians, on the other hand, are effusive at live shows. Artists, such as Panic! At The Disco and rare female group Tegan and Sara, often entertain the audience with lengthy personal anecdotes between songs. Blood Duster, however, reject the feminised 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!’ (Leon, Melbourne).

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 experience an affective relation of brutal belonging with 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 [capital city of South Australia] .. 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 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 ‘seeya’ and walked off. And, it was just like a big, collective ‘ohhh’, you know? Because they’d been let-down. Just letting down the crowds, like, actually become[s] heaps of fun (Leon, Melbourne – emphasis added).

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56 Inter-song ‘banter’, as fans call it, becomes a strong point of, mostly female, fannish identification with emo musicians. This is evident in the many dedicated banter fan groups online (Advameg 2008; Tegan and Sara Banter 2010).
Nevertheless, other members of Blood Duster still experience brutal belonging. 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 (Jules, Melbourne)

Like other scene-members, Jules’s 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’s 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 and affect’s articulated representation in feminised emotion. The Other manifests as emo culture. However, emo, of course, stands in for emotions. Like death-metal, 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 emphasises 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 grindcore band] ‘Fort’ I think it was (Ward nd).

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 [guitarist] 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 (ibid.).

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. ‘Pissing’ is associated with territoriality. That is, Jason claimed the stage as his (masculine) space. Further, 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’s affective experience of “you” referring to the self’s immersion in the feminised 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

This chapter focused on affective, or brutal, sociality in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore spaces. I looked at how scene-members constitute affective belonging through social practices that include or exclude individuals according to their
degree of ‘brutality’. Here brutality works as both representational (of masculinised violence) and affective (the inarticulable sense of being in the grindcore scene).

I established grindcore sociality as affective – demonstrated through the more than representational intensity of gigs described by scene-members. Such intensity allows grindcore fans a sense of belonging, or in some cases not belonging – to the music and to the scene. ‘Friendly’ and ‘welcoming’ affect needed to be cultivated and experienced before many scene-members felt comfortable. In Melbourne, scene-members also used brutal affect as a means for distinguishing themselves from what they deemed as ‘image’ focused – indeed representational – genres, such as hardcore, death- and black-metal. In Osaka, scene-members linked affect to *ikigai* – the pursuit of one’s passion – and opposed it to what they perceived as the hollowness of dominant Japanese culture.

Melbourne participants were ambivalent about affect. While they championed their ability to experience intensity without needing to announce, “I’m so fucking brutal” (Andy), they also avoided articulating affect, particularly in interviews. I proposed that this is due to affect’s association with its articulated form, in feminised emotion. Thus, masculinity is foregrounded in scenic micro-media interviews through overt misogyny and objectification of women. My ethnographic interviews also yielded latent and explicit misogyny. However, scene-members also insisted on distancing themselves from the “violent ... porn” (Graham) elements of the scene. Here, affect is jettisoned for a cerebral position that acknowledges misogyny’s presence while maintaining an ‘ironic’ distance.
In Osaka, patriarchal brutality was represented in fliers, and interviewees’ sexist views of women. While they maintained the scene was friendly and accepting, particularly for ‘outsiders’ such as biracial and burakumin men, women remained marginalised and their presumed fragility even excluded them from brutal belonging altogether, according to some scene-members.

To elaborate the tension between brutality as affect, and brutality as machismo, I offered a case study of Melbourne grindcore scene-members’ relation to emo. Emo connotes femininity through representations (clothing styles and make-up), as well as articulations of affect in its ‘emotional’ lyrics. Such representation is absent from grindcore music and establishes emo as an Other. An analysis of Blood Duster’s response to emo music demonstrates the lengths scene-members may go to in order to avoid association with emo. Through emphatic parodic distancing and literal displays of the phallus, Blood Duster constitute an opposition between masculinised grindcore and feminised emo.

Of course, Blood Duster’s attempt at a binary distinction is flawed. By relating at all to the emo Other, they acknowledge the proximity of emo to grindcore. This is unlike grindcore’s relation to pop music – which is “just invisible” (Phil). The strong feminine associations of male emos, and grindcore scene-members’ declared aversion to these associations, highlight the ambiguities of grindcore’s constitution of masculinity and experience of affect and brutal belonging.

In the next chapter, I explore scene-members’ ambiguous relation to affect further, as I discuss how scene-members constitute the brutal sociality requisite for brutal belonging, outside of their ‘home’ or ‘uchi’ spaces, on tour in Melbourne and Osaka.
In the previous chapters, I have looked at Melbourne and Osaka as discrete spaces. That is, I have compared how scene-members constitute and experience brutal belonging, spatially and socially, in each city. Despite cultural differences, both Melbournian and Osakan grindcore fans feel ‘at home’ in their local grindcore brutal spaces, because of their experience of brutal belonging, generated by the affective intensity of grindcore music and brutal sociality. In this chapter, I look at the relatively recent interaction between both cities and how scene-members negotiate brutal belonging in spaces away from home.

Since the early 2000s, grindcore bands, and fans, from Osaka and Melbourne have travelled to the other city to pursue their interest in grindcore. Generally, these informal exchanges and events are celebrated. If brutal belonging is bound to the affective experience generated by grindcore, a visit to a live performance in the other city should be one of ‘coming home’, no matter material, or representational, differences in the space and scene. Nevertheless, structural and cultural barriers
mediate the experience of affective, brutal, belonging in an Other space.

Importantly, scene-members from both cities experienced such barriers affectively as ‘culture shock’, or even ‘racism’. This, again, highlights the potentially negative counterpoint of feeling brutal – in this case, the physical or symbolic exclusion from the scene, due to one’s perceived Otherness based on ‘foreign’ identity. In such cases, brutal sociality is stymied which makes brutal belonging difficult.

I suggest that the affective experience in an Other space is sometimes experienced not as brutal belonging, but as a dislocation (out-of-place-ness) because of both cities’ diverging constitutions of brutal belonging in relation to national space. Both scenes establish belonging to the local grindcore scene, as well as to the local spaces where it is performed through enactments of grindcore brutality. However, the grindcore subject is sometimes also interpolated to belong to the macro spaces of Melbourne and Osaka and, more broadly, Australia and Japan. Notably, explicit nationalism was present in the Osakan scene and interviewees often conflated it with their understanding of authentic grindcore identity, indeed ‘being brutal’. In Australia, nationalism was implied, rather than explicit, through the enactment of various ‘Aussie’ cultural traits.

In this chapter, I look at how the experience of brutal belonging might also generate an experience of national belonging. In broader Australian and Japanese culture, the constitution and experience of affect is important for generating a sense of national belonging. National sporting events and holiday celebrations are suffused with affect. In Melbournian and Osakan grindcore, nationalism is present and often gestured towards in the same moment as the experience of brutal belonging. This simultaneity conflates the two experiences and potentially grants
scene-members belonging to grindcore, and the wider nation. I will look at how this mediates the transnational relationship between both cities’ scenes. In section One, I outline how the informal touring relationship between both cities operates. In section Two, I look at how Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes constitute national belonging, via representation, and how this is mediated by broader popular representations of the ‘foreign Other’ in each city. In section Three, I consider how this nationalism operates affectively, through an analysis of scene-members’ experiences of brutal (un)belonging in the other city.

SECTION 1: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MELBOURNE AND OSAKA’S GRINDCORE SCENES

Globally, grindcore is a relatively small music scene. Between historical ‘centres’ of grindcore, in Britain, Northern Europe and the United States, there is a semi-formalised touring network, supported by transnational metal labels, such as Earache and Roadrunner Records. However, in Asia and Australia, tours by more successful grindcore artists are less frequent. Even in Japan, which hosts more international grindcore than its Australian neighbours do, official tours, sponsored by record companies, are usually limited to one or two per year (Figure 5.1).\(^1\) Australia rarely hosts major overseas grindcore acts, though Napalm Death, Carcass and Brutal Truth have toured in the past twenty years. In fact, in Japan and Australia, less famous grindcore bands are more likely to tour – informally, on tourist visas – without the backing of record labels. In Australia, they often stay at squat or warehouse venues, or local scene-members’ homes. In Japan, scene-

\(^1\) While living in Osaka, I noted three major grindcore international tours between 2009 and 2011. These were Brutal Truth, Converge and Discharge.
members’ homes, or even tour minivans, are also common ‘crash pads’ for visiting bands. This informal network is proliferated via word-of-mouth as well as online grindcore blogs and forums (Butcher 2005; Nuclear Death Terror 2011).

Figure 5.1 Fliers advertising raibu of overseas bands, including Melbourne bands Pisschrist and Agents of Abhorrence.

In the last ten years, there has been an increase in the number of Osakan bands touring Melbourne via this informal network, and vice-versa. Rather than being the machinations of label marketing or city-sponsored ‘cultural exchange’ (despite Melbourne and Osaka being ‘Sister Cities’), this relationship developed through the involvement of a few Melbournians in the Osakan scene. Though bands from each city had toured in the other city during the 1990s, this was rare, and usually involved ‘one off’ gigs, rather than regular exchanges. Joel, Graham and Mick, who moved to Kansai between 2000 and 2001, catalysed a new network between the cities. Through associating with Sensei, and his KE venues, they organised the ‘Hokage’ network, named after Sensei’s venue. The intention was for each city to
host the others’ bands, with the local band organising events, parties and
accommodation for the visiting groups. This, again, utilised informal networks –
friends’ venues, or band nights, squat or domestic accommodation and house
parties or *izakaya* celebrations. Though informal, the intention was for a
continuing relationship of exchange. For example, if Birushanah played in
Melbourne on a tour organised by Dad They Broke Me (DTBM), DTBM could expect
to be hosted by Birushanah when they visited Osaka.

The background of how scene-members, from both cities, established this network
is important for understanding how the scenes interact. Joel, Graham and Mick
moved to Japan primarily to teach conversational and business English. However,
Graham, who lived near AmeMura, stated that Osaka’s grindcore scene also
motivated his choice to live in that city:

> I did know that there was a great grindcore scene in Osaka and I was very interested in
going to see it and I knew there was a lot of more, kind of, experimental and crazy stuff

(*Graham, Melbourne*).

Joel was also interested in the scene and met Graham at a live. They had never met
in Melbourne, though had mutual friends in Melbourne’s scene. Joel lived in Kyoto,
but “commuted to Osaka ‘cause that’s where most of the grindcore ... stuff
happened” (Joel). Joel and Mick had been in bands together in Melbourne, and after
visiting Joel, Mick decided to move to Kansai:

> [After holidaying in China,] I sort of had a stopover in Osaka with the drummer in the band
[DTBM] I’m in – Joel – and, um, we sort of had a night out on the town in Osaka and he sort
of said ‘oh you should come over and we’ll start a band!’ You know, do that sort of stuff.
And – so I came back (*Mick, Melbourne*).
The three men started regularly attending lives together in AmeMura. They were usually the only ‘white’ people in attendance, which drew the attention of Sensei, at that time a member of the band Tetsuo:

I actually went to see the [Tetsuo] show and I was talking to Sensei... And, didn't realise that he was – he was in one of the bands and having a chat to him and he actually came over – he had very limited English at that stage – and we managed to have a bit of a chat and then he goes 'Oh, my band's playing next'. And I said 'Oh, are you from Tetsuo?' And he said 'Yes, yes, please watch'. And, um, it was one of the most amazing bands I've ever seen, um ... really intense and, um, yeah – after seeing that, it was, um, I became good mates with him (Graham, Melbourne).

At this stage, Graham and Joel had limited Japanese language skills. Mick had none. However, after some months of study, Graham and Joel's Japanese improved. During this time, Sensei graduated from scene-member to *sempai* after his establishment of Kagura and KE.² He set up Kagura, and his later venues (Shinkagura and Hokage), following the Osakan interpretation of ‘brutal’ as authentically Western grindcore. To a non-Japanese fan, the venues appear typically Japanese. However, Sensei felt that the “rock soul” § (Sensei) of his spaces – that is, the affect he hoped the venue would generate – was not Japanese but Western, even Australian, despite, at that stage, having never travelled overseas. The slogan for Shinkagura is “Worldwide Project” (Shinkagura 2012), reflecting Sensei’s desire to make his venues Western-style spaces:

[Other] Japanese *raibuhousu*, clubs and bars are not rock. They don’t have the rock soul.

Um, soooo, I want to base my venues on this soul – to make everyone welcome. I’m

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² The seemingly miraculous shift from day labourer to venue owner, was anecdotally attributed to Sensei’s association with organised crime. Though, during interviews, participants were more coy, suggesting his change in financial status was due to his “drive” (Joel) and dedication to the scene.
influenced by European style, US style, Australian style – different – different music cultures – definitely a more underground music culture with soul (Sensei, Osaka). * §

To build his brutal credibility and, presumably, add “soul” to his venues, Sensei was enthusiastic to establish a touring network between Melbourne and Osaka:

Sensei was keen to get his music out of Osaka and into – he wanted to expand the kind of people who listened to the band, he wanted to go overseas basically, wanted to, you know we talked a lot about the Melbourne music scene and, you know I think he, felt that was a good place. He saw a lot of similarities between the Melbourne scene and the Osaka scene and felt that that music would also go down well in Melbourne (Joel, Melbourne).

Joel concurred with Sensei’s belief that such a network would constitute an “international” (Joel) identity for both scenes:

[T]he [touring] thing with Japan’s been really interesting over the last couple of years, you know, because, especially when bands like palm – they’ve come out twice – and now you hear of people who are into palm … you can see how they’ve taken root in Melbourne. And that’s been exciting. You know it’s great fun to work with them as well and tour with them as well – when they come out – you know the exchange of ideas and the exchange of music and all that sort of thing. Good fun. And with them coming out, it adds a bit more of an international element to the local gigs we’re doing which is good for bringing audiences along as well. It exposes people to different kinds of music … it gives people from Melbourne an opportunity to see international bands who are of an international quality in tiny, small local venues (Joel, Melbourne).

For Joel, the network demonstrates both cities scenes’ cosmopolitanism. It adds “quality” to the local scene and even educates (“exposes”) local scene-members to foreign music. To initiate this network, Sensei began inviting Joel, Graham and Mick to uchiage (Figure 5.2). This was unusual, as uchiage are generally reserved for performing band-members and sempai. Sensei’s invitation to the Melbourne
scene-members was a significant gesture, implying their inclusion in the Osakan scene:

I think perhaps because we were a bit out of the ordinary in the crowd [being white], and – this is probably significant, we were invited to those, that after-party [uchiage]. ... There were gigs where we were just in the audience and we'd be invited to go to those after-parties and that's where we formed those stronger relationships. ... I think a lot of the early planning and stuff for those tours was, I would say, also came with those after-parties – everyone's just chatting.

(Joel, Melbourne).

Um, it was a good system [the uchiage], um, they buy a few beers and everyone has a tiny, little cup and you fill everyone else's cup when your cup's empty, or near empty – someone'll fill it for you, so, it's quite, um, a nice bonding experience, and, it, it really does, I mean, someone that you might not know fills your cup for you and it's – you know – you start talking to them. Um, and it was a really good way to get to know people and get kind of welcomed in there (Graham, Melbourne).

Figure 5.2: Graham (second from left) at an uchiage with Toshi (far left) and Bâbon (far right). Next to Graham is the lead guitarist from Tetsuo.
Sensei was aware that Joel, particularly, had been in bands in Melbourne and invited him onstage during a Tetsuo performance, to play drums:

And then, then there's a gig where – I think it was a fairly spontaneous sort of thing, they said 'Oh come up and just have a jam on the stage' and we did that one night (Joel, Melbourne).

This led to Joel's inclusion in Tetsuo and later, after that band broke up, Birushanah. Sensei also asked Graham to join Birushanah, as vocalist, despite Graham never having before performed. As Graham points out, Sensei's role as *sempai* translated into his organisation of even non-Japanese Osakan scene participants:

[B]asically, I was told that I was the singer. I wasn't asked! ... Yeah – so they said 'You're doing vocals'. So I did ... Sensei said 'Yep, you’re in it'. I said, 'Oh, oh, oh – okay' (Graham, Melbourne).

Mick remained an audience member, but was also invited to *uchiages*.³ Birushanah toured Japan and released an album, *Touta* (Birushanah 2002). In 2003, however, Joel and Graham returned to live in Melbourne. Mick remained for another year.

After their return, they endeavoured, with Sensei, to establish the touring network they had discussed during *uchiage* in Osaka. The first tour was to be Birushanah visiting Melbourne in 2003. The organisation was done on email. Sensei nominated suitable dates and Joel organised gigs at Melbourne venues. Unfortunately, Joel suggested they arrive on tourist visas. Due to their guitars and “rock dude” (Phil) look, however, Sensei and Birushanah's guitarist were stopped at customs. When

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³ Mick did begin his own, stoner-rock, band, but “it wasn’t in the scene. Umm, yeah – I was sort of a different style of music” (Mick, Melbourne). Further, Mick’s band was made up completely of other Melbournians, and did not play at any of the grindcore livehouses.
they confessed they were intending to play shows in Melbourne, they were sent back to Japan and a three-year ban was placed on their travel to Australia:

[T]he first time he [Joel] tried to bring them over they got stopped at immigration ‘cause they didn’t have – they were carrying guitars and they looked like rock dudes and they – they were tricked into saying ‘yeah we’re here to play gigs’, or whatever. And they got deported straight away … devastating (Phil, Melbourne).

In the meantime, Joel organised for other Osakan bands, Damaged Digital, Realized, Ryôkuchi and palm to tour Melbourne. The two latter bands form part of Hokage’s uchi group. These events proved successful. Melbournian scene-members were impressed by the Japanese bands:

palm came over which – we played with palm the first time and the second time. ... They were just awesome (Phil, Melbourne).

[T]he first time Birushanah and Ryôkuchi came out – that [online discussion boards] was what really made it a success I think. I think they did a free show the first night – no-one knew who they were – and suddenly like Mess + Noise [a Melbourne-based music discussion board] – there was all this chat on there. The following night, more people came [to the gig] (Joel, Melbourne).

In 2006, Birushanah were able to return to Australia, on the correct visa, and tour Melbourne and the east coast of Australia. In Melbourne and Brisbane, they stayed on scene-members’ couches and floors, and in shared crusty-punk warehouse spaces in Sydney. After each Melbourne show, Joel organised a variation on the uchiage, inviting bands and patrons back to his house for parties (Figure 5.3). These were also networking opportunities for Melbourne and Osaka scene-members. One party I attended (I also used these events as a chance to make contacts for my research), rather than devolving into drunken revelry, ended with
a core group of Sensei, Iso, Takeda, Joel and other Melbourne scene members Don and Pete soberly organising tours of Melbourne bands to Osaka.

![Figure 5.3: Joel and band-members from palm at a Melbournian variation on uchiage – a house party. (Photograph: Duncan Box).](image)

At first, Joel was the 'broker' between Melbourne and Osaka's scenes. This was due to Joel's relative proficiency in the Japanese language. Scene-members would often ask Joel to contact Sensei, on their behalf, to organise lives in Osaka. Further, Sensei would contact Joel to help organise gigs for Osakan groups visiting Melbourne. Joel enjoyed this role, which he saw as enabling Melbournians “expos[ure] to ... quality international acts” (Joel) and building the scene’s international credentials. After the 2006 tour, however, with emails exchanged at Joel’s ‘uchiages’, Osakan and Melbournian scene-members began organising tours and shows independently and the term ‘Hokage network’ was used less. By this time, Sensei’s English had improved and he was able to write emails in English. Don’s band, Fire Witch, for example, toured Japan in 2006 and released a split EP with KE stable band Ryôkuchi. Ryôkuchi then toured Melbourne and the east coast.
This informal network contributed to the shadow economy of both cities’ grindcore scenes. Compact discs, cassettes and vinyl records, along with other merchandise, were sold at shows in both cities. Further, visiting scene-members were keen for their recordings to be stocked in independent record shops in Melbourne and Osaka. In Melbourne, Joel’s friendship with a number of Missing Link staff members led to Missing Link stocking Ryôkuchi, palm and Birushanah’s albums. The same occurred in Osaka, with KE acting as a (Japanese) label and distributor for Melbourne bands. Again, however, Melbournian records were stocked in independent record shops in AmeMura, such as Punk and Destroy, rather than chain-shops.

There were also costs incurred. Similar to playing in their ‘home’ cities, touring bands did not make monetary profits from visiting the other scene:

[B]asically, when the bands have come out from Japan and when we went to Japan the cost of the, your plane tickets – you just write that off, you’re never going to cover that. You hope to cover the costs of the van hire and you know paying for the mixers really and that’s it really. ... That’s why they have to stay at other people’s houses or ... like a warehouse sort of thing (Joel, Melbourne).

This section outlined the origins of the relationship between Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes. Rather than resulting from the machinations of the music industry, or official civic action, the connection between the scenes hinged on the activities of a handful of people. The networking that occurred at raibu and

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4 Most recently, Cyberne and Sensei’s new project (“Sensei”) toured Australia’s east coast. This tour was organised by Don, a member of Fire Witch.
uchiage in Osaka led to the establishment of an informal touring network that remains in place. Most recently, Lucy and Ant, from Melbourne's (and earlier Hobart's) scene lived and played grindcore in Osaka.

SECTION 2: AUSTRALIAN ‘BOGANS’ AND JAPANESE ‘WARRIORS’ – HOW GRINDCORE RELATES TO NATIONAL BELONGING

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated how the affective experience of grindcore constitutes brutal belonging for scene-members in material sites: at the spaces of grindcore performance. The relative smallness of such spaces makes them micro sites of belonging. These are also the spaces where brutal sociality, discussed in Chapter 4, works to include, or exclude, particular identities. However, in both scenes, macro spaces are also important. In Melbourne, and Osaka, there is an element of ‘representing’ national space as part of grindcore’s affective homely or uchi space. In this section, I look at how such representations mediate brutal belonging in both scenes. This is to establish a framework for understanding how scene-members experience brutal belonging affectively when travelling to Melbourne or Osaka, discussed in section 3.

As already outlined, male subjects dominate both scenes, though the experience of brutal belonging, when articulated as ‘feminised’ emotions, potentially tempers this. The national subject interpolated in both cities, however, is male. It is also notable that the broader cultural, personified, image of both countries is often male. For example, despite tourist advertising for Australia most recently using a woman to entice visitors, the most enduring image of Australia for foreigners is
‘Crocodile Dundee’ Paul Hogan’s ‘Australian Made Holidays’ campaign. For Japan, the samurai, or ninja, warrior is also a key figure in tourism images as well as popular cultural exports, such as *The Last Samurai*.

Both scenes draw on these wider national stereotypes to represent Australian identity in Melbourne, and Japanese identity in Japan. Melbourne scene-members gesture towards a white, heterosexual, male ‘Aussie bogan’. In Japan, the mythologised ‘samurai warrior’ is hailed.

Though both cities’ scenes interpolate a national, as well as a grindcore, subject, they do so in different ways and to a different extent. My discussion of Melbourne, therefore, is relatively brief because Melbournian scene-members are less explicitly nationalist than are their Osakan counterparts.

2.1: Sledging, heckling and ‘Aussie bogans’

In Melbourne’s grindcore scene, explicit nationalism is absent. This is due to its association with right wing black metal performers, and the radical left politics of many scene-members. Nationalism, however, manifests in ways apart from waving a flag and openly denouncing migrants (Hage 1998). Normative national discourse, which excludes migrants and ‘naturally’ celebrates hegemonic (in Australia’s case, white) national identity in culture, is insidious and perhaps just as powerful as explicit nationalism. In Australia, sport is a key site where nationalism remains present (Connell 2003, 15), albeit in what Hage (2011) might describe as a ‘relaxed and comfortable’ – that is, widely accepted – mode. Sporting events remain spaces where it is acceptable to drape oneself in the Australian flag and

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5 See, for example, Nuclear Death Terror’s website, which has radical political resources and statements from band members (Nuclear Death Terror 2011). See also the ‘AusGrind’ Facebook page (Vaughan, Dale et al. 2007), which sometimes includes political discussions.
shout “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie”, despite their connotations of nationalism, and even racism.

Wearing the flag is associated with the conservative politics of the One Nation party (ONP) and its leader, Pauline Hanson. Hanson gained a seat in parliament in 1996 on a platform of minimising migration from Asia and forcing Asian-Australians to assimilate. Her politics appealed to many, particularly working class, voters. The major Australian conservative party, the Liberal party, adopted milder forms of Hanson’s policies into their own platform in order to gain votes, which they eventually did – Hanson was voted out in the following election (Murphy 2002). For all her relative support, Hanson met with a vocal opposition. ‘Anti-Hanson’ demonstrations occurred across the country. A number of grindcore scene-members were even involved in organising and participating in these rallies. At the height of her infamy, Hanson released a book The Truth, the cover of which displayed the politician draped in the Australian flag. The image was relentlessly displayed in Australian media and the act of wearing the flag has come to be associated with Hanson and her racist politics. Even years after Hanson’s election, there were restrictions on the Australian flag at public events, such as the popular music festival ‘Big Day Out’, because of its negative associations (Mulvey 2007).

The decision to discourage flag wearing at the Big Day Out was also influenced by the ‘Cronulla Riots’ in December 2005. This event explicitly linked flag wearing to, in this case violent, racism. The beachside suburb of Cronulla, in Sydney, had been the site of an altercation between a Middle-Eastern youth and a white surf lifesaver on the 4th of December. Surf lifesavers, of course, are one of Australia’s most iconic national images and are usually represented as white. They are also regularly
featured in Australian tourism campaigns. Following the altercation – of which the exact details remain unclear – there grew a perception that the youth had ‘attacked’ the lifesaver. A viral text message was sent to many (white) residents of Cronulla and wider Sydney encouraging them to “help support Leb[anese] and wog [sic] bashing day” (Jackson 2006) on the 11th of December. The altercation and the subsequent text message gained further publicity when a popular, conservative, radio host read the message on-air and encouraged his listeners to participate (Marr 2005). Meanwhile, Sydney’s Middle-Eastern community planned a counter-protest, also at Cronulla beach. On the 26th, the two groups clashed violently at the beach and the surrounding streets. Most noticeable in the countless images of the ‘riot’ are the preponderance of Australian flags being worn by the white youths (alongside signs such as ‘Aussie Pride’; ‘No Lebs’ and ‘Ethnic Cleansing Squad’). Further, the barracking chant of “Aussie! Aussie Aussie! Oi! Oi! Oi” was audible in much of the video footage aired on news programmes after the event (Jackson 2006). Both Pauline Hanson and the white Cronulla ‘rioters’ identified as ‘Aussie’ and signified their identity partly through the Australian flag.

These are extreme examples of nationalism in Australia; however, both phenomena interpolated what Hanson would call “mainstream” (Hanson 1996) white Australians. This could partly be attributed to a wider image of Australian citizens as white in media representations. Australian brands, such as Qantas, Tip-Top Bread and Vegemite rarely feature non-white people in their advertisements, which constantly emphasise their ‘Aussie’ identity. Australia’s two highest rating soap operas, Neighbours and Home and Away, centre on stereotypical imaginings of
the nation – as a suburban street and a beach. Neither programme has included non-European characters for longer than a few months at a time (Wilkins 2012).

More broadly, in representations exported globally to promote Australia as a tourist destination, the white subject is foregrounded. A brief look at how Australia is represented to Japanese consumers is particularly useful. In tourism advertisements for a Japanese audience, ‘Australians’ are almost universally white (primitivised Aboriginal Australians being an exception) (Drilmakita 2009; Jetstar Japan 2012). The recent film Australia (Luhrmann 2008) proffers similar representations, despite being set in the past. Australia was released to much fanfare in Japan in 2009, and the Japanese trailer focused particularly on the hard, male (usually topless) body of Hugh Jackman’s character ‘Drover’ (australia20thfox 2009).

There are, of course, multiple, and divergent, masculinities in Australia (Coad 2002; Connell 2003). However, the hegemonic ‘Aussie’ remains, an often sporting, white man who dominates media representations (Hogan 1999). This figure is especially celebrated in national sports. Events such as the Australian Rules football Grand Final, the Boxing Day cricket test match and the Melbourne Cup horse race are represented by the media as quintessentially Australian, even Melbournian, performances (AAP 2009; City of Melbourne 2012; Staff Writers 2009). The ‘blokes’ who play and watch these events are naturally assumed to be authentic Australians and authentic men (Connell 2000).

It is notable that the Australian sportsmen most celebrated are those considered tough under conditions of perceived adversity – such as losing a match, or experiencing a sporting injury. These men epitomise brutality-as-representation.
They are the ones able to withstand symbolic, or physical, assault, without assenting to articulated affect – emotions. Sportsmen, such as cricketer, Brett Lee, are celebrated for their sporting skills, but also their ability to ‘power through’ injury and personal problems without emotion. Lee, for example, was lauded for his ability to “move on from his painful split” (New Idea 2010) with his wife, after she left him, allegedly for another sportsman. Sportsmen who do display emotion are ridiculed. For example, as part of the weekly patter on The AFL Footy Show, video footage of fellow panellist Garry Lyon crying after he broke his leg on field is shown, looped and repeated (Nine Network 1994 - ). The ‘joke’ being that Lyon is weak, despite being a successful player.

It is through performative gestures towards this white, sporting, bloke identity that Melbournian grindcore constitutes itself within a nationalist discourse. This is done partly through ‘heckling’, which draws from ‘sledging’ in cricket:

This is what I heard: ‘Oi! Damo! Play faster you fat cunt!’ *(field-notes, Melbourne)*.

In Melbourne, heckling is commonplace at grindcore gigs. Though heckles such as the one above may appear insulting and negative, they are generally considered humorous by scene-members. They form part of the ‘piss taking’ culture and a significant element of the patter of bands such as FID, The Kill and Blood Duster. The crowd heckles and the performers heckle back:\(^6\)

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\(^6\) Heckles often include ‘in jokes’ and work to display subcultural capital. For example, audience members will often yell about former band-members, even if the ex-members left the band years before, and under acrimonious circumstances. Heckles also engage with the discourse around metal genres considered ‘not brutal’. For example, during an FID gig I attended, heckles included “play more death”; “black metal!” and “Play Manowar!” alongside the ubiquitous “play faster!” *(field-notes, Melbourne)*. Further, heckles often incorporate the revalorised abject signifiers common to grindcore, as I noted during fieldwork: “They yelled Brutal a couple of times and then said ‘that was shit’ – but they seemed to actually mean it was good” *(field-notes, Melbourne)*.
Oh, I always get heckled. ... Yep – I get heckled for all sorts of stuff [laughs]. But I can – I can give it back. I'm pretty good at giving it back. I think it's sort of part, of the Fuck ... I'm Dead thing is to [pause] come and give me shit [laughs] (Andy, Melbourne).

Joel even suggests that, for some scene-members, heckling is a key part of the experience of being in the scene:

[T]he grind sort of scene there’s probably a bit more of a focus on ... getting pissed [drunk] and rowdy, you know, sort of – that sort of on-stage banter, jokes and with Melbourne grind there’s always that expectation that there’s going to be some funny song titles and heckles and I think that’s part of the experience for some people – you know the tongue in cheek ... jokes and stuff like that (Joel, Melbourne).

Carsten echoes this in his sense that heckling indicates the crowd is enjoying a set:

There were a few humorous heckles here and there [during the set], so they were obviously reasonably pleased (Carsten, Melbourne). *

Heckling at grindcore gigs can be traced back to the global grindcore origins legend that Napalm Death wanted to prove they were the fastest band in Birmingham at their early gigs and the crowd would yell ‘play faster’. However, the heckling at Melbourne gigs, I suggest, gestures more towards the, originally, Australian sporting practice of ‘sledging’. Sledging comes from cricket culture, and describes the players’ on-field insulting of rival players. Sledging in cricket is jocular; it is intended to put opponents off their play. Though apparently humorous (there are a number of ‘funny’ books listing ‘famous sledges’), sometimes sledges extend to sexism and racism. It is mostly associated with Australian and, to a lesser extent,
British and Indian, cricketers. When a player has perceived a sledge as offensive, such as when Indigenous Australian player Andrew Symonds was called a “monkey” by an Indian player, there is an emphasis on the victim needing to ‘toughen up’ and ‘take it as a joke’ (Craddock 2008; McGrath 2009; Pierik 2008).

Grindcore heckling (literally) echoes cricket sledging through its interpolation of an ‘Aussie’ subject. It appeals to better ‘playing’ as well as offers straight insults. In grindcore, playing fast is most valued and this translates into heckles. In fact, yelling “play faster” is almost as common as shouting “brutal” from the crowd. The other type of heckling involves personal insults, such as commenting negatively on a performer’s weight, clothes and hair.

Melbournian grindcore expressions of appreciation also draw from cricket culture. At a New Year’s Eve gig, just after the Boxing Day test match, three of the four bands performing encouraged the audience to yell “Oi! Oi! Oi!” – the typical response to the cricket fans’ chant of “Aussie! Aussie! Aussie!” One band also brandished the Australian flag.

Like sledging, heckling in grindcore depends on a shared social understanding that it is a ‘piss-take’ rather than a serious insult. This draws on Australian cultural norms of self-deprecation and, indeed, being ‘relaxed and comfortable’ about vilification. The peculiar Australianness of heckling was described by Andy, in his description of touring the USA:

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7 Sledging does exist in other Australian sports, particularly AFL. Most recently a player for the West Coast Eagles was reprimanded for making a derogatory remark about a rival player’s mother (O’Donoghue 2011).

8 This ‘relaxed’ attitude has sometimes verged into complacency regarding vilification in Australian sports. In the AFL, racist remarks and discrimination against Indigenous Australians is common (Judd 2010). Despite the AFL adopting an anti-vilification policy in 1995, such racism remains prominent. Most recently, the recruiting manager for the Adelaide Crows reportedly said that he
Ummm, [I was] very obnoxious. Umm, very Australian ... when I went to the States, I reali- I noticed how – I ... introduced the band like [adopts broad Australian accent] 'G’day! How you goin’! We’re Fuck ... I’m Dead from Australia’ [laughs loudly]! ... They were looking at me going – a lot – no-one – heaps of people over there just couldn’t understand me. So, I just started yelling out, like, ‘Open your fucking ears!’ [laughs]. ... they thought we were like full gan- ... seriously – in a place like New Jersey and that ‘cause they are real gang orientated (Andy, Melbourne).

In the USA, Andy’s standard routine of “yelling” and swearing at the audience was taken “seriously” as a sign of gang-membership, rather than a ‘piss take’. Leon outlined a similar experience in Europe:

[W]e did a tour of Europe a few years ago, and the promoters there said ‘Oh I won’t bother putting you in the [anarchist run] squats and stuff like that’. Because he knew it was going to be more trouble than it’s worth. ... You know, the – it’s just those bands, you know? Like, they don’t seem to have a sense of humour ... you’d think you’d get it – it’s like a pretty fucking obvious joke (Leon, Melbourne).

Sledging centres on linguistic representation and shared codes regarding Australian male sporting culture. Like the ‘piss-takes’ Blood Duster enacted in response to emo, sledging represses the affectively brutal experience of a gig. Instead, sledging constitutes representative brutality, in the form of symbolic violence. Sledging is highly cognitive, it requires a quick, ‘clever’ response to counter-sledges, and sometimes even rehearsal:

You have to be pretty quick-witted ... [in the USA] I had, had pre-planned thing[s] to get up on stage and say ... I had to explain with – we do a song called ‘Shotgun Facelift’ – about

was disinclined to recruit Indigenous players, unless they had one white parent (MacDonald 2012), and the main sponsor of the Melbourne Demons was dropped after making racist remarks about the team’s players (AAP 2012).
[Melbourne shooting victim] Kay Nesbitt … so I had to explain the jokes and shit for that one … and the one about [Melbourne pop singer] Nikki Webster as well *(Andy, Melbourne)*.

To respond affectively, by being offended or upset, indicates one's lack of scenic brutality. This is, again bound to the patriarchal hegemony of the scene. Just like in cricket, to complain that sledging hurts, affectively, is seen as un-manly and ‘just not cricket’, or to quote a Blood Duster track 'It's Just Not Metal' *(Blood Duster 1998)*.

Figure 5.4: Super Fun Happy Slide perform the 'Aussie bogan' identity. The singer always dresses down and the guitarist on the right is wearing a Collingwood football club jersey.

The other national stereotype Melbournian scene-members invoke is the ‘bogan’. The bogan label is relatively recent in Australian popular culture. Similar to ‘chav’ in Britain, or ‘redneck’ in the United States, bogan refers to a working-class or aspirant working-class person possessing what is designated by the middle-class as ‘bad taste’. The bogan is regularly represented in Australian popular culture. In fact, Pauline Hanson is often labelled a ‘bogan’ *(Lonely Planet 2008; McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al. 2011; Yusuf 2010)*, as are the Cronulla ‘rioters’ *(Corbett 2011; Gwyther 2008; McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al.*) and many Australian
sportsmen (Johnston 2011; Noakes 2012; Sheehan 2005). A consistent aspect of those labelled – or even self-proclaimed – as ‘bogan’ is whiteness and a strong identification as ‘Aussie’.

The bogan is not simply reviled, rather it is often celebrated and laughed with, as demonstrated by the success of the sitcom Kath and Kim (Riley and Turner 2002-2005; 2007). People labelled ‘bogan’ are thought to have ‘bad’, working-class, taste, despite pretensions to ‘good’ taste. In fact, bogans are usually identified by their taste, which is characterised by peculiarly Australian elements such as ‘ugg’ boots, AFL football jerseys and Australian beers (McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al. nd). Most importantly, the white bogan subject is perceived as fiercely patriotic, perhaps due to the label’s incorporation of figures such as Pauline Hanson. Further, they are associated with the Australian mythology of egalitarianism epitomised in the cliché of giving everyone a ‘fair go’. Such egalitarianism, however, does not usually extend to migrants. Despite the popularity of bogans, such as those on Kath and Kim, the label can still be insulting, if used in an aggressive manner.

However, Melbourne grindcore scene-members generally embrace the ‘bogan’ label. This is due to the perception, held by many scene-members, that ‘bogan’ originally indicated a male metalhead and that broader culture appropriated it in the late 1990s:

Well, bogan used to mean a real metalhead – like a bloke with long hair ... band t-shirt and shit. Then, like, in the 2000s it suddenly started meaning something else ... Caroline

9 There is a (false) assumption that Australian sportsmen are working class and have worked their way up to professional sports. This is demonstrated in the media focus on ‘exceptions’ to the assumption, such as Collingwood Magpies player Chris Dawes who is “atypical of the blue-collar Pies’ archetype” (Gleeson 2010) because of his background growing up in an upmarket suburb, attending an exclusive private school and his father being a “history lecturer turned antiquarian bookshop owner” (ibid.).
Springs [an outer suburban housing estate], un-classy people or something (Phil, Melbourne).

This was perhaps due to wider popular cultural assumptions that metal fandom was tasteless, and working-class (Brown 2003). It is still used by some older scene-members to describe fans who are “[j]ust metal”:

Rosemary: [A]t Blood Duster shows especially, there's often more women than at other –

Jules: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just metal – metal chicks with their bogan boyfriends just come and see Blood Duster these days, I think (Jules, Melbourne).

Despite this history, Melbourne grindcore scene-members often perform the more popular image of ‘bogan-ness’ as tasteless and working class. While some of this may be genuine, it generally forms part of the wider ‘piss-taking’ culture of the scene. Further, it helps to build an ‘Australian’ identity for scene-members. Bogan-ness is represented in the Melbourne scene through a number of signifiers. Scene-members regularly wear cheap tracksuits and some wear Australian Rules football jerseys (Figure 5.4). Scene-members generally only drink Australian beers at gigs. Sledging, due to its association with sport, could also be characterised as bogan. So too, could the “Oi! Oi! Oi!” chants at some shows. Further, a number of references to popular ‘bogan’ figures, commodities and activities are weaved into song titles and lyrics.10 Graham even compared grindcore sociality with that of an AFL football club:

10 This includes Kay Nesbitt, whose ‘song’, ‘Shotgun Facelift’, Andy discusses above. Nesbitt was shot in the face by her flatmate’s criminal boyfriend in 1985. Other examples include: ‘Tracksuit Pants Are Thrash’ (The Kill 2003); ‘The Meat Song (Stiffy in McDonalds)’, referring to bogans’ perceived love of junk food (Blood Duster 1998); and ‘Chop Chop’ (about Australian ‘celebrity criminal’ Mark ‘Chopper’ Read) (ibid.).
[I]t’s the same in any kind of social kind of group, even if it was footy or whatever, you know? You still have to prove yourself, before people, um – yeah, people actually accept you (Graham, Melbourne).

Despite these representations of Australian identity, scene-members distance themselves from the nationalism that such significations imply. It is more complex than blunt signifiers automatically interpolating nationalist subjects. The shared understanding, in Australia at least, that heckling and bogan-ness are ‘piss-takes’ undercuts the Australian patriotism they both connote. Will, of Super Fun Happy Slide, who is regularly heckled for dressing ‘like a bogan’ explicitly rejected nationalism and, more specifically, the sporting ‘Aussie bloke’ identity:

I recently wrote something about how I don’t like the Olympics [which were being held at the time, in Beijing] and they just give me the shits and – Yeah, yeah. And you just can’t get away from it! It just annoys the fuck out of me. ‘Cause I don’t care about sport and, like, everyone in town just becomes, like an overnight patriot all of a sudden (Will, Melbourne).11

Will was an exception in his dislike for sports. However, most of the interviewees shared his negative opinion of nationalism, especially when it was expressed as racism:

And it [the Melbourne scene] sort of got really, really like flooded [in the early 2000s] with those kind of really shit bands and really just like really kind of nasty kind of vibe to it. And that kind of attracted some, like, yobbos [another derogatory term for white, working-class Australians], and, like, in turn, there was sort of a lot more sort of racist kind of stuff coming up towards the end of that little – fucking – explosion in that crappy style. And also, a lot of people, who’d been playing grindcore or whatever for years and years were just like ‘I want nothing to do with this shit anymore’ (Carsten, Melbourne).

11 During a gig, held during the same month, Will included criticism of the Olympics in his on-stage banter: “Who hates the Olympics as much as I do?” (field-notes, Melbourne).
Carsten is keen to distance his own taste from the “racist ... stuff” he saw as “flood[ing]” Melbourne in the early 2000s. While he identified elsewhere as a bogan – in the metalhead sense – he used what is arguably a synonym for bogan – ‘yobbo’ to demarcate those who liked the racist, “crappy style” of grindcore. For Carsten, a real bogan, such as himself, is a metalhead, while the racist bogan is, in fact, a “yobbo” who much of the scene “want nothing to do with”.

Other scene-members emphasised their distance from ‘real’ nationalism through their insistence that any ‘bogan-ness’ performed at gigs was a pretence and, even, ironic. For band-members, there is often a clear play between their offstage, ‘real’ self and the bogan ‘Aussie’ self onstage:

[When I get on stage – this is going to sound wanky – but when I get on stage I almost change? ... I get up there – I’m a totally different person – overly confident. It’s like – I don’t know where it comes from – like, if you meet me – ‘cause a lot of people meet me after the show – and they just think I’m a fucking lunatic bogan or something. But I’m just me – a normal dude, you know. (Andy, Melbourne).

**Rosemary:** So, like, when you go on stage what’s it feel like?

**Leon:** Without being an actor – just it’s more like you just get to be drunk. Or, for Blood Duster, it’s like, we get drunk, be stupid dudes, you know. Because, you can do shit on stage that you can’t do – you know – if you were just standing in the crowd shouting shit – where people would just punch the fuck out of you. But, when you’re standing on stage you just talk shit, you know, and people just ‘rara’ – accept it, because they’re kind of taught that, when you’re on stage you can do whatever you want (Leon, Melbourne).

**Jules:** [I]f you’ve seen the show you probably could tell, and if you spoke to me offstage you could probably tell as well.

**Rosemary:** Mmmh. How would you describe the, sort of, ‘Blood Duster Jules’?
J: Ummm, car – crazy, ohhhh, can be a bit wild. ... Ummm, what else? Pretty much it’s just the drink – if I drink a lot I’ll go mad. If I don’t drink a lot of booze I, ah, tend to just kick back and pace the stage up and down and try to act tough. ... [laughs] Well, ['acting tough'] it’s the tradition, I think, with ... metal and all that stuff. Because, ah, pretty much every photo you see everyone’s either trying to look angry – flex their biceps – and ahhhh, yeah. So, I sort of thought – think it’s pretty funny. Um, yeah.

R: So it’s kind of like a jokey being tough.

J: Yeah, yeah – people that know me know who I am and, ah, you know, ‘I’m a lover, not a fighter’, as they say (Jules, Melbourne).

Interestingly, Leon and Jules acknowledge the shared understanding that what occurs onstage is a performance, rather than a genuine expression of their identities. To Jules, gigs are a “show” where he “act[s] tough”. As Leon says, offstage, two crowd members “talk[ing] shit” (heckling) would result in being “punch[ed]” because it would appear more ‘real’ than the heckling onstage. Jules, in particular, emphasises his distance from his Blood Duster persona. He notes that rather than ‘really’ being “angry”, he simply “look[s] angry” as he thinks the metal stereotype of the tough man is “pretty funny”. Andy and Jules both associate boganism with violence and fighting, following broader stereotypes of working-class men as rough and ready for a fight (McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al. nd).

Another way that band-members distanced themselves from the bogan identities they enacted onstage was through parody of stereotypical bogan-ness. In the media, bogans are often associated with ‘low’ culture, such as pornography consumption and attendance at strip clubs (Heckler 2012; McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al. 2009; McKenzie-Smyth, Johnson et al. 2010; Tankard Reist 2008). At one gig I attended, audience members yelled: “show us yer norks [breasts]” (field
notes, Melbourne) to Andy while he was onstage. He replied in a, faked, strong Australian accent, “You don't have the money to see these norks!” (ibid.). As an Australian, I understood this as a ‘piss-take’. Norks is an outdated, working-class, term for breasts. Further, Andy's macho physique made the heckle ridiculous. Here, the audience-member, as well as the performer, emphasised that they were only ‘playing’ at bogan identity.

In interviews, scene-members sometimes also followed hegemonic culture’s denigration of “real bogans” (Phil), affirming the assumption that boganism is linked to violence, low intelligence, and, in Phil’s understanding, “sporty types”:

But it's sort of, like, real bogans – uncool people wouldn’t like it [grindcore], you know? And they're people who are just, just the opposite really [of grindcore scene-members]. ... I've never seen much violence [at a Melbourne gig]. Ever. I've seen way more violence in, say, a pub where some horrible band is playing covers full of, um, you know, ‘jock’ type people – sporty types or whatever. ... They're the real bogans, I think (Phil, Melbourne).

[Speaking about moving from Hobart, Tasmania to Melbourne] people from Melbourne they were like: ‘Yeah – well, I’m not going to waste any more time on you! Tasmanian! Where's your other head? Ouhouhoua’. Oh god! You know? It was as ignorant and as stupid a response as I could possibly fathom from the dumbest bogan (Lucy, Melbourne).

Andy shared a similar sentiment. Despite identifying as working-class, due to his background and job, Andy perceived his taste in grindcore music elevated him above “real Australian” bogans. This is, presumably, opposed to ‘real’ grindcore bogans, with which Andy identifies:

Rosemary: How do your workmates find – find you playing that sort of [grindcore] music at work?
Andy: Oh – well one guy – he’s like forty-odd, kids, lives in the suburbs – real Australian bogan guy, you know? ... He just goes [rolls eyes]. He doesn’t care – he goes – he just goes ‘it’s fucking stupid!’

R: What does he put on?

A: Creedence, Beatles, Jimmy Barnes .... Yeah. He’s a full Aussie pub rock dude (Andy, Melbourne).

Andy, Lucy and Phil’s responses demonstrate that embodying Melbourne grindcore brutality requires a navigation of subcultural capital. Like the clubbers in Thornton’s (1996) study of nightclub cultures in Britain, Melbourne scene-members designate working-class people as “uncool” (Phil). However, in contrast to Thornton’s case study, part of the Melbourne grindcore scene’s discourse of authenticity depends on an, albeit ironic, enactment of such ‘uncoolness’. These performances of the ‘Aussie bogan’ signal the scene-members’ Australian identity. This is demonstrated through their performance of its negative connotations, within grindcore, and broader Australian culture. Such performances, however, are usually parodic and become a ‘piss-take’. For scene-members, belonging to the Melbourne scene requires an awareness of the cultural significance of the ‘Aussie’ identity – in particular its links to ‘boganism’. To be brutal is not to be ‘really’ a “bogan Australian” (Andy), but to be a bogan metalhead. That is, to be able to ironically stage Australian bogan-ness in the context of a grindcore performance.

2.2: Brutal spirit and ‘Japanese warriors’

In Osaka, nationalism is more explicit than in Melbourne. Some scene-members associate feeling burutaru with a sense of yamato damashî. Yamato damashî translates as ‘Japanese spirit’. It is a phrase with a long and fraught history in
Japan. Coined by Murasaki (1976 [1021]) in the early 11th century, it referred to Japanese intellect, grounded in ‘Chinese learning’ (knowledge of kanji, Buddhism, Chinese political systems and so on). However, after the first Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895), its popular meaning was inverted. *Yamato damashî* became the catch-cry of nationalists who used it to signify Japan’s difference, and superiority, over China. Later, as nationalism increased preceding World War II, officials regularly used *yamato damashî* rhetorically to claim Japan’s uniqueness not only to China, but also to all other, particularly Asian, nations. *Yamato damashî* enmeshed in Japanese nationalist ideologies that claimed Japanese people were stronger, smarter, braver and even cleaner than other nationalities (Guo 2002). More specifically, *yamato damashî* was associated with pragmatism and resilience:

*Yamato damashî* refers to an inherent faculty of resourcefulness, and prudent judgment that is characteristic of, and unique to, the Japanese people. It also refers to a practical, "real life" ability and intelligence that is in contrast with knowledge acquired through formal education. It is a term used to express such ideas as the essential purity and resolute spirit of the Japanese people and the possession of a strong spirit that will meet any challenge, even at the expense of one’s own life (Fukio 2007). Resourcefulness, prudence, practicality, strength and intelligence are traits associated with masculinity (Plumwood 1994, 43). However, as Plumwood points out, such traits are particularly dominant in Western understandings of masculinity. It is significant, then, that it was only after Perry ‘opened’ Japan to ‘the world’ and Japan began implementing Western systems of governance that the meaning of *yamato damashî* shifted towards patriarchal, nationalist, significations. As Reischauer notes, one of the catalysts for militarist reaction in the 1930s was a

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12 As Carr (1994) points out, during the 1930s and 1940s *yamato damashî* was similar to the Third Reich’s use of Herrenvolk (‘master race’).
sense that Japan, as a modernising country, should have a right to colonies, just as European countries did (Reischauer and Jansen 1995, 97). Along with a Western-style army came the patriarchal rhetoric common to militarism (Agostino 2003; Morgan 1994). This rhetoric was suffused with *yamato damashî*. Japanese spirit implied masculinist jingoism. These meanings are familiar to Japanese people and associated with nationalist politics. *Yamato damashî* is also associated with particularly militaristic and masculinist symbols of Japan’s past, such as samurai and the Japanese Imperial Army (JIA).

However, the hugely successful 1970s children’s animation series *Space Battleship Yamato*, also links ‘*yamato*’, at least, to a nostalgic understanding of Japanese culture. In 2010, a live action film version of the programme was announced to much excitement, during the popular *Johnny’s Countdown* television show (Takashi 2010). Despite its seemingly benign associations with children’s television, *yamato damashî*, even in relation to *Space Battleship Yamato* is reactionary, nostalgic and retrograde. All of these meanings, of nationalism, but also a nostalgia for a past, strong, Japan, permeate *yamato damashî* and, by extension, its use in Osakan grindcore understandings of *burutaru*.

The Osakan scene-members who associated experiencing brutal belonging with *yamato damashî* professed conservative, nationalist political outlooks. They felt *yamato damashî* was important for distinguishing Osakan grindcore from the global scene. Further, their recognition and approval of *yamato damashî* helped make scene-members feel at home in the Osaka scene. In particular, singing in Japanese was appreciated, due to its association with *yamato damashî*:

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13 It is also associated with less masculinist, but also nostalgic symbols of Japan – such as *sakura* (cherry blossom).

We [in Birushanah] sing in Japanese because [gestures to himself] – [I am] Japanese. Japanese, so, yeah, I – we can – we can output only one culture and one word – language. We can’t – write song lyrics for English speakers – we can’t. Only for Japanese people (Sensei, Osaka). * §

By singing in Japanese, Sensei aligns himself, and Birushanah, with a wider national community of “only Japanese people” with whom he feels he belongs. Yumi continued, by linking yamato damashî and mononofu’s music to her own nationalist perspective. She echoes Sensei in her sense that yamato damashî signifies her love for her country – Japan:


Sensei and Yumi had both travelled overseas, on tours and to see foreign bands. However, they did not see this as a contradiction of their affiliation with yamato damashî. Instead, they considered Osakan grindcore as working on two levels: an aesthetic level, where the music is relatively similar to global grindcore and relatively easy for a non-Japanese fan to consume; on the other hand, Yumi and Sensei believed Osakan grindcore possessing yamato damashî held a special significance for Japanese listeners who, they hoped, would appreciate its patriotic spirit.

Japanese spirit was also important to Infernal Revulsion’s lead singer, Nobu. Being bilingual, he was often called on to translate Japanese lyrics and liner notes into English. He noted the importance of yamato damashî, associated with the
“samurai”, to many bands’ image, but also the, often necessary, translation of lyrics into English so as to accrue brutal authenticity. From Nobu’s point of view, this can lead to tension:

And when it comes to real ‘Japanese Spirit’, you know, mentality – samurai kind of lyrics – it’s really hard to translate that into the English. Hm. ... Not, not – not only samurai but you know these ‘Japanese Spirit’ – *yamato damashî* ... sort of, hmm, a Japanese way of thinking (Nobu, Osaka).

Of course, the contemporary conception of *yamato damashî*, as a nationalist ideology, necessarily implies an adherence to the Japanese language, which Yumi and Nobu both acknowledge. Singing in English, though still trying to express “Japanese Spirit”, responds to an awareness that *yamato damashî* is politically incorrect. Nobu, particularly, felt that blunt expressions of *yamato damashî*, such as singing Japanese, were detrimental to bands that wanted to appeal to a wide audience:

> When you start singing in Japanese – [it] really sounds, um, too, ummm, too, um, strict – in a mentality way – you’re more going to sound like ... [a] right-wing band (Nobu, Osaka).

Despite not wanting his bands to “sound ... right wing”, and his status as biracial, Nobu was a Japanese nationalist. He expressed a common nationalist paranoia (Hage 1998) that foreigners and foreign influence were about to overrun his country, and national identity would be stifled:

> Everyone ... don’t even know about Japanese history. Are you – you ask them, “Are you proud of being Japanese?” to, um, like, a young people – nobody will say yes. They’ll say: “I’m very ashamed of being Japanese. If I can – if I can – [be] reborn ... American I’d love to be that” (Nobu, Osaka).
Yumi expressed a similar concern:

I want them to protect Japanese culture and Japanese style .. Who is of Japanese blood shouldn’t love American stuff *(Yumi, Osaka)*.

A tension arises between brutal as authentically Western grindcore, and brutal as adherence to *yamato damashî*. Nobu’s favourite event was California Death Fest and some of Yumi’s favourite bands were American. These scene-members did not recognise such divergent ideas of brutality as contradictory, however. Instead, they judged “American stuff” (Yumi) by degrees. That is, “lov[ing] American” (ibid.) culture was acceptable, so long as one did not lose sight where they really belonged – Japan – and enjoy foreign culture ‘too much’:

I really, really hate that. ... We have our culture and this – why [do we] need to be inspired by America? And so – I – Japan is important for me – it’s my country. My home. And, uh – and I don’t want to see people love America. ... So I don’t like [it]. But they all – most people think they are so cool. That all American stuff is so cool *(Yumi, Osaka)*.

Popular music [in Osaka] is pop, reggae and hip-hop – mostly [they] listen to black [African-American] music. ... Ummm – it’s weird for me [laughs]. I don’t think, ummmm, errr – I can’t answer why – it’s – I said – I’m always think[ing]: ‘Why?!’ [laughs]. ... I think it’s a fashion. Basically, Japanese want to be American. With the basic, basic thought [that] black man (sic) looks cool *(Ryûchi, Osaka)*.

This is an interesting variation on Hage’s (1998) concept of ‘numerical racism’ where the nationalist fixates on there being ‘too many’ migrants. Here, Yumi and Ryûchi’s concerns are less for the material presence of migrant bodies, than the
symbolic, representational, presence of American culture, in the form of fashion and American music.\textsuperscript{14}

Nobu, on the other hand, was concerned with the presence of migrant bodies in Osaka, in particular in AmeMura. Since the 2000s, AmeMura has hosted a number of what locals often regard as ‘real’ Americans, in the form of male African refugees and migrant workers. These men, who are often more fluent in French than English, dress in stereotypical African-American ‘gangster’ clothing. They are often hired by shops as spruikers, yelling ‘Americanisms’ such as “dude!” and “man!” to passersby in a bid to get them to enter. For shops (in AmeMura no less) to use them as marketeers, these men obviously hold significant connotations of authentic ‘cool’ America-ness. However, this recent phenomenon has also led many Japanese people to regard AmeMura as ‘dangerous’ due to popular, if not racist, representations of the supposedly increasing population of Africans as warui (Brasor 2007; Condry 2006; Kresge 2009).\textsuperscript{15} Nobu shared this view. I interviewed him at a ‘Karaoke Box’ in AmeMura. As Nobu and I approached the ‘Box’ a couple of African men were spruiking in front of a shop nearby. I noticed Nobu frowning. Once inside the ‘Box’, the first thing he said – before we had even organised a room to conduct the interview – was “Did you see those black guys?” (Osaka field notes) I replied that I had. He then said:

\begin{quote}
You know? They’re not even real black guys? They’re Africans. Don’t even speak English. Just over here selling drugs and shit. I hate it (Osaka field notes).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} The concern about America’s negative influence on Japanese culture is, of course, nothing new. Tanizaki (1997 [1922]) wrote on Japanese women’s agurī (ugly) obsession with American fashion in the 1920s. In the 1960s, Mishima (1978 [1967]) famously lamented the decline of the ‘Samurai Ethic’, blaming particularly America’s influence.

\textsuperscript{15} Notable exceptions include Bobby Ologun, a Nigerian-born enka tarento (enka pop star). Ologun also speaks Japanese and, as Brasor (2007) points out, is regarded as “childlike” and regularly the butt of variety show jokes about “his skin colour [and] lack of sophistication”. See also Leupp (1995) and Russell (2009) for accounts of the history of the presence of Africans in Japan.
Interestingly, Nobu associated ‘real blackness’ – so important to hip-hop cultures (Forman 2002) – with African-American, rather than African origins. Nobu presumes that an African presence in AmeMura must be limited to ‘real’ African-Americans as opposed to simply Africans. It is, after all, ‘America Mura’.

Nobu, of course, would probably have been just as concerned had the African men in AmeMura been ‘real’ Americans, due to his dislike of what he perceived as American cultural imperialism. Ryûchi also disliked the influence of American culture. He associated American-ness with Japanese people who he regarded as shallow in their desire to “want to be American” (Ryûchi). He considered the consumption of ‘good’ American culture that is, “brutal” grindcore music – acceptable, however, because Ryûchi perceived it as alternative to the mainstream American popular culture more visible in Japan:

I like brutal American music. ... Portland, Oregon, has made a good scene (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Yumi also excepted “underground” American grindcore from her dislike of American cultural imperialism:

It's cool – I was just travelling in America and I found a gig, yeah. I found the underground band – I love that (Yumi, Osaka).

There is also a sense that, unlike Osakan pop fans, who mindlessly desire re-birth as American, grindcore scene-members' yamato damashî and awareness of American-Japanese history protects them from being ‘duped’ by American cultural imperialism. Following from his observation that “everyone” is unfamiliar with “Japanese history”, Nobu foregrounded his own familiarity – mediated by nationalist discourse – with the impact of American post-war occupation:
MacArthur – he ruined our country ... with, um, punishing us and nailing us to his written laws of, um – well he introduced, ahhhh, all these Western cultures and everything. Democracy and everything – to corrupt our mentality. And, you know, now, you look, you look at every Japanese – everyone wants to American (Nobu, Osaka emphasis added).

Grindcore fliers sometimes use signifiers of Japanese identity as a mark of authenticity. For example, the band Fucho always writes its name in kanji, and advertised one of its raibu as “true japanese negative assault” (Figure 5.5). This slogan marries yamato damashî – the notion of authentic Japanese identity – with signifiers of Western brutality – “negative” and “assault”. Notably, use of the English word ‘true’ is not likely to be a deep claim to authenticity. Instead, “true Japanese” identity represents musical sincerity. Japanese language and traditional imagery are stronger signifiers of Japanese brutality.

Figure 5.5: “true japanese” grindcore at Hokage raibousu.

16 Truth and Japanese-ness are also associated elsewhere in the scene, such as the band Cyberne’s t-shirt slogan “True Japanese Aggressive Psycho Rhythm”.
As Stevens (2008) notes, Japanese language and particularly kanji are an important determinant for the designation of a musical product as ‘Japanese’ (23). With so many Japanese popular cultural artefacts appropriating English, items that use kanji are distinctive. The majority of livehouse fliers use a mixture of English and Japanese, or sometimes only English. Usually, such fliers display the event and livehouse name in English. However, there are some notable exceptions. For example, Hokage occasionally holds an event called ‘Bishamon’, organised personally by Sensei (rather than the manager and usual booker, Takeda). Bishamon fliers are generally written primarily in kanji, save for band names that use English. In fact, when Bishamon has been an all-Japanese band event, the flier has been written entirely in kanji.

Sensei’s use of kanji is a primary signifier of the event’s Japaneseess. Matsue (2009) and Condry (2006) also highlight the use of Japanese language and traditional imagery as a signifier of Japanese identity, or even Japanese pride, in Tokyo’s hardcore and hip-hop scenes respectively. Condry points out that Japanese hip-hoppers often appropriated the stereotypical image of the African-American gangster as a means of displaying “respect” (27) for the genre’s roots, and as a marker of hip-hop authenticity. However, some emcees use samurai imagery and kanji to differentiate Japanese hip-hop from global manifestations of the genre, but also as a way to claim Japanese authenticity. In such cases, Japanese identity is foregrounded over global generic signifiers.

The significance of the word Bishamon is also important. Bishamon is the Japanese name of the Buddhist deity Vaisravana. In Japan, Bishamon is considered the god of war and is usually depicted wearing armour. The most famous statue of Bishamon
is in Kansai, at the Toda-ji temple in Nara. Images of Bishamon generally accompany the Bishamon event fliers. The only exception was when the line-up featured an American band (Figure 5.6). This flier was also written in English, save for the ‘Bishamon’ banner. Further, this flier rejected the sombre images of Bishamon for a crudely drawn image of a person sitting on the toilet. The regular use of Bishamon images complement the flier’s use of kanji to connote *yamato damashi*.

Bishamon continues Sensei’s broader desire to associate KE with *yamato damashi* through the appropriation of Japanese religious images and language. His band, Birushanah, takes its name from the Japanese word for Vairocana, the sun Buddha. In Japan, Birushanah is considered the celestial embodiment of the Buddhist notion of emptiness. Further, Sensei’s first and second venues were named ‘Kagura’ (from which KE also takes its name) and, since 2001, Shinkagura. Unlike Bishamon and Birushanah, *kagura* is a Shinto concept. It refers to the sacred dance worshippers did, and still do, to coax the Shinto Goddess Amaterasu out of her hiding place in a cave. His other venue, Hokage, takes its name from the pseudo-religious themes proffered in the Japanese manga (comic strip) *Naruto*. Hokage means ‘fire shadow’ and, in *Naruto*, refers to the strongest men in the village where the manga is set. KE’s record label continues to claim Japanese identity via association with Japanese religion. It is called Shinto Music Dance (SMD Records)

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17 ‘Kagura’ was also a minor character in the *Naruto* series, who first appeared in 2008. She was a female fighter aiming for Hokage status. She fails, however. In a reference to the Shinto meaning of *kagura*, her special powers were related to dancing (Jake711 2008).

18 Now, KE’s fliers primarily claim Japanese identity for the venues Shinkagura and Hokage, as well as event such as Bishamon. However, the original Kagura venue also built Japanese identity through the decoration of the venue. It was adorned with huge paintings of Bishamon and other Japanese Buddhist deities. Currently, the live spaces in both KE venues are spartan, save for event and band fliers. However, the prominence given to Japanese-themed fliers does emphasise the Japanese identity of both venues.
records and represents a number of key Osakan grindcore bands, as well as working as a label for Melbourne bands who wish to sell music in Japan.\textsuperscript{19} This is an explicit reference to Shinto and to the \textit{kagura} dance. SMD sells SMD tee-shirts, which feature ‘Shinto Music Dance’ or ‘Sacred Music Dance’ on the back. SMD and Birushanah’s websites continue the emphasis on Japanese religion in their design. Birushanah’s MySpace background image is of the Birushanah god (Birushanah nd). On SMD’s site the banner features a picture of another Shinto god and the background image is of an old Shinto text (SMD Records nd).\textsuperscript{20}

Other fliers represent Japanese identity through depictions of Japanese soldiers and samurai. A 2009 Bishamon event, organised by Sensei, provides a good example of how Japanese-ness is associated with samurai identity. This incarnation of Bishamon was a part of the Rashomon and Kote ‘Blood Smith Tour’ of Japan. The Osaka live was a Bishamon event, which also included Sensei’s band, Birushanah. The flier is written in Japanese, except for “Blood Smith Tour 2009” and “SMD records”. Birushanah’s name, usually written in \textit{roma}\textit{ji} (Roman alphabet) is also written in \textit{kanji}. It fits with Rashomon and Kote, who always write their bands’ names in \textit{kanji}. The name Rashomon refers to the story by Akutagawa (1999 [1915]), later made into a globally successful film by Kurosawa (1950). The plot of the film \textit{Rashomon} regards the murder of a samurai and the rape of his wife. Edo Kyoto is the setting for both the book and the film. The samurai character in the film is typically tough and noble, at least in some of the ‘flashbacks’. The name

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bands discussed in my thesis represented by SMD records are: Birushanah, Ryôkuchi, palm, Realized, Cyberne, DTBM, Grey Daturas and Fire Witch.
\item This mixture of religious references, from Buddhism, Shinto and popular culture might also be a reference to the ‘new religion’ movement in Japan. One event used an image and slogans from the ‘Happiness Realisation’ (\textit{kôfuku jitsugen-tô}) religion, and now political party, on their flier. Notably the Happiness Realisation group is a right-wing group whose platform is for the re-armament of Japan (McNeill 2009).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
'Rashomon' pays homage to arguably Japan’s most famous director, Kurosawa, as well as the historical samurai themes of the motion picture.

Figure 5.6: An unusual flier for Hokage’s ‘Bishamon’ event. The band names and raibu information are written in English, perhaps due to the inclusion of an American band in the line-up. The event title, ‘bishamon’, however, is written in kanji at the top.

The image on the Blood Smith tour Bishamon flier is a collage. It is an old image of a samurai on a horse that has been stylised and recoloured. Further, instead of the samurai’s head, there is an image of a noh theatre style oni (devil) mask pasted onto his face. This flier emphasises Japanese history in order to signify authentic Japanese identity. The reverse side of the flier describes each band performing, claiming that the three groups are unique in their combination of metal and grindcore with traditional Japanese musical style. The emphasis is on the incorporation of Japanese scales and instruments (taiko drums and shakuhachi...
flute) into loud, metal music. In this example, Japanese identity, linked to the masculine figures of the samurai and oni is foregrounded instead of globalised signifiers of grindcore.

After the Edo period, the Meiji regency officially denounced and disbanded the samurai in the late 1870s. However, as the flier above demonstrates, samurai images still resonate with Japanese grindcore scene-members. Despite the Meiji’s denunciation, the samurai bushido was, and arguably still is, significant in Japanese culture (Light 1999; Mishima 1978 [1967]). Japanese ‘samurai soap operas’ air daily on Japanese television, and samurai are included as characters in popular anime and manga. Due to the military emphasis in the Blood Smith tour flier, however, most pertinent is the relatively common Japanese and Western understandings of the JIA during the Pacific War as embodying samurai spirit (Reischauer and Jansen 1995; Taylan nd). In particular, the act of seppuku (suicide by sword) committed by many JIA personnel after defeat is regarded as evidence of the strength of samurai ideals (Reischauer and Jansen 1995, 168). Seppuku was a part of bushido. In wartime Japan, many regarded the JIA as a continuation of the samurai, due partly to the Imperial government’s mobilisation of yamato damashi.

Contemporary Japanese adherents of right-wing politics (uyoku dantai), in particular, perceive, and celebrate, the parallels between samurai and soldiers. The conservative politics of many scene-members are reflected in more explicitly nationalist fliers, which associate the scene with Japanese identity represented by samurai and militaristic signifiers.

The Iron Stock Power Play Project (ISPPP) event at Rockets in 2010 provides an example of the association between grindcore music and nationalist Japanese
identity. As with the Bishamon flier, the text is in English and Japanese. The information about the venue, time and ticket price is in Japanese as are some of the band names. Most significant is the ISPPP slogan on the bottom left of the flier. Its kanji reads: Japanese nationalists awake! Fight for your country! This phrase is reminiscent of Showa period rallying cries (Friedman 2003) as well as current sloganeering from organised uyoku dantai activists. When shown the flier, Masa concurred, saying, “this one is a right-wing event” which he, consequently, decided not to attend. The flier's image complements its catch-cry. It depicts a JIA soldier kneeling in front of the hinomaru (sun disc) Japanese flag. In the foreground is a sword. The soldier appears to be about to commit seppuku. This flier foregrounds nationalist imagery and rhetoric. Through their presence on the line-up, the bands mentioned on the flier are also associated with nationalist sentiments. A number of other fliers featured the hinomaru or other nationalist imagery (Figure 5.7). Not surprisingly, openly nationalist venue Sengoku Daitoryo often features the JIA flag on fliers. Other fliers feature stereotypical images of Japan, such as sumo, yakuza and even students taking the university examination.

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21 I also saw two fliers using Nazi imagery. The ‘XXX’ event at Sunsui featured pictures of Hitler, swastikas and propaganda posters (including images of herrenvolk type Germans). The ‘Combat Hour: Metal Tribute Night’ at Rockets also included swastikas and German bombers on its flier.

22 Sengoku Daitoryo was Yumi’s favourite venue, due to its ‘Japanese-ness’, signified by tatami mats: “it’s so comfortable, um – has tatami. You can take your shoes off. [This] place is good.” (Yumi, Osaka).
Mononofu, the band Yumi felt most embodied *yamato damashî* is an interesting example of Osakan scenic expressions of brutal authenticity as *yamato damashî*. Firstly, they insist on their name being written in Japanese *katakana* as モノノフ。Katakana is mainly used for *wasei eigo* words, but also for emphasis on Japanese words. In this sense, it operates like italics in English. ‘*Mononofu*’ is an archaic word for samurai warrior (Aikido Kulubu 2005). According to their website, Mononofu chose this moniker to distinguish themselves from the majority of Japanese extreme metal bands, who choose to sing in English:

> At this time, the [band] thought English name to be strange[,] though [because] we were Japanese (Mononofu / モノノフ 2009).
Mononofu’s members have also adopted stage-names (often on top of previous stage-names), taken from their “samurai ... ancestors” (grimdoom 2010). The band outlines the bizarre meaning of each pseudonym on their website. Notably, many of the pseudonyms refer to traditional Japanese, and also Osakan, culture:

Kazuwo was renamed ... Kazumune "Bonten-maru" Date. The name was ... from Masamune Date [who] he respected. Necrolord Pandémonium was renamed to Yoshi-hisa "Minbu-Shouyō" [soy sauce, Osaka's main industry pre-Meiji] Amago. The name was named [after] his ancestor Yukihisa Amago

Shinpei "Kunai-Shouyō" Chousokabe (Guitar) [named after] a hard general in the Tosa country ... joins in July, 2005. Haruhisa "Sakon-Shōgen" Kumon (Drums) [a] descendant of Shigetada Kumon ... the brave general of famous Icsa ... joins in September, 2005 (Mononofu 2009).

Mononofu also lament the “ruin” (ibid.) of the samurai spirit in the liner notes of their album *Light of Sunset Seen from Kozuki Castle* (Mononofu / モノノフ 2008), reproduced on their website:

"Why did they have to go to ruin ..." Mononofu is now lamenting [the] Pride of the defeated in place of the defeated who was not able to leave one's own name to war-torn history. *Light of Sunset Seen from Kozuki Castle* is a real SAMURAI invasion[,] Mononofu plays 6 tracks 26 minutes of unmerciful ... Metal. There is a truth of cruel war-torn history here (Mononofu / モノノフ 2009).

It is possible that, like the Melbournians’ enactments of ‘bogan-ness’, Mononofu’s rhetoric is ironic, or parodic. However, other scene-members with whom I spoke, particularly Yumi, felt assured of their sincerity. On seeing them live – they were

23 See Condry (2006) for a discussion of the complex ways which Japanese hip-hop artists have incorporated samurai signifiers into their scene (49-50).
dressed in samurai armour, and brandishing swords, as well as guitars – I noted a surprising lack of the jocularity often seen at Birushanah and palm gigs. This led me, also, to believe that Mononofu were in earnest.

The band’s proffered identity on their website emphasises their Japanese identity. However, they also focus on micro-spatial allegiances – to Osaka, but also to their Kansai hometowns. The website profiles each band-member. They give the standard ‘name, instrument, former bands’ information. However, Mononofu also state where they are “coming from”. For example, ‘Gyôbu’ is “Coming From Kaga” (ibid.). Such parochialism echoes Edo period inter-daimyo rivalries. However, it is also a signifier of yamato damashî as Ryûchi explains:

[Yamato damashî means] loving Japan, or maybe – ... not whole area – it doesn’t always mean all of Japan. ‘Love Japan’ means, err [to] love Osaka, or Shinsaibashi. Really small (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Nevertheless, many in the scene rejected the explicitly nationalist ideology of yamato damashî. Even Ryûchi, who felt that “black” American culture was becoming too influential, found yamato damashî distasteful:

Hmmmm – yamato damashî? It’s a – hmmm – I think – I heard many right-wing music who – skinhead music – yes, it’s the same as Japanese right-wing music. ... [If], if someone said ‘[I] love Japan’ means, umm – it’s really dangerous. I think. Yeah, because it’s – in fact, err, many right-wing band[s are] in Osaka – around here – when I was in high school or something [it meant] ‘smash the immigrants’ or something – that kind of shit. So, ahh – I – I don’t use that words (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Here, Ryûchi acknowledges the official Japanese belief that yamato damashî is a politically incorrect phrase, associated particularly with nationalism. In fact, given its racist connotations, yamato damashî is a considerably loaded statement in
contemporary Japan. Ryûchi went on to note the patriarchal associations of *yamato damashî*:

> [I]t’s completely men’s idea. Yes and – maybe you know – Japanese is a man ... Yes. So, *yamato damashî* is a really old – old word – and that era – old era – is really men dominated women – hmm, so *yamato damashî* has – it’s, ah, really men’s thing (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Ryûchi’s background partly explains his distaste for *yamato damashî* politics. He was an active member of the student movement associated with the *Kyôsantô*, the Japanese Communist Party. He still considers himself a radical, despite having left the party.24 Sometimes “Japanese right-wing” musicians have come to his bar, Jokerman, unaware of Ryûchi’s political persuasion. Unlike in Melbourne, where radical scene-members boycotted venues and bands which professed racist sentiments, Osakan scene-members are more tolerant of conservative bands. Ryûchi sent this text after seeing me at a gig that included left and right wing bands in the line-up:

> Glad to see you at [Namba] Bears ... I’m still working now [at 5am] dah ... [be]cause, vocalist of SLEDGEHAMMER [a right-wing Japanese metal band] and his friends are here (Ryûchi, Osaka).

Masa did not profess any official political affinities, despite his father being active in the *Burakumin* liberation movement. Nevertheless, he found Mononofu’s seriousness and ‘samurai’ image silly and pretentious:

> [laughing] Mononofu? Yes, yes – they are ‘samurai’ band. I don’t know [their music] very well. Though I heard [the] singer is very rich. He drives an, a – expensive sports car – convertible. [laughing] He doesn’t drive [it] to *raibu* though (Masa, Osaka)!

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24 His current email address is even BOLSHEVIK@phonecompany.jp
SECTION 3: BRUTAL BELONGING IN OTHER SPACES

In order to contextualise scene-members’ experiences in the ‘Other’ city, it is important to outline how Melbournians ‘see’ Japanese people and Osakans ‘see’ Australians. That is, I wish to briefly discuss dominant representations of Australians in Japanese media – as these pervasive images potentially mediate how Osakan scene-members relate to Melbournian visitors and how Osakans experience Melbourne.

3.1: Australian representations of Japan in the 20th, and 21st, century

Prior to World War II, Japan was sometimes represented as a tourist destination for Australians. In these advertisements, the exotic nature and beauty of Japan was emphasised, with images of women in kimonos prominent (Figure 5.8). However, like the other Allied countries in World War II, Australia represented Japan, and its people, as ‘the enemy’ after 1939. These images traded on racist stereotypes of Japanese people as stylised ‘Asians’ with almost animalistic features killing white Australian soldiers and even ravaging white women. After the war, as Kato (2005) points out, Australian perceptions of Japan shifted to consider Japan a ‘friend’ and, later, ‘business partner’. In fact, Melbourne and Osaka became ‘Sister Cities’ in 1978 with the aim of building “mutual friendships” (City of Melbourne 2012) between both cities. Building on this friendly relationship, Melbourne and Osaka became ‘Business Partner Cities’ in 1988 with a focus on building trade links.
With the image of Japan as ‘the enemy’ abating after 1945, representations of Japan as a tourist destination returned to iconography of the nation as exotic. However, this was also tempered by the growing image of Japan as the site of an ‘economic miracle’, characterised by high-tech industry. A travel feature in a 1969 edition of Australian magazine *Woman’s Day* demonstrates such representations (Figure 5.9).

The title ‘A feast of fun for the Woman’s Day Adventurers in an Oriental Wonderland’ trades on an exotic image of Japan, as do the images of the travellers at temples and visiting a “dragon-maker” (Dupree 1969, 15). However, the article also notes that the tour group experience “[t]he very latest, most efficiently air-conditioned coaches” (ibid.) and “fast express” (ibid.) trains on their journey, demonstrating Japan’s revitalised image as modernising. This image of Japan peaked in the 1980s, during Japan’s bubble period, when Japanese investment was keenly sought by Australians, particularly in the area of property development.
The 1980s also saw the rise of the figure of the 'Japanese tourist' in Australia, especially on Queensland's beach resorts. As Sanderson (2003) notes, for some Australians this was regarded as a 'second Japanese invasion' (72) due to the Japanese presence – both as tourists, and investors – in Australian spaces.25 However, the prospect of Japanese money and the image of Japanese tourists as polite, clean and obliging mitigated such xenophobic responses.

Since the 1990s, Australian tourism to Japan has increased considerably, particularly after the onset of cheap flights to Osaka and Tokyo with Jetstar airlines, established in 2003. Jetstar advertisements for travel to Japan echo the 1960s example above. They focus on Japan as exotically different – and traditional – but also high-tech and modern. Copy on the Jetstar website demonstrates this through its claims that Japan is “a bubbling (nabe) pot” (Australia 2012) of “age-old

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25 In fact, Pauline Hanson even attributed her dislike of 'Asians' to her time working as a cocktail waitress on Queensland's Gold Coast. Here, she claimed that she got the sense that white Australian “[p]eople are sort of feeling like they’re losing something that was theirs. Like you’re in this country, but it’s another world. ... If you’re not an Australian citizen I don’t believe you should own property in this country. We’re losing control of this country” (Leser 1996). In this commentary, she is speaking particularly about Japanese investment and tourism.
Japanese traditions” (ibid.) and “modern urban society” (ibid.). This is echoed in the imagery on Jetstar's site, which focuses on geisha and temples as well as the Shinkansen and luxury shopping. Japanese politeness and friendliness is also emphasised. Overall, representations of Japan in Australia focus on Japan as both exotic, but familiar and easy to navigate.

3.2: Japanese representations of Australia in the 20th, and 21st, century

Before World War II, Australia and Japan were trading partners. Australia had very little Japanese migration, due to the White Australia Policy (WAP), established in 1902. In the early 1930s, Japan was Australia’s third most significant nation for exports (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2008). However, in 1936 this relationship was scaled back, and eventually stopped, due to Western sanctions on Japan (ibid.). Despite this early relationship, representations of Australia in Japanese popular culture during this period are relatively scarce. Broinowski (2003) notes, nevertheless, that 19th century traders’ representations of Australia focused on its exotic animals and abundant natural resources. Interestingly, she also points out that early 20th century representations of Australia in Japanese media framed Australia as immature. This, Broinowski claims, might have been a displacement of the stereotype of Japan as ‘childlike’ held by Westerners at the time. Leading up to World War II, and within a cultural context of increasing militarism, Japanese newspapers chronicled the racism of the WAP, constructing white Australia as imperialist, but also under the thumb of Britain.26 Further, reports focused on Australia’s vastness and low population as a means for justifying its militaristic endeavours. *Yamato damashî*, according to

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26 This was compounded with other Japanese media reports focusing on Australia’s convict heritage, which claimed Australia was a “fool’s paradise” populated by “degenerate ex-convicts”.

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Broinowski, is prevalent in newspaper reports leading up to, and during, the Pacific War. In particular, any re-population of Australia with Japanese (and even Chinese) migrants would not involve inter-marriage lest Japanese ‘purity’ be diluted.

During the war, Australia was often sidelined in propaganda, focusing primarily on East Asian ‘prosperity’ under Japanese rule. Australia was, however, featured in the *Children of the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere Songbook* (Asahi Shimbunsha 1944) as a victim of British imperialism, in need of ‘liberation’ from the Japanese.

Tada’s (2000) study of Japanese newspaper representations of Australia, post-war, reflect a more benign image of the country. She notes, however, that Australia featured relatively rarely in Japanese newsprint. When it did, it coincided, understandably, with instances of economic negotiation. While representations between the 1970s and 1990s were generally positive, Tada points out that they depended on well-rehearsed, and even ill informed, stereotypes of Australia as “a vast land with natural resources” (171) and *yutakana* (rich). During the 1980s, coverage increased, particularly when Prime Minister Hawke visited Japan and Queensland hosted the World Expo. Here, the focus was on Australia as a tourist destination replete with exotic, and cute, furry animals.27

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s representations of Australia in Japan were mediated by tourism discourses, which highlighted Australia as a ‘relaxing’ country. In particular, Tada notes, the Japanese newspapers began to profile

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27 The fascination with koalas perhaps reached its peak in the *Asahi Shimbun’s* establishment of a ‘Koala Fan Club’ in 1984 (Tada 2000, 174).
Japanese migrants to Australia, highlighting their move as an ‘escape’ from what are framed as the strictures of Japanese society (175). The rise of Hanson, in 1996, tempered positive images of Australia and Japanese news consumers were reminded, again, of the WAP (ibid.).

Since the 2000s, Japanese representations of Australia have returned to a tourism discourse. Advertisements for travel focus on relaxing in the sun and the ubiquitous koalas and kangaroos (Drilikita 2009; Ryugaku.com.au 2007; Travel Japan 2012). Despite Melbourne being one Australia’s more metropolitan cities, tourism guides remain focused on its flora and fauna. ‘Osutararia Gaido’ (Australia Guide) boasts that Melbourne’s zoos are the “last paradise of wild animals” § (Travel Japan 2012) and the Dandenong ranges grant visitors “beautiful scenery” § (ibid.).

Unlike Australia’s representations of Japan, the city nightlife is not emphasised. Instead, Melbourne – indeed Australia – is framed in the past. Tourists are encouraged to enjoy a “colonial tramcar” § (ibid.) and the “retro atmosphere” § of Puffing Billy steam train. This echoes the notion that Australia is behind Japan, in terms of technological development and modernisation, present in pre-war and wartime representations.

Most recently, however, Jetstar Airlines, Japan, has built its tourism campaigns around not only images of Australia as ‘sun, sand and surf’ (though it does that too), but also as relatively cosmopolitan. Notably, Jetstar is an Australian company, with a Japanese branch. Its Japanese website touts Melbourne as hosting the

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28 See also Tada’s earlier article (1999) for further discussion of representations of Australia in Japanese media.
“world’s best coffee” (Jetstar Japan 2012a). Further, they use biracial Japanese personality ‘Bekki’ to advertise Australian travel, complementing the wider Jetstar emphasis on Australia’s multiculturalism. Unlike Australian representations of Japan, Japanese representations of Australia emphasise the differences between the two countries. The plethora of online gaido – to navigating dangerous surf (and less friendly animals); colloquialisms; and even taxi travel (the doors do not open automatically in Australia) – focus on Australia as foreign, and potentially challenging for Japanese visitors.

### 3.3 Affective belonging and national space

People obviously know that you’re not born and bred in Osaka. But not as an outsider, as in you are not welcome. Um, if anything, you’re more welcome, because they wanted – they obviously wanted to encourage people from other countries to come and see their bands and I felt very, very welcome. But, still, definitely felt like an outsider (Graham, Melbourne).

Massumi contends that cultural studies predominantly understands belonging topographically. While this is sometimes literal (such as in cultural geography), it is also metaphorical. That is, society, and its mediating structures, are the ‘map’ on which individuals, and their experiences, are positioned (68). The correct positioning allows one to ‘belong’ in a demarcated area. According to Massumi, even approaches that challenge the normative mapping of individuals still maintain the grid (for example, hetero-normative culture) as a reference point (69). Instead, Massumi, following Deleuze and Guattari, concerns himself with “anything more than a negation ... or subversion” (70). That is, moments, subjectivities and experiences that bypass, and expand beyond, the social map altogether. We can understand the representations of Japan and Australia in
popular media as just such a grid. Only later, upon reflection, and after the affective constitution and sensation of belonging, is the experience neatly locatable on the social grid. The experience of brutal belonging – inarticulable to scene-members and bound to feeling ‘at home’ with other grindcore fans – could be an example of Massumi’s “anything more than” (ibid.) experience. However, nationalist signifiers and popular representations of the other country attempt to wrangle brutal belonging back into a structure that only includes certain subjectivities.

Importantly, nationalism is not only representational. It is clearly also affective. As Thrift (2008) points out, affect is “prime[d] and ‘cook[ed]’” (236) spatially. That is, space works as a “conditioning environment” (ibid.) which interacts with and feeds into affective experience. Just as a venue space mediates brutal belonging, so too does the broader space in which it is located. Reactionary politics can, and does, harness affect, primarily through the media (Massumi 2002, 44). In fact, nationalism depends on more than cultural norms and ideology. Crucial to its success is affect. Mass-mediated national events – state funerals, royal weddings and sporting matches – are replete with affect, which constitutes a sense of national belonging in citizens.

In Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes, the potential de-territorialisation of affective belonging lies in tension with nationalist rhetorics and its appeal to reactionary affect. This tension is most evident when the two scenes overlap and interact. Non-local scene-members affective experiences range from a sense of dislocation, or culture shock, to discrimination and exclusion. Of course, as well, some scene-members positive affective experience over-rode nationalist rhetorics, and moments of transnational brutal belonging do exist.
Before detailing scene-members’ affective responses, it is necessary to comment on Japanese responses to my questions regarding how they felt visiting Melbourne. In Japan, politeness remains an important cultural norm. In order not to offend others, Japanese people regularly pronounce their *tatamae* perspective, rather than their *honne* (true) feeling. Though similar to tactfulness in Western society, it is more formalised and emphatic. *Tatamae* sometimes results in Japanese people expressing the exact opposite of their actual opinions. This is important when accounting for Osakan scene-members responses to questions about Melbourne.

The scene-members interviewed knew me as a part of the Melbourne scene. Occasionally, I felt scene-members were not expressing their *honne* out of politeness. The mediating factor of *tatamae* needs to be considered when looking at Osakan responses.

### 3.4 Culture shock

For scene-members who toured and lived in the Other city, culture shock was often experienced affectively. This was particularly due to the constraint placed on linguistic representation due to language differences:

> [Y]eah ... it was difficult sometimes, because often there was misunderstandings. You know, I remember, just, that sort of 'lost in translation' thing where you're sort of guessing what each other are saying... initially it was, it was, um, difficult *(Joel, Melbourne).*

> I wish my English was better. It is very hard to understand people in Melbourne. I like them ...very much, but I don't always understand *(Masa, Osaka).*

> I don't know ... interact[ing] with that many Japanese – it was just a little hard *(Leon, Melbourne).*
And it’s – you know – it’s just tiring not being able to communicate with people that well, ’cause it’s a different language (Don, Melbourne).

The men above characterised language difficulties as “hard” or “difficult”. Don also talked of the affective weariness (“it’s just tiring”) of not knowing Japanese. Some scene-members found the assumed language barrier so daunting they did not want to tour the other city, despite enjoying their music:

**R:** Why don’t you think you will tour Melbourne?

**Kobayashi:** English is difficult *(Kobayashi, Osaka).* *§

It’s actually one of my biggest dreams … I would absolutely kill to go to Japan … Japan is a dream – there’s so many good bands over there … Yeah, it’s been a big travel goal of mine for ages – even more so a musical travel goal. But, I don’t speak Japanese *(Will, Melbourne).*

For Australians, the tourist image of Japan as easy to navigate was countered by their experiences of linguistic differences in the grindcore scene. Lucy, who lived in Osaka from 2008 until 2011, and was in a grindcore band there with other Australians, also found language barriers difficult to navigate:

[T]here’s a language barrier – if we did find someone who was an awesome Japanese drummer, how the fuck are we going to tell him what we want *(Lucy, Melbourne)*?

Scene-members often employed hand gestures, phrasebooks and dictionaries as substitute representational tools. However, the experience of being without a common spoken language led to a sense of dislocation:

[E]verything’s kind of polite but you can’t understand each other. ... So – so, you just like, you don’t really know what’s going on – I mean, we had times there where ... I thought I wanted to pack it in: ‘fuck, if the whole tour’s like this, I’ll go nuts’ *(Don, Melbourne).*
Politeness generally implies a contented feeling for both parties. However, symbolic gestures of kindness, such as ‘thankyou/arigatō’ or bowing, did not always translate into a sense of feeling welcome in the scene. Don went on to describe a situation where, despite Osakan scene-members’ politeness, he felt unwelcome:

[W]e drove into Sensei’s venue [Hokage] to meet him and he wasn’t there and the whole time we didn’t know what was happening! We sat there for ages. And then I think we went with Sensei’s wife – who was really nice and polite – to his house, sat there for ages again – still, we didn’t know what was happening. Then Sensei emerged like, you know, he’d been asleep ... It was really uncomfortably silent – for ages. And then Sensei said ‘Allright, we’ll go to the venue’ and we went back to the venue! We were there for about five minutes! And then we left again! And the whole time none of us could work out what the fuck had just happened or where we were supposed to be (Don, Melbourne).

Without verbal communication, Don found it difficult to feel where he was “supposed to be”. However, even after learning some Japanese, Don still felt outside of the Osakan scene, despite touring with the same Osakan band for two months, in Australia and Japan:

We learnt that they don’t like you using the dictionary which kind of pissed me off I thought – that was the first thing we learnt. ... That was pretty frustrating – it was like ‘man I’m trying to the right thing – you know, trying to make the effort and like I can’t even do this’ (Don, Melbourne).

Other Melbourne scene-members found lack of language comprehension liberating, as it gave grindcore music precedence. Joel, who learnt Japanese while living in Japan, describes when he first became involved in Osaka’s scene:
I think he [Sensei] and I quite liked the idea that we couldn’t communicate verbally all that well and the idea of still getting together and seeing what happened musically was interesting (Joel, Melbourne).

Cultural differences also mediated whether Melbournian scene-members felt at home in the Osakan scene and vice-versa. Such differences were often enacted ‘naturally’ by local scene-members and a lack of understanding on behalf of the visitor sometimes also led to experiencing not belonging. Despite later feeling at home in the scene, Graham felt that his and Joel’s initial inclusion in uchiage was as ‘guests’ rather than scene-members. He felt particularly uncomfortable about the Osakan scene-members paying for their drinks, which is a common way for Japanese people to host foreign guests. This differs from the Australian drinking culture of ‘buying rounds’, where one person buys everyone a drink, then someone else buys everyone a drink and so on:

Ahhh, everyone tended to chuck in some cash – I think, I probably got ah – had to chuck in less than everyone else, I think on most occasions, just, um, you know, I’d see people chucking in more than me and they’d say ‘oh no 2,000, 2,000’ [AUS$20] ... treated me like a guest. ... After a time I kind of realised what was going on – and put in as much as everyone else as well (Graham, Melbourne).

Joel also felt that, at first, they were considered guests – epitomised in the Osakan scene-members’ perception of them as a novelty:

[S]ometimes you’d feel a bit like the ‘novelty English speaker foreigner’ sort of thing. ...
[I]nitially it was very difficult to get past that ‘surface’ sort of relationship (Joel, Melbourne).

Joel’s experience affirms the notion, put forward in Australian accounts of Japan, that Japanese people are polite; he experienced this as disingenuous, as a “surface” relationship, rather than a deep connection. However, Joel described his eventual
experience of brutal belonging to the scene as affective (“more than that”) and arising from the shared performance of grindcore music:

After a while, when we'd been there longer and when we started playing music, I think, perhaps, we were seen [as] more than that. We got a bit closer to those guys (Joel, Melbourne).

Many Melbournian scene-members are vegetarian, or vegan, in adherence with their radical politics and this often presented a problem in Osaka:

So – me and Paddo are vegetarians – the food thing was difficult. I think Haruda [an Osakan scene-member], being a lot more traditional, he was like 'this is how it is'; 'that meal always has meat' (Don, Melbourne).

It's been hard being vegan here. It's like they don't understand? All the soup and stock has fish stuff in it so we've actually resorted to bringing around our own, like, seaweed to give to them to put in our soups (Zak, Melbourne).*

Other Melbournian scene-members found the sempai/kohai system different:

They talked to me … they wouldn’t really talk to the rest of the band. They’d talk to the rest of the band through me, like I was 'the boss’. And then, I would filter the information down; just the way the culture kind of works, like … Yeah, there was like full hierarchy thing which we noticed, you know? So, until you met like Westernised Japanese who would just walk up and know the deal. … But, yeah, that was kind of a weird thing – that hierarchy thing. Mmm (Leon, Melbourne).

Leon went on to juxtapose the “full hierarchy thing” to his sense that the Melbournian scene exhibited Australian ‘tall poppy syndrome’:

I think that it's the complete opposite [in Melbourne]. If you're the bigger band, there's no respect. If you're the bigger band, you need to be knocked off your perch or something, you know (Leon, Melbourne)?
Despite lamenting the lack of respect for his band in the Melbourne scene, Leon still felt uncomfortable ("weird") in the Osakan context. Certainly, in tourist representations, the *sempai/kohai* hierarchy is absent. Leon sensed he was receiving the *tatamae*, rather than the *honne*, perspective of Osakan scene-members:

I think that – maybe it’s Japanese culture – like they, they made you feel like they wanted you there. Even if maybe they didn’t want you there. You know, the Japanese culture thing is, you know, say ‘yes’ to everything, you know, all that kind of stuff … it felt really weird *(Leon, Melbourne)*.

For Leon, homeliness is associated with the familiarity of Australian-ness and the myth of Australian egalitarianism, which, not coincidentally, is a key tenet of Australian sporting and bogan mythologies, in the form of a ‘fair go’. Graham also felt that the *sempai/kohai* system was antithetical to Melbournian grindcore, and broader Australian culture:

Um, so, over here [in Melbourne], there’s none of that hierarchy, so it would just be a shambles – people aren’t organised enough in that – people wouldn’t be able to decide on where to go [for an *uchiage*], so … And, I think, probably, people are a bit different in Australia too … it’s just not really done. I couldn’t see it really working over here *(Graham, Melbourne)*.

For Graham, an *uchiage* in Melbourne would “be a shambles” due to what he implies as Melbournians’ lack of commitment to the scene. Mick interpreted this as Australians not taking things “seriously”, compared with Japanese people. The image of the relaxed and comfortable Australian complements broader ‘Aussie’ stereotypes, circulated in Japan, as well as Australia, of Australians as laid back:
And I think, sometimes in – in Melbourne, we come from a culture which sort of shuns – shuns taking yourself seriously. You know, it’s sort of, ah, you know it’s, um, yeah – it’s pretty much frowned upon, here. So, you know, it doesn’t happen so much. You know, as – as – most grindcore bands in Australia – it is kind of humorous and piss-takey with-. And, um, it certainly wasn’t like that over there. You know? They took it extremely seriously … and there wasn’t – there was little, or no irony and, um, you know … it certainly wasn’t like Australia over there. You know? They took it extremely seriously (Mick, Melbourne).

Graham went on to contrast his initial sense of unwelcomeness in Osaka’s scene with his belief that the Melbourne scene was egalitarian, and inclusive of a broader range of ethnicities:

I guess that’s the difference with over here [in Melbourne], because you’ve got a broad range of faces over here – so -. You know – someone could be born in Australia and they’ve got Asian, or Indian, or whatever heritage. So you’re always regarded as – you know, you don’t stick out like dog’s balls, basically ... I think that’s probably the definition of, like, why it’s so different to, um, sort of, the Melbourne scene is the fact that – where even if I was born in Japan people would still assume that I was – that I was an Aussie, or you know, a foreigner (Graham, Melbourne).

Other Melbournians who lived in Osaka liked the seriousness of the scene. Lucy, for example, used the dedication of the drummer from Corrupted as inspiration for her own drumming:

I try and imagine that Chew from Corrupted is watching me and so I better play like Chew’s watching, ’cause I’d never want to play a bad song for Chew. He’s such a serious drummer – I mean – he’s awesome (Lucy, Melbourne).

Brutal belonging was also difficult for Osakan scene-members to muster in Melbourne. During one Osakan band’s tour of Melbourne in 2007, I was present for a conversation between the band’s singer and Joel. Unlike previous tours, another
Melbournian scene-member, who had just toured Japan, had organised for the band to visit. The Osakan scene-member complained to Joel that the current tour organiser “was not looking after us” (field notes). The band were playing shows to small crowds, due to what they felt was lack of promotion and, as a counterpoint to Don and Terry’s issues above, they felt forced to eat vegan food. The latter point was due to the Melbourne ‘host’ band’s organisation of venues. They chose mostly crusty-punk warehouses where it is common for Food Not Bombs, or another similar collective, to supply vegan food for patrons. There was a sense from the Osakan scene-member that the hospitality he had extended to the Melbournian and his band when they toured Japan had not been reciprocated. In particular, the Osakan band expressed distaste at the squat houses they were billeted at, finding them “very dirty and disgusting” (field notes). Masa expressed a similar sentiment:

I was always thinking Australian houses were very big. When we stayed in Sydney … it was [a] huge apartment, very near the sea. I think his parents were very rich. I like this place a lot. But in Melbourne, maybe, these places are a little dirty – like rubbish on the floor – maybe crusty [punk]? I am not sure. I did not like so much (sic) (Masa, Osaka).

3.5 Discrimination

Some scene-members, however, experienced more than the discomfit of culture shock. For a few, the touring experience led to a sense of discrimination, and even racism. In her discussion of belonging (and not belonging) in Kentucky, hooks (2009) describes the sensation of belonging as embodied, as feeling “heartwhole”

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29 When Joel organised tours, he told me he consciously tried to accommodate the Osakan band, even if it meant experiencing discomfit himself: “[W]hen the Japanese guys come out … we’re solely responsible for them to get them round, organise them, get them fed and all that sort of thing. You know lugging gear and all that and then you, you know, you might drive eight hours and … you haven’t had much sleep and the sleep you’ve had’s been crap and then it is difficult to get up and play, yeah. But it’s still – still worth it. ‘Cause, um, especially when they come out here we feel they’re very much, sort of playing a supporting role for them – that their experience is good, rather than ours” (Joel, Melbourne).
She gestures towards affective belonging in her descriptions of the Appalachian Mountains as a space where “I was nature and nature was me”. That rational split between humanity and ‘nature’ is eroded through the affective experience of belonging. Outside her spaces of belonging, in urban Kentucky, hooks experienced a sense of “trauma” (ibid.) and “shame” (218). hooks did not belong because of marked identity as an African-American woman in Jim Crow era Kentucky. She suffered structural racism, but the key register in which hooks experienced not belonging was affect; a sense of shame and loss of the “vital” (219) sites of the Appalachia.

Birushanah did experience structural discrimination when they were turned away due to having an incorrect visa. Again, though, when recalling the incident, Sensei particularly noted how it felt, affectively:

> It felt very shameful for me to be banned for three years ... It is hard to say it! We didn’t understand, we thought we were all right with that visa (Sensei, Osaka). *§

Certainly, when I broached the subject with Birushanah’s members, I was met with silence and a desire not to talk about it. I recorded the quotation, above, during an informal discussion with a slightly drunk Sensei, one of the few times he invited me to the *sempai* table, as I was ‘chaperoned’ by Joel.

The visa incident, though significant, was the only time scene-members from either city were refused belonging through institutional structures. Usually, discrimination manifested in everyday scenic activities, which made the outsider feel they did not belong. For Joel, Mick and Graham, this occurred at the first few *uchiage* they attended:

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30 Probyn (2005) also discusses the affective experience of shame in her work.
Oh, I definitely felt like an outsider [at uchiage]! ... there was always a little – with some people there was a little bit of, um, a vibe. ... ‘Why are you here?!’ kind of thing ... ‘Cause, I think a lot of the guys in the music scene perceive a fair few foreigners just going over there to get – get girls (Graham, Melbourne).

There was quite a bit of resistance to begin with, ah, because most men who go to Japan to teach English, it’s to pick up women. And, um, drink and whatnot (Mick, Melbourne).

Sometimes [at uchiage] you’d get a bunch of guys ... they’d sort of throw out swear words and all that sort of thing. ... Some of the guys in the scene thought that we were there to fuck their girlfriends. ... [T]here was a bit of that protective, macho, sort of thing ‘cause there’s a bit of a perception – there’s a perception I suppose in Japan, that foreigners feel they can just waltz in and get any Japanese girl they want. So I am sure with some of them there was a bit of that anxiety and that sort of bravado sort of thing (Joel, Melbourne).

The “vibe” (Graham) these Melbournian scene-members experienced was the product of the Osakan scene’s patriarchy, informed by popular perceptions that Western men are more desirable to Japanese women than are Japanese men (Arudo 2011; Bailey 2007). The sense that the Western men were “just ... there to ... get girls” (Graham) led Osakan scene-members to be wary of Joel, Mick and Graham. This, in turn, led to their sense of being “outside” (ibid.) of the Osakan scene.

Despite these experiences, Joel, Graham and Mick also felt that their involvement in the Osakan scene gave them a more enriching and authentic experience of Japanese culture than their fellow expatriate English teachers. For Graham, mixing with his Western workmates socially was “terrible”:

[O]n occasion I’d get dragged out to a club that was aimed more towards foreigners and more – whatever – and I just had a [laughs] a terrible time! ... A lot of dodgy people. ... So,
I’d rather go out with my [Japanese] mates’ bands and my mates who go to the bands and actually have a decent conversation and actually have a friendship, instead of these fake little conversations (Graham, Melbourne).

For Graham, socialising with other foreigners was “fake” compared with his, presumably more ‘real’, experiences in the grindcore scene. In fact, for the Melbournians who lived in Osaka, the divergence from the tourist experience granted them a sense that their ‘Japanese experience’ was more authentic:

Oh, definitely – it felt like a more real experience ... playing music ‘cause, yeah, I mean, ‘cause when you’re teaching English in Japan you’re often isolated from, from Japanese people. ... [M]eeting those guys [in the grindcore scene], allowed me and ... to step out of the expat scene a bit and actually spend time with, you know, real Japanese people (Joel, Melbourne).

Graham and Joel’s sense, that Western themed clubs and bars were “terrible” (Graham) and that the expatriate community was not “real” (Joel), indicates they felt a stronger sense of belonging in grindcore spaces. He based this on a sense that the grindcore scene was about grindcore music and the affective experience it generates, rather than “picking up” (Graham) the opposite sex, which he associated with Western venues:

[I]t’s all more so about ... picking up [at Western bars and clubs]. Whereas, at the grindcore venues, it was, you know, it was just about the music really – the music and not about picking up ... It was just about enjoying myself, yeah (Graham, Melbourne).

Graham went on to criticise other Westerners he knew, outside the grindcore scene, who had not learnt any Japanese. He negatively associated this with their desire to “hang around other Westerners” (Graham). On the other hand, Graham attributed his acquisition of Japanese to his inclusion in the Osakan scene:
The funny thing is, some of them [other Westerners] had been there for fifteen years and they couldn't even speak Japanese. ... Very strange. ... There's no way they could sit and have a conversation in Japanese. So, I found that very strange. ... I guess, going into the scene - the music scene - where you can't, can't always speak English, it - it really helped as well. And I just carried a notepad around and they loved teaching me dirty words, so I learnt a lot of stuff through them - my mates (Graham, Melbourne).

For Graham and Joel, participation in the scene made them feel more at home in Japan. It enabled them to experience brutal belonging (“it was just about enjoying myself”), but it also led them to discriminate against other Westerners, who they felt were less open to the Japanese culture.

Further, Mick noted that, although he felt he experienced discrimination outside of grindcore, he felt at home when he was in the scene. In fact, for Mick, the brutal sociality of the grindcore scene abated negative experiences in his life outside of grindcore:

[I]t's certainly a, um, overwhelmingly monocultural society [in Japan] and, you know, there's fairly deep-seeded xenophobia there. ... But I just ignored the fact that people wouldn't sit next to me on the train. It didn't really register too strongly with me. 'Cause I had a really good little social group in the music scene over there and I was having a great time (Mick, Melbourne).

Japanese scene-members were reluctant to articulate experiences of discrimination in Australia. Almost all respondents noted they felt “welcome” in Melbourne because the scene was “just like Osaka”. This was most likely due to my position as a Melbourne scene-member whom they, understandably, did not want to offend. Yumi was an exception she enjoyed travelling to see Osakan bands play in Melbourne, but also felt angry at how Melbournians perceived Japan:

Rosemary: Anime?

Y: Yeah. ... So, I can’t understand ... some people – ahhh – make fun of Japanese band, or Japanese style ... ‘Oh look at Japan, hahahaha’. It’s real. So, I always felt fucking mad: ‘What the fuck?! What are you doing?’ (Yumi, Osaka).

Yumi’s identification with nationalist politics mediates her affective response. However, it is also possible that Melbourne scene-members did poke fun at Japanese popular culture. For some Melbournian scene-members, even after touring Japan, they depended on tourist stereotypes of Japan as exotic and strange:

Ummm, yeah – that [touring Japan] was, ah, that was cool. Completely bizarre (Jules, Melbourne).

I’ve heard wild stories about ... Japan. A wonderland of second hand and rare records at a cheap price and tons of’em!! (Carsten, Melbourne, via email).

I’m fascinated with the culture in, ummm, Japan... They just do mad ... music thing[s]. ... And, like, it’s a real wild scene (Will, Melbourne).

[An Osakan band were] Playing these, sort of, assorted indigenous acoustic instruments ... like, shamisen which is a Japanese, kind of, stringed instrument and, um, and all kinds of stuff like that (Mick, Melbourne).

English speaking Osakan scene-members, like Yumi, also felt offended by Australian assumptions that Japanese people cannot speak English:

Because you’re Japanese, ‘oh she doesn’t speak English’? Ummm, some people said that (Yumi, Osaka).

Rosemary: So, did you ever have moments where people assumed that you didn’t speak English because you were with the Japanese band?
Nobu: Yeah, yeah. Of course. Bit annoying, really. But I’d said ‘G’day mate’ [laughs].

R: What did they do?

N: ‘Wow! He grew up in Australia!’ ... That’s interesting because it’s all based on how I look, right (Nobu, Osaka)?

3.6: Making it homely

To deal with moments of dislocation and discrimination, scene-members from both cities had strategies for making the Other space homely, or uchi, sites of brutal belonging. For Osakan scene-members, particularly, this often involved the incorporation of Osakan or Japanese representational elements into their performances. Touring bands usually brought banners with them on which was emblazoned their band name (often in kanji) and logo. Birushanah and Ryôkuchi also used traditional instruments and scales to signify their Osakan-Japanese identity. These bands emphasised such traditional elements in the English-language fliers they distributed at Melbourne gigs:

Rising from Osaka, Japan, the experimental doom tribal grindcore band Ryokuchi formed in January 2002. You will never again find this tribal, Japanese scaled illusory heavy hardcore sound.

In this case, the Osakan band used their Japanese identity strategically to appeal to the assumptions of some Melbourne scene-members that the Osakan scene was “wild” (Carsten; Will) and exotic.

However, scene-members never singled out representational practices as making the Other space more homely. Instead, the affective experience of brutal belonging at a gig, or a raibu, though potentially different, helped them feel at home. Despite
feeling affronted when Melbournians presumed, offstage, that he could not speak English, Nobu found the experience of Melbourne gigs “like … home”:

I really enjoyed those bands [at the Green Room]. And, I think the crowd was – but I knew Australia, so it was kind of like going back to my home country and – second home country, and just going to shows. So, I didn’t really feel anything different and didn’t even think about it (Nobu, Osaka).

Other Japanese scene-members described Melbourne as similar to Osaka:

I felt a similar vibe to Osaka in Melbourne (Katsu, Osaka). §

[Melbourne is] very nice … like Osaka (Masa, Osaka).

Crucially, however, Nobu notes that the sense of “going back to my home” was affective, rather than cognitive: “I … didn’t even think about it”. This contrasts with his response to the assumption he was mono-lingual, which involved the cognition of the response of “‘G’day mate!”

Jules had a similar experience when his band toured Osaka:

Rosemary: And how did it [Osaka] compare to Melbourne’s scene?

Jules: Ahhh, it’s pretty much the same. … I thought. Yeah, you get your punters [patrons] that go down and, um, yeah, just do their thing … head-banging and that. … I found it was pretty much the same as it is in Melbourne (Jules, Melbourne).

Like Nobu, Jules found the live space most homely. In fact, though he noted that the language barrier outside of raibu was difficult, communicating with fans at raibuhausu was pleasurable:

[S]ometimes, like at shops and stuff– some people were – and you’d see people, ahh, just trying to talk English at their best. But, um, that was really hard to understand … [At lives]
yeah, you’d have all the ... crazy fans that just talk to you and the band and they just go off – it’s just like, yeah awesome – you can’t understand a word they’re saying – but it’s brilliant (Jules, Melbourne).

Jules notes the affective sense of spending time with fans at lives through his emphasis on them “just go[ing] off” and being “crazy” rather than simply talking. Leon also felt at home at lives:

[A]hh, the gigs were exactly the same, like, once we were on stage. The crowds were pretty much the same as well (Leon, Melbourne).

For some scene-members the fact they were in a foreign space actually further enabled the affective experience. Zak, for example, felt less inhibited because he did not know the crowd:

It was great – great energy – probably because I know I’m never going to see these people again. Yeah, you just let go of all your inhibitions and just do it (Zak, Melbourne). *

Graham found that, after becoming friends with Sensei, he experienced more belonging in the Osakan scene. Again, however, this was bound particularly to raibu:

I mean, you [pause] I did get into the – a very comfortable little pocket with a certain base of friends. ... It didn’t take very long at all. Um, so I, you know – there’s probably a group of about five bands that I would see regularly, and this was, you know, at least once every month, or more. And, you know, we – those gigs, I’d be there and just be able to walk in and not even think about it (Graham, Melbourne).

My best performances over here are different ... I wake up and go ‘What happened?’ It’s kind of good (Lucy, Melbourne).
The affective experience of live grindcore – of not having to “think about it” (Graham) or process it – meant Graham and Lucy felt they belonged in the scene.

Some scene-members from Melbourne felt their experience of the Osakan scene actually provided more of an affective experience than Melbourne:

> It certainly was different [the Osakan scene]. And, I think, part of it was just that feeling, err, you know, seeing something – finding something that you probably were really looking for, then suddenly you find it and it was pretty overwhelming … And, um, yeah, that was really exciting – kind of, that’s probably what, you know, reignited my interest in that sort of music, was that it had that potential to, you know, be quite confronting [pause] I’m just trying to think of the word – maybe, visceral, you know (Mick, Melbourne)?

For Mick, the difference in the Osakan scene may have provided culture shock, but it also constituted an “overwhelming” affective, embodied (“visceral”), experience that helped him re-connect with the grindcore genre. Don felt a similar way:

> I mean, for me, it was like just a dream come true. It was always what I wanted to do and that’s why I want to do more of it. And it sort of took a while to kick in, like I distinctly remember the first song of the first gig, and sort of how surreal that was. And I sort of, I kind of feel like I missed that show, in a way. … I got really, really happy and that basically stayed for the rest of the time …. I don’t know why it was just like I was in a totally foreign country and … it was like the best of both worlds. It was like being at home and overseas (Don, Melbourne).

Don associated his experience in Osaka as helping him constitute and experience brutal belonging. He notes the pre- or non-cognitive experience of playing at a live:

> “I feel like I missed that show”, due his giving over to being “really, really happy”.

The continuation of this sensation, throughout the tour, led Don to experience Osaka as “like … home”, despite his cognitive awareness that he was “overseas”. He
went on to describe how he felt the tour helped him to better engage with affect, back in Melbourne:

[B]efore we went to Japan. I just didn’t have the ability to turn my mind off it [playing in a band]. ... After Japan, though – our first tour, really – being in a band, I realise, is sort of a lot more, in a way, a lot more about everything else except for music. I know it sounds stupid – but the music kind of just happens. Like, you don’t, you don’t know why but you just have to do it and you just keep doing it. ... So, the tour over there [in Osaka], for me, was pretty amazing (Don, Melbourne).

Mick also felt that his experience in Osaka’s grindcore scene, in particular, allowed him to play more affectively, to “push” his music to a point beyond conscious performance, that allowed him to be “overcome”:

I think that’s what we sort of took away from that time in Osaka was, you know, like, trying to push it to that place that was, you know, that is, kind of, too much – uncompromising. ... I think the players in the band, you know, I think we try and focus in on just the unit, playing together, you know? Like, I know, you know, when I’m, sort of playing onstage I’m just really thinking about playing, rather than, you know, ‘performing’ as such. Ummm, it’s certainly not always been the case – playing in other styles of music, I’m probably more conscious of the audience. ... ‘Cause, um, I don’t know – it’s not really about that. ... It’s more a weird, umm, I don’t know ... sort of overcome by it, I think (Mick, Melbourne).

For Mick, his post-Osakan gigs in Melbourne heightened his experience of brutal belonging with his band-mates (“we ... focus in on ... the unit, playing together”), rather than the audience or the venue.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discussed whether the experience of brutal belonging moved between grindcore scenes. I outlined the transnational relationship between Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes as a means for exploring this idea. The previous chapters demonstrated that, most crucial to both cities’ scene-members experiencing brutal belonging, was not shared representational codes but an ability to constitute and experience affect at live performances. Following from these findings, scene-members should experience brutal belonging at grindcore performances overseas, as well as at home. However, structural and cultural factors mediate the transition between feeling brutal at home and abroad.

I elaborated on this through a discussion of how both Melbourne and Osaka’s scenes depend, to a differing extent, on imagining brutal belonging to their local grindcore scene as entwined with belonging to their national identity. In Melbourne, gigs implicitly interpolated an ‘Aussie bloke’ through cultural references to local sports and the ‘bogan’ identity. In Osaka, nationalism was sometimes explicit, in adherence and reference to yamato damashiî. These expressions of nationality hinged on representation: local language and in-jokes, use of kanji characters and other image-based representations of national identity.

Brutal belonging, though, is affective and I also looked at how each scene’s understanding of national identity, and perhaps more importantly, the foreign Other, mediated the affective experience of non-local visitors and scene-members. I discussed how Osakan and Melbournian scene-members experienced Otherness affectively when visiting the other city. Beyond the obvious language barriers,
scene-members felt their Otherness through their marked (as either white, or Asian) bodies. This was experienced as discomfit, as not belonging, by most scene-members. Yet, the affective moment of live-performance seemingly overrode experiences of discrimination. Further, especially for the Melbourne scene-members who based themselves in Osaka for an extended period, their Otherness was an asset that actually led to their inclusion in the scene – albeit initially as a means for Sensei’s ‘worldwide project’. In particular, the Melbourne scene-members in Osaka felt they, in fact, belonged more broadly to the Osakan, and Japanese, national space through their scenic participation.

This chapter brought together the themes, established in Chapters 3 and 4, of space and sociality, in a transnational context. While both cities’ scenic spaces, and discourse, were mediated by nationalist representations, the presence of grindcore music and its concomitant – albeit culturally varied – social practices helped foreign scene-members experience brutal belonging in Other spaces.
CONCLUSION

In Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes, to belong is to be brutal. Scene-members constitute belonging to grindcore scenes in multiple ways: through shared knowledges and significations, social practices, and through the experience of being in a live grindcore performance – as a fan or a musician. Material grindcore objects and visible grindcore practices work primarily on a representational level. Scene-members’ experience of belonging at a live grindcore performance, however, is more-than-representational. It is primarily affective – it constitutes the experience of brutal belonging.

Brutality is an important signifier in the global grindcore scene. Fans yell ‘Brutal!’ to express their appreciation of a band, musician, or riff. Many have used the word ‘brutal’ and its variations in their own band-names, album titles and lyrics. Despite its global usage, brutal’s significance in grindcore depends on its English language connotations – of out-of-control violence usually perpetrated by a male subject. ‘Brutal’ works homologously with grindcore’s fixation on the gory, the abject and the taboo. Further, its masculinist connotations are reflected in the male dominance of the scene.

Brutal is one of the most common signifiers in Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes. It appears to be primarily representational, with only occasional incidents
of ‘brutal violence’. However, in my thesis, I argue that brutal is also more than representational. The exultation of ‘Brutal!’ at a gig in Melbourne, or a raibu in Japan, is the articulation of an affective experience that is beyond words. For scene-members in both cities, the experience described as ‘brutal’ is a sense of belonging in the grindcore scene. Feeling brutal means feeling at home in the grindcore scene.

The key site for the generation, experience and extension of brutal belonging is the live performance. My participation in such events provided an inroad into analysing, understanding and interrogating brutal belonging. My analysis revealed, for scene-members, the affective experience of a live show was crucial to feeling they belonged in the scene.

Brutal belonging is a useful metaphor for describing the multiple nuances of affective belonging. The everyday connotations of ‘brutal’ indicate affective intensity. However, they also highlight the potentially negative experiences and consequences of affective belonging. In grindcore, belonging is the province of those privy to the affective experience. Feeling brutal also accounts for the simultaneous exclusion of those who do not feel brutal. Grindcore’s concern with taboo, and often offensive, material helps generate brutal belonging, but it may also lead some to experience affect in another way – as the sensation of not belonging.

My focus on brutal belonging in grindcore music marks a departure from current literature on grindcore, and metal cultures more broadly, which typically explore how the culture manifests in representations. Rather than emphasising brutal representations, I demonstrated that affect is the key mode through which scene-
members establish belonging in grindcore. I also argued that brutal belonging works spatially, as well as socially, to provide scene-members with a sense of homeliness.

A focus on affective belonging requires an affective methodology. This thesis applied an ‘affective ethnography’ as a means for understanding brutal belonging. I drew on my personal experiences of brutality in Melbourne and Osaka’s scenes. I also attempted to destabilise the primacy of the ‘representational’ moment in ethnographic interviews through a ‘participant-sensing’ approach, where scene-members self-recorded, or were recorded during or directly before or after a live performance. This is the first analysis of grindcore music to use an affective methodology.

I presented my ethnographic material on brutal belonging through an analysis of three key modes of the affective experience that grindcore generates. First, I looked at how grindcore spaces encourage or inhibit brutal belonging through their constitution – or lack of constitution – of affect. The second mode is sociality, which refers to the brutal social practices enacted by scene-members, and how these contribute to brutal belonging. Finally, I looked at how the interaction between Melbourne and Osaka’s grindcore scenes mediates scene-members’ affective experiences and, thus, their sense of brutal belonging.

In both Melbourne, and Osaka’s grindcore scenes, spaces for the experience of grindcore music are crucial for constituting brutal belonging. Grindcore spaces encompass pubs, warehouses, raibuhausu and even underneath bridges. Scene-members identified a sense of being ‘at home’ in these places as an important
contributor towards broader feelings of belonging in the scene. Key to a venue’s identity as ‘grindcore’ was its capacity for ‘brutality’.

Brutality manifested in two ways in both cities’ key grindcore spaces. Firstly, some venues consciously, and actively, sought to build a brutal image through representations of brutality. Secondly, other venues garnered brutality through the venue’s ability to encourage an affective experience during live shows. The latter was less a conscious marketing ploy than an unpredictable and fluid intensity, generated by the practice of grindcore music and scenic activity within the space.

Of course, signifiers of brutality remain important to the Melbourne and Osaka grindcore scenes. Both scenes draw on Western media representations of brutal violence. Fliers, lyrics and even stage costumes connote brutal violence. Venues, such as the Green Room in Melbourne, and Jokerman in Osaka, drew on this brutal discourse in their interior decoration. At the Green Room, patrons could watch horror movies between grindcore band sets, and its location in a seedy part of the CBD contributed to the venue’s desired image as ‘brutal’. So too, at Jokerman, did the owner attempt to build brutality through representation. The walls were covered in albums depicting gory violence and, like the Green Room, it was located in a run-down area.

Despite both venues’ efforts to become brutal through images of brutality, scene-members did not classify the Green Room, or Jokerman, as sites of brutal belonging. Instead, the spaces scene-members most valued were those which enabled an affective experience. That is, they favoured spaces which generated the experience of brutal belonging.
This experience was articulated variously as being “blown away” (Anita) by the music, or prompting a sense of being unable to “contain yourself” (Carsten), or “diving into other people’s hearts” (Ueno). That is, for scene-members in both cities, feeling brutal was an intense experience of collective belonging with other scene members. The self’s borders are effaced and one finds the ability to connect with others, on stage, or in the crowd.

Proximity to the stage, in particular, mediated scene-members experience of brutal belonging. Those closest to the stage described an affective experience, characterised by a difficulty in pinning the experience down linguistically. Patrons positioned away from the stage, on the other hand, described a more cognitive experience. Brutal belonging was heightened when venues had a stage at audience level. This meant the division between the audience and performer was effaced. Scene-members likened this effacement to all the elements of the grindcore event – people, music, and the venue itself – becoming like “one big living creature” (Tim).

A venue’s homeliness (in Melbourne) or *uchi* status (in Osaka) was premised on its capacity to produce an experience of brutal belonging. However, a space’s brutality was also mediated by more mundane, structural, realities. In Japan, the affective moment of a *raibu* is tempered by the *sempai/kohai* hierarchies which remain in place in the scene. One’s position – as a “good head” (Andy) in the eyes of other scene-members – in the tight-knit Melbourne grindcore community also influenced how, and whether, scene-members felt at home.

By looking at both cities’ grindcore scene spatially, I demonstrated that places where grindcore is performed only become homely grindcore spaces when they enabled scene-members to experience brutal belonging.
A venue’s ability to become a grindcore space depends on its capacity for brutal belonging. Crucial to such spatialised belonging is the social experience of scene-members within the space. That is, grindcore social practices generate affect which leads to a scene-member feeling at home, or not at home, in the scene.

Sharing an enjoyment of grindcore with other audience-members, or playing with one’s friends in a band, was important for experiencing brutal belonging. Again, scene-members found it difficult to articulate how they experienced these social practices. Amorphous and contradictory, it became “something” (Will), “wao wao” (Nobu) or an experience that “you can’t really explain” (Hayley). Nevertheless, scene-members emphasised that these inarticulable affective sensations helped them feel like they belonged in the scene. In these shared moments, brutal belonging was encompassing. As Katsu put it, the grindcore scene becomes “everything” when one feels comfortable.

Those outside of the ‘everything’ of brutal belonging are non scene-members deemed overly fixated on representation by grindcore scene-members. Hardcore, death- and black-metal, and pop scene-members, were criticised by grindcore scene-members in both cities for their shallow engagement with music cultures. As Andy pointed out, to belong in grindcore is self-evident – in one’s capacity to experience and generate affect in the form of ‘being brutal’ (“You know how brutal I am!”) – not in the blunt display of brutal signifiers.

However, scene-members’ valorisation of affective belonging did not extend to emo – a genre purportedly based on the generation of affect – articulated and comprehended as ‘emotion’ – in its fans. I argued that Melburnian scene-members’ relation to emo, and the affective experiences the music represents,
indicated a broader tension with how grindcore scene-members respond to their own sensations of affect. Blood Duster’s concern to distance themselves from emo indicated its band-members’ difficulties in dealing with affect, due to its association with ‘emotion’ – a concept often feminised in contemporary Western culture. Band-members Leon and Jules’s descriptions of brutal belonging were tempered by a wariness not to appear “blown away” (Anita) from their masculine bodies, lest they be associated with emotion, and therefore, femininity. Blood Duster’s repeated representation of masculinity – often bluntly, in the form of a penis – indicated their anxiety regarding brutal belonging.

While Osakan scene-members did not explicitly target emo as a genre for ridicule, they too demonstrated an anxiety regarding femininity and emotions. In particular, scene-members valorised a hard, male body and patriarchal behaviour. Those deemed non-compliant were excluded and labeled “pussies” (Nobu).

The establishment of subjects deemed ‘outside’ the experience of brutal belonging also demonstrates affect’s ability to generate negative, or ambivalent, sensations, as well as those which are exultant. For those who felt excluded from brutal belonging, the pain of exclusion was just as affective. Some of these scene-members later felt they did belong – though this was through their compliance with scenic social standards (particularly patriarchy) or their association with senior (male) scene-members. This demonstrates the flexibility and ephemerality of the experience of brutal belonging. One’s social status – as belonging, or not – is constantly mediated by one’s ability to experience affect which, in turn, is tempered by systems of power, particularly in relation to gender.
Structures of patriarchy, and even misogyny, are one way that grindcore belonging is wrested from an affective experience of brutal belonging as “one big living creature” (Jim), to a regulated representation of ‘grindcore-ness’ as macho, and male. Brutal belonging is potentially further challenged when grindcore travels. If grindcore spaces, and brutal belonging, depend on the affective, collective, experience of the live performance, geographic location or origin should be irrelevant. However, an analysis of Melbournian and Osakan scene-members visiting each other’s cities demonstrates a less straightforward situation.

The connection between both cities’ scenes is relatively recent, beginning in the 2000s. Since the inception of Sensei’s ‘worldwide project’, however, tours between Osaka and Melbourne have been regular. The experiences of scene-members is usually glossed as ‘just like being at home’ due to shared music tastes. However, a closer look at how both scenes operate, and a deeper engagement with scene-members’ touring experiences revealed, a tension between brutal belonging and an affective sense of dislocation when visiting the other city.

Scene-members’ sense of un-homeliness in the other city was due partly to nationalist discourses, present in both scenes. Articulations of ‘national-ness’ operated in tension with brutal belonging. Often they overlapped, at other times they appeared opposed. A lack of understanding of cultural references to nationality sometimes led to touring scene-members lacking a sense of brutal belonging.

In Australia, articulations of ‘Australian-ness’ were implicit in signifiers of ‘Aussie bogans’. In Japan, national identity was explicit through some bands’, and fans’, expression of yamato damashî. Fliers, imagery and stage costumes – such as

The constitution and articulation of representations ostensibly interpolate particular, in this case, national identities. Importantly, the sense of feeling at home in the nation – and in grindcore – is affective. So, too, is a sense of not feeling at home. Scene-members who had visited the other city noted particularly how it felt – affectively – to be in the ‘Other’ space. Particularly for Melbournians, there was a sense of not grasping the Osakan scene and feeling, if not excluded, outside the scene. The denial of entry, by Australian officials, for Birushanah led Sensei to feel ‘shame’. Further, Yumi and Nobu both felt frustrated by what they perceived as Western stereotypes about Japanese people when they visited Melbourne.

However, scene-members from both cities also emphasised that the live performance of grindcore music built a sense of brutal belonging for them, even if they were not in their ‘home’ country. Again this was described by scene-members as an affective “visceral” (Lee, Strauss et al.) experience that sometimes even vitalised their subsequent experience of grindcore ‘back home’.

For grindcore scene-members in Melbourne and Osaka, brutal belonging is crucial to feeling ‘at home’ in the scene. The experience is affective, and shared. It supplements representational signifiers of scenic membership. My thesis tracked the constitution, experience and, finally, the articulation – through language and visual representations – of brutal belonging. Through an analysis of how affect works in the grindcore scene – how the experience of brutal belonging is constituted spatially, socially and via the transnational interaction between
Melbournian and Osakan scene-members – I demonstrated the multiple, and nuanced, manifestations of brutality.

Potentially, brutal belonging could be applied to other music, or even other cultural, scenes where 'brutality', violence, or 'hardness' is a key aspect of scenic signifiers. An expansion of the concept – to account for instances of brutal belonging to other sites of the global grindcore, or extreme metal, scene would also be fruitful. This thesis aimed to demonstrate that affect has multiple cadences and sought to trouble the standard celebratory depictions of belonging in a crowd of music fans. A similar criticality, regarding how affective belonging might also involve the symbolically (or physically) violent exclusion of ‘Others’, would offer an alternative perspective on less obviously ‘hard’ music scenes, such as classical and acoustic music.

My thesis, being necessarily limited in its focus, did not discuss in detail the economics of creative labour, of which all the performing participants were a part. The economic pressures of performing music for the profits of a bar-owner, or selling tickets and alcohol to patrons surely mediates the experience of brutal belonging and could be the foregrounded in a future project.

Finally, an affective approach to ethnographies of music – particularly participant-observation projects – opens a new way of understanding music cultures. Music is affective. It is not static, stable or easily pinned-down by representation. Thus, it necessitates a similarly fluid, flexible and affective approach. The participant-sensing methodology was, necessarily, challenging – partly due to the, rather artificial, necessity of recording participants’ articulations into an often bulky voice recorder. Alternative technologies, such as video, or even a ‘video space’ within a
venue to record one’s thoughts, would potentially enhance future projects and more lucidly capture the affective experience of brutal belonging.

In 2011, Blood Duster held a New Year’s Eve gig at the Tote, in Melbourne. Having interviewed the members of the band, I was surprised to see that in their promotion of the event, they announced they would be playing a “brutal new track” called ‘I find it hard to say what I am feeling’. At the gig, they played their new song alongside their older tracks. It sounded like classic Blood Duster: fast, loud and with incomprehensible vocals. After the set, I spoke briefly to Leon, Jim and Jules and, as usual, they asked about my thesis. They joked about me not having my digital recorder or notebook. What really struck me, however, was Leon’s emphasis that he never expected to be asked the questions that I asked for my thesis. He said he thought I was a psychology student who would paint him as “the devil, or something” (field-notes). What Leon wasn’t expecting, he said, was questions about “feelings” (field-notes), which he found “pretty hard” (ibid.) to answer. “Bloody academics!” he said, laughing. Though we are fellow scene-members, I felt the same sense of being outside the scene, because of my position as researcher. However, I did find their new track name intriguing – whether a joke, tribute, or meaningless. It crossed my mind that it might, after all, be about feeling brutal.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS FOR THE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

Melbourne Questions:

Please go into as much detail as possible.

- Name / age / current occupation?
- What were your parents’ professions?
- What does the word ‘brutal’ mean to you?
- How would you describe your personal ‘style’?
- How did you become involved in the grindcore scene?
- How are you currently involved in the scene?
- What does being a member of the scene mean to you?
- How do you feel when you are performing / in the audience? Can you please describe this experience?
- How would you describe the Melbourne extreme music sound? Is it unique?
- How does the scene differ from other music scenes in Melbourne (such as punk, death metal, clubbing, pop and rock)?
- How do you fit your interest in this music around your other commitments, for example job / study / family?
- Which venues do you most enjoy seeing / playing music? Why?
- How do you feel in your favourite venue, when watching / playing in, a band?
- How do you feel about music from other places, such as overseas?
- How do you pursue your interest in grindcore (i.e. Through gig-going, playing in band/s, listening to CDs, internet forums, listening to music online)?
- Do you think the scene has changed over the last five years? If so, how?
- What are your favourite bands from Melbourne, and elsewhere?
- What sorts of music do you listen to, apart from grindcore?
Osaka Questions:

面接質問項目

・ お名前 年齢職業
・ 貴方のファッションや音楽の趣味、嗜好を表現して みてください。
・ どのようなきさつで、大阪のグラインドコアの音楽シーンに触れる 関わるようになり ましたか？
・ 現在、グラインドコアの音楽シーンにどのように 関わっていますか？
・ グラインドコアの音楽シーンにいること、関わっていることは、あなたにとってどういう意味を持ちますか？
・ 大阪のグラインドコアとは - あなた だったらどのように表現しますか。他の国や地域のグラインドコアと比べてユニークなものだと思いますか。
・ や大阪の都市空間に、グラインドコア の音楽シーンが何らかの影響を与えている部分がある と思いますか。
・ グラインドコアの音楽シーンは、大阪の他の音楽ジャンルと比べてのどのように違いますか。
・ あなたは、グラインドコアに打ち込むことと、仕事、勉強、家族といった生活の他の部分とをどのように折り合いをつけていますか。
・ グラインドコアを聴けたり、演奏したりする のにあなたが一番好きな場所ライブハウスはどこですか。
・ ライブハウスのような場所以外で、グラインドコアを聴いたり、演奏したりするのにあなたが好きな場所がありますか。
・ 他の地方・地域や海外のグラインドコアについて どう思いますか。
・ あなたはグラインドコアへの関心をどのように実践していますか （例：ライブハウス行く、バンドで演奏する、CDを聴く、インターネットのフォーラムに参加する、ネット上の音楽を聴く、など。）
・ 最近五年間で、グラインドコアシーンが変化した と思いますか。また、どのように変化したと思いますか。
Melbourne Questionnaire

(To be completed by participants in their own time and then returned by email)

Thank you for your participation in this project. Your assistance with this Questionnaire would also be appreciated. Please fill in the fields below. You may add extra sheets of paper if you like. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Answer</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest level of education you have completed? Please specify in which field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your parents’ professions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you please list some of your favourite grindcore bands / musicians?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you listen to music apart from grindcore? If so, can you please list some of your favourite non-grindcore bands / musicians?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever travelled, locally, or internationally, to pursue your interest in grindcore? If so, where have you travelled? E.g. touring in your own band or travelling to see a band play live.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever travelled internationally for leisure? If so where?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other sorts of non-grindcore interests, or hobbies, do you have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the word ‘brutal’ mean to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any other thoughts? Add them below! THANKYOU!
Osaka Questionnaire

質問票

当研究プロジェクトにご協力いただき、ありがとうございます。以下の質問項目へのご回答、ご協力をお願いいたします。

お名前

________________________________________________________

年齢

____________

ご職業

_____________________________________________________________________________

________________________

最終学歴（専攻・専門度か。）

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

________________________

ご両親のご職業

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

あなたのお好きなグラインドコアバンドやミュージシャンを挙げてください。

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
グラインドコア以外にどのような音楽を聴きますか？グラインドコア以外の好きなバンドやミュージシャンを挙げてください。

観に行ったり、自分で演奏するなど、グラインドコア関連が目的で他の地域・地方や海外に出かけていったことはありますか。

海外旅行に出かけたことはありますか。どこに行きましたか。

グラインドコア音楽以外に何か趣味をお持ちでしたら紹介してください。

他にコメント、ご意見があれば記入してください。
ご協力ありがとうございました。
APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

Melbourne

Andy

Anita

Carlos

Carsten

Don

Graham

Hayley

Jim
**Joel**

**Jules**

**Leon**

**Mick**

**Phil**

**Shawn**

**Will**

**Zak**
Osaka

Ant

Bâbon-kun (Fukuda)

Fukuda Masaru
Male. Late 30s. Occupation unknown. Vocalist.

Katsu (Tarukawa Katsufumi)
Male. 27 years old. Editor of kreativ magazine; door attendant. Vocalist. Toured Melbourne.

Kaz (Kazuno)
Male. 27 years old. English teacher at a juku. Lead guitarist. Runs a record label. Grew up in the United Kingdom.

Kobayashi

Kôki (Higashiyama Kôki)

Lucy
Masa (Matsumoto Masakazu)

Mike (Fujii Mitsuyuki)

Nobu (Tanaka Nobuhiro)

Oka (Okamoto)
Male. 25 years old. University student. Lead guitarist.

Ryûichi
Male. 36 years old. Bar owner. Runs an online record distribution business. Formerly a member of the Japanese Communist Party.

Sensei

Takeda
Male. 27 years old. Raibuhausu manager. Drummer. Previously homeless. Toured Melbourne

Toshi

Yôko
Female. 30 years old. OL (office lady / administration assistant). Fan.
Yumi

APPENDIX 4: GLOSSARY JAPANESE / ENGLISH


Amerika Mura アメリカムラ / アメリカ村 – America Village, the key space for grindcore raibuhausu in Osaka

Burutaru ブルタル – brutal

Gaijin 外人 – foreign person (literally: ‘outside person’)

Guraindokôa グラインドコウア – grindcore

Ikigai 生きがい – true dream or desire

Impakuto インパックト – impact

Juku (Gakushû juku) 学習塾 – after school studying institution

Kaisha 会社 – company

Kôhai 後輩 – junior in male hierarchical system

Minami 南 – south, used to refer to the precincts in the inner south of Osaka, including Shinsaibashi, Namba and Nipponbashi

Mukokuseki 無国籍 – ‘odourless’ culture – cultural products and practices which lack strong indicators of their geographic origins

Okonomiyaki お好み焼 – Japanese omelette associated particularly with Osakan cuisine

Raibu ライブ – live performance of music

Raibuhousu ライブハウス – live music venue

Sempai 先輩 – senior in male hierarchical system

Shumi 趣味 – hobby
Shûshoku katsudô 就職活動 – career track employment

Sôshokukei Danshi 草食系男子 – ‘herbivore’ men

Soto 外 – outside

Sutorîto fashon ストリートファッション – street fashion

Uchi 内 – home

Uchiage 打ち上げ – after party celebration – originally a term from sumo culture

Wasei Eigo 和製英語 – loan words borrowed from English

Yamato damashî 大和魂 – Japanese spirit
Author/s:
Overell, Rosemary Therese

Title:
Brutal Belonging: affective intensities in, and between, Australia’s and Japan’s grindcore scenes

Date:
2012

Citation:

Persistent Link:
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File Description:
Brutal belonging: affective intensities in, and between, Australia’s and Japan's grindcore scenes

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