Tapes, Transgression and Mundanity:

the participatory engenderment of death metal and grindcore

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ABSTRACT

Since its origins in the early 1980s, the popular rise of extreme metal throughout the globe has been phenomenal. The emergence of extreme metal's most sonically transgressive subgenres of death metal and grindcore between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, however, was not an easy one. Indeed, during this period, the only way for globally dispersed extreme metal fans and unsigned extreme metal bands to stay musically connected was via the underground practice of tape-trading.

The aim of this study is to illuminate the impact of tape-trading upon the global spread of extreme metal. The study will situate the historical context of extreme metal tape-trading by exploring how it emerged, and why it was necessary in the first place. Utilising the concept of 'extreme metal scene', the study will focus on the central scenic discourse of transgression and explore how this was negotiated into the mundane scenic practice of tape-trading. In relation to this, and utilising the concept of participatory culture, the study will further explore how the music arose and spread throughout the globe via the socially networked practice of both musician and non-musician tape-traders in relation to the tape cassette technology itself. Ethnographic interviews were undertaken with both types of traders in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question.

The research concludes that the tape-traders were able to challenge the status quo of record company gatekeepers, by facilitating the engenderment and global distribution (including the later commercial distribution) of death metal and grindcore. Such powerfully affective music via its continual global spread, offers as it did for the original tape-traders, a pleasurable and empowering communal/personal space for disempowered people throughout the globe. Further research into extreme metal tape-trading would require deeper exploration into other extreme metal subgenres, especially black metal, tape-traders situated outside of North America and Europe, women tape-traders as well as exploration of the phenomenon after the early 1990s.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic background

Since its origins in the early 1980s, the popular rise of extreme metal throughout the globe has been a phenomenal one; especially as this particular subgenre of heavy metal has consistently produced some of the most aggressive sounds known within wider contemporary popular culture via its extremely fast distorted guitars, thudding bass, aggressive drum rhythms and often screamed or guttural vocals. Indeed, whilst many people outside of the extreme metal scene consider its music as noise (and some state censors, religious leaders and conservative politicians regard its lyrical themes of death, destruction and Satanism as negative/harmful), extreme metal fans/musicians however have always remained very emotionally attached and fanatically dedicated towards the music and its associated scene (Kahn-Harris 2007; Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011).

This fanaticism was exemplified throughout extreme metal scene's embryonic years during the 1980s, when it remained very marginal and underground due to the wider heavy metal scene's domination by two of its more commercial pop orientated subgenres, namely lite metal and glam metal (Weinstein 2000). Indeed, during this period, especially from the mid 1980s, the only way for globally dispersed extreme metal fans and unsigned extreme metal bands to stay musically connected to each other was via the underground practice of *tape-trading*. This practice consisted of these globally networked extreme metal musicians/fans trading mainly band demos, rehearsal or live cassette tapes with each other (containing the most extreme underground metal music available) via the global postal network (Christie 2003; Kahn-Harris 2007).

However, when undertaking preliminary research into the phenomenon of tape-trading within the extreme metal scene as a possible thesis topic in the autumn of 2014, it came to my attention that whilst most historical/academic texts addressing extreme metal mentioned tape-trading/acknowledged its importance towards the initial global spread of extreme metal, they did so briefly without any further analysis of the phenomenon (Weinstein 2000; Christie 2003; Purcell 2003; Mudrian 2004; Kahn-Harris 2007).

The premise for the following study therefore reflects my intention to address what I *then* believed to be a grossly underexplored phenomenon within Metal music scholarship, especially considering that these aforementioned musicians/fans via their

underground global extreme metal tape-trading network were fundamental towards changing the sonic and (global) scenic landscape of metal that exists today.

1.2 Purpose and relevance of this study

As I have addressed above the main objective of my thesis is to critically explore and illuminate the impact of tape-trading upon the global spread of extreme metal. Although firstly, because extreme metal contains within itself a grouping of *extreme* musical subgenres (namely thrash, death metal, grindcore, black metal and doom metal) my main focus will be on *death metal* and *grindcore*. These two subgenres are not only the most sonically similar, but also represent the most sonically extreme, in other words the most "sonically transgressive" of all the extreme metal subgenres (Kahn-Harris 2007; Reyes 2013). However, to contextualise the temporality of the extreme metal scene, the earlier subgenre of *thrash* from which death metal (and with the help of underground punk) grindcore both emerged will also be explored due to its sonic/discursive influence, as well as *underground punk* due to its sonic, but more importantly, its DIY (do-it-yourself) influence upon thrash, especially the underground practice of tape-trading.

However, whilst I shall explore the origins of tape-trading in relation to its emergence within an underground metal scene by the early 1980s, my primary focus upon tape-trading will be between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, which coincides with the global emergence of death metal and grindcore via tape-trading, or more specifically, when these subgenres were intrinsically linked to underground global networked practice and the cassette technology itself. Issues of capital inequality regarding record companies controlling access to the main modes of musical production and distribution will also be addressed in terms of record companies acting as barriers to globally dispersed extreme metal musicians and fans who wanted to push *their own* music's boundaries in terms of its sonic extremity and global space. In relation to this I will thus explore the musicians'/fans' appropriation of cassette technology/underground networked practice as a means to reassert their control of the situation by facilitating their own production and global distribution of extreme metal; thereby transgressing the aforementioned barriers.

As extreme metal also contains a set of scenic practices in relation to attachments to transgression, it is my intention to focus upon the central role of music, namely sonic

transgression, as an empowering factor towards these musicians'/fans' *participatory* organisation into mundane scenic practice. In other words the facilitation of an underground tape-trading network for the global production, distribution and consumption of underground extreme metal. Thus, by contextualising the internal/external scenic factors that contributed towards extreme metal tape-trading and its engenderment of death metal and grindcore, the central research question that I intend to address within this thesis is: How was (sonic) transgression negotiated into mundane scenic practice to facilitate the participatory global rise and spread of death metal and grindcore, between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s?

As I shall discuss in more detail below and throughout this study, in relation to this question, transgression in this context, and more specifically *sonic* transgression will be explored as a central component of the extreme metal scene to which underground death metal/grindcore musicians and fans both attached themselves, and deeply immersed themselves. In contrast, whilst the *mundane* scenic practice of tape-trading (in its everydayness) may not carry the same transgressive connotations as (symbolic) attachments to extreme metal music, the functionality of tape-trading as musician/fan *participation* via networked social practice, or more specifically the negotiation of sonic transgression into mundane scenic practice, actually reveals a major transgression against the status quo of record industry control. In other words, the rise and global spread of death metal and grindcore, against all odds (barriers) particularly between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, via the mundane scenic participatory practice of tape-trading I argue, was one of greatest transgressions of all in the whole history of metal.

Finally, although I situate this study within Metal music scholarship as an important historical moment within the wider metal scene in which its own members enacted change; I believe that it has much wider implications in relation to our contemporary society/cultural production. Indeed, these tape-traders act as a pressing reminder of the power that exists within often marginalised communities to enact change by actively participating in the creation/circulation/preservation of their most culturally central texts, thus engendering greater communal (including globally communal) connectivity. This mirrors our current epoch in which the adverse affects neo-liberal globalisation often atomise/alienate people from each other, further disempower already marginalised communities, encroach upon our personal freedoms, and also via the increasing corporate grip upon popular cultural production, encroach upon our personal pleasures.

1.3 Review of the previous study on the topic

In relation to the impact of tape-trading upon extreme metal, Keith Kahn-Harris (2007) suggests that the foundations of the early global extreme metal scene were built in the early 1980s via its organisation around the global postal system, namely through pen-pal letters and the exchange of fanzines, flyers, trading lists and cassette tapes. These traded cassette tapes, which mainly contained demo/rehearsal recordings of unsigned bands or live gig recordings "were the predominant mode of transmission for extreme metal" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 78). Indeed, as Ian Christie (2003, 241) suggests the rise of death metal (and therefore by close association grindcore) "was a pure product of the tape-trading underground." What this reveals therefore is that tape-trading was central to the emergence and global spread of death metal and grindcore, as Nick Terry, the former editor of Terrorizer magazine[1] confirms:

> If it hadn't been for the demo tape-trading underground, death metal and grindcore wouldn't have reached the attention of their audiences, of the record companies who signed the bands, or of the musician themselves" (cited in Mudrian 2004, 21).

Beyond the above consensus regarding the importance of extreme metal tape-trading as a conduit for globally dispersed scene members to hear the most extreme metal music available/underground musicians to distribute their own demos, as stated earlier, upon undertaking this study, such were the limits of analysis/historical accounts regarding the extreme metal tape-trading phenomenon (Weinstein 2000; Christie 2003; Purcell 2003; Mudrian 2004; Kahn-Harris 2007; Netherton 2014). However, during my research, Jason Netherton (2015) presented an academic conference paper on the "analog origins" of death metal between the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

Netherton's timely study uses media archaeology theory to uncover how tape cassette technology and photocopied fanzines provided "the material guts for a dispersed international scene" and he also uses the concept of paratext to explain how the tapes were encased in particular gruesome artwork, which was "essential to the growth of the extreme metal scenes aesthetic self-identity" (2015, 310). Firstly, Netherton concurs that tape trading remains "underexplored" within metal scholarship by reasoning that it perhaps represents "an assumed aspect of extreme metal's international development" (ibid). Whilst Netherton (2015, 309) re-iterates the importance of the formation of a

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[1] Terrorizer magazine (Est. UK 1993) is the leading commercially published extreme metal magazine, with "a worldwide reputation" within the global extreme metal scene (Kahn-Harris, 2007, 110).

globally connected scene via the global circulation of tapes (and fanzines) what is most illuminating and useful towards my own study is his discussion regarding how the *sonic* "evolution" of death metal (and by association grindcore) is tied directly to its medium, in other words, to the cassette tape technology itself.

This for Netherton (2007, 315 -316) relates to fact that many influential first generation death metal bands were teenage amateur musicians attempting to push/transgress the sonic boundaries of earlier incarnations of extreme music (namely thrash and underground punk), whose early demo recordings were actually "rehearsal tapes, recorded on boom boxes and then copied and recopied numerous times." This poor sound quality coupled with the cassette medium's intrinsic low-fidelity became "integrated into the rawness of the music itself," which though its global circulation "contributed to the underground network's perception of what death metal was" (ibid).

Another important contribution that tape-trading (and fanzine distribution) made towards the extreme metal scene for Netherton (2015) was the fact that its practice acted as a precursor to future online practice by extreme metal scene members, for example peer-to-peer file sharing, blogs and online fanzines. However, as Netherton (2015, 317) recognises, whilst analog tape cassettes and photocopied fanzines may have "given form" to the death metal sound and future scenic practice, due to its ability to disseminate music throughout the globe in an instant, the internet also marked the decline of tape-trading within the scene during the 1990s.

Whilst Netherton's (2015) paper offers an excellent perspective on tape-trading and the rise of death metal (and by association grindcore) via its medium, and tape-trading's later relationship to the internet (both of which I will address further in Chapter 4), I consider my approach towards the phenomenon in question to be somewhat different to Netherton's. Indeed, Netherton (2015, 311) suggests that his intention is to:

> ...situate the death metal underground within the *discourse of social and material activity through the* music was contextualized, rather than through prevailing narratives that present heavy metal's "evolution" as a series of unfolding genre-fragmentations.

Although I regard Netherton's approach completely valid, especially as a focus upon socially networked practice is central to my own study, and as stated above I wish to build upon Netherton's discussion on the importance of the cassette medium itself; I argue that the tape-trading phenomena requires a more holistic approach, which situates its further exploration within both camps, thus with equal consideration of heavy metal's

"series of unfolding genre-fragmentations" (ibid). Moreover, through approaching the rise of death metal and grindcore via tape-trading holistically this will enable me to delve deeper into dominant discourses within heavy metal which may help answer why amateur musicians wished push the music towards more "sonically transgressive" extremes in the first place, and continually attempt to break-away from mainstream heavy metal (Kahn-Harris 2007). Such an approach as I will explain below, will therefore also need to account for other factors such as internal and external scenic flows of capital, which, beyond geographical considerations, will help to ascertain why a tape-trading underground emerged within the heavy metal scene in the first place.

Before moving on however, I wish to establish at this earlier stage that whilst I acknowledge the importance of fanzines to the emergence of global extreme metal; although I will discuss such media artefacts in this study, unlike Netherton's paper which gives equal discussion to tapes and fanzines, my own focus is primarily on tape cassettes in terms the medium itself, its engenderment of socially networked practice, and most importantly facilitating the global flow of "sonic transgression" (ibid). Moreover, this latter mentioned importance of the *sonic* will also be a primary focus of my study, for whilst I again acknowledge the importance of "discursive transgression" within extreme metal such as expressions of death, horror and gore via lyrics, artwork and clothing (Kahn-Harris 2007), music always remains central to scenic expression, understanding and connectivity (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000).

With this in mind, by contextualising the period in which the extreme metal scene, or more specifically, the thrash scene first arose in the early 1980 (initially in the US via tape-trading), it makes sense to inquire why this scene had split from/demarcated itself as different to the wider heavy metal scene, especially in terms of its music. The main factor here is that during the early 1980s global mainstream heavy metal had fragmented into the more commercial metal sub-genres of lite and glam metal (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). These subgenres articulated pop orientated interpretations of metal (notably with song themes relating to love or partying) with greater emphasis of visuals aesthetics, especially via its male musicians' feminised appearance through make-up, blow-dried hair and bright spandex clothing (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000).

Because lite/glam metal had wide commercial appeal especially amongst young women, this music was very lucrative for the mainstream recording industry in terms of record

sales, and thus it was in their best interests to sustain these subgenres as the dominant ones within the wider heavy metal scene, which was helped further through their (visual) promotion via MTV (Music Television) (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). However, as the original heavy metal scene was primarily built in the 1970s around a young male, predominantly working-class fan base, its overtly masculine working-class image, and most importantly music which was regarded as noisy and rebellious within wider society; heavy metal's move away from its central masculine, and musically transgressive discourses towards the visually dominant and feminised pop direction of lite/glam metal was very problematic for certain die-hard scene members (Weinstein 2000).

Indeed, for the early thrash musicians, theirs was a return to the roots of heavy metal via a move away from the mainstream, which most importantly was expressed through their sonically aggressive interpretations of foundational heavy metal music specifically Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Motörhead, as well as by the punk aggression evident within the sounds the New Wave of British Heavy Metal bands, which emerged in the very late 1970s (Waksman 2009). Such a desire to push the boundaries of metal music to its sonic extremes, highlights for Keith Kahn-Harris (2007) what is central to attachments to the extreme metal music and the extreme metal scene: *transgression.*

Kahn-Harris (2007, 29) suggests that transgression within the context of the extreme metal scene "implies a sense of testing and crossing boundaries and limits." For Chris Jenks (2003, 7) however, transgression itself "opens up chaos and reminds us of the necessity of order." Indeed, whilst there was the desire for musicians to transgress by pushing the sonic boundaries of metal to its greatest extremes (and by association, fans to symbolically transgress via their pleasurable attachments to sonic transgression), as I will argue further in the following chapter, such symbolic transgression can also be regarded as desire by extreme metal musicians/fans for the heavy metal scene to return to the original transgressive dynamism that it maintained prior to its commercial/feminised weakness by glam/lite metal. In other words, the transgression of extreme metal music and its associated scene members reflects a desired return to order via the perpetuation of metal's discourse of transgressive authenticity.

This however also highlights the crucial factor regarding the unequal flows of capital (Kahn-Harris 2007). Indeed, the very fact that the mainstream record industry during the

1980s wanted to maintain the status quo (namely its own profits by perpetuating the dominant position of lite/glam metal within the wider heavy metal scene via its major control of music production and global distribution) meant that the potential rise of sonic transgression, then in the earlier extreme metal manifestation of thrash, was being contained/blocked (Weinstein 2000; Waksman 2011). However, just prior to this in the late 1970s, the record industry's unfair advantage of financial capital as a means to control music production and dissemination had come under threat.

The first factor here was the emergence of punk, which spawned not only a youthfully charged aggressive back-to-basics sonic aesthetic, but also an anti-establishment/anti-commercial DIY ethos of anyone being able to form a band (regardless of poor musicianship), contribute to scenic discourse via writing fanzines, create their own independent record labels, and most importantly release their own music (Gosling 2004; Dunn 2011). The other crucial factor here was the widespread availability by the late 1970s of tape-cassette technology, which Peter Manuel (1993, 2) argues in contrast to the mainstream recording industry were "decentralized in ownership, control, and consumption patterns" thus offering "greater potential for consumer input and interaction." Cassette technology's historical encounter with punk thus led to the rise of a global underground tape-trading network, which around 1979 had been appropriated by the a small underground metal scene through which thrash, also appropriating the sonic aggression of punk into its own sonically transgressive extreme metal aesthetic, was born (Christie 2003; Kahn-Harris 2007; Waksman 2011).

Whilst thrash appropriated sonic elements as well as scenic elements from underground punk (specifically tape-trading), it also appropriated the formation of independent record labels, with such thrash labels successfully competing for space within metal's field of cultural production against the major label backed lite/glam metal bands (Weinstein 2000; Christie 2003; Waksman 2011). However, these record labels would by the mid 1980s thus facilitate the global spread of thrash throughout mainstream heavy metal space, which would perhaps imply that tape-trading was no longer required for the global spread of extreme metal. However, as Kahn-Harris (2007, 80) argues, tape-trading within the extreme metal scene was "most prevalent in the late 1980s and early 1990s."

Ultimately, as I shall address in Chapter 3, whilst thrash itself would rise to global prominence by the mid to late 1980s and by then had already inspired even more sonically transgressive sub-genres, namely death metal and grindcore; greater flows of financial capital into the thrash scene (from record sales, the thrash independent labels signing distribution deals with the major labels and majors label poaching all their successful bands) suggest that the thrash labels would also start operating like the major labels (Negus 1992; Jones 1992; Walser 1993; Christie 2003). In other words, although thrash had become more commercially acceptable, its more sonically transgressive variants of death metal and grindcore would (then) be too much of a risk for the thrash labels (Mudrian 2004; Netherton 2014), who needed to sustain their business via adhering to the commercial "codes" of profitability (Weinstein 2000, 145).

Whilst the death metal and grindcore bands therefore still needed to rely on extreme metal's underground tape-trading network to get their music to their fans throughout the globe, and likewise these fans could only access such music via tape-trading, there were however different motivations towards the underground practice between extreme metal compared to those of underground punk. Indeed, as Nick Terry mentioned earlier: "If it hadn't been for the demo tape-trading underground, death metal and grindcore wouldn't have reached the attention of...the record companies who signed the bands..." which appears to suggest that the prime motivation of tape-trading for the extreme metal bands was to create enough exposure/popularity throughout the underground so as to eventually get their band noticed by, and signed to, a record label (obviously with far greater global distribution potential) (cited in Mudrian 2004, 21). This seems to differ from underground punk which attempted to stay underground by releasing/distributing music via their own band's labels (Gosling 2004; Dunn 2011). Moreover, as I shall explore further because extreme metal fans also amassed obscure metal tape collections this has connotations of record *collecting*, which Simon Reynolds (2004, 292) suggests is "pure commodity fetishism."

However, whilst Michelle Phillipov (2012, 68) notes that unlike underground punk, metal is often criticised within the academy for its lack of engagement towards progressive politics or direct political activism (namely an anti-capitalist stance), she argues such denigration fails to consider the "affective investments that can motivate metal fandom or...the pleasures of listening to metal music" in terms of personal empowerment. This for Robert Walser (1993, 55) is central to metal fan/musician

attachments to a socially marginalised and transgressive music/scene, for whom "pleasure frequently *is* the politics of music."

Therefore, I argue it was the pleasure of being symbolically attached to transgression, most articulated via producing and/or consuming sonic transgression, that drove extreme metal musicians/fans towards tape-trading in the first place. Indeed, these death metal/grindcore musicians/fans in terms of pleasure, but also of empowerment by maintaining metal's transgressive dynamism, wanted to push metal to further sonic extremes than thrash, regardless of major record labels or the now more commercially motivated independent thrash record labels. Moreover, not only was there a desire to spread extreme metal via tape-trading, but through this practice create global connectivity between globally dispersed extreme metal scenes/likeminded individuals.

Therefore, with sonic transgression as the central source of pleasure, empowerment and connectivity within an extreme metal scene, which was held together via a global tape-trading network, this brings me to the factor of *mundanity*. Indeed, whilst certain aspects of the extreme metal scene are regarded as transgressive, namely its sonic transgression and discursive transgression (lyrics, artwork, clothing etc), much of its inherent scenic practice is not, for example tape-trading or possessing in-depth scenic knowledge, and can thus be regarded as mundane scenic practice (Kahn-Harris 2007).

However, what is most important for Kahn-Harris (2007, 124) is that whilst pushing the transgressive boundaries of the scene is afforded much capital, or more specifically peer respect within the scene (as was the case with the innovative bands that created death metal/grindcore), there are also ways for those engaged with mundane practice to accrue capital. Indeed, accruement of "mundane subcultural capital" is afforded to scene members who engage in an altruistic commitment towards sustaining the scene (ibid).

In this case therefore I argue that by facilitating the global spread of death metal and grindcore though tape-trading, or more specifically, negotiating (sonic) transgression into mundane practice, both tape-trading musicians and tape-trading fans beyond their personal motivations (namely bands getting their music heard and promoted/fans having access to music more extreme than was the commercially available) would also accrue mundane subcultural capital. This in turn would only reinforce their commitment to the tape-trading network, thus perpetuating the global spread of death metal and grindcore.

This finally brings me to how the functionality of the tape-trading network and its engenderment of death metal and grindcore can be more closely analysed. Indeed, by regarding tape-trading as a network facilitated by both musicians and fans it is worth exploring tape-trading in terms of participatory culture. Henry Jenkins (1992) early work regarding this explored how certain groups of active media fan communities, for example fans of a sci-fi television programme, would appropriate that show by creating and distributing their own fan fiction (including re-edited videos of episodes to create textual meanings more centrally understood within their own fan community). This was due to their disillusionment that the programmes' producers (namely those in mainstream control of its production and distribution) did not satisfy/reflect the needs of their fan community, in other words by not pushing characters/plot-lines far enough; which for such communities were *their* central sources of communal understanding, pleasure and connectivity (ibid).

This I argue mirrors the predicament of globally dispersed death metal and grindcore fans (which includes musicians as music fans first and foremost) from the mid 1980s until the early 1990s, who unified via their fandom of thrash wanted to push its sonic transgression to much further extremes. However, as I have already addressed, because they were (then) prevented from doing so within the mainstream, the trader musicians created their own articulations of thrash's sonic transgression, in other words death metal and grindcore, within the underground and via the participation of the trader fans were also able to facilitate its global distribution throughout the tape-trading network.

Moreover, Jenkins in his later work (2006; Jenkins et al 2009) explores how participatory culture operates through online socially networked practice towards the spread of grassroots culture within the mainstream, via creativity and knowledge circulation, in which creation and contribution are highly respected and creativity and knowledge circulation benefits the community at large. Indeed, regarding Jason Netherton's (2015) previous claim that tape-trading and its related activities provided a blueprint for the extreme metal scene's later online socially networked practice; this suggests that Jenkins (1992; 2006 Jenkins et al 2009) concept of participatory culture may still offer a useful framework towards analysing the functionality of tape-trading as an early form of participatory socially networked practice. With this in mind therefore, I shall now move on to briefly discuss my theoretical and methodological approach.

1.4 Theoretical framework, methodology and chapter outline

Firstly, although this focus upon death metal and grindcore, their associated scenic practice of tape-trading and "sonic" transgression perhaps grounds my study in metal studies or more broadly in cultural musicology (my home discipline), I do however situate this study within an interdisciplinary context. Indeed, due to the many aforementioned factors that feed into the phenomenon of extreme metal tape-trading during the period in question, issues of capital inequalities will be examined via a sociological approach and forms of socially networked practice around the cassette technology via media theory. Moreover this important historical moment within popular music culture, can thus also be framed in relation to (popular) cultural historical study.

Therefore to better explore the phenomenon of tape-trading in relation to its engenderment of death metal and grindcore I shall first use Keith Kahn-Harris' (2007) sociological based conceptual framework of the "extreme metal scene." Indeed, whilst Natalie Purcell's (2003) academic book study on death metal uses the concept of 'subculture' to primarily situate and explore its community as social outcasts, bonded/rebelling through their music; her theoretical approach fails to account for the far greater complexities that surround certain extreme metal practices, or for the global space within which extreme metal scenes exist.

The concept of "scene" in contrast can be viewed as a "cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization" (Straw 1991, 373). Building upon this, Kahn-Harris' (2007, 13) concept of "extreme metal scene" utilises an "holistic" and "spatial" approach towards analysing the various musical subgenres, discourses and practices that are inextricably linked within the temporal and globally spatial parameters of the scene. Moreover, as Kahn-Harris (ibid) notes in the context of an "extreme metal scene," although its existing practices/institutions (or former ones such as tape-trading) can in no way be separated from other internal scenic phenomena, such as transgression, neither can they be separated from certain external phenomena, especially "the global flows of capital."

I will therefore be utilising Kahn-Harris' (2007) conceptual framework of "extreme metal scene" to help situate how tape-trading was inextricably linked to symbolic attachments to (sonic) transgression; contextualise the temporal and spatial parameters

of the scene (encompassing the initial global rise of death metal and grindcore); explore accruements of subcultural capital in relation to mundane scenic practice; and address the relationship of death metal, grindcore and tape-trading to issues of capital inequality.

However, whilst the concept of 'extreme metal scene' is very useful towards contextualising the global rise of death metal and grindcore in relation to tape-trading, as addressed previously; to help me better analyse the functionality of tape-trading as a participatory socially networked practice, I will also be utilising Henry Jenkins (1992; 2006; Jenkins et al 2009) media based conceptual framework of "participatory culture."

As explained earlier, the concept of participatory culture will allow me to explore how extreme metal musicians created their own articulations of thrash's sonic transgression in the form of death metal and grindcore, which in terms of Jenkins (1992) concept is regarded as "textual poaching." However, it was only via the participation of other extreme metal scene members (namely collectors of sonic transgression) through their altruistic commitment towards the facilitation of the tape-trading network that death metal and grindcore was spread throughout the globe. This globally socialised network, which engendered creativity (both in terms of musical and scenic production) where *all* tape-traders contributed, felt appreciated for doing so and thus more scenically connected to each other (which I shall explore further in Chapter 4) seems to adequately fit Jenkins et al (2009, xi) following definition of participatory culture:

> A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, members care about others' opinions of what they have created).

Finally, with regards to my methodological approach, in order to gain a clearer understanding of tape-trading within the extreme metal scene primarily between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, I have conducted ethnographical interviews with musicians/ex-musicians from bands that were closely associated with the tape-trading network during the period in question (three of which are/were members of bands that are considered within the extreme metal scene as defining the genres of Death Metal and Grindcore). These particular musicians have also been chosen in relation to their different geographical locations (two from the USA, one from the UK and two from Finland) in order to give a better perspective on global tape-trading (I was unfortunately

unable to make contact with any traders outside of Europe and North America). Furthermore, as I will also extend my focus upon non-musician tape-traders within this study, whose participatory commitment towards the facilitation of the tape-trading network (and therefore global spread of death metal and grindcore) I argue was crucial, I have also conducted extensive interviews with three such tape-traders from Finland.

With regards to the interviews themselves, all interviews were conducted via email with musicians being asked about ten to twenty structured questions specific to their own involvement and their band's involvement with tape-trading. However, as the interviews were conducted over a particular period the questions themselves were not static, for instance if one respondent gave an answer that I had not considered before, this would be incorporated into the questions for the next musician. Regarding non-musician tape-traders, I was able to conduct more specific email interviews relating to the functionality of the tape-trading network (each of these interviewees were given approximately fifty five questions to answer). All of the interview questions and a brief discussion on ethical considerations can be found in the appendix at the end of this study.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 2, I will use the concept of "extreme metal scene" to explore how tape-trading was, and death metal and grindcore are, inextricably linked to many scenic discourses/practices, especially transgression and accumulation of mundane subcultural capital; as well as explore their relationship to glam/lite metal and the (unequal) flows of capital, which existed outside of the scene (but still exerted great influence).

In Chapter 3, I will explore the influence that thrash and underground punk had upon tape-trading and the rise of death metal and grindcore; the problematic effects of financial capital first entering the extreme metal scene; as well as the personal motivations and "politics" behind extreme metal tape-trading.

In Chapter 4, I will use the concept of "participatory culture" to explore the functionality of the tape-trading network; how technology facilitated the sound of death metal and grindcore, but also contributed to tape-trading's later decline. Finally, I will explore issues regarding the actual democracy of participation within the tape-trading network and also explore what the network and its engendered music ultimately achieved.

2. Tape trading in the context of the "extreme metal scene"

"Extreme metal is a tricky phenomenon to pin down. It consists of a cluster of genres with different histories, which are constantly developing and reconfiguring. It is produced and consumed across the world through a wide variety of institutions in a wide variety of contexts."

Keith Kahn-Harris (2007, 7)

In this chapter I will explore the musically inter-related aspects of tape-trading as social practice; musician and fan attachments to sonic transgression, and their negotiation towards engendering the extreme metal musical sub-genres of *death metal* and *grindcore*, which can be best understood through Keith Kahn-Harris' (2007) conceptual framework of the "extreme metal scene." Through deeper analysis of specific scenic related phenomena in this manner, not only will I be able to address the often complex parameters within which tape-trading existed, but in doing so, it will also help further frame the following chapter and compliment my use of the concept of participatory culture in Chapter 4.

2.1 The "extreme metal scene"

Although, the practice of tape-trading and the extreme metal sub-genres of death metal and grindcore from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s will be the primary focus of this thesis, as was explained in the introduction, such aspects of the extreme metal scene were in no way detached from other scenic phenomena, nor for that matter were they hermetically sealed from certain *external* phenomena. Indeed, in temporal terms even though I will explore only a small historical period in the development of the extreme metal scene in this study, particular phenomena already in existence prior to this period, both within and without the scene will be of crucial importance, specifically thrash (internally); the mainstream recording industry (including its relationship to commercial metal) and the punk DIY (do-it-yourself) scene (externally). Moreover, In spatial terms, although my focus on tape-trading will be grounded within the global extreme metal scene, it will cover different entities within that particular scene, but nevertheless ones all inextricably linked to the larger collective (namely from small pockets of individual scenic activity to larger, in scenic terms, globally renowned local scenes).

To begin therefore with both its spatial and temporal dimensions, the extreme metal scene has since its formation during the very early 1980s been "a fairly unified scene" although one "largely confined to certain areas of the world", mainly North America, Europe and certain countries in South America (especially Chile and Brazil) (Kahn-Harris 2007, 99), but also in recent years in regions of South East Asia, such as Malaysia and Indonesia (Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011). Within these different countries prominent local extreme metal scenes emerged; the most notable of which in the early 1980s (namely during the embryonic stages of the scene) was in the US city of San Francisco (associated with thrash). Thereafter, however, and during the period in question, there emerged important local scenes in Tampa, Florida; Gothenburg, Sweden¸ and Birmingham, UK, with the two former scenes associated with death metal and the latter scene more associated with grindcore (Mudrian 2004; Kahn-Harris 2007).

In relation to how such local scenes emerge and grow, but also allow for interconnectivity between members from different scenes (and therefore connectivity between globally dispersed scenes), Kahn-Harris (2007, 99) suggests:

> [T]he scene contains other scenes that have varying degrees of autonomy from each other. As more people became interested in extreme metal, so local concentrations of scene members emerged and particular institutions developed around them...Scenes tend to entrench capital within them, but while capital differences can become institutionalized within scenes, the quasi-autonomous relation of scenes to each other means that individual scene members are never bound by their particular location in one particular scene. Networks of international collaboration ensure that individual differences between scene members are easier to bridge than differences in capital between scenes.

Indeed, a prime example of how local extreme metal scenes connected with one another within "networks of international collaboration" was through the scenic practice of tape-trading. For now however, before I begin to explore this particular phenomenon in greater depth, I must first address important considerations pertaining to the extreme metal scene; namely how the extreme metal scene is understood and articulated by its membership, especially in terms of a global scene, its local scenes, its genres and its scenic institutional practices?

Extreme metal scenes are "discursively and institutionally reproduced" both in terms of place ("globally, regionally, nationally and locally," for example "the global scene, the European scene, the Swedish scene and the Gothenburg scene") and in terms of genre (namely thrash, death metal, grindcore, doom and black metal), but in both cases there will always be a degree of "overlap" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 99). Indeed, within the extreme

metal scene no internal aspects can be completely detached from one another, and this is especially true of its extreme metal music sub-genres, which overlap each other through sharing the common musical thread of "sonic transgression" (this sonic overlap will be addressed further in Chapter 3) (Kahn-Harris 2007, 30). Beyond place and genre however, there are two other important aspects of the extreme metal scene that help to further explain firstly, how it is discursively understood, and secondly, how it physically reproduces itself (in other words, articulates its own dominant discourses), which Kahn-Harris (2007, 100) categorises as "construction" and "structure."

With regards to "construction," this refers to three different types: the first type; "Internal discursive construction" is when people "inside" a particular scene "discursively construct that scene as a distinctive space" regardless of the term "scene" ever being used and through this process such "scenes become visible and recognizable to members" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 100). The second type; "External discursive construction" is when discursive construction arises "outside" of the scene in which particular scenes are identified as distinctive spaces with more significance than they may be imbued by internal members, and finally the last type; "Aesthetic construction" is when scenes are constructed through the development of a particular aesthetic, musical and otherwise, which become both internally and externally visible (ibid).

With regards to scene construction, this raises an important point with regards to the central role of tape-trading in the discursive construction of the early extreme metal scene, in terms of place, particular sub-genres and aesthetics. Indeed, as metal historian Ian Christie (2003, 241) argues: "While heavy metal was born in England and thrash metal had its heart in San Francisco, the seeds of death metal were planted throughout the world. The phenomenon was a pure product of the tape-trading underground." As this therefore suggests, particular extreme metal subgenres such as death metal (and indeed grindcore) arose in many different places, and even though they became more commonly associated with particular scenes (for example the Tampa death metal scene in Florida), they were however, more synonymous in terms of place within the global context of the extreme metal scene. Moreover, if sub-genres such as death metal were indeed engendered by the facilitation of tape-trading as Christie argues, then his mention of a tape trading "underground" also implies a particular aesthetic construction.

Indeed, this aesthetic especially in relation to the practice surrounding tape trading is also apparent in the much of the empirical data collected for this study. For example, when asked to comment on how important he considered tape-trading to be in relation to the future development of extreme metal, former tape-trader/ex-Napalm death vocalist Lee Dorrian replied:

> Essential. It was a completely DIY network that existed without the interference of magazines and record labels dictating what people should listen to, thus it helped created a totally organic and unrestricted scene….at least for a while.

Indeed, this particular D.I.Y network in contrast to the commercial recording industry (namely "magazines and record labels") has certain aesthetic connotations of the underground punk movements prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s, such as hardcore punk (in the U.S) and anarcho-punk (in the UK) thus implying certain political considerations with regards to tape-trading (which I will address in more detail in Chapter 3). Furthermore, not only does a D.I.Y aesthetic manifest itself within the practice of tape-trading, but also in the *sound* of the music engendered via this practice and its technology (which I will also address further in Chapter 4).

For now however I shall return to Kahn-Harris' (2007, 100 - 101) second category to help further explain how the extreme metal scene is discursively understood and reproduced, namely its "structure," which he further divides into the sub-categories of "infrastructure"; "stability"; "relation to other scenes"; "production and consumption"; and "capital."

Scenic Structure

"Infrastructure" refers to the way in which specific scenes are organised and reproduce themselves around their primary "institutions" (such as labels or gigs) with some scenes having a proliferation of "distinctive institutions" not shared by other scenes (for example tape-trading), whilst other scenes may be "weakly institutionalized" and therefore, "institutional 'thickness' is correlated with the degree of autonomy that scenes have" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 100). Indeed, this raises an important question surrounding the ontology of tape-trading; in other words, was it an underground scene or simply a practice within underground scenes? Therefore, by framing tape-trading as a particular "institution" (namely an established practice) within the "infrastructure" of the extreme metal scene I'm able to better examine how it interrelated with other institutions (such

as letter writing, fanzines and music production) within that same scenic infrastructure, as well as examine it more closely within its own institutional parameters (as I will also do in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively).

However, what is particularly interesting regarding tape-trading is that it was one of the earliest institutions to help define the extreme metal scene, namely to discursively construct the extreme metal scene as different/separate to that of the mainstream (commercial) heavy metal scene. Indeed, as Jason Netherton (2015, 309) suggests with regards to the early years of the scene, tape-trading along with fanzines (another important scenic institution) enabled globally dispersed local scenes/individuals to connect with each other and create an "imagined community; in other words, the musical texts contained within the tapes and the discursive texts contained within the fanzines helped to then define the terms of what the extreme metal scene was, could, or even should be.

As this therefore implies, the emergence of certain practices namely distinctive institutions such as tape-trading, may themselves be greater catalysts towards enacting change within particular existing scenes (infrastructures) than other institutions and therefore provide the actual material means for newer scenes to emerge and eventually split from larger scenes. However, although fragmentations often occur within a larger (parent) scene, when a new scene emerges and breaks away by reimaging/re-constructing itself as different in terms of its music, institutional practices and even eventual infrastructure; this does not necessarily suggest that there will be any differences along ideological lines (as I will addressed further in the next chapter).

What does remain certain however, is that when important differences do occur between existing scene members within a lager music scene, such as those that occurred within the mainstream heavy metal scene in the early 1980s; alternative institutions of music production and consumption will often arise on the fringes. This will be facilitated by certain technological factors (for example. the availability of cassette recording technology) and associated social practices around those technologies (namely the self-production of music texts, tape-trading and consumption) and thus a new scene begins to emerge around such institutions (Manuel 1993).

This is indeed what distinguishes tape-trading as one of the most important institutions to have ever existed within the (break-away) extreme metal scene, because it operated

as a catalyst for particular musicians/fans throughout certain parts of the world to connect and create their own scene (which in turn engendered the discursive construction/production and global spread of its own internal cultural forms, namely the music genres of death metal and grindcore. Furthermore, it also became the primary institution that allowed this burgeoning extreme metal scene (namely its infrastructure) to continue functioning (for a certain time at least, as I will address in Chapter 4).

Therefore, by considering the importance of tape-trading in terms of how it both engendered and perpetuated the early extreme metal scene, this also suggests that it enabled the scene to embody a large degree of "institutional thickness," which allowed for a "certain degree of autonomy" from forces within the mainstream metal scene, such as the strong institution (or dominant omnipresence) of the commercial recording industry (as I will soon discuss in the next section) (Kahn-Harris 2007, 100). With regards to the autonomy of the early extreme metal scene however, I must remind the reader that when dealing with any concept of "scene," it not only operates within spatial dimensions, but within temporal ones as well. Indeed, just because the extreme metal scene was protected within its own thick borders, specifically from certain (detrimental) elements within the powerful institution of the commercial recording industry during the 1980s, this does not suggest that they were not impenetrable at any point later during its history (which as stated above earlier, I will address in Chapter 4).

With regards to this important consideration therefore, this brings me back to Kahn-Harris' (2007, 100 - 101) four remaining, but still inextricably linked sub-categories of the extreme metal scene's structure. "Stability" therefore, in relation to what has just been mentioned above is pretty self explanatory, in that no scene's autonomy, not even its continued existence is ever guaranteed, namely some scenes may last for many decades producing long lasting institutions, whilst others are assimilated into other scenes or disappear altogether (ibid). This in turn relates directly to the category of "relation to other scenes," which suggests that some scenes (usually the larger ones) contain "a multiplicity of scenes" as opposed to other scenes that may be "non-proliferating entities" (ibid). However, some scenes may have a closer relationship to other scenes (even those ones that are discursively regarded as external scenes), for example, the punk scene in which "cross-fertilization" may therefore occur between scenes, or as already suggested above, the mainstream heavy metal scene and therefore a connection to the "wider music industry" (ibid).

Indeed, with regards to the aforementioned underground punk scene prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s, not only was the practice of tape-trading appropriated from this particular scene (Kahn-Harris 2007), but as also mentioned, certain aesthetic elements pertaining to its sound (Mudrian 2004). These particular punk sounds in their cross-fertilization with particular metal sounds in relation to sonic transgression would play a major role in defining the future sounds of both death metal and grindcore (I will explore the influence of these punk practices/aesthetics in the next chapter).

With regards to "production and consumption" scenes always "vary in the amount and quality of the metal texts and discourses that they produce" and also vary in the degree of their exports to, and imports from, other scenes, therefore, some scenes may be highly productive while others not so much (Kahn-Harris 2007, 101). Indeed, as this suggests certain local scenes may create a greater wealth of musical texts than others, which in turn will perhaps be reflected in their elevated status within the global scene, for example the Stockholm or Tampa death metal scenes (Mudrian 2004; Kahn-Harris 2007). What is important here however, especially when discussing the production of texts and discourses within any musical scene, is that not only is the production of musical texts by local band's important to scenic infrastructure, but other forms of scenic production as well, such as fanzine production by writers, the production of gigs by local promoters and most importantly in relation to this study, the production of an underground music distribution network by tape-traders.

Furthermore, when discussing scene production and consumption I do not intend to simply consider musicians only in static terms as producers of musical texts and fans only as consumers/collectors of musical texts, but instead both groups frequently embodying dual roles as tape-traders and even fanzine writers, or fans who later became musicians, fanzine writers, or even entrepreneurs within the scene. Indeed, as Kahn-Harris (2007, 69) suggests: "The scene is structured by a complex infrastructure through which members navigate on individual 'careers'." This suggestion of individual scenic careers is important to this study, because it reveals that within the scene, members always enact different roles that have various impacts upon, and benefits towards, the scene. For example an unsigned band may produce music within a scene, but it is perhaps another scene member/local promoter who will arrange for them a live gig; a fanzine writer who will alert its global readership to their existence. And more importantly, a tape-trader in a another country (in correspondence with that band) who

will share their music with members from his or her own local scene, or even exchange it with other traders throughout the global tape-trading network (who in turn may do the same).

As this suggests, even though musicians, who as producers of the music around which the scene is constructed, will obviously have the most value/prestige attached to them by other scene members, there still exist ways in which non-musician scene members can gain respect from others scene members via their particular scene producing practices. This therefore, brings us to Kahn-Harris' (2007, 101) final sub-category of the extreme metal scenic structure and one that is very crucial to this study: capital.

Capital (inside and outside of the scene)

In terms of capital, and remaining focused towards scene members for the moment, as I have suggested above each different scenic career has a certain amount of capital attached to it (specifically capital in terms of power through prestige, as opposed to financial capital). Therefore, through navigating these careers within particular scenes (for example trading a few tapes initially to then becoming a prolific well known/ respected trader, or moving from a fan to become a fanzine writer) this also implies additional ways in which further capital can be accumulated. Indeed, personal capital (namely value attachment) within the scene is accrued by the way in which individual scene members navigate their various individual practices towards commitment to "the collective" (such as via tape-trading), which in extreme metal scenic terms is regarded as the accumulation of "mundane subcultural capital" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 121-122). The importance of this form of capital with regards to tape trading and its relationship to sonic transgression will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

For now however, due to the very fact that the "scene's institutions and practices are embedded in webs of power both within and without" I will turn my attention other important factors regarding scenic capital (Kahn-Harris 2007, 69). Indeed, although I have already suggested that capital can be accumulated *within* the extreme metal scene, in terms of individual commitment to the collective; what about the circulations of capital from *without*; in other words pre-existing forms of capital outside of the scene?

With regards to capital as a fundamental aspect of the extreme metal scene's continual existence, Kahn-Harris (2007, 69) builds upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu by suggesting how different forms of capital e.g. economic capital or prestige "circulate in different fields," inside which, "struggles to accrue and utilize capital take place." Within the field of cultural production it therefore becomes apparent how "inequalities" pre-exist, namely the mainstream recording industry possessing a large amount of power due to its enormous financial capital, as opposed to the extreme metal scene, which possessed very little financial capital during its early years (ibid; Weinstein 2000).

Indeed, in terms of the mainstream recording industry's financial advantage it has prime ownership over the mode of musical production as well as control over the commercial distribution network (namely the circulation of purchasable music, either physical or digital, to the masses). During the mid 1980s to early 1990s therefore this powerful institution was able to act as a gate-keeper deciding what particular music (artists/genres) were made widely available to the public (Weinstein 2000). Moreover, beyond, the availability of such (permitted) vinyl, or later CD, releases entering the record stores during this period, the recording industry's corporate monopoly also extended itself to other modes of musical dissemination such as commercial radio and the then burgeoning Music Television (MTV), as well as musically related printed media, such as specialist music magazines, all very crucial for band promotion (Shuker 2013).

Such centralised control of cultural production for the main ideological purpose of creating more profit for the corporations, implies an unfair advantage via gate-keeping, namely record companies not signing bands or releasing music by contracted bands that fail to conform to profitability. Moreover, any band's music that is promoted/released to a mass audience will almost always adhere to a tried and tested commercial formula (in other words, be musically homogenised into a profitable commodity that conforms to radio airplay time and produced to sound similar to other hit records/current musical fads). Indeed, with regards to how the unfair distribution of wealth and ownership (upheld and perpetuated by capitalist ideology) impinge upon what music is commercially released and what music is not, Deena Weinstein (2000, 145) suggests:

> The mass media appeal to an undifferentiated audience. They must be fit to enter the family rooms of the preponderance of the population and, therefore, must develop a code

for screening and filtering cultural objects that originate with some degree of independence from their cultural-fabricating and culture-promoting apparatus. That is, if a new cultural form is not compatible with the code of the mass media it will either be excluded from them or will be transformed by them to bring it in line with that code.

Although this pre-existing inequality will be addressed further in the following chapter, especially regarding record labels "screening and filtering" out the non-compatible sonic transgression of death metal and grindcore during the mid 1980s (which tape-trading was a direct response towards), it is worth taking a moment to consider some other pre-existing inequalities in relation to capital and the extreme metal scene.

Indeed, Kahn-Harris (2007, 70-75) suggests that the dominant membership group of the extreme metal scene are white heterosexual men (often teenagers) from mainly working-class backgrounds, but also some from lower-middle class backgrounds, and therefore, scene members outside of this group will not only be marginal in numbers, but also due to this unequal power structure "have difficulty reaching high levels of involvement within the scene," for example as musicians. However, despite a working-class background being a dominant characteristic within extreme metal scene membership, in "the context of Europe and North America at least, class brings relatively few advantages within the scene," in other words, being from a higher class does not equate to a more privileged position, or advantage towards navigating a career within this particular scene as it does in other fields (Kahn-Harris 2007, 78).

Outside of these geographical locations however, this is not the case. Indeed, due to "global flows of capital" some countries possess more economic capital and power than others, which directly equates to the citizens with these countries, and therefore potential scene members in poorer counties such as those within the Global South may not only lack access to record stores, metal on the radio or record labels, but if especially from a lower-class background, also the funds to buy equipment (such as radios, guitars, record players and tape recorders) (Kahn-Harris 2007, 98). Moreover, many countries are controlled by totalitarian regimes where music making/distribution is therefore more difficult to achieve outside of state control and in the 1980s this was especially true for parts of Eastern Europe under the rule of Soviet Russia (Mudrian 2004, 110-116; Netherton 2014, 199-200).

Although a lack of capital afforded to extreme metal scene members in different global locations during the period in question will be addressed in Chapter 4 and issues of

gender addressed later in this chapter (in relation to sonic transgression), internal scenic inequalities will not be a main topic of discussion within this study (for more in-depth discussions regarding such inequalities see Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000; Kahn-Harris 2007). However, this does not suggest that issues of inequality be ignored completely in a critical evaluation of tape trading in relation to the extreme metal scene, which I shall come to at the end of Chapter 4. For now however, I must turn my attention towards another aspect of the extreme metal scene, one it could easily be argued is more fundamental to the extreme metal scene than capital: transgression.

2.2 Transgression

Kahn-Harris (2007, 29) utilises the concept of "transgression" to help better explain what is actually *extreme* about extreme metal and suggests "transgression, like extremity implies a sense of testing and crossing boundaries and limits." Indeed, for Georges Bataille (1986) society exists within the parameters of timeless "taboos" that prohibit us from, for example, acts of violence or murder, but which are also central elements in defining our human nature and primarily imposed from within, namely via our own sense of morality. However, in violation of certain taboos (for example eroticism), our desire to cross such boundaries is also an acknowledgement of their existence, for "transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it" (Bataille 1986, 64).

During the medieval period transgression actually had a place within society, which Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) recognises as the "carnival" and its various rituals for example the 'feast of fools', which turned the social order/hierarchy of everyday life on its head, but in doing so, connected all carnival participants together in its temporary period of boundlessness. In modernity however, because transgression "has always been a source of concern to authorities" its practice has been increasingly suppressed and marginalised within society through the enforcement of restrictive laws, including censorship upon transgressive literature, art, film and music (Kahn-Harris 2007, 29).

However, although it would be easy to just claim here that death metal and grindcore via their extreme music, lyrics and artwork transgressed the boundaries acceptability within Western society during mid 1980s (when and predominantly where these genres emerged), or indeed for that matter within the overarching mainstream heavy metal

scene; what does the act of transgression actually tell us about those who engage in its practice? One possible answer is as John Jervis (1999) suggests:

> The transgressive is reflexive, questioning both its own role and that of the culture that has defined it in its otherness. It is not simply a reversal, a mechanical inversion of an existing order it opposes. Transgression, unlike opposition or reversal, involves hybridization, the mixing of categories and the questioning of the boundaries that separate categories. It is not, in itself, subversion; it is not an overt and deliberate challenge to the status quo. What it does do, though, is implicitly interrogate the law, pointing not just to the specific, and frequently arbitrary, mechanisms of power on which it rests – despite its universalizing pretensions – but also to its complicity, its involvement in what it prohibits (Jervis 1999, cited in Jenks 2003, 9).

Therefore, when a particular group of metal musicians and fans began to reflexively question their own existence within both wider society and their own dominant heavy metal society/scene through transgressive actions, consequently positioning them as "other," (in other words marginalized from society/the mainstream), it was not only to exceed, but also interrogate the limitations that were being unfairly imposed upon them within these social spaces.

However, by first contextualising the overarching mainstream heavy metal scene during the mid 1980s, fan affiliation to this scene was already by its own virtue deemed by dominant society to be transgressive (in other words deviant behaviour) due to metal's loud music, dystopian or sexually explicit lyrical content and visual imagery (for example on album covers, t-shirts and posters) and also its association with other forms of excess (namely sex, high levels of alcohol consumption, and the use of illegal drugs). This correlated with the fact that the predominant demographic of heavy metal in the 1980s (as with extreme metal) was white male working-class youths, who in this youthful existence lacked power due to the barriers imposed upon them by parents and authority (namely school, police or work); and therefore, their rebellious fandom along with "long hair, tattoos and denim and leather," all revealed "visible proof of one's self-willed rejection of middle-class values" (Weinstein 2000, 272).

Therefore, because transgression was already inscribed in heavy metal culture, not only as a way to cross authoritarian boundaries, but to also reflexively question the imposition or even the validity of such boundaries, heavy metal had by its own design created its own boundaries/institutional thickness, namely its own alternative territory; protecting itself until a more acceptable society would emerge. Indeed, with regards to

metal's transgression as a means towards furthering *its own* utopian ideal, Robert Walser (1993, xvi-xvii) suggests:

> ...the rebellious or transgressive aspects of heavy metal, its exploration of the dark side of social life, also reflects its engagement with the pressures of an historical moment. For rebellion and escapism are always movements away from something, towards something else. Rebellion is critique, whether apparently effectual or not, it is politics. But even more important, what seems like rejection, alienation, or nihilism is usually better seen as an attempt to create an alternative identity that is grounded in a vision or the actual experience of an alternative community. Heavy metal's fascination with the dark side of life gives evidence of both dissatisfaction with dominant identities and institutions and an intense yearning for reconciliation with something more credible.

This alternative territory; this safe haven of the heavy metal scene, also reiterates the importance of capital within particular fields within which, as suggested previously, "struggles to accrue and utilize capital take place" (Keith Kahn-Harris 2007, 69). Indeed, in this case the power struggle between dominant adult authority and youth culture becomes apparent, in which the heavy metal fans as well as its musicians become "proud pariahs," who "wear the grounds for their rejection from society as a badge of honor," but which in turn, creates further friction between the two parties, for dominant society is always "militantly hostile against groups that flaunt" such forms of prestige, namely deviant cultural capital (Weinstein 2000, 270).

Indeed, during the mid-1980s in the United States (which was the main global exporter of mainstream heavy metal) right-wing conservative groups such as the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) repeatedly attacked the metal community through moral panics, due to ill-informed associations between listening to heavy metal and teenage suicide (e.g. Ozzy Osbourne's "Suicide Solution") or the Christian right-wing fears of young metal fans being drawn towards Satanism due to certain references to the devil in metal songs (e.g. Iron Maiden's "Number of the Beast") (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). Although such panics would result in increasing calls for censorship on metal music, for particular US metal musicians, such as Mike Browning (ex-Morbid Angel/Nocturnus) and Chris Reifert (Autopsy/ex-Death) whose respective death metal bands were emerging on the very margins of the heavy metal scene, creating some of the most sonically and lyrically transgressive music of its day (namely aggressive uncommercial sounds with satanic or horror/gore inspired lyrics), such attacks seemed pointless:

Mike: I didn't think it would last that long because it was only happening in certain parts of America, there wasn't much censorship going on in music in the rest of the world and most of it was religious based, which made it even more ridiculous.

> **Chris:** Lame, of course! However, it created notoriety and as a result probably more curiosity than ever. Their plan backfired. Haha!

As this suggest, for the burgeoning local extreme metal scenes during the mid 1980s (especially in the US), not only were members unconcerned with such barriers by producing and distributing even more transgressive texts (initially via the tape-trading network), but this was also causing metal fans to gravitate towards the underground through their "curiosity" and a need to attach themselves to far greater forms of transgression, than was then commercially available. However, although the extreme metal scene's "relative obscurity undoubtedly affords it a good deal of 'protection' from attacks and censorship" on the outside, this "protection" or as mentioned earlier, its thickness also applies to "attacks" that emanate from inside the wider heavy metal scene as well (Kahn-Harris 2007, 28).

With regards to this, in the mid 1980s metal was at its commercial peak with heavy metal sub-genres known as lite metal or glam metal consisting mainly of US bands (e.g. Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, Poison) but also the occasional UK band (e.g. Def Leppard) (Walser 1993, Weinstein 2000). These bands however were very different from preceding forms of heavy metal most noticeably in terms of visual style with their hair-sprayed and blow-dried hairstyles, make-up (namely eye-liner, mascara and lipstick) and colourful spandex clothing. Lite/glam metal's songs also deviated from the more traditional themes of heavy metal (such as evil, fantasy, science-fiction and mythology) by following either pop themes relating to romance and heartbreak or themes of rock 'n roll decadence such as partying/sexual conquest. Moreover, following more traditional pop aesthetics band members, especially the lead vocalists (such as Jon Bon Jovi) were very appealing to a young female audiences, thus creating wider commercial appeal.

However, with regards to this mass appeal, the visual image of lite/glam bands was expressed with more far reaching possibility than had previously existed for earlier more traditional heavy metal bands, which had relied primarily on album covers, specialist magazines, posters and live gigs to promote their visual appearance (albeit a more tradition denim and leather, t-shirt and jeans look with its working-class connotations, as opposed to the overblown lite/glam metal look with its Hollywood/celebrity connotations). What was therefore crucial for the global rise of the lite/glam metal phenomenon, was the rise of another 1980s visual and musically related phenomena, namely MTV (Music Television).

MTV therefore, via its 24/7 rotation of music videos was, similar to the recording industry, able to utilise the potential of certain musical genres whose visual and sonic codes were most compliant to the codes of commercial mass appeal (and ultimately profit), which Deena Weinstein (2000, 171) Suggests:

> What MTV has done is to select those elements within each genre of youth music that are compatible with its compromised structure while excluding the rest. Lite metal, for example, originated prior to MTV as an internal development of the melodic side of the genre. MTV selected it for play because it was a form of metal most congenial to a broad youth audience, defined in terms of age, sex and class. By doing so, it made lite metal more distinctive than it might have been, exacerbating the fragmentation of the cultural form without eliminating the sense of that form altogether.

The most important point with regards to this particular form of musical promotion however is that the visual elements of the music video become more synonymous as a commercial product not just in the form of the band music, but as with any product advertisement, the consumption of a lifestyle by addressing the desires of the audience (Walser 1993; Mundy 1999; Weinstein 2000). Indeed, in the "Nothing but a good time" (1988) music video by the then commercially popular glam metal band Poison (that depicts a teenager quitting his dishwasher day job, by kicking down his workplace door to enter the band's fantastical partying world), Robert Walser (1993, 126) suggests: "Poison, like Pepsi, uses narrative and image to arouse these longings and to present us with a particular kind of consumption as a means of satisfying them."

Therefore, what lite/glam metal represented through its generic, but commercially useful association to teenage rebellion inscribed within heavy metal, and its heightened glitz and glamour visuals disseminated via MTV, was the promotion of the (unrealistic) dream of opulence that *all* youth could, and should buy into. Interestingly, some early 1980s traditional heavy metal bands (such as the aforementioned Def Leppard) began to glam-up their image and soften their music for greater commerciality, effectively buying into the dream as well. However, these culturally hegemonic representation of the emerging neo-liberal free-market economies of Reagan and Thatcher promoting lavish consumerist excess, as opposed to transgressive excess, had very little to offer extreme metal fans or musicians, as the following mix of traders and musicians attest:

> **Chris:** It was kind of like the enemy in a way. All the hair bands and all that stuff, you know? To me, that wasn't metal. Even worse, quite a few good bands tried to join that bandwagon and commercialize their sound, therefore, losing respect from their original fans. Oddly enough, looking back, there's actually some charm to some of that stuff, depending on which bands you're talking about.

Luxi: I loved all kind of Metal music (except Glam Rock/Metal...I actually pretty much despised it...

....I did despise posers for how they looked like. And that was the only reason for me to despise/hate them, ha ha hah!! Probably I myself was a frustrated and angry teenage pizza-face back then, getting no flattering smiles from attracting-looking girls...

Jami: *Death to posers.* That was one of the pertinent slogans among the Death/Thrash scene. Glam Metal bands were the posers. Not really discussed, it was common knowledge and the law... I despised all the music but true Heavy Metal. Back then the UG [underground] scene was rather insular as such. You didn't flirt with other genres. I despised commercial rock and Glam Metal. I despised all the music but true Heavy Metal.

Jukka: "Purkkaa!" as in bubblegum, that's what we called anything not deemed heavy enough, metal or otherwise. At some point it was very popular to "hate" all things not proper metal, but we soon started expanding our musical spectrum to other things.

These comments obviously reveal a lot of retrospection, for indeed, these men were teenagers in the mid 1980s whose attitudes were obviously different back then and also filtered through the usual anxieties associated with youth and an often strict(er) criteria of what type of (metal) music was best befitting to their youthful masculinities, and what was evidently not. Thus, it is apparent here that during this particular historical moment, lite/glam metal, whilst retaining an identifiable generic heavy metal sound, had, due to its collusion with commercial pop visuals and (in terms of its love songs) lyrical aesthetic, represented for many heavy metal scene members a watering down of "true" or "proper" metal.

This apparent blight on metal for these young men at least, as I will address further in the next chapter, was in great contrast to the canonised 'metal' bands such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, or more importantly, bands such as Metallica and Slayer belonging to the then less commercial but even more heavier/extreme genre of thrash, which had emerged around the same time as lite/glam metal, but retained/honoured the essence of tradition heavy metal. Indeed, with heavy metal now one of the most globally commercial mainstream music forms, albeit now represented by the lite/glam metal aesthetic, metal suddenly became more *acceptable* and therefore began to lose its transgressive dynamism.

Moreover, Walser (1993, 129-130) and Weinstein (2000, 46) point out that the term posers (or "poseurs"), which is very apparent from the empirical sources cited above, is often used to reinforce that lite/glam metal's "lack" of heavy metal "authenticity."

Indeed, the word poser/poseur represents not only connotations of a feminized appearance especially via lite/glam metal's make-up, hairspray and effeminate costume (and therefore in masculine terms, a sense of visual "weakness"), but also the over indulgence on the visual at the expense of the music, which for Weinstein (1991, 122) is the underlining discourse of heavy metal, because its "sonic elements take precedence over the textual, visual, or social components."

This therefore also implicates tape-trading as an authentic conveyor of the *sonic* as opposed to MTV as an inauthentic conveyor of the (lite/glam metal) visual. Indeed, although it cannot be denied that death metal/grindcore musicians were engaged in the practice of tape-trading, in most part, to promote and circulate their band to as wide an (appreciative extreme metal) audience as possible (which I will address further in the next chapter), it was importantly through the sonic, and indeed a traditional/authentic commitment to the sonic, and *not* the visual, that this was most profoundly articulated.

Ultimately, such a youthful vehement drive for metal's rightful return to the sonic and a refusal towards metal's misrepresentation by these apparently false prophet "posers" would lead its purist fan base (which included aspiring musicians) to reflexively re-assert their own sense of order/control over their once sacred territory (but always contested field of cultural production) by delving further into the depths of transgressive possibility. Indeed as Chris Jenks (2003, 7) argues:

> ...transgression is a component of the rule. Seen in this way, excess is not an abhorration nor a luxury, it is rather a dynamic force in cultural reproduction – it prevents stagnation by breaking the rule and it ensures stability by reaffirming the rule. Transgression is not the same as disorder; it opens up chaos and reminds us of the necessity of order.

Transgression therefore within the extreme metal scene can be seen as both reflexive questioning towards the larger outside society which threatens its existence through cultural/ideological assimilation, and a desire to exceed its own boundaries. Indeed, this threat/fear of assimilation provokes action to return internal order (namely by splitting from the mainstream scene and its compliant/assimilated and therefore disempowered membership). In doing so, such action consolidates existing internal capital through authenticity discourses (such as guardians of "true" metal) and also engenders even more capital, through the creation of more powerfully transgressive musical forms, namely death metal and grindcore.

To help further illustrate how "the concept of transgression captures the central elements" of certain "extreme metal practices" inextricably bound within the scene, Kahn-Harris (2007, 30) presents "three ideal types" of scenic transgression: "sonic transgression"; "discursive transgression"; and "bodily transgression." For the sake of this study I will only be addressing sonic transgression in detail due to its direct relationship to tape-trading, death metal and grindcore, which understandably relates to the sounds that were disseminated throughout the tape-trading network via the tape cassettes (the medium of which, as I will address further in Chapter 4).

However, before I move on to sonic transgression it's worth briefly mentioning that discursive transgression relates to lyrics, the way in which the scene is discussed/ imagined (in other words constructed) by its members and also visual discourses, all of which contribute to the scene's transgressive themes/aesthetic of death, destruction, gore and evil (Kahn-Harris 2007, 34 - 43). With regards to visual discourses, these did however accompany and compliment the sounds contained within the tape cassettes and help to further discursively construct the extreme metal scene through paratext, namely the transgressive artwork covers surrounding these cassette tapes (Netherton 2015, 310).

With regards to Bodily transgression, this relates more to violent dancing (moshing), tattoos, body piercings or actual transgressive acts of violence or murder, for example as committed by members of the Norwegian black metal scene in the early 1990s (Kahn-Harris (2007, 43-46). Although this extreme form of transgression does not relate directly to tape-trading, in relation to death metal and grindcore, however, the aforementioned black metal scene *will* have some significance towards accruements of different kinds of scenic capital, which I shall discuss in Chapter 4. However, whilst bodily transgression will not be a focus of this study, it's worth noting that although the "mundane" (bodily) action of tape-trading may not *appear* transgressive in extreme metal scenic terms, this is not to suggest such practice did not possess transgressive potential. Indeed, on the contrary, as I will address in the final section of this chapter.

Sonic transgression

In order to discuss the sonic transgression of death metal and grindcore (or more generally extreme metal), it first makes sense to contextualise such sound in relation to its generic parent heavy metal. Indeed, many discursive codes within, and central to,

heavy metal music will be very important to my following discussion regarding the way in which such codes were later expressed by death metal and grindcore musicians from the mid 1980s in relation to their own music productions.

Robert Walser (1993, 43) in his musicological analysis of heavy metal music asserts that the dominant instrument of the genre is the electric guitar, which when played through heavily distorted amplification creates the music's generically identifiable timbre. During the early years of studio recording, engineers attempted to minimise distortion (created when amplification "components are overdriven") because it was considered "undesirable"; thus the timbre of heavy metal becomes historically associated with "extreme power," via its overdriven capacity and "intentional transgression" against acceptable norms (ibid, 42).

Vocal timbre is also important in relation to "intensity and power" because heavy metal vocalists often display their powerful vocal premise via the delivery of long sustained notes and heavy vibrato (ibid, 45-46). Modes are important because they "produce powerful and affective charges" for the audience, who always "respond differently to each mode"; moreover, modes are also the "primary constituents" of popular musical genres, namely the Aeolian or Dorian modes of heavy metal differentiate it from the Ionian or Mixolydian modes inherent in most pop songs (ibid, 46). With regards to harmony, powerful "affective potentials" can also be achieved by the way certain notes are sounded in unison as chords, with one of the most recognisable chord structures in heavy metal being the "power chord" (ibid, 47-48).

With regards to rhythm, because of its close association with the body (historically suppressed in Western culture due to a "recurrent anxiety" of its symbolic threat of "the other," for example, women), the rhythmic elements of heavy metal, mainly provided by the drums and bass are signifiers of the music's "feminizing effects" and as such must be controlled by the power of the guitar riffs (ibid, 48-54). In response to this therefore, the guitar solo embodies a form of virtuosic freedom and transcendence, including on occasions the powerful sustain of high pitched vibrato vocals, which both resist and escape the feminized bodily threat of the rhythm, thus signifying their ascendancy above it (ibid 1993, 48-55).

For Walser (1993, 108-109) therefore, it is this "dialectic of controlling power and transcendent freedom" inscribed within heavy metal music which ultimately

"articulates" the genre's dominant "discourse shaped by patriarchy." However, with regards to the suggestion of transcendent freedom, Kahn-Harris (2007, 30-32) argues that extreme metal moves away from this particular discourse because guitar solos are diminished in presence or even completely eradicated from the music. Extreme metal is also much faster in tempo than traditional heavy metal and the high pitch, sustain and vibrato vocals of Heavy Metal (again symbolic of transcendent freedom) are replaced with growls, grunts, guttural sounds and screams devoid of melody (ibid, 32). With regards to the heavy guitar riff within extreme metal however, not only does it take on "an even greater importance" than the solo, but its controlling power is thus intensified though down-tuned guitars "with bottom E strings often tuned as low as B or A"; minimising "uncontrolled feedback"; and the predominant use of "power chords" and "palm muting," which are produced at extremely fast and intense speeds (ibid, 31-32).

For Kahn-Harris therefore, if heavy metal music represents the dialectical relationship between freedom (as articulated by the solo) and control (as articulated by the riff), extreme metal music in contrast "reduces freedom" and is more about "total mastery and total control" and whose sonic expression is usually interpreted by scene outsiders as an "unmusical and unpleasant" noise, thus further transgressing normative musical boundaries (Kahn-Harris, 2007, 31). However, what is most important here is that in extreme metal it is the abject (once again relating to the feminized body) that needs "to be tightly controlled," which leads Kahn-Harris (2007, 34) to conclude:

> This constant flirtation with the formless sonic abject produces dominance of the abject. In doing so, extreme metal is associated with a form of masculinity that is based on a fear of feminine weakness...The abject cannot simply be controlled once; dominance has to be proven again and again. This obsessiveness produced extreme metal as its logical conclusion and produces thousands of identical-sounding recordings to this day.

What this suggests therefore is that the premise of extreme metal, or in other words a move towards the more extreme and therefore transgressive elements of the music (and its associated scenic discourses/practices) was an intensified continuation of the discourses of masculine power already inscribed within heavy metal. The question that remains therefore is; why by the mid 1980s had the more extreme musical genres of metal such as death metal and grindcore appeared; why did this extreme sonic intensification within heavy metal materialise?

To answer to this it is first important to address what the inherent masculinity that both heavy and extreme metal infers. Indeed, as I have already stated, metal (regardless of

ethnicity) has always consisted of a predominantly male working-class teenage audience who within wider society "is a group generally lacking in social, physical, and economic power" but at the same time always being "besieged by cultural messages promoting such forms of power, insisting on them as vital attributes of an obligatory masculinity," such as those promoted in action films (Walser 1993, 109).

In other words, when talking about metal music representing masculine control over "feminine weakness," this should not necessarily be interpreted as young male metal fans/musicians having the conscious desire to dominate women. Instead it can be regarded as young men searching for adequate ways to address their own social/physical/economic weakness by finding a safe (musical) space that offers them a chance to enact this power. That is, a power that patriarchal society ideologically demands and culturally promotes, but subsequently denies through obstacles of authority (namely the aforementioned parents, teachers and police).

Indeed, if this were otherwise true, and metal represented only a conscious subjection of women through its masculine discourses, this would make it very difficult to account for all the women who derive great amounts of "listening pleasure" from metal (Hill, 2015). As this suggests, for both young men and women - including other socially marginalised groups such as those not of Caucasian origin (especially the increasing numbers of extreme metal fans from the Global South; see Wallach, Berger and Greene 2011) - metal music thus offers its members a space for personal and (in terms of its scenes) communally shared attachments to *pleasure* and *empowerment.*

To answer the earlier question therefore, one possible reason why this particular branch of heavy metal music, namely extreme metal, had materialised via its sonic intensification by the mid 1980s was an unconscious desire to tightly control metal's own internal (feminised) "weakness." In other words, the fact that glam/lite metal, or metal's out of control abject, had now become its dominant genre and was being perpetuated by the dominating control of the mainstream recording industry, manifest within scenic infrastructure. Indeed, not only were these weak (commercialised, feminised and visually centred) forms of lite/glam metal a threat to the order and stability of a once heavier, purer, more empowering, and discursively sonically centred heavy metal scene; they were also strengthening their own position within capitalist society as a useful hegemonic tool within the field of popular culture production. This

latter factor specifically being achieved by further perpetuating capitalism's patriarchal discourses though lite/glam metal's often overtly sexist lyrics.

With Regards to lyrical content here, in the early years of the extreme metal scene, in order to further suppress such threats of weakness, namely to further effect tighter control upon the infiltration of lite/glam metal, extreme metal distanced itself from the use of lite/glam metal's pop influenced romantic lyrics as well as its predominant crass sexist lyrics. Interestingly, Lee Dorrian who in this study's research stated that he "opposed racism, animal exploitation, sexism and general ignorance" wrote and recorded a song entitled "Cock-Rock Alienation" on Napalm Death's second studio album (From Enslavement to Obliteration, 1988), which seems to capture the aforementioned zeitgeist, namely the apathy towards, and sense of threat from lite/glam metal as expressed by the extreme metal musicians/traders.[1] Therefore, in order to match its sonic transgression, the lyrical content of death metal and grindcore focused on equally transgressive topics (in relation to its lyrical norms) of death, destruction and gore/ horror (with grindcore also addressing animal cruelty, capitalism and globalization).

However, as was stated earlier, the lyrical content of death metal and grindcore (in terms of transgressive discourse) will not be the main focus of this study; although it should be clarified here that the reason for this is not one of economy, but instead the way in which the voice is used in these specific sub-genres. Indeed, extreme metal vocals are predominantly expressed through growls, grunts, guttural sounds and screams, and although the vocals are worded this is often linguistically undecipherable, which is especially true for the early work of grindcore bands such as Napalm Death and Xysma. This is due to the fact that the timbre of extreme metal vocals are mainly expressed more as instruments (such as the with distortion of the guitars) to further accentuate the expression sonic transgression, thus adding "a more generalized sense of brutality to the music" (Phillipov 2012, 78).

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[1] These particular lyrics interestingly suggest how certain grindcore bands at least were also blatantly aware of/concerned with the connections of glam metal to the perpetuation patriarchal capitalist ideology (which will be addressed below), for they begin with "Capitalism, racism, sexism the foundations of cock-rocking idealism. Exploiting, sucking, manipulating the wisdom of a starry-eyed nation. Making idols out of assholes. Raunchy hunky machismo type fools. Who cares if they've got no brains. Just give us tits and tools!"

What this suggests therefore, as Weinstein (2000, 122) mentioned earlier regarding heavy metal's "sonic elements," is that it is the *sounds* of extreme metal, namely its sonic transgression as opposed its visuals and lyrics, which are the most important signifiers of empowering attachments for scene members. With regards to the latter, as Walser (1993, 40) suggests: "musical codes are the primary bearers of meaning; lyrics, like costumes and performers' physical motions, help direct and inflect the interpretation of the meanings that are most powerfully delivered, those suggested by the music." The disproportionate weight given to sound over lyrics by members of the tape-trading network (both musicians and fans) is also reflected in the empirical data:

> **Chris:** Hey, if it was fast and heavy, I was into it. Lyrical content never concerned me too much. It was the actual sounds that turned me on more than anything.

> **Luxi:** The music did all the talking to me - and not the lyrics or anything else really...at the end of the day it was always the music itself - without any exceptions...other aspects of a demo tape were secondary for me to be honest.

Sonic transgression therefore, was the provenance of death metal, grindcore and the future global extreme metal scene, which later emerged around them. Indeed, as I have already discussed, sonic transgression was not only a way for musicians/tape-traders to symbolically attach themselves to transgression via the pleasure of producing/consuming music deemed as noise (in other words unacceptable to, and transgressive towards, societal/musical norms), but also as a way of re-establishing internal scenic order by addressing the threat to their already limited youthful power (namely from the commercial diluting of their sacred, and once pure music).

This sonic transgression as I shall explore further in the following two chapters was facilitated by tape-trading throughout an underground global network, which therefore, in relation to the necessity of this particular practice suggests that such attempts to further the spread of extreme metal by legitimate means were being thwarted by the corporate recording industry. Indeed, as I have already discussed, these gatekeepers were more interested in sustaining their profits (and thus maintaining the capitalist ideology) through perpetuating glam/lite metal, without any regard for a group of marginal musicians/fans and their pure metal authenticity discourses, articulated by the sonic transgression that was emerging from the underground death metal and grindcore scenes. That was, however, until the commercial recording industry began to realise, by the early 1990s, that the burgeoning global extreme metal scene was showing signs of (profitable) potential (as I will address much later in Chapter 4).

What this ultimately highlights therefore are the aforementioned factors of capital, or more specifically its accumulation; its global flows; and as always, its unfair distribution. For indeed, the emergence of tape-trading coincides with a particular historical moment, a conjunction if you will, in which a certain faction within the metal community attempts to reassert its control on cultural production and thereby unite its globally dispersed contingent, not only alienated from each other, but also from the music that they love (via the mainstream weakening of its transgressive dynamism).

This also occurs to a backdrop of Western de-industrialisation on the one hand, creating a greater threat of castration for metal's predominant (but already disempowered) young male demographic; and on the other (as addressed in the introduction) the commercial availability of democratising, and therefore empowering, tape cassette recording technology (Manuel 1993). Such disempowering/empowering binaries would contribute to a move towards the underground by this globally scattered collective of musicians and fans in their struggle to create their own form of capital within the field of extreme metal's cultural production.

Returning to sonic transgression for the moment, and as I will address further in the next chapter, there were, however, two important contributors that still need to be discussed in relation to its overall sound/aesthetic in order to engender a better understanding of the early history of, and similarities/differences between death metal and grindcore; namely thrash and punk (the latter of which I will also reveal, played a very important role in relation to tape-trading). For now, however, before moving on to the next chapter I still need to address one very important question that is central to this study: if these musicians/traders made a symbolic attachment to transgression in the form of sonic transgression; how was this particular transgression linked to, or more appropriately negotiated by scene members into, the everyday practice of tape-trading (which in extreme metal scenic terms at least, doesn't appear particularly transgressive)?

2.3 Tape trading as the negotiation of transgression into mundane subcultural capital

In order to increase/sustain their symbolic attachment to transgression, extreme metal scene members obviously need to commit much of free their time to scenic activities (as with tape-traders who dedicated their time to searching out more sonically transgressive

music than was commercially available between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s). Indeed, as most scenic careers (including being a tape-trader) never offer members any financial rewards, which would otherwise enable them to dedicate more time to the scene (as maybe the case for a professional musician), the time required for such careers can often cause difficulties due to the pressures and commitments of everyday life, for example school, work and relationships (Kahn-Harris 2007, 59). As consequence therefore, such everyday pressures and commitments from outside of the scene would obviously impinge on the pleasure one receives from active involvement within the scene, and through it, greater personal attachments to transgression.

Therefore, to "manage the negotiations of everyday life without excessive frustration and often with considerable success," Kahn-Harris (2007, 61; 59) suggests that there exists a "logic of mundanity" in which individual members "attempt to experience 'everydayness' in all its regularity and unexceptionality within the scene itself." However, when these everyday (namely mundane, non symbolically transgressive) practices by individual members are "produced through a commitment to work hard for the scene, as an almost altruistic commitment to the collective," it enables them to accrue a form of personal capital known as "mundane subcultural capital" (Kahn-Harris, 2007, 124).[2]

Thus the link between tape-trading and attachments to transgression now becomes clear, for it is only when symbolic transgression is negotiated into mundane scenic practice (namely dubbing countless tapes, photocopying flyers, writing letters, typing up fanzines, updating personal tape collection lists, purchasing blank tapes and posting demo tapes) that the scene itself creates its own capital. Indeed, by a desire to attach themselves to greater amounts of sonic transgression, tape-traders thus engaged in these *everyday* activities with altruistic commitment, which were further perpetuated by the respect (attachments of mundane sub-cultural capital) that they received from their peers within the scene (namely fellow tape-traders/musicians). Such incentives in turn

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[2] The term "subcultural capital" was first coined by Sarah Thornton (1995), in relation to her research on club/rave culture in the U.K in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thornton (1995, 201-202), who like Kahn-Harris builds upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu, suggests that subcultural capital is a form of "hipness" which can be "objectified or embodied" upon/within individual youths participating in the rave scene (which Kahn-Harris (2007) argues is also applicable to extreme metal scene members). Subcultural capital operates in a space away from that of capital imbued by class status (i.e. cultural and economic capital) and affords its own capital, or hipness to members via their knowledge of, and association to, the scene in terms of its materials, practices and protocols, i.e. the hippest music to collect/dance to, the best clubs to attend, and the best way to behave, or be seen to behave, in order to remain hip (Thornton 1995).

fuelled the tape-trading network, thus allowing for the perpetual circulation and global spread of, and personal/communal connectivity to, sonic transgression.

However, although this accounts for the function of sole tape-traders, throughout the tape trading network, what does this suggest for the musicians linked to this underground scenic institution, who as I suggested previously, already carried much accrued scenic capital? With regards to this Kahn-Harris (2007, 126-127) suggests:

> Mundane subcultural capital is also acquired by musicians, but in a slightly more complicated way. Mundane subcultural capital is about contributing and sustaining the scene and not, principally, about innovating within the scene... Musicians accrue mundane subcultural capital by developing existing styles. The majority of musicians and bands in the scene are not innovators but refiners. Nonetheless, within a musical landscape of many similar bands refining similar styles, it is hard for musicians to accrue mundane subcultural capital by musical means alone. Those bands that accrue the greatest amounts of subcultural capital are generally those that are the most adept at working within scene institutions. They are the bands that are most skilled at forming relationships with a wide range of scene members. Accruing mundane subcultural capital by these means maximizes a bands chances of having their music released by a prominent label with a high standard of production.

This would indeed account for the fact that musicians were also required to engage in mundane scenic activity in order to maintain a healthy relationship with the tape-traders, so as to get their music circulated, and their band noticed. However, although Kahn-Harris is discussing the scene as it exists today in relation to bands "having their music released by a prominent label with a high standard of production," as I will argue in the next chapter, during the mid 1980s when death metal and grindcore bands were emerging, this was most definitely not the case (2007, 127).

Moreover, the fact that these bands were themselves defining what would become known as death metal and grindcore; by pushing the boundaries of sonic transgression to even further extremes, suggests that they *were* "innovators" at the time, "developing" older styles into what would only later become known as the "existing styles," which in scenic terms is often associated with a form of capital known as "transgressive sub-cultural capital" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 126-127). However, so as not to over complicate the discussion here, I will address this other form of subcultural capital much later in Chapter 4, for it has much relevance to new transgressive activities, that would emerge in the extreme metal scene in the early 1990s, in response to the fact that some scene members felt that certain extreme genres, especially death metal, had began to lose their innovative, and more importantly, transgressive potential (ibid; Reyes 2013).

For now however, what's most important here is an understanding that via the mundane scenic practice of tape-trading, traders as consumers of sonic transgression and musicians as producers (but also tape-trading consumers) of sonic transgression, were thus linked together via a symbiotic relationship, which perpetuated the global tape-trading network and in turn engendered and further perpetuated death metal, grindcore and the global extreme metal scene. Tape-trading therefore, as the negotiation of transgression into mundane sub-cultural capital, does in direct consequence, also engender the further accruement of internal scenic capital, namely death metal and grindcore, which in the early 1990s (as I shall be address in Chapter 4) was also transferable into other forms of capital, in other words, into high financial investment and global recognition/prestige.

In conclusion to this chapter therefore, through the lens of the extreme metal scene I have revealed how tape-trading, transgression (especially sonic transgression), death metal and grindcore were inextricably linked through a complex network of practices and discourses, as well as other wider scenic institutions (such as the recording industry) and genres (such as heavy metal). Furthermore, I have revealed that the phenomena of tape-trading, death metal and grindcore operated within temporal and globally spatial parameters, in which the (often unequal) flows of capital (manifest both inside and outside of the scene) *cannot* be ignored.

With regards to other important inter-related phenomena, and as promised earlier, it is now time to turn my attention to thrash and punk; without which there would be no sonic transgression (in extreme metal terms at least) and most likely no death metal or grindcore. Moreover, but of no less importance, without punk, neither would there have been a global underground tape-trading network. Thus, I continue on my journey into the next chapter by going deeper underground and further "South of Heaven."

3. Going deeper underground and further "South of Heaven"

"...it was the only way to distribute your music if you weren't able
to record [via record label support]." [translated from Finnish]

Jani Muurinen (vocalist with Xysma and former tape-trader)

Although my main analytical emphasis focuses on the global underground practice of tape-trading primarily between the mid 1980s and early 1990s relating to the emergence of death metal and grindcore, this particular practice, and these two extreme metal sub-genres cannot be separated from the important influence of underground punk or thrash. In the first section of this chapter, I will therefore explore the influence of punk's DIY (Do-it-yourself) ethos upon the emergence of global underground extreme music tape-trading and also upon heavy metal during the late 1970s/early 1980s, in terms of music aesthetics and independent record labels. I will argue that it was a direct result of these aforementioned factors that the thrash scene emerged, initially via metal's own global tape-trading network, and that it was the sonic transgression of thrash that would have the most significant impact upon the emergence of death metal and grindcore.

In the second section, I will argue that just because the thrash scene became very successful by the mid to late 1980s, spreading its sonic transgression throughout the world; this did not necessarily suggest that the more extreme sub-genres of death metal and grindcore which followed were also given the same opportunity to do so, namely by those with the greatest power/capital within the global thrash scene. Thus I will address the motivations behind the members within the death metal/grindcore scenes for going deeper underground in relation to their engagements with tape trading and attachments to extreme sonic transgression. Finally in the last section I will address the politics of this global underground extreme metal scene, by suggesting that the ideological motivations behind tape-trading for the original underground punks were not necessarily shared by the majority of members within the extreme metal underground.

3.1 The origins of tape trading, sonic transgression, death metal and grindcore

In the previous chapter it was suggested that there is always an element of "overlap" within the extreme metal scene especially in relation to other genres in terms of their sonic qualities, but also in terms of certain scenic practices, especially the practice of tape trading (Kahn-Harris 2007, 99). Indeed, when examining the emergence of death

metal and grindcore in the mid 1980s, their overlap with, and influence by, both the metal subgenre of thrash and the punk subgenres of anarcho and hardcore punk is of crucial importance. As punk emerged before thrash and also had an indisputable influence upon it, it is therefore with punk that I shall begin.

Punk and its DIY underground culture

The U.K punk explosion of 1976 with its first wave of London based bands, including The Clash, Sex Pistols and The Damned, would have a profound effect upon music and the world thereafter; not just in terms of its sound and visual aesthetics but also its attitude. This burgeoning punk scene that quickly became a global phenomenon was a youthful reaction against the then dominant rock scene, which by the mid 1970s was saturated by the musically technical excess of prog rock bands (for example Yes); as well as a reaction against the "establishment" (namely the powerful elite at the very top of the British class and political systems). Indeed, although this initial punk movement from the mid 70s was at the time more inclusive towards female participation (including band membership), its main demographic was still (often working-class) young men, for who, as I discussed in the previous chapter, embody a weakened social position in terms of authority. This position was further weakened during the high levels of poverty and youth unemployment in Britain around the mid 1970s (Savage 1991).

The attitude of punk therefore was not to accept the way things were and if you wanted to enact change you should (and could) do it yourself, and it was the do-it-yourself (DIY) attitude that became the central ethos and indeed clarion call of punk. For punks therefore, you didn't need to be a virtuoso musician to be in a band, in fact you needed very little music talent whatsoever, just perhaps know (or be shown) how to play about three chords on the guitar and you could form your own band (Waksman 2009). The outcome of such cacophony was more than just a back-to-basics approach, but also an intended noise (transgression against the system) as well as musical form, the latter of which Steve Waksman (2009, 164) suggests: "In punk, volume is more commonly attached to making "noise," creating a kind of sound that is designed to disturb sonic conventions and defamiliarize what may otherwise be standard song structures." This sonic transgression was further strengthened by punk's anti-establishment lyrics and its transgressive visual aesthetic (namely ripped, safety pinned or bondage style clothing; spiked, and later Mohican hairstyles; or transgressive iconography such as swastikas).

Punk's DIY attitude however was not just limited to kids forming bands, or, like their fans creating their own visual style/clothing aesthetic. Indeed, because there was very little hierarchy in scenic terms between punk bands and their fans (unlike that which existed between 70s grandiose rockstars and their fans), punk fans were also encouraged to actively participate more towards creating the scene. One of these scenic institutions was the underground publication of fanzines, which like the bands, enabled fans to participate in their own scene's discursive production, in other words preventing professional music industry journalists from being the only ones to dictate the terms of the scene and thus, like record companies, act as gatekeepers to its music. With regards to record companies, there were a few independent record labels such as Stiff Records or Chiswick Records that emerged around the same time as punk and began to release records by some of its early bands (for example the Damned) (Waksman 2009). Despite this, Punk's main protagonists, namely the Sex Pistols and The Clash, still signed very quickly to major record labels (who no doubt saw their profitable potential due to punk's vastly accelerating fan base). For many punks however, such a partnership between punk and the music industry establishment, did not rest well.

Indeed, by late 1977 a new movement grew from punk initially in the U.K and the U.S (but later spreading across the globe), which Tim Gosling (2004, 168-181) terms "The Underground Network of Anarcho-Punk." This underground network was a reaction against punk's assimilation into the mainstream, which by now not only included pioneering punk bands, but also punk's style quickly turning into a uniform/commercial fashion and losing its original aesthetic of individuality (namely posing as opposed to being authentic), which Gosling (2004, 169-170) suggests:

> The anarcho-punks viewed safety pins and Mohicans as little more than ineffectual fashion posturing stimulated by the mainstream media and industry...
>   ...Artistic integrity, social and political commentary and actions, and personal responsibility became the scene's central points, marking the anarcho-punks (as they would see it) as the opposite of what had came before under the name of punk. Whereas the Sex Pistols would proudly display bad manners and opportunism in their dealings with "the establishment" the anarcho-punks kept clear altogether...

This new underground punk movement therefore embodied a more partisan attitude towards maintaining, as well as furthering punk's original DIY anti-establishment ethos, which in relation extreme metal, can be viewed as another (albeit earlier) example of transgression arising from a questioning of the current state of internal scenic affairs and a desired return to order. Therefore, beyond the existing DIY scenic activity of fanzine

writing, these new punk bands took the DIY ethos one step further by forming their own record labels to distribute mainly their own (but also later other underground bands') recordings within their own underground community; thereby completely cutting themselves off from mainstream control (Dunn 2011).

However, before addressing the importance of these particular underground labels and other related underground networked practices, it needs to be clarified that although Gosling (2004) terms this movement "The Underground Network of Anarcho-Punk," there would actually arise from it two punk sub-genres: anarcho-punk, initially in the U.K with bands such as Crass; and hardcore punk, initially arising in both the U.S and the U.K with bands such as Black Flag (U.S) and Discharge (U.K). Musically, beyond hardcore retaining punk's amateurish guitar solos (albeit played with greater velocity) and anarcho-punk virtually eradicating guitar solos altogether, there was little difference between these two sub-genres that both "played faster and more chaotically than had been heard before" in punk (Gosling 2004, 170). Lyrically, whilst both sub-genres were concerned with issues such as "poverty, war, or prejudice"; anarcho-punk, as opposed to hardcore's pure nihilism, expressed far greater anti-capitalist and (as its name suggests) anarchic sentiment, as well stronger support for issues such as gender equality, human rights and animal rights (Gosling 2004, 170; Dunn 2011).

For the sake of this study, such distinctions are important here because whilst the sonic traces of underground punk (especially hardcore) can still be heard in death metal, anarcho-punk had more of a direct influence upon grindcore in terms of its lyrical themes, political stance and, in early grindcore at least the noticeable omission/infrequency of guitar solos; the latter of which was not adopted by death metal, which retained the obligatory guitar solo due to its metal credentials. This last point also highlights another important distinction; that death metal had its main origins within heavy metal whereas grindcore initially rose from the punk scene (this will be an important point to remember, especially with regards to the last section of this chapter).

Returning to the subject of record labels, as suggested above, many hardcore/anarcho-punk bands had decided to do-it-themselves by forming their own record labels e.g. Black Flag formed SST in the U.S and Crass formed Crass Records in the U.K. However, what differed from these labels and the major labels was that they adhered to an underground ethos of authenticity, namely DIY practice, anti-commerciality and a

distinctive aggressive sound that matched (or perhaps, even more affectively expressed) song lyrics confronting society's ills (as opposed to most mainstream music ignoring them through escapist fantasies), which Gosling (2004, 170) suggests:

> Production values were reduced to the lowest levels, a reflection of the budgets available under the DIY system, as well as a reaction against the values of commercial music. The sound was trashy, discordant, and very angry. Reflecting their outlook on the societies to which they objected, there was no respite, no chance to catch the breath, only a sense of imminent destruction, fear, anger, and desperation.

Indeed, to such an intense, aggressive, and most importantly, transgressive soundtrack, the discursive codes of the punk DIY underground were articulated further into social practice through underground distribution networks (for example, record sales through mail order, at gigs, or via small independent shops) and record promotion through fanzines (via ads and reviews). There was also the distribution of underground compilations such as Crass Records' "Bullshit Detector" series, which promoted bands who had submitted their demo tapes for inclusion (indecently the 3rd Bullshit Detector compilation released in 1984 contained a track by an early incarnation of future grindcore pioneers Napalm Death) (Mudrian 2004, 28; Gosling 2004).

Through such underground networks of DIY record distribution and promotion, as well as earlier scenic connectively through the circulation of fanzines (which arose with early punk) there also emerged the scenic institutions of letter writing and tape trading. Indeed, the global underground punk scene from the late 1970s was facilitated by fanzines that operated with a global perspective (such as "Maximum Rock 'n' Roll"), whose back pages "contained addresses of scene members throughout the world and adverts from people wanting to correspond," and this same "worldwide network of correspondents was tied into networks of trading" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 78).

As this suggests, the circulation of pen-pal letters and tapes perpetuated the cohesion and expansion of a global network of underground punk. For example, bands unable to release their own vinyl recordings due to perhaps a lack of finances and/or access to record pressing companies (the later due to geographical location), were, beyond their own gigs, still able to sell their demo tapes worldwide by placing adverts in globally distributed fanzines. Fans of these bands could then make contact, purchase the demos for a small fee and both maintain close personal contact through further letter writing or trading demos they had both received from other bands. These fans would in turn be able to trade their tapes with others throughout the network by making further contact

via pen-pal/tape-trading adverts in the fanzine. Thus music, scenic discourse (expressed through letters writing/fanzines) and friendship would circulate throughout this global network; connecting globally dispersed individuals/local scenes together; promoting bands; and inspiring the formation of countless other new DIY bands.

Overall therefore, such globally networked activity would enable the scene to accumulate its own capital and thus be able to sustain itself, allowing the bands to retain artistic control over their music, and as with fanzine writers, freedom of expression without fear of state censorship, or further silencing by the mainstream music industry.[1]

The "authentic" origins of thrash and its establishment of the extreme metal scene

Although within the U.K by the late 1970s there had been very rare occasions of heavy metal bands being (partially) accepted within punk, such as Motörhead, whose high volume, fast-paced noise, was not too far removed from punk, the U.K first wave punk and heavy metal scenes did not really mix (Christie 2003; Waksman 2009). Indeed, by the late 70s most of the iconic bands associated with heavy metal were no strangers to rock star grandeur (e.g. Led Zeppelin), prog-style virtuosic excess (e.g. Deep Purple), or even lyrical escapist fantasy (e.g. Rainbow); in other words the antithesis of punk.

However, immediately after the first U.K punk explosion, bands emerging within the heavy metal scene were largely ignored by the record labels and music press, who were more interested in capitalising on this punk scene (Waksman 2009). For many young bands in the U.K, who grew up as ardent fans of heavy metal and had remained so after the punk explosion, it was obvious despite this (momentary) marginalisation that the music these *mainly* proficient musicians wanted to play was still heavy metal. Although, this is not to suggest that they had not been influenced by punk in any way.

Indeed, for a new breed of young working-class heavy metal bands such as Iron Maiden, Def Leppard and Saxon, their music had youthful energy akin to punk with much faster paced distorted sound than the more established heavy metal bands of the time, thus giving heavy metal in general the reinvigoration it needed in light of punk's current dominance. Furthermore, instead of waiting around for record labels to take

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[1] With regards to how the same scenic practice of pen-pal correspondence and its entry into tape-trading operated within the extreme metal scene a short while later, I will address this in much greater detail and with more focus upon the empirical data in the next chapter.

interest in their demos, bands such as Iron Maiden and Def Leppard appropriated punk's DIY ethos by releasing vinyl E.P recordings via their own labels in 1979 (Waksman 2009). The important difference here, however, is that the formation of such underground labels was not out of any anti-establishment ideology like later punk, but out of a necessity for these bands to get their music out to the fans (as well as generating any label, magazine and radio play interest) in a climate saturated by mainstream punk.

This new breed of heavy metal would soon be championed by music journalists such as Geoff Barton from *Sounds*, who would group these young saviours of heavy metal under the banner: "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" (N.W.O.B.H.M), and before long a strong scene would emerge, with Iron Maiden and Def Leppard being quickly signed to major labels (Christie 2003). Incidentally, a little while later in 1981 Barton would become editor of Sounds' metal magazine offshoot: Kerrang!, which by this time with such support from the music industry suggested N.W.O.B.H.M's rise to prominence, including its commercial enterprise, especially now that first wave punk was in decline (ibid). Moreover, to further accommodate this rise, as with the indie labels that had arisen previously with punk, small independent heavy metal labels emerged in the U.K such as Neat Records in Newcastle, which quickly signed local bands Raven and Venom (Waksman 2009).

Indeed, with these particular bands, being signed to an indie meant that their sound, due to lower budget production costs was not as polished as the major label (bigger budget) Iron Maiden and Def Leppard recordings. These bands also took their music to greater extremes than any other N.W.O.B.H.M bands in terms of speed, especially Venom who not only retained more much of punk's (and Motörhead's) back to basics noisy chaotic sonic aesthetic, but was also very transgressive in terms of its satanic imagery and lyrics (Christie 2003; Kahn-Harris 2007; Waksman 2009). Moreover, Venom, similar to anarcho/hardcore punk, began to further accentuate its transgressiveness by distancing itself from what effectively had been 70s heavy metal's assimilation into the mainstream. Indeed, Venom vocalist/bassist Cronos claimed "If people think the likes of Foreigner are Heavy Metal, then we don't want to be associated with it at all. Our music is Power Metal, Venom Metal, Black Metal, not Heavy Metal," which leads Steve Waksman (2009, 195) to suggest:

> Whereas many bands sought to renounce their association with metal so as to claim
> inclusion in some broader categorization (rock, pop), Venom may have been the first

band to deliberately seek a more limiting classification for itself. With this gesture, emphasizing narrowness rather than breadth of appeal, exclusivity rather than inclusiveness, the seeds of an underground metal sensibility were planted.

Such discourses circulating at the extreme margins of heavy metal suggests that some heavy metal scene members had become increasingly disillusioned with the way in which metal was now being misrepresented by commercial radio friendly rock bands such as Foreigner. Indeed, bands like Foreigner, were in great contrast, to the doom/evil sound and imagery of heavy metal originators Black Sabbath, the heavy faster sounds and macho studded leather image of Judas Priest, and the noise and working-class rebel image of Motörhead; a foundational heavy metal collective termed affectionately in some extreme metal circles as the "unholy triumvirate" (Patterson 2013, 4).

As this suggests, Cronos' suggestion that Venom be exclusively categorised as Power Metal, Venom Metal, or Black Metal, reveals a desire to transgressively split from the mainstream only to return to the power, danger and sense of foreboding originally at the heart of metal. Thus, an underground metal sensibility was indeed planted here, but unlike anarcho/hardcore punk's politically laden purist discourse of a return to its DIY anti-establishment ethos, this new metal discourse called for a purist return to heavy metal's transgressive provenance, which, with the music being metal's dominant code was most profoundly articulated through sonic transgression.

However, this perpetual extreme metal discourse would best be articulated not by the N.W.O.B.H.M scene (which would soon become very commercial itself), but instead by a more extreme form of heavy metal known as thrash, which emerged initially in the U.S via an embryonic global network of "metal" underground tape-trading. Incidentally, this same network a few years later, but by then a more scenically institutionalised one, would also spawn death metal.[2]

The origins of thrash can be traced to a very small group of committed young heavy metal fans/record collectors from California, who from 1979 came into contact with a burgeoning underground heavy metal movement emanating from the U.K, referred to by those in the know as the N.W.O.B.H.M, which despite not making any commercial impact in the U.S. at the time, was still entering the county by alternative means;

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[2] Grindcore's emergence through the tape trading underground is slightly more complicated and will therefore be addressed separately in the last section of this chapter.

namely via an underground metal tape-trading network that Waksman (2009, 229-230) claims:

> ...was the province of a small ensemble of dedicated heavy metal fans who were dispersed around the United States, Europe, and points further afield. Holding these fans together was combination of mail correspondence, fanzines, and a few mass-market publications such as *Sounds* and, slightly later *Kerrang!*..."

As this importantly suggests, by 1979 tape trading, including its inter-connected practices of letter writing and fanzine publishing had become established within (appropriated by) the heavy metal scene, thus underground punk had not only influenced the sonic elements of underground metal, but had also influenced it in terms of underground social practice. One particular trader from Los Angeles, was Brian Sagel, who whilst being "dedicated to the local Californian metal scene" was "also distinctly drawn" to the N.W.O.B.H.M and its associated DIY practice, thus inspiring him to start his own record label, Metal Blade in 1982 in order to release a compilation of unsigned local L.A metal bands entitled "Metal Massacre" (Waksman 2009, 229).

Metal Massacre featured a mix of glam metal bands, traditional heavy metal bands, as well as one band (still in its embryonic stages) named Metallica, put together by avid metal tape-trader Lars Ulrich and influenced by the heavier/faster N.W.O.B.H.M. bands. Metal Massacre would be a great success, prompting Metallica to release their famous "No Life 'til Leather" demo tape, which soon set the tape-trading underground alight with excitement, which in turn prompted Sagel thereafter to use Metal Blade as an independent metal label for signing/promoting bands whose music was on the faster, heavier and more aggressive spectrum of metal (Christie 2003, Waksman 2009).

Metallica however would not sign to Metal Blade, but to another independent label instead; Megaforce Records, formed in New York in 1983 by John and Marsha Zazula (husband and wife record-store owners with links to the tape-trading underground), for the sole purpose of releasing Metallica's music. Indeed, John, then acting as their manager was unable to secure the band a major label record contract despite the underground buzz around their "No Life 'til Leather" demo (Waksman 2009, 234). As this therefore suggests, more independent metal labels were now emerging in the U.S with the sole intention of releasing metal's (then) most extreme bands, which included the bands such as Slayer, Anthrax, Exodus and Megadeth, all soon to be grouped under the exclusive heavy metal sub-genre of thrash. Therefore, as with Venom previously, by

marking itself out as different, the formation of thrash as a metal sub-genre suggests its desire to separate from the (U.S) heavy metal scene of the time.

Indeed, this music was built upon the purer heavier metal of Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Motörhead, the fastest most aggressive forms of the N.W.O.B.H.M, such as Raven and Venom, and to some extent also incorporated the sonic aggression of the U.S underground hardcore punk scene's of New York, Washington D.C and L.A., thus all contributing to the embryonic form of extreme metal sonic transgression. However, it was another music scene from L.A that these thrash bands wanted to separate themselves from: glam metal, which by 1983 was quickly rising to become metal's dominant sub-genre (Walser 1993, Weinstein 2000; Christie 2003). Thus beyond their sonic transgression, thrash bands also adopted the more traditional heavy metal working-class rebel look as personified by Motörhead to distinguish themselves from the glam metal "poseurs." Moreover, this also led Metallica to leave the glam metal heartland of L.A and settle in neighbouring San Francisco, which as mentioned in the last chapter would become the eventual spiritual home of the (global) thrash scene.

Two possible reasons that San Francisco would become important to creating a unified thrash scene beyond its important bands such as Exodus and the newly arrived Metallica, is firstly its location was away from the commercial music industry situated in L.A, which Kahn-Harris (2007, 98) suggests is a trait that commonly exists within extreme metal scenes (such as the Gothenburg death metal scene), which are often "off-centre" to the "global flows of capital." This distance from a major commercial music scene would thus add to thrash's underground credentials. Secondly, San Francisco already contained a thriving live metal scene "far less orientated toward glam style and pop musical hooks" and more into "die hard, underground metal" (Waksman 2009, 176). Indeed, Chris Reifert, prior to becoming the drummer of death metal pioneers Death and (later) vocalist/drummer of Autopsy, was a teen member of this burgeoning San Francisco thrash scene, about which, when interviewed for this study he stated:

> It was pretty badass, thinking back on it. It all seemed like uncharted territory and it was pretty exciting. I saw some shows here that people would kill to see now...As for tape trading feeding the scene here, it sure didn't hurt!

As this suggests, with the emergence of thrash the early extreme metal scene would institutionally consolidate itself, for thrash had the sonically transgressive bands, the die-hard fans, the gigs, independent record labels, fanzines, official metal magazines

(now on the rise after Kerrang!, e.g. Metal Forces and Metal Hammer), a claim to metal authenticity, as well as its very own tape-trading network, which continued "feeding the scene" with sonic transgression emanating from different parts of the world. Indeed, by 1986 the first wave of thrash bands had released their first two or three albums, setting the heavy metal world alight with their sonic transgression connecting with other thrash bands/scenes emerging not just in the U.S but also abroad, especially in Europe (e.g. Germany's thrash scene, which had emerged by 1984 with its own independent labels). Such scenes would likely have first been exposed to N.W.O.B.H.M then U.S thrash via demos or even dubbed tapes of official recordings circulating through the tape trading underground (I will address the varied musical contents of the tapes in the next chapter).

One very important band to arise from the first wave of U.S thrash was Slayer, who like N.W.O.B.H.M band Venom, were the most extreme band within their particular genre, actually taking their cues from Venom, by not only pushing the almost punkish and aggressively sonic assault to new transgressive extremes (further expressed by Tom Araya's screamed and tortured vocals) but also the satanic imagery in terms of lyrics and artwork. Indeed, Slayer's peers tended to focus more on the realities of war, ecological destruction, pain and human suffering than on satanic themes. Although, what is most important here is the fact that Slayer's early albums, beginning with "Show No Mercy" in 1983, would be hugely influential on the emergence of death metal and the shaping of grindcore (both of which I will discuss further in the following sections).

Before moving on the to the next section, it was stated in Chapter 1 that extreme metal tape-trading was "most prevalent in the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 80). However, if by the mid 1980s when thrash was beginning to take-off, why did tape-trading become more common later, especially now that thrash metal labels were firmly in place within the scene? For *surely* these labels were all releasing records by the most extreme metal bands emerging throughout the globe...*weren't they?*

3.2 Motivations - sonic transgression verses the new gatekeepers

With regards to the consolidation of the thrash scene as I have discussed above, this convergence of sonic transgression was thus negotiated into various elements of mundane scenic activity such as the running of record labels, gig/tour promotion, fanzine/magazine publications, including underground tape-trading, which would

obviously afford it much global scope, institutional thickness and therefore the accumulation of much scenic capital. However, due to the very nature of discourses of metal authenticity (best articulated via the musical codes of its sonic transgression), this burgeoning thrash scene would inevitably and quite quickly fragment, namely with the rise of a more commercial thrash scene; and the emergence of an even more extreme and sonically transgressive underground sub-genre to become known as "death metal."

With regards to the rise of a more commercial thrash scene (as was the case previously with the N.W.O.B.H.M. bands Def Leppard and Iron Maiden), certain bands would attain popularity more quickly and at higher levels than others. This was especially true of Metallica and Slayer, accumulating not only more sub-cultural capital, but also more financial capital for the scene. Furthermore, in terms of financial capital accumulation, this was not just in terms of independent labels receiving financial support from fans purchasing these bands' official recordings, but more importantly, major labels injecting further financial capital into the scene through distribution deals with these smaller labels, or buying-out band contracts. As Keith Kahn-Harris (2007, 69) suggests, building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to explain the extreme metal scene's accumulation of (financial) capital from outside itself: "power is kaleidoscopic, fields 'refract' capital from other fields and from the overarching 'field of power'."

Moreover, after the initial explosion of thrash bands, especially the more extreme variants such as Slayer or even Switzerland's Hellhammer (soon to become the highly influential Celtic frost) and in unison, the sudden surge of independent metal labels on the scene (including Metal Blade, Megaforce and Combat in the U.S and Noise, Roadrunner and Music for Nations in Europe), this sent a clear message to aspiring bands emerging within the global metal underground that those who wished to play extreme metal instead of lite/glam metal could still obtain a record contract. However, these new bands would inevitably want to be more extreme/transgressive than what came before, for such is the very nature of maintaining transgressive dynamism. Such bands emerging in the U.S in wake of the initial thrash explosion and taking their sonic (as well as lyrical) transgression to greater extremes were Possessed (from San Francisco), Death and Morbid Angel (both from Tampa, Florida).

These particular bands would expand on the sonic intensity and aggression of Slayer and Celtic Frost, which included adopting a more extreme (almost animalistic) guttural

vocal style, resembling the now familiar generic sounds of extreme metal's sonic transgression (as already outlined in chapter 2). Although, what is most important to clarify here is that such bands, due to their more extreme interpretation of thrash and more narrower lyrical themes concerning not only Satanism (as with Possessed and Morbid Angel) but more commonly death, mutilation, horror and gore (as with Death), would by the late 1980s be more commonly known throughout the extreme metal underground as death metal (Mudrian 2004). Indecently, another band of note during this period was Genocide (later to be renamed Repulsion, from Flint, Michigan), who were not only inspired strongly by thrash but also hardcore punk, and would be a strong influence on the future of grindcore (Mudrian 2004).

Like the thrash bands before them, these embryonic death metal bands (and embryonic grindcore bands such as Genocide/Repulsion), which emerged circa 1983/84 all relied on the tape-trading underground to get their music heard by fans (and on occasions purchased by fans, if not traded for other tapes). These bands also relied on the tape-trading to hear other inspirational extreme interpretations of thrash emerging in pockets throughout the world; as well as get their music hopefully heard by people associated with the independent record labels, namely musicians signed to these labels, who were still active tape-traders. As was customary with all aspiring metal bands, their demos would also be sent directly to the independent labels, with hope of soliciting interest in their music, and ultimately leading to a recording contract (see Mudrian 2003; and Netherton 2014).

However, during the mid 1980s now that the independent metal record labels had become the global thrash scene's primary institution (albeit still indebted to the tape-trading for helping nurture new bands, thus "feeding the scene"), as suggested earlier, they were now as reliant on capital from without the scene (financial capital) as they were from capital from within (sub-cultural capital), if not more reliant on the former. Indeed, in the wake of Metallica and Slayer, there arose a plethora generic clones guaranteeing a wealth of raw materials, but whether these raw materials could be turned into gold, or in other words that these bands would make a profit for the labels, was never guaranteed.

Ultimately therefore, although these independent labels were the specialists of the most commercially available extreme forms of heavy metal by the mid to late 1980s, and in

most part originally set up by fans/tape-traders to promote this form of music, they were after all businesses, which (unlike many of the anarcho punk labels) needed to operate on market principles, in other words, keep making a profit to sustain themselves.

What this meant for the underground metal bands creating music even more sonically transgressive than Slayer therefore (namely the embryonic death metal/grindcore bands), was that they would find it more difficult to find an independent record label willing to take a chance on them, as opposed to those remaining closer to the winning formula of Metallica. Indeed, although Slayer's third studio album "Reign in Blood," released on the corporate backed Def Jam Recordings in 1986 marked the band's first album to chart in the US (peaking at Number 94), it was Metallica's third studio album, "Master of Puppets" also released in 1986 on major label Elektra, which gained the most commercial success (peaking at Number 6 in the US charts); becoming the genre's first platinum selling album and signalling thrash's rise in stature throughout the wider global heavy metal scene (Walser 1993; Romanowski and George-Warren 2001).

Metallica's greater commercial success would thus suggest to its former independent label Megaforce, including the label's peers (such as Metal Blade and Roadrunner) that bands in the vein of Metallica would be a much safer (namely more lucrative) bet than those following in the vein of the slightly more transgressive Slayer, or more importantly, those attempting to *transgress* the boundaries already set by Slayer. Moreover, to hinder things further, this was the same period (as addressed in the previous chapter) in which the P.M.R.C were beginning to make things more difficult with their call for censorship on any transgressive music, especially metal bands with lyrical themes concerning violence or the occult etc; thus causing the record industry to tread even more carefully (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). Indeed, Columbia Records, the original distributors of Slayer's "Reign in Blood" refused to distribute that album on the strength of the song "Angel of Death" (morbidly retelling the horrific experiments of Nazi Doctor, Josef Mengele), thus forcing record label Def Jam to sign a distribution deal with Geffen Records instead (Romanowski and George-Warren 2001).

Prior to 1986 a miniscule number of bands such as Possessed had managed to trickle through signing to independent metal label Combat records in 1984 on the strength of their popular underground traded demo "Death Metal," eventually releasing their debut album "Seven Churches" in 1985 (Mudrian 2003). Moreover, such labels willing to take

a chance on the more extreme forms of metal (such as death metal) emerging on the tape-trading underground, would do so sporadically due the plethora of more commercially viable thrash bands still circulating on the scene (David 2009). Indeed, it would not be until 1987 when death metal's genre defining band Death would release their debut album "Scream Bloody Gore" also on Combat Records (on the strength of their very popular 1986 "Mutilation" demo); whilst other influential bands, such as Morbid Angel, Repulsion and Autopsy had to wait until 1989 to have their material officially released by two very small (originally anarcho/hardcore) labels from the U.K (the importance of which I will address in the next chapter) (Mudrian 2004).

By late 1980s however, bands such as Metallica and even to a degree Slayer, began to slowly adhere to the commercial codes of the recording industry, with Slayer's fourth studio album "South of Heaven" (1988) overall slightly slower in tempo, utilising more undistorted guitar parts and Tom Araya delivering his screaming/tortured vocal style with slightly more subtlety, thus contributing to a more polished production sound compared to the uncompromising sonic transgression of their first album.

Metallica however, (who already had a more polished sound than Slayer to begin with) would go even further with their fourth studio album "...And Justice for All" (1988) in terms of greater commercial acceptability by releasing the single "One"; a morose style ballad about the horrors of war, which for most of the song's early half utilised clean vocals, clean guitars and classical guitar style solos. This particular single also had an accompanying promotional video (the band's first video single) which was in rotation on MTV amongst the more prevalent lite/glam metal videos of the time, helping it to become the band's first commercial hit single, entering number 35 in the U.S Billboard charts, thus placing the band firmly on the path toward their future global commercial success (Romanowski and George-Warren 2001; Wall 2012).

Although it could be argued that Metallica had similar songs to "One" off their last two albums that also begin more subtly and get heavier/faster towards the end, such as "Fade to Black" and "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)"; because "One" was the first song to be granted a video, this was how the band was therefore presented to a wider (viewing) public, especially mainstream heavy metal fans. Such fans would perhaps find this more commercial form of thrash much more accessible than thrash's earlier incarnation (namely the more sonically transgressive first album by Metallica and definitely Slayer's

first album). What this signalled to the now established (business focused) independent metal labels during the late 1980s was that thrash bands willing incorporating more commercial elements into their repertoire would now be an even safer bet; thus curtailing the record deal aspirations of the underground metal bands, whose extreme sonically transgressive interpretation of thrash *could not* be compromised.

However, now that thrash itself had begun to display signs of "weakness" (via its own commerciality), the very nature of extreme metal implicated the need for a more transgressive reaction, namely, pushing sonic transgression to far greater dynamic extremes, for as Kahn-Harris (2007, 34) suggested in the previous chapter, "[t]he abject cannot simply be controlled once; dominance has to be proven again and again." This would inevitably create a quandary for these unrepentant underground bands in their search for recording contracts such as was the case for example with (future Napalm Death guitarist) Mitch Harris' former (grindcore) band, Righteous Pig, about which he states:

> Trying to find a record deal [for Righteous Pig] was hard. I sent a demo to Roadrunner, and [label boss] Monte Connor actually called me the next day. He said we were a bit too extreme for what they were signing, but that the music seemed different, and told us to keep trying to shop it to some other labels..." (Cited in Netherton 2014, 63).

Ultimately, by the late 1980s, the once very supportive independent thrash metal record labels had themselves now become the *new* gatekeepers of metal's extreme sonic transgression, who were not necessarily unsympathetic, as the above quote suggests, just unable to accommodate anything "too extreme" in a climate when thrash had become more profitable by becoming slightly less extreme. Thus any unsigned extreme metal bands transgressing even further "South of Heaven" than (the once transgressively ground-breaking) Slayer, had very little chance of obtaining a recording contract with any of these now very *established* metal labels.

However, although the thrash metal scene had now become increasingly more mainstream and enmeshed within the global flows of financial capital, one underground scenic institution/safe haven still remained strongly intact: the global tape-trading network. Thus, in order keep the sonic transgression of extreme metal in circulation therefore, the unsigned bands and tape-traders needed to go *deeper* underground.

Record Contracts and Record Collectors

One recurring theme in this section thus far was that the ultimate goal for underground death metal/grindcore bands via their tape-trading practice was to secure a record contract. This, in relation to the discussion on the underground punk DIY ethos/ authenticity discourses in this chapter's first section seems to imply a contradiction in terms, for as Gosling (2004, 172) suggests: "[t]he members of the [underground punk] networks worked hard, not with financial motivations but with a common belief in the integrity of the networks and common opposition to the mainstream industry." However, was the motivation of underground extreme metal musicians purely financial? Moreover, just because a particular music scene is not vocal in its opposition to the mainstream industry, does this mean that that no opposition exists at all, for surely the underground practice of tape-trading suggests otherwise?

To answer the first question, it makes sense to explore what obtaining a recording contract and recording an official debut album actually meant to the musicians of these underground death metal/grindcore bands:

> **Author:** How did the experience of recording "Scream Bloody Gore" [Death] and later "Severed Survival" [Autopsy] compare to recording (and trading) your early demos with both bands?
>
> **Chris:** Well, we got to go into better studios and have more time to record. That was the main thing. That, along with knowing that the recording would actually be going into record stores where people could just walk in and buy a copy.

Although Chris mentions that "people could just walk in and buy a copy," this suggestion of purchasing the band's music is no different to how most underground bands operated, including the anarcho/hardcore punks, namely selling their demo tapes to fans, or even selling their own records and other bands' records directly to the fans, through their own record label (for example, Black Flag's SST label). Moreover, when underground punk bands were selling their own demos/albums the revenue made (essentially required to keep the band functioning, such as equipment and petrol for gigs) was guaranteed to go directly to the band, for even the anti-capitalist anarcho-punks Crass made a "substantial" profit from their music sales via their own Crass Records label (Gosling 2004, 178). This however was most definitely not the case with bands signed to independent metal record labels, who were unlikely to make any profit at all, as Don Girovasi, the former promotions/A&R (artists and repertoire) person at Combat Records states:

> The label would pay the studio costs up front, but that money is recoupable, meaning that that the money is a loan against record sales. The band doesn't see any royalties until the studio costs and such are paid back to the label. It's probably the biggest reason why indie bands don't make any money (cited in David 2009).

Thus, it was the love of creating sonic transgression and its more accessible global spread, in other words getting the music out there, and not the love of money that was the prime motivation of the death metal/grindcore musicians. Indeed, in contrast to the anarcho/hardcore punk attitudes towards the first wave punks as selling-out, the underground extreme metal fans were very supportive of bands wishing to secure record a contract, for the very same musical motivation as the bands; for example:

> **Author:** Was there ever any talk on the underground about bands selling-out if they signed with record labels or were most traders happy to see them signed and made popular to larger audiences?

> **Luxi:** No, there was not that kind of talk about any bands (as far as I can recall) when they got signed to some record company. In fact, people tended to think just very opposite way, and hoping to hear an excellent debut album from some certain Metal band that was still doing demos a little while ago.

What is also interesting with regards to this attitude is that even the thrash originators during their move towards a more mainstream direction were also afforded a large degree immunity from the underground border guards of sonic transgression:

> **Jami:** At the beginning they were very much respected. Of course they were. Metallica in particular were the forerunners of Thrash...so they weren't criticized in the Underground trading scene at least. From the early 90s onwards only, people began accusing of the bigger names for selling out. Jealousy really.

As this understandably suggests, unlike the glam/lite metal bands who once ruled the kingdom of heavy metal via the strong support of the mainstream record industry, thrash innovators such as Metallica had turned the tide on the loss of metal's transgressive dynamism. Indeed, not only did they offer a strong alternative to the misrepresentation by "poser" metal for many alienated die-hard metal fans throughout the world; they also opened the flood gates for even more extreme transgressive genres to emerge such as death metal and grindcore.

Returning to theme of motivation however, another prime motivation behind extreme metal tape-trading amongst both the musicians and fans alike was *collecting*. Indeed, this was featured quite significantly within the empirical data; for example:

> **Lee:** I was quite heavily involved in tape trading...This led onto other things, including more serious record collecting etc.

Chris	....to be honest, I never really considered myself much of a tape trader. More of a collector you could say, though I did trade demos with some bands back then.
Mike:	...everyone was trying to get their hands on whatever they could from bands that they liked.
Jami:	At one point I was heavily into obscure US Death/Thrash metal and collected that stuff in great volume.
Luxi:	I basically collected everything in the very beginning because I was so thrilled to make some new band discoveries constantly, I would say. At some point I was just collecting simply for the sake of collecting, trying to increase the amount of items on my trade lists - and trying to make people interested in the stuff that I had in my collection. It sort of became like an obsession to me...

With regards to record collecting, this could be considered both an essentially "masculine practice" and the "mundane, solipsistic practice par excellence" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 63). In terms of it being a masculine practice, which offers the self a form of control over that which consumes and threatens you, Simon Reynolds (2004, 294) suggests:

> ...record collecting remains overwhelmingly boys-own: just check the gender imbalance at your average record fair. If there's a distinctively masculine "sickness" here, its perhaps related to the impulse to control, contain, master what actually masters, ravishes, disorganises you: to erect bulwarks against the loss of the self is music's greatest gift.

This suggestion of "control" is very interesting in relation to the earlier discussion about the extreme metal scene's desire via sonic transgression to "control" the abject, and only being able to achieve this by shutting itself away in the underground (to strengthening its defences against the abjectified threat of weakness). However, although sonic transgression and underground practice are more associated with personal attachments to transgression, Kahn-Harris (2007, 63) argues that the mundane practice of collecting is "a masculine practice that differs markedly from the sort of transgressive displays of male power that are so prominent within the scene," for instead it "involves a sustained commitment to the development and organisation of vast and detailed scenic knowledge." An important point to remember here is that it was the commitment of collectors such as Brian Sagel and Lars Ulrich, whose cumulative knowledge of N.W.O.B.H.M and underground tape-trading helped to facilitate the birth of thrash.

Indeed, as I will argue in the next chapter, it is precisely the sort of personal commitment to the scene as expressed by Luxi above that enabled the tape-trading network to function, and ultimately death metal and grindcore to spread throughout the globe. Also, whereas Luxi discuss his collecting as an "obsession," this I will also argue

can be viewed as the *affect* that the accruement of mundane subcultural capital had upon its members, which beyond its functionality will also reiterate the negotiation of transgression into mundane scenic practice. Moreover, although record collecting can be viewed as "pure commodity fetishism" (Reynolds 2004, 292), and a desire to accumulate large tape/record collections can be viewed as an equally problematic phenomenon known as "stockpiling" (Attali 1985, 101); I will however argue in the following chapter that collecting and stockpiling underground tapes was essential to the facilitation of the tape-trading network and further development of death metal and grindcore's sonic transgression.

However, before moving on to the next chapter, one question remains: if these extreme metal bands wanted to secure themselves a recording contract via tape-trading and their fans were primarily engaged in collecting via tape-trading; how can this be understood in terms of being underground, or in other words, as anti-establishment practice?

3.3 The "politics" of the extreme metal tape-trading underground

In the first section to this chapter I established how the anarcho/hardcore punks regarded their underground practice as purely anti-establishment/anti-commercial, which obviously implies a very strong motivation towards the *political* (namely direct action against those holding/sustaining dominant power). However, when considering how the notion of "politics" is predominantly understood and expressed within the extreme metal scene, especially with regards to underground practice, this embodies a very different set of principles altogether. Indeed, the mere mention of external politics within the extreme metal scene is often met with reservation as the responses to the following question imply:

> **Author:** Were you interested in any bands with political messages such as grindcore bands like Napalm Death or Carcass?
>
> **Jami:** I wasn't interested in politics. In fact, I wasn't particularly keen on hearing political statements or messages in Metal music. Wrong venue, methinks.
>
> **Jukka:** Sure, but mostly just for the music. For the most part we avoided politics and all that goes along with it.
>
> **Mike:** Even though I don't really like politics in music, I didn't listen to bands like that for their message, I listened to them for their music and their overall sound more than what they were saying in their words.

As this suggests, external politics seemed practically unwelcome amongst these particular musicians and traders actively involved in the underground extreme metal scene, to the point even that it was considered to impair the music. Indeed, Kahn-Harris 2007, 154) claims that this is a dominant view held within the extreme metal scene in which "politics" is regarded as something that takes place strictly "outside of the scene" and music is upheld as a purely "autonomous" entity, which is itself part of a long standing "tradition of idealist musical discourse that has obscured the connections between music and society." For the extreme metal scene therefore, unlike the anarcho and hardcore punk scenes, music, not politics, will always be its raison d'être.

When considering politics within music however, it is worth enquiring upon what criteria music is being judged, in other words, should any music and associated scene deemed devoid of overt political activism or politically progressive potential be regarded as invalid, and more importantly, who has the right to decide?

Michelle Phillipov (2012, 68) suggests that both heavy and extreme metal have often been framed by progressive critics within the academy as "conservative and reactionary" and lacking in terms of its political commitment, thus failing to live up to their more "celebratory accounts" regarding the libratory potentials of punk, hip hop, and electronic dance music. However, whilst acknowledging the importance of political questions towards the study of popular music culture, Phillipov (ibid) argues:

> [S]imply chastising the music, the scene, and its fans for their reluctance to create for metal a radical politics ultimately tells us little about the kinds of affective investments that can motivate metal fandom or about the pleasures of listening to metal music.

For Robert Walser (1993, 55), "pleasure frequently *is* the politics of music," both in terms of listening to music which affords personal empowerment and also pleasure from being attached to a marginalised and transgressive music scene; and claims that such pleasures are mostly experienced through the music itself, namely "beyond the vocals." This concurs with what has already been suggested in the previous chapter via the empirical data, in that lyrics were of little importance to the musicians or traders, thus it was sonic transgression that that offered the real politics as far as these musicians/traders were concerned, in other words, the politics of pleasure. Indeed, the pleasure for these individuals to produce and consume the music most important to them and their community (namely the global extreme metal scene), unconditionally and without intervention by the record company gatekeepers.

Returning to Kahn-Harris' (2007, 154) earlier claim that within the extreme metal scene, politics is regarded as something that takes place strictly "outside of the scene," for these underground extreme metal musicians and traders at least, there were perhaps other reasons as to why politics may have also been regarded as being on the "outside" that needs some further consideration: One particular reason was adolescence and its associated discourses, for example:

> **Chris:** We just wanted to play brutal music, it was that simple. No statements or anything like that, just teenagers making noise.

> **Jani:** There was no "statement". We just wanted to create music. You didn't think about making music. Partly It was about growing old and being young. Other people work on their moped and others play in a band. *[translated from Finnish]*

> **Luxi:** ...it was the bands' highly energetic music that did all the talking among the tape traders, fanzine writers, etc. as far as I can see this. I don't think kids at my age back then (from 15 to 18), were so interested whether some bands did have some political message incorporated into their music they did - not for us non-English speaking tape traders anyway. As long as the music was loud, heavy, fast and all that shit, it got tape traders general acceptance, I believe upside-down crosses, pentagrams, six-six-six marks and such in the lyrics, were obviously a definite plus for the kids of my age back in those days - definitely more fascinating and exciting than any type of politically orientated shit, no doubt.

Firstly, whilst the primary pleasure of producing/consuming sonic transgression, to which any political statements were subordinate, is undeniably evident here with these particular musicians/traders, what is particularly interesting is that they frame their transgressive pleasures through their adolescence. Indeed, these scene members were mostly still in their teens when active members of the extreme metal tape trading scene, and as with all teenagers, but especially for young males, as was discussed in the previous chapter, they're always in a position of disempowerment enforced by authority (specifically parents, teachers, employers and police). Therefore politics, in the sense of governments/politicians, may be regarded as just another form of *outside authority*, or threat which curtails their freedom and gets in the way of them having fun (pleasure).

Moreover, as Luxi also implies here, transgressive texts (such as "pentagrams") seemed to offer more personal empowerment (via the accruement of sub-cultural capital) than was afforded by political authority figures. For as mentioned earlier and also in the last chapter, during the mid 1980s politicians and political lobbyists (namely the P.M.R.C) had already exerted their own capital (influential/powerful position) to place restrictions

on metal, which they deemed lyrically/visually (discursively) transgressive. Thus there was obviously within the extreme metal underground, much suspicion towards "politics," especially when directly threatening. Moreover, Luxi's statement also obviously reveals the pleasure of flaunting ones adolescence via attachments to transgressive music and discourse to the annoyance of outside authority, or as Deena Weinstein (2000, 270) put it in the previous chapter, being "proud pariahs."

Another reason that direct political messages incorporated into the music via the lyrics may not have had much influence upon particular scene members was language comprehension. For as Luxi also stated above, many tape traders throughout the global extreme metal underground were "non-English speaking," which suggests that even if the music did contain politicised lyrics, when listened to by a trader/musician in another country with perhaps no, or very rudimentary, understanding of the English language, such lyrics may not have been fully understood as conveying political messages. This is not to suggest that English was the only language circulating throughout the global underground (indeed Luxi as I will reveal in the next chapter, initially traded Finnish language hardcore punk throughout the underground), but the majority of death metal/grindcore bands to emerge in the mid 1980s to early 1990s at least sang, screamed or growled in English.

This primary use of English was no doubt due to the fact that the early influences on the extreme metal scene from Venom to Slayer and many of the influential anarcho/hardcore punks bands (such as Crass, G.B.H and Discharge), as well as the aforementioned fundamental heavy metal bands (namely Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Motörhead) all sang in their native English language. Moreover, so too did most of the early influential extreme metal bands from Europe sing in English, such as Celtic Frost (Switzerland) and Bathory (Sweden), who were themselves influenced by Black Sabbath, Motörhead and Venom; but were no doubt also aware that their music would appeal to a much wider audience if sang in English, thus having a greater chance of obtaining a record contract with a more established metal label.

However, because the only way that most tape-traders could initiate/maintain contact with other tape-traders on an international level was through letter writing, in which English was again the primary language being used, this suggests that the majority of traders most likely had more than just a rudimentary level of English; and therefore,

enough to also understand politically orientated lyrics.[3] Although beyond language comprehension, a more obvious factor was audible comprehension because it was not only about how fluent you were in the English language, but also (and for native English speakers included) how much you could actually comprehend politicised lyrics in terms of the way they were being expressed via sonically transgressive vocalisations.

With regards to this fact, and to give an example; in an earlier incarnation of Napalm Death (prior the Lee Dorrian joining the band), they released a demo tape entitled "Hatred Surge" (1985) replete with overtly politicised (mainly anti-capitalist) lyrics, but on listening to this particular demo without a lyric sheet is quite difficult even for a native English speaker such as myself to audibly comprehend the majority of the songs' lyrical content. Moreover, after Lee Dorrian joined the band in 1987 as their vocalist he would take Napalm Death's vocal sonic transgression to even further extremes (as exemplified on their debut album "Scum," 1987), creating almost animalistic grunts/growls/screams, which would become completely detached from any linguistic traits. Such transgressive vocalisations, along with the equally animalistic vocalisations of fellow U.K grindcore pioneers Carcass would in turn inspire throughout the tape trading underground even more extreme interpretations (such as Jani Muurinen's sonically transgressive animalistic vocalisations on the 1989 "Swarming of the maggots" demo by Finnish grindcore pioneers Xysma).

What this ultimately suggests therefore is that the vocalisations within grindcore, as well as death metal (which although more linguistically intact, was still a sonic blur), were appreciated more by the underground extreme metal scene members for their sonically transgressive qualities as opposed to the lyrics which they conveyed. Also, the fact that this particular music predominantly reached the ears first of scenic members via the tape-trading underground, the actual medium of the tape would also play a crucial role here as well (Netherton 2015). Indeed, as the quality of the music on a tape

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[3] This should not however imply that all traders could speak English; for example in Finland such individuals were still able to trade on a national level via the Finnish language with other English speaking Finnish traders such as Luxi and Jami. Indeed, as much of the empirical research suggests these particular traders were conduits to the larger international trading scene for many of the local Finnish traders. Moreover some fanzines were actually written in their native language, e.g. the first three issues of the Finnish "Isten Fanzine," before it then switched to English as revealed by its own compilation release (Mattila 2014). However, as most fanzines from the mid 1980s to early 1990s period suggest, as with the music and a need to maintain global communication amongst musicians/international traders, English *was* the main language of the tape-trading underground (see Jason Netherton's "Send Back My Stamps!: Metal History Through Fanzines" website (Netherton 2010) for a very comprehensive digitised compilation of international extreme metal fanzines, relating to the period in question).

cassette degrades over-time or from being dubbed onto countless tapes via tape-trading practice (for example a copy of a copy of a copy), the sonic qualities of even the most comprehensible death metal vocals begin to lose any clarity, thus any bands with politicised lyrics would have had even more trouble getting their message across.

Furthermore, although politically motivated extreme metal bands may have been inclined to include lyric sheets, flyers, or letters expressing their political views within the mail packages containing their demos, this does not necessarily suggest that such additional paraphernalia/opinions would be passed along with another (slightly more sonically degraded) copy of that demo to the next trader, either photocopied or relayed through written correspondence. Thus both musically and discursively, most overt political messages would slowly degrade from one trade to the next, and whilst such messages may have been kept in circulation via fanzines via the punk underground, as has already been suggested above, "outside" politics are always kept outside of the extreme metal scene, which would therefore be no different within the fanzines (for example see Netherton 2010; Mattila 2014).

However, just because lyrical content was subordinate to the actual aesthetic of, and pleasurable (transgressive) attachments to, sonic transgression; as I will address in the next chapter, this does not suggest that sonic transgression is not a political statement in itself, for surly this is implicated in its ontology.

Another important point to consider is that just because many extreme metal musicians/traders did not wish their music to be attached lyrically to political messages, this does not necessarily suggest that, even as teenagers, they weren't interested in politics *outside* of their music/scene: For our connections to music, regardless of how deep, only form just one part, or one layer, of the complete person that we actually are. Furthermore, it would also be an over generalisation for me to suggest that every member of the extreme metal scene between the mid 1980s and early 1990s was not interested in politicised lyrics being attached to the music (although as suggested above audible comprehension was quite a difficult task). Indeed, the U.K grindcore bands which originally emerged from the anarcho-punk scene (but heavily influenced by thrash and death metal), were obviously very politically aware, most evidently via their song titles and lyrical themes; but what is most interesting is how they choose to express their views, as Lee Dorrian suggests in answer to the following question:

Author: When you were in Napalm Death, what was the central ethos of the band, and what statement do you feel that the band made overall with its sound and lyrics?

Lee: During my time in the band, I didn't have a direct statement to make. I opposed racism, animal exploitation, sexism and general ignorance. However, I also realised that I was far from perfect myself. I liked to put across observations about myself, my own faults as well as addressing wider issues. The lyrical themes basically strived towards the idea of individual freedom as being the most important thing in life.

Interestingly therefore, although Napalm Death were indeed known for "addressing wider [political] issues," on a personal level for certain band members, it was actually more about conveying ideas of "individual freedom" via the lyrical expressions. This notion of individual freedom whether successfully understood or not by scene members was however still very consistent with their musical/scenic needs; especially the fact of enjoying the freedom to produce/consume sonic transgression regardless of the gatekeepers or the censors. Moreover, this strong belief in individual freedom may also offer some understanding as to what drew many members of the anarcho-punk scene initially to thrash and later to death metal, through which would emerge grindcore, for it was not the lyrical content, but most importantly the sonic transgression which appealed to them the most; as Lee Dorrian's answer to the following question suggests:

Author: Did any of the bands that you first heard on the trading underground have a big influence on your musical tastes or any political views in any way?

Lee: Yeah, absolutely, well certainly on my musical tastes. When I first heard Slayer, Metallica Exodus and Possessed etc they blew my mind musically but then when I heard bands like Death, Slaughter, Legion of Death, Massacre etc things started to get really exciting. I always struggled with the lyrical aspect of some of the metal stuff but loved the music. Lyrically I grew up with The Clash when I was very young, then quickly moved on to the Anarcho bands such as Crass, Conflict, Rudimentary Peni, Icons of Filth etc. Despite a certain amount of naivety, the fundamental points of these type of bands are what stayed with me throughout life really, though some may find that hard to believe!

A passion for Sonic transgression was therefore at the heart of the grindcore and death metal scenes, and their musical synthesis was helped by their access to underground trading and obvious cross-trading between underground punk and extreme metal scenes (as Lee's statement implies). Indeed, after the initial thrash explosion certain U.S hardcore bands such as Suicidal Tendencies and D.R.I (Dirty Rotten Imbeciles) from around 1985 began incorporating the sonically faster and heavier elements of thrash into their music creating the sub-genre known as "crossover" (Christie 2003, Waksman 2009). When Lee Dorrian was questioned about what type of music he was trading on the underground he answered: "initially punk and hardcore, then I started getting into

the metal crossover, which was an exciting time." This obviously suggests how the more extreme forms of metal, especially death metal eventually found their way into global underground punk scenes, helping to shape not necessarily the political opinions, but more importantly, the sonic transgression of future grindcore musicians.

Thus by the early 1990s due their musical similarities (and with grindcore now adopting more technically proficient death metal style guitar solos, as opposed to no solos at all), grindcore would find itself more affiliated with death metal than underground punk, with both scenes becoming practically entwined (which I will discuss further in the next chapter). The marriage of these two extreme sub-genres would by then also become part of a now more identifiable global extreme metal scene, which also encompassed other metal sub-genres such as doom and black metal (Kahn-Harris 2007).

However, returning to the mid to late 1980s for the moment, as discussed earlier, the now dominant (commercialised) thrash scene with its independent metal label/major label backing was having a detrimental effect on the plans of the more extreme death metal/grindcore bands; unwilling to compromise their sonic transgression, and as a direct consequence, not getting signed by these powerful gatekeepers. Therefore, as the global flows of financial capital, which now sustained/directed the thrash scene clearly stated: politics is not just about those who wield or contest power on the outside, it's also very much about those affected by it on the inside. As Kahn-Harris (2007, 154) rightly suggests: "music and the scene can never be detached from flows of power and hence a non-political scene is an impossibility." Indeed, the noise of sonic transgression refused to be silenced and its global spread refused to be contained, and whether the members of the extreme metal underground cared for it in their music and scene, or not; this was "politics"...the politics of sonic transgression.

Overall, as I have explored in this chapter, although being underground within the heavy metal scene had been discursively set in stone by bands such as Venom during the N.W.O.B.H.M heyday as a space in which "real" metal is produced and consumed (namely pure transgressive metal as opposed to weakened commercial poser metal); it was obviously much more than just this. Indeed, from punk a small metal underground emerged via its appropriation of the punk DIY ethos, which most importantly engendered metal's very own underground global tape trading network. From this underground network the original manifestation of thrash (namely the early non-

commercial version) was born, and with it the consolidation of sonic transgression as a movement. In other words, a unified scene; for this was no longer the preserve of a couple of bands on the margins of metal such as Venom, it was now a global force to be reckoned with. Indeed, for many die-hard metal fans/amateur musicians throughout the world who'd felt alienated within the overly commercialised expanse of heavy metal, thrash *was* heavy metal's (sonically and discursively) transgressive heir apparent, ready to reclaim its rightful kingdom from the glam/lite metal imposter king.

However, as I have also addressed, transgression can never become complacent for fear of losing its innate dynamism. Thus, in the aftermath of thrash, there emerged the more transgressive sub-genres of death metal and grindcore; whose articulations of sonic transgression were, for their own underground scene members at least, sacrosanct and more important than anything else within the global extreme metal scene (and for some members, perhaps even more important than anything outside of this scene as well).

This was the extreme metal underground between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, for which the "politics" were simple: extreme metal bands scattered throughout the world wanted their sonic transgression to reach as far and wide as possible without this music being compromised; but were instead being hindered by the gatekeepers. Whilst at the same time certain metal fans also scattered through the world wanted to hear/collect metal that was much more extreme and sonically transgressive than what was being offered/reaching them via the commercial mainstream (either from the independent metal labels or from the major labels).

The alternative route around this problem was simple (regardless of whether scene members regarded their actions as individual/collective political statements or not): engagement with, and altruistic commitment to, the global extreme metal scene's underground tape-trading network. Thus, it is the functionality, the benefits, as well as certain problems associated with this particular form of networked practice that I turn my attention to now in the next chapter; which I shall explore through Henry Jenkins' (1992; 2006; Jenkins et al 2009) conceptual framework of participatory culture.

4. The "participatory culture" of tape-trading

"...there was no internet and the big magazines only covered the big bands. If you were a new band with a demo to get out there, you had to do the work yourself. And of course there were the straight up traders that didn't have their own bands, but wanted to hear the latest, heaviest stuff. It worked out great for all parties involved."

Chris Reifert (Autopsy, ex-Death/former tape-trader)

In this final chapter I will address how the extreme metal global tape-trading network functioned between the mid 1980s and early 1990s via the collective commitment of *all* the traders (regardless of whether musicians or collectors of sonic transgression). This commitment I argue engendered not only greater scenic connectivity, through which personal motivations and investments were fulfilled, but also the global underground (and eventual commercial) rise of death metal and grindcore.

In the first section of this chapter, I shall explore the sonic/technological appropriations, scenic connectivity and circulations of sonic transgression, scenic knowledge and affect within the tape-trading network via Henry Jenkins conceptual framework of participatory culture (Jenkins 1992; 2006; Jenkins et al 2009). This framework will enable me to better explore how all of the tape-traders via their mutual participation, created their own alternative fully functional global distribution network for the spread of death metal and grindcore. In the second section, I shall address how the rise of death metal and grindcore via the tape trading network gave rise to eventual flows of financial capital into the extreme metal scene, namely to address its commercialisation and how this led to criticisms from a certain transgressive faction within the scene. I will also discuss the tape-trading network's decline in light of technological advancements during 1990s. In the last section, I will explore issues regarding the democracy of participation within the tape-trading network, before finally addressing what the network actually achieved; especially in terms of the death metal and grindcore music that it engendered.

4.1 Participatory culture within the global extreme metal tape-trading network

In the introductory chapter I highlighted Jenkins et al (2009, xi) premise of 'participatory culture' as one in which particular groups of people are able to artistically and creatively interact through "creating and sharing creations" and circulating "knowledge," especially with more experienced participants sharing their

creativity/knowledge with novices. Moreover, this is all made possible within a supportive networked environment in which all participants "believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another" (ibid, xi).

These particular principles I argue, were at the heart of the global extreme metal tape-trading network, through which sonic transgression was negotiated into mundane scenic practice, which in turn not only engendered personal capital (mundane subcultural capital), but also scenic capital as well, namely the rise to global prominence of death metal and grindcore by the early 1990s within the wider heavy metal scene.

To begin therefore by analysing global extreme metal tape-trading between the mid 1980s and early 1990s as a form of participatory culture, it is important to establish that whilst Jenkins et al (2009) discuss participatory culture in relation to forms of artistic creation, knowledge production and social interaction based around Web 2.0 media technology (such as Facebook, blogs, YouTube and Wikipedia), when Jenkins (1992, 1) first outlined his concept of 'participatory culture, he based it on a pre-digital networked culture of "media fandom." These factors as I shall address below, are essential towards a clearer understanding of creativity and functionality within the tape-trading network.

The "textual poachers" of thrash (and beyond)

Jenkins' (1992) early work explored certain fans of popular commercial texts such as the Star Trek television series, whom he argued were often more than just passive consumers, but active participants engaged with creatively/productively transforming their viewing experience into networked form of participatory culture. Jenkins (1992, 227) ethnographic research for example explored how particular fans were actively engaged in writing and exchanging fan fiction based on their own interpretations of Star Trek charters/plots. Some of these fans were also creating via the analogue video technology of the 1980s/early 1990s, re-edited versions of actual Star Trek scenes often dubbed with popular music songs to offer alternative readings (such as queer readings of the relationship between central characters such as Captain Kirk and Spock) (ibid).

Building upon the earlier work of Michael de Certeau, Jenkins (1992) regarded these recontextualisations as "textual poaching" whether adhering to established fan community understandings of the Star Trek universe (namely characters, events, and plotlines) or offering alternative readings to those channelled through mainstream media

by the dominant mode of white heterosexual patriarchy. Most importantly however, it was the fact that the act of 'textual poaching'" and its further participatory practice of exchange between associated fan community members (for example at sci-fi conventions or in private), posed "important questions about the ability of media producers to constrain the creation and circulation of meanings" (Jenkins 1992, 23).

This constant struggle therefore between media gatekeepers and these active fans over the control of popular media texts, for which the latter group invest much personal attachment towards by creating a material space for their communal bonds, is what drives such fans towards textual poaching and participatory culture in the first place. Indeed, as Jenkins (1992, 23-24) suggests:

> The fans' response typically involves not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism, and it is the combination of the two responses which motivates their active engagement with the media. Because popular narratives fail to satisfy, fans must struggle with them, to try to articulate to themselves and others unrealised possibilities within the original works. Because the texts continue to fascinate, fans cannot dismiss them from their attention but rather must try to find ways to salvage them for their interests. Far from syncopathic, fans actively assert their mastery over the mass-produced texts which provide the raw material for their own cultural production and the basis for their social interaction.

With regards to this therefore, I see the predicament and consequential actions of these particular media fans similar to those of the underground extreme metal fans between the mid 1980s and early 1990s. In other words, the music industry gatekeepers (commercial producers) preventing the more intense sonic possibilities still available within metal (namely *extreme* sonic transgression) via their tight financial control of thrash; thus to the frustration of certain thrash fans thought the globe who wanted to push this music into more extreme sonic territory (in other words, transgress the barriers imposed by the gatekeepers). However, in my use of the term "fan," I don't just regard those wishing to hear/collect the most sonically transgressive forms of extreme metal available as extreme metal fans, but amateur extreme metal musicians as well. Indeed, the personal attachments of this latter group to sonic transgression and their dual roles as collectors implies that they were also first and foremost, extreme metal fans.

Moreover, although both the sole collector and amateur musician/collector fans of sonic transgression were on the margins of the larger heavy metal scene, their initial entry into metal fandom was via their original attachments to commercial texts, specifically commercially released albums, for example:

Luxi: My first introduction to Heavy Metal music happened via Judas Priest's "Killing Machine" album...After Judas Priest, I started discovering bands as Motörhead, Black Sabbath, AC/DC, Deep Purple, Def Leppard, Uriah Heep, Led Zeppelin, Saxon, etc. After a little while I also discovered Iron Maiden...and they soon become my favourite Heavy Metal band in my life. I actually bought all their 3 albums at the same time back in 1982 as cassettes...

For other fans who would later become prominent musicians within the global extreme metal scene, this was also the case. For example Mike Browning (who began tape-trading in 1984) stated for this study: "...the most stuff that influenced me was always stuff that I heard on a record album that I bought, like Iron Maiden, Angel Witch and Merciful Fate." As this suggests, initial exposure to heavy metal would begin within the commercial heavy metal scene via interaction with commercially released texts. Indeed, as I will discuss afterwards, only later, usually through word of mouth or the back pages of metal magazines/fanzines, did these fans/amateur musicians discover tape-trading and thus gain access to the sonic transgression of the extreme metal underground.

What is important to establish here however, is that by the mid 1980s the most extreme form of metal commercially available was thrash, with official early recordings such as by Slayer, Possessed and Celtic Frost representing the (then) more extreme end of the metal spectrum. Indeed, although thrash initially emerged from metal's embryonic tape trading underground, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, it was mainly via the early 1980s commercial album releases that thrash became more globally recognised, namely, such sonic texts became the unifying points of (sub)cultural understanding and bonding around which the initial San Francisco, and later, global thrash scene materialised.

In turn, as I had also mentioned, the thrash explosion was the catalyst that inspired countless other underground (extreme) metal bands throughout the globe to raise the bar with their own articulations of sonic transgression. Therefore, when considering Jenkins' (1992, 23-24) notion of "textual poaching" it makes sense to suggest here that it was the initial commercial manifestation of thrash, in other words, the early ground-breaking (sonically transgressive) thrash albums which offered the initial "raw materials" for embryonic death metal/grindcore musicians to appropriate.

Furthermore, with regards at least to early death metal bands such as Death and Morbid Angel, although they may have initially been sonically inspired by the more extreme N.W.O.B.H.M bands such as Venom or Angel Witch, it was upon hearing thrash bands such as Slayer and Possessed, which made them push their own interpretations of Sonic

transgression even further (Mudrian 2003).[1] Indeed, when questioned in this study; what bands Mike Browning remembered being popular on the tape-trading underground, he answered "Well of course Slayer and Possessed were probably the top 2." This suggests that during the mid-1980s as the vocalist/drummer of Morbid Angel, Mike would in turn feed his own interpretations of such bands back into the tape-trading underground, thus inspiring the next generation of underground extreme metal "poachers."

Jukka Kolehmainen, vocalist of the late 1980s Finnish death metal band Abhorrence seemed to confirm this, when asked in this study; which bands circulating within the tape-trading underground were most influential upon his band:

> Nihilist/Entombed maybe, but most of our influences were from the first extreme bands that we fell in love with collectively. Those would be Bolt Thrower, Morbid Angel, Slayer and so forth. Which were pretty underground stuff in '88-'90, well maybe not Slayer...

As this suggests, although bands such as Abhorrence were influenced by early thrash bands such as Slayer, it was also the more extreme "underground stuff," such as Morbid Angel (U.S), Nihilist (later Entombed, from Sweden) and Bolt Thrower (U.K), now circulating within the global tape-trading network and emerging from various local extreme metal scenes throughout the world, which increasingly shaped their sound.

Thus, the global tape-trading underground perpetuated "the creation and circulation of meanings" central to the death metal/grindcore scenes, namely sonic transgression, which although originally "poached" from the commercial texts of thrash, was by the late 1980s increasingly poaching new sonically transgressive "meanings" generated from within its own globally networked underground space (Jenkins 1992, 23). However, as suggested earlier, specific fan cultures' engagements with textual poaching via networks of participatory culture come into existence only as direct responses to the cultural gatekeepers who "constrain the creation and circulation of meanings" most central to these particular fan communities (ibid).

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[1] A similar argument can be made here in relation to grindcore, because for pioneering grindcore bands such as Napalm Death, whose original members came from the anarcho-punk scene, as they have claimed, it was on first hearing the sounds of thrash band Celtic Frost which helped shape their eventual sound (Mudrian 2004, 32). Indeed, this strong influence of thrash was also confirmed in the previous chapter by later Napalm Death Vocalist Lee Dorrian (also originally from the anarcho-punk scene) who stated: "When I first heard Slayer, Metallica, Exodus and Possessed etc they blew my mind musically." Indeed, because thrash contained elements of punk's noise/sonic aggression within its own musical DNA, it was thrash which initially drew many underground punk musicians towards their later involvement within the extreme metal scene. Therefore, whilst the sonic aesthetic influence of punk cannot be denied within grindcore, it was ultimately *thrash* (and thereafter thrash's more extreme offspring, death metal) which also made grindcore bands push their interpretations of sonic transgression even further.

Moreover, as more identified within Jenkins later works (2006; Jenkins et al 2009) regarding participatory culture, it is not only the central cultural sources/meanings which are important to specific groups, but also their creation and circulation via certain networked technologies. Indeed, during the period in question tape cassette technology had already engendered decentralised power away from the cultural gatekeepers (Manuel 1992). However, when appropriated by the underground metal scene (via underground punk), its members' social interactions with this technology not only helped facilitate the global spread of death metal and grindcore, but, as I will discuss later, also helped to further define their respective sound as well (Netherton 2015).

With regards to this therefore, I will now move on to addressing what Jenkins' et al (2009) understand participatory culture to embody, primarily in relation to how social organisation around Web 2.0 technologies engender creative expression, active participation and greater flows of knowledge towards collective enhancement/ empowerment. This particular breakdown of participatory culture into its various forms I argue, despite its intended focus relating to contemporary media technologies, still offers a useful framework towards exploring the *functionality* of extreme metal tape-trading between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s.

"Affiliation" with the tape-trading network

For Jenkins' et al (2009, xi-xii) participatory culture can be observed through various forms of social activity which include "Affiliations," "Expressions," "Collaborative problem solving" and "Circulations." These particular forms of participatory culture I suggest were all inextricably linked in their contribution towards the daily facilitation of the global extreme metal tape-trading network.

To begin with "Affiliations", Jenkins et al (2009, xi) suggest that this form entails: "Memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centred around various forms of media, such as Friendster, Facebook, MySpace, message boards, metagaming, or game clans." In relation to the extreme metal scene during the mid/late 1980s, affiliation with, and indeed access to, this underground community (the embryonic death metal and grindcore scenes) was very different to that of the thrash scene.

For example, during the mid 1980s although thrash was by no means the most dominant sub-genre of heavy metal, it was still possible for most metal fans predominantly in

North America, Western Europe, Japan, etc to access thrash via its commercial recordings, as well as thrash articles/reviews in specialist commercial metal magazines (such as Kerrang! and Metal Forces). Moreover, by the late 1980s with the commercial popularity of thrash, even more new fans had access to thrash (mainly the more commercially viable bands such as Metallica) through increasing radio and MTV promotion (Walser 1993; Weinstein 2000). Such fans may have also only been casual fans of thrash, in other words more general heavy metal fans, and thus be considered perhaps as having an "informal" membership to thrash (Jenkins et al 2009, xi).

What is important here, is that unless any of the above fans during both periods had access in any way to the extreme sonic transgression circulating throughout the tape-trading underground, they would only be connected to the mainstream network, thus having access only to the forms of sonic transgression regarded suitable (profitable) for dissemination by the record industry gatekeepers. As this implies, for metal fans who wanted to hear/collect the most extreme (and obscure) sonic transgression available during the same periods, as well as extreme metal musicians wanting to get their own sonically transgressive productions to these fans, membership to the underground extreme tape-trading network was essential.

However, if membership/affiliation to the embryonic death metal and grindcore scenes (for those not in close proximity to any local death metal/grindcore live scenes) was only possible via active engagement with tape trading; how did these potential members discover the tape trading underground in the first place? After all, this was as suggested earlier, a pre-digital network and therefore not so easy as it is today towards discovering Facebook for example, and initiating your own membership into that particular social network. When Chris Reifert and Mike Browning were asked in this study how they first discovered the tape trading underground, they gave the following responses:

> **Chris:** ...There were a few good sources for finding demos back then. One was through friends recommendations, another was reading about bands in underground fanzines and yet another was finding tapes in record stores. There were two record stores in the bay area that sold demos...

> **Mike:** ...[W]hen I was in the band [Morbid Angel] with [guitarist] Trey. He was into it before me from what I can remember and everyone was making all these small sized zines and the zine usually had a section near the back that was like a pen pal/tape trading thing where people would list the bands they liked and give their address and you would just start writing to them and send them a list of what you had on cassette and they would do the same and the trading would begin!

As Chris suggests one possible way of discovering demos would be from (extreme) metal friendly local record stores, in which you would perhaps after purchasing a demo, contact the band via the address usually supplied on the inlay card in order to purchase more of their demos and then (if they were interested) begin trading demos of other bands that you have purchased at the record store for their demos. Although, despite being a valid way of gaining membership to the tape-trading underground, this would be perhaps a little limiting towards engendering frequent trading, for you would only be able to correspond with the bands in question. However, if a local record store was selling underground metal band demos, it would most likely also be selling underground metal fanzines, which as Mike points out (and as also suggested in the previous chapter) pen-pal adverts in the back pages was one of the main ways of gaining membership to a wider network of traders (Kahn-Harris 2007,78). Indeed, not just to a wider network of musicians, but also to other avid extreme metal fans/collectors.

What Chris and Mike both importantly mention here, is the fact of gaining membership into tape-trading through their friends, namely "friends recommendations" or via fellow band members. Indeed, access to greater scenic knowledge (and subcultural capital) via close personal relationships between members has always been a crucial factor within the metal scene. As Deena Weinstein (2000, 137) suggests on reflection of the heavy metal scene during the 1980s: "Ask any heavy metal fans how prior to the mid-1980s they found out about their favorite band, and the response is the name of some friend or an older brother who "turned them on" to the group." However, it's important to point out here that when Chris and Mike mention the ease of gaining membership to the tape-trading underground via record stores, fanzines or fellow scene members' greater scenic knowledge, this was not necessarily the case for all potential members.

Indeed, when considering Chris' circumstances, he is reflecting on his access to tape trading whilst also being a member (or initially as a fan) of the San Francisco thrash scene during the early 1980s, which as discussed in the previous chapter, was the spiritual home of the thrash. Therefore, amongst its plethora of bands and live venues, this local scenic space was already facilitated by a large scenically knowledgeable membership (i.e. die-hard fans), metal friendly record stores, fanzines, and most importantly strong links to the tape-trading underground. For Mike also, he was part of the equally thriving Tampa, Florida metal scene, which along with Stockholm, Sweden by the early 1990s would become a major scenic hub of the global death metal scene.

Thus, as Mike suggests, his particular scenic base was also saturated with fanzines, which offered entry into the underground world of tape-trading. Although what is most important to consider in Mike's case perhaps is the fact that he was already an underground extreme metal musician when he began tape-trading; membership of which, to that particular global network as with all musicians like him, was a lifeline. For indeed without it, his own brand of sonic transgression had no other way of reaching the ears of other extreme metal musicians/fans throughout the world.

Therefore, because many future tape-traders were neither underground metal musicians nor initially members of large established local extreme metal scenes (namely with little access to the circulation of underground metal fanzines) such as Luxi, who then lived in a small village in South-Western Finland, how did such individuals make initial contact with the global extreme metal tape-trading underground? As Luxi explains:

> ...I started buying these Metal Forces magazines that had this section named "Penbangers" or something, in which people could advertise, which types of bands they were into, which stuff they had in their tape collection and stuff like that. As far as I can remember, putting an advertisement on this section was completely free back then, so I also decided to write my own advertisement...I told on my advertisement that I am into Speed/Thrash Metal and have stuff from such Finnish bands to offer...mostly listing down some names of Finnish Punk/Hardcore bands because we didn't really have that many Speed or Thrash Metal bands coming from the Finnish underground soil back in those days yet. After a few weeks I started receiving dozens of letters, basically from all over the world, people sending me their trade lists and pretty nicely hand-written letters...That's how it all started for me... great times indeed!

This statement is interesting for it addresses different aspects of membership. The first obvious one is that when Luxi initially gained access tape trading (which he recalled in another interview question, began around 1983/84), he did so by placing his own advert in the commercially published Metal Forces (a U.K metal magazine established in 1983). What is particularly interesting about this is that like the many commercially released thrash albums by the likes of Metallica and Slayer, whose appropriation (textual poaching) by the next generation of extreme metal musicians engendered the sonic transgression of death metal and grindcore, it was also other commercial texts of the music industry, namely commercially published specialist metal magazines, which also helped in some way to established these underground extreme metal genres. Indeed, by acting as a gateway to the tape-trading underground for many metal fans (including those who may later become musicians) this would mean that there would be more traders in different countries, enabling extreme metal to have a wider global (albeit initially, underground) circulation.

This ultimately reinforces the role that commercial producers also played towards perpetuating the then underground extreme metal scene and also reiterates the fact that the extreme metal underground fans/musicians did not necessarily have a directly antagonistic relationship with the commercial music Industry as did the underground punks. Interestingly, some of the original underground punks also entered tape-trading this way as well such as Lee Dorrian who when interviewed for this study stated: "There was an English magazine called Flexipop, which was pretty mainstream but I placed a penfriend request in there in 1982 and it opened up a new world from me..."

Despite the influence of commercial magazines however, once membership to the tape-trading network was initiated, just as it offered musicians/fans unhappy with the (weaker) sonic transgression emanating from the commercial sector the autonomy to readdress this problem, this same underground space also offered fans/musicians unhappy with the discourses (content and opinions) emanating from commercial magazines the autonomy to readdress this by producing/circulating their own fanzines.

Another interesting factor regarding membership in Luxi's statement is that when he began his tape trading (prior to the emergence of death metal and grindcore) he suggests that Finland did not actually have many thrash or speed metal bands (the latter a metal sub-genre associated with thrash, expanding on thrash's speed but with less harsher sounding vocals). However, upon commencing his membership to the tape-trading network, his own existing sub-cultural capital was the fact that he had access to Finnish hardcore punk, which inevitably enabled him to circulate that particular music throughout the tape-trading network to other countries unfamiliar with those bands, whilst at the same time open the underground floodgates for thrash to enter Finland, and thereafter, the global flows of underground death metal and grindcore. The way in which different bands from all over the globe expressed their own interpretations of sonic transgression, which I suggest all circulated within the tape-trading network as a databank of *sonic knowledge,* will be addressed later in this section.

This brings me to the last point raised in Luxi's statement, which relates to membership "from all over the world." Indeed, as Luxi reveals with the music that Finland had to offer the extreme metal tape-trading network by the mid 1980s, and during the same period, what underground forms of sonic transgression Finland had little access to; the input of musical "expressions" from different parts of the world all feeding into one

global network was very important towards cementing the foundations of a strong global extreme metal scene. Moreover, this was a scene not centrally controlled from one major hub of financial capital, in other words, one which attempted to undemocratically control/shape the scenic forms of cultural production/hegemony (for example, Los Angeles and its music industry produced/ideologically protected glam metal scene during the 1980s). For instance, when asked what countries he remembers his tape-trading correspondents coming from, fellow Finnish tape-trader Jami stated:

> ...my trading network included most of the European countries (including Russia). And also USA, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Columbia, Brazil, Australia, Japan, New Zealand... My long-term trading partners came from Finland, Germany, France. Costa Rica, Canada, Norway, Italy, The Netherlands and United States...

As this suggests, not only were members trading from North America, Western Europe, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, but also from Russia (then the U.S.S.R) and many South American countries, thus allowing such countries then predominantly excluded from participation towards globally commercial forms of metal during the 1980s, still the chance to play an active democratically participative role in the shaping the sonic (and discursive) future of death metal and grindcore during the same period. Indeed, this was made possible only via the "decentralized ownership" of the tape-trading network (Manuel 1993, 2). Therefore, such networked memberships (namely democratised social formations of participatory culture) would strengthen structural capital of the scene (its global connectivity) as well as the future sonic capital of the scene.

What the factor of "affiliation" or membership to this pre-digital network ultimately reveals here therefore, is that it was diverse in terms of scenic careers (fan/collectors, fan/musician collectors as well as some members who added fanzine writer to their scenic résumé) and, as already addressed in the previous chapter, musical backgrounds (members not only from heavy metal backgrounds but underground punk as well). Also important was the diversity of the members' different but cumulative geographically situated expressions of sonic transgression (I will address other issues relating to diversity, or more specifically, gender and economic status in the last section).

Now that I have addressed "affiliations," as I discussed earlier, this along with the other three forms of participatory culture, namely "Expressions," "Collaborative problem solving" and "Circulations," were all inextricably linked in their contribution towards the daily facilitation of the global extreme metal tape-trading network (Jenkins' et al

2009, xi-xii). Indeed, especially in relation to these latter three forms of participatory culture, it was I argue, the very fact they were networked as mutually productive social practices based around a pre-digital technology that enabled the global extreme metal tape-trading network to function so efficiently. With this in mind, I shall thus move on to exploring the productive interconnectivity of "Expressions," "Collaborative problem solving" and "Circulations" via this particular network (Jenkins' et al 2009, xii).

Networked "Expressions," "Collaborative problem solving" and "Circulations"

When Jenkins et al (2009, xii) refer to "expressions" as a form of participatory culture, they suggest that this entails: "Producing new creative forms, such as digital sampling, skinning and modding, fan videos, fan fiction, zines, or mash-ups." In relation to the tape trading network therefore, especially in musical terms, the production of "new creative forms" was obviously the new sub-generic formations of death metal and grindcore initially via the aforementioned "textual poaching" of thrash throughout the tape-trading network (Jenkins et al 2009, xii; Jenkins 1992, 23).

As I previously suggested, via the tape-trading network, the first generation of pioneering death metal bands such as Morbid Angel (which includes Death and Autopsy), but also the grindcore pioneers (such as Repulsion, Napalm Death and Carcass), all appropriated/poached the original sonic transgression of thrash, to create their own more extreme sonically transgressive expressions. Thus, as I also suggested such interpretations were later appropriated/poached by the next generation of extreme metal bands via the tape-trading network, such as Nihilist (later Entombed), Abhorrence and Xysma, who created even more sonically extreme "expressions." However, although it could be argued here, that the increase in sonic extremity was purely down to a conscious desire by these young musicians to transgress even further than what had come before, which as suggested in the previous chapter is the very nature of transgression, this would ignore the role that the cassette technology itself played towards creating the "sound" of extreme metal (Netherton 2015, 315-316).

Indeed, Jason Netherton (2015, 315-316) acknowledges that an important attribute to the formation of the death metal "sound" was that the "music was performed by teenagers who in many cases were learning the techniques" of extreme metal musicianship, whilst at the same time attempting to "push the boundaries of what was

perceived aurally tame." However, he suggests that a greater influence upon the "sound" could perhaps be attributed to the cassette technology's own "analog capabilities," namely its inherent "lack of fidelity [which] became normalized and integrated into the rawness of the music itself" (ibid). Therefore, not only were the codes of sonic transgression being poached, but with it the sonic codes, or in other words the low-fidelity of the cassette technology itself, as Peter Manuel (1993, 16) Suggests: "In many cases, media content - including popular music - may be seen to recapitulate or encode specific features of its context, including the nature of its disseminating medium."

This important sonic factor mainly arose because most of the early demos recorded by the influential "first generation death metal bands were rehearsal tapes, recorded on boom boxes and then copied and recopied numerous times" (Netherton 2015, 315-316). Therefore, a second generation band, whose musicians were in the early stages of their musical development, would upon hearing a rehearsal demo form a popular underground band such as Death for the first time, regardless of the poor sound quality, perhaps regard its sonic "rawness" as a faithful representation of what death metal/grindcore was and should be. For whilst low-fidelity, "is not itself a sound," it is often "what audiences interpret as a raw, noisy" element belonging to the cassette's musical content (Reyes 2013, 252). Indeed, as Netherton (2015, 316) suggests, this was how the influential "Stockholm sound" arose in the late 1980s, namely the raw distorted death metal guitar sound pioneered by Swedish death metal band Nihilist/Entombed.

Moving on now to other "expressions," fanzines were obviously the other form of creative expression via the tape-trading underground through their scenically discursive artwork and reviews (namely scenic knowledge circulation). However, as I mentioned in the introduction, although I acknowledge the importance of fanzines to tape trading (as I have already suggested in relation to their membership recruitment) it is not my intention to focus to too much of my attention towards them within this study.

With regards to other expressions therefore, due to the very nature of tape-trading being a pre-digital social network, what I argue was just as important as creative expressions within this underground networked space, was that of productive expressions; in other words, it was not only sonic production that was important to the creation of death metal and grindcore, but also the production of the network itself. To explore this further therefore, I will now address how this particular form of productive expression

as a form of participatory culture, was bound-up with the participatory form of "Collaborative problem solving" (Jenkins et al 2009, xii).

Jenkins et al (2009, xii) suggest that "Collaborative problem solving" as a form of participatory culture entails: "Working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop new knowledge, such as through Wikipedia." Indeed, as already addressed, new knowledge in sonic terms (namely the formation of death metal and grindcore) was produced in relation to the actual medium of the cassette itself, via the quality of its relayed low fidelity sound, and also in relation to the fact that these young musicians were attempting to take the music to it most extreme transgressive potential (Netherton 2015). This new sonic knowledge would ultimately be shared, or circulated throughout the tape-trading network to further engender a scenically collective understanding of what death metal/grindcore was and what it could be.

However, if new sonic knowledge was being produced by the musician traders, and further scenically discursive new knowledge was being produced by the fanzine writers; what was being produced in terms of them also being fans/collectors, and therefore by members of this network who were *only* extreme metal fans/collectors? What I suggest here, is that it was precisely the fact that they were all avid extreme metal music "collectors" in the first place that the tape-trading network functioned so smoothly.

Jacques Attali (1985, 101) suggests that in our age of musical reproduction because recorded music is sold in a commodity form we are forced to spend our "exchange time" earning money to purchase these recordings, and thus tend to purchase more recordings than we actually have the time to listen to (our "use-time"); Attali terms this form of consumerism "stockpiling." As this implies, the very nature of being a record collector, is most definitely bound up with stockpiling. However, when considering traders/collectors stockpiled tape collections, this was actually beneficial, although not directly to the perpetuation of Capitalism, but instead, to the perpetuation of the tape-trading network, namely the constant circulation of death metal and grindcore.

Indeed, by taking a moment to consider a modern web based participatory network such as Wikipedia; it has countless content producers (the public) but only one single site provider (the Wikipedia website itself), this also applies to corporately controlled digital music service providers such as Spotify, who provide music by countless artists for purchase or sandwiched in-between advertisements for public consumption through one

central site. However, the tape-trading network was a pre-digital social network, and although it had countless content producers (the musicians) there was no single site in which the music was stored, and no single place from where it could be accessed. In relation therefore to Jenkins et al (2009, xii) notion of "collaborative problem solving," I argue that all the traders' stockpiled tape collections functioned as the many databanks (or music libraries) of sonic transgression throughout this global network.

Moreover, because the music could not be retrieved from only one central site, the traders were all required to have their trading lists, namely detailed lists of what death metal/grindcore bands were in their tape collection, as one tape-trader (who has opted to remain anonymous) stated, "you had to keep a detailed list/record since you could not trade with others if you did not provide a copy of your own list to other traders." In other words, these "lists" provided/circulated scenic knowledge. Indeed, as these lists would be constantly updated and circulated with the tapes throughout the network they acted as a form of data retrieval for traders searching for specific band demos, rehearsal tapes or live bootlegs. What was also crucial with these analog sonic databanks, was that like modern digital servers, all the data was backed-up. Therefore if a trader's treasured copy of a particular demo became damaged, lost, or degraded in sound quality (due to countless tapes being dubbed from it for other traders), it could easily be retrieved by searching which trader's list had a copy, and thus writing to that trader to send, or trade for, a replacement copy.

Ultimately, these collectors were the service providers of the tape-trading network, who along with the musicians as content providers all utilised the global postal network for the distribution and circulation of extreme metal. This factor is also bound up with the technology itself for it was not only the tape cassette's ability to perform sound recording, storage and retrieval, but also its "miniaturization," which allowed for easier and cheaper circulation through the global postal network (Manuel 1993, 2). Moreover, the appropriation of the postal network, not only enabled traders to hear the latest underground extreme metal demos, but also enabled some traders to hear officially released death metal/grindcore recordings (e.g. by Death), who were otherwise deprived of such access due to their geographical location, as the anonymous trader explained:

> For me it was important as there were no record stores here (a small city in Northern Finland) and it was mostly demos etc. We exchanged things, even copies of released albums as no one could buy all the good stuff... *[translated from Finnish]*

As this suggests, not only were demos, rehearsal tapes and live recordings circulating throughout the global tape trading network, but also copies of studio albums because many of these traders/'collectors' lived huge distances from the nearest record store, especially perhaps traders from South America. However, another reason for this during the 1980s was that some traders lived in countries under totalitarian control such as the U.S.S.R and those within the Eastern Bloc, as with Poland where "getting heavy metal records from behind the Iron Curtain was nearly impossible" (Mudrian 2004, 111).

There was however another form of "collaborative problem solving" required within the tape-trading underground (Jenkins et al 2009, xii). Indeed, as most people on the web nowadays are required to pay corporate service providers for use of their services with money or time (in other words, be bombarded with advertising to listen for free on Spotify or to watch free content on YouTube), a form of reciprocal recompense was also required within the tape-trading underground. In other words a particular mode of tape-trader etiquette/mutual respect was required to enable the tape-trading network to function properly and maintain its active and participatory membership, as Luxi suggests:

> The way how this worked, we all bought our own empty tapes by ourselves, and sent them to each other along with our wish lists that we wanted to get recorded on our tapes. The unwritten rule was if I sent 3 x empty 60 minute tapes out for someone, my tape-trading partner in crime did the same. 3 hours of music against an equivalent hours of music. The rule was this simple actually...

This social etiquette of fair trading practice towards the perpetual functionality of the tape-trading network can in many ways be regarded as "the spiritual and skeletal infrastructure upon which online communities later emerged," especially peer to peer music sharing (Netherton 2015, 317).[2] Indeed, other activities central to the socially networked infrastructure of the internet were also evident with the earlier tape-trading network such as fanzine circulation, which contributed to the global extreme metal scene's later assimilation into online practice, for example, its use of online fanzines, blogs and discussion boards (for the continual flow of scenic discourses). However, as I will address in the next section, the arrival of the internet would consequentially also mark the end of active scenic involvement with tape-trading (ibid).

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[2] Other forms of tape-trader etiquette/"collaborative problem solving" also existed within this global network, but not necessarily bound-up with future online practice. For example to save money, traders smeared glue over the stamps of their mail packages containing the demos, which on receipt, the other trader would cut-out the stamps and send them back within the package containing the reciprocal demo for the first trader's reuse (Netherton 2010).

Ultimately, these forms of participatory culture as part of the tape-trading network were bound-up with, and engendered perhaps the most important participatory form, namely "Circulations," which Jenkins et al (2009, xi) suggest entail: "Shaping the flow of media, such as podcasting or blogging." This is perhaps one of the most important points to consider when addressing how this democratizing tape cassette technology engendered the possibility of alternatives towards "shaping the flow of media", because the circulation of music and ideas, in other words, new scenically discursive knowledge, *did not*, as I have suggested thus far, happen on its own (Jenkins et al 2009, xi).

Indeed, for it is not solely the technology itself that engenders new musical forms or societal changes, but also, and in unison, the organization of the social relations, namely the social appropriation of that particular new media technology (often as with cassette tapes or digital sampling technology, as alternative to their original socio-technological intentions) through which the codes of a new popular culture are able to live and breathe. This important consideration has been articulated by Armand Mattelart and Jean-Marie Piemme (1982), who suggest:

> The production of a communication alternative is more than ever linked to the production of new social relations...New social relations are not the means for a new communication. And a new form of communication will not be the means for new social relations. One and the other undergo, in parallel, the same long, slow effort in the construction of a popular culture (cited in Manuel 1993, 262-263).

Tape cassette technology in unison with a socially networked form of participatory culture, namely tape-trading, thus allowed for the circulation of new scenically discursive knowledge throughout the global extreme metal underground. Indeed, the circulation of knowledge enabled the more "experienced" musicians a platform for "creating and sharing" the most underground forms of sonic transgression then available in metal with the less experienced musicians, in other words the "novices," who in turn added their interpretations, thus "shaping the flow" and future of death metal and grindcore throughout the global (Jenkins et al 2009, xi). However, it was not just the musicians "shaping the flow" of extreme metal but also the trader collectors, for via their symbiotic relationship with the musicians, they helped to spread the musical/discursive knowledge throughout the globe via their own production of the network, which in turn engendered greater globally scenic connectivity.

As Jenkins et al (2009, xi) suggested: "In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another

(at the least, members care about others' opinions of what they have created)." Indeed, this was precisely the purpose of the underground tape-trading network, because the underground bands cared about the other tape-traders appreciating their music who, due to the lack of record industry support, were then their only means of promoting their music as far and wide as possible (namely through further trading). This in turn would hopefully create a potential fan base/buzz within the underground, which in the long-run via word of mouth/positive fanzine reviews would hopefully get these bands noticed by the indie metal labels. As a direct result of this, "collector" traders would obviously feel appreciated for not only helping these bands get their music promoted and hopefully signed, but also for helping collector/fans throughout the globe gain access to the most sonically transgressive underground forms of extreme metal available.

These circulations of pleasure through symbolic transgressive attachment to the music and the circulations of appreciation (namely the personal accruement of "mundane subcultural capital") throughout the network are interesting here, for they appear to highlight their *affect* upon the traders (Keith Kahn-Harris 2007, 124). Indeed, when describing the "affective sensibility of fandom," Lawrence Grossberg (1992) suggests:

> The fans relations to cultural texts operates in the domain of affect and mood. Affect is perhaps the most difficult plane of our lives to define, not merely because it is even less necessarily tied to meaning than pleasure, but also because it is in some sense, the most mundane aspect of everyday life. Affect is not the same as either emotions or desires. Affect is closely tied up to what we often describe as the feeling of life...Some things feel different from others, some matter more, or in different ways, than others...The same object, with the same meaning, giving the same pleasure, is very different as our affective relationship to it changes.

The reason that this is important is because one of the criticisms towards Henry Jenkins' earlier work relating directly to the participatory culture of media fandom, is that it pays no attention the affective dimensions of fandom; instead focusing only on its cognitive dimensions, in other words interpretation, meaning and knowledge (Hills 2001; 2002). However, in line with Grossberg's (1992) notion of affect upon fandom (which he interestingly articulates through examples of rock music fandom), the affective intensities upon the traders' pleasurable relationships with sonic transgression are very evident within this study's imperial data. Indeed, as Luxi suggested in the last chapter, tape-trading "became like an obsession to me," regarding which, he further elaborates:

> ... I basically got stuck to my room just for hours and just recorded tonnes of tapes for my traders, without even leaving my room for many hours. It did get pretty intense at times, but I loved doing it. It basically (and unfortunately) was all my life back in those days. I

seemed to care more for trading tapes actually than my childhood's friends back then. There was something truly magnetic to it, being a part of the worldwide tape-trading network, and making constantly new band discoveries through people's trading lists.

Indeed, although tape-trading as a form of mundane scenic practice within the context of the extreme metal scene may be considered different to the more seemingly exciting symbolically transgressive scenic elements of "sonic transgression" (the music itself) or bodily transgression" (such as moshing), this should not suggest that such mundane or "everyday" engagement with the participatory processes of network functionality was not exciting either (Kahn-Harris 2007, 30). In other words, although tape-trading was mundane scenic practice, it was far from feeling like a dull and laborious everyday task for traders such as Luxi, but instead "intense" and pleasurable. Such intense emotions thus reflect the traders' affective relationship to the "tapes" and "trading lists," which were "truly magnetic" for they represented their material connection to the most sonically transgressive forms of underground metal available throughout the world, as well as to a global network of like-minded fans/musicians/collectors.

Overall therefore, within this participatory culture of tape-trading, the musicians through their appropriations/new creative expressions of sonic transgression (mediated via the low-fidelity sonic codes of the cassette technology itself) brought death metal and grindcore to life. However, it was *all* of the traders through their "collaborative problem solving" and affective altruistic commitments to the tape-trading network which thus brought death metal and grindcore to the world. Moreover, the investment that each tape-trader made to the global rise of death metal and grindcore, and thereafter the global rise of the extreme metal scene, did not go unrewarded.

Indeed, through their negotiation of transgression into mundane participatory scenic practice *all* the traders were rewarded with respect and appreciation from their peers throughout the tape-trading network, thus enabling each trader (musicians included) to accumulate more personal "mundane sub-cultural capital," which in turn within an affective cycle of pleasure and empowerment only re-enforced their commitment to the network (Kahn-Harris 2007, 124). Moreover, it was the very fact that these tape-traders were able to facilitate the global spread of death metal and grindcore, in other words the accumulation of scenic capital, that the record industry gatekeepers were eventually forced to reconsider their position and now except the fans/musicians/collectors legitimate claim that extreme metal could no longer be ignored.

This would eventually lead to the indie metal labels signing more death metal/grindcore bands, and from the early 1990s, including some major labels as well. Therefore, by forcing the record industry to open its gates and let the sonic transgression of death metal and grindcore in, namely be accepted on its own sonically transgressive terms, it could be argued that these mundane scenic practitioners, via their participatory culture of tape-trading, achieved for the extreme metal scene the greatest concrete transgression of all. Indeed, through these record labels and their the major global distribution network, the bands finally got their music to more fans throughout the world, and metal fans (not necessarily associated with, or even ever aware of the tape-trading underground) now also had greater access to the more extreme variants of sonic transgression. With regards to this, as Henry Jenkins (2006, 268) suggests:

> The power of participation comes not from destroying commercial culture but from writing over it, modding it, amending it, expanding it, adding greater diversity of perspective, and then rearticulating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media.

However, as I will address now in the final section of this chapter, once the genres of death metal and grindcore had moved deeper into the territory of the mainstream recording industry after the early 1990s, they consequently moved closer to the problematic commercial codes and financial control of the industry as well. During the 1990s transgression also took on a very different trajectory within the extreme metal scene, from which new internal scenic criticisms emerged, especially towards death metal; claiming that it had now lost its transgressive dynamism (Kahn-Harris 2007; Reyes 2013). This shift into the 1990s as I will as explore in relation to the internet, also marked the steady decline of active scenic involvement with the tape-trading network.

4.2 The "commercial" rise of death metal and grindcore and the decline of tape-trading

As I have already addressed in Chapter 2, when discussing tape-trading within the context of the extreme metal scene it needs to be understood not only in spatial terms, but in temporal terms as well. Indeed, one very important factor that I also addressed in Chapter 2 was how the early global underground extreme metal scene in its primary scenic embodiment through the global tape-trading network was afforded a large degree of "institutional thickness," namely protection from external fields of power such as record industry control and censorship (Kahn-Harris 2007, 100). By the 1990s therefore, because the large amounts of capital engendered within the tape-trading

network were now being "poached" by the record labels, in other words the internal production of scenically popular death metal/grindcore bands and the furthering of globally scenic connectivity (thus creating existing promotional networks and fan bases), the once strong protective walls around the tape-trading network were now consequently starting to crumble.

However, although after the early 1990s major labels were signing bands such as Morbid Angel, it was not initially record label activity outside of the extreme metal scene that started the ball rolling but one from *within*, and, like most of the early influential US thrash labels, one which also emerged from within the tape trading underground. Earache Records was set up in Nottingham, UK, as an underground punk label in 1986 by hardcore punk promoter Digby Pearson (Mudrian 2004, 28; 121). Pearson, a tape-trader himself, came into contact with an early incarnation of Napalm Death, which a short while after recording a demo in a small Birmingham studio in August 1986 their vocalist/guitarist left the band and gave the master tape to Pearson (ibid, 45). The remaining band members then hired vocalist Lee Dorrian and guitarist Bill Steer as replacements (both avid extreme metal tape-traders) and recorded another demo in the same studio in May 1987 for Pearson, who put the two demos together (namely the 1986 demo as side A and the 1987 demo as side B), which he released as Napalm Death's debut vinyl album "Scum" via Earache in July 1987 (ibid, 121-122).

"Scum," only Earache's third release (distributed via independent label Rough Trade Record's distribution network) was championed by cult BBC Radio One DJ John Peel who later invited Napalm Death to record one of his coveted Peel studio sessions for radio broadcast, which after its broadcast led to crucial press coverage in major British music magazines such as the NME and Melody Maker, thus elevating the band to public attention/sonic notoriety (Mudrian 2004). To capitalise on the success of "Scum," Pearson started signing more grindcore/death metal type bands including Carcass and Bolt Thrower from the UK, Morbid Angel and (Mike Borrowing's later band) Nocturnus from the U.S and Entombed from Sweden (ibid). The success of Earache also inspired other grassroots record labels such as Peaceville Records (originally a punk tape-label based in the UK) to move into extreme metal territory and sign bands such as Chris Reifert's Autopsy, and as suggested previously, other existing independent metal record labels such as Metal Blade and Roadrunner Records finally began signing popular underground death metal bands such as Cannibal Corpse and Obituary (ibid).

As with the previous global rise of thrash during the mid to late 1980s, once again, the rapid growth of labels such as Earache saw them quickly sign distribution deals with major labels by the early 1990s, which in turn were also now poaching the smaller labels' more successful bands such as Morbid Angel (Mudrian 2004, 185). As this seems to suggest, the influx of financial capital within this now slightly more *over-ground* global extreme metal scene, would once again bring with it the problems associated with corporate control as addressed in the previous chapter, namely the commercial codes taking precedence over transgressive sonic codes; potentially causing signed death metal/grindcore bands (as with many major thrash bands before them) to lose their transgressive dynamism. Moreover, another concern here relates to *all* of the tape-traders dedicating their time and energy towards generating scenically sonic /connective capital, only for the eventual financial gain/control of the major labels.

To address this latter issue first, this is indeed a very problematic occurrence, not just in terms of the metal scene's relationship with the mainstream recording industry, but generally within the capitalist system itself via the creation of commodifiable cultural products emerging from grassroots culture. With regards to the major recording industry, however, it is established practice that the major record labels maintain their profits by making sure that potential label artists already have a proven track record, in terms of an established fan base, and sellable (music/image) product before any large financial investment (namely the offer of a recording contract) is made. In other words the major labels have the smaller independent labels, or even subsidiaries of their own company in the guise of independent labels (often for reasons of maintaining discourses of authenticity amongst fans) doing all of the groundwork for them (Negus 1992).

Although this particular form of capital appropriation represents a "farm system" for talent to be nurtured by the independent labels, whilst being observed by the larger (or parent) record companies' A&R people; during the 1980s, cassette technology was also playing a large role here, not just in terms of band demo being tapes sent directly to the indie/major record companies, but also in relation I suggest to the extreme metal tape-trading network (Jones 1992, 142). Indeed, from the point of view of the recording industry, especially during the mid 1980s to the early 1990s, there was a clear hierarchal order in place in which the major labels farmed talent developed within the independent labels, whereas independent metal labels such as Earache and Peaceville in turn were able to utilise the extreme metal tape-trading network to nurture (farm) talent for them.

As I have already suggested, within this global tape-trading network was the circulation of sonic knowledge in which bands could essentially be inspired by the sonic transgression feed into the network by other (more experienced) bands, hone their own musical skills, and thus use this network to test-out/spread their own music, hopefully creating a fan base within local scenes throughout the world and thus an underground buzz around their band. The other flows of knowledge circulation would then be this buzz reaching the ears of potential independent labels through word of mouth or via fanzine reviews, for many of the labels' small staff and bands etc were still active tape-traders. Indeed, as Chris Reifert clarifies in response to the following questions:

> **Author:** Did you make a lot of useful connections with other bands through tape-trading, i.e. did you ever get to play live gigs with any bands from other states/countries because of this connection, or did any bands help with getting Autopsy signed to Peaceville by passing on your early demo tapes for instance?
>
> **Chris:** Yeah, I got to know tons of cool bands and people. We were all trying to be the heaviest or fastest or whatever and we all pretty much supported each other. Actually, it was Jeff Walker from Carcass who suggested that Peaceville get in touch with Autopsy, which led up to us signing a deal with them.

As this suggests, although it would be easy to argue that the global extreme metal tape-trading network functioned mainly as a farm system for the financial benefit of extreme metal labels such as Earache and Peaceville, or for the eventual financial benefit of the major labels, this would grossly underestimate not only the input of all the traders, but also their own needs and usage of the tape-trading network. Indeed, as I addressed in the previous chapter; the musician/traders just wanted to get signed in order to get their music more widely disseminated throughout the world; and for the trader/collectors, they just wanted greater access to sonic transgression. In this respect therefore, the prime motivations/needs of the extreme metal tape-traders were fulfilled.

Moreover, as I had also addressed previously, these fan/collector traders did not have the same antagonistic relationship to commercially motivated record labels as did the underground punks; as Luxi had suggested that traders "tended to think just very opposite way" regarding such "selling-out" discourses; instead "hoping to hear an excellent debut album from some certain Metal band that was still doing demos a little while ago." Such inter-scenic support thus reflects the "mundane subcultural capital" accrued by the bands which, as mentioned in Chapter 2, were "most skilled at forming relationships with a wide range of scene members" namely tape-traders and later the owners/employees of independent extreme metal labels (Kahn-Harris 2007, 126-127).

Ultimately therefore, "mundane subcultural capital" afforded to both musicians and fan/collector traders was the added bonus to either their recording contracts or extensive collections of sonic transgression (ibid). For as I had addressed previously, money was not a prime motivator for active participation in musical or network production, but *respect* (in other words something that was not granted to these teenagers outside of the metal scene). Indeed, this accumulation of personal subcultural capital signified that all the traders' "contributions matter[ed]" and through their symbiotic engenderment of death metal and grindcore, and indeed thereafter the eventual consolidation of the global extreme metal scene, they were able to "feel [a significant] degree of social connection with one another" throughout the globe (Jenkins et al 2009, xi).

However, although the cumulative actions of these traders enacted change to the status quo, in that extreme metal after the early 1990s began to have a noticeable music/scenic presence and commercial accommodation (via access to the major distribution network) within the wider heavy metal scene; as I still need to address, this does not alleviate the fact that participation with the commercial recording industry is not problematic; especially once the commercial codes start taking precedence over sonic codes.

Indeed, during Earache's early years, its bands, such as Carcass recorded their debut albums on very low budgets in a cheap studio with engineers who'd "never even recorded a standard heavy metal or punk band before", thus the sonic qualities on such albums *remained* "chaotic" and "raw" (Bill Steer, Carcass guitarist, cited in Mudrian 2004, 128). Nevertheless, once more capital was injected into these labels the bands now had bigger recording budgets and things began to change. For example, Napalm Death's third album "Harmony Corruption" (1990), recorded in Florida by (then) experienced death metal producer Scott Burns, not only saw the band move away from their grindcore roots and more towards death metal (namely longer songs structures, and even occasional guitar solos), but to the dismay of certain band members "it sounded too clean" and "didn't make them sound extreme" enough (Mudrian 2004, 166). As this suggests, the financial capital of the record labels and power invested in the producer (to deliver a commercially profitable product) were beginning to have a detrimental effect upon death metal/grindcore's transgressive capital, namely its transgressive dynamism.

With regards to this, as I have already discussed in relation to discourses of transgression emanating from the extreme margins of the metal scene, early purveyors

of extremity such as Venom first accentuated their own transgressiveness by distancing themselves from the metal mainstream (Waksman 2009, 195). Such discourses later fed into thrash, which evoked its own transgressiveness via its sonic/discursive response to the glam/lite metal mainstream; only for death metal and grindcore via the tape-trading network to claim their own transgressive dynamism by taking sonic transgression even further than thrash (the latter of which had by the mid to late 1980s started to become commercialised). The question that this posits therefore is; was there also a response towards death metal/grindcore's sonic commercialisation in the early 1990s?

The Black metal and advanced technological assaults

During the early 1990s critical questioning towards the current state of metal's transgressive dynamism emanated once again from *within*; this time from an extreme metal subgenre known as black metal (Kahn-Harris 2007). Black metal itself is complex; due to its association to satanic discourse; racism emanating from some of its internal factions; but most notoriously, due to a spate of murders and church burnings committed by certain members of the Norwegian black metal scene throughout the 1990s (for an academic critique of black metal, see Kahn-Harris 2007). However, for the sake of this study it is not my intention to dwell on these issues (or indeed unfairly suggest that that acts of violence and racism are representative of the vast majority of black metal scene members), but instead to briefly address here how black metal can be seen as a response to death metal's (and by association, grindcore's) move from the underground, i.e. its move from the tape-trading network, into the commercial sphere.

As discussed previously, the initial success of extreme metal labels such as Earache led to many influential death metal/grindcore bands moving from the tape-trading network to the commercial recording and (major label financed) distribution network. This led to the more produced sound on their later albums/major label debuts at the start of the 1990s, thus becoming the major sonic representation of extreme metal, especially to the burgeoning groups of newer fans who had never participated in tape-trading. For members of the early black metal scene therefore (such as within the Norwegian scene), who were also active within the tape-trading network, they felt that the cleaner productions, especially by producers such as Scott Burns and the level of professional musicianship that he demanded, lost the rawness and amateurism that was present on

earlier influences upon black metal such as the early Venom and Bathroy albums or the lo-fi rawness apparent on the early extreme metal demo/rehearsal tapes (Reyes 2013).

Indeed, for what black metal represented in musical terms was its members' "preferences for amateurism over virtuosity and for low-fidelity production over high," as well as their disillusionment towards the plethora of newer death metal acts emerging and (as with many grindcore bands during this period) all sounding very much the same, with little music variation and an increased focus upon musical complexity/virtuosity (Reyes 2013, 247). For although the early death metal/grindcore bands were regarded as musical innovators due to their creation of death metal/grindcore by transgressing the musical boundaries established by thrash, most of the death metal/grindcore bands emerging on the extreme metal scene from after the early 1990s onwards were not.

This ultimately, reflects the distinction that Kahn-Harris (2007, 126-127) makes with musicians' accruements of subcultural capital as addressed in Chapter 2, because innovators who push the transgressive boundaries of the scene are afforded "transgressive subcultural capital," whereas those more active towards contributing and sustaining the scene (as with tape-traders) are afforded "mundane subcultural capital." Indeed, this feeds into black metal discourse, in which asserting one's own individuality, especially through "producing idiosyncratic forms of art"/critiques towards followers, not leaders, are the main ways to accrue (transgressive subcultural) capital (ibid, 29).

However, regardless of death metal's/grindcore's latter more polished/professional (commercial) sonic manifestation, this music represented and still remains "the heaviest of all metals," which therefore implies that the chance of black metal surpassing it (or transgressing it) not in terms of innovation, but in terms of sonic transgression was, and *still is* near impossible (Reyes 2013, 241). This therefore brings me to the factor of the mass dissemination of sonic transgression itself, for although death metal/grindcore may still be regarded as lacking innovative potentials for some members of the extreme metal scene, for others, as I have touched upon in the previous chapters and will address further at the end of this chapter; it still offers (like it did for the tape-traders) a space for personal and communally shared attachments to pleasure and empowerment.

Whist the above discussion regarding the rise of black metal in the 1990s may account for internal scenic criticisms towards death metal's/grindcore's move towards the commercial sector (namely its reflexive questioning towards the threat of assimilation

and call for the extreme metal scene's return transgressive order), this does not account for the gradual decline of active tape-trading within the extreme metal scene beginning in the early 1990s. Moreover, although the rise of extreme metal labels had contributed to the demise of tape-trading, they were not the main cause, for this was *technology.* Indeed, whilst tape cassette recording technology "democratised" the production, distribution and consumption of musical texts (Manuel 1993), and thus engendered the possibility for extreme metal's global tape-trading network, it was also the advancement of technology by the early 1990s which led to its strong institutional demise.

The first technological blow towards tape-trading was the arrival of the CD (compact disk), which in the 1990s began mainstream circulation alongside vinyl and tape cassettes (Reyes 2013, 252). Although this didn't affect tape-trading immediately, because this new technology like tape cassettes was miniature and recordable in the form of the CD-R (Compact Disc-Recordable) offering better sound quality (namely digital instead of analogue) and markedly less degradability than tapes, it obviously offered better potentials for both collector and musician traders; as Jami suggests:

> Traders opted for blank CDs. You know, CD-r's (which I didn't like, and I hadn't the proper equipment). Cassettes more or less ceased to exist...Bands began releasing self-released CDs and CDEPs. All of a sudden you saw these virtually unknown bands releasing full-length albums. It was like they had skipped the rehearsal and demo years. Somehow I saw it killing the Underground scene.

Indeed, although CD-Rs offered many benefits to collector and musician traders, the problem here was not in terms of sonic quality factors, but instead economic and social factors, because unlike tape-cassette technology many traders did not initially have access to CD recordable technology, which even by the mid 1990s was still expensive. Moreover, traders being able to record full CDs in minutes as opposed taking ninety minutes for tapes would begin to lose their affective immersion in the process of trading, because the recording of CDs had now become practically effortless/musically disconnected, as the anonymous tape-trader stated: "...I enjoyed listening as I was recording." Most importantly however, because of such ease/less real-time immersion in the sonic/mundane aspects of recording, CD-traders would gain little respect from their tape-trading peers, thus maintain personal accruements of mundane subcultural capital.

This was also the case for musicians, because by self releasing a professional sounding CD recording without first "building up a reputation" through first trading demos and making connections with traders, they would also begin to forfeit accruements of

mundane subcultural capital, which as I have already suggested in this study, fuelled the continuation of the global extreme metal tape-trading network.

The greatest technological blow towards tape-trading however during the 1990s was the internet. Indeed, if the rot set in with the CD-R technology, the walls finally began to crumble with the internet and advent of file sharing, for not only was the exchange of sonic transgression now even easier (namely music could now be globally disseminated within seconds) it was also cheaper/free; as tape-trader Luxi suggests:

> ...Who wants to trade tapes any more when everything is available in the internet? Who wants to spend a fortune on tapes + postage fees when you can save the money spent on those things, just by downloading music straight from the internet? I don't believe people want to spend money on (empty) real tapes any more, just to record and trade them away for other people...The whole ideology of tape-trading has more or less ceased to exist since the internet killed it all - or at least most of it...Perhaps there still is a very small handful of ultra-die-hard tape traders out there even nowadays who are still into trading tapes, doing it for the sake of this thing called nostalgia, who knows...

However just as the sonic transgression of death metal and grindcore had once circulated throughout the tape-trading network from the mid 1980s, only to be transferred to the mainstream distribution network throughout the 1990s; the social interactions of global scenic connectivity were now also transferred to elsewhere. Indeed, the internet, in relation to the future of the global extreme metal scene was a double-edged sword, for although it did cause the end of active extreme metal tape trading, it still enabled the extreme metal scenes, bands, or indeed individual global extreme metal scene members to stay connected to each other via emails and social media; to circulate scenic discourses via online fanzines, blogs and fan pages; and most importantly to keep sharing/circulating sonic transgression (Netherton 2015, 317). In other words, keep the global extreme metal scene (and its grassroots discourse) alive.

Ultimately, although the global extreme metal scene today is inextricably linked to record labels and the internet, without which it would be hard to maintain scenic functionality, it should never be forgotten that without the tape-trading network and the participatory social interaction of all its members, extreme metal, and therefore death metal and grindcore, would perhaps not have existed, or at least not existed to the major globally popular cultural music form that we know today. Indeed, as Abhorrence vocalist/ex-trader Jukka Kolehmainen summed-up, when asked to comment for this study upon the impact of extreme metal tape-trading: "I'd say metal wouldn't be as big and it would have taken a decade or more to get where we are now..."

4.3 Problems and positive potentials

Before bringing this chapter to a close, as I have mainly explored within this chapter the functionality of tape-trading through the framework of participatory culture, I must therefore address one important related issue: how *democratic* was actual participation within the global tape-trading network between the mid 1980s and early 1990s?

When Jenkins (2006, 269) discusses participatory culture, in terms of how social networked interaction with modern modes of media technology offer potentials for greater grassroots participation towards shaping mainstream media he acknowledges that there always exists a "participation gap." This gap highlights the "cultural factors that diminish the likelihood that different groups will participate" towards shaping possible change (ibid). Indeed, what is central here is access to participation, and for Jenkins: "[r]ace, class, language differences amplify these inequalities in opportunities for participation" (ibid).

With regards to tape-trading between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, race, class and language, were indeed curial factors towards participation, for as I mentioned in Chapter 2 regarding capital; certain countries throughout the world possess less economic capital than others. Thus, during the period in question, lower-class citizens in economically poorer countries such as those in the Global South may not have had access to tape recorders/musical instruments (or even due to remoteness, access to commercial magazines/underground fanzines); and even if they did, they may not have had sufficient leisure time/funds to engage in tape-trading (Kahn-Harris 2007, 98).

However, whilst tape recording equipment was more commercially available in North America, Europe, Japan and Australia, issues of class may once again precluded access to funds to engage within tape-trading, or if in full time employment, limit the leisure time to participate. One point that Kahn-Harris makes however is that because some countries provide social welfare, this at least gave perhaps some tape-traders (and indeed amateur extreme metal musicians) the advantage of time and some income towards participation, over those in countries not providing similar support (ibid, 97).

With regards to language, especially a lack of English, as I have already addressed in the previous chapter, this would also have been a problem towards participatory access to the *global* tape-trading network due to reasons of communication (namely being able to read pen-pal adverts in fanzines/magazines and engage in letter writing). Indeed,

English as I had also previously mentioned was the dominant language of communication throughout the global tape-network, because heavy metal itself was based historically on the commercially released recordings by bands from the U.K and the U.S. However, it is perhaps another established element prevalent within metal, which perhaps signified the greatest barrier towards participation: gender.

As I have already discussed in Chapter 2, metal has always been a male dominated music scene built upon discourses of masculine power, but whilst women have always participated within the scene, they always lack the same amounts capital and autonomy already afforded to men as the dominant group within the scene (Weinstein 2000; Kahn-Harris 2007). For women extreme metal fans during the period in question however, who were from more economically and technologically prosperous countries, with access to sufficient amounts of financial capital and leisure time, there was no reason for them to have been excluded from participating in tape-trading.

Indeed, as my research has found, women *were* involved in the extreme metal tape-trading network, for in one Fanzine from the period, (Disposable Underground issue 5, 1992) the editor gives a list of fellow fanzine editors he regularly trades with, of which five out of the twenty seven listed are women. This does suggest therefore, albeit in smaller numbers, but reflective of the metal scene's dominant male demographic, women did participate not only within the production the tape-trading network, but also within scenically discursive production via their fanzines.

Whist this accounts for tape-traders producing discursive scenic production, sonic production was a very different matter. Indeed, although examples exist of fanzines giving mention to all female bands, such as a positive article about Swedish death metal band "Neutron Rain" recording their first demo (Slayer Zine issues 5, 1987), there is little evidence that there were many all-female bands or at least bands with at least one women member circulating throughout the tape-trading during the period in question. This again reflects the fact that in metal very few women due to their marginal position tend to engage in high-profile scenic careers, such as become musicians, not least because very few women exist in such roles in the first place (Kahn-Harris 2007, 71).

That being said, despite not that many women participating towards the circulation of sonic transgression throughout the tape-trading network during the period in question; this space did however give them the opportunity, and - as the above positive fanzine

review (indecently written by a man) suggests - the encouragement to do so if they desired, and therefore as with all other musicians (regardless of gender) they were able to "believe their contributions matter[ed]" (Jenkins et al 2009, xi). Moreover, whilst this male dominated space mirrored the patriarchal hierarchy of the wider society; for the women who did have the opportunity to get their music heard throughout globe via this extreme metal tape-trading network, at least they had more representation within this space than was then afforded to them within the mainstream.[3]

However, whilst such issues of participatory access need to be addressed when evaluating the extreme metal tape-trading network, this should not diminish the sonic and scenic changes and the positive potentials that it *did* achieve.

Indeed, the very fact that the participatory practice of tape-trading was a blueprint for the global scenic practice that takes place via the internet today (Netherton 2015), has meant that it set in motion not just the global connectivity of the extreme metal scene, but its continual perpetuation of scenic discursive construction through continual dialogue and amendment (namely via online blogs, fanzine and discussion boards). Indeed, whilst extreme metal may exist within commercial space via its online global connectivity, it still retains its grassroots ability to also exist outside of the mainstream; not only to disseminate music by unsigned bands (or even bands that do not wish to participate within the commercial mainstream); but also to engender a space in which problematic issues within the scene (such as gender inequalities) can be addressed and challenged.

Most importantly, however, tape-trading engendered death metal and grindcore and spread them throughout the globe. For although it can be argued that death metal/grindcore became more polished with record contracts and advancements in music technology, as suggested earlier, they still remain "the heaviest of all metals" (Reyes 2013, 241). Thus, it is perhaps within this most sonically transgressive of all metals where the most positive potentials lie; namely *pleasure* and *empowerment.*

As I have already addressed in Chapter 2, sonic transgression offers pleasure and empowerment to those who often lack power within the wider global society (such as

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[3] I am only aware of one death metal/grindcore band arising from the tape-trading underground during the period in question, which included a woman band member and eventually obtained a record contract. This is Bolt Thrower from Coventry, UK (with bassist Jo Bench) who were first signed by the very small independent label Vinyl Solution in 1988, before signing with Earache the following year.

young men, women, economically disadvantaged and ethnic minorities), for it does not discriminate and thus offers potential pleasure/empowerment to anyone wishing to immerse themselves within its sonic space. Indeed, as Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger and Paul D. Greene (2011, 10-16) suggest, metal music offers listeners access to "musical experiences invested with serious, weighty, or powerful emotions" and through this "affected overdrive" these listeners are afforded a space in which they can experience not only heightened pleasure, but also personal empowerment as "an expression of freedom in the face of society's attempted imprisonment."

This may explain why death metal and grindcore as metal's most sonically intensifying sub-genres, thrive in the economically poorer countries of South America and have spread to other countries in the Global South, such as Malaysia and Indonesia (ibid). Indeed, this potentially pleasurable and empowering personal/communal space for all the world's disempowered appears to offer a very different globalisation to that of the alienation and gross inequalities created/sustained under neo-liberal globalisation.

Ultimately therefore, for those who attach themselves to sonic transgression, not only do they share this musical space with perhaps a couple of musically like minded friends or members of their local extreme metal scene, they also co-exist within a sonically transgressive pleasurable and empowering space, which thanks to the seeds originally planted by *all* of the extreme metal tape-trading musicians/collectors, today covers much of the globe.

In conclusion to this chapter, as I have thus revealed; the functionality of the extreme metal global tape-trading network between the mid 1980s and early 1990s was only made possible through the participatory commitment and networked practice of *all* the traders. These traders, whether musicians or collectors, were fans of sonic transgression first and foremost, engaged in a symbiotic relationship towards building upon, and pushing the boundaries of, their most communally connective sonic text: *thrash.*

Indeed, via the sonic "poaching" of thrash by musician traders, filtered through the low-fidelity "rawness" of the cassette tapes, death metal and grindcore were brought to life. However, it was only via a participatory network of stockpiling, knowledge circulation and mutual exchange that *all* of the traders (energised by mundane subcultural capital acquisition and affect) facilitated global scenic connectivity; engendered future online scene practice; and essentially brought death metal and grindcore to the world.

5. Conclusion

The rise of death metal and grindcore through a global underground tape-trading network primarily between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s was a fascinating historical moment within the wider extreme metal scene. However, whilst this particular phenomenon engendered some of the most sonically transgressive forms of music to exist within contemporary popular culture, thus affording pleasure, social connectivity and potential empowerment for countless numbers of extreme metal fans/musicians throughout the globe, it also represents something else, and of equal importance.

Indeed, this phenomenon stands as a testament to a globally dispersed collective of fans and musicians who transgressed the status quo and took ownership of their most communally understood, and communally connective cultural texts. In other words, metal's "authentic" sonic transgression was *theirs*, and they were not consciously or unconsciously willing to accept that it be contained or compromised by the record industry gatekeepers. Nevertheless, as I have revealed within this study, this process was not a simple one, and one which intersected with many contributing factors.

At the heart of such factors was the music and its associated scene, and what this represented to those who wished to attach themselves towards it. Indeed, for fan affiliation to metal, due to its historical association to noise, rebellion and social deviancy, has always been a pleasurable and empowering space for (often young) people to enact symbolic transgression against authority (Weinstein 2000). Moreover, because this symbolic transgression is always best articulated through the music itself, for extreme metal fans/musicians at least, "sonic transgression" - as bound-up with discourses of masculine power and articulated through the musicians' control of the music's aggressive intensifying threatening rhythmic abject - thus allows extreme metal music and by association its scene members (regardless of gender) to possess and sustain transgressive dynamism (Kahn-Harris 2007).

This binary opposition between those in authority, namely the powerful, and those feeling the need to transgress, namely the disempowered (such as young men using their symbolic attachments to sonic/discursive transgression as meaningful enactments towards personal empowerment) also reflects the other crucial factor regarding the rise of death metal and grindcore through tape-trading: the unequal flows of capital (ibid). Indeed, as I have revealed, especially via the empirical data, the global exchange of

sonic transgression through tape-trading primarily between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s was not just out of pure pleasure and empowerment, it was out of necessity.

The centralised ownership of the major commercial recording industry in the hands of a few powerful elite, and therefore their control of the major commercial distribution networks, underlines the historical context from which tape-trading emerged in the late 1970s. For these major record companies maintained their powerful position by acting as gatekeepers, only releasing what music conformed to their codes of commerciality. Thus, whilst heavy metal may have been regarded as sonically/discursively transgressive throughout the 1970s, at the start of the 1980s, this was not the case. Indeed, then, due to its further commercialisation/fragmentation into the profitable subgenres of lite and glam metal (emphasising the feminised visual over the masculinised sonic; especially via MTV), metal for *some* scene members began to lose its transgressive dynamism (as previously articulated by bands such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Motörhead, and from the very late 1970s the N.W.O.B.H.M bands).

Just prior to this however, during the late 1970s the arrival of punk and the commercial availability of tape cassette recording technology offered alternatives to the established order. Indeed, punk's transgressive noise and youthful energy and a DIY ethos (which also inspired the rise of small independent record labels) changed the rules of the game. Although, whist the first generation of punks were soon integrated into the mainstream, the next wave of underground punks took the anti-commercial/establishment ethos further via their underground networks of music exchange and distribution. Thus via the democratisation of music production, distribution and consumption afforded by tape cassette technology, a global underground punk tape-trading network was born.

Punk's musical influence upon metal, as I have suggested in Chapter 3, cannot be underestimated, for its back to basics approach, noise and youthful energy gave metal the reinvigoration it so desperately needed, but the very fact that it provided an alternative means for global music distribution (and by association discursive distribution via fanzines/pen-pal letters) had a more profound effect upon the eventual rise of death metal and grindcore. Thus, it was through thrash that punk's sonic aggression and global tape-trading network was eventually fully incorporated into the metal scene, and with its punk inspired formation of independent record labels, an embryonic extreme metal scene was born. This consolidated scene via its transgressive

dynamism soon challenged the wider heavy metal scene's internal weakening by the (record industry sustained) lite/glam metal "poseurs" (who, as the empirical data has revealed, were despised by extreme metal tape-traders for their "inauthentic" metal).

Indeed, as I have explored, a central tenet of transgression is a desired return to order, which is what thrash achieved for heavy metal in the early 1980s by restoring its sonic (and discursive) transgressive dynamism. However, as I have stated, transgression can never become complacent for fear of losing such innate dynamism. Therefore, building upon thrash as the (then) most scenically understood, and globally connective extreme metal text, there emerged once again from the underground extreme margins of metal, and indeed for some members of the underground punk scene (who as revealed by the empirical data were inspired by thrash) the even more sonically transgressive sub-genres of death metal and grindcore. Moreover, because by the mid 1980s thrash had become more financially integrated within the mainstream, further sonic transgression was imperative if this "authentic" metal scene were to retain its transgressive dynamism.

Herein, as I have addressed, the major obstacle for the global rise of death metal and grindcore existed; for whilst thrash arose in close proximity to its own independent (later major backed) labels, death metal and grindcore *did not* (at least initially). Thus, as these independent thrash labels became more entwined with financial capital, they soon became the new gatekeepers by the mid 1980s, not willing to take any chances on anything remotely more extreme than the aggressive thrash of Slayer (namely death metal and grindcore). However, as has been central to the exploration of this study and the empirical data highlights, the existence of the global extreme metal tape-trading network offered an alternative means for globally dispersed death metal/grindcore bands to distribute their music creations to globally dispersed extreme metal fans.

However, what I have also revealed via this study's empirical data is that whilst the original underground punk tape-trading network was ideologically motivated towards opposition of the capitalist perpetuating mainstream recording industry, this was not necessarily the case for the extreme metal tape-traders. Indeed, for during the mid 1980s to the early 1990s these globally dispersed unsigned extreme metal bands just wanted their sonic transgression to reach as globally far and wide as possible without their music being compromised; but still hopefully one day reach the ears of a sympathetic record label. In harmony with these desires, globally dispersed underground metal fans

wanted to hear/collect metal that was much more extreme and sonically transgressive than what was being offered or reaching them via the commercial mainstream.

Moreover, beyond personal needs/motivations, these musicians/fans/collectors via their altruistic commitment towards tape-trading and the global spread of extreme metal, specifically, their *negotiation of transgression into mundane scenic practice*, they were also all afforded peer respect, namely "mundane subcultural capital" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 124). This in turn fuelled their further commitment and perpetuation of a globally scenic/connective tape-trading network. Nevertheless, whilst mundane subcultural capital and personal needs/motivation are important, without the further crucial factors of socially networked organisation, which I argued in Chapter 4 is better understood via participatory culture, as well as the mediation of the cassette technology itself, death metal and grindcore may not have had the sonic or global embodiment that exists today.

Indeed, the functionality of the extreme metal global tape-trading network was only made possible through the *participatory* commitment and networked practice of *all* the traders. Through their active fandom of thrash, the musician traders "poached" its sonic transgression, which was further mediated though the low-fidelity rawness of the tapes themselves and thus death metal, and (by its association as a predominantly extreme metal sub-genre) grindcore, emerged as the most sonically transgressive forms of metal in existence today. Moreover, through the participatory network of stockpiling sonic data for mutual exchange, all of these traders via their affective commitment facilitated scenic connectivity and the spread of death metal and grindcore throughout the globe.

However, whilst issues of participatory access and death metal/grindcore's later existence within the commercial recording sphere are apparent, as I have suggested, the ultimate achievement of tape-trading was the uncompromising music that it engendered and spread throughout the globe, offering a personal/communal space that has lost none of its affective pleasurable and empowering potentials. Moreover, because the tape-trading network structured future online participation, where internal "scene politics" (e.g. gender inequality) can be addressed, this at least offers further positive potential.

Ultimately, these extreme metal fans/musicians/collectors not only challenged the status quo (namely the gatekeepers) they also changed the sonic and scenic landscape of metal forever. Most importantly, however, as my study has revealed, they *all* achieved this only through their *tapes,* their *transgression* and their *participatory mundane practice.*

Appendix

Interview participants:

Jami Lahtinen	tape-trader	(Finland)	email interview 08/03/15
Anonymous	tape-trader	(Finland)	email interview 04/04/15
Jukka Kolehmainen	Musician/tape-trader	(Finland)	email interview 08/04/15
Luxi Lahtinen	tape-trader	(Finland)	email interview 09/04/15
Mike Browning	Musician/tape-trader	(USA)	email interview 23/04/15
Jani Muurinen	Musician/tape-trader	(Finland)	email interview 02/05/15
Chris Reifert	Musician/tape-trader	(USA)	email interview 05/05/15
Lee Dorrian	Musician/tape-trader	(UK)	email interview 19/05/15

All of the musician tape-traders gave their permission to have their real name used in conjunction with this particular study, which I feel enables me to better explore the important impact that many of their respective pioneering bands had on creating the future sounds (sonic transgression) of death metal and grindcore via the tape-trading network. Furthermore, regarding the two Finnish musician tape-traders, this also enables me to link their own band's sound to appropriations of many of these earlier aforementioned bands, again via the filter of the tape-trading network. I have also added the name of the band/bands that all of these musicians were in (or are still in) during their main participatory period of tape-trading with their specific email questions below.

To keep everything consistent I have also used the real names of the three other Finnish tape-traders, apart from one trader who did not give permission for his name to be used. For ethical reasons therefore, this trader will be referred to as "anonymous" when directly cited within this study. Finally, whilst all the interviews for musician traders varied in question content, which are all attached below, the larger amount of questions (over fifty) for the other three Finnish tape-traders was virtually the same in question content. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary repetition I have only attached just one copy of one of copy of these particular email questions below (question 29 however has had a particular place name removed to protect the anonymity of the aforementioned trader).

<u>Lee Dorrian: ex-Napalm Death</u>

1. How actively involved were you in the tape-trading scene before you joined Napalm Death and how did you first get involved in tape-trading?
2. What sort of bands were you trading, was it mostly punk or metal?
3. Did any of the bands that you first heard on the trading underground have a big influence on your musical tastes or any political views in any way?
4. How would you describe the extreme underground scene in the UK during the mid to late 80s, in relation to the gigs, the community spirit and its politics etc?
5. After you joined Napalm Death, were you still involved in tape-trading and how much were the other members still involved in trading?

6. Would you say that the music that came from the tape-trading underground had much influence on Napalm Death's sound (including your vocal style) in any way?
7. When you were in Napalm Death, what was the central ethos of the band, and what statement do you feel that the band made overall with its sound and lyrics?
8. Do you think many of the other metal bands that emerged from the tape-trading scene during the mid to late 80s had much to say politically or was it more just about creating the heaviest, fastest, extreme demos possible?
9. After you joined Napalm Death how much of a response would you say the band's extreme sound (especially your vocal style) was to the historical period from which it emerged, i.e. would you say that the extreme sound was a conscious reaction for example to the state of Britain under Thatcherism or the commercial music of the time, or perhaps something else?
10. Finally, how important would you say that the underground tape-trading scene was to the future development of extreme metal in general?

Chris Reifert: Autopsy/ex-Death

1. How did you first find out about the underground metal and tape-trading scene and what attracted you to it in the first place?
2. How often did you trade tapes and what was it like to receive new tapes in the post from all over the world (i.e. was this an exciting time in your music career)?
3. What sort of bands did you first hear through the tape trading scene?
4. Do you remember any bands that were really popular with everyone on the underground trading scene during the mid to 80s to the early 90s? And which band(s) stood out for you?
5. What sort of music was on the tapes, was it mainly demos, live or rehearsals (or even recordings of existing studio albums from a traders own collection), or anything else?
6. Can you remember all of the countries that you sent tape to/received tapes from and was there a lot of letter writing involved?
7. How important would you say fanzines and letter writing were to the existence of the tape trading scene?
8. Were the early demos that you recorded (i.e. Mutilation with *Death* and Demo '87 and Critical Madness with *Autopsy*) very popular on the tape trading scene at the time (or did they become more popular after the later success of Autopsy and Death)?
9. Did you make a lot of useful connections with other bands through tape-trading, i.e. did you ever get to play live gigs with any bands from other states/countries because of this connection or did any bands help with getting Autopsy signed to Peaceville by passing on your early demo tapes for instance)?
10. Did you circulate many rehearsal tapes or tapes of live gigs on the underground tape-trading scene, whilst in Autopsy and Death (or was Chuck Schuldiner more responsible with the latter)?
11. Do you think the music that you made with Autopsy and Death reflected the period in which it was made, i.e. do you think it was a reflection upon society? Or, if not, what statement did you (or do you think Chuck Schuldiner) attempt to make with the early music?
12. Do you feel that any of the bands that you listened to via tape trading were a big influence upon Scream Bloody Gore and Severed Survival or any of the later Autopsy records (whether musically, lyrically or politically), and if so, which bands were most influential?
13. How did the experience of recording Scream Bloody Gore and later Severed Survival compare to recording (and trading) your early demos with both bands?
14. Were you interested in any bands with political messages such as Grindcore bands like Napalm Death or Carcass?
15. What was your opinion of the censorship on metal during the 80s?
16. What was your opinion of commercial metal during the 80s?
17. Were the demo tapes more influential on to the music/lyrics of any of your earlier bands than any officially released recordings by any bands?
18. Do you think there was a lot of competition on the tape-trading scene to make the heaviest, fastest and most extreme music possible?
19. What was it like being part of the San Francisco Metal scene during the period in question (and was tape trading a big influence upon this scene)?

20. Why do you think the underground metal scene was so important to the bands that traded their demos etc, and how important would you say that the tape trading scene was to the global metal scene that exists today (and do you miss those days)?

Mike Browning: ex-Nocturnus/ex-Morbid Angel

1. How did you first find out about the underground metal and tape-trading scene and what attracted you to it in the first place?
2. Were you a very active tape-trader?
3. What sort of bands did you first hear through the tape trading scene?
4. Do you remember any bands that were really popular with everyone on the underground trading scene during the mid to 80s to the early 90s? And which band(s) stood out for you?
5. What sort of music was on the tapes, was it mainly demos, live or rehearsals (or even recordings of existing studio albums from a traders own collection), or anything else?
6. How important would you say fanzines were to the existence of the tape trading scene?
7. What was the best thing about recording your own material and trading it on the underground scene?
8. Did you make a lot of useful connections with other bands through tape-trading, i.e. did you ever get to play live gigs with any bands from other states/countries because of this connection in or did any bands help with getting Nocturnus signed by passing demo tapes on to their own label for instance)?
9. Did you circulate many rehearsal tapes or tapes of live gigs on the underground tape-trading scene, whilst in your early bands?
10. Do you think the music that you made with Incubus/Morbid Angel/Nocturnus reflected the period in which it was made, i.e. do you think it was a reflection upon society? Or, if not, what statement did you want to make with your music?
11. Were any of the bands that you listened to via tape trading a big influence upon your music (whether musically, lyrically or politically), and if so, which bands were most influential?
12. Can you remember all of the countries that you sent tape to/received tapes from?
13. Were you interested in any bands with political messages such as Grindcore bands like Napalm Death or Carcass?
14. What was your opinion of the censorship on metal during the 80s?
15. What was your opinion of commercial metal during the 80s?
16. Were the demo tapes more influential on to the music/lyrics of any of your earlier bands than any officially released recordings by any bands?
17. Do you think there was a lot of competition on the tape-trading scene to make the heaviest, fastest and most extreme music possible?
18. What was it like being part of the Florida Metal scene during the period in question (and was tape trading a big influence upon this scene)?
19. Why do you think the underground metal scene was so important to the bands that traded their demos etc, and how important would you say that the tape trading scene was to the global metal scene that exists today?
20. If there is anything else you'd like to add about the tape-trading scene during this period please feel free to do so! And thanks for answering my questions!

Jani Muurinen: ex-Xysma

1. How did you first discover the tape-trading scene?
2. Were any of the bands that you listened to via tape trading a big influence upon Xysma (whether musically, lyrically or politically), and if so, which bands were most influential?
3. When did you first hear bands such as Napalm Death and Carcass was it via the tape trading scene or from their first official records releases?
4. What interested you the most about bands such as Napalm Death and Carcass, was it the music, the lyrics, their politics or something else?
5. Was Repulse/Xysma your first band?
6. Were you tape-trading before you formed Repulse/Xysma?

7. What sort of music were you listening to before you started tape-trading?
8. How did the extreme music that you heard on the tape trading scene during the mid to late 1980s make you feel?
9. What were the local Naantali / Turku Metal scenes (if separate!) like during the mid to late 1980s, were it vibrant and did Xysma help create a scene (were there many other Metal bands in the area playing similar music to Xysma during the period)?
10. Were there any other influences on the Naantal/Turku metal scenes or other scenes affiliated to them such as hardcore punk or anarcho-punk for example?
11. What was your opinion about commercial rock/metal during the period such as glam metal and how was it discussed on the underground in the local Turku metal scene (if discussed at all!)?
12. When you formed Repulse/Xysma what statement were you and the other band members trying / hoping to make with your music?
13. Do you think that Repulse/Xysma's music reflected the period in which it was made?
14. Do you remember how many Xysma (and Repulse) demo /rehearsal / live tapes you produce and circulated on the underground tape-trading scene?
15. Were other Xysma members also tape trading?
16. Do you feel that your interest in the scene became more intense / enjoyable with the more tapes that you received and did that make Xysma produce more tapes to circulate on the tape-trading scene?
17. Did Finnish military/civil service get in the way of the band / tape-trading in any way?
18. How important would you say that the tape trading scene was to the global metal scene that exists today?
19. Why do you think the underground metal scene was so important to the bands that traded their demos etc?
20. Are you still a big fan of metal/underground music?

Jukka Kolehmainen: Abhorrence

1. How did you first find out about the underground metal and tape-trading scene and what attracted you to it in the first place?
2. Were other Abhorrence band members also into tape trading?
3. What sort of bands did you first hear through the tape trading scene?
4. Do you remember any bands that were really popular with everyone on the underground trading scene during the mid to late eighties (or even in the very early 90s)? And which band stood out for you?
5. What sort of music was on the tapes, was it mainly demos, live or rehearsals (or even recordings of existing studio albums from a traders own collection), or anything else?
6. How important would you say fanzines were to the existence of the tape trading scene?
7. As well as your *Vulgar Necrolatry* demo did Abhorrence circulate any rehearsal tapes or tapes of any of their live gigs on the underground tape-trading scene?
8. Do you think that the extreme music of Abhorrence reflected the period in which it was made?
9. Were any of the bands that you listened to via tape trading a big influence upon Abhorrence (whether musically, lyrically or politically), and if so, which bands were most influential)?
10. Did you meet a lot of other bands through tape-trading (i.e. did you ever get to play live gigs with any of them because of this connection)?
11. Were you or any of the other Abhorrence band members interested in any bands with political messages such as Grindcore bands like Napalm Death or Carcass?
12. What was your and the band's opinion of commercial metal during the mid to late 80s?
13. Were these tapes more influential on to music/lyrics of Abhorrence than any officially released recordings by any bands?
14. Do you think there was a lot of competition on the scene to make the heaviest, fastest and most extreme music possible?
15. Why do you think the underground metal scene was so important to the bands that traded their demos etc, and how important would you say that the tape trading scene was to the global metal scene that exists today?

Sample questions for Luxi, Jami and anonymous:

1. How did you first find out about the underground metal trading scene?
2. How old were you when you first started trading?
3. What sort of Metal type bands were you listening to (or did you grow-up listening to) before you started trading, and/or were you listening to other types of music such as punk, hardcore or any other types?
4. Do you remember your first trade (when, what band was on the tape and where did you send the tape/receive the tape from?
5. What was it like to receive your first tape(s), did it seem more special to you than buying a record from the local record store?
6. Do you feel that your interest in the scene became more intense / enjoyable with the more tapes that you received?
7. Was anyone else in your local circle of friends also involved in trading?
8. How often did you trade tapes (and was it on a daily, weekly or monthly basis)?
9. What recording equipment, tape cassettes did you use?
10. What sort of music was on the tapes, i.e. was it mainly demos, live or rehearsals (or even recordings of existing studio albums from a traders own collection), or anything else?
11. Can you remember all of the countries that you sent tape to/received tapes from?
12. Was there a lot of letter writing involved with the scene (i.e. sent with the tapes, and if so, what sort of things were usually written in the letters)?
13. If you did receive many letters, did traders ever mention other things in them apart from Metal, e.g. the political situation in their country or perhaps (in certain countries) how difficult it was to send/ receive tapes due to state control?
14. Do you think that the underground Metal trading scene was an important life-line to Metal fans in remote parts of a country, i.e. hundreds of kilometres away from any Metal scene or record shop for instance, and did any traders ever mention this to you?
15. Were any other things included with the tapes such as photos, flyers, tape lists / requests or anything else?
16. Were you involved with the local Metal scene in any other way during the mid to late eighties, such a playing in a band, involved with a fanzine, promoting bands or anything else?
17. During the period in question (mid to late 80s) where do you think the bands that were being traded on the Metal underground were trying to take their music/what statement were they trying to make?
18. What kept you involved with the trading scene for so long, and would you say that you became well known throughout the global trading scene?
19. During the mid to late eighties, what kind of Metal bands were you trading?
20. Do you remember any bands that were really popular with everyone on the underground scene during the mid to late eighties?
21. Did you trade/correspond with many Metal bands worldwide?
22. Did you trade/correspond with any big named Metal bands/musicians on the scene then, such as with members from Napalm Death, Death, Morbid Angel, Carcass and Entombed (or others) etc?
23. Did you trade much with UK traders and bands (if so which bands during the mid to late eighties)?
24. When did you first hear bands such as Napalm Death and Carcass was it through the underground scene or through their official record releases?
25. Were there any radio stations in Finland (or any radio stations from other countries received in Finland) which played any Thrash, Death Metal or Grindcore in the mid to late eighties?
26. Would you say that the scene was very well respected by all of the traders, i.e. were there any incidents when you sent a tape to traders but did not receive any tapes in return (and if this did happen at all did traders let other traders know about and bad traders)?
27. Would you say that trading was an expensive thing to do?
28. Did trading take-up a lot of your free time?
29. Did you circulate your tapes from other countries with your friends in the local **[place name deleted to maintain anonymity of one trader]** Metal scene?
30. Do you feel that you had a greater connection to the tape trading scene or your local Metal scene (or did it all feel part of the same thing)?
31. Did you ever meet up with any of your fellow traders from other parts of Finland or other parts of the world, or talk with them on the phone?
32. What interested you the most from the tapes that you received, was it the music, the lyrics or anything else?
33. Do you think that the quality of the tapes made a difference to the music (for better or worse)?

34. Were you interested in any of the political messages from of any of the bands in the mid to late eighties, such as the Grindcore bands or any others?
35. Were tapes ever traded for money or was it always a case of one tape received = one tape sent back?
36. Were there any particular ways between traders for describing how good they thought a tape was? I've heard some say "This Kills!" but do you remember anything else?
37. How did the music you were first hearing on the tape-trading underground during this period make you feel?
38. What was your opinion about commercial Rock/Metal during the period such as Glam Metal and how was it discussed on the underground (if discussed at all)?
39. What were your thoughts about tapes being sold on the underground instead of being traded?
40. Was there ever any talk on the underground about bands selling-out if the signed with record labels or were most traders happy to see them signed and made popular to larger audiences? What were your own thoughts about this?
41. When bands released their first "official" LP do you think any of them had perhaps lost some of the excitement or energy that they may have had on their demo tapes that were traded on the underground?
42. When would you say was the best period of tape trading (i.e. its golden years) and why?
43. How important would you say that the tape trading scene was to the global Metal scene that exists today?
44. Why do you think the underground Metal scene was so important to the bands that traded their demos, etc.?
45. Were there any Hardcore Punk bands traded on the underground during the mid to late 80s or was it strictly Metal only?
46. Do think there was much interest by fellow traders, fanzine writers or local scene members in the political messages of Thrash bands like Nuclear Assault or Grindcore bands like Napalm Death when they emerged on the scene (that is if any of these band's early demos were being traded)?
47. Why do you feel that tape-trading went into a decline (if you feel this is the case)?
48. What impact do you think that early extreme Metal labels such as Earache etc had on tape trading?
49. What impact do you think the internet had on tape trading?
50. Do you still correspond with any of the old traders?
51. How many tapes would you say that you traded / received during you whole involvement with the scene and do you still have any of them (or letters/lists etc)?
52. What is your most treasured tape (if that is easy to answer!) and why is this?
53. What was your most memorable moment of trading?
54. What was the best thing about trading?
55. What was the worst thing about trading (if there was one)?
56. Do you have any anecdotes about your time trading tapes (especially during the mid to late eighties)
57. Finally, if you have any other memories about the trading scene please feel free to add it to your answers.

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* please refer to the interview information in the appendix (on page 106).

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